

1 **The Mnemonic Conversion: From Communicative Memory to Cultural Memory in the**
2 **Culinary Memoirs of Olia Hercules.**

3 **Abstract**

4 This article examines the two culinary memoirs of Olia Hercules, namely *Summer Kitchens:*
5 *Recipes and Reminiscences from Every Corner of Ukraine* (2020) and *Strong Roots* (2025), to
6 look at the transformation of everyday domestic practices from the fragile realm of
7 communicative memory to the durable realm of cultural memory. Using the theoretical
8 distinction between the interpersonal and institutionalized forms of remembering proposed by
9 Jan Assman, the study demonstrates that the two select texts stabilize ephemeral and orally
10 transmitted knowledge through embodied practice, affective intensity, and material
11 codification. *Summer Kitchen* evokes a sensory-rich archive of domestic life. It foregrounds
12 the Ukrainian culinary traditions as inherited, practiced, and socially situated forms of
13 remembering. *Strong Roots* adds to this further by amplifying the whole process, especially
14 during displacement and geopolitical rupture. Both the select memoirs of Hercules function
15 as a counter-archive by converting the lived, domestic experiences into published cultural
16 artifacts. The article also situates these select memoirs of Olia Hercules in a space where food
17 narratives can materialize cultural continuity, hence operating as an important archive of
18 national belonging.

19

20 **Keywords:**

21 Culinary Memoirs, Communicative Memory, Cultural Memory, Embodied Practice, Affective
22 Memory, MaterialMemory, Ukrainian Foodways

23

24 **Full-Text**

25 Culinary memoirs, according to Barbara Frey Waxman, link “food with cultural
26 identity, ethnic community, family, and cross-cultural experiences”, writers act as “cultural
27 tenders” who preserve the communal values and rituals across generations; they occupy a
28 unique stand in safeguarding identity, memory, and cultural continuity (364). Food narratives
29 are the intimate archives, embedded with autobiographical and familial reflections, often
30 exposing the lived experiences that connect the sensory language of cooking to both the
31 personal and the collective memories. The domestic kitchen attributes culinary memoirs a
32 distinctive space, as it becomes a site where emotions, histories, and cultural practices are
33 activated, recorded, and sustained. It is also a space where the text materializes memory
34 through the detailed evocation of gestures, tastes, and techniques that might otherwise remain
35 ephemeral. The fusion of sensory experiences with these narratives gives space for embodied
36 recollection. Culinary memoirs also enable their writers to negotiate identities, and they
37 become a medium where the distance is bridged and the heritage is sustained. Theorist
38 Roland Barthes argues that the act of cooking and eating becomes a practice where food “is
39 not only a collection of products that can be used for statistical or nutritional studies. It is
40 also, and at the same time, a system of communication, a body of images, and a protocol of
41 usages, situations, and behavior” (21).

42 Culinary memoirs act as an important mnemonic text by preserving the community’s
43 lived experience in the forms that are emotionally resonant and transmissible across
44 generations. It also acts as a space where social memories are produced and transmitted.
45 Culinary memoirs are different from traditional cookbooks, which are replete with
46 instructions, techniques, and ways about cooking. Cookbooks “reflect shifts in the boundaries
47 of edibility, the properties of the culinary process, the logic of meals, the exigencies of the
48 household budget, the vagaries of the market, and the structure of the domestic ideologies”
49 (Appadurai 3). Culinary memoirs, on the other hand, not only encode instructions,

50 techniques, and tastes but also the domestic structures, rituals, and survival strategies
51 employed by communities. These texts document the histories that often escape from the
52 traditional records, like that of women, diasporic communities, and even families navigating
53 displacements.

54 French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs developed the concept of Collective Memory.
55 He believed memory is never individually contained but always arises within the social
56 frameworks that structure daily life. Halbwachs argued that “no memory is possible outside
57 frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections”
58 (43) and that it is “in the consciousness of various members of the domestic group” (54) that
59 family memories take shape. Thus, memory is not purely an individual faculty but
60 fundamentally a social one. Building and refining the concept of Collective Memory, German
61 Egyptologist and cultural theorist Jan Assmann reshaped the field of memory studies. He
62 distinguishes between two forms of collective memory: communicative memory and cultural
63 memory. These two forms of memory together form the theoretical background for this study.
64 According to Jan Assmann:

65 Communicative memory is non-institutional; it is not supported by any
66 institutions of learning, transmission, and interpretation; it is not cultivated by
67 specialists and is not summoned or celebrated on special occasions; it is not
68 formalized and stabilized by any forms of material symbolization; it lives in everyday
69 interaction and communication and, for this very reason, has only a limited time depth
70 which normally reaches no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three
71 interacting generations. (111)

72 The move to cultural memory is a deliberate and necessary process, a process that
73 anchors the fading and personal recollections into a durable and externalized form, which

74 ensures persistence. According to Halbwachs, collective memory is situated within social
75 frameworks: “a person remembers only by situating himself within the viewpoint of one or
76 several groups and one or several currents of collective thought” (33). When domestic
77 customs and traditions are transcribed and published, they are expelled from the context of
78 the regional kitchen. Here, the lived experience is institutionalised for the storage of a
79 reconstructed past. The lived experiences thus get transformed into a stable cultural heritage
80 (128-29). The term “Cultural Memory” was first coined by Assmann in his seminal essay
81 “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” (1995). He states that:

82 The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images,
83 and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to
84 stabilize and convey that society’s self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for
85 the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity
86 and particularity. (132)

87 This study is centred on the notion that culinary memoirs generate a structured
88 transformation. Olia Hercules, through her two select memoirs, gives a potential case study to
89 analyse this process of memory conversion. The intergenerational transmission of memory in
90 these works is a result of a crucial shift necessitated by the movement of memory from the
91 fragile nature of communicative memory to the durable nature of cultural memory. The act of
92 writing down enables the preservation of a community’s knowledge into a permanent cultural
93 artefact. This act of preserving memory becomes the foundational mechanism which enriches
94 the process of exploring memory conversion, especially within a culturally rich landscape
95 such as Ukraine. It is in this context that the works of Olia Hercules gain traction.

96 Olia Hercules is a Ukrainian-born chef and writer who is instrumental in documenting
97 and internationalising the Ukrainian culinary traditions. The works of Hercules use

98 professional techniques that are often presented in the form of dialogues with the intimate and
99 inherited knowledge. The two culinary memoirs of Hercules, *Summer Kitchens: Recipes and*
100 *Reminiscences from Every Corner of Ukraine* (2020) and *Strong Roots* (2025), evidently
101 portray how domestic practices and sensory recollections can perform the role of cultural
102 testimonies. The culinary practice transfers and preserves rituals and gestures within the
103 family across generations, which later forms durable cultural evidence. Through the two texts
104 examined, *Summer Kitchens: Recipes and Reminiscences from Every Corner of Ukraine* and
105 *Strong Roots*, Hercules demonstrates the exclusive ways in which memory is formed,
106 circulated, and endured. The theories of embodied, affective, and material memory are used
107 to analyse the transience and stabilisation of these memories. The act of remembering here is
108 analysed as diversely distributed through body, emotions, and objects. Embodied memory
109 here is “an implicit ‘body memory’ that underlies our habits and skills, connecting body and
110 environment through cycles of perception and action” (Fuchs, 215). Similarly, affective
111 memory is found to occur when “emotions ... generate a strong impact upon memory,”
112 producing “more vivid autobiographical memories [that] tend to be emotional events ...
113 remembered more frequently, more clearly, and in greater detail” (Cardoso et al. 81). Material
114 memory, however, treats objects as mnemonic agents: “things are full-fledged memories,
115 since they accumulate and bring forth how we have materially engaged with them over
116 different timescales” (Prezioso and Alessandroni 1).

117 Olia Hercules’ culinary memoir, *Summer Kitchens: Recipes and Reminiscences from*
118 *Every Corner of Ukraine* (2020), presents a literary sphere of personal recollection, regional
119 foodways, and architecture of memory within Ukraine. The texts begin with Hercules
120 revisiting the eponymous “summer kitchens,” a small outbuilding adjacent to vegetable plots
121 or orchards, where generations of Ukrainians cooked, preserved, and shared seasonal labour
122 of garden and harvest. In the *Summer Kitchen*, Hercules writes, “I owe some of my earliest

123 and fondest memories to the ‘summer kitchens’ of my parents, grandparents, neighbours and
124 friends in Ukraine.”*Summer Kitchens* is also an intermedial text featuring vibrant
125 photographs, lyrical essays, and recipes that bring the Ukrainian domestic spaces alive. From
126 themes of “preserving and pickling, breakfast and bites, broths and soups, bread and
127 dumplings, field and forest vegetables, meat and fish, and desserts along with recipes such as
128 borscht with duck and smoked pears, burnt aubergine butter on tomato toast, poppy-seed
129 babka, nettle and wild garlic soup” (Hercules, *Summer Kitchens*), all serve dual purposes;
130 they instruct the home cook and preserve a cultural landscape of food memory. In addition to
131 being a work about cooking, this text also presents a vast canvas of cultural endurance. Here
132 modernity, migration, and changing lifestyles threaten the practices she records. She notes
133 that although summer kitchens are “dwindling these days,” there remains much to learn about
134 making the most of vibrant produce throughout the year (Hercules). Through the lens of food,
135 labour, memory, and landscape, *Summer Kitchens* documents how domestic experiences
136 encode cultural identity. Here, cooking and preserving become forms of remembering and
137 gestures of continuity in times of change.

138 A genre-bending blend, *Strong Roots* (2025), is Hercules’ yet another culinary
139 memoir. It spans nearly a century of Ukrainian history through the lens of four generations of
140 Hercules’ own family. The text begins with eras of Russification and Soviet repression. It
141 moves through her grandmother’s deportation, her aunt’s youthful protest, and her parents’
142 flight when their village fell during the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The memoir
143 offers recipes as entry points into wider cultural and historical retrospection. The text also
144 maps memory into food, at the same time restoring the Ukrainian culinary practices as the
145 most important archive of national identity.

146 In reading the narratives of Hercules, it is evident that the stories she narrates are
147 living practices and not formal archives. These are techniques and gestures she imbibed
148 through proximity. At this juncture the Hercules' texts mirror Halbwach's foundational belief
149 that memory is created within social frameworks. Here structures such as family are sites for
150 recollection. All the recipes and ideas presented in the memoirs exhibit the sediments of
151 interaction. A tacit understanding is built in kitchens where hands rather than texts teach the
152 next generation. Central to Hercules' portrayal of communicative memory is the primacy of
153 embodied observation, where knowledge is conveyed without explicit instruction. In *Summer*
154 *Kitchen*, Hercules writes, "Adding a splash of hot water to the batter is a trick I learned from
155 my mum" (86). She also recalls "watching [grandma] make butter: [grandma would] take a
156 three-quart jar full of cream and keep shaking it until butter was formed." (321). In *Strong*
157 *Roots*, she notes that she "grew up among incredible cooks, but in Ukraine you don't – or at
158 least we didn't – cook at your mother's side. The adults were busy, you were not to get in the
159 way, but I must have absorbed a lot of it by osmosis". Children internalized knowledge from
160 the periphery through observation rather than learning through direct instruction and
161 participation. These levels of marginal apprenticeship are expanded during extended family
162 gatherings. These gatherings for Hercules were moments of good fortune: "A large chunk of
163 extended family was present, including Mum's sister Valia, her brother Slava and his wife
164 Liuda, and the eldest of Mum's five siblings, my Uncle Viktor, who we call 'the walking
165 encyclopedia'" (Strong Roots). These family gatherings act as the nodal sites where the
166 stories, techniques, and gestures converge to form intergenerational memory flow that
167 persists without ever being formally written down, where even the minute procedural details
168 tend to carry memory. The instance in which Hercules remembers sitting "on stumpy wooden
169 stools and pick out the bruised and blemished" with children carefully selecting fruit so that
170 "only the best, undamaged specimens were to make it into the preserving jars" (Summer

171 Kitchen 13) carries insights that further emphasise Halbwach's notion that memory is
172 transmitted by participation in the shared rhythm of work.

173 The interpersonal memories often demonstrate an inherent ephemerality, and Hercules
174 often frames her recollections in terms that highlight their precariousness. The repetition of
175 gestures, techniques, and tones leads to memory preservation. However, lack of permanence
176 is considered as a feature of communicative memory. Communicative memory is known to
177 thrive on intimacy, which allows it to be vulnerable to disruption. Migration, political
178 suppression, and generational loss are some of the reasons for such disruption. Hercules thus
179 positions communicative memory not as a nostalgic residue of the past but as a living
180 knowledge, a foundation upon which her broader idea of culinary remembrance rests. In both
181 texts memory is not a static content but a living interpersonal archive, which forms the raw
182 material for the subsequent stages of memory transmission.

183 The process of memory transmission involves a series of stabilizing practices that
184 give intimacy to domestic interaction. These mnemonic practices, embodied, affective, and
185 material, do not replace the oral recollection but fortify it, thereby ensuring the
186 transformation of the experimental world of kitchens, landscapes, and family rituals into a
187 more permanent cultural repertoire. It is at this stage that memory begins to acquire a more
188 transmissible structure. As British anthropologist Paul Connerton notes, "We may preserve
189 the past deliberately without explicitly re-representing it in words and images. Our bodies,
190 which in commemorations stylistically re-enact an image of the past, keep the past also in an
191 entirely effective form in their continuing ability to perform certain skilled actions . . ." (72).
192 Embodied memory is the central mechanism of stabilization, where the techniques are
193 repeated until they become instinctive patterns of movement. Embodied memory
194 contextualizes memory by fundamentally rooting it in the human body and its sensorimotor

195 systems. The process of remembering is activated through bodily and sensory experiences,
196 which is originally linked to an event. The body here becomes the medium for the operation
197 of memory (Iani). This gets clearer in *Strong Roots* when Hercules describes the meditative
198 quality of kneading dough: “The soft dough under the cushion of my palm, its stickiness, its
199 comforting sweet-sour aroma, the repetitive movements...the ultimate act of mindfulness.”
200 These gestures here are not simply learned but inhabited, and the stability fostered arises
201 from the repetition of the practice, not its origin alone. Embodied memory is a form of
202 knowing even without verbal knowledge; muscles, postures and the rhythms of everyday
203 labour are the mnemonic repository. Preserving, fermenting, and tending seasonal produce
204 are all repetitive tasks that showcase the stabilising dimensions of embodied memory.
205 Fermenting foods “elate me, they trigger memories, and they inspire me to cook creatively”
206 (Summer Kitchen 25), writes Hercules. Fermenting is an embodied act that becomes iterative,
207 each season repeating the last, that keeps memory in action and not in narration. These
208 practices highlight the transformation of the bodily repetition from fragile recollection into
209 cultural patterns that are resilient because they get reenacted continually.

210 Embodied memory ensures continuity through practice, while affective memory
211 ensures continuity through emotional intensity. “Affective memories are inscribed in
212 everyday artefacts, making it possible to get in touch with positive memories of past events,
213 with memories of people who are no longer present, and with feelings of belonging to a
214 group and identity claims, among other possibilities (Cardoso et al. 87).” Affective memory
215 often acts as the emotional-intuitive layer wherein the sensory experience shapes, amplifies,
216 and preserves cultural recollection. In Olia Hercules’ culinary memoirs, taste, smell, sound,
217 and texture become more than descriptive embellishments. They are the mechanisms through
218 which memory acquires intensity and durability. Hercules’ texts continually look at how
219 sensory stimuli, particularly smell and taste, connect the personal past to the cultural identity.

220 Allowing what might otherwise disappear into the fragility of communicative memory to
221 persist through the emotional force of sensory recall.

222 In *Summer Kitchens*, smell is often framed as the earliest and most enduring portal
223 into memory. Smell plays a crucial role; it is the seasonal pulse and, at the same time, a
224 sensory ritual denoting family intimacy, time, and cultural continuity. Hercules looks back at
225 her childhood Easters, for her Easter days began with the smell of yeasty dough resulting
226 from the *makoviy rulet* placed in the oven (302). Hercules says, “clean tripe smells like fresh
227 milk” (142), which also shows how memory induces sensory precision in both imagination
228 and body. In a similar manner, Hercules’ first impression of Kyiv arrives in an olfactory
229 landscape: “the whole place smells of borsch” (115). Smell facilitates national belonging, like
230 in Proust’s insights, where sensory impressions unlock an “entire structures of the past” held
231 completely dormant in the consciousness (67).

232 Affective memory acts as a stabilising force in *Strong Roots*. There are instances in
233 the text where Hercules talks about cooking as a process that renewed her sense of orientation:
234 “The familiar smells, the sounds of chopping and stirring ... made the addiction to cooking
235 stronger and stronger” (*Strong Roots*). The sensory familiarity here produces emotional
236 grounding. The kitchen is a site where repeated emotions accumulate, which in turn generates
237 a sense of belonging. This idea is further extended when Hercules describes her parents’
238 return to the Ukrainian household filled with “familiar smells: fried onions and grated carrots,
239 beetroot, chicken fat, freshly cut dill...” (*Strong Roots*). Smell is thus considered a reservoir
240 of memory that leads to cultural continuity. Taste is yet another affective trigger capable of
241 traversing the temporal distance. On tasting a Christmas bun, Hercules writes, “When I tasted
242 them, I nearly fell off my chair” (*Strong Roots*). This memory is both tactile and immediate,
243 which is the essence of embodied recognition. Hercules presents instances in the text where

244 flavour is itself a form of cultural continuity; in *Strong Roots* she discusses the process of
245 salivating just at the thought of a dish, which in turn is representative of the taste of her
246 homeland. Similarly, the scent of walnut is “so familiar, but not familiar like the walnuts of
247 [her] childhood... [her] brain buzzes from such a niche connection” (Hercules, *Strong Roots*).
248 These are instances of affective recall, an involuntary surge of memory connecting the past
249 with the present. Sound also takes the centre stage by becoming an affective modality in the
250 text. Hercules believes that if one wants to be a good cook, one must be able to see, smell,
251 taste, and hear, and there is no better way to feel alive (*Strong Roots*). Both select texts are
252 replete with sonic imprints of domestic life: the sizzle of vegetables and the rhythmic
253 repetition of chopping. This reinforces the notion that affect follows a circular path, shaping
254 the everyday encounters that influence how bodies inhabit spaces.

255 Cultural remembrance is the defining feature of Hercules’ memoirs, which are
256 anchored in affective memory. In addition to narration, emotional discharge of sensory
257 experiences helps in the transmission of cultural remembrance. Affective memory is the
258 emotional adhesive of Hercules’ mnemonic system, selecting that which is preserved,
259 intensifying that which is inherited, and at the same time ensuring that memory is both
260 recollected and felt profoundly. The emotional resonance further stabilises communicative
261 memory and prepares it for the transformation into the durable realm of cultural memory.

262 The material anchor is the final stabilising mechanism that externalises memory into
263 objects, texts, and symbolic motifs that can endure even in the absence of their original
264 carriers. In *Summer Kitchen*, Hercules foregrounds the importance of such anchors, noting
265 that “I still have grandmother’s handwritten recipe books” (323). A handwritten recipe is both
266 an artifact and an archive. It transforms the embodied knowledge into a repeatable,
267 preservable, and transportable document. Material anchors extend beyond the textual.

268 Domestic textiles such as “Hand-embroidered – and often hand-woven linen or hemp cloths
269 called *rushnyky* would adorn the walls, often draped over icons or, later, photographs” serve
270 as visual and tactile repositories of familial and cultural lineage in *Strong Roots*. Cultural
271 identity persists even when verbal transmission is interrupted and memory gets broken down
272 into fabrics, colours, and threads. The texts also emphasise symbolic anchors by merging the
273 personal memory with the collective imagery. Domestic objects are the carriers of culturally
274 resonant symbols. The grapevine of her childhood is one such symbol for Hercules, and she
275 believes it resembles the tree of life (*Strong Roots*). Cherry trees, on the other hand, become a
276 growing mnemonic marker of family belonging. She recollects the existence of two cherry
277 trees at the front of her house, one for her and one for her brother (*Strong Roots*). The
278 memory recollected here is rooted in materiality; such symbols acquire form here, and their
279 significance resonates even beyond the immediate setting. These symbols carry forward
280 memories of a domestic world, its taste, gestures, and emotions, to a future world. Memories
281 associated with objects, recipes, and symbols are spared from the vulnerabilities of loss or
282 displacement; this is then transferred from the private recollection to the cultural archive, a
283 movement allowing persistence even without emotional intensity and embodied practises.

284 Mnemonic conversion happens when communicative memory creates space for
285 cultural memory, which is capable of facilitating the transition from the interpersonal into the
286 collective archive. This shift is evident in Hercules’ memoirs, and this transition is not just an
287 authorial choice for her but is in itself an act of preservation shaped by historical pressure.
288 The need to record and document memories is necessitated by cultural erasure, migration,
289 war, and even modernisation. This documented memory can thus become part of a larger
290 national inheritance. Documenting is thus an act of safeguarding; publication is a gesture that
291 has the ability to transform kitchen affairs into materials of national importance that are
292 stored, taught and collectively remembered. In *Summer Kitchen* a story is embedded in the

293 ordinary rhythms of domestic life and the need for inscription increases with the direct
294 response to geopolitical trauma in *Strong Roots*. This shift directly points at what Jan
295 Assmann identifies as the defining characteristic of cultural memory: “Cultural memory is a
296 kind of institution. It is exteriorised, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that,
297 unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent”
298 (111). Written pages act as a preservation force: domestic knowledge becomes a cultural
299 artefact, and these artefacts no longer rely on the contingencies of family transmission.
300 Hercules’ treatment of the iconic dishes of Ukraine also reveals this shift, where certain food
301 items carry ritualistic stature, as they carry certain layers of meanings that are beyond the
302 personal realm. Hercules points out how ordinary dishes develop and acquire symbolic force
303 within the Ukrainian cultural sphere. Borscht, a national dish of Ukraine, is given the status
304 of national treasure and acute pride in *Summer Kitchen* (113) and is also capable of triggering
305 deep-seated memories and feelings of kingship (120). In *Strong Roots* she mentions the
306 ability of borscht to function as the part of DNA. Similarly, varenyky is a dish “known and
307 loved by everybody in Ukraine” (*Summer Kitchen* 174). It is considered the dumpling of all
308 seasons and all regions of Ukraine (*Summer Kitchen* 83). This exceeds mere sustenance,
309 becoming a marker of belonging, and also carries an affective weight resulting from familial
310 transmission. The labour involved in the preparation of it is “nothing less than a
311 manifestation of love” (*Summer Kitchen* 83). This asserts the importance of a dish in
312 carrying memory. It's not the repetition in its making alone, but the repetition is collectively
313 passed on from one generation to the next. Preparation and consumption carry equal status,
314 making it the performative link connecting the past and the present.

315 It is important to note that cooking is one such process capable of connecting people
316 to their origins, even when physical return is impossible. Diaspora is thus involved here, and
317 Hercules tries cooking so that it lets her connect to her homeland on a deeper level. Culinary

318 practices are both an emotional and mnemonic bridge across distance. When territorial
319 belongings are lost or suspended, cooking even takes up the role of compensation. In *Strong*
320 *Roots* we see Hercules cooking traditional dishes for her fleeing parents, making a familiar
321 space, engulfed in familiar smells, which, in turn, sends signals of safety and hope. Being
322 able to have some borscht and smell familiar flowers signals not the end but hope, a hope she
323 is trying to cultivate. This is demonstrative of how food rituals stand in for a threatened
324 homeland. These are the acts that carry the cultural weight of a portable homeland, a
325 sustaining identity when the place and the belongings are jeopardised. Here culinary
326 traditions are offering a belonging that endures even across the oceans and the boundaries.
327 Even though they also carry the emotional weight marked by the "bittersweet longing that
328 Ukrainians call *tuga*" (Strong Roots). Thus, the select culinary memoirs, in addition to
329 describing diasporic memory, also sustain it and provide both textual and sensory frameworks
330 which allow the diasporic communities to reaffirm cultural identity.

331 Suppressions and the threat of cultural erasure are two aspects that gain significance
332 in the memoirs of Hercules. At times of political pressures, there is an increasing tendency to
333 standardise or even weaken the regional distinctiveness. Hercules states that "further from the
334 eastern border were more able to preserve their dialects, rituals, and embroidery and other
335 crafts, as well as their cuisine" (Summer Kitchen 21). The kitchen takes up the status of a
336 counter archive, an embodied repository to preserve the cultural knowledge even when
337 institutional memory fails. Culinary practices are a form of resistance for the writer which in
338 many ways might give these dreamy kitchens, the food traditions followed, and the cherished
339 recipes the attention they very much deserve (Summer Kitchen 11) The sensory and
340 embodied transmission aids this endurance further; she writes, our maternal grandmother
341 "taught us to listen to our cooking" (Strong Roots). Memory is also in practice; in *Strong*
342 *Roots*, Hercules uses the method of symbolic preservation when she paints Ukrainian motifs

343 on the door of her London kitchen. These practices are representative of how foodways and
344 domestic rituals lead to cultural continuity, which might contribute to the survival of
345 memories outside the official histories.

346 The memoirs discussed confront the history of cultural erasure, especially through the
347 embodied memories of those who lived under the weight of it. Hercules recalls the historical
348 violence when “Russification was in full swing in Ukraine when [her] parents were children,”
349 a policy that sought to turn “the fifteen Soviet republics... into a single homogenised
350 Russified whole, with one history, one future and one language: Russian.” (Strong Roots).
351 The destruction of “toponyms” and the systematic clearing of Crimea so that it was “largely
352 cleared... for Russians” (Strong Roots) are the instances that form the backdrop against
353 which Hercules’ writings become resistance and not just testimonial. The “half-whispers” are
354 thus a learned behaviour from the older generation, who survived by being silent, and this
355 becomes a “muscle memory” passed on to their children (Hercules, Strong Roots). Writing
356 takes a prudent role by disrupting this silence that is passed on, and she declares that “I am
357 writing this story to help myself heal and to make you understand. I am writing the story of
358 my ancestors, as well as my own story, which is a microcosm of the story of Ukraine”
359 (Strong Roots). Here private recollection is transformed into collective inheritance, and she
360 also laments the loss of cultural and ecological landmarks during destruction; what has been
361 restored “has now, in turn, been destroyed”, compelling her to “sew a small stitch in the vast,
362 rich and colourful embroidery of all Ukrainian lives” (Strong Roots). Here the past is both an
363 inheritance and an obligation. She writes of “a million cloaked ghosts, standing at our
364 shoulder” (Strong Roots), these are the figures who embody the ethical weight of
365 remembering when others tried to erase Ukrainian presence altogether. Through this work,
366 domestic memory becomes cultural resistance. A counter-archive that reclaims what
367 authoritarian regimes attempted to grind into sawdust.

368 In conclusion, the two select culinary memoirs of Olia Hercules, *Summer Kitchens:*
369 *Recipes and Reminiscences from Every Corner of Ukraine* and *Strong Roots*, demonstrate
370 their stature as far more than a record of recipes and domestic routine. It is a site where
371 memory is formed, transmitted, and stabilised against displacement and erasure. These
372 narratives trace the movement of memory from the fragile and embodied exchanges of
373 everyday life into a durable symbolic form of the cultural archive. Memories originating from
374 and within the space of the kitchen are lifted out of the fragile world of communicative
375 memory into a more durable and secure world of cultural memory through the act of writing.
376 What is particular about these memoirs is their insistence that the stabilisation process is also
377 a result of bodily involvement. The embodied, affective, and material registers of memory are
378 constitutive and not incidental. They are the definitive medium through which the Ukrainian
379 foodways survive migration, political rupture, and historical suppression. Hercules locates a
380 form of cultural resilience in these sedimented gestures, in the longing that attaches itself to
381 taste and smell, and in the mnemonic weight of the recurring objects. Ultimately Hercules'
382 memoirs affirm the notion that cultural memory is not entirely a property of the official
383 histories, national monuments, or institutional archives. It lives equally and more tenaciously
384 in the domestic and familial rituals that are passed down from one generation to the next. The
385 different theoretical frameworks of memory used in this article have sought to demonstrate
386 that culinary memoir occupies a pivotal place in the field of memory studies and Hercules'
387 writings endure not despite their intimacy but because of it, and it is in that intimacy that their
388 cultural work is most powerfully done.

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