"The moon was not Stalinist"*
Post-Soviet Memory: Narratives from the Borderland City of Lviv

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WHEN memory studies were flourishing in the West[1], memories were still being murmured in the East. The construction of a Soviet master narrative pervaded the intimacy of the everyday life of citizens, but memories excluded from the official discourse were preserved in the private sphere, nourishing an underground counter-history opposed to the state-sanctioned one[2]. By the time the Soviet Union ceased to exist, the "long suppressed and still painful memories came to the fore, freed from the constraints of censorship"[3]. The quest for the construction of a collective sense of belonging in the newly independent countries became a central topic of research, mainly reflecting the political requirements of state- and nation-building. At first, the literature regarding the history of post-Soviet countries was written chiefly along ethnocentric lines. Notwithstanding, the process that Georgiy Kasianov referred to as "nationalizing history"[4] soon showed its limitations and risks. So that, across the turn of the millennium, historians sought to expand and go beyond the framework of national history since the essentialist categories of 'One's Nation' and the 'Other' could not coexist with the multinational historical past of the region. From this paradigm change from national to transnational history, memory became a compelling research topic in Eastern Europe, where the continuous migration of peoples and border-change caused overlapping historical narratives within and among states and communities.

The present article aims at examining and revisiting the post-Soviet as a category of analysis in the study of historical memory and nation-building in the Eastern European space. Noting the conceptual relevance of the category of 'post-Soviet' does not imply addressing only events that took place after the time or beyond the space of the Iron Curtain, nor overestimating the impact that Soviet culture had on the region. In my view, it would instead address how politics, culture, and the whole array of everyday human emotions passed through these seventy years of history, impacting on, and being influenced by them.

Post-Soviet memory suggests both a continuum and a rupture in space and time that will be critically addressed through the lens of a local case study, the borderland city of Lviv.

The case study has been chosen because of its unique features, since Lviv is a borderland city with a variegate past that nowadays finds itself at the gates of the European Union. Known throughout the centuries as Lemberg, Lwów, L'vov and L'viv, according to the political entity which has ruled this space, the cityscape encloses much of central and eastern European history: from a multinational and multicultural heritage of religious and linguistic kaleidoscope to a top-down forced national uniformity. The approach on which my analysis is based is transdisciplinary and it comprises methods and theories derived from postcolonial studies. I chose this perspective for two reasons. Firstly, these tools may be

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* A. Zagajewski, *Two Cities: on Exile, History, and the Imagination*, Athens 2002, p. 90.

[1] I use the categories of Western / Eastern Europe in the perspective of the West-East dichotomy central in the narrations regarding the Cold War. However, they are not essentialized but challenged and problematized.

[2] Cf. M. Ferretti, *La memoria mutilata: la Russia ricorda*, Milano 1993.

[3] U. Blacker – A. Etkind, *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*, London 2013, p. 7.

[4] Cf. G. Kasianov – P. Ther, *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography*, Budapest-New York 2009.

instrumental in investigating if and in which circumstances the USSR could be regarded as a colonial power, or rather, a political entity that combined elements of an empire with features of a multinational state[5]. Moreover, this viewpoint recognizes the sensibility in the way east-central Europe articulates its historicity. In this region, narratives seem to be built upon a postcolonial perception of one's own experience, so this approach could be valuable in problematizing and challenging these representations. In doing that, my article intends to underline people's subjectivity, investigating their role not as passive victims of an outside and foreign power but as agents who negotiated through time their self-belonging. Nation, othering, hybridity and palimpsest are among the scaffolding concepts that are relevant in my analysis[6]. Specifically, I will present, looking at the cityscape, the historical narratives that identify the 'Self', in this case the Ukrainian nation, and the 'Other'. In doing so, I will show how the post-Soviet city has been defined through the selective adoption of symbols conceived by past ruling political entities. In this vest, I contend that the national city has been imagined through the complex interactions of elements considered solely Ukrainian with others coming from the adoption or the refusal of the mythscape of the Habsburg Lemberg, the Polish Lwów, the Jewish Lemberg and the Soviet L'vov.

From a theoretical and methodological perspective, the research intends to bridge memory studies and urban analysis. The idea of sharing common identities is linked not only with invented traditions[7] but also with the material forms in which communities have constantly imagined themselves[8]:

> When we think about social or cultural identity, we inevitably tend to place it, put it in a setting, imagine it in a place. Ideas and feelings about identity are located in the specificities of places and landscapes in what they actually look like or perhaps more typically how they ought to appear[9].

As concerns the urban environment, the analysis focuses both on the monumental and the performative dimension of collective memory. According to this perspective, I will address historical narratives that have been shaped and reshaped through time in the urban cultural landscape of Lviv. The idea of 'cultural landscape' derives from the work of an American geographer, Carl Sauer, who stressed the prominent role that humans play in the material transformation of natural landscapes[10]. Inevitably, the cultural landscape is linked with the material human construction, such as buildings, monuments and memorials. Notwithstanding, during the 1980s and 1990s[11], scholars started to 'dematerialize' the analysis, focusing on the symbolic, conceptual and ideational dimensions of these material elements. This cultural approach has been built upon post-structuralism and linguistic theory by scholars who defined cultural landscape as a multifaceted process of representation[12]. This methodology allows reading the city as a 'text' to grasp the ideas through which sites of memory[13] emerge, change and disappear. However, the analysis is not meant to be static: the city represents a site of cultural production, mediated through the symbolic practices of self-identification of the communities which inhabit it. The city-text is thus imaginary, it is based on an existing urban space, but it is embedded in the constellation of alternative reminiscent worlds. Hence, it is possible to integrate the city-text metaphor with

[5] D. E. Letnyakov, *Critical Commentary on the Concept of "Soviet Empire"*, "Russian Studies in Philosophy", 2017 (55), 3-5, pp. 293-304.

[6] See B. Ashcroft – G. Griffiths – H. Tiffin (ed. by), *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London 2013.

[7] Cf. E. J. Hobsbawm – T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 2012.

[8] See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread Nationalism*, London 2006.

[9] C. Tilley, *Introduction: Identity, Place, Landscape and Heritage*, "Journal of Material Culture", 2006 (11), 1-2, pp. 7-32.

[10] C. O. Sauer, *The Morphology of Landscape*, Berkeley 1925, p. 46.

[11] Here, I refer to the so-called 'cultural turn' in social sciences and humanities. This approach is aimed at turning culture into the subject of debate. Prominent figures were Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Clifford Geertz.

[12] D. Cosgrove – P. Jackson, *New Directions in Cultural Geography*, "Area", 1987 (19), 2, pp. 95-101.

[13] The sites of memory can be defined as the institutionalized forms of collective memories about the past; places in which the community deposits the memories that its members consider to be a fundamental part of their identity. This notion became popularized in memory studies as *lieux de mémoire* (P. Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, New York 1996); *landmarks* (M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago 1992).

semiotics to investigate the creation of symbolic places that materialize the collective remembering and to emphasize how places have been re-signified through time[14]. In the urban analysis of Lviv, I will identify temporal, spatial, or even imaginary layers from which the multiple narratives at play in the historical memory of the city could be recounted[15]. This perspective delves into both the multiplicity of the variegate past of the city, which has left several traces on the material environment and the complexity of the identification processes that simultaneously have an impact on and are influenced by this landscape, emphasizing the dialogical engagement between people and the environment. Hence, building on the work of Marianne Hirsch and Uilleam Blacker, I read the concept of 'post-Soviet memory' as a complex combination of processes through which pre-Soviet and Soviet narratives that may belong directly or not to current urban communities are internalized, or refused, through the production, or the destruction, of material elements in the cityscape[16].

The article is structured as follows: firstly, I present the urban landscape of the city, focusing on the interesting feature of ghost signs on the facades of buildings, and I propose the definition of palimpsest to describe this environment; then, I proceed investigating how the landscape of the contemporary, or post-Soviet, Lviv is treated as a multicultural project by local agents. Afterward, I question whether the category of cultural hybridity may be instrumental in conceptualizing the multi-layered structure of identification processes in the city, moving beyond cultural and national essentialism. The case of the Eastern European space, which is characterized by an imperial and multi-ethnic past that struggles to be enclosed within fixed national boundaries, can be considered as a 'laboratory' where to apply these transdisciplinary approaches. This local space raises awareness of the limitations of ethnically-based national narratives and allows challenging them. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the possible implications of these findings for the field of memory studies: may these narratives be conceptualized as a post-Soviet memory?

Under the plaster: Lviv as an urban palimpsest

The analysis begins on a ground level, with footsteps[17]. While walking around the city, the first element that can be noticed is the presence of numerous statues, high-reliefs and decorations representing the figure of the lion. According to the traditional narration, the city was founded by Danylo Romanovyč Halyc'kyj[18] (1202-1264) in 1256 and named after his son Lev, which means "lion".

This is the first example of how the urban landscape of Lviv shows the material presence of diverse absences, which are the political entities that have ruled this urban space. Throughout the years this city has been a medieval Rus' village, a town belonging to the Polish crown, the capital of the Galicia and Lodomera province of the Habsburg Empire and a modern centre during the interwar Second Polish Republic. After the Nazi occupation and the chaotic war times, it was a strategic city of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and finally, it became the bastion of nationalism in independent Ukraine[19].

Due to its favourable geographical position, between the Baltic and the Black Sea, Lviv was a relevant trading centre: this gave to the city its characteristic feature of a multi-ethnic space where Ruthenians, Poles, Germans, Armenians, Hungarians, Tatars, and Jews lived together. The Second world

[14] U. Blacker, *Memory, the City and the Legacy of WW II in East Central Europe. The Ghosts of Others*, Abingdon-New York 2019, pp. 25-62.

[15] To evade confusion, the historical narratives considered in this analysis are the Ukrainian L'viv, the Polish Lwów, the Jewish Lemberg and the Soviet L'vov. The object of this study consists of the material elements of the urban environment. Literature texts, although being relevant, fall outside the scope of my research.

[16] U. Blacker, *Memory*, op. cit., p. 11; M. Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, "Poetics Today", 2008 (29), 1, pp. 103-128.

[17] The literature regarding urban walking as a research method has been presented in T. Shortell, *Introduction: Walking as Urban Practice and Research Method*, in E. Brown – T. Shortell (ed. by), *Walking in Cities: Quotidian Mobility as Urban Theory, Method, and Practice*, Philadelphia 2016, pp. 1-16.

[18] Danylo Romanovyč Halyc'kyj was the ruler of the principalities of Galicia and Volhynia from 1221 to 1264.

[19] Y. Hrycak, *Lviv: A Multicultural History Through the Centuries*, "Harvard Ukrainian Studies", 2000, 24, pp. 47-73.

war represented a watershed in the urban identity from two perspectives: the demographic and the geopolitical. Regarding the former, Lviv lost around 80% of its former population and was repopulated by Ukrainian and Russian inhabitants coming mainly from rural areas and other regions of Ukraine. Another significant moment was the exchange of populations between Poland and Ukraine SSR (1944-1947)[20]. Likewise, the demographic composition lost its traditional multicultural features. Jaroslav Hrycak, one of the most preeminent Ukrainian historians, highlights that at the time 'identity' was reformulated through a new geo-cultural canon: from a peripherical centre of Central Europe towards a peripherical centre of Eastern Europe[21]. According to Hrycak, who analysed Lviv from a multicultural perspective, the national lens is not adequate to tell the history of the city:

> Historians of assorted nationalities have written distinct historical accounts of the city according to their respective national perspectives. Thus, we have Ukrainian, Polish, Soviet and Jewish versions of Lviv's past [...] No matter how detailed and well written, each of these versions of urban history selects or highlights those facts and events that best conform to a national paradigm[22].

In the urban history of Lviv, the national lens, which necessitates a substantial 'Other' to be opposed to the 'Self' appears particularly unconvincing since the Other is deeply embodied in everyday interaction with buildings and people. The material elements of the landscape open a fracture in this narration where the Other has lived and left traces on the space.

During the three-month research that I have conducted in Lviv[23], I was able to find material examples of each political entity and community that live the city: ranging from the architecture of buildings, religious heritage, monuments and memorials to the topography of the city and miscellaneous objects that can be found around the streets, such as flags, and means of transportation. In this article, I give specific attention to 'ghost signs', defined as the remains of painted advertising signage on walls. Here, I use this term to include any inscription or artifact that left a trace on the facades and the interiors of buildings. I consider these elements particularly intriguing because they are the material embodiment of both nostalgic and forward-thinking longing, so that they may have an intense impact on the imaginative component of identification processes. The remains of old signs represent "survival and loss simultaneously"[24], it is both a "tenacious and precarious"[25] feature, in which diverse temporal layers overlap. The fading ads visible in Lviv are mainly Polish-written signs, but there can also be found German and Yiddish ones; they dated back mainly to the times in which the city was part of the Habsburg Empire and immediately afterward, during the interwar Second Polish Republic [Fig. 1 and 2].

Fig. 1 – Polish and Yiddish signs on a former Milkhouse in Tyktora Street.

Ghost signs of this kind can be also found inside buildings. There are remains of Polish inscriptions on floors, walls but there are also traces on windows

[20] T. C. Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv*, Ithaca [NY] 2015.
[21] J. Hrycak, *Lviv*, op. cit.
[22] Ivi, p. 48.
[23] The research has been conducted in collaboration with the Ivan Franko National University and the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe from October 2019 to December 2019 in Lviv, as part of my master's degree in International Cooperation on Human Rights and Intercultural Heritage of the University of Bologna. The thesis resulted from this fieldwork is titled: *"The past is a foreign country". Memory politics in post-Soviet Ukraine. The Case of the borderland city of Lviv*.
[24] S. Schutt – S. Roberts – L. White (ed. by), *Advertising and Public Memory: Social, Cultural and Historical Perspectives on Ghost Signs*, New York 2017, p. 3.
[25] Ibidem.

which are particularly captivating because, as Kovalska noted, "Glass is the most fragile of all remnants of the past"[26] [Fig. 3].

Nowadays, it is given specific attention to the restoration and preservation of the Jewish, Polish and Habsburg heritages, which, once discovered under the plaster, are not destroyed but maintained. However, those are not the only foreign pasts that left visible traces on edifices. The administrative building located on Čornovil prospect is an interesting case in point [Fig. 4].

This panel was created by the artist Evgen Beznisko in the 1970s and it is devoted to the "friendship between Ukraine and Russia". The composition has two empty spots, a sign that paradoxically renders evident absence. Soviet symbols of the panel were in fact disguised in 2015-16 under the Law "On the condemnation of the communist and national socialist (Nazi) regimes, and prohibition of propaganda of their symbols"[27]. This panel is another outstanding example of how the past that can be considered 'foreign' is still fiercely materially present. In other cases, this past has been hidden [Fig. 5]: for instance, on the wall of another building in the same street there was once a mosaic with the highlander playing on a *trembita*[28], a woman in national dress, who meets bread-salt and male-worker; below there was the inscription: "Glory to the builders of communism!". In 2017 the mosaic was entirely closed by the neighbouring new building[29]. In contrast to the Polish, Jewish and Habsburg heritage, it emerges an attempt to forget this Soviet past, using the destruction of its symbols, as in the case of the first mosaic panel, and through negligence, as in the second example.

All these things considered, I argue that Lviv is an outstanding example of palimpsest, a concept that has been put forward in cultural geography by Michel De Certeau[30]. The term palimpsest originally refers to a parchment on which it has been written more than once with some of the previous signs still visible. Then, it began to denote a location with different layers beneath the surface and postcolonial studies began to employ the concept to refer to earlier features of cultural persistence:

> Any cultural experience is itself an accretion of many layers, and the term is valuable because it illustrates the ways in which pre-colonial culture as well as the experience of colonization are continuing aspects of a postcolonial society' s developing cultural identity. While the 'layering' effect of history has been mediated by each successive period, 'erasing' what has gone before, all present experience contains ineradicable traces of the past which remain part of the constitution of the present[31].

Fig. 2 – Polish-written advertisement in Rynok Square.

Here, the term palimpsest is more than a metaphorical concept: the foreign past of the city emerges directly under the plaster of buildings' walls. Ghost signs represent the "Others-from-the Past"[32] that have lived the city, such as Polish and Jewish communities and the Self-from-the-Past, or the Other-from-the-Soviet-Past, namely the Soviet citizen that had to re-conceptualize its self-belonging after the USSR's collapse. Several questions may

[26] A. Kovalska, *Prewar Glass Inscription in Lviv*, December 2020, <https://forgottengalicia.com/prewar-glass-signage-lviv/> (latest access: 09.07.2021).

[27] "Soviet mosaics in Ukraine", <https://sovietmosaicsinukraine.org/en/mosaic/330> (latest access: 09.07.2021).

[28] The *trembita* is a musical wind instrument made of wood commonly used by mountain dwellers in the Carpathians, such as Hutsuls and Gorals.

[29] "Soviet mosaics in Ukraine", <https://sovietmosaicsinukraine.org/en/mosaic/599> (latest access: 09.07.2021).

[30] M. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984, pp. 109.

[31] B. Ashcroft – G. Griffiths – H. Tiffin (ed. by), *Postcolonial Studies*, op. cit., p. 158.

[32] N. Otrishchenko, *Memory about the Others in Postwar Pidzamche: Between Anonymity and Emotional Ties*, published on the website of the project "Memory Treatment and Urban Planning in L'viv, Chisinau and Wroclaw", <https://memoryofvanishedurbanpopulations.files.wordpress.com/2014/03/pidzamche_otrishchenko_ed.pdf>, p. 7 (latest access: 23.11.2021).

be posed regarding these markers: What has been destroyed or simply forgotten? What instead has been rediscovered and restored, by whom and why? To be clear, everyday contingencies should not be underestimated. The excessive emphasis on what a material object may symbolize could be misleading: sometimes, no grand ideological intent is at stake. However, this consideration may give even more significance to the investigation of memory sites, because they are not only ideological markers, rather: "Windows into a range of phenomena connected with the experience of modern urban living"[33].

Memory Politics of Multiculturalism: dealing with the Other

As already mentioned in the previous section, the urban palimpsest of Lviv highlights several layers that interplay with as many narratives that characterize the history of the city. For example, there are the proudly showcased Jewish Lemberg and the Polish Lwów or the disregarded Soviet L'vov[34]. Undoubtedly, walking through the streets we can grasp the idea of being in a place with a richer past than the one framed by the nationalistic canon of Ukraine[35]. However, how local authorities and citizens handle this poly-ethnic past, that is which elements of this cultural diversity are included or excluded from the master narrative, remains a contextual political choice open to changes.

For many, multicultural is an accurate and welcome description of Lviv and a guiding framework for how Ukraine should be described nowadays[36]. However, what political aim may be hidden behind the labelling of the city as multicultural? I propose to investigate how those narratives have been employed as a tool, namely how the multicultural discourse entered the agenda of the so-called 'memory politics' in post-Soviet Lviv. Memory politics can be defined as the set of institutional decisions taken by memorians[37] to forge collective identities by selecting what it is to be remembered and what it is to be forgotten, to cope with a challenging past and to construct (or re-construct) a collective memory of a community. The aim of these practices has been twofold: To legitimate state power and to construct a sense of belonging to the community in which they are adopted. In the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, Lviv has been 're-imagined' firstly as a national city in the context of the Ukrainian state- and nation-building. These issues have been well-documented by numerous scholars who have already investigated memory politics in post-Soviet Lviv. The academic community has extensively explored the creation of national symbols, which were used to present the city as the Ukrainian Piedmont and the least Sovietized city of Ukraine[38]. Historians have investigated the relationship between the Soviet and the Ukrainian mythmaking of the Second World War, noticing how Soviet symbols have been dismantled or re-signified in the local arena, sometimes with paradoxical outcomes[39]. In addition, the immediate impulse to break with the Soviet past erased all Soviet traces from the public spaces of the city, but in the quest for finding a new national identity, all other traces of the multicultural history of Lviv were alien, not fitting, and therefore neglected in forging the public spaces of Lviv as genuinely national. Therefore, the Ukrainization of Lviv provoked a strong reaction in the communities who considered the city a symbol for 'their' national project, as in the case of Poles, who main-

[33] S. Schutt – S. Roberts – L. White (ed. by), *Advertising*, op. cit., p. 2.

[34] B. Cherkes – S. Linda, *Rebirth of Multicultural Identity in Public Spaces of Lviv*, "IOP Conf. Series: Materials Science and Engineering", 2019, 471, p. 2.

[35] The website of the city's official tourism site for example insists on the fact that Lviv is "the capital of Ukrainian culture, spirituality and national identity". See <https://lviv.travel/en/lviv-history> (latest access: 22.09.2021).

[36] As it has been showcased during the European Heritage Day in 2018. See <https://www.europeanheritagedays.com/EHD-Programme/Press-Corner/News/European-Cultural-Connections-Foregrounded-in-Lviv> (latest access: 22.09.2021).

[37] Memorians are defined as "Diffuse epistemic communities making intellectual interventions in the public debate on the past", in E. Narvselius, *Tragic Past, Agreeable Heritage: Post-Soviet Intellectual Discussions on the Polish Legacy in Western Ukraine*, "The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and Eastern European Studies", 2015, 2403, p. 38.

[38] Idem, *The Nation's Brightest and Noblest: Narrative Identity and Empowering Accounts of The Ukrainian Intelligentsia in Post-1991 L'viv*, PhD dissertation, Linköping 2009.

[39] T. C. Amar, *Different but the Same or the Same but Different? Public Memory of the Second World War in Post-Soviet Lviv*, "Journal of Modern European History", 2011 (9), 3, pp. 373-96.

tained cultural and political supremacy in Lviv for almost six centuries. It has been noticed that the Ukrainian national canon provoked contrasting narratives between ethnic communities. Consequently, several authors have thoroughly investigated the so-called 'memory wars' concerning sensitive and conflicting topics[40]. In outline, previous studies have concluded that the Orange Revolution of 2004 and then the Euromaidan of 2014, the Crimea crisis and the escalation of the war in the eastern borderland have caused two contrasting processes: an exacerbation of nationalism and an increasing discourse of Ukrainian Europeanness. In this context, it was framed as a sometimes incoherent political will of building a Ukrainian identity that could be summarized under the motto "Ukraine is not Russia but Europe". Accordingly, the urban landscape, imbued with an imperial atmosphere that reminds "the good old times of Grandma Austria", somehow conflicts with the majestic monumentalization of controversial symbols, such as the statue honouring Stepan Bandera[41]. Therefore, it may be argued that the selective representation of the national or the multicultural heritage of the city results in what Lviv looks like today: a Ukrainian, Western-oriented city, "open to the World"[42].

However, little research has been conducted so far to deconstruct this multicultural discourse, which oftentimes has been oversimplified as the right way to do memory politics to place Ukraine towards its predetermined European path. This perspective, in which multiculturalism seems equated to Europeanness, has failed to grasp both risks and potentials of the cross-cultural dialogue that occurred in this very peculiar context and led to the regaining of an intercultural public space.

Firstly, it should be noted that when talking about multiculturalism in Lviv, we are focusing on the relationship between specific ethnic groups, namely Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, Russians, and to a lesser extent Armenians, and that the multicultural discourse is not aimed at managing cultural diversity of current citizens. Rather, it is oriented towards coming to terms with a complex and controversial past.

Fig. 3 – Street name. Photography: Courtesy of Areta Kovalska.

So that, soon after independence, the objective of multicultural policies served the question of nation-building. The display of the poly-ethnic past of the city, had the intent of normalizing the post-Soviet transition and placing the territory within the frame of the European discourse: "Envisioning a multicultural heritage, in line with contemporary (primarily Western) models, became a part of post-Soviet normalization"[43]. At a national level, the government tried to re-write the history of the Ukrainian territory rooting it in an ancient past, aiming at making citizens feel the new communitarian bond along the lines of a pre-Soviet discourse.

Accordingly, since the memory politics aimed at forging a heroic pre-Soviet and Ukrainian past,

[40] Soviet monuments and memorials became the subject of selective destruction and preservation. Those which were maintained have been re-signified as 'Ukrainian' and not 'Soviet' symbols, i.e. Soviet cemeteries and memorial of WW II. Moreover, new statues were erected following a Soviet aesthetics, as in the case of the monument to Stepan Bandera. See V. Sereda, *Politics of Memory and Urban Landscape: The Case of Lviv after World War II*, "Time, Memory, and Cultural Change", IWM Junior Visiting Fellows' Conference Proceedings, XXV, 2009, <https://www.iwm.at/transit-online/politics-of-memory-and-urban-landscape> (latest access: 23.11.2021).

[41] Stepan Bandera, the Ukrainian nationalist leader, is one of the most symbolic figures in the construction of the Ukrainian identity in the Western region and, at the same time, the most controversial and divisive, due to the charge of his involvement in crimes committed against Poles and Jews.

[42] "Lviv open to the world" is the official city slogan. See <https://lviv.travel/en> (latest access: 22.11.2021).

[43] E. Narvselius – N. Bernsand, *Lviv and Chernivtsi: Two Memory Cultures at the Western Ukrainian Borderland*, "East/West: Journal of Ukrainian Studies", 2014, 1, p. 63.

within this "myth of the origin" the statue to the medieval king and founder of Lviv, Danylo Halyc'kyj has been erected on 29th October 2001. However, at a more attentive analysis, this project was not entirely born in independent Ukraine. In fact, for Soviet propaganda, this historical figure personified the unity of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, and the idea to establish a monument in his honour has already appeared in 1947. The plan was not implemented until 1999, when Lviv city authorities, the Union of Architects, and the Union of Artists of Ukraine announced a contest for the project of the monument[44]. The pedestal of the equestrian statue is decorated with the coat of arm of Ukraine, the famous trident (*tryzub*)[45], in the centre and a royal crown on top. These elements symbolize the link between this figure and the national history of Ukraine. Far from being set in stone, this example shows that a single monument may become the symbol for two distinct narratives, the Soviet L'vov and the Ukrainian L'viv, depending on how it is (re-)presented.

However, multicultural policies in those times were not only about nation-building. The touristic and economic incentive has given another reason to them. In fact, the poly-ethnic past of Lviv has been employed not only to memorialize the national history of Ukraine, but it has also been utilized as a touristic and commercial strategy by local agents[46]. Concerning the popular culture, the content of those policies has focused by and large on the Habsburg past of the city. In this case the intent was to replace it from the Eastern to the Central European narration. In every corner there are coffee houses, souvenir shops and thematic restaurants that remind of this glorious epoch.

Initiatives linked to the Jewish and Polish past were instead far more controversial and divisive than those related to the Habsburg times, and they came after a long process of conflict and negotiation. This heritage, in fact is related to controversial tragedies that frequently jeopardize the glorification and victimization canon upon which Ukrainian identity has been first imagined[47]. One example is the regeneration of a historical memory concerned Polish Lwów: the 'Cemetery of the Defenders of Lwów', known as the Eaglets Cemetery, one of the military sections[48] within the Lyčakiv cemetery. The rebuilding of the cemetery, which had been neglected and partially destroyed during Soviet times, represented one of the most controversial issues that divided Poland and Ukraine in the 1990s. In fact, for the Ukrainian nationalists, the cemetery recalled the period of 'Polish occupation', while for Poles the cemetery was a symbol of recognition of their own experience in the city. After several years of public discussion and confrontation, finally, in 2005 the local authorities of Lviv agreed on restoring and opening the cemetery. It was not by chance that it happened after the Orange Revolution in 2004: in fact, the Polish support for Viktor Juščenko was crucial in order to end the memory war about the Polish-Ukrainian battle over Lviv in 1918-1919. On 24th June 2005, both presidents, Aleksander Kwaśniewski and Viktor Juščenko, attended the opening ceremony[49]. This case is an example of how the international environment influences the political use of the memory of historical events. It is also the message featured on the plaque at the entrance of the cemetery that is emblematic, stating: "We have to remember the past, but we have to

[44] I. Melnyk - R. Masyk, *Pam'iatnyky ta memorial'ni tablytsi mista L'vova*, L'viv 2012, pp. 67-68.

[45] The emblem of the trident dates back to Kyivan Rus' as the coat of arms of the Riurykide dynasty. Then, it was adopted by the Central Rada as the coat of arms of the Ukrainian National Republic in 1918. There are various interpretations of the trident, ranging from a falcon to the Christian holy trinity. Whatever interpretations, the trident represent the Ukrainian nation and for this reason there is widespread usage of it.

[46] N. Godis – J. Nilsson, *Memory Tourism in a Contested Landscape: Exploring Identity Discourses in Lviv, Ukraine*, "Current Issues in Tourism", 2018 (21), 15, pp. 1690-1709.

[47] U. Blacker, *Martyrdom, Spectacle, and Public Space: Ukraine's National Martyrology from Shevchenko to the Maidan*, "Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society", 2015 (1), 2, pp. 257-295.

[48] The military sections of the Lyčakiv cemetery include graves of UPA fighters (1940-1950), graves of Ukrainian's People Republic (1917-1920) and Ukrainian Galician Army (1918-1920) soldiers, a memorial to an unknown soldier of SS Galician Division (1943-1945), the Eaglets Cemetery, the remains of Polish insurgents during the January uprising (1863-1964) and the Field of Mars, in memory of Red Army soldiers who lost their lives during the WW II.

[49] M. Arsenicz, *The Battle of Lviv in November 1918 as "the Memory Place" for the Polish and the Ukrainian People*, "Múltunk Journal of Political History", Special Issue: *Memory and Memorialization of WW1 in Eastern and Southeastern Europe*, 2016, pp. 147-153.

look to the future"[50]. This signs a paradigm shift in Polish-Ukrainian relations, which have a common enemy, the Russian Federation, and objective, the European Union.

All factors considered, multicultural discourse seems to work on two levels. On the one hand, it plays an active part in leisure activities, especially holidaying. For this reason, it comes with no surprise that the local authorities included the city's 'foreign past' for commercial purposes: i.e., to increase the touristic appeal of the city. In addition, a significant proportion of tourism in Lviv is composed of "genealogical tourists", defined as those "who travel to the place of their pedigree to reiterate one's own roots and identity, researching personal lineage"[51]. The city thus adapts its image also following the demand of those who are looking for their Polish or Jewish Lvivian roots. We should bear in mind this relevant aspect: often, the reconciliation of different perspectives in local authorities' initiatives is not aimed at coming to terms with a complicated past, but rather it may be oriented toward profiting from nostalgic tourism. On the other hand, and deepening the analysis even further, this local policy reflects other, more complex, geopolitical levels, such as, from a local perspective, the role of Lviv within Ukraine, and, from a national standpoint, the international relations of Ukraine with Poland, European Union and Russian Federation. Concerning the domestic level, the Polish legacy on the territory was indisputable, and in order to inscribe this diverse local and transnational space into a coherent national narrative, this region was framed as the cradle of Ukrainian nationalism, though endowed with a distinctive *bahatokulturna spadščyna* [multicultural heritage]. The inclusion of the Other-from-the-Past, namely Poles and Jews, was instrumental in responding to the narratives of those who have lived in the city before the Second world war and who carry narratives different from the ones of current citizens.

The reconsideration of the multi-layered past of Lviv seems to be still going on and continues to influence the appearance of the city. For instance, the mission of the 2025 development strategy affirms that Lviv has preserved "the European heritage for over 750 years"[52]. The recovery of ghost signs can be inscribed in this policy objective. They are not only prosaic remains of old painted ads; the more Polish and Jewish heritage is included, the more discovering those pasts on buildings facades and interiors is considered an enrichment of the building itself. This process can explain the restoration of ghost signs and it may answer why this heritage is preserved and proudly showcased. Conversely, ghost signs linked to the Soviet heritage are considered as an unwelcomed element of the urban landscape and, for this reason, they are usually forgotten or dismantled. So that, the Soviet discourse seems eradicated from the framework of the identity construction analysis, which is oriented towards the Western concepts of multiculturalism. However, I would like to problematize this issue from two perspectives. Firstly, as noted by Narvselius, *bahatokulturnict* is not conceptually equivalent to the English word 'multiculturalism': "In some respects, the rhetoric of multicultural heritage in Ukraine continues the well-known Soviet ideological discourses of internationalism and friendship of the peoples"[53]. Accordingly, the scholar demonstrates that vocabulary change is not enough to eradicate discourses that have shaped cultural and intellectual frameworks. From the Western liberal-democratic perspective, multiculturalism is a political and ideological concept born as a counter-discourse in respect to the French model of assimilation; the friendship of the peoples, instead, suggests more a descriptive term which refers to the "fact"[54] of the existence of a territory of poly-ethnicity and a *smychka* [alliance] among these peoples against an enemy; in a nutshell, multiculturalism suggests more a transformative normative ideal, while the friendship of the peoples is rather an essentialistic project. A remark of Stalin himself has elaborated the latter: "And the friend-

[50] Ivi, p. 151.
[51] N. Godis – J. Nilsson, *Memory*, op. cit., p. 4.
[52] *Lviv Complex Development Strategy 2025*, <https://studylib.net/doc/18313557/lviv-complex-development-strategy-by-2025>, p. 5 (latest access: 23.11.2021).
[53] E. Narvselius, *Tragic Past*, op. cit., p. 6.
[54] Ibidem.

ship between the peoples of the USSR is a great and serious victory. For while this friendship exists, the peoples of our country will be free and unconquerable. While this friendship lives and blossoms, we are afraid of none, neither internal nor external enemies"[55].

Fig. 4 – Evgen Beznisko, Čornovil Prospect, Lviv 1970s.

In my opinion, the Polish-Ukrainian relations may have been shaped, at least initially, by the influence of this framework of 'alliance' against the Russian Federation. Secondly, the concept of multiculturalism should be critically addressed. If multiculturalism as an ideology and policy has captured the imaginary about the city, it is partly because citizens in Lviv could relate to it. However, these narratives are not per se inclusive. The risk is that the acceptance of the Others is based on political opportunism rather than a participatory social practice of mutual understanding. Initiatives organized by the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe (CUHECE) are an outstanding example of how to enhance the cultural diversity of the cityscape. This institution is one of the most dynamic research centres of Lviv, constantly working on the revival of the polyethnic past of the city, through the organization of numerous lectures, seminars, workshops, summer schools, educational programs and exhibitions. Their actions are based on the perspective that the city results from a shared heritage of Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish, Soviet and European discourses. Nevertheless, the display of a multicultural past can paradoxically underwrite and support nationalistic narratives at odds with its intended values. This circumstance happens when culture is understood in an essentialized manner, that is when multiculturalism underpins the idea of a coexistence of different and mutually exclusive 'cultures'. In this vein, multiculturalism is not intended to include the Others. Rather, the motivation behind this 'alliance' is given by immediate political strategies aimed at fighting a common enemy. This duplicity is well represented in this case-study when Europeanness is employed as a divisive tool to exacerbate a generalized anti-Russian sentiment in the light of the conflict in the eastern borderlands of Ukraine.

Finally, another interesting element that may deserve further investigation concerns the roots of the multicultural discourse in Lviv before independence. Throughout the centuries, each ruling political entity had to deal with the challenge of linguistic diversity and pluriculturality in the city. The policies promoted by the Habsburg Empire are of specific relevance; they were oriented towards a balanced co-existence of all the ethnic groups subjected to the Empire. In imperial Lemberg, each ethnic group established its own cultural and educational facilities, which eventually became symbols of place-based identity. It was due to the imperial pragmatic 'Enlighten policies' that in this period the Ukrainian nationalist movement could emerge, backed by the Hapsburg Empire, against the upheaval of Polish nationalism, which has been considered more of a threat to Vienna.

Then, during the Soviet times, the nationality question has remained pivotal in the domestic affairs of each republic. Even though the Soviet regime suppressed political nationalism, it established and consolidated 'nationhood' and nationality as fundamental cognitive and social forms through nativism and folklore. National cultures were accepted to manage the enormous territory and mobilize the masses; however, they were thought to be a transitional phenomenon towards the achievement of a common culture that would express the values of the Party. Due to these concessions to nationalism, Moscow, as it similarly happened under the Habsburg rule,

[55] *Rech' tov. Stalina*, "Pravda", 06.12.1935, p. 3.

has systemically promoted the national consciousness of some ethnic groups to the detriment of others. The USSR thus with its pervasive institutionalization of nationality, has transmitted to the successor states a deeply structured ethnocultural understanding of nationhood, "a ready-made template for claims to sovereignty"[56], that once again favoured certain ethnic groups in respect to others. Both Vienna and Moscow managed cultural diversity in the territory to make coexist different 'groups', treated as homogeneous and isolated monads. In this context, the concept of multiculturalism has been combined since the beginning with the ethnonational discourse. It is safe to suppose that multiculturalism, as a Western-oriented policy and an ideology, may have entered the Ukrainian agenda from abroad. Interestingly enough, the Ukrainian diaspora has been the leading ethnic group in building the policy of multiculturalism in Canada already in the 1970s. It may be fruitful to analyse if and how those narratives did enter the Ukrainian state and how they have been negotiated in the framework of the Soviet friendship of the peoples[57]. These considerations fall beyond the scope of this article, however, they denote the complexity of the multicultural discourse, born in a specific context of state- and nation-building, for precise objectives and with definite models. The narrative has been gone through an ever-lasting negotiation process, recalibrating from time to time according to political contingencies.

The following section will elaborate on a final issue, that is the multi-layered identification processes fostered by the urban environment, in which identification and othering processes take different paths. On the one hand, they may foster narratives of inclusion of the Other-from-the-past. On the other hand, they could reinforce narratives of exclusion, what we may call in Rosenfeld's words "illiberal memory"[58].

The hype of hybridity: crafting a local identity in a multicultural landscape

The urban palimpsest manifests different pasts, which cannot be integrated into one grand narrative but at the same time cannot be judged with the categories of true and false: alternative pasts may also be the basis for alternative presents. Following postcolonial theories, I propose defining those multi-layered processes of self-belonging, applying the concept of cultural hybridity. This term could enable us to overcome the binary opposition between the Self and the Others, since we can no longer construct our identity following this distinction when the Other could be perceived among 'us', and even more drastically, 'we' could have been the Other. It is no surprise that Jan Nederveen Pieterse defines cultural hybridity according to these lines: "Hybridity is to culture what deconstruction is to discourse: transcending binary categories"[59]. Cultural hybridity has been conceptualized for the first time in the study of colonialism to investigate the asymmetric interdependences between the colonizers and the colonized. One of the most influential scholars associated with this analysis is Homi Bhabha. The author claimed that the encounter between the main narrative of the colonizers and its imposition on the colonized eventually creates new hybrid patterns of belonging. Bhabha argues that this process happens in-between, in a liminal space which he called the third space of enunciation[60].

Cultural hybridity emerges in moments of historical transformation as a counter-discourse to the essentialist national narratives of belonging: "The very idea of a pure, ethnically cleansed national identity can only be achieved through the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweaving of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood"[61]. Jonathan Friedman criticized the postcolonial theory of hybridity reducing it to another type of ideology that serves the "postmodern

[56] R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, Cambridge 2010, p. 24.

[57] This issue is currently under investigation in my research for the PhD in History at the University of Pavia, provisionally titled *In a Fight Against the Common Foe. Memory Politics of WW II: Narratives from the Ukrainian Diaspora in Canada*.

[58] G. D. Rosenfeld, *The Rise of Illiberal Memory*, "Memory Studies", 2021, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1750698020988771> (latest access: 23.11.2021).

[59] J. N. Pieterse, *Hybridity, So What?* , "Theory, Culture & Society", 2001 (18), 2-3, p. 238.

[60] H. K. Bhabha, *Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences*, in B. Ashcroft – G. Griffiths – H. Tiffin (ed. by), *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, New York 1995, p. 209.

[61] H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London 2004, p. 438.

cosmopolitanism elite"[62]. From the anthropologist's perspective, a hybrid identity can be an essentialized identity like a national one. The critique is valuable because it gives an insight into the risks of drawing hasty conclusions. It is arguable that a Ukrainian identity that is given once for all, is not very different from a given hybrid identity. However, this is not what postcolonial theory is about. Cultural hybridity is not the attribute of identity. Conversely, it is the process through which identification processes are constantly (re-)negotiated, continuously changing their self-definition and content.

Fig. 5 – Building in Čornovil prospect 39, Lviv 2017. Source: courtesy of Olga Martynchuk.

Drawing now attention to our case study, it can be argued that in Lviv the urban environment of the city, with its polycultural historical traces, offers the stage to accept the existence of different narrations that contradict the master national discourse. Secondly, once the fracture within the national discourse has been opened, the Other who emerged from this rift can be excluded from or included in the narrative. Interestingly, in Lviv memory politics from above has been incoherent in this respect, fostering on the one hand a conflict with the Other, which has emerged both in the Ukrainian-Polish memory wars and in dealing with the Soviet heritage, and on the other hand a process of inclusion in which the multicultural heritage has been valued, or not, according to specific domestic and international interests.

Today, the Ukrainian – and European – Lviv is simultaneously the Jewish Lemberg and the Polish Lwów. Arguably, this tension impacts the local community, which is constantly renegotiating its self-belonging towards the hybrid processes of division and encounter with the Other in their identity-making. The consequences of these multicultural policies have been internalized in a way beyond actual necessities, with the opportunity to trigger a self-reflexive definition of identity able to integrate diversity into a collective narrative of self-belonging. A thought-inspiring example of this process is the development strategy aimed at "Heritage preservation and activation of the local community in the renovation of Pidzamche district", elaborated by the Lviv City Institute, in cooperation with the Institute of Urban Development in Krakow in 2011. Since the community was actively involved in the project, it would be interesting to note whether the multicultural history of the district has been considered by residents. The most relevant findings concern the proposal fostered by locals to enhance the "uniqueness of the area", which is considered "critical in maintaining the spirit of the place"[63]. In the framework of the project "Searching for Home in Postwar Lviv: The Experience of Pidzamche, 1944-1960", organized by the Urban Centre of East Central Europe, the sociologist Natalia Otrishchenko analysed

[62] J. Friedman, *Global Crisis, the Struggle for Cultural Identity and Intellectual Porkbarelling: Cosmopolitans versus Locals, Ethnics and Nationals in an Era of De-hegemonisation*, in P. Werbner – T. Modood (ed. by), *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, London, 1997, p. 75.

[63] N. Mysak, *Identity Formation of Non-Central Districts of Lviv: the Role of Local Community in Designing of Open Public Spaces*, in K. Janas – M. Trojnar (ed. by), *Community-Led Urban Regeneration – Polish Ukrainian Experience and Inspiration*, Kraków-Lwów 2014, p. 70.

the complex processes of identification and differentiation from the imaginary 'Other'. Overall, the respondents have showed the tendency of idealizing interethnic relations[64]. Even if in post-war times newcomers grounded their relations with the place in a total separation from pre-war residents, the majority of the inhabitants, still living with ghosts of the past, tried to preserve the unique atmosphere of the neighbourhood, creating an emotional bond to the place through a mythmaking process about this peculiar situation. Another interesting element described in Otrishchenko's research is that sometimes information about Others-from-the-past is not transferred through witnesses and stories, but thanks to the environment of the houses themselves. A woman could tell that her house was previously inhabited by a Jewish family because on the doorway there was a typical Jewish object: "How do I know that it was a Jewish apartment? Because the Jews have at the door something they kissed[65]. It was like those thermometers we have outdoors"[66].

In this case it is the material environment, like artifacts still present on houses' walls, that fosters an emotional tie with the multicultural past.

However, this hybridization and recognition of the Others has incoherent and contradictory outcomes. Multiculturalism may value cultural diversity, focusing on the multilingual, pragmatic and sometimes national indifference of everyday life, but they, with their ethnonational understanding of culture, may also foster radical nationalistic narratives. An example that may be instrumental in deepening these considerations has been given by Yurko Nazurak. The entrepreneur, one of the founders of !FEST[67], has defended the decision of opening a Jewish theme restaurant stating:

> Some Jews say, "It's not Kosher restaurant, you have no right to speak about our history, about our culture". And I say to them, "Yes, I have no right to discuss your history or culture, but still, I am making a restaurant about my city. And it's not only your history. It's the history of my city"[68].

It is interesting to note the expression "it's not only your history, it's the history of my city". It raises the fundamental question about who owns the past of the city, discerning among the communities who experienced those events and the people who currently live in the city and identify themselves through this ethnocultural prism. A question may be posed: in this case, is it an inclusion or an appropriation of the Others' past? Accordingly, this example encloses both the peril and promise of the multicultural discourse in Lviv nowadays. From the one hand, there is the inclusion of the Jewish experience in the local history of the city. This element is valuable since Jews were utterly excluded from the memorialization of the urban landscape until the last decade. On the other hand, however, the Others seem 'frozen' in a past that they do not own anymore. What is missing here is the dialogue between the Self and the Others because both sides talked about one's own history and one's own city along exclusive and ethnocentric lines: the former talks of 'my city', the latter of 'my history'. In this instance, the Us embodies only Jews or only Ukrainians, it is not an 'Us' made up by both groups. According to this perspective, we again witness an ethnonational understanding of multiculturalism that could reinforce an illiberal memory based on nationalistic narratives of each ethnic community[69].

From memory roots to memory routes: post-Soviet mnemonic journeys

> Memories do not hold still – on the contrary, they seem to be constituted first of all through movement. What we are dealing with, therefore, is not so much (and perhaps not even metaphori-

[64] N. Otrishchenko, *Between Anonymity and Attachment: Remembering Others in Lviv's Pidzamche District*, "Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society", 2019 (5), 2, pp. 87-120.

[65] She refers to the *mezuzah*, namely a small scroll of parchment on which are written two biblical passages. According to tradition, the *mezuzah* is to be affixed at the entrance to the home as well as at the entrance to each of the interior rooms (R. L. Eisenberg – Publication Society Jewish, *Jewish Traditions: A JPS Guide*, Philadelphia 2000, pp. 580-582).

[66] N. Otrishchenko, *Between Anonymity*, op. cit.

[67] !FEST is a restaurant holding company in 2007. Nowadays it is expanding its business, creating several local art and educational projects. Now the company has 20 different concept restaurants with more than 80 locations, not only in Ukraine but also abroad (i.e. in Baku, Azerbaijan, and Krakow, Poland).

[68] Y. Nazurak, interview with D. Estrin, *The World*, 09.02.2012, <https://theworld.org/stories/2012-02-09/slideshow-ukraines-controversial-theme-restaurants> (latest access: 23.11.2021).

[69] G. D. Rosenfeld, *The Rise*, op. cit.

cally) sites of memory, lieux de memoire, but rather the travels of memory, les voyages de memoire[70].

One final question arises: does the exclusion of the Soviet past mean that the (post-) Soviet should be completely abandoned from the framework of the analysis of identity-making in contemporary Lviv? With the words mentioned above, Astrid Erll has effectively argued to consider collective memories not as fixed and bounded constructs, but as an evolving and adaptable feature of our experience and social life. Memories, the narratives they build, and the multi-layered identities constructed upon them are not immutable. It is for this reason that shifting the focus from roots to routes is instrumental in understanding how we derive specific patterns of thought that shape the way we see things in the present and how we envisage the future[71]. In this vest, I would contend that Lviv's memory culture may be regarded as post-Soviet. The 'post-' signifies that the national discourse and the politicization of the poly-cultural heritage happened not only immediately after but also because of and in reaction to the nationality policies of the USSR, which the territory of Ukraine was part of. An analysis of the collective memory of Lviv deprived of the Soviet times is incomplete and misleading since the memory culture has been built upon this history both from above, through the impact of the Soviet memory politics, and from below, in everyday life of ordinary citizens that have creatively had to negotiate this memory. This is not to say that the Soviet past is the only past that matters, the journey has started long before. Notwithstanding, it is essential to move beyond simplistic readings that reduce the Soviet to the category of an external enemy. In this regard, the words of the Almaty artist Ruf' Dzhenrbekova are quite evocative: "It is difficult to consider the Soviet power as somehow external. The native residents of the republics built not only 'communism,' but also their own identity as 'the builders of communism' and invested their own creative, intellectual, and emotional resources in its construction"[72].

In the contemporary context of the war in the eastern borderlands, the risk is to exacerbate and radicalize the anti-Soviet discourse not as the legitimate opposition to a totalitarian regime but as a tool to describe the ongoing conflict and contemporary Russian Federation with the vocabulary of the past, a feature that provokes historiographic inaccuracies from both sides.

The challenge is presented outstandingly by Marianne Hirsh: "How can we carry the stories of Others forward without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them?"[73]. It may be effective in academic analysis to de-link the Soviet past from the contemporary political arena to investigate the full-fledged complexity of these mnemonic journeys. Moreover, exacerbating the multicultural discourse in view of some idea of Europeanness may turn out to be just a flash in the pan. The superficial acceptance of the Others based on idealized and, in part foreign, categories may hinder wider-ranging, and far more valuable, processes of interculturality: if the aim is a shared future, it should not be envisioned along new power asymmetries. If the Soviet L'vov seems utterly forgotten, traces that represent those muted narratives do emerge from beneath the surface in the urban environment. The question about how and for which political aims this past will be treated remains open. Notwithstanding, I argue that the definition of post-Soviet memory is valuable because it is meant not only to include Others, but also to confront one's own Self: those who did believe guided by noble intention and whose hopes have been betrayed, those who never surrender, always fighting against and those who has never ceased to be fascinated by the everyday beauty, as in the case of the protagonist of the short essay *Betrayal*, written by the Polish poet Adam Zagajewski. In his thought-provoking monologue, the main character contends with both innocence and guilt of having lived under, and been part of, a totalitarian

[70] A. Erll, *Travelling Memory*, "Parallax", 2011 (17), 4, p. 4.
[71] Ibidem.
[72] G. Napreenko, "Korenizatsiia. Prosveshchenie. Velikorusskii shovinizm" [Indigenization. Education. Great Russian Chauvinism] cited in D. E. Letnyakov, *Critical Commentary*, op. cit., p. 300.
[73] M. Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, "Poetics Today", 2008 (29), 1, p. 104.

regime, in a desperate attempt of coming to terms with his own Self-from-the-Past. As he claims, after all: "The moon was not Stalinist"[74].

www.esamizdat.it ◇ E. Lucente, *"The moon was not Stalinist". Post-Soviet Memory: Narratives from the Borderland City of Lviv* ◇ eSamizdat 2021 (XIV), pp. 137-152.

[74] A. Zagajewski, *Two Cities*, op. cit., p. 90.

♢ *"The moon was not Stalinist". Post-Soviet Memory: Narratives from the Borderland City of Lviv* ♢

Elisa Lucente

Abstract

This article examines the post-Soviet as a category of analysis in the study of historical memory and nation-building in the former Soviet Union. Post-soviet memory suggests a continuum in space and time that will be critically addressed through the lens of a local case study, the borderland city of Lviv. Two questions structure the analysis: how we shape our surroundings and how they shape us. Following postcolonial theories derived from urban and memory studies, Lviv is presented as a palimpsest made of temporal, spatial or even imaginary layers from which it could be possible to recount the multiple narrations at play in the historical memory of the city. Finally, the paper questions whether the category of cultural hybridity may be instrumental in conceptualizing the multilayered structure of identification processes in the post-Soviet space, moving beyond cultural and national essentialism.

Keywords

Lviv, Memory Politics, Post-Soviet Memory, Urban Palimpsest, Cultural Hybridity.

Author

Elisa Lucente is a first year PhD student in History at the University of Pavia. Currently, her research explores the elaboration and negotiation across generations of Second World War memories in the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada. This project has a multidisciplinary approach encompassing historiography, anthropology and memory theories from a cultural studies perspective. She holds a master's degree in International Cooperation on Human Rights and Intercultural Heritage from the University of Bologna, where she graduated with the thesis "*The Past is a Foreign Country*". *Memory Politics in Post-soviet Ukraine: the Case of the Borderland City of Lviv*. Her research interests revolve around the history of the twentieth century, with an emphasis on memory and identity politics as nation-building tools in the urban landscape.

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