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Borne out of the personal experiences and connections of its author, Omer Bartov, *Erased* is an attempt to “unearth a past of destruction” in a place where that past has been largely and purposefully obscured (201). While Germany, France, and Poland were slow to acknowledge a complex understanding of their respective populations’ pasts as perpetrators in Jewish genocide during World War II, Bartov argues that this discussion has not yet even commenced in the Ukraine. While, in all cases, the story had been obscured by struggles against Soviet communism, Bartov explains that this shifting of victimhood onto Ukrainian nationalists cannot be the sole reason for this inability to confront a complex past. *Erased* contains no definitive answers to the problem of buried Ukrainian memory—but it does suggest that the murder of Jews in the Ukraine was not a “bureaucratic undertaking,” but meaningful, “intimate violence” that now interferes with a neat narrative of Ukrainian resistance and homogenous Ruthenian culture (xvii).

The book is structured in three parts. The first and the last part are quite short, leaving the bulk of writing for the second part, “Travels in the Borderland.” The first section is a more typical historical account of the “borderland” that is the region of Galicia. This chapter provides an important basis for the reader in the political, ethnic, cultural and economic history of the region. In particular, Bartov’s narration in this chapter highlights the ethnic diversity of Galicia, in which were the mingled effects of Polish, German and Austrian culture, in an area that was at least open to Russian and Central Asian influence. The cultural influences of different denominations of Christianity and Judaism were also felt in the area. Bartov notes the rurality of the region, and the traces of quasi-Medieval Jewish “shtetlach . . . hidden from the reach of modern civilization (4-5)” before World War I. It was precisely the rural nature of the area that inspires contemporary nostalgia and romanticism over a “rustic idyll” or a lost part of a “long-vanished great empire (7).”

This nostalgia obscures the contested nature of the land in what is now the Western Ukraine. Bartov describes the area as constantly contested, conquered and reconquered between the Polish, Russians, Germans, and Ukrainians. The political and martial changes prove to be crucial to Bartov’s later arguments. Like the Germans, the Ukrainians have unhappy associations with the Soviets, who otherwise would be seen as liberators from the Nazis. However, to the ethnic Poles and Ukrainians, the devastation by the Soviets trumped offenses by the Nazis. Indeed, the Ukrainian nationalists found more in common with their German occupiers than the Soviets. Since the country has been independent, the OUN and UPA have been lionized, regardless of their collaboration with the Nazis in mass murder (see 96, 208). The contemporary population—a combination of descendents of relocated people uninterested in knowing whose houses they now occupied, and local people who were pleased to see the area *Judenrein*—is unwilling to disrupt this narrative of OUN and UPA heroicism. This atmosphere certainly will have silenced any individuals who questioned the dominant narrative, or who in fact had harbored Jews during the war.

From this silence, Bartov proceeds in an attempt to find the physical remains of Jewish culture in Galicia. The interior chapters of this second section are part travel-narrative, part historical extractions from the remaining material culture of the towns Bartov visits, and part critique of the historical narratives that *are* being told in various towns. One of Bartov’s intentions is to show, specifically by town, how mass murder and complicity with the Nazi regime would have been economically and socially beneficial to the non-Jewish residents of the town. He also demonstrates the contemporary efforts at reshaping the towns’ identities through erasure of memory. In L’viv,
for example, Bartov relates the relative decline of the Armenian population, and growth of the Jewish population from the Middle Ages forward (13). The contemporary state of the 14th century Armenian cathedral is good, while the historic synagogues decay. In Chortkiv, he documents the local interest in and respect for Roman Catholic sites, even amid a population that is primarily Greek Catholic or Orthodox (113). There are also issues of contemporary tourism, and the hopes of local populations to draw interest to the towns. In Kolomyia, a new ski industry occupies the site of mass graves (86-87). Occasionally, historic synagogues were converted for other uses—sports clubs, or a tanner's club in one instance.

Money, or lack of money, is not always a deciding factor in the preservation of historic sites. Bartov observes that in many towns, decaying historic Jewish sites (synagogues or cemeteries, for instance) are only a "short distance from freshly painted . . . municipal building[s]," and other well preserved edifices. Often, it seems that Bartov has arrived just in time to photograph painted signs in Yiddish, just before they are painted over. The lack of an existing Jewish population explains the ease of forgetting an unpleasant past. Even in towns where there is a small extant Jewish community, Bartov suggests that its members are nervous about bringing the issues to the forefront, lest it spark anti-Semitism or suspicion about the "return of the Jews. (114)"

Another theme addressed in the interior chapters is that of physical memorials. Most of the memorials that Bartov encounters are for nationalists and Ukranians. In some cases, there is the local perception of the Jews as instigators of the violence, or at least responsible for it. Bartov describes the "memory" of Jews as exploiters of the regional population in the face of evidence to the contrary. In places that acknowledge large-scale massacres, Jewish identity is still most often eliminated. Of course, Bartov also describes countless sites that have fallen into such bad disrepair that they are beyond preservation. Thus, the book itself acts as a kind of memorial. While, in The Order Has Been Carried Out, author Alessandro Portelli memorialized the victims of a Nazi massacre in words—by name—Omer Bartov's memorial is created through photographs of places that may not exist much longer.

The book contains some unintended resonance with J.B. Jackson’s critique of manufactured historic sites versus the presence of "hortatory" ruins, in The Necessity for Ruins. Bartov makes it clear that the majority of historical representation in Galicia is of a blindly celebratory nature. He also suggests that there will be a time when this particular Jewish past will be missed—but only after it is gone. This is very much in line with Jackson’s observation of excitement with “re redeeming what has been neglected,” particularly when it is “seen as holy or beautiful.” However, Bartov is skeptical about when this change will take place, given contemporary anti-Semitic sentiment and unwillingness to accept complication of the past in the Ukraine.

A word about the style: Bartov’s own personal experiences compelled him to write of this book, although unlike Richard White’s Remembering Ahanagran, Erased is not a personal journey of family discovery. In part, this is by necessity: Bartov’s family’s past in Zolotyi Potik has, in fact, vanished. In some cases, the personal influences he reveals in his introduction lead down fascinating avenues that are not, ultimately, a part of Erased. The author’s description of his 1950s childhood revealed sensory associations with languages (Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew, English) that I wished he had been able to explore. Bartov also mentions the inclination of scholars to approach this history either through analysis of the perpetrators (Nazis, et al.), or through the idea of genocide. In either approach, Bartov notes, the humanity and lives of the victims are negated. If there were something more I could have asked from Bartov and Erased, it would have been a richer narrative about the lives, before the disappearance.