

**Border Landscapes:
Religion, Space and Movement on the Polish Belarusian
Frontier**

PhD Thesis

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Based on fieldwork carried out in a small town on the Polish border with Belarus, this thesis is concerned with the negotiation of a sense of place in a multi-religious municipality. My fieldsite was a well-known local Roman Catholic Mariological cult site and pilgrimage centre, yet many of the town's residents were Eastern Orthodox Christians. The wider area also contained a number of important Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholic religious sites. The negotiation of the pluralistic religious nature of my fieldsite is also influenced by representations of the area as a "frontier". The idea of the borderland plays an important role in shaping regional attitudes to place, the EU, Belarus, Ukraine and the Polish state. The margin is conceptually important in this region and the shifting of state borders, the residues of socialism, changes to international border policies, and the presence and absence of diverse religious groups form multiple border landscapes. I argue that these landscapes are produced through the careful management of plurality. Plurality must be managed as it is constantly threatening to come apart. The relation between the periphery and the margin, or the inside and the outside, is constantly shifting through what I have called everyday religion, approaches to the border, and incorporation of visitors. A sense of place is messy, contradictory, and fragile, as the shape of the place is by no means fixed, and this thesis aims to explore how it is created, maintained, and recreated.

This thesis starts by exploring the dominant religious landscape of my fieldsite, excavating underlying religious tensions and contradictions by paying close attention to Church buildings and cemeteries. I then turn to the forest, the river and the border to examine these tensions in light of attempts to link religious differences to ethnicity and larger EU boundary projects. In the final two chapters I draw out the hegemonic position of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, and the ongoing silencing of the Eastern Orthodox population through a "heritagisation" of their spaces, looking specifically at pilgrimage, household religious objects and religious events.

Table of Contents

Title page	
Declaration	1
Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
List of Illustrations	
Maps	5
Images	5
Acknowledgements	8
0. Introduction	11
0.1. Starting with the Town	16
0.2. The Methodology of Living in the Field	22
0.2.1. Embodiment as Method	23
0.2.2. Space, Time and the Everyday	29
0.2.3. The Image and the Visual	34
0.2.4. Material Cultures	38
0.3. Writing a Sense of Place	40
0.4. Conclusion and Beginning	42
1. Chapter One: Emerging Backgrounds: Setting a Scene with History, Memory, Religion and Borders	46
1.1. Fragments of History	47
1.1.1. The Commonwealth	47
1.1.2. The Partition	49
1.1.3. The Hidden History of Judaism in Kościół	53
1.1.4. 'When the Orthodox Left'	58
1.1.5. Return to Europe?	61
1.2. The Questions of the Border	63
1.3. Locating Religion	70
2. Chapter Two: Kościół and the Queen of Heaven: Churches, Icons and Space	74
2.1. Stone, Bone, Land, and Gold: St. Catherine's and its Demesne	81
2.2. Rebuilding the Orthodox Heritage	88
2.3. The Noble Wielmoża's and the Queen of Podlaskie	93
2.4. Bodies in Devotion	100
2.5. Terespol and the Weeping Madonna	106

3. Chapter Three: The Present Lives of a Borderland Dead _____	112
3.1. Walking Analytically through the Graveyards of Kościół _____	115
3.2. Gilt and Ceremony: Materiality, Embodiment and the Dead _____	125
3.3. Abandoned Jewish Cemeteries _____	135
3.4. Historical Graves: The Tatars _____	138
3.5. Death and Abandoned Memorials _____	143
4. Chapter Four: The Forest, the River and the Fields in a Landscape of Frontiers ____	149
4.1. Forests of Memory _____	155
4.2. On the Bug Trail _____	162
4.3. Neighbours and Trade _____	170
4.4. Religious Pastures _____	180
4.5. Inside/Outside _____	190
5. Chapter Five: Household Religion _____	191
5.1. Pamiątki: Religion in Catholic Homes _____	197
5.2. Przedmioty Religijne: Religion in Orthodox Homes _____	203
5.3. Kinship and Conversion _____	213
6. Chapter Six: The Pilgrim Landscape _____	224
6.1. Getting There _____	227
6.2. Being There _____	244
6.3. Planned Events _____	263
7. Chapter Seven: Conclusion _____	269
7.1. Getting Along _____	272
7.2. Imagining Outsiders _____	276
7.3. Understanding Place Making _____	279
7.4. Border Landscapes _____	284
7.5. Future Work _____	288
7.6. Placing my Research _____	290
8. Bibliography _____	291
9. Appendices _____	307

List of Illustrations

Maps

Map 1: Map of Poland, 2014 _____	16
Map 2: Map of Kościół _____	17
Map 3: Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth circa 1635 _____	48
Map 4: Map of the Partitions of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth _____	50
Map 5: Poland 1939 _____	55
Map 6: Poland post 1947 _____	58

Photographs

Image 0.1 – Roman Catholic Cross near to Kościół with paper Orthodox Cross added _____	11
Image 1.1 – Car driving through Church Grounds to border crossing, Kościół _____	63
Image 1.2 – Multiple styles of crosses on the roof of Greek Catholic church Kostomłoty _____	73
Image 2.1 – View of the altar of St. Catherine’s Basilica Kościół _____	74
Image 2.2 – Holy image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół and Shrine _____	78
Image 2.3 – Assortment of different shaped reliquaries, Kościół _____	81
Image 2.4 – Walls of Church of the Holy Spirit, Kościół _____	84
Image 2.5 – Commemorative marker stone, Kościół _____	85
Image 2.6 – Framed votive offerings to the Blessed Mother of Kościół _____	86
Image 2.7 – The skull of St Felix, Kościół _____	86
Image 2.8 – View of the monastery and basilica, Kościół _____	87
Image 2.9 – View of the two Orthodox Churches, Kościół _____	88
Image 2.10 – The old Orthodox Church, Kościół _____	89
Image 2.11 – Sledging on the Church grounds, Kościół _____	91
Image 2.12 – Holy image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół _____	97
Image 2.13 – Woman on way to mass, Kościół _____	100
Image 2.14 – The night vigil at St Catherine’s Basilica _____	101
Image 2.15 – Behind the shrine of the holy image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół _____	103
Image 2.16 – Pilgrims making the devotion to the Blessed Mother of Kościół _____	105
Image 2.17 – The weeping image of the Madonna, Terespol _____	107
Image 2.18 – Service for the weeping image of the Madonna, Terespol _____	108
Image 2.19 – Cleaning the weeping image of the Madonna, Terespol _____	110
Image 3.1 – View of the new graveyard, Kościół _____	112
Image 3.2 – View of the old Catholic graveyard and Routonda, Kościół _____	115
Image 3.3 – The walkway that divides the Orthodox and Catholic graves, Kościół _____	116
Image 3.4 – Orthodox and Catholic graves side by side, Kościół _____	117
Image 3.5 – Abandoned Orthodox graves, Kościół _____	118
Image 3.6 – The Catholic half of the shared graveyard, Kościół _____	119
Image 3.7 – The Architects Grave, Kościół _____	121
Image 3.8 – November 1 st , near Kościół _____	125
Image 3.9 – November 1 st , near Kościół _____	126
Image 3.10 – New grave, Kościół _____	129
Image 3.11 – Abandoned Orthodox graves, Kościół _____	131
Image 3.12 – Abandoned Orthodox graves, Kościół _____	132
Image 3.13 – The ‘German Cemetery’, Kościół _____	133
Image 3.14 – The Forgotten Jewish Cemetery, Kościół _____	135
Image 3.15 – Apple trees in the Forgotten Jewish Cemetery, Kościół _____	136
Image 3.16 – Entrance to the Tatar cemetery, Zastawek _____	138

Image 3.17 – Repaired gravestone at the Tatar cemetery, Zastawek _____	139
Image 3.18 – Stone marker in the Tatar cemetery, Zastawek _____	140
Image 3.19 – Three alphabets on Tatar gravestone, Zastawek _____	142
Image 3.20 – Entrance to Jewish Cemetery and Memorial in Sławatycze _____	143
Image 3.21 – Dedication at Jewish Cemetery and Memorial in Sławatycze _____	144
Image 3.22 – Jewish Cemetery and Memorial in Sławatycze in 2008 _____	146
Image 3.23 – Jewish Cemetery and Memorial in Sławatycze in 2012 _____	147
Image 3.24 – Forget-me-nots, Jewish Cemetery and Memorial in Sławatycze _____	148
Image 4.1 – The Bug river and the border of Poland _____	149
Image 4.2 – The forest reclaiming an abandoned house, Kościół _____	151
Image 4.3 – Sign marking the border, Kościół _____	153
Image 4.4 – Forest, Kościół _____	155
Image 4.5 – Woodpiles by homes, Kościół _____	156
Image 4.6 – The Bug cycle path (with my old Russian made bike), near Kościół _____	162
Image 4.7 – Fishing along the Bug river, Kościół _____	168
Image 4.8 – Border marker on Church land, Kościół _____	170
Image 4.9 – Demonstrating the broken train doors, near Kościół _____	176
Image 4.10 – Catholic cross outside Kostomłoty _____	180
Image 4.11 – Shrine to the Virgin Mary on Bug Cycle Trail _____	181
Image 4.12.1 – Markers, leaving Kościół going west, Catholic cross and statue of Mary _____	182
Image 4.12.2 – Markers, leaving Kościół going west, statue of Jesus _____	183
Image 4.12.3 – Markers, leaving Kościół going west, Catholic cross _____	184
Image 4.12.4 – Markers, leaving Kościół going west, Catholic cross _____	185
Image 4.13.1 – Markers on the way to Terespol, north; Greek Catholic Cross _____	185
Image 4.13.2 – Markers on the way to Terespol, north; Orthodox Cross _____	186
Image 4.13.3 – Markers on the way to Terespol, north; Orthodox graveyard gate _____	186
Image 4.14.1 – Markers on the way to Sławatczyna, south; Shrine to Virgin Mary _____	187
Image 4.14.2 – Markers on the way to Sławatczyna, south; Catholic crosses _____	187
Image 4.14.3 – Markers on the way to Sławatczyna, south; Orthodox cross _____	188
Image 5.1.1 – Joaska turns the pages of her bible _____	191
Image 5.1.2 – Images of the Virgin Mary on Joaska’s walls _____	191
Image 5.1.3 – Full view of Joaska’s Wall _____	192
Image 5.2.1 – Feliks’ pilgrimage memorial badges _____	193
Image 5.2.2 – View of Feliks and the religious images in his home _____	194
Image 5.2.3 – Religious images over Feliks’ bed _____	194
Image 5.3 – Religious Images on Marzena’s wall _____	195
Image 5.4 – Desk in St Catherine’s basilica for writing requests to Mary, mother of God _____	198
Image 5.5 – Image of Black Madonna of Częstochowa with inserts _____	201
Image 5.6 – Estera’s holy images, Terespol _____	203
Image 5.7 – Beata’s holy images, Terespol _____	204
Image 5.8 – Icon of St Nicholas, Zabłocie _____	206
Image 5.9 – Chapel at Jabłeczna _____	209
Image 5.10 – Ukrainian Women’s Choir, Terespol _____	214
Image 5.11 – Cameraman at Terespol Choral Festival _____	215
Image 5.12 – Song-sheets at Malanka, Biała Podlaska _____	217
Image 5.13 – Stall at a festival selling Orthodox and Catholic icons and images _____	222
Image 6.1 – Queue to view holy image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół, August _____	224
Image 6.2 – Pilgrims arriving in Kościół, August Pilgrimage _____	227
Image 6.3 – Pilgrims sit waiting for mass to begin, Kościół _____	229
Image 6.4 – Incorrect dress, August festival Kościół _____	231

Image 6.5 – Pilgrims on the final approach to Grabarka, with crosses _____	232
Image 6.6 – Procession for the solemnity of the sacred heart of Jesus, Kościół _____	235
Image 6.7 – Aftermath of the solemnity of the sacred heart of Jesus, Kościół _____	236
Image 6.8 – Pilgrims arriving in Kościół, August Pilgrimage _____	237
Image 6.9 – Banners for processions and pilgrimages, Kościół _____	239
Image 6.10 – Forest of Crosses, Mount Grabarka _____	241
Image 6.11 – Adding a cross to the forest of Crosses, Mount Grabarka _____	242
Image 6.12 – Pilgrims walk past outdoor confessionals August festival Kościół _____	245
Image 6.13 – Market being erected during August festival Kościół _____	246
Image 6.14 – Mass during the August festival Kościół _____	247
Image 6.15 – Military Procession before the opening mass of August festival Kościół _____	250
Image 6.16 – Religious Procession before the opening mass of August festival Kościół _____	250
Image 6.17 – Soldiers preparing cannon for the opening mass of August festival Kościół _____	251
Image 6.18 – The holy well at Grabarka _____	252
Image 6.19 – Pilgrim (kneeling) making devotion to the shrine at Grabarka _____	255
Image 6.20 – Handkerchiefs hanging by the holy well, Grabarka _____	256
Image 6.21 – Mischa bathing in the healing waters at Grabarka _____	257
Image 6.22 – Police at Grabarka, preparing or the arrival of Patriarch Kyrill _____	259
Image 6.23 – Stall selling religious items and knickknacks, Grabarka _____	260
Image 6.24 – Stall at Jabłeczna festival selling toys _____	262
Image 7.1 – Map used by Al Jazeera to represent the divisions in Ukraine _____	269
Image 7.2 – Catholic Youth Group visiting monastery at Jabłeczna _____	285

Acknowledgements

Over the course of writing this thesis I have accumulated great debts of gratitude to many people and I hope one day to repay them all in a much fuller form than a few lines of text. But it is a start at least.

Firstly I am forever grateful for the kindness, interest and patience the people of my fieldsite showed toward me and this project; and for the continuing bonds of friendship they have extended to me. My respondents' desire for anonymity prevents me from naming them all here, but I am truly grateful to each and every one. To my landlady and her family I am particular obliged; I cannot hope to fully represent how wonderfully at home she made me feel and how important her help in getting to know the town and its residents was. In my research I was always met with huge generosity. Much of the analysis that follows was first discussed around kitchen tables, over very sweet black tea and occasionally very good vodka and therefore I owe my respondents credit for helping the germination of this work as well as producing the data.

When I brought my fragile ideas back from the field they were developed under the expert supervision of Dr Frances Pine. Her seemingly endless reserves of regional and theoretical knowledge continued to help me organise and interrogate my data from the beginning of my doctorate studies until now. I am forever grateful for the amount of time she found to read my work, offer detailed and helpful comments and curtail my erratic use of the comma. Throughout my time in Goldsmiths, Frances has constantly offered support, kindness and guidance above and beyond her role as my supervisor and has been an inspiring mentor who has nurtured my confidence as much as my analytical skills. Prof Emma Tarlo was a wonderful second supervisor whose contributions were always insightful and timely. I sincerely appreciate her taking time to read the full draft of this thesis despite being on research leave. Her comments regarding structure and style were exceptionally helpful. Frances and Emma worked wonderfully together and I could not have wished for better support during my five years at Goldsmiths.

The influence of the wider Goldsmiths Anthropology community is also evident throughout this thesis. Thanks are owed to Prof Victoria Goddard who was always available to

talk and offer encouragement and support as Postgraduate Convener and as a teacher. I am thankful for the reassurance, input and friendship of Dr Charlotte Joy. Finally I am obliged to Dr Nicholas De Genova and Dr Gavin Weston who made many helpful suggestions and comments during my upgrade from MPhil to PhD. My graduate cohort has been helpful, opinionated, influential, supportive and wonderful. Particular thanks to my flat mate and colleague Zahira Araguete-Toribio who offered unwavering friendship and anthropological insights, especially regarding memory and place. Also to Katie Aston who taught anthropology and religion with me for two years and whose analysis and critique of that canon I value highly. Thanks to my other colleagues Gabriela Nicolescu-Cristea, Souad Osseiran, Will Tantom, Amy Johnstone, Iliana Sarafina, Magda Buchczyk, Alena Oaka, Claude Jousselin, Krzysztof Bierski, Alex Urdea and Steph Grohman. I was also fortunate to make friends with Dr Liz Saleh, Dr Dom Santos and Dr Ali Clark, all of whom finished their PhD's while I was writing and were wellsprings of sympathy and knowledge. I am obliged to Irma Allen and Nicole Osborn for their patient help with transcriptions and proof reading respectively. My thanks go out too to the undergraduate students I taught over the past two years, their interest, fresh opinions and penetrating questions forced me to develop my communication skills and added to the atmosphere of the department. The whole community is held together by the practical and administrative support offered by Hugh Macnicol, Susan Westbrook and Ben Melrose and I owe them each much gratitude.

I would not have been able to pursue my doctorate without financial assistance from a number of funding bodies. Firstly, I would like to thank the ESRC who provided me with a three year studentship. I am also appreciative to the now defunct University of London Central Research Funds, who offered me a fieldwork research grant and to Goldsmiths University who gave me a fees waver grant in the first year of my studies. Finally I am indebted to the FfWG (Funds for Women Graduates) who awarded me a generous Foundation Main Grant to cover the cost of my final year. The financial support of all these bodies was indispensable and I am endlessly grateful.

I am also beholden to a number of people whose assistance during my fieldwork year was vital to the completion of this thesis. I am thankful for the wonderful hospitality offered to me by Dr Agnieszka Kościńska and Dr Anna Witeska-Młynarczyk when I first arrived in Poland. At the beginning of my fieldwork I was lucky to encounter some fantastic people in Warsaw whose help was invaluable. Thank you to Helena Patzer, Radek Budzyński and Jóaska Woźnicka. In particular I would like to thank Weronika Plinska, who offered me a home when I

first arrived in Warsaw and later was responsible for finding me a place to live in my fieldsite, I am glad to have made such a kind friend.

I also owe apologies and thanks to the friends in England and Ireland who tolerated me throughout my PhD even during my most reclusive periods. However, Ash Fox, Mieke van Embden, Laura Buttigieg and Neasa McGarrigle went above and beyond and helped me through the last minute editing and panic that all theses include.

Finally and most importantly I would like to thank my family. My siblings have been my lifelong friends and co-conspirators. While all four of them are owed praise I would like to thank my brother Josh in particular for creating the wonderful maps in this thesis and my sister Hannah for her intentionally hilarious advice and level-headed interventions in the last few months of this thesis. But my largest debt of gratitude is to my parents, Tom and Denyze. My parents have given me a lifetime of support and I owe my best qualities to their wonderful nurturing dispositions and fearless originality. I am also intensely glad for their understanding of the turns and twists I have already made in my life, for their reassurance that *'is fada an bother nach mbíonn casadh ann'* (it's a long road that has no turns).

Introduction

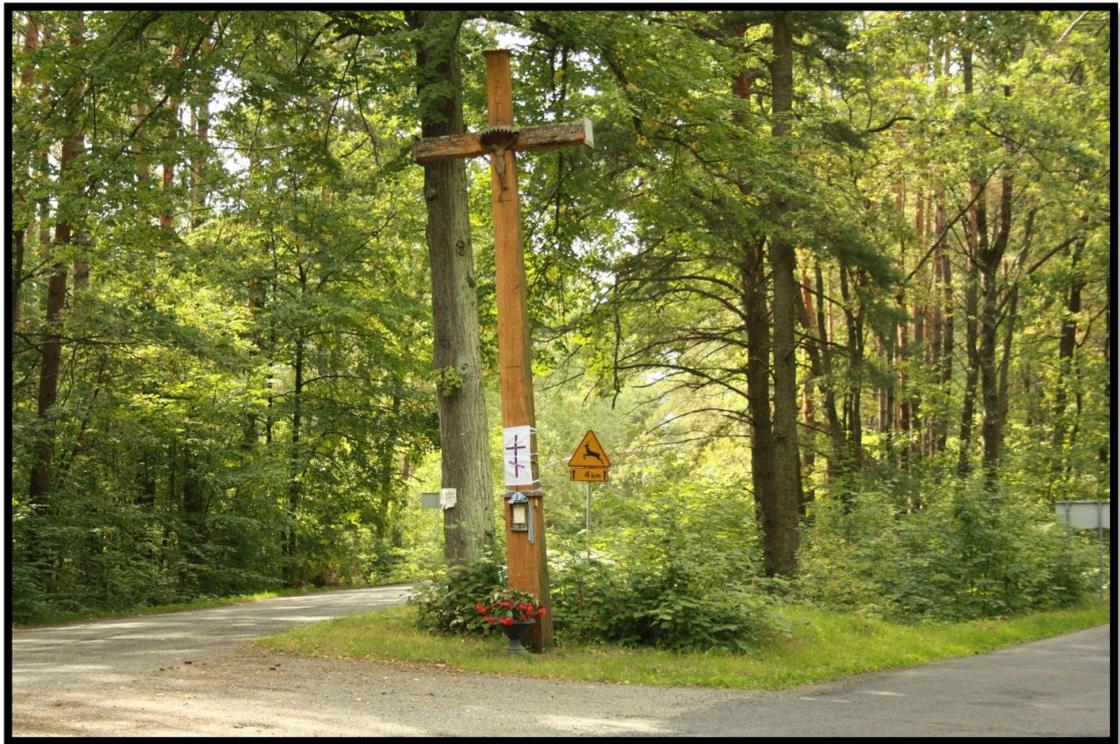


Image 0.1¹

Warm yellow lights illuminated the holy image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół,² it was still early in the afternoon but already the winter sky was so grey that it could have been late evening. Gathered in St Catherine's basilica a large group of women were singing a well-known hymn to the Virgin Mary, their breath visible as a mist above them. Almost all eyes were turned to the holy image, her gilt frame catching and exaggerating the glow from the low-watt light bulbs that brightened the nave. Kościół is a small town in the east of Poland. It sits on the Bug River and the border with Belarus. Despite its size and rural surroundings the town is renowned throughout the east of the country as a site of Mariological significance. The miniature basilica holds a miracle-working painting, the holy image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół, mentioned above. The painting features a rather adult looking baby Jesus and a serene, dark skinned Virgin Mary. Mary wears a deep red dress, a navy cloak, and smiling pink lips; there is a crown on her head and she sits in a white and gold shrine surrounded by cherubs and saints. Each evening she is enclosed in a silver and gold cover, accompanied by fanfare, and each morning she is revealed again.

The pilgrimage season in the town had ended nearly two months ago, and snow

¹ All photographs by the author unless otherwise stated.

² Kościół is a pseudonym for the town in which I conducted my research. The holy image was named for the town.

had been falling solidly since December, so this current batch of pilgrims had had to gain special permission to attend a vigil with the image. When I introduced myself before the ceremony they told me that they were ‘Amazons’. During our short conversation they explained that they were a group of breast cancer fighters who chose the name because they identified their mastectomies with the legend of the Amazons, who removed their left breasts to better draw their swords. Back in the freezing basilica the hymn ended and we all got on our knees to begin the rosary. The Catholic rosary consists of an introductory set of prayers, followed by five decades (each decade is an ‘Our Father’, ten ‘Hail Mary’ prayers, and the ‘Glory be to the Father’ prayer). No one leads the rosary; it is said as a group. Each decade is said for a mystery, and in this case the Amazons were praying for the ‘Joyful Mysteries’ of the annunciation, the visitation, the nativity, the presentation of Jesus at the Temple, and the finding of Jesus at the Temple. There are four sets of mysteries but only the ‘Joyful’ ones focus on the life of Mary, particularly on her life as a young mother. They were praying to Mary the virgin mother, most blessed of all women, mother of God, who mediates for her subjects, who suffered the death of her son so that sins may be forgiven—they were not praying to Mary as queen, star of the sea, seat of wisdom, or tower of ivory. The women knelt in front of her shrine and spoke as one voice. They appealed to the Blessed Mother, who suffered as they had suffered, to alleviate pain, to intercede for them with St Peter, or to look down on their family—or they simply thanked her. When the rosary was done and the priest announced coffee, very few of the women left the basilica. Instead of taking coffee they began a devotion to the holy image. On their knees they made their way up the centre aisle in supplication to the Blessed Mother Mary.

The intensive and fundamentally human relationships people form with the Virgin Mary were my initial motivation for writing this thesis. I intended to study these relationships by focusing on pilgrimages to the Marian Shrines in Poland. It was only once I started to read the literature on pilgrimage that I realized that there were two ways to approach my fieldwork, and thus two ways to approach my thesis (Badone & Roseman 2004; Coleman & Eade 2004; Coleman & Elsner 1997; Eade and Sallnow 1991; Turner & Turner 1978). The first was to make a number of pilgrimages to one of the great pilgrim sites, or to base myself in one of these sites and interview arriving pilgrims. The second was to pick a smaller pilgrimage site and to study the pilgrims and the community around the site too. I chose the second path, and after a short pilot trip to a variety of Mariological sites I found a small but important sanctuary in the East of Poland where I could conduct my fieldwork. My reasons for choosing the second path emerged from the reading I was undertaking on the anthropology of Christianity. At the beginning of my doctoral studies

there was a surge in interest in the anthropology of Christianity. My initial interest in Polish Catholicism was born out of what I perceived to be a lacuna in the research that was on-going. I felt there was a lack of ethnographic studies of Catholicism in Europe, and particularly eastern Europe. Anthropologists at the time were exploring Pentecostal expansion in South America and Africa (Anderson 2010), Evangelical Protestantism in America and Europe (Coleman 2006; Harding 1991), and missionized Catholic centres (Cannell 1999; 2006). The full variety of forms of Christianity in Europe was not, at the time, fully represented in the literature. Hann noted that there was also a gap in the new disciplinary focus when it came to Orthodox forms of Christianity (2007). But my primary bugbear was that, despite emerging from a call to interrogate the inherent Christian biases of anthropology (Cannell 2006; Robbins 2003), the refocus on Christianity seemed to be on extraordinary manifestations of the category. I was raised in a country where Catholicism was the *de facto* state religion. In Ireland society was suffused with an ordinary religiosity and only punctuated by moments of extraordinary manifestations of religious sentiment. I wanted to explore the ordinariness of Christianity, and the manner in which it blended into everyday life. More specifically, I wanted to explore how this ordinariness enfolds the encounter with the divine, as mentioned at the start of this paragraph. When I began my fieldwork this interest in the dialectical relationship between ordinary and extraordinary was focused on religion. As I continued my research it began to expand and soon added a second strand to my thesis.

The religious landscape of Kościół is fragmented and constantly changing. During my fieldwork the region, surrounding the town, had a Roman Catholic majority, a sizable Eastern Orthodox minority and a small Greek Catholic population, as well as small numbers of Jehovah's Witnesses and Protestant Christians. The region had also once a large Jewish population—although since the carnage of World War II they are no longer a living tradition. This pluralistic religious setting both contained, and existed beyond, the Catholic³ landscape of the area. Catholicism was both active and at odds with other religious landscapes. All along the eastern border there is a topography of miracles and Madonnas, one that does not always require the official mandate of the Church and sometimes includes other denominations. During the year in which I did my fieldwork two miracles were reported to have occurred: a piece of the host turned into the heart tissue of Jesus to the north of my fieldsite, and a dramatic crash landing of a plane in Warsaw was explained by the presence of a relic from the area that had been carried by a passenger. A few miles north of the site there was a miraculous stone carving of the Virgin Mary and an Orthodox weeping Icon of the Blessed Mother. Most the Catholic churches in the region are

³ Catholic refers to Roman Catholicism unless otherwise stated.

devoted to the Virgin Mary. All of these landscapes and more are incorporated by, and constitutive of, the everyday religion of the area, highlighting both its ordinariness and its extraordinariness.

The multiple and overlapping character of everyday religion bears the imprints of other topographies. During socialism in Poland the Church was a place for counter memories and resistance. Religious ceremonies and rituals were very publically observed, and when Pope John Paul II (often called the Polish Pope) was elected religion became even more visible in the public sphere. From the 1980s onwards *Solidarność* and Catholicism were both implicated and active in resisting the Socialist State and defending human rights in Poland (Kubik 1994). Although Church leaders were persecuted from time to time and Cardinals and priests imprisoned, and the building of new churches was severely limited, the Catholic Church was still visible and offered visible and created a public space outside of Socialism (Kubik 1994). With the fall of socialism in 1989, the Churches of Poland (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Greek Catholic) along with new religious missionaries and faiths, competed for the space left behind by socialism. Throughout Poland the Catholic Church became increasingly implicated in the new government, which was pursuing 'an ambitious and political legislative agenda' (Ramet 2014, 28). This included laws pursuant to education, sexual health, and the media. The Catholic Church's role in the public, private, and political realms strengthened the idea that to be Polish was to be Catholic (Ramet 2014). Currently Roman Catholicism has constitutional privileges but is not a state religion. The other Churches and religions of Poland were thus presented as marginal (*ibid.*). This connection between religion and the imagining of a bounded national community (Anderson 1983) incorporated ideas about the border of the country. Margins and borders are interesting spaces, constantly being redrawn, and thus impacting on concepts of centrality. They are often fuzzy and fidgety; yet there remains a desire to fix them in place, to clearly mark a boundary where one thing ends and another begins (Green 2005; Pine & de Pina-Cabral 2008).

In Kościół the border was important for the production and experience of space. However, it remained a very ambiguous border. To be more precise, it was a number of ambiguous borders and frontiers. My first research into my fieldsite and its complex and tempestuous history led me to expect to find a town that was marginal in a very specific sense. I even allowed images of the American Wild West to simmer in my subconscious. Based on the work of Hann (1993; 1996; 2010b; Hann & Magocsi 2005) and Buzalka (2008), further south, I further expected to find the two religious denominations in active conflict. Instead, I found that in Kościół there was a dynamic relationship between a local

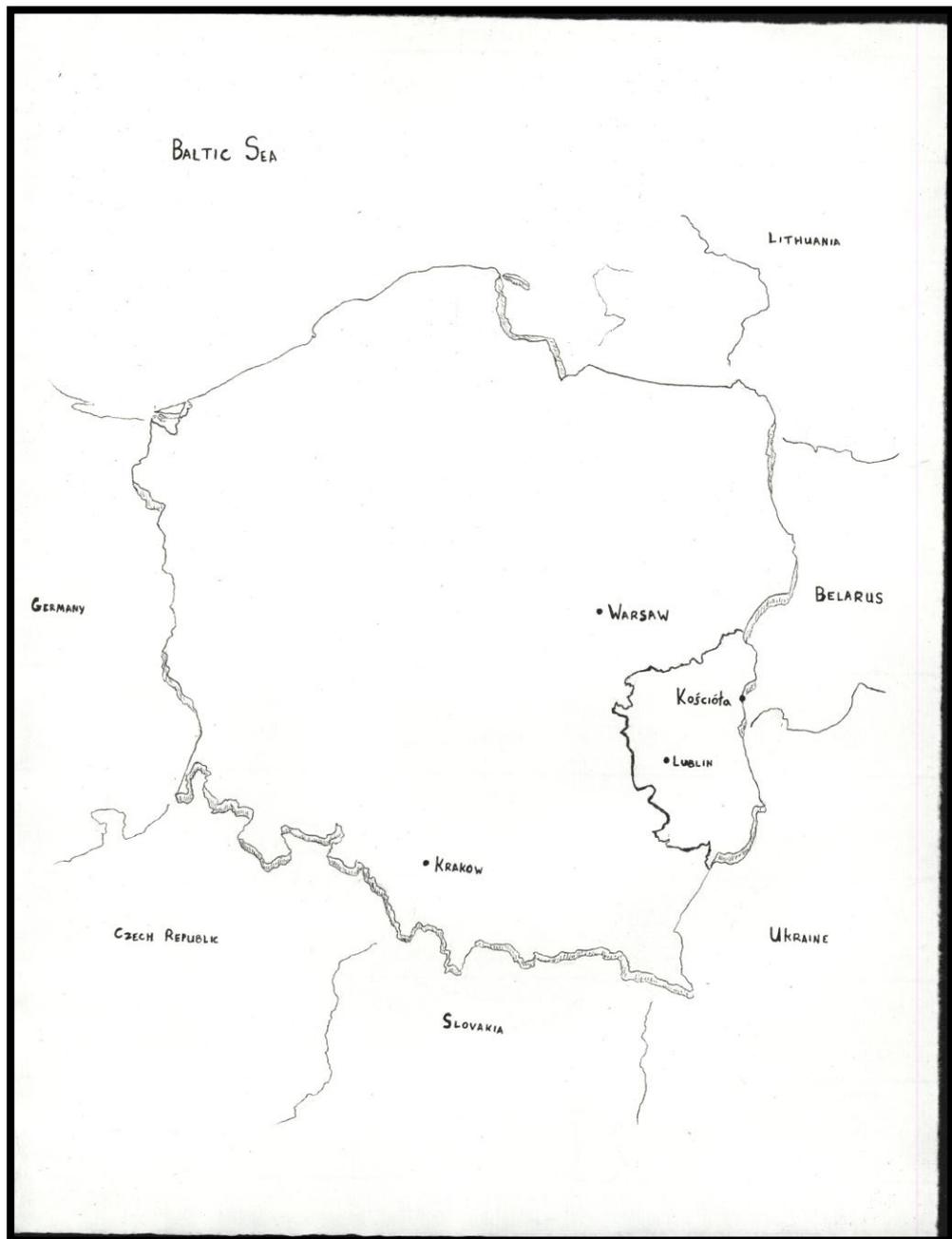
landscape that appeared still and ordinary, and the on-going creation and recreation of a sense of place. Kościół was a town where people from different faiths got on well, and despite the presence of the border they worked to maintain a sense of being at once local and Polish.

Maintaining and creating their sense of place involved my respondents containing the messiness of the various landscapes in their everyday life. They also needed to build and maintain relationships that would enable a shared sense of place across space, between people, and through time. Too much emphasis on, or lack of recognition of, the extraordinary risked the disintegration of this sense of place, as the ordinary and extraordinary were dialectically constitutive of the space. My respondents were also negotiating the contradictory impacts that visitors to their town had on the sense of place. Pilgrims, cross-border traders, and tourists invigorated the economy and identity of the town, while simultaneously threatening to have a negative impact on the relations that produced the space. Visitors to Kościół had their own sense of the place, and the town needed to accept these to some degree in order to benefit from what the visitors had to offer; yet it also needed to prevent these alien constructions of the space from destroying it altogether. Most of the visitors attempted to reproduce only the exceptionality of the town.

My research remains connected to both religion and border studies, in an attempt to explore the sense of place emerging in Kościół. This thesis will, therefore, explore the making and breaking of the sense of place on the border of Poland and Belarus. To do this two themes are continuously turned over in the following chapters: the idea of the border, and everyday religion. Each chapter departs from these themes, develops them and returns to the thesis in order to feed them back into the overall argument. This first chapter will continue with an account of my fieldwork, and in the final section I will give an expanded outline of my thesis. I will discuss my methods, as well as some theory, and give a brief account of the initial appearance of Kościół, aiming to clarify how the data presented here came to be gathered and analysed.

0.1 Starting with the town

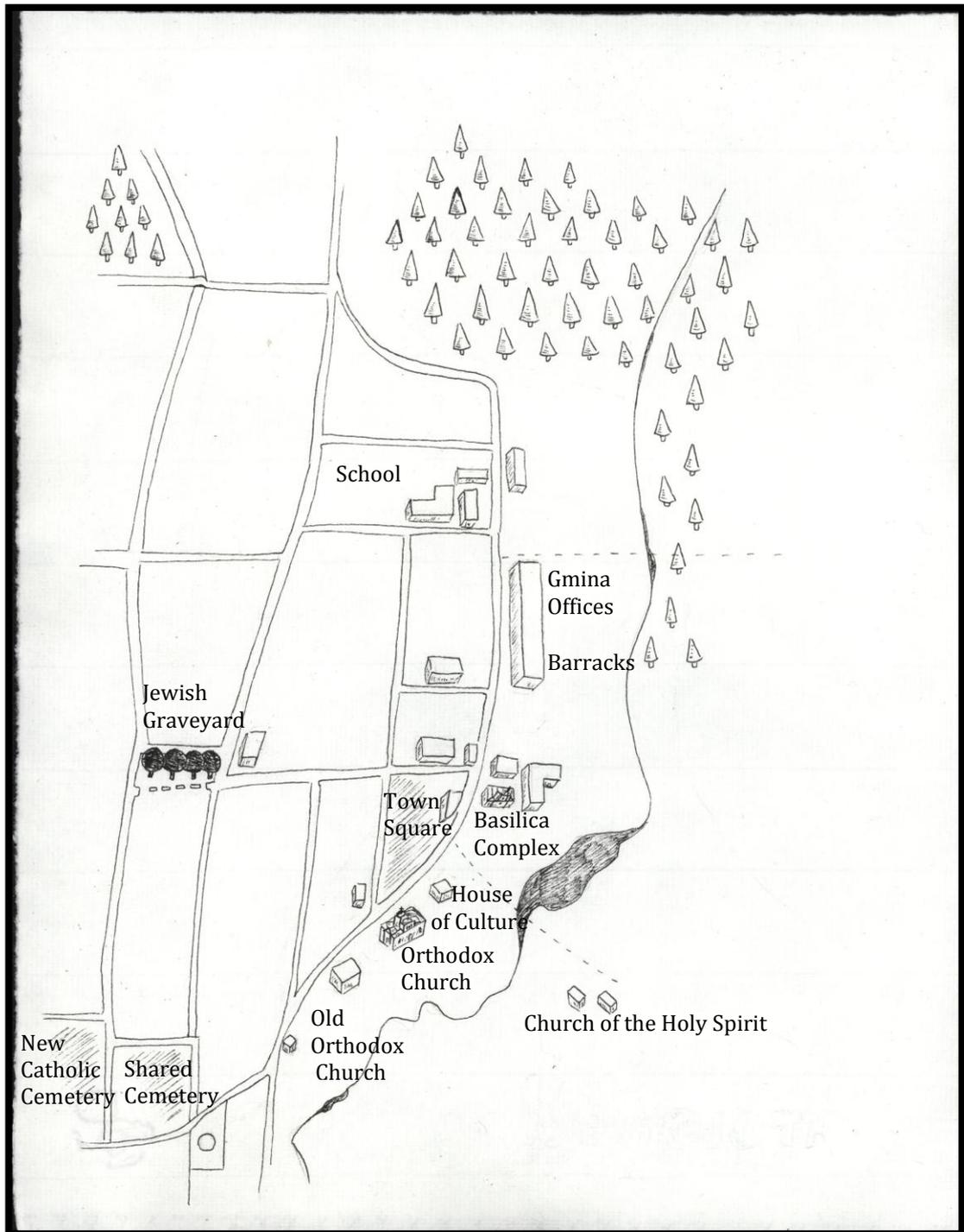
I conducted my fieldwork in the town of Kościół between September 2011 and October 2012. Initially my interest in the town was centred firmly on the Catholic Basilica that dominates its central square. This was because I intended to research pilgrimage and ‘popular religion’, such as Catholic devotion to the Holy Image of the Virgin Mary residing in the Basilica. Once I began my research, the area that encompassed the Basilica became increasingly important to its development, and my fieldsite began to distend and stretch to unexpected dimensions.



Map 1: Map of Poland 2014 ⁴

⁴ All maps were made by Josh Joyce and reproduced with permission

Kościół is in the Lubelskie province in southeastern Poland. It is in an area renowned for its natural beauty. The landscape consists of undulating cornfields, dense forests, and teeming swamplands adjacent to the Bug River. On its easternmost boundary, Lubelskie province is bordered by Belarus and Ukraine (Figure 1).



Map 2: Map of Kościół

Kościół is located on the border with Belarus, which coincides with the river in this section. The town is not an official border crossing, but it is situated equidistantly between two such junctions. The association between the town and the border is important for local people. However, this association is rarely expressed in explicate terms, instead it

becomes apparent most often in conversations about religion, kinship and trade. In this sense while the border is central to this thesis it is not always visible and in the chapters that follow it comes in and out of focus.

Kościół is on the eastern frontier of Poland and as such it is not the linear, physical and conceptual border that its residents are predominately concerned with. Rather they are concerned with the reality of living in a borderland, these two attitudes are not independent but do require different methodological and analytical approaches. In his book on the Pyrenean border between France and Spain Peter Sahlins argues that political geographers have long differentiated 'boundaries' and 'frontiers' (1989, 4). In these divisions boundaries are understood to be the official borders, lines drawn between countries maintained by political actors and a range of state policies and practices. Frontiers, on the other hand, are more nebulous, they are borderlands, zones where the fact of the boundary has an impact on the social context of the people who reside there. Obviously these boundaries and frontiers are intimately related, each shaped and shaping the other (Sahlins 1989, 4). This thesis is based on the 'local life of the borderland' (ibid, 23) and as such the formal institutions of the border are rarely discussed. In this frontier area the border is most often experienced in the 'fault-lines' that lie between the Eastern Orthodox Christian minority and the Roman Catholic majority, in the linguistic choices of its residents and assumptions about how the above factors relate to ethnicity (Hann 1996). As Hann indicates in the East of Poland there was historically little 'congruence between the boundaries of political units (state) and the boundaries of ethnic or national groups' (1996, 390). In this way through discussing the moments of conflict and cohesion between self-defining religious and ethnic groups within Kościół this thesis is implicitly discussing what is at stake in living in a borderland. As Vila has suggested by attempting to conduct ethnographies of borderlands, to tease out the complex and often contradictory everyday practices of borderlanders, anthropologists can examine the border as a social process as well as a territorial and legal entity (2005, introduction).

Kościół is a relatively small town at the centre of a rambling municipality. It has approximately 3800 residents, many of whom are scattered throughout the municipality.⁵ Only around 1800 people live in the town, and over half are older than sixty-five or younger than eighteen years of age. The centre of Kościół is contained by three main roads (see map, Figure 2) and surrounded by cornfields to the west, forests to the south and north, and the river Bug and the border with Belarus to the east. Nearly seven hundred people are officially registered as unemployed—roughly three hundred men and

⁵ The municipality or commune is called the *gmina*.

four hundred women. Yet Kościół is one of the more economically well-off towns in the province.⁶ The houses of the area are generally one story, detached, and surrounded by a small plot of land on which vegetables are grown. There are still a number of traditional wooden houses, but these are constantly being torn down and replaced by concrete buildings. There are a number of two-storey apartments and one block building on the edge of the township. The town is also well known throughout the local area, distinguished by its Basilica and the Holy image at its heart. There are a number of small businesses, three food shops, and one restaurant that opens irregularly. The town has no train station—small mini-buses are the only public transport available for travelling beyond the municipality. There is a school for children aged four to thirteen, while older children have to travel to school in one of the nearby cities or large towns. Most of these children spend Monday to Friday away at school, giving the slightly disturbing impression that the town is devoid of young people throughout the week. There is also a free clinic and youth hostel beside the school grounds. These, along with the local government buildings, are the only buildings in the centre of the town over two stories tall. Still the most imposing building in the town remains the Basilica—it is bright white, and taller than the treetops.

The Basilica is run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a monastic missionary order of priests with communities throughout Poland, Cameroon, Madagascar, Turkmenistan, Belarus, and Ukraine. The Basilica and the oblates are all in the service of the Holy Image, the Blessed Mother of Kościół,⁷ a miracle-working image of the Mother of Christ. The reputation of the Holy Image brings people to the town each year, normally during the ‘pilgrimage season’, which officially lasts from April to October but can be extended if winter stays or arrives late. The Basilica and the Government are the main institutions in the town, and each maintains a suspicious distance from the other. The municipality’s officials maintain that the Church does not contribute to the overall wealth of the town, and the leader of the Oblates asserts the Basilica is at the centre of the town’s economy and culture (in interviews). Many of the inhabitants are employed by the local government as teachers, foresters, and soldiers. However, just as many work for the Church, especially in the pilgrimage season, but it is unclear how much of this work is voluntary. There is also no guarantee that money raised by the Church will be returned to the pockets of the gmina, as religious institutions are tax exempt. Both sides claim to be supporting the townsfolk, and both mumble suspiciously about the corruption or venality of the other.

⁶ All information presented comes from an interview with the municipality’s secretary.

⁷ Catholics in different countries refer to the Mother of Christ in a number of different ways. In this thesis I will adhere to the Polish tradition of ‘*święta Matka Boża...*’ as the Blessed Mother of...

The town is also home to a sizable Eastern Orthodox Christian minority. There is even a new Orthodox church, built in 2006, just a five minute walk from the Basilica. During my fieldwork I was fortunate enough to come into contact with the Eastern Orthodox population. Roughly half of my respondents were Catholic, and half Orthodox. This split is not directly representative of the town, whose Catholic population is much larger than its Orthodox population. Yet I feel this half-and-half approach was the best way to ensure a fair selection of data. Information on the Catholic faith was easily available from a number of different sources, both written and oral. It was more difficult to access information on the Orthodox population, which was rarely available in written form. Just beyond the municipality is the only remaining Greek Catholic parish of Kostomłoty. Within the municipality are a number of sites that evoke the Jewish and Tatar heritage of this area of Poland. These were difficult traditions to address due to their traumatic and often hidden histories in the area. Despite this difficulty, and as much as my data and further research allow, I will attempt to draw these histories into the thesis to fully demonstrate the intricate plurality of my fieldsite.

Publications by the Oblates and the Municipality (Gomulak 2012; Golec 2009; Grzanka 2012) stress the illustrious of Kościół's history. Kościół was the seat of the noble Wielmoża⁸ family from the 1500s, and it was Ivan Wielmoża who had the town formally recognised in this period. This family were powerful noblemen in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,⁹ with branches spread across the territory. The Wielmoża family built the Basilica in the 16th century, and a large manor house during the 18th century that has served as a retirement home since the socialist period. The family is intricately tied to the miraculous story of the Holy Image, and I will explore this link in the second chapter. Despite the manner in which they are currently represented, the Wielmożs reflect the religious plurality of this municipality: members of the family were noted Eastern Orthodox Christian leaders, Calvinist sympathisers, and Catholic 'defenders of the faith' (Stepnik 2007). Outside the Wielmoża family the history of the town is not discussed overly much, either in the available literature or by local people.

The Jewish heritage of the area is silently ignored, as are the atrocities carried out against Jews during World War II. Likewise, Greek Catholics are presented as being part of a history that belongs somewhere else, either further north or south. Vast parts of the

⁸ This is a pseudonym for the Noble family that owned the town.

⁹ I will discuss the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in more detail in the next chapter. It was a dualistic multi-ethnic state established in 1569 and finally destroyed in 1795. The state had a monarch but was controlled by the nobility.

town's history do not make it into its narrative. Sometimes they slip in as gaps or unexplained incidents, such as when local Orthodox people speak of 1947 as 'when the Orthodox left the town' without mentioning *Akcja Wisła*.¹⁰ Haukanes mentions a similar avoidance of macro-historical events in the telling of biographies in the Czech Republic (2006). She points out that history is only alluded to in accounts of normal life by her respondents, such as when they remark that 1968 was the year someone went away. By refusing to name any actual event, such as the 1968 protests, people detach themselves from traumatic histories they may be implicated in or affected by (Haukanes 2006). Pine, writing about Poland, draws out the importance of listening to how a story is told in order to recognise elisions or hidden narratives (2007). She gives the example of a young woman discussing her father's death in a hospital in Warsaw at the start of Martial Law. Martial Law is only briefly mentioned in the young woman's tale, where the focus is her father's death, interspersed with descriptions about the dreadful winter that year. The young woman's description of winter is drastically different to the usual account of how beautiful the season renders the village. Instead, in her tale, the winter is a terrible and terrifying force that constantly encroaches on the family home. The recounting of the memory and the depiction of a hostile outside world become entangled and open up a way of understanding the village's experience of Martial Law (Pine 2007). Much of the alternative history that is discussed in Kościół gives the impression that it is heavily romanticised. The stories of the local Tatar population sound like something out of a Sienkiewicz¹¹ novel, for example. Their Islamic heritage is played down and their heroic deeds in many Polish conflicts exaggerated; they are also imagined as a 'dead population', despite the fact approximately three thousand Poles still claim to be ethnically Tatar (Dziekan 2011).

As I began to investigate the town it became apparent that the history and narratives that I heard and read about were part of a 'story of the past ... therefore a selective account of the actual sequence of events' (Hastrup 1992, 9). What was omitted, or in Hastrup's words hidden, was an equally worthwhile aspect of my fieldsite, and it was apparently contained or somehow evident in the stories and histories I was encountering (Hastrup 1992). The gaps and exclusions were not entirely obscured, and the onus was on the anthropologist to learn to listen *for*, not only *to*, the stories (Cruikshank 1998). What I was told, or what I read about the town was a strategy for communication (ibid., 41). A lot

¹⁰ Operation Vistula: The forced relocation of those considered Ukrainians from the east of Poland. I will talk more about this in the next chapter.

¹¹ Best known in the west for the novel *Quo Vadis*, Sienkiewicz also wrote a trilogy of historical Polish novels that feature the Tatars and Cossacks. His books *Pan Michal*, *The Fire and the Sword*, and *The Deluge* are much better known than *Quo Vadis* in Poland. Sienkiewicz was also of Lipka Tatar descent.

was imparted outside of the actual words, through how the story was selected and the context of its telling (ibid., 44). This is the point where the methods of the anthropologist become a vital part of fieldwork. When I began writing this thesis I did not see the value in including a section about methodology. Surely anthropologists have talked participant observation to death, I thought, and there is only so much that can be said about an interview. Nevertheless, as I began to explore the theory and the data something felt amiss. It wasn't until I started to think back about how I came to position the town and myself within it that I realised how connected my way of being in the field was to my eventual theoretical outlook.

0.2 Methods and Theory Lived in the Field

A step conversation

It was early afternoon and the scurry of morning tasks had ceased. My landlady and I sat on the steps of the front porch drinking in the unseasonably scorching May sun. It seemed to me as though the whole town was hushed, and the hum of the forest and river slowly became preeminent. 'You must be very bored' my landlady said softly, 'it is always the same here. There is very little to do and only old people to meet.' I shook my head. 'I like it here', I responded, my face still turned to the sun. My landlady chuckled, 'why?' she asked. Confronted with the demand to put my experience of fieldwork into words I found myself dumbstruck. Eventually I lamely offered that it was 'interesting'. My landlady's chuckle burst into a deep belly laugh. When she finally regained composure I tried again. 'At first I thought that it was very quiet here, that it was still'. I was struggling to find the Polish words to put across an idea that was as yet in its most abstract and infant form. 'Now I think there is a lot going on, lots of movement. It is just difficult to see at first'. I turned to my landlady: she was watching her chickens aimlessly ricocheting around the small public green field opposite us. 'Do you understand', I asked; 'did I make sense?' She gave me a soft smile and patted my leg. 'No, it doesn't make sense', she said, 'but I am happy you like it here'. I was annoyed at myself. Since I had arrived in this house, seven months prior to this conversation, I had struggled to explain my research beyond the basic premise that I was studying pilgrimage and the relationships between different religious groups in the area. Whenever I tried to explain that I wanted to explore the everydayness of religion, I found that I lacked the subtleties of language needed to adequately describe what I meant. Beyond that no one could understand why I would be interested in 'normal' religion when I could study the Basilica and other important local cult sites. Why did I want to talk about how they prayed, or what religious images they had in their homes? Why did I not want to talk to the 'experts'? Why did I not study pilgrimage in Częstochowa? 'I want to study the small things that change everyday' I began again in laboured imperfect Polish. 'So much changes, but everyday still feels the same. That is interesting'. My landlady turned to me again with a furrowed brow. 'Yes, that makes sense. I understand', she said firmly, then added 'it will be hard to write about that'.

I present this vignette by way of introduction to the following discussion of my methodology. Not only are they difficult to write about; everyday change and continuances are also difficult to research. The master narrative of anthropological research—participant observation—is a frustratingly broad approach with little to unite its many aspects. Geertz's definition of this foundational anthropological research method,

as ‘deep hanging out’ (2001), undervalues the time an anthropologist spends living in the field and what they actually do there. For me it is important that research takes the form not just of interviews and interventions; I also value the day-to-day being in time and space. As much as we gather fieldnotes, photographs, and other material data, our time in the field is also, to use a phrase from Ingold, out of context, ‘an education in attention’ (2000, 21–22). We attempt to learn a way of being in the world that will allow us to understand the information we are gathering. In researching the production of a sense of place in Kościół, such attempts to attune myself to the pace, life, and attitude of the field were vital but invisible labours. In presenting participant observation as a singular deep ‘hanging out’ the anthropologist can really interrogate the basic ideas and practices behind being ‘in’ with their respondents. In the following section I want to explore the how the anthropologist learns to attend to the field through embodiment.

0.2.1 Embodiment as Method

One of the biggest challenges of my fieldwork was to confront research interests—everyday religion, ideas of the border, and sense of place—that were all messy and intangible. While there were some moments in which they became extraordinarily immediate and apparent, most of the time they formed the undercurrent of everyday life in Kościół. They are concepts that emerge, that are lived in, and that help us to perceive the entangled bodily world. How can one research things that are so integral to our perception and lived reality of the world that they are always implied but rarely detectable? This is the great problem anthropologists interested in embodiment face, and it was a real stumbling block at the start of my fieldwork. I began my engagement with embodiment through the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962). For Merleau-Ponty, perception was at the centre of consciousness, and this entailed a rethinking of the Cartesian division of mind and body. By focusing on perception instead of the body-mind we are faced with an intersubjective consciousness that is indivisible from the world in which it perceives (1962). Further to this, perception and reflection are simultaneous, which means that at any point we perceive we are also in perception, thus breaking down the subject/object division (Merleau-Ponty 1962). The problem is that this approach to embodiment replicates the age-old anthropological problem: how do you research the mind of an Other (Bloch 1998)? In this case the mind is no longer an objectified whole; instead the focus is on perception—but the problem of gaining access to the unique intersubjectivity of one consciousness’s embodied perception remains.

Michael Jackson made use of the work of Merleau-Ponty, but to do so he added the insights of Bourdieu. Taking Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, he began in a 1983 article by exploring the 'patterns of bodily praxis' (Jackson 1983, 327). He was interested in how knowledge is embodied and how human experience is grounded in the body's movements through space. He proposed that embodied knowledge is something that starts at the level of the body, before making its way to the conscious mind (Jackson 1983). Later in *Paths Toward a Clearing*, Jackson turns to embodiment once again, but this time as a method of research rather than as an analytical tool. Here he suggests that through sympathetic use of the body in the field the anthropologist can learn to see as their respondents do (Jackson 1989).

Csordas also focuses on Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu in his famous article 'Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology' (1990). However, he has a different emphasis from that of Jackson: Csordas is interested in the moment of objectification, and how bodily engagement is involved (1990) in that moment. Throughout his text Csordas explores Christian practices. He describes how through rituals demons can be constituted as cultural objects. Csordas also looks at how these rituals are linked to bodily states, emotions, behaviours, and thoughts that are experienced as 'outside their control' (Csordas 1990, 14). Most importantly, Csordas uses Bourdieu's *habitus* to explain the 'taken for granted nature' of our embodied experience of objectification.

The problem I see with the work of Csordas and Jackson is that both are primarily interested in Merleau-Ponty: In the end Merleau-Ponty was 'not interested in first-person private experience as a means of acquiring insights into phenomenal and ontological structures' (Al Mohammed 2011, 128), so it seems like a mistake to start from here. Bourdieu, on the other hand, implies an embodied subject throughout the text but never fully theorises it (1977). What he does instead is suggest a praxis whereby we can understand the interplay between embodied subjects and the social structures that they live within (ibid.). To do this he introduces the concept of *habitus*, which is 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant 2005, 316). Most critiques of Bourdieu focus on the unconscious nature of *habitus* and *doxa*¹² and claim that both concepts are too deterministic. Yet this ignores a large part of what is written in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, chiefly Bourdieu's emphasis on uncertainty (1977). The idea that every structure contains uncertainty allows for change because it allows for the introduction of new

¹² The experience by which 'the natural and social world appears as self-evident' (Bourdieu 1977, 164).

concepts or practices that enable individuals to see that *doxa* (or *habitus*), rather than being the sole truth, is one possibility among the many. *Habitus* therefore appears as a way that anthropologists can approach the body without becoming entangled in debates about the ontological restrictions of an embodied agent.

I would like to think through embodiment as method a little more thoroughly. To do this I want to focus on one particular embodied method I employed: walking. Urban anthropologists have been taking walking seriously for a long time. Theoretically, they focus on the works of Benjamin (1999; 2006; 2008) and de Certeau (1984), making particular reference to the flâneur (Amin & Thrift 2002; Hannerz 1980; Ocejo 2013). However, the combination of these two thinkers is somewhat problematic: their work does not always fit together well. Benjamin's idea of the flâneur emerges from Baudelaire (2006). A flâneur is a man (I will return to this point) who wanders purposefully but without a plan, through the city, following lines of desire and getting lost, discovering the ambiance of the architecture and the crowd (ibid.). The appeal of this idea to anthropology has been the similarity between such a practice and participant observation. The concept of the flâneur allows us to discuss the alienation that characterises everyday urban life, which becomes apparent through use of the city in a way counter to normal use (Amin & Thrift 2002). But Baudelaire's flâneur was not an anthropologist; he was a gentleman stroller. 'His passion and his profession are to become one with the crowd ... The spectator is a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito ... Thus the lover of life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy' (Baudelaire 1964 [1863], 9–10). This is anthropocentrism at its most individualistic and egocentric. Baudelaire was concerned with the poetics of the city. He made the assumption that being part of the crowd enabled an understanding of it, while remaining intellectually distant from the mass enabled a conceptualisation beyond their understanding. Baudelaire was a member of the petite bourgeoisie, a gentleman to whom no part of the city was off-limits; so while his experiences are not in doubt they are not equivalent to an understanding of life in the city for those who cannot stroll unencumbered through it.

Benjamin used Baudelaire to explore the alienation of urban life, but the flâneur lacks a political critique of alienation. The flâneur observes and attempts to wander the city against its prescribed paths—but in the end Benjamin accepted this practice could be destroyed by capitalist consumption (1999). The forces of consumption can claim and redesign the arcades and streets through which the flâneur wanders, putting them beyond his free use (1999). The flâneur's approach to the city is similar to de Certeau's only on the surface. De Certeau came from a politically charged, social science background; the

impetus for his work was the student protests of 1968 and the study of political resistance to the alienation of everyday life. Unlike Baudelaire, de Certeau was most interested in the great mass of the city. Despite Benjamin's own intensely politically turbulent times and his commitment to finding fragments of forgotten and hidden histories, I believe the concept he took from Baudelaire could only be stretched so far. What is useful in the flâneur is a direct result of Benjamin's development of the term; but even he suggested that the character was of a specific time: between the arrival of the Parisian arcades and the emergence of department stores (1999, 448). More than this, Benjamin realises that while flânerie may be a purposeful act (akin to de Certeau's 'art of doing', 1984) it is an act of leisure: 'In 1839 it was considered elegant to take a tortoise out walking. This gives us an idea of the tempo of flânerie in the arcades' (Benjamin 1999, 422). Benjamin made an effort to present this leisure as 'a demonstration against the division of labour' (ibid., 427), but this interpretation owes more to his own political engagement with modernity than to the flâneur's motivations. This demonstrates the core problem with Benjamin's flâneur: Benjamin was trying to politicise a group of men who had resoundingly sketchy rationales for their practices:

The city is the realization of that ancient dream of humanity, the labyrinth. It is this reality to which the flâneur, without knowing it, devotes himself. Without knowing it; yet nothing is more foolish than the conventional thesis which rationalizes his behaviour ... namely, that the flâneur has made a study of the physiognomic appearance of people in order to discover their nationality and social station, character and destiny ... The interest in concealing the true motives of the flâneur must have been pressing indeed to have occasioned such a shabby thesis. (Benjamin 1999, 429–430)

Benjamin rightly recognised that with some work the practice of the flâneur could be a clever methodology for investigating the dialectic of the city crowd (Benjamin 2006).

We can draw an alternative history for the anthropology of walking—one that that resembles flânerie but that begins as politically situated and embodied and not with gentlemen strollers. Ivan Chtcheglov (aka Gilles Ivian) was an erstwhile situationist who wrote *Formulary for a New Urbanism* (1953) at the age of nineteen. He was born in France, and was the child of a Ukrainian father and French mother—both of whom were intellectuals and had been involved with communism (Mension 2001). *Formulary for a New Urbanism* is a beautifully written, almost poetic work that sets forth (with the standard surrealist bombast) a set of practices for exploring the geology of a city. Chtcheglov was concerned with the past and politics of cities; he tells us that:

All cities are geological. You can't take three steps without encountering ghosts bearing all the prestige of their legends. We move in a closed landscape whose landmarks constantly draw us toward the past. Certain shifting angles, certain receding perspectives, allow us to glimpse original conceptions of space, but this vision remains fragmentary. (1953, 1)

Formulary for a New Urbanism sets out the architecture of the new surrealist city but it also introduced the concept of the drift. The drift (*derive*) was a more engaged version of the ramblings of the flâneur. Chtcheglov saw the drift as an almost spiritual act; challenging binary models used to conceptualise life, it was 'the changing of landscapes from one hour to the next' and 'an aesthetic of behaviours' and 'a good replacement for a mass' (1953: 7). When the situationists set out on their first drift the experience was chaotic and political and involved a number of paranoid meetings with inhabitants of Paris of various social standing. Chtcheglov noted the mass-like 'collective feeling' of the experience and the manner in which the disorientated journey reshaped both the experience of the city's materiality and his own personal sense of time and pace.¹³

There is something in de Certeau's approach to the city, Chtcheglov's drift, and Benjamin's attempted rehabilitation of the flâneur that seem compatible. This might be to do with the type of attention to the world that each requires. De Certeau's famous contention that 'memory is a sort of anti museum, it's not localizable' (1984, 108) echoes Chtcheglov's reflection, quoted above, on the pasts invisible in the city. It is apparent that both men were attempting to find a practice that would enable them to see the invisible living city: 'There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can invoke or not ... they do not speak any more than they see—it is a sort of knowledge that remains silent. Only hints of what is known but unrevealed is passed on' (De Certeau 1984, 108).

For my own research it was necessary to find a way of discussing walking outside the city. To do this I turned to Ingold. Ingold and Vergunst assert that 'walking around is fundamental to the practice of everyday life' as well as 'to much anthropological fieldwork' (2008, 67). Ingold's work is slightly idiosyncratic,¹⁴ but his writing on wayfinding offers a way both to make the work of Chtcheglov anthropological and to use de Certeau outside of the city (Ingold 2000). For Ingold walking is not about mapping; 'It is not in the mind but in the world' (*ibid.*, 55). Rather, walking involves knowledge of the world, finely-tuned

¹³ In 1958 things began to fall apart for Chtcheglov. He boasted one night in a bar of his intention to blow up the Eiffel Tower because it shone light into his bedroom all night long. He had stolen some dynamite. When he was arrested he was diagnosed as schizophrenic (Hussey 2001). Chtcheglov was then confined to an asylum where shock therapy and insulin 'destroyed him' (Mension 2001, 100–101).

¹⁴ Ingold's work leaves little space for the political despite the role that the political plays in most other discussions of material cultures or embodiment.

perceptions, and the internalising of previous experience. Wayfinding is a skilled performance in which the walker feels their way toward a goal through their knowledge of their 'position within the matrix of movement constitutive of a region' (ibid., 235). This knowledge is stored between the person and the environment, and learning how to make your way is in fact the unveiling of a process and 'an education in attention' (ibid., 21–22). This means that people embody their environment. Embodied techniques like walking are ways of exploring the connection between embodied subjects and social structures, comparable to the connection between practice and *habitus*. In the case of walking, Ingold¹⁵ has a fascinating account of the changes that bodily technique has undergone over the years (2004). In 'Walking the Streets' he considers how the paths and pavements in a city can be understood through changes in the body. 'They have literally paved the way for the boot-clad pedestrian to exercise his feet as a stepping machine', he tells us, 'No longer did he have to pick his way, with care and dexterity, along pot-marked, cobbled or rutted thoroughfares' (2004; 326).

When I started to investigate Kościół's sense of place, I therefore turned to my feet, in an attempt to learn the right 'attention' (Ingold 2000, 22). I endeavoured to walk with people through the land, following their paths and learning how they made their way. Over time I became used to the landscape, to its tracks and trials, and began to make sense it by moving within it.

Walking with my respondents also helped me to make sense of the spaces of my fieldwork. The forest was an important space for many of my respondents, but I found it hard to determine which area they were actually discussing when they spoke about it. There were numerous arboreal spaces in the town, and I was unsure which were included or excluded from the space of the forest. Ingold has explored how in threading a path and stopping along the way people make their own spaces, spaces that are embedded with personal memories and biographies (Ingold 2007). I would amend this statement slightly. Wayfaring is a way for people to define certain spaces and to attempt to perceive a differentiated space. However, the walking body is still an embodied actor; along with personal memories and motivations it brings with it society, as *habitus* and bodily technique. Wayfaring with my respondents was a good way of identifying the centre of a social space like the forest, but it did not give me enough to analyse that space.

Implied in the work of Vergunst and Ingold is an encounter with the world through the senses. When Ingold speaks of rough pot-marked paths (2008), he is thinking through touch. This is the aspect of walking that was of most interest to me during my fieldwork.

¹⁵ Together with Vergunst, Ingold leads a project at Aberdeen dedicated to walking.

Before leaving for Kościół I had been fascinated by work on the anthropology of the senses. However, much like Merleau-Ponty's ideas about perception, it frustrated me. Despite the pages and pages of text, there seemed to be no agreement on the kind of techniques that would yield a sensuous anthropology. Pink suggested turning to visual methods; Classen (1997; 2005) and Stoller (1989; 2011) suggested that fieldwork put emphasis on the ignored senses like smell and hearing; and Seremetakis suggested an emboldened sensuous writing style and the connection of memory and the sensuous perception of material cultures (1994). All emphasised that analysis of the senses needed to be embedded in rich sensory ethnographic data.

Seremetakis' work on memory, material culture, and the senses particularly interested me (1994). In the essays presented in her book her core research method seems to be sympathetic reflection (Seremetakis 1994). Her methodology, and that of the contributors to her volume, was reminiscent of recent 'popular natural history' writing, which focuses on walking. I thought of Solnit (2001) and MacFarlane (2012) and the sensitive way in which they present and explore material cultures, memories, histories, and the sensory experience of walking. Solnit writes a history of walking, focusing on its emergence as a leisure activity. Her book is limited in scope,¹⁶ yet it still manages to explore how, from the eighteenth century, walking came to be a fertile cultural practice for writers, protesters, and thinkers (2001). In doing this Solnit captures in prose something of the inescapable sensory quality of walking. MacFarlane does something similar; the reader is swept through the erratic nature of his research by the beauty of his prose (2012). When I walked in the forest with my respondents I sometimes recorded the walk with photographs and fieldnotes. I made notes on the sound and appearance of the forest, as well as on the expression and gestures of my walking companion, alongside brief references to how my feet felt or the chill in the air. I realised that while writing certainly couldn't capture all the nuances of the senses experienced in everyday life, a thick description of the 'sense' of the field was vital to my analysis of the sense of place.

0.2.2 Space, time and the everyday

I began reading Lefebvre's *Production of Space* (1991 [1974]) during fieldwork, because I was looking for a way to understand the multiple contradictions of space I was encountering in the field. Initially I tried to analyse the Basilica, specifically how a site becomes sacred and how people interact with sacred spaces. Quickly I realised that approaching Kościół as a sacred site involved a massive oversimplification. In even the

¹⁶ Focusing on walking as a leisure activity excludes a whole history of walking as necessity, and this gives a totally different impression of the activity to the reader.

most traditionally religious spaces of the town (the Basilica and other churches) there seemed to be multiple forces at work, and not all were intent on the same outcome. I began to see an inherent conflict or contradiction at the heart of the spaces in which I was interested, and, further, I began to realise that these were social and political conflicts.

I was drawn to Lefebvre's argument that space was a 'concrete abstraction', a material product of relations, a manifestation of relations, and a relation itself (1991, 15; 86; 100; 341); or in Marx's terms, 'an abstraction which became true in practice' (1973 [1939], 104–105). Space is an 'active movement' that needs to be 'actively produced' by historically-dependent social practices. Merrifield argues that by examining the production of space we can see how and what is internalised, and learn how to produce something different; we realise that 'to change life is to change space; to change space is to change life' (Merrifield 2006, 108). I was always curious about how Lefebvre's work would transfer to my fieldsite given that he was, for the most part, interested in urban spaces in capitalist countries, while my fieldsite was rural and post-socialist. Makovicky has examined the post-socialist capitalism of Poland, arguing it may be a very singular economic model, because the 'successful adoption of market economy' requires changing the very foundation of what it means to be a person" (Dunn 2004 cited in Makovicky 2014, 1), and this change may not produce ideal neo-liberal subjects (ibid, 9). The difference between the two contexts is important because Lefebvre understood the production of space as guided by the relationships that underpin capitalism.

The question that follows Merrifield's contention is: How can we analyse the manufacture of space? The *Production of Space* is a difficult book to read. It has a circular style; points covered at the start are frequently repeated in a slightly different manner later in the book. There are several disruptions to the text and moments where revelations seem to come too early. Despite Lefebvre's stated commitment to undermining the dualistic approach of earlier philosophers, many binaries appear throughout the text and live for a few pages before being thought through his dialectic. Despite this, the underlying premise that space is a social product and that the production of space manifests (and is a manifestation of) social relations of production is extremely provocative.

There are two conceptual bundles buried in the text that I think can be helpful analytical tools or nascent methods. The first of these comes out of Lefebvre's focus on the dialectic of centrality. This dialectic emerges from his conception of the form or morphology of space: 'The form of social space is encounter, assembly, simultaneity ... social space implies actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point'

(Lefebvre 1991, 101). This description allows Lefebvre to speak of the general form of space, regardless of the actual specific qualities of a space. The struggle for spatial centrality is a struggle for political autonomy, as once one controls the centre one can control the production of space (Lefebvre 1996). This is possible because centrality is not fixed but in constant flux, through the interplay of centre and periphery (Lefebvre 1991). Lefebvre talks about the Paris Commune in 1871 and about May 1968 as two successful, if short lived, examples of the political potential of taking the centre (Kipfer 2011).

Centrality as the form of space was important to Lefebvre because of the dialectical nature of forming a centre. Taking Paris, post 1968, Lefebvre looks at how the state attempted to undermine the threat posed by the students and working classes living on the 'periphery' of the city by including them in the 'centre'. This was performed through creating a discourse of Paris as the centre of 'cosmopolitanism' in Europe. In turn, the centrality of the 'dangerous classes' to the production of a Parisian space worked only so long as the state dispersed them from the centre of the city, from where they could disrupt its actions (Lefebvre 1991). This is the dialectic of centrality at work. In other words, the form of social space is based on a contradictory inclusion and exclusion, the 'centre gathers things together only to the extent that it pushes them away and disperses them' (Lefebvre 1991, 386). Much of the conflict over the production of space, then, is based on who is included, and who makes the decisions about that inclusion.

The second conceptual tool in Lefebvre's work on space is perhaps the best known: the triad of (1) spatial practice, (2) the representation of space, and (3) the representational space. Spatial Practice or 'lived' space (1) concerns the everyday¹⁷ practices that come to embody the relationship between conceived space and perceived space. It 'embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation' (1991, 33). 'Representation of space' or 'conceived space' (2) is the 'conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers'; it is the 'dominant space in any society (or mode of production)' (Lefebvre 1991, 34). This is abstract space, space as envisioned and implemented by the 'dominate discourse'. Finally, spaces of representation or perceived space (3) are 'space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of inhabitants and users' (Lefebvre 1991, 38-39). This is the space for struggle, contestation, and appropriation. Of course, as space exists in time our space of analysis may encompass more than one of these.

¹⁷ I will get to the importance of this word shortly.

As I stated at the start of this section Lefebvre's spatial analysis, designed for a French, capitalist subject of analysis, cannot be simply transferred from that situation to my fieldsite. Two particular stumbling blocks are the rural nature of my fieldsite and the role of class in Polish societies. I will explore the problems that a rural setting present for a Lefebvrian analysis in Chapter Four and in the conclusion. However I would like to take a moment to point out the impact that the different political and historic context of Poland has on my use of this theorist. Within my fieldsite there was no clear division between the capital owning and the proletariat class. The power to produce space was distributed across a number of different spheres. In some situations the monasteries Oblates and the local Catholic majority were in the position to conceptualise space and exclude members of minority religions from the production of place. However this same sacred space may also be a secular space at another time and a different group (such as the Gmina's officials) would have more power to define and conceive of its centre in this instance. In Kościół the absence of a clear 'ruling class' meant places had multiple centres and producers, which operated at different levels across time and space. This is why alongside Lefebvre this thesis refers to two other theorists of space throughout, Edward Casey and Doreen Massey.

Casey, who also deconstructs the abstract notion of space, sees time and space as the inseparable components of place, and place, in turn, as the loci of struggle (1996). Lefebvre uses the word 'space', but in its original French (*l'espace*) the word has a meaning much broader and—according to his writings—much more similar to Casey's *place*.

Lefebvre's work alludes to the idea that space might not only be lived differently by different people, but also perceived differently. Massey also considers this idea, but deals with it explicitly; she also presents a theory of space that allows for the multiscalar nature of the phenomena. She has come to call these different perceptions 'imaginations' (2005, 89). Imaginations are 'vantage points' from which someone can imagine a collection of the stories of a space (2005, 89). Massey emphasises that the multiplicity of space is not just a result of its production but also shows the work of time. 'Conceiving of space as a static slice through time, as representation, as a closed system and so forth are all ways of taming it' (Massey 2005, 59). She also brings the materiality of space back into the discussion clearly and complexly (Massey 2006). She talks about space beyond humans, encompassing skies and rocks and tectonic plates and all their varying temporalities. She talks about engaging with geography through landscape as an event, circling back to space as process, and 'space imbued with time' (2006, 46) To talk of a

sense of place in this way counsels against an inward-looking study of 'localism'; instead we again engage with an emerging spacio-temporal notion of place (Massey 2006).

Implicit in all this talk of space is the body (Douglas 2002 [1966]). Massey speaks of Ingold's dwelling body (2007; 2008), while Lefebvre speaks of the production of space as a history of the 'decorporalisation of space' (1991, 97). Later Lefebvre draws out the concept of a multiple body, one that contains the social body of society, the social body of needs, and the 'fleshy body of the living being' (Lefebvre 1991, 396). To this we should add Douglas' body as medium for communication limited by its social system (2013[1970]). The body, this multiple body, generates, produces, and creates difference as it lives (Lefebvre 1991, 396). Here, then, is an explicit recognition of the connection between time, space, and the living body.

First translated into English in 2004, *Rhythmanalysis* was originally published in 1992 just after Lefebvre's death, and contains essays jointly written with Catherine Régulier.¹⁸ The book discusses time, space, the body, and energy, together, through an exploration of flow and rhythm. In his introduction to the translation Elden mentions that the book was supposed to be the start of a project that would tie together all of Lefebvre's previous work (2013). This is the book that asserts the centrality of movement to Lefebvre's thinking. It begins with the claim that the body is rhythmic and rhythmically permeable (Lefebvre 2013). Lefebvre also makes interesting assertions about the nature of interruption and rhythm. He makes the claim, reminiscent of the contention in his final volume of the *Critique of Everyday Life*, that all interruptions tend to be eventually reintegrated into a rhythm. However, he does allow that this leads to new and potentially emancipatory rhythms of life (2013). In this way the everyday is a complex interplay of counter rhythms. This understanding of rhythm active in life circles back to the *Production of Space* (1991) and also reverberates with Massey's ideas about progressive place (1993). Here is space as an event through which various practices, rhythms, bodies, and conflicts pass.

Before we move on, I would like to consider the idea of the 'everyday'. Everydayness is associated by Lefebvre with the Marxist idea of alienation, but it is not encompassed by it. In his three-volume work, *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre explicitly extends the concept of alienation beyond Marxist 'modes of production' into the whole of social life (Lefebvre 2008a [1947]; 2008b [1961]; 2008c [1981]). Throughout his work Lefebvre speaks of alienation as inhuman or against humanization, based on one of Marx's

¹⁸ Régulier is rarely acknowledged as a co-author, perhaps because she was married to Lefebvre at the time of writing.

explanations of alienation as the ‘alienation of man as a species-being, member of the human species’ (Lefebvre 2008a, 62). He also explores Marx’s idea that alienation is not (as it was for Hegel) a condition of contradiction, but merely an aspect of it, and that alienation is present in the everyday only when there is an attempt to set something aside from the everyday (ibid., 70).

Just over half way through the foreword of the second edition of Volume One, Lefebvre talks about a woman buying soap powder. He explores the many relations, motivations, reasons, and spheres of this simple action, eventually concluding that, if he could analyse it fully, ‘Finally I will have grasped the sum total of capitalist society, the nation and its history ... So now I see the humble events of everyday life as having two sides: a little, individual, chance event—and at the same time an infinitely complex social event, richer than the many ‘essences’ it contains within itself’ (ibid., 57). The moment when these complex social events and fragments of poesis (humanization) are extracted from everyday life and presented as ‘super human moments’ is the moment when everyday life becomes alienating (ibid., 127). Without ‘every moment of inspiration, of genius, or of heroism’ lived through everyday life it becomes a hollowed-out experience (ibid., 163). The increasing alienation of everyday life is not an inherent feature of the everyday. Mundane life is human because we live it through truly human moments and if in the valorisation of everyday life we go too far and conceptualise or experience these moments as transcendent we risk objectifying and externalising them, thus alienating ourselves from the everyday (ibid., 71).

We have taken this detour into the concept of the everyday in order to go on to examine ‘everyday religion’ specifically. When I first began my research it irritated me that anthropologists often throw the phrase ‘everyday religion’ around without interrogating what the word everyday means in this context.¹⁹ Although outside the strict disciplinary boundaries, many sociologists such as Nancy Ammerman dedicate time to delineating the differences between everyday religion and religion more generally (2007). Recent anthropological books such as Schielke and Debevec’s *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes* (2012) have also sought to clarify that the everyday is something more specific than the day-to-day, something more than simply lived or practical religion. For Ammerman and Schielke and Debevec the everyday is a frame of reference that covers both the public and the private, or more fully undoes that easy binary (2007²⁰; 2012) Sometimes reference is made to de Certeau (1984), and everyday is conflated with everyday practice. I think that using the expanded notion of everyday espoused by Lefebvre is a good way to start

¹⁹ See Davie 2007 for a good example of this unproblematic use of the term

²⁰ Ammerman deals with this particularly in her conclusion from page 226 onwards (2007).

looking afresh at everyday religion. It allows us to explore the ordinary and the extraordinary aspect of it without reverting to a false dualism. It also allows for the potential of religion to be estranging when the habitual practices associated with it in daily life are removed from the extraordinary forms it can take, leaving people at a distance from their religion, or experiencing a deep sense of loss.

I must add here that this is not the way Lefebvre understood religion; I am taking some liberties with his ideas. Lefebvre felt that religion contained all the alienation of everyday life, and that religion's unique place as a private experience organised by a public institution left it 'breathing in the positive substance of everyday life and *concentrating its negative aspects* (Lefebvre 2008a, 226 emphasis in original). However, Lefebvre had a very diminished sense of religion. Throughout his work he repeatedly equates religion with the rationalisation of magic or with the French Catholic Church. In the context of this thesis, everyday religion is the undefined mass of mundane activities, activities that can be positive and negative and that contain extraordinary and ordinary moments in dialectical balance. We are dealing with what is sometimes called 'religiosity': practices that are tantalisingly on the edge of a number of categories, but are not objectified as one or the other (Pine & de Pina-Cabral 2008).

Engaging with everyday religion in my fieldsite threw up one final methodological consideration. The religious practices of my respondents outside of the formal institutional sites of the church were sumptuously material. David Morgan, among others, has asserted that material practices are an invaluable way for anthropologists to approach religion and religious belief (2010). In saying this, however, he is advocating a broad understanding of material cultures that includes objects, images, spaces, sensations, and feelings. His book *Religion and Material Culture: The matter of belief* (2010) begins by asserting embodied understanding as a way of avoiding the mind/body dualism that often pervades discussion of practice and belief. Morgan's approach appears to be a useful way of studying the heady materiality of my fieldsite, and in the next section I will examine material culture in more detail.

0.2.3 The Image and the visual

In this thesis the visual is encountered in two guises: as a method and as an object of analysis. When I began fieldwork I soon realised that my notes did not always capture everything I wanted them to. There were also occasions where a lot happened in a short period of time but there was no space to sit down and write about it. I began to use visual

methods as a way to solve this problem. A lot has been written about visual methods, and the history of visual ethnography goes back to anthropology's early ignominious colonial history (Edwards, 1992). Despite this, in the late 1990s interest in the visual was once again at the forefront of methodological debate. Writers such as Banks, MacDougall, Morphy, and Pink began producing books that advocated and described the use of visual methods in qualitative research (Banks 2001; MacDougall 1997; Morphy and Banks 1997; Pink 2006; 2013). Most of these works begin by struggling with the idea that the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled (Berger 1972, 7). It will not be profitable to step too far into these discussions, just as it is ill-advised to enter the mire of the 'knowing the mind of another' debate. For now, therefore, I will say that the work done by these authors established that visual methods can help present a fuller understanding of the fieldsite for the anthropologist. At the same time, bearing Berger's insight in mind, it is vital when making use of visual materials and methods that we are constantly aware of the interplay between the image-maker and the observer.

In my fieldwork I chose to focus on three aspects of visual methodology: the production of images, the analysis of images or material objects in the fieldsite, and the use of images to produce non-visual data (Pink 2006). This meant that I took photographs and analysed images and material culture in the Church and other town spaces. It also meant that I took the images I produced or collected and used them to start conversations with respondents.

Initially I chose to produce images as a supplement to my fieldnotes, but as my time in the field wore on the camera I used, a rather beaten up old SLR, became an important mediator in my research. The camera is a material object bundled up with a multitude of signs, significances, and meanings. It is a tool for research, yet it often defines the researcher in unexpected ways. One needs to be able to use it, and thus to understand clearly technical concepts such as exposure and framing. But one also needs to understand that the camera has a social life and a set of social meanings. When I began attending festivals and events with my camera it identified me as a researcher. When I attended events without it people assumed I was there in a personal capacity. Part of the reason my camera became important to my role as an ethnographer in the eyes of my respondents was that it was a machine that required a level of skill to operate. It was hard for them to quantify the skill I used when interacting with them as an ethnographer, but photography was clearly a task that required a level of expertise. The camera as an object was seen as something professional, and as such people frequently felt the need to pose professionally for it. Older people tended to adopt a stern countenance and rigid posture. Younger people

were more relaxed, but were insistent that photographs be full length and flattering. At large events, festivals, and pilgrimages this wasn't an issue, as there were always a number of photographers and people soon got used to the camera and tired of posing. In my daily research it did begin to cause difficulties; I reached a compromise by carrying two cameras with me: the large SLR and a smaller digital camera. When the occasion was relaxed and I wanted informal photos to supplement my fieldnotes, I used the smaller camera, as people associated it with the idea of a snapshot.

These snapshots were a kind of common property. Whenever I visited Warsaw or the nearest city I would end up printing lots of copies to give to people in the town. As my fieldwork continued I began to make this sharing of photographs an explicit part of my research. I was surprised at how photographs seemed to lead to an outpouring of information; they seemed to open up a winding path full of tangential offshoots that people were only too happy to explore (Weber 2008).

When I was taking more formal photographs, intended to illustrate this thesis, I found that the bodily technique involved in the taking of photographs was instructive. Photography involves movement—sitting, standing, climbing—in order to capture the images you want. To take the photographs I wanted I viewed the landscape from different angles and positions. I stayed longer at each space, adjusting my posture to best capture the images I wanted; I saw the subjects from above, from ground level, in the distance, mid-distance, close up, and so on. Slowly I began to notice an affinity between my walking methodology and my visual one: both involved understanding the landscape by adjusting my physical position within it.

The final aspect in which my research interacts with the literature on visual anthropology is in the analysis of images, and one image in particular: the Holy Image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół. I will discuss this image in more detail in the next chapter, but I would like to set out some theoretical lines of enquiry first. The encounter with the image is an incredibly difficult thing to discuss. In many cases anthropologists end up using theories from art history and other disciplines that are primarily concerned with the image in question and not the viewer. To avoid this I will use the work of Hans Belting. Belting is actually an art historian, but one who is uniquely interested in the 'anthropology' of the image (1994; 2011). Belting understands that critics and anthropologists treat art works differently. He makes a distinction between the historical material object of art history and the image (2011). Belting considers the image to be open to study by anthropologists. He appeals to anthropologists not to become second-class art

critics; for anthropologists it is not the content of a work of art that is vital, or that must be analysed and understood; rather, for the anthropologist, the vital aspect is the image contained by the work of art. This formulation also allows us to consider non-art images and mental images (Belting 2005). Of course, this means an image is difficult to classify, because it exists between (and potentially within) the embodied actor and the material object. An image 'may live in a work of art but it does not coincide with it' (Belting 2005, 42).

After establishing the difficulty of definition Belting attempts to describe the image at great length (2011). He uses a trio of subjects in a dialectic manner, as it is the conflicts and tensions between the three categories that help maintain and generate the image, rather than the subject in and of themselves. According to Belting, the image is generated by (1) an embodied observer/generator, (2) a medium to carry the image (confusingly this can sometimes be the embodied observer), and (3) the image which, physical or imagined, cannot live without mediation. This trio is often shortened, rather confusingly, to 'body-medium-image'.

The image lives between and within bodies and mediums. In the encounter with the medium, which holds the potential for an image, there is a struggle between the embodied actor's internal representation and external representations of a given image. Or, as Belting puts it, between the endogen and exogene images, '[d]reams and icons ... dependent on each other' (Belting 2005, 304). These physical and imagined representations²¹ are held in tension during the encounter and generate the image (Belting 2011). Belting's approach has an interesting impact on how we see the encounter with the image. The most important point he makes regarding the encounter is that the image comes into being through the attempt to make present an absence. An image may be imagined, perceived, or remembered, but at each point there is something beyond the physical object that we observe. Throughout his work it becomes clear that he relates this something beyond the image to 'the mystery of Being and Appearing' (Belting 2011, 146). For an anthropologist studying images, Belting's approach indicates a number of considerations that need to be made in any analysis of the image. We need to take into account memory, the medium, the body, and the history of all the elements in the encounter as well as their social and political agenda. In fact, much of how Belting describes the study of images reflects Lefebvre's tri-point approach to space.

²¹ Belting understands imagined images as those perceived, produced and remembered (2011)

Tarlo has suggested that anthropologists must be more willing to use a 'mixed methods' approach in their research (2010). In the end, my approach and use of visual methods and theories was rather eclectic, but this eclecticism served to improve the quality of the work I carried out. I did not attempt to produce a large-scale visual project, as this would not have contributed any more to what I wanted to achieve. The visual methods and analysis I did include, and the way in which they were entangled with my other methods, reflects the reality of my fieldsite. Throughout this thesis I continue to approach the visual not as a distinct category for research or production but as an indispensable aspect of my anthropological research.

0.2.4 Material cultures

Material culture, like visual anthropology, has reemerged in anthropological discourse after a long time in the wilderness. Whereas anthropologists on the Torres Straits expedition studied material culture as an equivalent of culture, current practices begin with an interest in things and their relations to people and society. Within this broad definition researchers have pursued a number of different threads. For some time the most productive have followed Miller and examined practices of consumption, or have explored the world of museums and heritage. The theory of material cultures in anthropology has recently led to some interesting debates. Many of the ideas spurning the current 'ontological turn' so talked about by anthropologists emerged from reactions to the edited volume *Thinking Through Things* (Henari, Holbraad & Wastell 2007). In this thesis, however, I want to avoid going too far into what seems to me to be a relatively fruitless debate. Sidestepping the larger perspectives within the field I want to present the case for material cultures as a way of exploring the silences or absences we encounter in anthropology. I further explore the complication of these gaps in the next chapter while discussing my fieldsite's Jewish history. Here I would like to start by mentioning Navaro-Yashin's point that we need another way to explore silenced pasts, one which is more respectful of the fragmented nature of these pasts than the much abused notion of 'voice' (2013).

To begin with we need to clarify what we mean by silence and absence. Is silence the total absence of noise? If so, then speaking about 'giving voice' seems appropriate, if somewhat arrogant. Yet if there is silence, can we be sure the voice that emerges is not simply a reflection of the researcher interrogating the silence? How does discussing absence differ from discussing silence? Do absences occur independently of people's activities, or are those activities constitutive of the silence? Perhaps the most central and

difficult question is how we research something that is not there (Pine and Navaro-Yashin in conversation 2013). We know that absences are complex, that they are the result of practices and relationships between embodied actors, space, time, history, and objects. Moreover, we know that absences are not total—they must leave fragments or traces, because otherwise we could not identify or recognise them. If there was a total absence, a void, it would pass unremarked. Or, as Casey has pointed out, ‘if ... the place [were] to be permanently empty, it would be no place at all but a void’ (1993, 25). The things that are involved in forgotten pasts—buried tombstones, repossessed houses, the abandoned objects of a fleeing people, and the objects that now occupy sites of loss—are multifaceted and offer a way to gain access to what has gone or been erased.

Hodder has outlined certain aspects of ‘things’ which indicate their suitability for discovering the fragmentation of absences and silences (2012). Things are not isolated; they are mobile, they endure over time, they can be apparent in their invisibility, and they can be forgetful. Things, like space, are not stable but only give the appearance of stability; they are constantly moving in space. Things are moving in time in a slow process of disintegration (Hodder 2012). As Miller has pointed out, things can also fade into the background, and material culture can be a frame as well as an object of study (1987). Perhaps the most interesting aspect of things that Hodder discusses is their forgetability. Despite their full and complex existence, encountering things likely involves forgetting their multiple connections, mobilities, temporalities, and relational qualities, unless those characteristics act directly on us in the space and moment of the encounter.

The objects that we encounter, or fail to encounter, are thus entangled in webs of meaning and use. This is an example of what Manning and Meneley, following Keane, call ‘bundling’ in their description of material objects in cosmological worlds (2008). Bundling ‘points to one of the obvious, but important, effects of materiality: redness cannot be manifest without some embodiment that inescapably binds it to some other qualities as well, which can become contingent but real factors in its social life ... as qualisigns bundled together in any object will shift in their relative value, utility, and relevance across contexts’ (Keane 2003, 414 cited in Manning and Meneley 2008, 3). In other words, bundling helps to explain the variation in meaning and value of objects and at the same time accepts their messy irreducibility. It recognises that the material cultures we encounter may not help to distinguish a clear narrative from the absences in which they are embedded. Rather, objects reflect the disintegrated pasts with which we are dealing and the fragmented impacts they have on our fieldsites.

0.3 Writing a Sense of Place

The concepts I have examined here will reemerge throughout the next five chapters. This approach reflects the impossibility of untangling method, theory, and analysis, mentioned at the start of this chapter. I spoke earlier about how Lefebvre's *Production of Space* has a tangled structure, about how it is repetitive, circling, and tangential. This is an approach to writing to which I am deeply sympathetic and that has had an impact on my own style of address. However, writing and writing as an anthropologist are two different tasks. Before we make headway into the body of this thesis I would like to briefly mention one of the challenges of ethnography with which I have been wrestling since I began writing. My undergraduate degree was in Social Studies—a broad church program at Trinity, University of Dublin, Ireland. One of my first encounters with anthropology during the course of my studies was with the anniversary edition of Nancy Scheper-Hughes' *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics: Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (2001). It was an instructive encounter. Scheper-Hughes' work was based in a fieldsite remarkably similar to the countryside in the west of Ireland where I was raised, and I felt deep discomfort as I made my way through the book until I reached the Epilogue, 'Crediting An Cloghan'. In this section Scheper-Hughes attempts to correct a mistake she made in the original edition, where she treated only the aspects of the village that were relevant to her thesis, subsequently painting a portrait of the community that failed to portray the actual life of the village. Scheper-Hughes acknowledges, and appeals against, the temptation for anthropologists to do this, that is, to find within a fieldsite something that intrigues them and to write about it to the exclusion of any data that do not fit. She quotes the first two lines one of Ireland's best known poems, *Digging* by Seamus Heaney, at the start of a discussion about the violence of writing ethnography:

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun

But there is a better lesson in the poem, which Scheper-Hughes seems to have missed in her selective quotation. Heaney is considering the work of his father and forefathers, farmers and turf cutters all, and attempting to reconcile his own academic pursuit with the legacy of their work. He sees inherent value in the physical skill of digging and the connection it has to the land. In the end, Heaney finds he cannot follow their work, but he can dig into something vital in the land equally well through his own work. Scheper-Hughes' quote is from the middle of the poem, but Heaney brings his meditation on labour and kinship to a close with a very different set of lines, as follows:

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests
I'll dig with it

Scheper-Hughes quotes a respondent's rebuke at the start of her epilogue: 'We all have our weaknesses. But you never wrote about our strengths. You never said what a beautiful safe place our village is. You never wrote about the vast sweep of the eye that the village offers over the sea and up to the Connor Pass' (2001, 311). This statement has stuck with me through the years since my undergraduate degree. In part the tangential style of my writing, the frequent setting of the scene and the use of short ethnographic vignettes alongside more embedded ethnography is an attempt to represent a town that is not contained by my thesis, that shaped and informed my opinions on religion and space but refuses to follow the logic I try to impose on it, preferring to follow its own. I wanted to talk about the town and its people openly without going back and anonymizing the place, thereby losing something in that translation. However, this was not the wish of my respondents, and adhering to their requests I have anonymized them and the town. It is always beyond ethnography to fully write the field, but I have chosen a style that I hope evokes a sense of the place.

0.4 Conclusion and Beginning

To finish this introduction I want to return to its start so I can clarify my thesis. I left off as follows: 'This thesis will, therefore, explore the *making and breaking of the sense of place* on the border of Poland and Belarus.' I intend to argue that producing a sense of place that appears stable and local involves moving through a number of different landscapes. When I speak of a landscape I am making use of Massey's definition, 'one constantly emergent, ongoing, product of that intertwining of trajectories' or 'the (temporary) product of a meeting up of trajectories out of which mobile uncertainty a future is—has to be—negotiated' (2006, 46). The thesis constantly returns to everyday religion and the border, as these are two of the most shifting trajectories in the landscape of Kościół. The wider Polish landscape is likewise in constant flux. Thus Kościół's dialectic relations to those constructed as external actors²² are constantly being renegotiated.

I am interested in the negotiation that goes on in making and remaking place. I argue that the landscape of Kościół's residents is grounded in the careful management of plurality, but that this management is also threatened through everyday religion, approaches to the border, and incorporation of visitors. A sense of place is messy, contradictory, and fragile, and this thesis aims to explore how it is created, maintained, and recreated.

To do this the first substantive chapter initially presents a selective and somewhat erratic history of Poland. However, my aim is to focus on the process of placemaking from the outside. Demonstrating the role that history plays in external understandings of my fieldsite and its connections to—and contradictions of—my fieldsite's internal sense of place disturbs the strict delineation between inside and outside. The second chapter begins by focusing on the holy image and the Basilica. In this chapter I look at the increasing visibility of the Catholic Church in the town. I investigate how this visibility helps the Church to control centrality in the production of space and thus preserve the claim that Catholicism is central to town's identity. This claim forces those it excludes to contest the space of the Church, and in this chapter I examine this contestation. In so doing I introduce a number of different competing and contingent groups and lay out the politics implicated in the making of the local sense of place. In the third chapter I focus on graveyards. Through the places of the dead I explore the importance of relations in space-making. Particular attention is paid to the maintenance and transmission of relations that enable the production of different types of space. Through grave goods and memorials I

²² Such as the state, the various churches, traders, tourists, pilgrims, worldwide faith communities, and imagined national communities—to name a few that we will consider.

look at materiality and its connection to memory and forgetting, as well as the meaning of the absence of materiality, to add another strand to my understanding of the role of relations. The next chapter explores the presence, absence, and multiple containers of the state through a detailed look at the forests and flat lands of the town. Continuing from the previous chapter I examine the echoes, traces, and gaps in the 'natural' landscape of the town. In so doing I contest the very idea of the 'natural'. I also look at the uses to which space is put by conflicting groups and the responses of various constituents of the land. In the fifth chapter my focus narrows again to homes in the town. Here I take time to examine the contradictions inherent in everyday religion. I also look at the relationship between the Catholic and Orthodox populations in more detail, trying to explain how people generally get along while accounting for increasing hardening of the boundaries of the different groups. This discussion foreshadows my conclusion. The final chapter turns to the visitors, pilgrims, traders, and tourists. It tries to unravel the impact that these groups have on the creation of a sense of place. It also explores the impact that the hardening of the border—since EU accession in 2004—has had on these groups, and thus on the town itself.

Chapter 1: Emerging Backgrounds: setting a scene with history, memory, religion and borders

History and memory in Kościół are not straightforward ideas. Attempting to speak about them and the way they permeate the local landscape disrupts any naïve notion that only those on the inside construct the sense of a place. In fact it goes further still, disrupting the inside/outside binary that such an idea takes for granted. History and memory in Kościół are ongoing projects emerging from the dialectic of inside/outside, from the way in which each category constructs itself in relation to the other, and from the contradictions of their relationship. It is difficult to speak of history without memory, and vice versa, and often even more difficult to draw a line separating them. In the end it often comes down to scale and stability, to history as a larger more fixed or fixing process (Pine, Kaneef & Haukanes 2004). In this way 'time, space, place and the presence or absence of a fixed chronology all come into play in understanding the relationship and distinction between history and memory' (ibid, 13). History and memory are as such deeply implicated in the construction of a sense of place. In the introduction I spoke about some of the work that has been done on 'hidden histories' (Hastrup 1992) and about listening *to* rather than *for* (Cruikshank 1998; Haukanes 2006; Pine 2007). In this chapter I want to circle back to that discussion. Hidden histories are a good example of how entangled landscapes of memory and history can be. The name, hidden history, ignores the fact that there are a few distinct cognitive processes involved: memory, official discourses, and common knowledge are by far the most necessary (Hastrup 1992). Hidden histories are thus deeply personal and local, based on memory and common knowledge; while at the same time they provide examples of how integrated national historical narratives are in people's everyday lives. Hidden histories are only possible when inside/outside forces are understood dialectically. Put another way, the 'external' historical discourse must be integrated in order for hidden histories to be operational. We need to know that the empty space in conversation covers a real event or else we cannot interpret the silence. Often in Kościół what is not said is as important as what is said, and what is not spoken of acts as a *negative space*, a background that has the potential to some into the foreground when we listen to the absence and not the action of a tale.

I am aware that in discussing the town's background I risk ossifying partial memories and histories into a singular narrative of the past. However, it must be remembered that the historic landscape of the town is shifting like any other. History is constantly emerging as memories and perspectives move on the scale of social processes or elide into more permanent categories. Personal memories become part of collective

memory and are later read as history (Lass 1994). In this section I will present a historical background that does not attempt to replicate the grand texts of historians such as Norman Davies (1979; 1981; 1986). What will follow is fragmentary. I am presenting a history that is intimately connected to the nuanced manner in which the town's various landscapes were emerging. This does not mean avoiding troubled and troubling events or giving a partial history; rather, it represents a recognition that there is no way of giving a total (totalising) history.

Similarly to the landscape of history and memory, the backdrop for discussing religion and the border involves the dialectic relationship of inside/outside. The border remains implicit throughout the chapters that follow in a complex and sometimes contradictory way, which I want to introduce here. I shall begin with the attempts to create a spatially solid EU border that coincides with the Polish one. Talking through theories of borders and bordering I shall draw out some ideas that infuse the conceptually and physically diffuse border landscapes of Kościół. The final part of this chapter considers the category of religion, which saturates the town's landscape. I have already discussed how I understand and approach religion in the introduction, but more needs to be said. Chiefly I will discuss two aspects of religion that are fundamental to the argument put forward by this thesis. The first is the socio-historical construction of the category *Christian* (Asad 1993) and the impact this has on how I discuss the category in my work. The second aspect relates more specifically to my fieldsite. I am interested in drawing out the conflation of Catholicism and Polishness and the impact this has on the relationship between the different Churches in my fieldsite.

1.1 Fragments of history

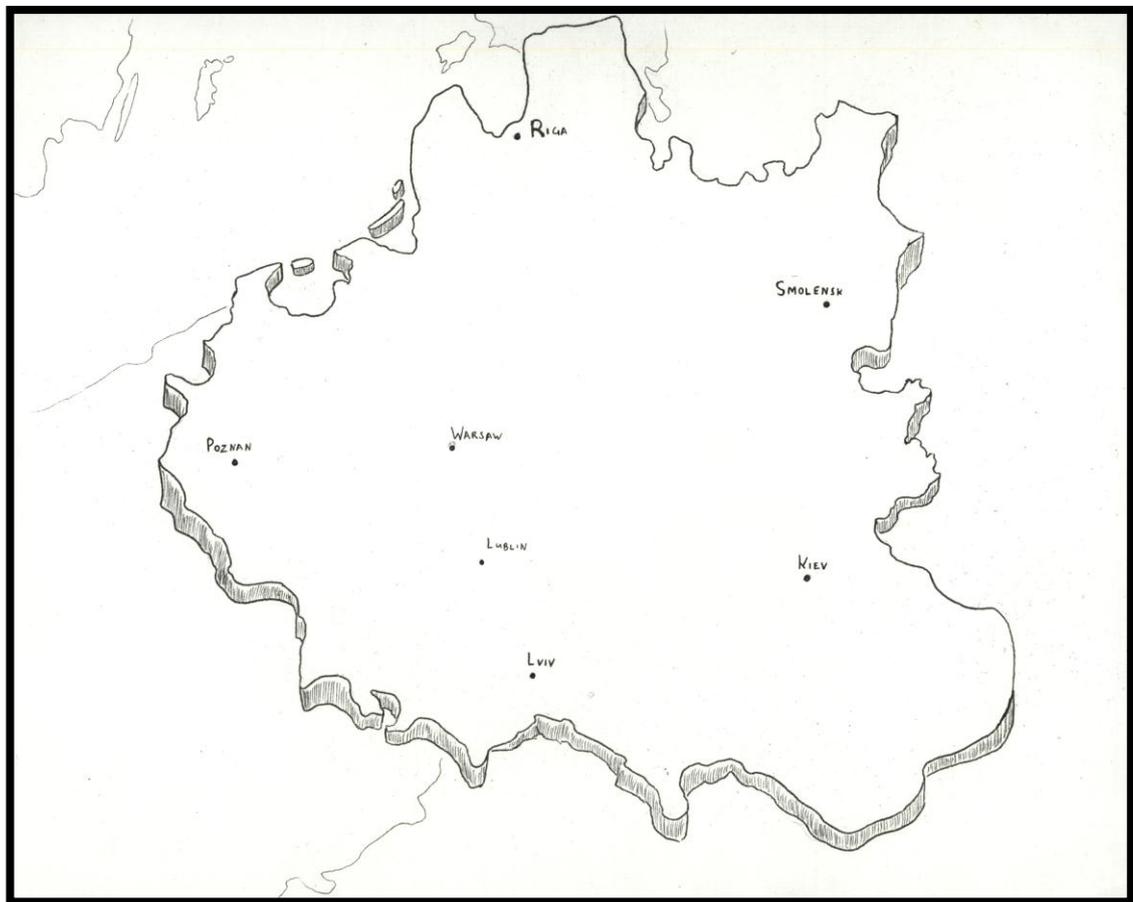
1.1.1 The Commonwealth

The noble Wielmoża family built St Catherine's basilica at the zenith of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, during the mid 1600s. This commonwealth was established in 1569 and dissolved finally in 1795, in the third partition (Davis 1981;¹ Longworth 1997; Stiles 1991)². The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a multi-linguistic state; its people spoke Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Yiddish. Its territories covered areas now called Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, and Russia, as well as smaller parts of

¹ Norman Davies' account of Polish history is strongly biased toward a view of Poland as a besieged Catholic nation. His work is problematic; however, he is still one of the most widely-read and remarked-upon Polish historians outside, and indeed within, Poland. Thus Davies must be included in any account of Polish history, perhaps with the caveat that he should be read alongside less partisan historians.

² See Appendix 1 for a brief timeline of Polish history.

Estonia, Latvia, Moldova, and Slovakia (Snyder 2003). During this period Kościół was located in the interior of the commonwealth's territory and its noble family were members of the Sejm.³ Throughout the commonwealth era politics and the idea of the nation were seen to reside in the nobility. The Sejm was made up of representatives of the commonwealth's noble families who also elected the Monarch (Davies, 1981). The sharing of civic rights was considered the tie that binds, and civic rights were the privilege of the nobility. The nobility was not homogenous; many families like the Wielmożas were Lithuanian, yet the language of power remained Polish in recognition of its senior status in the commonwealth. The Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth may have had many languages and religions but this plurality was only considered an issue when it troubled the organisation of the small noble elite. However, over the two hundred or so years of its existence these ideas began to change (Snyder 2003).



Map 3: Map of Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth 1635

The nobility of the commonwealth was remarkably weak; the Sejm could be disrupted by a single veto and it often was. Arguments over the rightful king (the nation was an elective monarchy) dominated the final years of the commonwealth, as did external meddling. As the commonwealth grew weaker its neighbours grew stronger

³ Parliament

(Davies 1981). To the east was Russia, under Catherine the Great, to the west was a belligerent Prussia, and to the south the Austrian Empire. By 1772 the commonwealth was under the thumb of Russia and a disorganised attempt to eject Russian troops had already failed miserably. This was the event that prompted the initial partition of Poland (1772) and then began a series of two further partitions (in 1793 and 1795). The partition of 1795 obliterated the commonwealth, removing it from the map and splitting the territories between Russia, Prussia, and Austria (Austro-Hungarian empire from 1867–1918) (Stiles, 1991). The partition of Poland lasted until 1918, although there were attempts throughout this time (see timeline),⁴ to rectify the partition and re-establish Poland (Snyder 2003). During this period the east of Poland was part of the greater Russian empire. The town of Kościół found itself in Russia for one hundred and twenty three years. In 1815 it was on the Russian edge of Congress Poland's border (Davies 1981). By 1918, just before the founding of the interwar Polish state, it danced on the edge of the border between German-controlled Poland and the Ukrainian People's Republic.

1.1.2 The Partition

The final partition is deeply ingrained in the memory of Catholic residents of Kościół. During the first and second partitions the town remained within the borders of the commonwealth. However, after the third and final partition and the disappearance of any form of the Polish state, the town ended up on the Russian side of the new border. The history of partition emerged when my respondents talked about the history of the basilica. In 1795, I was told, the Russians came and set about destroying the basilica. My respondents told me that the Russians transformed the basilica into a place of Orthodox worship, while stripping it of all its interiors. Historically it is unclear if the basilica was ever used as an Orthodox Church, yet this story is important as it demonstrates a change that was happening across partitioned Poland at the time. During the years of partition, 1772 to 1795, the narrative of the nation changed, and after 1795 this change was apparent in developing attitudes to nationality.

In 1791 the Polish nobility drew up the first constitution in the world, which the second partition prevented from being enacted (Stiles 1991). The constitution had the capacity to empower the people of the commonwealth and has been celebrated as an emancipatory act ever since.⁵ Marx declared 'the history of the world knows no other example of similar noble conduct by the nobility' (cited in Stiles 1991). But this constitution also demonstrated that the nobility recognised the commonwealth could no

⁴ Appendix 1

⁵ Poland's national day still falls on May 3rd the date the constitution was signed.

longer be anchored in an increasingly debased gentry. As the commonwealth was divided again and again a new way of conceiving of the state was necessary. By the time of the rebellion of 1793, Kosciuszko, its leader, was appealing to a version of statehood that involved enfranchising the Polish people (Stiles 1991). This change of discourse represents a shift in where 'the nation' was believed to reside. Snyder talks about this as a shift from imagining the nation as based in politics, to imaging the nation as 'the people' (2003; 2). To make this shift the people had to be understood as a homogenous group, sharing a language, a religion, and a set of cultural practices, all contained in a given territory (Snyder 2003).



Map 4: Map of the Partitions of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth

Anderson puts the birth of nationalism in Europe as 1820 (1983, 67) and while Gellner (1983), Smith (1998), and Hobsbawm (1990) are less specific they still posit that nationalism and modernism arose simultaneously. Many of the conditions Anderson links to the rise of nationalism's imagined communities (1983) could be seen emerging during the demolition of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. The imaging of a limited sovereign community (Anderson 1983) was essential to Kosciuszko's rebellion, and at the core of this imagining were language, religion, and territory. Speaking Polish now became the primary indicator of Polish nationality; hence any area where Polish was the predominant language was considered part of the Polish nation. Roman Catholicism, the most common religion among Polish speakers, similarly became an aspect that limited the extent of naturalization (Snyder 2003). During this period many of the traditions and 'essential elements' we now associate with Polishness were first imagined and created (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Smith 1998). In a manner of speaking, the people of the former Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth were in a process of becoming 'ethnic', and this ethnicity was primarily understood as related to spoken language (Snyder 2003). Throughout the partition there were attempts to revive the Polish nation: in 1807, 1815, 1831, and 1863 (Davies 1985; Longworth 1997). All of these rebellions, uprisings, and personal union states relied on an appeal for the reunification of the Polish nation, a nation now imagined as encompassing a vastly different set of territories. This nation also relied not on the early modern history of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, but on a reimagined medieval past (Snyder 2003). It fabricated a Polish culture that extended from the Christian King Mieszko I (tenth century) all the way to the present period. This past was manifest particularly in the actions of the women of the gentry. From 1795 onwards the aristocratic women began to 'grieve' for the death of Poland, dressed in full black mourning accessorised with jet jewellery and veils whenever they appeared in public (Pine 2001). This action linked women and women's bodies to the ideal of the 'body political', a connection further strengthened as women became central to the transmission of the dream of Poland throughout the partition years. Language, religion, romantic histories, and counter memories were all communicated in the private domain—the domain of the family and the mother (Pine 2001).

This linking of Christianity, specifically Catholicism, and the Polish nation is problematic in the east of Poland. Despite this it is a narrative that is played out in many history texts (see for example Davies 1981; 1985). From 1795 until 1918, in the regions under the control of Russia, the Catholic faith was suppressed. Like Kościół, in many towns and cities Catholic churches and cathedrals were given to the Eastern Orthodox Church or stripped and left empty (Davies 1981). The Russian state did not aim to destroy

Catholicism outright in the area; rather it wanted to ensure the Church was sufficiently weak that it did not become a space for sedition. The Greek Catholic (sometimes called Uniate, although this term is believed by some to be derogatory; Neuhaus 2002) population was not so fortunate.

There was an extensive Ukrainian Greek Catholic minority in the East of Poland in 1795. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in this area was born out of the 1596 Union of Brest. In this Union the Church of Kiev (an Eastern Orthodox Church) entered into communion with the Church in Rome. The subsequent Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church initially retained the Byzantine rite and the look and liturgy⁶ of the Eastern Orthodox Church while acknowledging the Pope as their head (Keleher 1995). Throughout the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth period the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church became more Catholic in its appearance, while retaining its Orthodox liturgy. During this period the initial multi-lingual aspect of the Church began to change; in 1596 early forms of Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Polish were spoken and used by the clergy, while by 1795 Ukrainian had become the most-used language of the Greek Catholic Church—Belarusian had ceased to be used and only a small number of priests spoke Polish. During the Partition period a number of priests and bishops were determined to ‘de-Latinise’ the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (Keleher 1995). They followed a set of policies and practices that closely aligned them to the Russian government.

The Russians believed that the Eastern Catholics should ‘re-join’ the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church was one of the largest Eastern Catholic Churches in eastern Europe, and this in particular motivated the Russian state’s desire to incorporate them into the Russian Eastern Orthodox Church. Initially the Russian state pursued a policy of voluntary and coerced conversion to the Eastern Orthodox faith (Keheler 1995). They encouraged and assisted reformers, but when this tactic did not yield results they allowed much more violent campaigns: buildings were confiscated and practitioners executed. One such example of violent suppression occurred near my fieldsite, in Pratulin in 1874. Here parishioners refused to participate in the Russification of their Church. Thirteen of them gathered in front of their church in protest, and were shot dead by the Russian army (Butler 2000). A year later, in 1875, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church of the former Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth was formally incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church (Keheler 1995). Chris Hann (1993; 1996; 2006; 2010a) and Juraj Buzalka (2008) have written in detail of the ongoing conflict between the Greek, Orthodox, and Roman Catholics in the southeast of Poland. Yet in the

⁶ The liturgy is the form of public worship, which is dictated by the ecclesiastic traditions of a religious group.

area where I worked, despite its proximity to the parish of Kostomłoty, there had not been the same level of violence or sectarianism, perhaps because Kostomłoty survived both the 19th century repression and the later communist repression by staying quiet and constantly implying they would join the Catholics or Orthodox just as soon as the old parish priest died. Keheler has a telling footnote in his article about Kostomłoty. He recalls visiting the parish and being asked to speak in Russian; this was despite the fact the locals spoke Ukrainian and Polish. He offered to speak in Ukrainian and was discouraged, as it might raise the ‘ethnic question’. He later asked the locals the ethnic question anyway and notes with (unexplainable) surprise that their answer was ‘we’re the locals’ (Keheler 1997, 370).

1.1.3 The hidden history of Judaism in Kościół

East Poland was home to a large number of Jewish communities from the late 16th century until the end of World War II. Despite this, throughout my fieldwork the history of these communities was almost never mentioned and rarely commemorated. For Polish Jews their relationship to their Christian neighbours encompassed both periods of violent oppression and relatively easy integration (Polonsky 2010a; 2010b; 2012). Weinryb suggests that a small number of Jewish people had been living in Poland for a far back as we can trace the country’s history (1973). However, in the 1500s there was a large influx of Jews of various traditions from across Europe who were fleeing persecution, particularly the new anti-Semitic laws of Spain (Weinryb 1973). This emigration was encouraged by the tolerant and relaxed legal attitude to the Jewish faith enshrined in laws issued by King Zygmunt I (Weinryb 1973). As large numbers of Jews sought refuge and settled in Poland, the country became the cultural and spiritual centre of Judaism in Europe and even was called *paradisus iudaeorum*⁷ by one Vatican observer (Polonsky 2010a). As Jewish communities spread further into the countryside and began to establish shtetls,⁸ tensions began to arise.

Conflicts between Jewish and Christian Poles led to a number of pogroms; most destructive of all was the Cossack-led Khmelnytsky Uprising, which began in 1648 and lasted until 1657. Yet after each of these periods of violence and oppression, surviving members of the Jewish community returned to their homes and started again (Polonsky 2010b). During the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth era most of the Jewish communities in eastern Poland lived in shtetls. Yiddish was their first language—although most also

⁷ Latin for Jewish Paradise.

⁸ The shtetl was a town with a majority Jewish population, which was given permission to manage its own affairs.

spoke the local vernacular too. Laws at the time allowed Jews to own property but ultimately Polish Catholic noblemen owned the shtetls. The residents of shtetls elected their own rabbi and collected their own taxes. Many in the shtetl were traders or craftsmen rather than farmers. This meant that they were not isolated from the larger Polish state. They frequently sold and bought from Polish Catholic neighbours and their taxes were owed to Polish nobles (Polonsky 2010a).

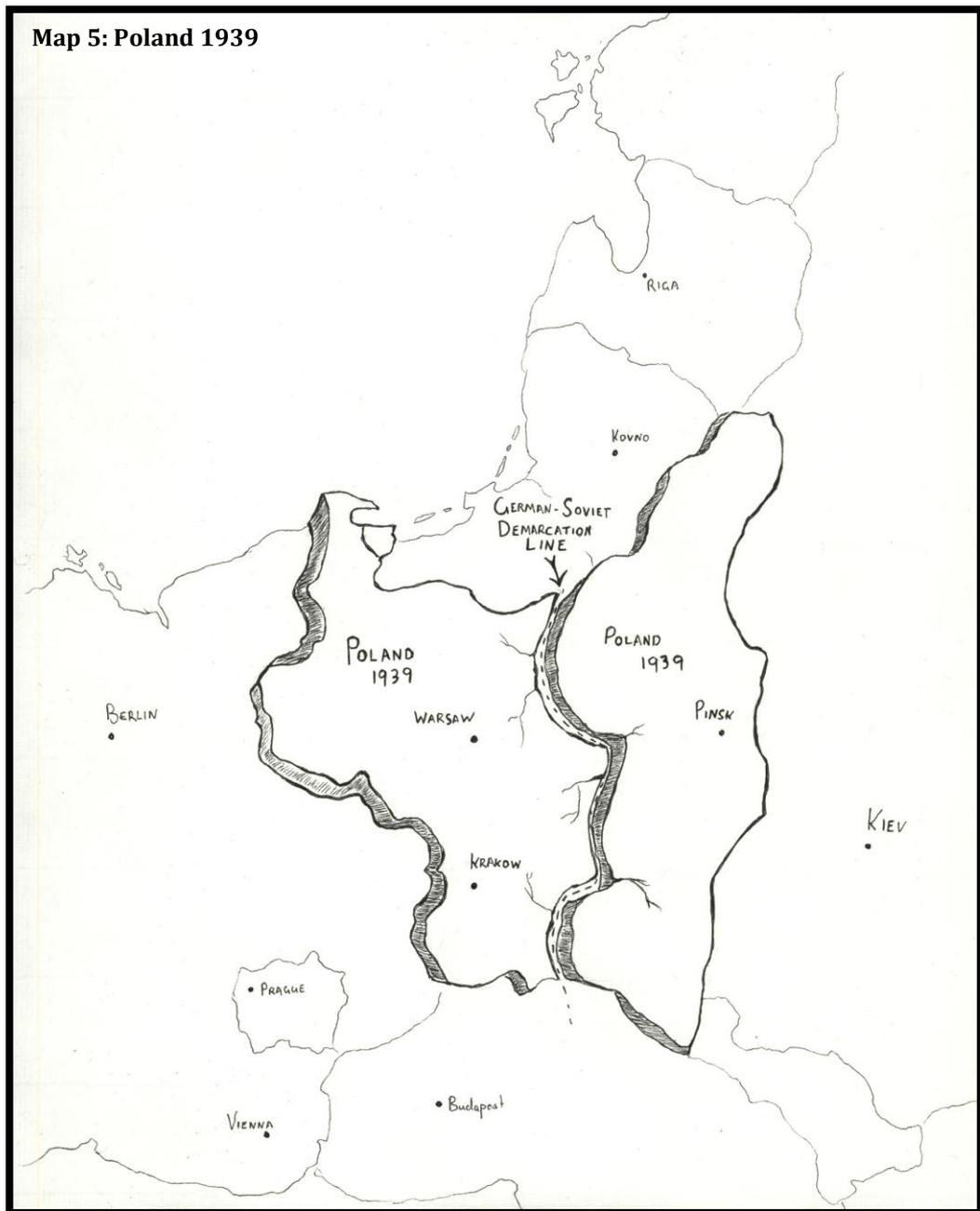
The partitions of Poland between 1771 and 1795 were the beginning of a long period of Jewish decline. From 1795 to 1918 the Jewish population in eastern Poland were part of the Russian State and subject to Russian laws and policies. This was a period of increasing anti-Semitism and decreasing state protection (Polonsky 2010a). Jewish communities were subject to the anti-Semitic policies of the Russian state, including the reneging of Jewish rights to own land; removal from villages and stetls to towns; assimilation via education only in Russian or Polish; and being excluded from certain industries (Snyder 2003; Weinryb 1973). From the 1880s onwards anti-Semitic narratives, including the infamous blood libel,⁹ circulated in Russia. During this period Russian subjects were also assured they would not be held culpable for the murder of Jews (Polonsky 2010b). This led to a long period of pogroms, and increasing pressure on the Jewish population to assimilate with the Russian/Polish Christian population.

As the 19th century faded into the 20th the anti-Semitic policies and beliefs of the Russian state continued and developed in a new direction. As the threat of communism stirred the Russian aristocracy, Judaism and Communism became linked. Like many oppressed Russian minorities Jews rushed to join the ranks of the revolutionary communist parties. The situation of the Jewish communists was complicated, as their parties advocated both atheism and internationalism. Yet the Russian state and other anti-Semitic groups accused the Jewish Revolutionary Communists of pursuing a 'Jewish agenda' through communism (Polonsky 2010b). Much of the White Russian propaganda of the time featured images of Bolsheviks that strongly resembled the traditional grotesque anti-Jewish caricatures (King 2010). To wit, during the 1905 revolution White Russians presented the Jewish communities as enemies on two fronts: enemies of Christendom and enemies of the Russian state (Snyder 2003).

When the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917 Lenin tried to explain and challenge Russian anti-Semitism as the result of imperialist attempts to divert workers' attention from their real enemies: 'Even in other countries one often experiences that the capitalists

⁹ The blood libel appeared in a variety of forms, but most focused on the idea that Jews abducted and ritualistically slaughtered Christian babies.

stir up enmity against the Jews, in order to divert the attention of the workers from the real enemy of the working masses, capital' (Lenin 1919). Throughout the period of 1917 to 1939, the new Soviet Russian leadership attempted to rehabilitate Russian anti-Semitism. But this policy had an unforeseen outcome when in 1939 when the Nazis invaded Poland. Their extermination of the Jewish population was, as Polonsky states, the joint result of Fascist German ideas and a National Socialist (Nazi) war against communism (2012). In other words, they were acting against the Jews as they saw them as 'undesirables' and as a population potentially loyal to their Soviet enemies (Polonsky 2012).



The area that is now the east of Poland saw a very bloody form of large-scale genocide during World War II. By the time the German troops reached the area that surrounds Kościół they were well on their way to Russia. In many of the shtetls and towns they passed through they did not take time to send the Jewish people to Ghettos or even to concentration camps. Instead they took them into the thick forests around the Bug River and shot them in massive groups, abandoning them in mass graves. Kościół had a Jewish population of over six hundred in 1931, but only two hundred and seventy three in 1939 according to the census (accessed via Jewish Cemeteries association online).¹⁰ There are different accounts of what happened to the people when the Nazi troops arrived in 1942. The Polish Jewish Cemeteries organisation says they were placed in the Miedzyrzec Podlaski ghetto and eventually transported to Treblinka concentration camp and slain. In a report for the organisation Jewish Gen Oshrin tells us they were taken to the forest and shot (1995). What is certain is that after the town's Jewish residents were disposed of the Nazi soldiers tore down Kościół's synagogue and yeshiva. They also removed the gravestones from the cemetery and used them to pave the road to Russia, enabling faster transport of heavy vehicles.

The fate of the Jewish population is one of the silences in the town's history. I will deal with the material traces, or lack thereof, in the third chapter; for now I want to look at what exactly is unsaid. Discussion of how to deal with silences and gaps has become more present in anthropology; during the conference *Thinking Memory through Space* (Goldsmiths 2013), Frances Pine and Yael Navaro-Yashin addressed the question 'how do you make an ethnography of something that's not there?' (Pine in discussion with Navaro-Yashin, 2013). Pine and Navaro-Yashin in discussion advocated a shift from the privileging of voice to a perspective that instead takes into account the fragments and traces of the forgotten or silenced past in the lived present. Similarly, Nichanian has written about the impossibility of voice in the case of histories without archives (2009). He discusses how the imposition of voice on such histories can do as much damage as good.

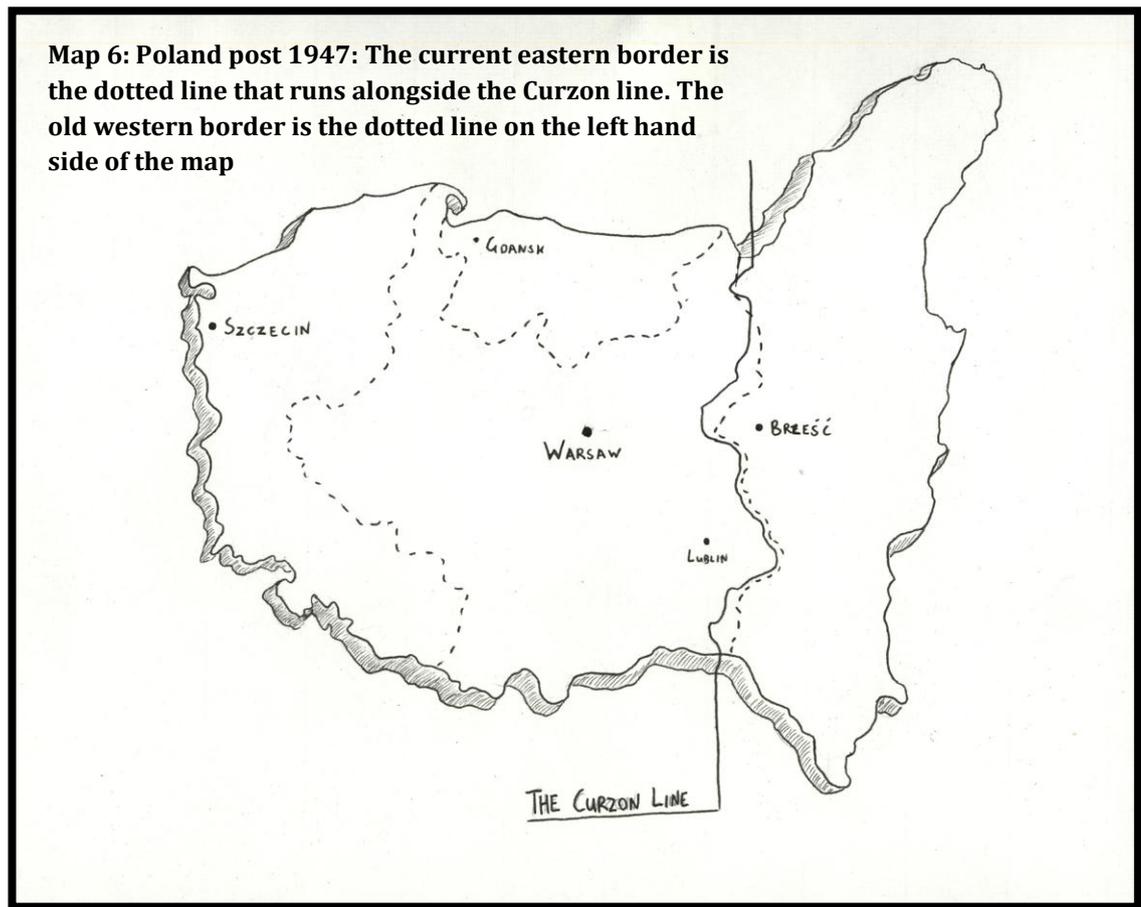
In the case of Kościół the silence was not total; some people did speak of the Jewish community and there was a fragmentary record of in the material culture and space that people encountered in the town. These fragments are temporally specific; they may not have existed twenty or even fifteen years ago when Poland was still grappling with the implications of Polish anti-Semitism during World War II. Even as recently as 2001 Jan Gross faced mass indignation and the accusation that he was part of an international

¹⁰ Oshrin puts the number at 541, and includes in her book a list of the dead (1995).

attempt to prepare the grounds for the restitution of Jewish land when he published his book *Neighbours*.¹¹ Most of the fragments I encountered found their way into narratives of a dead community, one contained in its own tragic demise. The thriving population of tailors, furriers, and shoemakers living in and around and working as a service community for Brest is not mentioned (Oshrin 1995).

Yet there was one trace that allowed people to imagine living Jewish people (as opposed to the dead or dying). One morning as I was out walking with one of my younger respondents she told me that most of the wooden houses remaining around the town square had belonged to Jewish families. She could identify them by their unique porches, small enclosed areas with double doors that opened outwards to facilitate trading. She finished this statement with a whimsical thought, 'how different it was when the entire town square was Jewish traders in black hats and furs!' In this thesis I include the silences I came across regarding this group, because the enormous Jewish presence in the past—and its absence in the present—is vital to the historic landscape of Kościół (Greene 2008).

¹¹ *Neighbours* examined in painstaking detail how the World War II massacre of Jews in Jedwabne was carried out not by Nazi soldiers but by the local non-Jewish population. A forensic investigation confirmed most of the book's claims, revising down the number of victims and adding that German and Polish neighbours had participated. *Neighbours* prompted much discussion of the dual role Poles had in Nazi occupied Poland, as victims of fascism and perpetrators of anti-Semitic violence.



1.1.4 'When the Orthodox left'

When I began my fieldwork I noticed the phrase 'when the Orthodox left' was iterated quite frequently in any discussion of World War II. It also came up in the context of explaining the presence of dilapidated abandoned homes or decaying grave markers. Given that the town still had a very visible Orthodox population this turn of phrase confused me. Then, a few months into my fieldwork, a poster appeared in Kościół's Orthodox Church announcing plans for the upcoming commemorations of Ackja Wisła. I asked one of my Orthodox respondents about the poster and she told me that Ackja Wisła was when the Orthodox had to leave. At the outbreak of World War II the Soviet forces had occupied the eastern half of Poland (see figure 5). In 1941, following the dissolution of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the advancing Nazi troops had pushed the Soviet forces back beyond what is now considered the official eastern border of Poland, during Operation Barbarossa. When the Nazis subjugated the East of Poland in 1941 they issued papers to the population that identified their 'ethnicity' alongside their other details. Many of the area's Eastern Orthodox and small Ukrainian Greek Catholic population found themselves with papers marked with a small 'u', which identified them as Ukrainian. This identification was haphazard, often based on religious affiliation, local hearsay, or convoluted notions of 'blood inheritance' (Snyder 2003, 198).

In 1943 this small letter became a concern for many people on the contested edge of the Ukrainian state, when the UPA (Ukrainian insurgent army) initiated a policy of massacring and expelling those they judged to be Poles in the area they considered part of their homeland (Hryciuk 2002). There was a large amount of land in the regions of Galicia and Volhynia that had been laid claim to by both the Poles and the Ukrainians (Snyder 1999). Starting in the contested southeastern region of Poland the UPA, with the tacit agreement of the Nazi occupiers, began destroying whole villages, murdering anyone they considered to be Polish. When they began to move north they changed tactics slightly, warning villages before they arrived and giving the people the opportunity to flee. The rallying call was to push the Polish west of the River San (Hryciuk 2002; Piotrowski 1998). Not all Ukrainians were involved in the terror but it left a deep scar on the minds and memories of many Poles.

In 1944, near the end of World War II, Soviet troops began to advance back through east Poland, pushing the Nazis toward Germany. The UPA turned their attention to these new aggressors and became an anti-communist army, joined by many more villagers (Piotrowski 1998). The UPA had already invoked the ire of the Soviet authorities before and after the 1932–33 famine in Ukraine, which had led to the deportation of many western Ukrainians¹² (Martin 1998). In 1944 Stalin decided that the only way of resolving the Polish/Ukrainian land disputes and curtailing the actions of Ukrainian nationalists was to create ethnic uniformity in each country, defined according to the Molotov-Ribbentrop borders delineated in 1939—at the beginning of the invasion of Poland (Snyder 2003).

To do this the Soviet Union initiated a transnational practice of repatriations from 1944 to 1946, moving about 780,000 Poles and Jews out of the Ukraine. In 1946 the Soviet Union halted its transnational repatriation project and funding, and from then on people could only be moved within the country (Snyder 2003). The UPA was still active in Poland, although now as an anti-communist partisan group; in 1947 they assassinated the Polish Defence Minister, leading to renewed calls for control or expulsion of the Ukrainians residing in Poland (Piotrowski 1998). In truth the Polish Politburo had been attempting to rid Poland of Ukrainians since 1944, and in 1947 they realised that a large number in the southeast had escaped deportation during the period of transnational repatriation

¹² The Ukrainian famine or Holodomor (Голодомор) is a particularly horrific man-made famine. Between 1932 and 1933 up to 7.5 million Ukrainians died of starvation. The cause is debated but most frequently collectivisation, rapid industrialisation, and potentially the purposeful intent to destroy nationalism are cited. In any case Russian Soviet policies such as rejection of outside aid, restricted movement of the population, and confiscation of household foods exacerbated the initial famine and created long-lasting resentment toward the Soviet Russians.

(Buchowski & Chlewińska 2010; Snyder 1999). On the day following the assassination of the Defence Minister a Soviet officer on the General Staff, Lieutenant Colonel Kossowski, went to investigate and returned with the recommendation that 'As soon as possible, an Operational Group should be organized, to form a plan for the complete extermination of the remnants of the Ukrainian population in the south eastern border region of Poland among other things' (Snyder 1999, 109). The Politburo quickly decided to 'resettle Ukrainians and mixed families in the regained territories (especially in southern Prussia), without forming any tight clusters and no closer than 100 kilometres to the border' (Snyder 1999, 108). They named the resettlement plan *Akcja Wisła*, Operation Vistula, after the river that divides Poland in half. The Ukrainians were to be moved from one side of Poland to the other. Snyder comments that the use of the river's name in the title recalls the Polish claim to all land west of the Zbruch River and the Ukrainian rally to push the Poles west of the San; it also is reminiscent of the Soviet Union's final compromise on the Bug River as the 'natural' border of Poland (Snyder 2003).

Operation Vistula began in 1947. It focused on three palatinates¹³ Rzeszów, Lublin, and Cracow, and over the course of four months approximately 150,000 people, 30,000 families, were relocated (Kersten 1991, 392). A further 3,936 men and women were sent to a concentration camp in Jaworzno as they were believed to have ties with the UPA (Snyder 2003). During the operation soldiers would surround a village they intended to 'cleanse'. A senior officer would enter the village and read out a list of those to be resettled; they would then be given a few hours to pack twenty five kilograms of luggage. After this the villagers would be marched to a halfway stop where they would later board packed trains to the resettled lands in the west; twenty-one people died on the journey (Torzecki 1993). Once again it is important to note that the ethnicity of those relocated was generally determined by the presence or absence of a 'u' on their Nazi-issued papers (Snyder 2003).

During the final part of my fieldwork the Orthodox Diocese of Lublin-Chełm was marking the 65th anniversary of Operation Vistula, and this was the reason I came upon so much information about this particular part of history. At the very end of my research I was introduced to three old women who had been transported to the west of Poland from a neighbouring town and had returned after 1989. I spoke briefly with them but did not have time to interview them when we met at an Orthodox Church outside the town. Later I spoke with a colleague in Warsaw about the encounter and the possibility of returning to research this period later on. I was surprised when she rather firmly corrected me 'Akcja

¹³ Regions during the early communist period in Poland.

Wisła did not happen near your fieldsite, it was all in the Kresy'.¹⁴ I explained that I had indeed met these women, and that they had told me they were resettled. 'They couldn't have been. You said they were Orthodox and they spoke Polish, only the Ukrainian Uniats in the Kresy were relocated'. Try as I might she would not budge in her opinion that I had been misled and mistaken. There were many possible interpretations of what these women told me: they may have been resettled, or they may have travelled west at another point in time for other reasons. They may have been remembering, reconstructing, or misremembering; either way my colleague's adamant insistence that no one in my fieldsite was relocated was stimulating. This is a continued misconception about Operation Vistula in Poland. Any internet search will throw up information about the Polish-Ukrainian nature of the violence, including pictures of burnt-out Ukrainian Greek Catholic churches. However, this ignores the manner in which the 'Ukrainians' were identified. Any divergence from the normative understanding of Polish (in language, religion, or family name) could lead to an individual being defined as Ukrainian (Mach 1993). Only five thousand people are believed to have returned to the southeastern borders (Kersten 1993). The repatriations served to homogenise the east of Poland, yet they remain out of the reach of most histories of the post-war era. Snyder puts this down to the post-1989 peace in Poland and the 'return to Europe' narrative of the second Polish republic (2003, 3).

1.1.5 Return to Europe?

The 'return to Europe' narrative began during the partition period, when new Polish patriots refocused their interest on an imagined homogeneous European medieval Poland. After the fall of socialism in 1989 this 'return' narrative was again prominent, though now the focus was on the emergence of the second republic in 1918. Once again it was an elite group, this time the intelligentsia, which advanced the return to Europe narrative. This time a move to Europe meant a turn away from Russia, from the peripheral status imposed by the Yalta Conference, and signified recognition of their struggle against communism (Mach 2000). Snyder points out in the closing chapters of his book that this 'return to Europe' entailed a change in the policies Poland pursued toward its eastern borders (2003). The first change was the avocation of 'European standards'. 'European standards' set out the ideal of a modern nation state, and incorporated the need for minority rights (Snyder 2003, 225). They also implied a voluntary Europeanization, a reorientation of the national culture to Europe (Mach 2000). The second policy that the Polish government followed was a commitment to 'keep history out of diplomacy' (Snyder

¹⁴ Kresy literally means borderland however, it is used most frequently to refer to a specific part of the border zone: the region between south east Poland and north west Ukraine.

2003, 261). In practice these two policies meant the reordering of foreign policy with regards to Ukraine and Belarus. Poland no longer made territorial claims, and apologised to Ukraine for the ethnic cleansing of the 1940s. It also reoriented its domestic policy so that the eastern borders were to be dealt with according to state interests as opposed to being governed as a site of important national memories. As Snyder puts it, 'Nationalism claims to be about continuity. In fact it must involve a reconstruction of early modern political traditions sufficiently radical to allow the masses to understand and wish to enter a redefined political community' (2003, 281). In other words, in drawing closer to Europe Poland needed to loosen its grip on the past, particularly the idea of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth. The 'return to Europe' is a discourse about the transformation (or formation) of the post-1989 Polish nation (Mach 2000).

Of course the phrase 'return to Europe' obfuscates what Poland was actually doing. This was not a going back to the past, to a pre-war Europe, but was imagined instead as a moving forward into a successful post-war Western Europe (Snyder 2003). At least, that was the government's plan. The reality for Poland was that the transition from socialism to democracy was fraught. There was increasing unemployment, growing inequality, and regional differentiation (Pine 2002). Poland was not alone in experiencing these problems, and, despite the problems, in the beginning of the 21st century it became the poster child for successful transition.¹⁵ In 2004 Poland joined the EU and its eastern borders were hardened. The Schengen regime, which allows for free movement within the EU, has the mirror effect of heavily policing the borders of the EU. Since 2004 Poland has been finding out what it means to be on the edge of 'fortress Europe'¹⁶ (Mandel 1994; Follis 2012). Despite the optimism of the return to Europe narrative, Polish accession to the EU 'asks rather than answers the question of the eastern border of Europe' (Snyder 2003, 293).

¹⁵ Transition is obviously a deeply flawed conceptual tool yet this imagination of Poland remains in the literature outside of academia.

¹⁶ Originally coined in relation to EU regulations curtailing the rights of migrants, particularly Turkish and Algerian migrants (Mandel 1994).

1.2 The Questions of the Border



Image 1.1

Already this chapter has dealt with some of the multiple lives and afterlives of the eastern Polish border. I considered bordering and re-bordering historically and from this vantage point (Massey 2005) a jumble of boundary lines came into focus and demonstrated a frontier that is much livelier than the straight lines on the map might suggest. The border landscape of Kościół has been forever moving in space and time but gives the impression of timelessness. Additionally, the border is a central concern of all the following chapters, though this may not always be explicit. Contained in my title ('Border Landscapes') is an awareness that my fieldsite comprises a number of alternate borders; this is because the idea of the frontier is a particularly potent if malleable local archetype, discourse, and reality, and people's approaches to the border are mediated and liable to change in different points in space and time. In this section I therefore want to focus on this movement and the processes implicated by the borders of Kościół. There is a danger in approaches that attempt to destabilize the idea of a permanent, unchanging border. The danger is that in emphasising the fluidity of the border, by locating it in practices and dislocating it in physical space we overstate the flexibility of the border. However, as Sarah Green expresses, perceiving multiple borders does not equate to identifying a state of borderlessness (2009). She has pointed out that the vantage points from which we encounter the frontier are often found within the very real experiences and processes of

bordering, such as the failure to obtain a visa (2009). In this way, while the border may be in flux and dislocated this does not mean it is any less restrictive.

Much research and writing on borders within anthropology and related disciplines has focused on how the state controls the nation at its limits (Anderson 1983; Braidotti 2010; Balibar 2002; 2004; Bigo 2008; De Genova 2013; Donnan and Wilson 1999; 2012; Sassen 1996). The 'border as a barrier' discourse recalls the work of Mary Douglas on 'matter out of place' and the desire to insulate the body from pollution practically and symbolically (2002 [1966]). Indeed much of the rhetoric of borders and border crossing explicitly focuses on the danger of pollution from the outside (Pine 2013). In my research I found that the new Polish/European frontier in the east remains contested by traders, border guards, and transnational kinship networks, and that these groups frequently overcome the practices of the Polish state. Further, the role of the EU in this area led me to question whether the state's control of its borders really amounts to anything in an era of supra-states, rapid free-moving commodities, and wide-ranging international intervention from the most powerful nations.¹⁷ We can approach these questions by focusing on the border as a process or set of processes. In this way we explore the processes that enable the state to maintain the edges of the nation and also the processes local populations and non-state global actors engage in, preventing the state's project from reaching completion (Mezzandra & Nielson 2013).

One of the most important processes to look at is the movement of people across borders. Karolina Follis does exactly this, following the flow of people across the Polish-Ukrainian border and tracking the states' policies about and responses to this movement (2012). One of the most interesting points she makes about the Polish State's border practices is that at the time of her research the state had no immigration policy. Rather it relied on an ad hoc border regime developed through the encounter between the Schengen treaty and the practices of various border agencies (Follis 2012). This regime is in a constant state of re-bordering, deciding the border through decisions about who is let in and who is kept out (De Genova 2013). The brilliance of Follis's work is that she demonstrates how the people are similarly engaged in their own cross-border regime. She does this by concentrating on Ukrainian shadow economy workers in Warsaw. In this thesis I will be looking at some of the border processes of the Polish people who live closest to the border regime. This is not to say that my respondents are actively resisting or perverting the state's border policies. Some may be; others are merely following strategies and practices that understand trade as a practice enabled and enhanced by the

¹⁷ With the current actions of Russia in Ukraine this question is particularly pertinent (March, 2014).

border, rather than prevented by it. Thus I explore how my respondents' everyday lives contradict and, in some instances, reconstruct the inside/outside narrative of the new European frontier in the east of Poland.

Étienne Balibar has worked extensively on the function and the history of European borders (2002; 2004). In *We the People of Europe* Balibar notes that historical borders were more numerous but also more contained; in other words social, political, and cultural borders often coincided (2004). Now, in a period of increasing human mobility, borders have both decreased and proliferated, as bordering processes have been dislocated from the physical frontiers of states. Balibar shows how the logic of the border has come up in arenas such as access to health care: thus 'some borders are no longer situated at borders at all' (Balibar 2004, 84). Increasingly, bordering processes are active in many of the sites where people attempt to access state provisions. At all these sites the logic of the border continues to play a role in the exclusion of certain persons (Braidotto 2010; De Genova 2013). In this way the practice of bordering coincides with ideas about who is on the outside of the state, that is, who is 'foreign'. The new EU border regime restricts trade and travel to Ukraine and Belarus. In doing so it places severe limits on the wealth that eastern Poles once generated through economic activities with these countries. In the 1990s many western Poles worried about the opening of borders with former Eastern Bloc countries, and participated in widespread discourse about the corrupting and polluting presence of Ukrainian and Russian citizens (Pine 2013). This discourse returned again in relation to the closure of the Eastern borders in 2004. This time the discourse involved the reimagining of former neighbours as potential threats; it had a lot in common with the 'return to Europe' reimagining we discussed at the end of the previous section.

This new relationship between the recently-expanded EU and Poland's former neighbours Ukraine and Belarus is in the process of sedimentation. The space or topography of the border has a role in the naturalization of these new patterns. It is correct to state that the border is an ever-expanding net of processes, yet if we do not explore where these processes take place we present only a partial view of state boundaries. Later in this thesis I will look at the manner in which the Polish state is building a tourist landscape in the East of Poland, one that explicitly references the plurality of the 'borderlands' while orientalising the Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Eastern Orthodox groups that have a vital role in this plurality. I will also look at how international actors (the EU and the UN) are shaping the physical landscape through mandates

attempting to present the eastern border as a timeless and unchanging natural environment.

One of the contradictions of Poland's eastern border is that it has been simultaneously mythologised and forgotten. Tomas Zarycki has been writing about the effects of Polish accession to the EU on Eastern Poland for many years (see Zarycki 2007; 2011 particularly). Zarycki's work covers both the orientalist attitude to Eastern Poland (Zarycki 2007) and the economic and political impacts of the Schengen Agreement (Zarycki 2011). He tries to explain attempts to marginalise eastern Poland. In *Notes on the Balkans* (2005) Green sets out to study marginality through the Greek/Albanian border region of Epirus and its inhabitants. In doing so she comes to conceive of marginality in the region as the combination of 'ambiguity and ordinariness' (Green 2005, 10). Ambiguity is further conceived as lacking the distinction of being just rather than pure Greek. Being 'just' has two sides. On the one hand being 'just Greek' aligns the residents of Epirus with the Greeks who live in the interior; they are seen to be the same as everyone despite their place on the border—ordinary. On the other hand, being 'just Greek' implies a distance from the pure Greeks of the interior, and implies that Epirus is 'more Balkan and less "European" than other areas' (Green 2005, 83). This experience of 'being and not being someone and somewhere in particular' (2005, 14) that Green untangles is also reflected in the sense that, despite multiple changes, everything remains the same. While Epirus moves (tectonically as well as socially and temporally) this constant instability becomes part of the narrative of the place. Epirus is a place where everything is shifting always and the discontinuities do not distinguish the place (Green 2005, 114).

When I first encountered Green's work I thought back to the conversation with my landlady that I presented as a vignette in the Introduction. It also reminded me of many conversations I had with Polish acquaintances about my fieldsite. When I spoke to people (both Poles and those who knew Poland) about my project they frequently assumed that I was working in the Kresy,¹⁸ the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands, formerly known as Galicia and Volhynia. They were always slightly deflated when I told them I was working on the border with Belarus. Unlike the Kresy, which has experienced numerous periods of civic violence, my fieldsite was perceived to be without event. It was just another *babcia*¹⁹ village, a place that would be hard to distinguish from any number of towns in rural Poland. Similarly my respondents frequently expressed their wonder that I would stay in

¹⁸ It is worth noting that the Kresy actually extends along the eastern border. However, in recent years ethnic tensions on the Polish/Ukrainian boundary have effectively repositioned the Kresy (see Hann 1993; 1995, 2005, 2010b).

¹⁹ Grandmother.

the town. The basilica was interesting but surely I could have researched it in a few weeks and avoided being stuck there? When I spoke of my enthusiasm for the everyday life of the town and the everyday religion of its people the response was always polite bafflement. The young people from the area, now scattered throughout Poland, often spoke approvingly of being from the borderlands, yet this was based on their new vantage point in the urban capitals of the country. Older people rarely spoke directly of the border instead focusing on being borderlanders; in this imaging the border was simply an aspect of their day-to-day lives. They negotiated it when trading, visiting family, and in any of their interactions with local government. Through maintaining the border-space the state tries to make a claim to authority over the daily lives of individuals both within and outside the state's limits (Mezzadra & Nielson 2013; Zartman 2010). Some of the practices of my respondents may have been constitutive of the border, or they may have even undermined the state's border regime, but this was rarely the most important (or indeed the intended) outcome of these actions. When people spoke of the border it was often during conversations about religion or Polishness. For my Orthodox respondents in particular, being *od granicy*²⁰ was another aspect of their life people used to imply they were not Polish.

The historic link between east Poland and Russia, as a neighbour and colonial power, remains relevant to current opinions on East Poland. During the partition period the Polish lands controlled by Russia were economically the poorest of the former Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth (Snyder 2003). These regions were also under the most pressure to abandon the Polish language and culture (Davies 1979). Despite this these areas have produced the largest number of famed Polish poets, writers, and national heroes. They were also the cradle of a new left liberal educated intelligentsia, thanks in part to Lublin's two universities (Zarycki 2013). The 'afterlife' (ibid, 141) of the 18th century border means that these contradictions have become integral to the romanticised view of eastern Poland, the so called 'myth of the Kresy'. The myth of the Kresy has parallels to Fredrick Jackson Turner's 'frontier thesis' (2008[1893]). Turner argued that the western frontier shaped the American character and that the frontiersmen were the essence of America (2008[1893]). His thesis was that the constant movement of the frontier in the west of America and the uncultivated land it unveiled created a society unlike anything in Europe. The ability to 'tame the land' was at the centre of citizenship on the Western frontier and the old habits of the European were stripped from the person at the frontier, this changed the colonists into Americans, something between the Native people and the European settlers; '[the frontier] finds him a European...it takes him from

²⁰ 'from the border'.

the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe...Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and ploughing with a sharp stick' (Turner 2008[1893], 4). For Turner the American frontier produced a new egalitarian and rugged American character. Although his thesis has been criticized since the 1900s (most notable Pierson in 1942), his association of the frontier and wild, anarchic, violent, individualistic and impulsive characters remains a powerful border archetype, a recurring motif. The notion is that it is a pluralistic rural idyll, where the true culture of Poland is sustained and grown, yet also a depressed and uncivilised region peripheral to greater Poland (Zarycki 2008).

As stated in the introduction the border is relatively invisible and implicit throughout this thesis. In presenting my data I often take my cue from ethnographies of border zones, such as Wolf and Cole's *The Hidden Frontier* (1974) and Berdahl's *Where the World Ended* (1999). Both works focus on frontier villages and often their analysis of the border is more implied than overt. Wolf and Cole's book frequently resembles a traditional 'village ethnography' with its interest in kinship, land inheritance, mountain husbandry and what they call 'the imponderability of daily life' (1974, 24). However as they clarify in the introduction the 'microcosm' of the local context is complexly related to larger political processes, including state level attempts to homogenise national identity in an Italian Alpine Valley that borders Austria. Berdahl's book begins by paying close attention to the former GDR border geographically and historically. However in the chapters that follow, covering topics such as gender, consumption and religion, Berdahl is more interested in the everyday interactions with power and implicitly the border. Berdahl makes a subtle study of belonging and the role that the border plays visibly and invisibly in this process (1999). Like these authors my intention is not always to speak directly of the border, however in discussing issues such as memory, space and tourism Kościół's location in a border zone has an impact on the analysis. Even when it becomes obscured the concept of the border leaves its imprint on this thesis.

While former borders remain in the landscape as translucent bands outlining local stereotypes the reality of the post 2004 border is equally vital to understanding East Poland's present. Despite media representations and academic studies approaching the 2004 accession as almost entirely positive (Komornicki & Miszczuk 2010), eastern Poland demonstrates the damage that hardening external EU borders can do. Unlike their compatriots, eastern Poles demonstrated against the closing of the borders (Zarycki 2011)—perhaps their long-time acquaintance with Belarusians, Ukrainians and Russians prevented them from believing and internalising the talk of violent drunk men and seductive predatory women (see Pine 2013). Since the closure of the borders the fears of

the eastern Poles have been demonstrated to be justified. Transport links have diminished, and trade with Ukraine and Belarus has dried up (Zarycki 2011). While there has been an influx of EU funds, Galar points out that these are short term, periodic, and for use in specific projects; thus they fail to make up for the economic shortfall the closing of the borders entailed (2008). My respondents were burdened with a nationally resonant identity, as the people at the edge of Polish belonging, and increasingly economically disadvantaged by EU accession. In their everyday lives they were not only impacted on by the border and its processes but also embroiled in the relational production of the border.

1.3 Locating religion

The issue of borders remains when we discuss religion in the area, but it is complicated by the everyday practices under consideration. In my fieldsite many people were active across different religious denominations (I will explore this in more depth in chapter five). However, as I suggested at the beginning of this section, they were also attempting to police the edges of their faith and often this was most easily done by defining religious belonging negatively: 'I am Orthodox not Catholic'. People were then involved in the socio-historical construction of their own religion and the religion they opposed it to. By contrast, religion was frequently unexamined in the day-to-day lives of my respondents, or was understood in almost non-denominational moments of religious imminence. Religion was at once active in shaping people and shaped according to peoples multiple senses of belonging.

Mothers and Grandmothers

My fieldwork was nearly finished when I found myself in Pani Halenka's kitchen talking about death. My grandmother had been ill throughout my fieldwork and was now nearing the end. She had 'neared the end' earlier in the year and I had flown home bringing with me an assortment of blessed religious objects from my respondents. With her characteristic iron will my grandmother had rallied and my respondents had been delighted when I returned, praising it as a miraculous recovery. Now I was getting ready to leave Kościół as she was ill again and her multitude of grandchildren were being recalled from around the world to be at her side. Pani Halenka was very impressed at the command my grandmother had over her family. Both women were retired nurses and Pani Halenka had always seemed to feel a certain empathy toward my grandmother. I noticed that this time around none of my respondents had given me religious items to bring to her and I told Pani Halenka. She was sitting opposite me at her small wooden kitchen table, and she looked up and smiled. 'This time we are praying to the Blessed Mother to ease your Grandmother's suffering'. I was silent; after many months in the field I was still uncomfortable when people seemed happy to include me in their cosmological universe with little thought. 'Do you remember when Andrzej fell from the apple tree and split his head?' She was referring to an accident that happened in the summer and was by now a common story of divine intervention in the town. 'Well then his family prayed and God healed him, it was a miracle, even the doctors said so'. She paused here and placed her hand on mine. 'Sometimes you pray to the Blessed Mother for a miracle, and sometimes you pray to her because She loves you always'.

Apparent in this vignette—and in my introduction—is that everyday religion in Kościół was at once ordinary and extraordinary, and these two categories related dialectically. For my Catholic and Orthodox respondents religion was always immanent in their lives, but often in an unexamined way. Initially I found this unexamined religiosity hard to investigate as my respondents found it difficult to verbalise. It often became apparent through the extraordinary manifestations of religion and my respondents' subsequent responses to them. When Andrzej's miraculous recovery happened the initial response was joy. A little later some of my respondents told me they had also felt extremely anxious about it. Andrzej was a pious and active member of the Orthodox Church and lived an overwhelmingly visible religious life. My respondents told me that through Andrzej's exceptional encounter with the divine they were made aware of their own unconsciously religious lives. Another way in which my respondents frequently reported becoming aware of their religion was in relation to other faiths. While they were always Catholic, some of my respondents felt their religiosity strongest when they unexpectedly encountered Orthodoxy in their everyday life. The contradictory emergence and experience of religion is not a new idea. In 1968 Leach was already applying the 'Hegelian dialectic' to anthropological approaches to religion in order to dissolve the binary of 'philosophical and practical religion' (1). The idea remains useful because it allows us to study religion as unbound and immanent while also taking account of the wider context (Coleman 2013). To paraphrase Simon Coleman, it prevents us doing an anthropology of religion that focuses too much on the religion (Coleman 2013, 254–255).

The study of religion in my fieldsite had been reinvigorated by the work of the Halle Focus Group on Religion, Identity, and Postsocialism that operated across East Central Europe, Asia, and Eurasia from 2003 to 2010. The focus group aimed to problematize the 'revival of religion' thesis and to identify areas where a direct appeal to socialism and postsocialism could improve the research and data on religion (Hann 2010a). They were acutely interested in the idea of 'religious identities', which Hann in his review of the project breaks into four aspects: personal religiosity, the local community, ethnic group/nation, and transnational factors (2010a, 13–15). The focus and output of the group reflects Hann's presentation of the religio-political problem: that 'the politization of religion under socialism meant that no aspect of religious identity after socialism could be free of the political' (2006, 6). Under the guidance of Hann the Halle group has operated under this principal during all of its long and industrious research into religion. I do not disagree with this approach to religion; however, I do find it remarkably flat. While I believe that studying religion through politics gets us a long way in our

understanding of politics, it also runs the risk of devaluing our respondents' affective religious lives, and it does not add overly much to our understanding of religious practices.

Of course by talking about how we study religion I am side-stepping one of the great debates in the anthropology of religion: the 'definition of religion' problem. Having taught many undergraduates this topic I can attest to the fact that it is still provocative. There is no solid answer, and I feel the best a researcher can do is make some attempt to draw a minimal definition of the category or indicate the kind of attitude they will be taking toward the concept in their work. Pine and de Pina-Cabral make a similar claim when they demonstrate how the category of religion has 'survived its deconstruction' yet remains frustratingly broad (2008, 3). Their book, *On the Margins of Religion*, originated in a conference they organised at the Max Plank Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle. During the debate they did not clearly define the category of religion, but they did utilise Wittgenstein's 'family resemblances' approach (ibid).

We have in common that our respondents are equally interested in defining their faiths (Leach 1968). In particular I focus on the relationship between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches in my fieldsite. The initial prompt for me to consider this relationship came during some questions raised following a paper I gave on my research just after returning from the field. A Polish academic took issue with my inclusion of the Orthodox community when discussing religion in the area. She suggested that by including discussions on the Orthodox and their relation to the Catholic majority I was 'orientalising' my fieldsite. When I asked her to expand she remarked that I was presenting my field as though Catholicism and Orthodoxy were equally important, and that I was making the region look exotic in relation to the rest of Poland. This comment stuck with me for a long time. I did not feel it was fair, but there was something at the core of it that felt honest. The idea that the presence of a living practicing Orthodox community could have the effect of exoticising the area reflected the assumption that an Orthodox community was somehow alien to Poland.

I became increasingly interested in understanding the impact of this assumption on the relationship between the Orthodox and Catholics in my fieldsite. In both the local and wider history that encroached on the area it is possible to trace a trend in the religious diversity of the region. Slowly this once pluralistic religious space is becoming more homogenised. The Catholic Church is not only in the majority, it also seems to dominate shared spaces in the town and in local discourse. The Eastern Orthodox Church is a minority, and one that seems to be increasingly viewed as an intangible heritage and not a

living community. Local guide books and coffee-table histories do not exclude the Orthodox community from the area; rather, they clean up history, leaving out references to Ukrainian nationalism and its fall out, packaging this history as one of the cultural attractions of the area (see photographic coffee table books such as Tabor 1999; 2008). The only time Orthodox people (and not Orthodox culture) are mentioned is in reference to festivals, and in these references great emphasis is placed on the quaintness of the event.²¹ Most interestingly, my own data revealed Orthodoxy as a religion that was focused on its liturgy and community events, yet ideas about the centrality of nature to the Orthodox faith are increasingly imported from neighbouring Ukraine (see Naumescu 2008 in relation to nature and Orthodoxy in Ukraine). Researching and writing about my fieldsite is a difficult balancing act. I want to acknowledge and explore the plurality and heterogeneity of the area without falling into the rhetoric of the myth of the Kresy. I also want to investigate the increasing homogenisation of the region and the impact of Catholic–Polish hegemony. These processes generate one another and are integral to my thesis.



Image 1.2

²¹ See Lubelski region's English language internet home page <http://www.lubelskie.pl>.

Chapter 2

Kościół and the Queen of Heaven: Churches, Icons, and Space

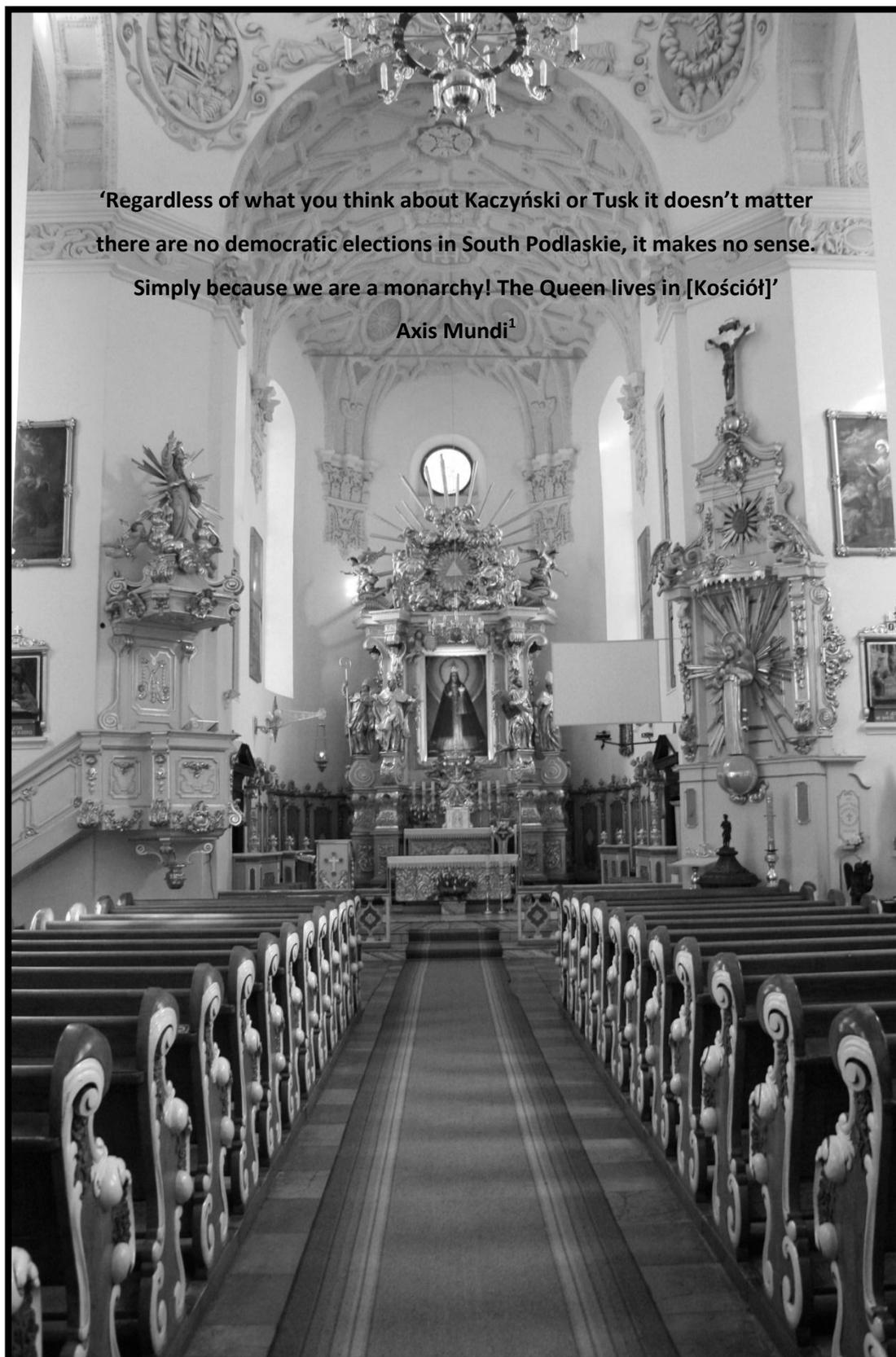


Image 2.1

¹ „Niezależnie co myślą na ten temat Kaczyński z Tuskiem to żadne wybory demokratyczne na Południowym Podlasiu nie mają większego sensu. Bo tu po prostu jest monarchia! Królowa mieszka w [Kościół]” From Axis Mundi (Name of town changed as per introduction)

By the end of November the visitors should have disappeared from Kościół, along with the watery sun. But this year winter was late, the sky remained strikingly blue, and the tourists were still enjoying the bleak, leafless forests in the crisp weather. The house I lived in doubles up as a guesthouse during the summer, and due to the unexpectedly mild weather it was still filled with boarders. There were no free rooms, so I had to conduct the interviews I had scheduled for the weekend in the monastery. The location did not reflect my preference but rather the fact that there was a limited choice of venues in Kościół. The local library opened sporadically throughout the week and the pizzeria—the only restaurant in town—only opened in the summer, and then on its own erratic timetable; the House of Culture was open every day but shut by six. This meant the basilica and the monastery were the only spaces open to the public throughout the year, every day of the week and after six in the evening. The monastery sat behind the basilica and was part of a complex of buildings that included a pilgrimage house, museum, and public meeting halls.

The basilica, or to title it correctly St Catherine's minor basilica, is an ostentatious affair, dwarfing the surrounding town in its towering white neo-Gothic grandeur. Still, St Catherine's is a relatively small building for such a grand title, with a maximum capacity of about two hundred people. I was told on more than one occasion that the basilica was modelled on St Peter's in Rome, and this mimesis is a very important part of the story of the holy image. Like most 16th-century churches it is built in the shape of a cross, with the altar at the top, easterly, end and the entrance at the bottom, westerly, end. According to tradition, the west is the end from which the hordes of hell will attack on Judgement Day, which explains the slightly fortified façade on that end (Gombrich 1995). At the centre of the church's cross shape is a high dome; the arms on either side are short and contain side altars, one dedicated to over eighty relics of a variety of saints and martyrs and the other to St Eugene and more recently Blessed Pope John Paul II. Like most Catholic churches in the area the walls are painted white. The pews and decorations are either in a dark heavy wood or bright gold. The basilica should seem out of place among the simple neat square houses of the town, each bounded with its garden of flowers and vegetable patch. Yet surrounded by trees and set in its managed grounds, emerging from the forested banks of the Bug River, St Catherine's has made itself at home in the centre of Kościół.

The basilica's lands and assorted buildings have waxed and waned over the years. During my fieldwork it sat on a 500-hectare site, awarded to the Catholic Church in the

immediate post-socialist period.² The provenance of the land and the buildings that speckle it are occasionally the subject of disagreement, gossip, or community-making gestures of ecumenicalism. The basilica casts a long shadow, and much of the everyday religious landscape of Kościół is coloured by it. In Eastern Orthodox Christian places of worship, the role that the Catholic majority's perception of space plays in their manufacture is apparent. We will discuss this later in this chapter in relation to the Old Orthodox Church.

The potency of the built religious environment is not just a post-socialist, or even a post-EU, accession phenomenon. As mentioned in the previous chapter, conflict over religion is common in these frontier lands and has historically been played out most visibly and politically through the changing shapes, appearances, and ownership of its buildings. Chris Hann, Vlad Naumescu, and Juraj Buzalka have written extensively about these disputes in the South East of Poland and Ukraine, where the protagonists are Ukrainian Greek Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, and Roman Catholics, and the *furor* encompasses arguments over the Kresy region and the local Ukrainian minority (Hann 1993; 1996; 1998; 2006; Naumescu 2008; Buzalka 2008). However, in the East and North East of Poland discord has rarely become violent; nor is it particularly apparent at first. My initial encounter with the tension between the two faiths happened a few months into my fieldwork when I inadvertently referred to the smaller church (Św Ducha, the Church of the Holy Spirit) behind St Catherine's as a 'cerkiew' rather than 'kościół', indicating that I was aware it had not always been a Catholic church—a conflict I will explore further later in this chapter. In this chapter, then, I will be dealing with the ways in which the ascendancy of different Christian denominations has been marked by the appropriation of land and buildings. I consider how spatial practices have altered and produced different religious spaces in the town and the role that potent objects, such as the blessed image of the Holy Mother of Kościół, have played in shaping these practices.

The Blessed Sin

I met Fr. Jan and Pan Stanisław at the front of St Catherine's. Pan Stanisław was, at the time, in his late sixties, and always impeccably presented. I had met him at the church one evening when I first arrived, and later asked if I could record an interview with him. He was well respected among the local Catholic congregation—he was a Minister of the Eucharist, a teetotaler; his eldest son became a priest and he attended mass every evening at six. Pan Stanisław had called at the house earlier in the week and asked me to write out the questions I intended to ask so that he could 'prepare the answers'. Under duress I had done so, and when

² Personal communication from interview with Head Oblate.

he arrived for the interview I saw that under his arm he had my badly spelt and grammatically muddled questions, a book on the Blessed Mother of Kościół, and his own collection of neatly-spaced handwritten pages. Fr. Jan allowed me use one of the interview rooms the monastery reserves for 'pastoral care', and as we settled in I tried to put Pan Stanisław at ease by explaining that the tapes were confidential and in my final report all the interviewees would be anonymous. Pan Stanisław waved this away with his hand as if it was unimportant. He told me he was only worried about not being able to answer my questions fully. The room was decorated in a style Peter Collins has called 'Christian Spiritual' (2012). It had some universally spiritual decoration: pictures of sunsets, calm landscapes, and a small wall-hung Crucifix subtly referencing the Christianity of the space. The walls were painted in muted colours and the furniture was durable and movable. The space could be arranged in the traditional stage-and-audience setup used by the Catholic Church, but on the day of my interview the chairs were facing each other across a table laden with biscuits and water. The room had that specific anaesthetic spiritual quality Collins identified in hospital chapels (2012). Outwardly it was an open religious space, with a degree of emptiness that allowed for the interrelations Lefebvre sees as constitutive of social space (1991, 73). Yet there were enough subtle 'associated images and symbols' present to identify the overlay of representational Catholic space (ibid, 39). Asking my questions here, I realised, would mean that the answers my respondents returned would be mitigated by a concern with reproducing the space. As a result, whatever Pan Stanisław chose to emphasise here might help me to explore in greater detail the production of the space.

I turned on my audio recorder and asked my first question: 'Can you tell me the story of the Blessed Mother of Kościół?' All of Pan Stanisław's answers were thoughtful but none lasted as long as this first question. When I turned off the tape nearly two hours later I realised he had spent a full quarter of our interview answering the first question. Pan Stanisław told me he enjoyed talking about the town and lent me the book he had brought with him, *Błogosławiona Wina*³ by Zofia Kossak. Over the next three days I conducted four more interviews with local Catholics at the monastery, and each time the pattern was the same. When asked to tell the story of the holy image—regardless of where in the interview the question was placed—my interviewees talked for much longer than they did when answering any other question. It was apparent that the holy image of the Blessed Mother of God had an important role in the way that these respondents perceived the town, and that it influenced their faith as members of the town. After this first rush of interviews I opened the book Stanisław had lent me and began my very slow journey through the chapters. As I moved

³ 'The Blessed Sin'.

through the book my fascination with the holy image, her story, legend, and place in the town's history and landscape, developed.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół was what brought me to the town in the first instance. During fieldwork my growing awareness of the complexities surrounding the picture of the Blessed Mother of Kościół was mirrored in my growing cognizance of the complex relationship between religiosity and space in Kościół.



Image 2.2

The portrait of the Blessed Mother of Kościół had a powerful impact on the way in which the various denominations marked out the space of their religion in the town. In order to consider the intersection of everyday religion and spatial practices, I want to take an in depth look at the blessed image of the Holy Mother of Kościół. There are many theories of figure and icon in the social sciences but here I shall look to the model developed by Hans Belting in his study of iconology (2005). Belting's model fits well with the theory underpinning this thesis as it has the potential to incorporate spatial practice and ideas about space and its production. This model best allows me to discuss the many social relations, meanings, and conflicts of the picture, as well as allowing us to consider the role the picture played in shaping the church and the Catholic hegemony. Using Belting's tripartite model, I will examine the work of the holy image, the church in which she resides, and the interactions pilgrims have with her. Within Belting's model there is room to discuss other theorists, and this I shall do too, looking particularly at Panofsky (1972), Benjamin (2008), Gell (1998), and Lefebvre (1991 [1972]).

The chapter will be split into five sections. The first section will look in more detail at the basilica, and the other church that lies within its grounds: this will highlight some of the conflicts that underpin the making of Catholic space in the town and also indicate the implications of retaining such a space. These implications will be drawn out in the following section, where I will look at other local non-Catholic places of worship. Both of these sections aim to highlight the dialectic of the holy image, namely that it is contextually situated by the church lands while also playing a vital role in the production of these spaces. The third section deals with the local history and narrative of the picture. A look at how people interact with the holy image, formally and informally, will make up the fourth section. Along with the second section this one also goes a long way in helping us understand, and yet at the same time complicating, the idea that there are two distinct religious groups in the town. Finally the chapter will move slightly beyond the town to focus on a miracle-working icon of Mary in the Eastern Orthodox Christian church of Terespol, close to my fieldsite. Through this site I will draw out some of the ways that the Blessed Mother of Kościół is constructed against the more modern Terespol Madonna. Throughout the chapter the various competing actors and their contradictory claims to space will become clear, as will the fuzziness and complexity of their divisions. In later chapters, specifically chapter four, I will explore the fuzziness and complexity of the groups' boundaries further, and question the idea that they form two discrete groups. However, in claims over religious land and the religious character of the town people police the boundary of the two religious groups zealously. I will present the strategies of exclusion and control alongside strategies that people have adapted to incorporate their religion into the

wider landscape, or to smooth over the conflicts that exist throughout the religious landscape of the area.

2.1 Stone, Bone, Land, and Gold: St Catherine's and its Demesne



Image 2.3

By mid-December the usual three months of snow have set in. The flow of neighbours and friends that passed through my landlady's kitchen has become more and more irregular. With less chance to interview and interact with people in the town, my days are quieter, more home-focused. One of the few activities that guarantees meeting people is attending evening mass. Yet even the basilica seems muted by the harsh winter weather. The building is freezing, minimally heated by a scattering of space heaters. The brilliant white and yellow gold interior that shone in the sunlight is now oppressively bare and cold under the grey skies. With no more visitors the pilgrimage season, which had been extended into late autumn, has finally been called to a close. I decide to take advantage of the empty church and take some photographs of the interior. When I arrive at the church I meet Fr. Paweł; he is one of the older priests just returned from a lifetime of missionary work. Happy to have company in the silent church, Fr. Paweł explains the intricacies of the interior to me as he cleans. This is not the first time I have been offered a tour of sorts of the building. Fr. Jan also showed me around when I first arrived and Henryk and his daughter gave me an alternative tour back in November. Fr. Jan runs the Church's pilgrimage activities and website, while Henryk is an amateur local Orthodox historian. Both offered interesting if partisan accounts of the history of the church and its grounds. Fr. Paweł is not considered as much of an expert as my previous two guides, yet as I am taking photographs of the high altar he interrupts the description he is giving to muse, 'there used to be thirteen of them throughout the basilica, but that is the only one now.' I am aware that after the Russian closure of the church there was a refurbishment, but

know very little about the details. ‘Where are the other altars from?’ Fr. Paweł looks up from the used candles he is throwing out. ‘Well they are all copies from the original plan, by the Professor from Warsaw’ he continues. Everything, barring the high altar, relic bones, and the holy image, is a copy—even the crown the Blessed Mother of Kościół wears and the silver cover that encases her at night are facsimiles. No one has mentioned this before; I was told the benches, confessional booths, statues and so on were simply restored. Fr. Paweł continues: even the striking colours of the basilica may be incorrect—they were extrapolated from the high altar and a black-and-white drawing done in the 1700s. I am surprised by my own irritation at the artifice of the decorations. Surely I didn’t really think that the hard wooden pews I sat bolt upright in every evening were 400 years old? My mother, an artist, could not pass a church during my childhood without attempting to educate me on the specifics of the architecture of the Romanesque, Gothic, High Renaissance, and more. Fr. Paweł’s information helped me to pinpoint the sense of the uncanny I got from the decoration of the basilica, which at once seems ancient, modern, and outdated, being a 1930s imagination of the 16th century. I had taken the originality of the holy image and her setting, the materiality of the basilica, for granted. But now I found myself reproducing that age-old art historian division of original/reproduction; if it didn’t matter to my informants—if they said restored when they meant copied—should it matter to me?

The period during which I resided in the town was one of massive construction and landscaping for the Oblates of Mary and the church. The building to the right of the basilica, which had stood empty since the Socialist Party abandoned it in 1989, was returned to the Church and they began to turn it into a pilgrimage centre and hostel (Gomulak, 2012). When I spoke about this to people they called it ‘restoring it to the *original*’ (emphasis added) as it had been a pilgrimage house before World War II.

This idiosyncratic take on originality was also apparent in the contested church Św. Ducha, the church of the Holy Spirit. Although the church of the Holy Spirit stood on the Church’s land, its history was unclear. It took me a lot of time during fieldwork to piece together the story of the Church lands and its buildings. My information came from books published by the Oblates, interviews, town gossip or general knowledge, and later from taking what I had gathered to be local experts or amateur historians. It was said in the town that the church of the Holy Spirit was built by Iwan, the town’s founder, as an Orthodox church; and later after his great grandson became a member of the Catholic Faith the building was converted to a Catholic church. The only records that exist are in the monastery and conversely suggest it was originally a Greek Catholic church. No mention is made of Iwan

Wielmoża or of it becoming a Catholic church in the 1600s. Although recent Church books and tourist information no longer claim Iwan built this church, this is still commonly reported by Orthodox and Catholic residents of the town. At the partition of Poland in the 18th century, the church of the Holy Spirit was, like the basilica, closed by the Russians. After the partition, due to the persecution of Greek Catholics, there was no local Parish to which to hand back the church of the Holy Spirit, so it became part of the Roman Catholic Church's holdings. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, I initially hit upon the mystery of the Church of the Holy Spirit through a slip of the tongue while talking to one of my Catholic respondents. Upon accidentally referring to the church as a 'cerkiew' (a word which translates as church, but implies Orthodox Church) I found out this controversy had not yet reached its conclusion. I was subjected to a lecture by my Catholic respondent, about the partition and how the 'Orthodox' (read as Russian's in this situation) had destroyed the interior of the church, and probably burnt the records. 'But it is a Catholic church [kościół], the Wielmoża's built it, so it is a Catholic church'.

Throughout this region of Poland there are places of worship like the Church of the Holy Spirit, which are claimed by different religious traditions; they become a locus of struggle. Many in the Orthodox Church believe that the Orthodox history of the area is being slowly eradicated. They point to the old Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches to prove that their connection to this land is as old, if not older, than that of their Catholic neighbours. As part of the 'restoration' of the Church of the Holy Spirit the interior was painted white. Yet this practice of 'restoring' churches by painting them white is exceptionally controversial (Smółko 2010). This is because the walls of both Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches are decorated with pictures of saints, scenes from the bible, and suchlike. Catholic Churches maintain plain walls decorated with statues in alcoves or framed icons. Whitewashing the walls of a Church is literally whitewashing the historically confused ownership of the building, and concealing what that contested ownership says about religious identity in this area.

As demonstrated in the photograph below, the Oblates have made some concessions towards clarifying the confused history of the church of the Holy Spirit by peeling back the paint on one wall to reveal the painted alcove below. But even this act is not as inclusive as it initially appears. Alcoves are demonstrative of Catholic churches, so this is an image that does not challenge the idea that this church is Catholic. More of the original walls would have to be revealed to see if images of saints and other Orthodox or Greek Catholic decorations are present.



Image 2.4: One of the walls of Św Ducha, revealing a fresco of an alcove; this is the only place where the white paint has been removed to show the original decoration.

Most local Orthodox people point specifically to the roof of the church, now painted white. Local knowledge says that for many years the roof was bright blue and decorated with golden stars, a common Ukrainian Greek Catholic motif (Smółko 2010). Yet every year the Oblates, who are aware of the claim, touch up the roof's paintwork. The question of which congregation has the right to practice in a given building is fraught, and whitewashing the history of the building at the centre of the discussion only leads to further disputes.

But the estate of the Blessed Mother of Kościół is more complicated still. On the five hundred hectare estate there is a marker stone commemorating the original church built by Iwan Wielmoża. The marker was placed there by the Catholic Church as an admission that, contrary to local belief, Iwan Wielmoża did not build the church of the Holy Spirit but another, now lost, chapel. This supposedly conciliatory marker has nevertheless become another locus of contested ownership on the church grounds. The opposition focuses on two words used in the plaque; 'Jan' and 'kościół'.



Image 2.5: Translation: In the year 1519 Jan Wielmoża built the church of the Holy Spirit here.

Jan is Iwan; the local Orthodox minority point out that Jan is a Catholic and ‘Polonised’ version of Iwan’s name. The leader of the Oblates explained to me that Jan is the form that Iwan’s name has in many of the previous tales and books, and was the form used on the stone for the sake of clarity. Additionally the nobility of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth spoke different languages in different situations, and used different names, so it is possible Iwan was also called Jan. The second problem with the stone harks back to the kościół/cerkiew entomology. The use of the word ‘kościół’ implies that Iwan/Jan built a Catholic church in 1519. My Orthodox respondents argued that even when the Oblates of St. Catherine’s commemorate the pre-Catholic history of the town they do so in a way that would leave visitors no more enlightened.

Back at St Catherine’s basilica the holy image sits impassively among all this contested materiality. Her golden High Altar is surrounded by votives left by grateful pilgrims. Above her frame is a delicate golden rose, a gift from a Prince and Princess whose marriage she helped to salvage. At any time of the year there are also fresh cut flowers, adding colour to the plain linens of the altar. Framed on either side of her are the votives left by less distinguished

pilgrims, a jumble of tin, silver, brass, gold, silk, cotton, pearls, glass, and hand-carved wooden beads. To the left of the high altar is the reliquary, filled with bones from over eighty different saints and martyrs, most fascinating of which must be St Felix's skull. All are housed in different containers, from simple square boxes to complicated 'man-shaped' hollow sculptures. To the right is the alcove once dedicated to St Eugene; it has now become the home of a bright portrait of the blessed John Paul II, documents pertaining to his visit to Kościół and a newly acquired vial of his blood.

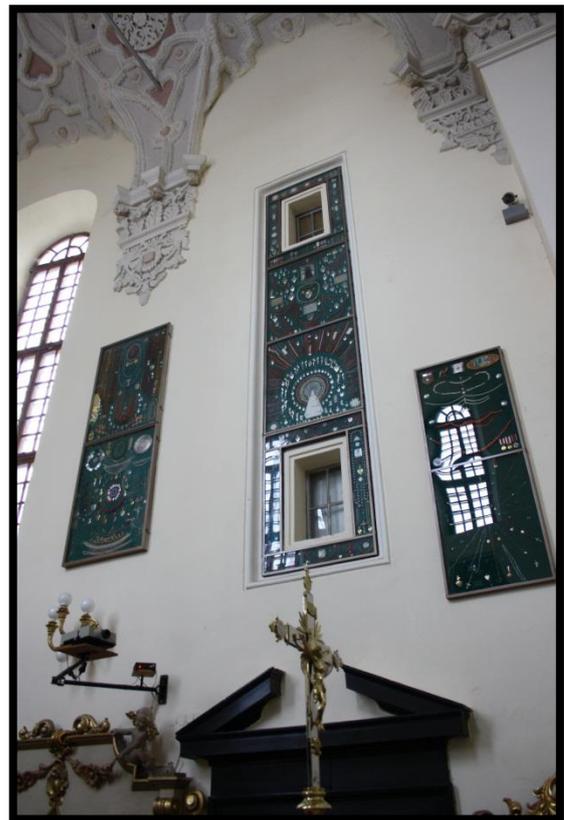


Image 2.6

Moving further away from the figure, past the dark wood pews and ornately carved confessional booths, we find ourselves in the well-kept and carefully designed grounds; we pass ponds, pools and the 'reflection' garden on our way to the church of the Holy Spirit. This church has its own image of Blessed Mother of Kościół, a 19th-century copy, in much less gilded surroundings. Outward we continue, past the stone commemorating the first church built in the town. Finally we reach the end of the grounds, a tall red and white striped pole and a yellow sign informing us that we are at the Polish border, and that to cross here is illegal. The objects and buildings that make up the setting of the holy image are a jumble of reproduction, restoration, and recuperation. Yet the Church has made the decision to present them uncomplicatedly. In interviews the Oblates told me that the history of the lands and the churches was often too complicated for information booklets and that a simpler story was needed. In tours of the grounds they were less concerned with the straightforward narrative and often allowed contradictions to slip in, mentioning



Image 2.7

for example that the church of the Holy Spirit may have originally been Greek Catholic, they even held a Byzantine Rite mass there during the ecumenical festival. However, in interviews and in publication the Oblates disagreed with the idea that the church of the Holy Spirit or any of their lands had ever been Orthodox. The claims of the Eastern Orthodox were problematic for the church because the town had a living Orthodox population. The basilica and its lands drew and gathered people and money; they defined the centre (Lefebvre 1991) because the basilica and the holy image were the reason for the town's renown. Allowing the Eastern Orthodox community a place in this space risked destabilising the centre.



Image 2.8

2.2 Rebuilding the Orthodox Heritage



Image 2.9

2006 saw the opening of a brand new Polish Orthodox church in Kościół. Officially this was the first new Orthodox church built in the town since the 1920s. It was built with help from the Greek Orthodox community, a fact commemorated on a large wooden cross outside its door. However, a few doors down from the church there is an odd-looking house that unsettles this narrative. The house has the usual local style of rectangular base, with two meaningful additions: onto the front has been added a small 'tower', topped with a doubly transected cross. Positioned in the centre of the roof is a small brass onion dome topped with a cross. The house looks like a fair approximation of an Orthodox Church, and not old enough to have been built much before 1920.

The Old Cerkiew

It's a balmy August day and I am standing outside the Orthodox church with two elderly sisters discussing last night's television. We are waiting for a bus, which will be the start of our pilgrimage to Grebarka, a holy Orthodox mountain here in the borderlands. I am trying hard not to force the conversation towards matters of religion, determined to experience the reality of pilgrimage. But eventually one of the sisters asks me to explain my research to the other, whom I have not met before. I have now developed a script for describing my research in these situations that includes the phrase 'the relationship between the Orthodox and the Catholics' and at this point the second sister, Misha, interrupts me. 'Well' she says, I should

have a look at 'the old [Orthodox] church'. Demanding her sister holds the bus if it arrives early, she leads me down the road toward the odd church/house, which until this point had been a mystery to me.



Image 2.10

According to Misha, and later confirmed by other locals, the house in the two photographs above was built in the late 1920s and looked totally normal at first. This was a period of Catholic ascendancy, when the image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół finally made her way back to the town after having been removed to safety during the Russian occupation of the partition period.⁴ Although the local government was not officially hostile to the Polish Orthodox Church, all requests to build a church had been refused. At this point an Orthodox Pole just returned from America purchased the house and build the tower onto its front. He offered the house to an Orthodox priest, who took up residency and started to hold mass in the front room of the house. Eventually a local official approached the priest, but, satisfied with his explanation that he simply had friends over on Sundays, pursued no further action. Eventually the American returnee paid for the addition of an onion dome and the house took on a decidedly ecclesiastic appearance. However, local officials simply ignored the unofficial Church. This story of collusion between the minority Orthodox community and the local bureaucracy is an example of the strategies local people use to make a shared place in the face of official guidelines privileging one group over another. Leutloff-Grandits has written about a

⁴ I will discuss the history and narrative of the holy image in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

similar phenomena in Croatia, where local people have a private discourse of inclusion about religious events that refers back to pre-war memories and runs alongside a public discourse that stresses the national meaning of the same events. In this case we have a private discourse of acceptance and permissiveness imbuing a story that initially appears to be about the repression of the Orthodox faith. However, part of the collusion in this tale relies on the fact the Orthodox are willing to accept being only partially visible in the town. Still what interested me the most about this story was that when I told it to Church officials, both Catholic and Orthodox, they denied that it was true. They claimed the old Orthodox Church was built officially in 1932, the year the locals gave for the arrival of the onion dome. In this way the Catholic Church maintained a hierarchy, through a narrative that demonstrates that the Orthodox did not have an uninterrupted place in the town. The Orthodox use the same story to demonstrate how they suffered at the hands of the Catholic majority prior to 1947 and Operation Vistula.

When we consider all the churches mentioned thus far, it is their contradictions that are most apparent. In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre uses religious space as the prime example of abstract space, space produced and conceived by the dominant group to demonstrate and reinforce its dominance (1991). The changing ecclesiastical ownership and whitewashed walls of Kościół's Churches certainly match up with this idea. It is easy then to say that the struggle at the heart of the Churches of Kościół is a religious one, between the Orthodox and the Catholic confessions. However, when we look to the other ideas in Lefebvre's dialectic trio something underneath this initial conflict begins to emerge. Looking to spatial practices (lived space) and spaces of representation (perceived space) we can find another layer in the analysis of the alternate stories of the old Orthodox Church and of the Church of the Holy Spirit (1991). In each of these stories the local religious affiliates tell a story that is directly contradicted by priests and pamphlets.

In the case of the old Orthodox Church, the story told by the locals deals directly with the revolutionary potential of the production of space. Here a building built as a home becomes a religious gathering point. The old Orthodox Church is perceived as a space filled with potential for struggle against the Catholic majority. Its spatial practices, however, are conservative. They still involve a priest and a mass. The old Orthodox Church in the telling of the local Orthodox population is a space produced by the crafty tactics of a repressed minority. Yet at the same time it is a space where the practices within it reinforce a hierarchical understanding of religion. Likewise, the local Catholic population's stories of the church of the Holy Spirit are confused and multiple; some acknowledge the church was a Greek Catholic

building first while others claim it was always Roman Catholic; but both claims make reference to the messy partition period. The Oblates, on the other hand, gloss over the ownership issue, and in so doing avoid discussing both the years when the town was Russian and the subsequent redistribution of land and buildings following the suppression of this period.



Image 2.11

It is not just the Catholic Church's buildings that are contested sites; their grounds are too. The lands in which the sanctuary complex sits are immense—one of only two spaces in town where the ground is cleared enough to use for sports. In the depths of winter I was taking a walk through the Church grounds. As I came to the man-made 'hill of Calvary' that rises up beside the Church of the Holy Spirit I was nearly run over by a small child, screaming with laughter, on a sled. Racing after her, her father issued a brief apology, and proceeded to pull the sled back

up the hill to where her brother waited impatiently. I stayed and watched for a bit, and assisted pulling the kids back up the hill. Eventually I asked the father if it felt odd to be having such fun in Church grounds. He just shrugged, 'it's the only place with a good hill.' Winter faded and the arrival of spring and summer saw gangs of young people turning the garden of remembrance into an impromptu hang-out spot, or playing rowdy games of football in the Church's empty campsite. Here then was a refusal to accept that proximity to a holy image or the government's action of passing land to a religious body produced that space as religious. Here the lived and perceived space was 'local' space. There were still pilgrims making their way through the remembrance garden, among the amorous teens. The space was not secular, but it was an extremely open, everyday religious space: a space that combined the mess and mundane of both life and religion.

2.3 The Noble Wielmoża's and the Queen of Podlaskie

The portrait of the Blessed Mother of Kościół has an intimate relationship with the various church buildings in the town. It is in the churches of Kościół that we come into contact with the Blessed Image of the Holy Mother of Kościół, and she⁵ in turn helps us to understand the churches. The Blessed Mother of Kościół is not just an enchanted icon with a strong connection to the town; she also plays a role in defining the town as Catholic. The premise of Belting's model, to which I refer here, is that there are three parts to any icon: the image, the medium, and the bodily interaction. The icon exists in the constant interaction and interplay of these three parts, each of which is required for it to have meaning and some sort of agency in its existence. The interplay of medium and image is such that the meanings of the materials that mediate our interaction with the figure become part of the meaning of the image. In the Blessed Mother of Kościół's case a large part of her meaning is derived from the narrative of her arrival in the town. The history of the Blessed Mother of Kościół is inextricably tied up with the town's founding family. Iwan Wielmoża, great grandfather of Mikołaj Wielmoża—the protagonist in Kossak's *Błogostawiona Wina*—founded the town of Kościół in the year 1511. The year before I started my fieldwork the town celebrated its five-hundred-year anniversary with as much pomp and circumstance as it could muster, even producing a book to mark the occasion. Iwan was Orthodox and over the next one hundred years the town he founded remained so. Iwan's grandson—another Mikołaj—never really broke with the Orthodox faith, yet at times professed to be a Calvinist or Catholic. He sent both his sons to study in Western Europe. It was the younger Mikołaj who converted to Catholicism and began to build the St Catherine Minor Basilica around the year 1603. This much is largely uncontested, appearing in historical books, tourist information, and Church documents alike. However, with the beginning of the construction of St Catherine's the story becomes more complicated (Gomulak 2012; Golec 2009; Kossak 1989; Stepnik 2007).

I conducted five interviews focusing on the painting and the history of the town. In many other interviews and informal conversations the topic also came up. Often on walks through the town with different informants the many monuments and signs dedicated to the holy image would start the conversation again. The image of Blessed Mother of Kościół is at the centre of the town's life, economically, spatially, religiously, and in many other more subtle ways. My five interviewees ranged in age and gender. Along with Stanisław (discussed at the start of this chapter) they included a middle-aged female shop owner, a sixteen year old

⁵ I use the pronoun "she" as this is how the holy image was referred to in the town.

female high school student, a fourteen year old girl who was a member of the church choir, and a twelve year old altar boy. The most striking aspect of all five interviews was the marked similarity in their answers when discussing the story of the Blessed Mother of Kościół. Later this hegemonic account would be challenged in my more informal interviews, but let us start with this relatively straightforward narrative.

How the Mother of God came to Kościół

Stanisław barely looked at his notes for this first question. I sat quietly, afraid to interrupt too much and thereby disturb the flow of the story he was telling. He moved quickly through the preamble about Iwan and the founding of the town to the tale of the holy image. It was when he reached the point where construction of St Catherine's began that he slowed the pace. Mikołaj Wielmoża was, he told me, a good man—much respected as the head of Kościół and a devoted Catholic. While building his Church Mikołaj suffered an accident that left him paralysed; Stanisław mentions his distraught wife and her knowledge of the curative powers of pilgrimage. No one else mentioned this aspect of the tale again in their conversations with me, but it forms a great part of Zofia Kossak's book. To regain the use of his legs Mikołaj decided to undertake an arduous pilgrimage to Rome, 'in an uncomfortable horse drawn carriage', Stanisław emphasised, foreshadowing later conversations about the necessities of pilgrimage.⁶ Once Mikołaj reached Rome, Stanisław continued, the Pope was only too happy to meet this nobleman from the 'edge of Europe'. Mikołaj was invited to pray in the Pope's private Chapel and while there he saw the painting of the Blessed Mother of Kościół for the first time. Stanisław stressed that Mikołaj was completely entranced by the painting, that he felt the Holy Spirit present when he looked at it. In fact, except for the older woman, all the interviewees make a point of this instant 'attraction' to the 'beautiful icon'. During the service a miracle occurred and Mikołaj was cured. He begged the Pope to let him take the image with him back to Kościół but the Pope said no. This is the point at which Kossak's ' *błogostawiona wina*'—blessed sin—occurs. Stanisław explains that Mikołaj knows that he must bring the image to Kościół and so that night he steals it and flees Rome. The rest of the informants who tell me this story all phrase this incident in the same way but later when I talk to the Oblates, their tale makes an important addition here. The three Oblates I asked about Mikołaj and the Blessed Mother of Kościół all said that at this point 'wickedness' came over the noble Lord. Upon arriving back to Kościół, Mikołaj finds out that he has been excommunicated, thus banning him from setting foot in his almost completed basilica. Despite this, Stanisław tells me, he continued to work for the interests of the Catholic Church within the Polish-Lithuanian

⁶ Chapter six

Commonwealth. Eventually he helped prevent the marriage of the King to a protestant Princess, and the story travelled to the Pope who lifts the excommunication.

With slight variation this was the tale that emerged from the set of focused interviews, as appearing in all the literature available at the Church gift shops and in the many copies of Kossak's book available in the town. The holy image has no known history before its encounter with Mikołaj Wielmoża, but once in Kościół it leads an exciting and mobile life. In 1723 it was the third image of the Virgin Mary to receive the Papal Crown in Poland. In 1864, during the Partition of Poland, it was transported to Jasna Góra, while St Catherine's Minor Basilica was closed by the Russians. In 1927 the picture was taken to Warsaw to be restored and from there it travelled by train to Siedlce. From Siedlce the figure was taken on pilgrimage, accompanied by over a thousand people, to Kościół, a journey of nearly 120 kilometers, and was placed on the High Altar where it resides to this day.

This story is all part of what Belting calls the 'medium' of the icon. The separation of the first two stages of Belting's theory—image/medium—is, he admits, difficult to grasp. Often the understanding of this separation slips away from us right at the edge of our comprehending it. As one part of this triangle begins to fit a dualistic model another aspect of it renders it impossible to fully divide out its composite parts. For Belting the simplest explanation of the medium is 'the how' of an icon: 'The what of the image is steered by the how in which it transmits its message' (Belting 2005, 304). I use Belting here because of the manner in which he builds, deconstructs, and then rebuilds the dialectic on medium, image, and body, and puts it to use in highlighting the flaws in previous ways of defining icons and images. His definition of medium, for example, eliminates the old form and matter distinction and makes the mode of transmission a broader category than materiality alone. Instead the medium now encompasses the technology, memory, narratives and politics of the image. It allows us to examine the role of institutions, artists, and audiences in determining how the mediation of images occurs. Belting says that this intensifying focus on the medium makes it increasingly easy to see the frequently disguised strategies of the medium (2005). In later sections of this chapter I will examine the materiality, performativity, and affective power of the picture, but for now I will focus on the story. The mythic narrative of the blessed sin was called into question very soon after conducting my initial set of interviews regarding the figure's history. My first experience of the alternate version of the story came when I was attending a weekly art and craft class with my landlady and some of her friends. After a time conversation turned to my research. I informed them that I was currently conducting interviews about the history of the beautiful icon. This was a subject all in attendance could

discuss with ease. A few minutes passed and conversation was swaying between the holy image and last year's celebrations of the town's quincentenary. Then Halszka, normally reserved, caught my eye. 'It's all a legend, Aimee. The Blessed Mother of Kościół comes from Spain maybe. Last year when the Parish Priest wrote to the Vatican for the papers they were not there'. A few other heads nodded, and my landlady added 'Henryk has a book on the Wielmoża family, would you like to read it? It says that Mikołaj Wielmoża never went to Rome'. A few moments before we had been discussing the 'history' of the icon, and now all were agreed that what they were discussing was in fact a legend. Subsequently I was told many times, formally and informally, that the blessed sin was a legend. Some informants were bitter about the power this legend held, about the fact it was taught in the local school and told to every visitor. More often though, my informants were able to hold these two seemingly opposed notions about the painting in their minds at the same time without showing any inclination to be bothered by the paradox, to paraphrase F. Scott Fitzgerald (2009, 69). When I asked about the story or the history of the image I was told the legend, when I further asked if this is what really happened I was told 'of course not'. Younger respondents told me that they learnt the story in primary school and from the Oblates, if they were Catholic. However they all also told me that they knew it was just a legend; normally they had found this out in a manner strikingly similar to the way I had.

Yet one part of the legend was never contested, and that was the 'pull' of the holy image. The narrative is part of the medium of the image and it expresses the idea of a divine attractive force. Throughout my fieldwork the portrait of the Blessed Mother of Kościół was frequently referred to by the diminutive 'piękny obraz' or 'piękna ikona',⁷ the beautiful image or beautiful icon. The title was not conferred in relation to the skill of the painter, but rather concerned the attractive force the painting exhibited, in drawing in pilgrims, and in the initial manner in which it drew in Mikołaj Wielmoża. Even the most vocal critics of the hegemonic account of the Blessed Mother of Kościół stated that people were drawn to her. The legend of the Blessed Mother of Kościół speaks of the attractive force of the holy image. It also speaks of the attractive force of the town. The figure appealed to Mikołaj, and Poland—particularly Kościół—appealed to the figure; in Zofia Kossak's book Mikołaj even tells the Pope that the painting belongs in Poland.

⁷ The use of the word icon is itself interesting. "Ikona" is an Orthodox word for holy images, Catholics are supposed to use "obraz". However this sectarian distinction in word usage did not seem to exist in Kościół, and in fact, the word most often used was icon. This is highly unusual in Poland (based on feedback from a lecture given in Warsaw University, Cultural Studies department).



Image 2.12

Accounting for the meaning or cause of this pull is a difficult task. For Gell, the enchantment of the artwork was completely entangled in the technology of production and reproduction (1998). The Blessed Mother of Kościół is enchanting, but fitting her to Gell's theory is awkward. She is not a master painting but a badly proportioned, ornate triangle, with an elongated face and irregularly positioned features; even the young Jesus in her arms appears to float by her side. You could discuss the storytelling as a technology of production, but the enchantment precedes, informs, and is created by the storytelling. Every informant who talked about the theft of the beautiful icon told me that the attraction emerged from the

image itself. However the enchantment also seemed to reside in the town, and had fed into the power of the image on its arrival.

Panofsky has an explanation for the attraction of an icon that relied more heavily on its religious significance (1972). Panofsky sees in the icon an example of the doctrine of incarnation. The icon came to represent the tension between distance and immediacy at the heart of Christianity. Panofsky reasons that Jesus was the first incarnation of divinity, of God made man. He was God, at once active in the world and removed from it as an impersonal cosmic force. Each icon represents this doctrine at a smaller level. Prayers are made to the icon as it is divinity active in the mundane world of the disciple. However, for the saint or biblical figure represented in the icon to intercede on your behalf they must also be active in the divine world (Panofsky 1972). In this case an icon of the Virgin Mary contains divinity and the recognition that such divinity is at the same time both absent and present elsewhere. In a way Benjamin's aura, which he discusses in relation to portraits and technological reproductions, with an emphasis on the dynamic balance of distance and presence, relates to Panofsky's incarnation thesis in iconology (2008, 1972). Belting calls this 'absent presence' an 'iconic presence', and clarifies further that we are discussing the way 'images are present in their media, but they perform an absence, which they make visible' (Belting 2005, 313). Benjamin's work introduces the social; his talk of portraits, and the power that knowing a subject has to mediate the distance normally present in the aura, is relevant here (2008). Perhaps more than any of other theorist Benjamin's work speaks to the emotionality of people's encounters with icons (ibid). The pilgrims in Kościół know the Virgin Mary: their affective responses are to the sudden closeness they have to a normally distant but incredibly important mentor and guide. In discussions with colleagues in Warsaw and with my supervisor, Frances Pine, all recollected moments when they witnessed people weeping and touching images of the Virgin Mary as though they were interacting with a close female relative, perhaps even a mother.⁸

However, Panofsky seems to miss the fact that often people form relationships with icons (1972). Many pilgrims come to the Blessed Mother of Kościół not to ask for intercession but to meet the Queen of Heaven, to thank her or to remember loved ones who have made the trip in the past. Panofsky's theory is remarkably similar to the official line on icons in the catechisms, bulls, edicts, and theses on iconography in Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Greek Rite Catholicism (1972). And Benjamin's theory has a more than passing relationship to Byzantine ideas about the way in which icons were changed by the essence of divinity (2008). Yet in the interviews I conducted not a single respondent agreed with the idea that holy figures are

⁸ From personal communications.

invigorated by the theory of incarnation. Likewise, none saw the production of the image as the point at which the icon's attractive force emerged. In line with Belting's medium and image the attractive force of the image and how the story mediated that attractiveness are almost impossible to untangle (2005). For my informants the portrait had an inherent pull that was expressed both in its origin story and in their personal relationships to her. They also recognised that the story—true or not—was essential to expressing the pull of the portrait to children, pilgrims, and visitors alike.

2.4 Bodies in Devotion



Image 2.13

During the third week of February—with the snow heavy on the ground and the temperatures still in negative double digits—St Catherine’s Basilica is again filled with pilgrims. The Basilica has a capacity of about two hundred, but on this night it is pushing this limit. Some pilgrims stand shivering in the unheated and unlit side chapels, others occupy the side aisles on fold-out stools and chairs, while many more stand at the back of the church. It is nine in the evening and everyone is wrapped in coats, scarves, and blankets against the dark cold of the evening. Gloved hands grasp rosaries, Mass cards, and written appeals to the Blessed Mother of Kościół, as the congregation sings her hymn. It is the start of the nighttime prayer vigil that the Basilica holds on the third Saturday of every month. The pilgrims have arrived in buses from all over Podlaskie and Lubelskie, bringing bags of blankets, thermos flasks, extra clothes, and stories of illness and sickly relatives. This vigil is always dedicated to the sick, and, throughout the year, even during deepest winter, the buses of pilgrims arrive, filling the pews of St Catherine’s. The most striking feature of the Basilica at this time of year is the cold. The high dome seems to draw all the heat away from the ground even at the height of summer, and now at minus twenty-five degrees Celsius the congregation is left visibly shivering. I am nestled at the back of the Basilica silently regretting my decision to forgo a second pair of socks. As the first set of prayers is coming to a close, I watch people carefully move the beads of their rosaries through their frozen hands, vigilantly counting off the decades remaining.



Image 2.14: Night Vigil in April 2010

‘Moja wina, moja wina, moja bardzo wielka wina’⁹ two hundred voices recite in unison, the word ‘wina’, sin, echoing off the cold white walls. The multi-tonal prayers are captivating; what at first appears to be a general mumble yields up individual voices every so often, rich baritones and quavering tear-stained appeals. Those joining in are carried by the many voices of the congregation, the temporally and spatially specific community of faith, so that thoughts of icy fingers and toes become secondary. The walls echo back the sound of the prayers and, even after they are finished, the silent Basilica still seems to resound with them. At the end of the prayers the Oblate, nominally in charge, invites the pilgrims to go to the ‘Pilgrim House’ for hot drinks and sweet cakes. I stay in my seat and watch a large number of pilgrims file out. Approximately forty people stay behind. Young children, restless from enforced stillness, wander the Basilica, inspecting each altar, image, and statue in minute detail, lingering over the skull of St Felix. After a few moments one of the women, kneeling in the pews, gets up and moves to the end of the aisle. I will return to her below.

The night vigils last on average five hours, from 8:30pm to 01:30am, although on some occasions they start later, around 10pm and continuing to sunrise. During the night vigils the priests play a secondary role to the congregation. The priests lead the formal prayer but during the night vigils formal prayer accounts for only a small percentage of the event. The main focus

⁹ ‘My sin, my sin, my very great sin’.

is on silent contemplation, songs, testimony, speeches about Catholic charities, and there are many small breaks that allow the pilgrims to interact with the Blessed Mother of Kościół as they wish. I attended these night vigils every month of my fieldwork and what struck me most was the bodily devotion of the pilgrims. I will move on to look at specific techniques of devotion shortly, but here I refer to less ritualistic bodily engagement. From the moment the silver case slides back to reveal the holy image the eyes of the Church are upon it. Unlike most Madonnas in the many Catholic churches of East Poland the Blessed Mother of Kościół takes central place on the altar and the Crucifix, the suffering Christ, is relegated to the side. The favoured devotion during silent reflection is the rosary, an act associated with the Virgin Mary. All the hymns sung are dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the formal prayers conducted are from the novena to the Blessed Mother of Kościół.

The body forms the last part of Belting's model of iconology. As with the image/medium description, it is almost impossible to isolate the body from the other two pillars of Belting's model. The image/body interaction is embedded in the medium of the image, and the medium/image interaction cannot be understood without the perceiving body (Belting 2005). In explaining this entanglement we can turn to Morris who, in line with Merleau-Ponty, notes that once we begin to bring the embodied body/mind into our analysis 'the crossing of body and world turns any simple division of subject/object into a problem' (Morris 2004, 5). The image exists somewhere between the body and the medium. In other words, the body perceives the image via its medium and the body also interacts with the image, affecting the way in which the image is perceived. Belting further tangles his model by regarding the body as a form of living media. As a German, Belting grew up with two different words for memory: *Gedächtnis* for memory as an activity and *Erinnerung*, the recollection of images. Thus Belting's assertion that there is a tension between the images we perceive and the images we own, and that this tension itself mediates the images we encounter (2005). We have an image of the Virgin Mary in ourselves, based on previous experience. This may not be the same as the image of the Mother of God we later perceive, but it will impact our understanding of it.

We can see the importance of perception in how the pilgrims engage with the Blessed Mother of Kościół. Let us return to the idea of the pull the holy picture exerts on the faithful. The portrait of the Blessed Mary that the pilgrims own, the suffering mother, the intercessor, becomes entangled with the image of the Virgin Mary they perceive. Thus a whole collection of affective responses they have for the internal image of the Virgin Mary become part of their perception of Blessed Mother of Kościół, part of the image's medium. She is mediated

by—among other things—her situation in the basilica, her story, and the pilgrims’ own affective responses to the ideal of the Virgin Mary.

But it is not just the perceiving body that Belting’s model considers; we also need to look at the performing body, and the impact that it has on pictures. Pinney has said that religious pictures have a ‘corporetics’, an idea that fits neatly with Belting’s iconology (2001). Corporetics is the way that a figure is framed, the corporal aesthetics of an image or, as Pinney simplifies it, ‘the sensory embrace of images, the bodily engagement that most people ... have with artworks’ (2001, 158). Pinney is interested in mass reproduced images of Indian Gods and the supplications that devotees make to them. These devotions imbue the figures with power, but the pictures also exert a power to draw out piety. Here piety is one of the bodily responses embedded in the image, one of the image’s ‘needs’. This power to draw out devotion is surely related to the medium of the image, the manner in which its place as a holy image connects us to a large, historic collection of potential bodily engagements (Pinney, 2001). In the case of the Holy Mother of Kościół, the devotion draws on a Catholic tradition of supplication. Acts of supplication fully engage the body in religion. They incorporate physical suffering into the sounds and sights of practices of devotion. As Dubisch argues, supplication can be a way of bringing equilibrium to a person, of ensuring that their inner and outer states are balanced (1990). In the case of Kościół, this kind of devotion ensures that the physical experience of meeting the holy image reflects the overpowering affective response. The intense visceral experience of supplication can also alter a devotee’s state and interaction with the divinity (Peters 2005). As this kind of religious practice is an embodied act, the processes of the body are intricately linked to the total experience (Gemzöe 2005). It is also worth noting that supplication has been associated in particular with the practice of female pilgrims (Badone 1990: Dubisch 1990, Gemzöe 2005).

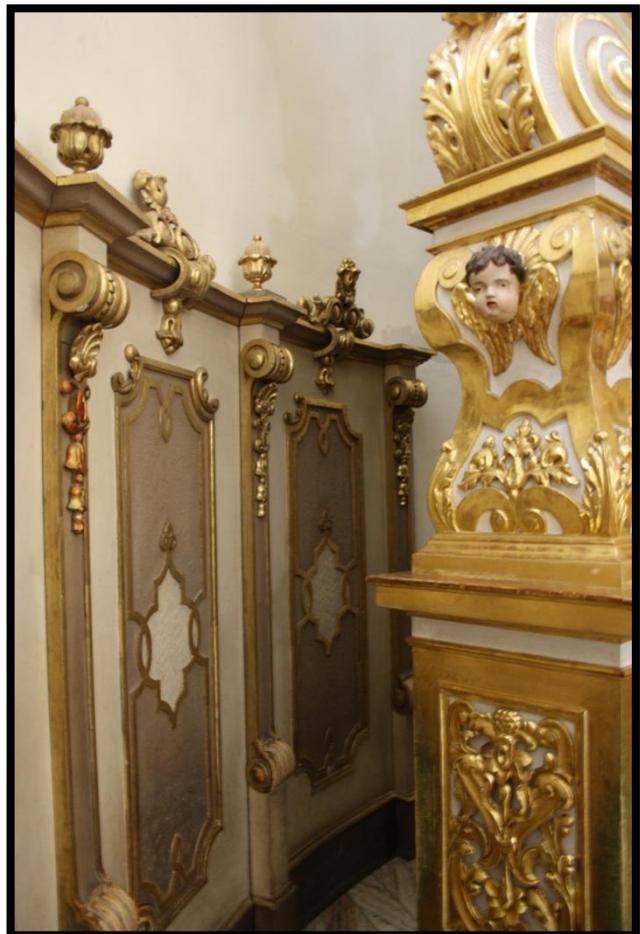


Image 2.15

Dubisch, working in Greece, associates the exceptional physical demands of supplications—such as crawling on hands and knees—with the performance of ‘the poetics of womanhood’ (1995, 194). Supplication in Kościół was part of forming a connection to the Blessed Mother of God that drew on a shared femininity and maternal suffering.

I return now to the night vigil with which I began this section. It is the second of the many mini-breaks that punctuate the evening. There are maybe twenty people still in the Basilica—the rest are outside talking or warming up with a cup of sweet tea in the monastery. The older woman I mentioned above has risen from her pew and walked to the centre aisle. Falling to her knees, the woman begins a slow process up the main aisle. When she gets to the altar she slowly moves up the steps, still on her knees. The Blessed Mother of Kościół is in the centre of the High Altar, flanked by golden statues of the four evangelists and topped by a heavenly pyramid emerging from throngs of angels and golden clouds. The portrait and its gilded podium stand out from the wall and there is just about room to pass behind it. This is the basis of the devotions pilgrims make to the image. Once they get to the altar they face the picture and pray for a few moments before continuing behind the shrine, still on their knees. In interviews with both pilgrims and Oblates no one was able to account for the origin of this practice. The Oblates all emphasised the notion of supplication and its connection to approaching on bended knee, but could not elaborate on why the pilgrims go behind the image. Pilgrims tended to mention being close, or getting close to the sacred image, or more directly ‘being close to the Blessed Mother of Kościół’.

The pilgrims’ understanding of this closeness could be seen in the way they travelled around the figure. At the altar the woman now kneels directly under and in front of the sacred image. She is kneeling on cold marble tiles in an already freezing space, yet she stays there, looking up at the portrait and praying. More pilgrims have begun to make the procession up the aisle on their knees but my attention is focused on this woman. Something in her movements seems a little unusual. Suddenly I realised it is the way she holds her head, looking up at the sacred image, making ‘eye contact’ with it. When Catholics pray during church services they look down, or occasionally at the priest, but casting your eyes up is just not done. Yet this woman, and the pilgrims who follow her, look up into the face of the sacred image. She finishes her prayer and begins to move to the left to circle the back of the shrine, but then she stops, wavering at the far left edge of her circumambulation. Her eyes are fixed on the painting and for a while she does not move. After this brief pause she continues on her knees, but she is twisting her head to keep looking at the image as she begins to move behind the

shrine. I watch in fascination as more than half of the pilgrims who move around the shrine made the same awkward move.

At the next break in the Vigil I make my way over to the woman to ask her about her interaction with the icon. Like other pilgrims I have talked to she tells me you circumambulate the image and the shrine to be 'close' to the Blessed Mother of Kościół. I attempt to probe a little deeper, 'do you have to stop in different places?' The woman is unsure. 'No', she tells me. 'Why did you stop on the left...' before I can finish she interrupts with a smile and tells me that as you move around the statue the eyes follow you. She did not realise this until she moved to the left of the shrine to complete her circuit. Looking at the Blessed Mother of Kościół, she was surprised to see her eyes following her. The surprise stopped her in her tracks. Later whenever I found myself in the Basilica during night vigils or pilgrimage masses I watched the pilgrims make the circuit of the holy image. I watched the moment a few feet to the left of the shrine when they would stop and lock eyes with the Blessed Mother of Kościół.

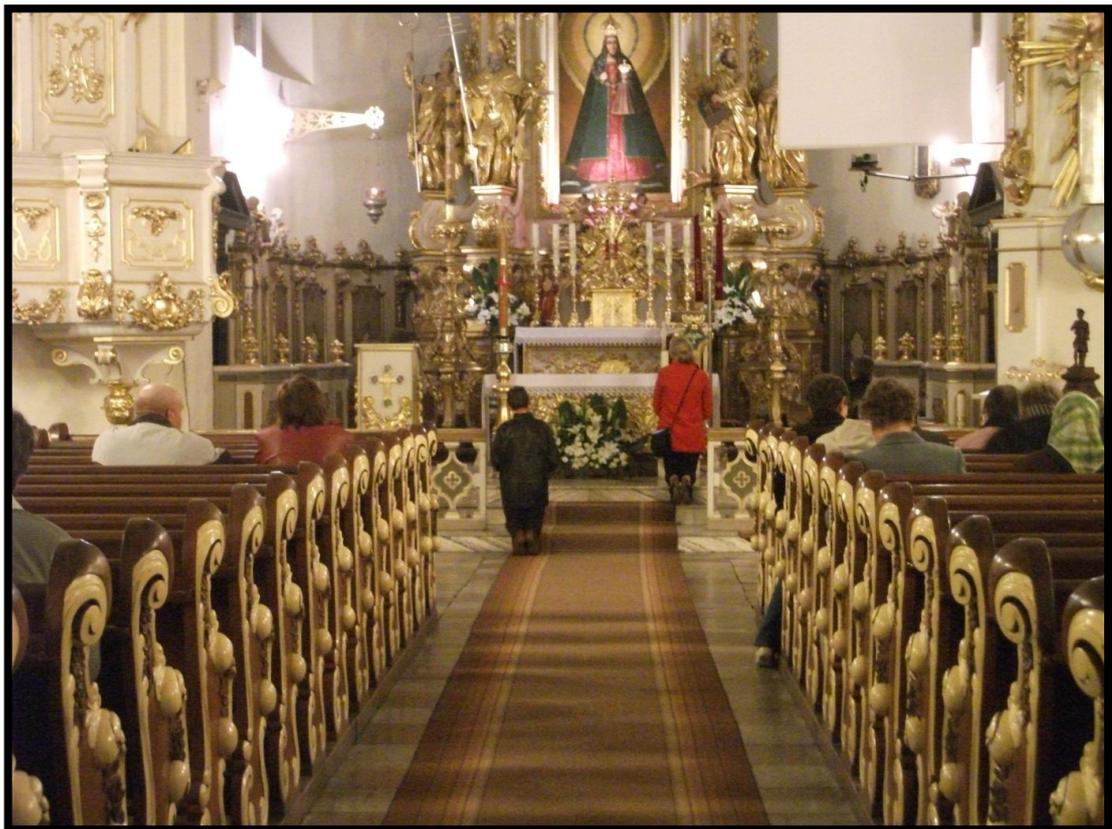


Image 2.16

2.5 Terespol and the Weeping Madonna

To close this chapter I want to discuss another local miracle-working image of the Virgin Mary. Two hundred of Terespol's five thousand residents are practicing Orthodox Christians, meaning the town has one of the largest Orthodox populations in Eastern Poland. Early in December one of my informants offered to take me with his family to a service in the town's Orthodox Church. A lot of people locally choose to go to nearby Terespol rather than Kościół for Sunday service, because the community is larger and more active, and the Church is home to a recently recognised miraculous crying icon.¹⁰

The story goes that a local Grandmother had a reproduction of a Greek icon of Our Lady of the Sorrows in her house. One day her twelve-year-old grandson was praying to the icon 'very strongly', when it started to weep oil. At first the family kept the icon in the house, where it continued to weep, and it attracted lots of people to the house. The story of the weeping icon spread and its fame grew to such an extent that the house was constantly full of pilgrims from all over eastern Poland. It became impossible to live with the icon and the family offered it to the local Church. The icon has been in the Church for two years now. When it first arrived it stopped weeping. However, over the course of the two years it has begun to weep on three separate occasions, for no known reason. The icon was originally bought at an Orthodox festival, and is like any other mass-produced icon available at such events: A3 in size, it is printed on a stiff cardboard. The tears she cries are of oil, an important fact for the Orthodox pilgrims, who connect this oil with Myrrh, the oil given to Jesus at his birth, and used to anoint him at his death. The crying has been witnessed by a Bishop and is therefore a recognised miracle. The oily tears are collected and used in services in the Church.

¹⁰ Recognized by the Archbishop of the Dioceses.

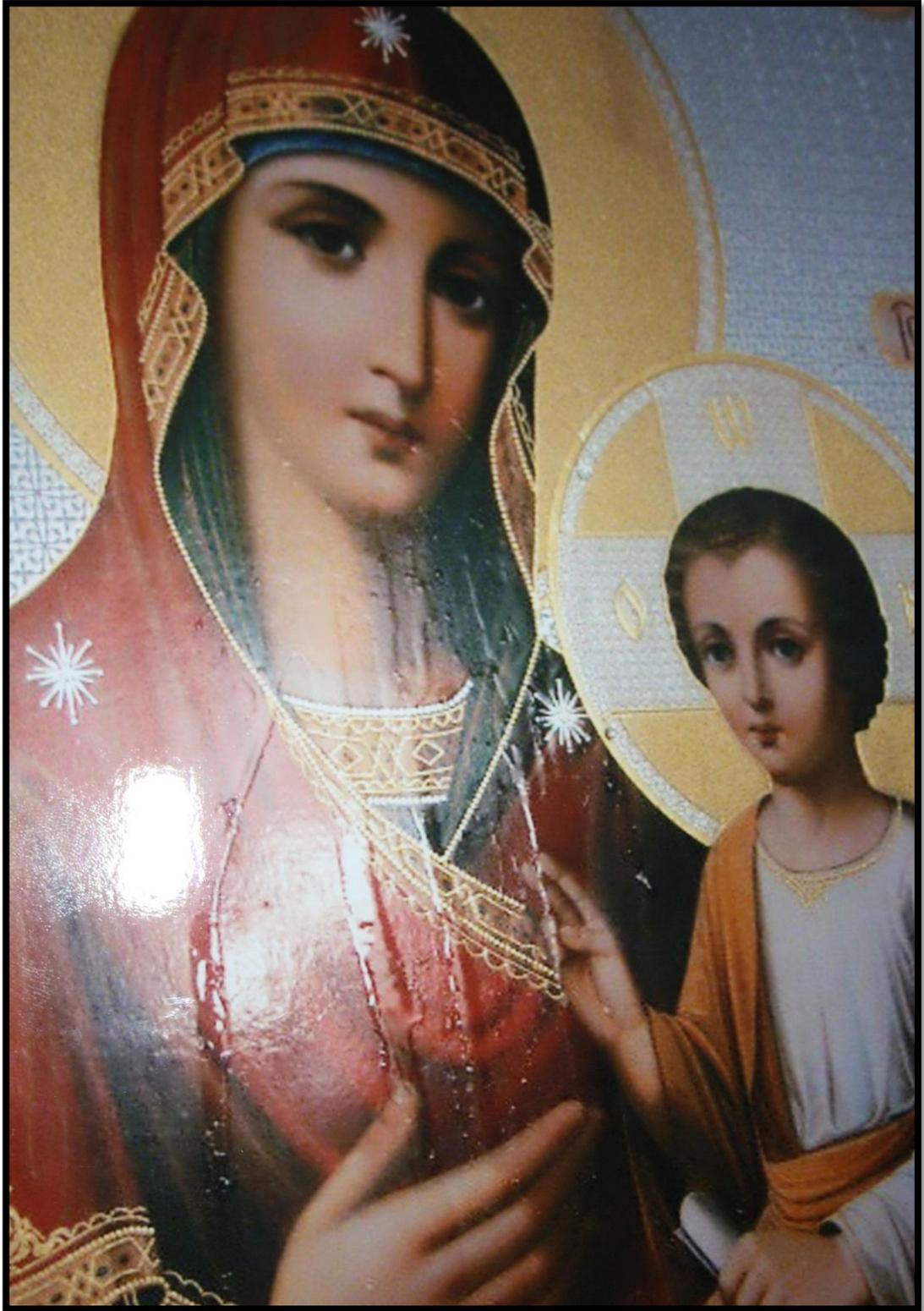


Image 2.17

Our Lady of the Sorrows

I arrived at the church at 9.30am, but the service was delayed to allow a bus full of pilgrims on their way from Białastok to arrive. The liturgy lasted an hour and a half with an extra twenty minutes at the end for a ritual to the Weeping Icon of the Virgin Mary. The Church itself is very different to the basilica both in the style of decoration and the basic architecture. It is square

in shape, and about three quarters of the floor space is open to the congregation, with the stone tiles covered in Persian-style rugs. Every bit of the wall is painted with pictures from the Bible and the lives of the Saints; even the ceiling is painted to represent the dome of Heaven. A large ornately-carved wooden wall covered with framed icons of the Saints called an iconostasis, set on a little raised balcony, separates the altar from the congregation. On the floor there are analogion (special stands) with icons laid on them at forty-five degree angles and two free-standing icons. All the icons are surrounded by candle stands, and after purchasing a long thin candle for 2 zł (from the makeshift shop on your right as you enter the church) worshippers can light it and place it in the stand. People do this as they enter, and also throughout the mass, without causing any great interruption. The Weeping Icon of Our Lady of the Sorrows is on the left hand table—as in the Orthodox Church the left of the Church is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and the right to Jesus. As people enter they each make their way to the Weeping Icon; most kiss the icon, light a candle and then offer a prayer. Many pilgrims had brought photos of loved ones, or strings of rosary beads, which they would press to the glass case covering the icon.



Image 2.18

This was the first Orthodox Christian service I had attended, and I was finding it hard going. People stand throughout the two-hour service. There is only call to sit or kneel for very short periods. Even then there are very few benches to sit on. The service is not said in the vernacular, but in a language called ‘old Slavonic’; even the prayer books are in Russian and

Ukrainian. The focus of the service is the two 'entrances', one for the Bible and one for the Host. At each 'entrance' the doors to the Alter are opened and the chandeliers lit up, altering the quality of light and space in the Church. The 'entrances' are also accompanied by the choir and the priest waving an incense holder over the congregation. It is very multi-sensory. In fact I was struck by how polyphonic and sensory the mass was, how tactile the congregation were, how the choir and priest shared so much of a role in the liturgy.

After the mass there was a service devoted to the Weeping Icon. The congregation wrote the first names of their loved ones on sheets of paper. Two of the four priests then read out these names concurrently with prayers to the icon by the other two priests. The names are of the still living, and this service is to protect them. At the end of the ritual pilgrims press small flat cotton balls (of the kind used for make-up removal) onto the glass covering the Weeping Icon. The priest now blesses the pilgrim's foreheads with oil, as well as putting some of the oil on the cotton balls the pilgrims had pressed to the glass on the icon's case.

Before I left Terespol I had the good fortune to interview the young man who two years ago prayed to Our Lady of the Sorrows and watched as she began to shed tears. Jakub was very devout, and enthusiastic about his faith. Throughout the mass he had stood beside me and helped me to understand what was going on. I was introduced to him properly after mass as he had stayed late to clean the Church and help with the Lenten feast. He was reserved, but seemed well-used to telling his story. In our interview he emphasised the importance of Icons to Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians alike. He told me that in this region the Virgin Mary was very important and very active. All of the people I spoke to in Terespol drew a direct link between their own miracle icon and the image at Kościół, and even Our Lady of Leśna Podlaska—both Catholic images. However, later, outside of Terespol, most of the Catholics and indeed some of the Orthodox to whom I spoke were very doubtful of the 'truth' of the icon in Terespol.



Image 2.19 Jakub cleaning the Weeping Icon of Terespol

Those in Kościół who disputed the veracity of the tears of Our Lady of the Sorrows gave similar reasons for their doubts. The first set focused their disagreements around the image itself and the second on the action of crying. For the first set of sceptics the idea that a commercially produced and purchased icon could be miraculous was laughable. They pointed out that the icon had 'no history', and that it looked 'out of place' in the Church beside all the icons painted on wood. The second set argued that tears are not a 'real miracle' but a cheap trick; real miracles are equated with healing and protection, with Kościół and Częstochowa. They argue that simply praying to an icon will not make it weep, that the tears must be fake.

There is a religious landscape in this part of Poland and it is one dominated by the Virgin Mary. The quote that begins this chapter is from a book written by a local politician about the churches and monasteries in eastern Poland (Smółko 2010). The idea of the Virgin Mary as an active participant in the production of space is reflected in her titles: 'Queen of Podlaskie', 'the Blessed Mother of Leśna Podlaska', and so on, and in the stories of the way images and statues of her were pulled to eastern Poland or manifested miraculously in its rivers, fields, and wells. The presence of the Blessed Mother of Kościół legitimates the Catholic claim to ownership of the land and the heritage of the town. Other nearby portraits of the Virgin Mary perform similar functions. What is striking is that there are no Orthodox icons of the Virgin Mary with this same power. In this case the active exclusion of the Terespol weeping Blessed Mary has a political implication. Allowing the icon of Terespol's Lady of the Sorrows to become part of the local landscape of Mariology gives the Orthodox population a place in producing the religious landscape of eastern Poland, challenging the Catholic hegemony. By considering the spaces of the images we realise that these two distinct groups are less bounded than they initially appear. Other divisions cut through them; elites exist within each and frequently their interactions with the holy images and the spaces are markedly different. Again we come back to the division of image/medium/body, to the production of space and to the underlying tensions that are negotiated in creating a sense of the borderland.

When we discuss the holy images, the entanglement of the figures themselves, their settings and materiality, and the way that pilgrims perceive, interact with, and are moved by them constantly lead us to consider more than just a picture of the Virgin Mary. In Kościół the painting of the Virgin Mary is a point at which we first find the many identities of the town. The image is something we can think with. Starting with the Blessed Mother of Kościół we begin to unravel and discover contestation over the shifting of borders of Poland, the process of post socialism, the ascendancy of different confessions and the presence and absence of many religious groups in this small town. Thinking through the image led me to ask for the first time what a shared 'Polish' identity might be in this town on the borders of Europe, and how this identity is tangled into the understanding of the town's landscapes.

Chapter 3: The Present Lives of a Borderland Dead

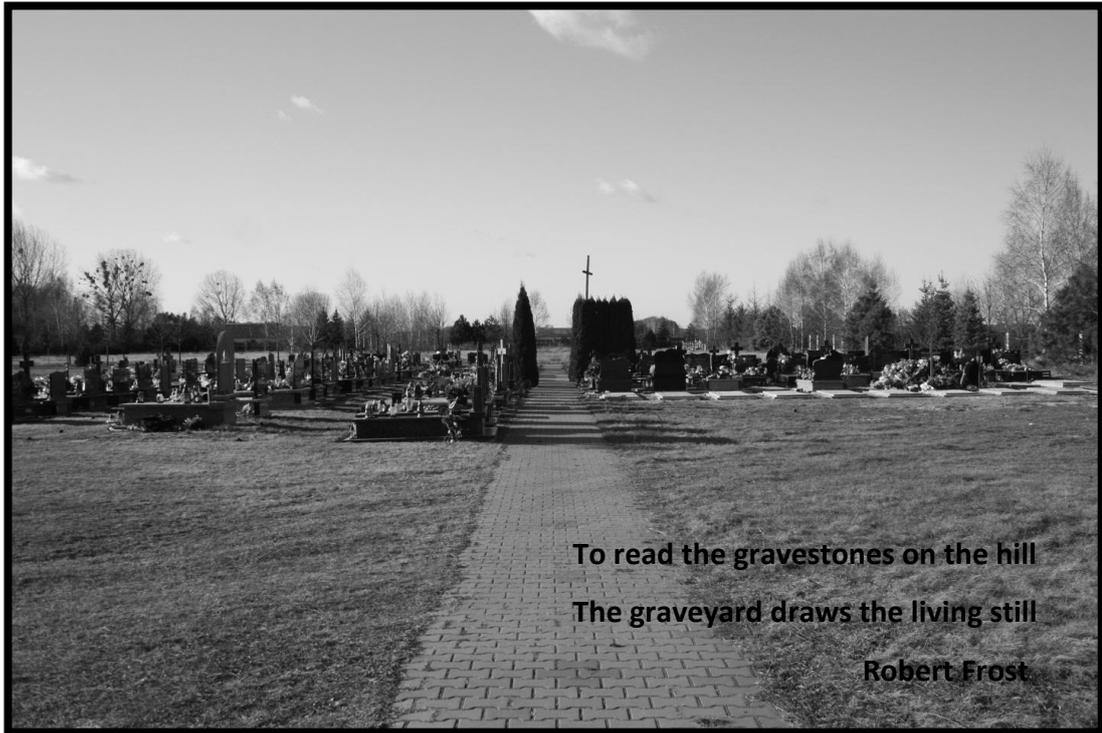


Image 3.1

As I cross the road from the old cemetery to the new one Henryk, my guide on this tour of the town's graves, casually informs me that the road we are walking on is the very one that was paved with Jewish headstones during World War II. 'What happened to the graveyard?' I ask, perturbed by the nonchalant manner in which he has delivered this information. 'Are the stones still here under all this dust and loose stone?' Henryk shrugs. He says he can take me to the cemetery later, but as to the headstones he does not know. Already the day has been a disconcerting blend of unpleasant and fascinating. Surrounded by the dead and the accoutrements of death the living bestow upon them I am beginning to feel decidedly uneasy. On our first meeting Henryk had insisted upon taking me on a walking tour of the burial grounds of the town. I had not realised then how many graveyards the town actually has. Some people will tell you there are only two grave sites—the Catholic and the Orthodox—others will divide the Catholic site into two, an old and a new site, while still others will say there are three Catholic graveyards, the 'main one', the 'old one', and the 'new one'. Finally a small number will include the forsaken Jewish cemetery. It is clearest to say there are three burial sites in the town, but this is to ignore the apparent subdivisions within each site. Henryk stops at a fresh looking grave, with the sandy soil of the Bug delta heaped on top of it. 'Look' he directs me. From the beginning it was obvious that Henryk saw this trip as an opportunity to point out the precarious state of the Orthodox community in the area. Here, he tells me, is another convert to Catholicism; he has an 'Orthodox name' yet is buried beneath the sign of the Catholic cross. It has quickly become apparent to me, as we move from

cemetery to cemetery, that the dead do not rest in peace in this part of eastern Poland, but continue to have a role in producing a sense of place and retain the potential to disrupt such place-making.

My trip with Henryk was one of three major ‘graveyard walks’ I was taken on over the course of my fieldwork. The next two were to follow a similar pattern: starting at the shared Catholic and Orthodox cemetery my guides would move from grave to grave and at each the stories they told, the material objects that decorated the plots, and the tombstones themselves began to bring into focus local discourses about place, nationality, ethnicity, and complex way these three interact. And it wasn’t just walks: people advised me to cycle to other towns and villages to look at the Tartar cemeteries, although no one mentioned travelling to see Jewish burial grounds. On the first of November, during Orthodox Easter, and on numerous name days and anniversaries, locals aware of my research would offer to take me along with them to the resting places of their kith and kin. In the previous chapter I discussed how the holy image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół first led me to think about the multiple groups producing the landscape of Kościół. However, it was when I was plodding through the graveyards around the town I began to understand that multiple landscapes were emerging in Kościół, producing and undermining a shared sense of place. I began to imagine the terrain curling at the edges and peeling back to reveal alternate versions of the surroundings, hidden underneath the seemingly coherent surface. In each new version of the cemeteries’ topography new issues regarding the perceived overlap of religion and ethnicity, the negotiation of a local and national identity, the claims different denominations made on the land, and how all of this was transmitted became apparent.

This chapter is broken into five sections, each exploring one of the multiple layers that construct the places of the dead. This includes the landscape of graveyards, the mortuary practices and processes, the embodied experience of visiting and tending to the graves, and the researcher’s attempt to locate the abandoned cemeteries that litter the countryside. The first section concerns the walks I took through the multiple graveyards of the town. It emphasises the contestations about religion and place and how these ideas are understood through the ruptures and maintenance of kinship and social relationships. The second section looks in more detail at some of the material objects associated with the graveyards and the ceremonies and objects used to solidify relationships between the living and the dead. The third section will look at one example—the town’s abandoned Jewish graveyard—where the failure to maintain relations with the dead can be seen as an attempt to reshape space, though such an act fails. To further illuminate the role of ‘active forgetting’, ‘present absence’, and the

impact these have on place-making, I will contrast the practices involved in relating to the abandoned Jewish and Tartar graveyards. Finally I will consider a trip I made to a Jewish graveyard near the town that has been officially commemorated. In this instance I will not only explore the materiality of the memorial and the unkempt nature of the site, but also the responses people in the town had to my decision to visit this site.

It has become a trope to speak of the lands surrounding the eastern borders of Poland as a necropolis, a seemingly never-ending graveyard. As far back as the World War I the Czech diplomat, Tomas Masaryk, referred to this borderland region as ‘a laboratory atop a mass graveyard’ (in Prusin 2010). In this chapter I do not intend to present my fieldsite as an area filled with the aroma of death. Yet it is true to say that like many places historically wedged between empires, these lands around the Bug River have witnessed numerous conflicts, all of which haunt the landscape still (Prusin 2010). Neither do I mean to present the cemeteries as a metaphor for the borderlands. During my fieldwork it became clear first that gravesites were important places for my respondents, and second that burial places and burial grounds are locations in which conversations between the living and the ghosts of the environment are easiest to overhear.

3.1 Walking Analytically through the Graveyards of Kościół¹



Image 3.2: The Rotunda as seen from the road into Kościół

When coming from Warsaw to Kościół, one enters the town through its graveyards. The forests on either side of the straight road begin to thin out and soon one sees the white conical shape of the ‘Rotunda’, the church in the middle of the oldest catholic graveyard that is dedicated to funeral services. Before you reach the Rotunda, however, one passes three other cemeteries, all on one’s right. The first is the newest, barely a quarter full—a large empty plot of land decorated starkly with an eight-foot-tall Catholic cross. After this is the contested shared burial site. A pre-World War II cemetery, it is surrounded by a wall with two gates side by side, one topped with the Orthodox cross, the other with the Catholic one. There is a loose-chip gravel road between the new and the old graveyards, and if one continues down this road for another five hundred meters or so, on the left hand side one sees a plot covered with apple trees. This was once the Jewish graveyard, although there is no sign to say so, and not a single headstone remaining.

All three of my walks with respondents began in the shared Catholic and Orthodox graveyard, and this site illuminates some of the issues contested throughout the places of the dead. A blunt dividing line runs through the graveyard, in the form of a cobbled walkway, severing the Orthodox graves from the Catholic ones. The gates sit beside each other but open

¹ Anna Witeska-Mlynarczyk coined the term ‘walking analytically’ to describe Frances Pine’s method of walking with respondents to uncover histories (2013, 63).

onto the two sides, as though the walkway that divides them is a solid wall. As one faces the graveyard the split is instantly obvious. To the right are the golden onion-domed roofs of Orthodoxy and the ornate suppedaneum and patriarchal² crosses, to the left the Catholic crucifixes and statues of the Virgin Mary.

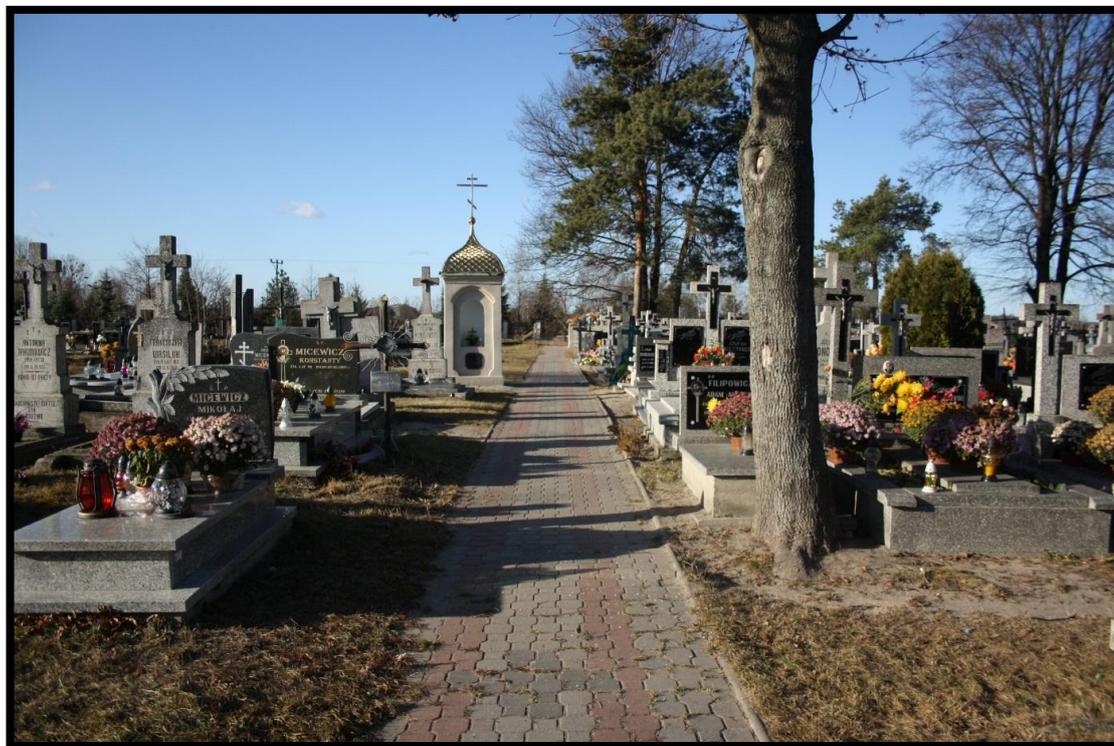


Image 3.3

Despite the obvious split, the distribution of graves is more complicated than it at first appears. Established during the partition of Poland, when the land was Russian and the Orthodox denomination prevailed, the gravesite was originally Orthodox. However, when the Catholic graveyard across the road began to reach capacity sometime during the late 1920s, during a period of Catholic ascendancy in the area, this site became a shared burial place. On my first visit with Henryk he insisted that in 1927 the Catholics had ‘taken’ the graveyard and split it. The recent Orthodox parishioners buried on the ‘wrong side’ of the graveyard were exhumed and reburied, but it was decided to leave the really old Orthodox graves where they were. Henryk lamented that this was doubly cruel; it ejected some of the corpses from their final resting places while also causing a situation where some Orthodox families were suddenly no longer buried together. Family members that had once lain side by side were all at once in two different graveyards, with some now lying in ground sanctified as Catholic.

² Both crosses resemble the Latin cross but have extra crossbars. The patriarchal cross has an additional shorter crossbar above the first crossbar. The suppedaneum has one shorter crossbar above and one short slanted crossbar below the first crossbar. Both are symbols frequently used by Eastern Orthodoxy.

On my second visit I ask the caretaker who was walking with me about the splitting of the graveyard. Basyl was originally Orthodox, but converted to Catholicism in order to marry his wife. He was more reticent talking about the reasons for the division of the site, relating that it is locally assumed the Orthodox clergy sold half the graveyard back in the 1920s. However the split had occurred he tells me, it was badly done. He recalls opening a grave meant to contain one woman, only to find seven skulls inside. They must have moved the graves very chaotically, he tells me solemnly, which is 'shameful'. Were the skulls Orthodox, I ask? Basyl is clearing away a broken pot from a new grave. 'Maybe', he replies, but a lot of Orthodox families 'left' after the Second World War, so there is no way of knowing. There is no one to ask who was originally buried where. 'Probably not' he concludes. The older graves were dug very deep, it is unlikely you would unearth them even if you were digging right on top of them.

This walk took place toward the start of my fieldwork year, when people still avoided talking with me about Acja Wistula, or the 1947 forced relocation of the Greek Catholic and Ukrainian Orthodox. They simply told me 'people left then'.³

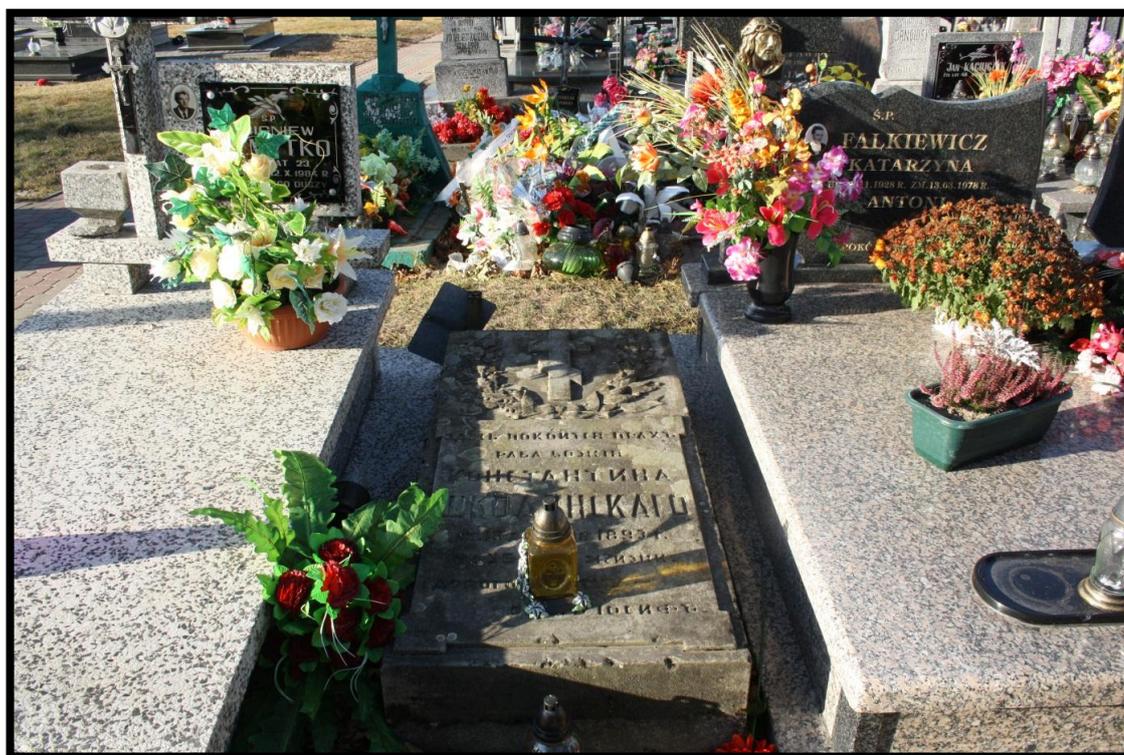


Image 3.4: An old Orthodox grave (1893, with a Cyrillic epitaph) now positioned between two modern Catholic graves on the Catholic side of the cemetery

³ Later, when I had been in the field longer and built a good relationship with my Orthodox respondents, I was able to speak more about Operation Vistula and was even introduced to the old women I mentioned in Chapter One. I will return to discuss Operation Vistula in Chapter Five.

This exodus of the Orthodox population, as well as the continued shrinking of the community, caused another disparity in the two graveyards. The Catholic side was well cared for. The graves were newer and there were family members who came at least once a year to clean and care for them. They were marked with solid stone markers, and often the plots were guarded by a heavy stone tomb. On the Orthodox side many of the burial sites were no longer correctly marked. Originally the Orthodox had marked their graves with wooden crosses, which had, over time, rotted. If the families had left there was no one to say who had been buried in the now unmarked plot. Iron that had surrounded the graves was also frequently stolen, especially in periods of scarcity such as the two world wars, the frontier wars (1918–1920) and the post-World War II re-moulding process (Prusin 2010).

The effect that moving through this landscape had on my respondents was obvious in their chosen topics of conversation. While he picked up debris in the Orthodox section, Basyl focused on the failure of the gravediggers to treat the bodies with the respect they were due during the division of the cemetery. Henryk was more cantankerous.



Image 3.5

Orthodox Names

As we moved from the Catholic to the Orthodox side Henryk became animated by the slights he believed his religious community had faced in the last few years. ‘Here again’ he declared, pointing at a Catholic grave on the Orthodox side, ‘this one is the child of a convert too’. He

shows me the last name, how it ends in 'iuk', an Orthodox ending he assures me, but how the first name is Piotr, a Catholic name. Interestingly, other people in Kościół point out that 'iuk' is a Belarusian or Ukrainian name ending, making the perceived entanglement of religion and nationality in the area apparent. Henryk avoids mentioning this connection. Henryk is adamant that the cause of the community's ill fortunes is the number of people who convert to Catholicism, like Basyl, so that they can marry. Why else, he asks, me, are there flowers on the graves? The first of November is a Catholic holiday, whereas the Orthodox remember their dead according to the Julian calendar and mostly during Easter—both according to edict and local practice.

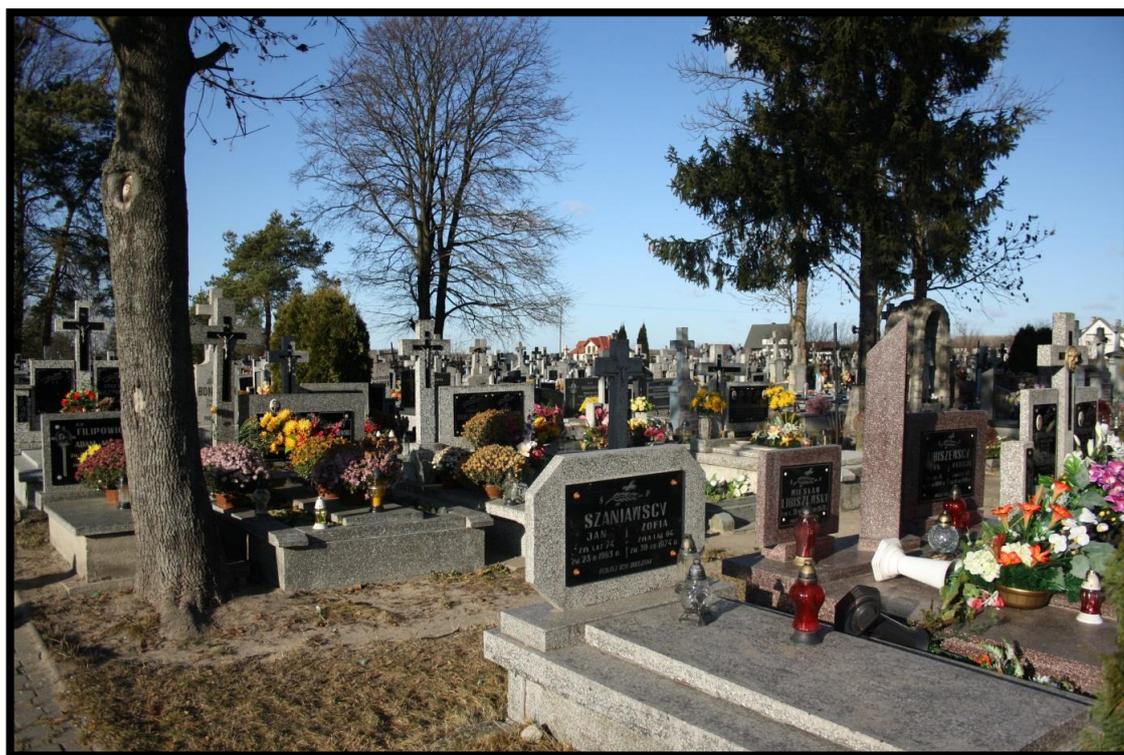


Image 3.6

We walk from the first two graveyards and across the road into the new Catholic graveyard. Henryk again begins to point out Orthodox names, people he still considers members of his religious community, buried in Catholic graves. Why do they convert, I ask? Because the Church will not let them marry if they do not? Yes and no, Henryk responds. He is warming to his subject, and he continues: it is 'easier to be a Catholic here now'. I begin to ask why but he continues to speak. Ever since the partition it has been easier to be a Catholic, he contends. 'Germans and Austrians are Catholic', he seethes, 'but no one ever says, "oh you're Catholic so you must be German, or Austrian" when you say you are Catholic. But if I say I am Orthodox they say "ohhh you're Russian!" I am not Russian! My roots,' he stamps his foot forcefully on the ground, 'my roots, my grandfather, great-grandfather, ancestors, my son,

they stood on this ground, they worked in Kościół. Why not say “oh you’re Greek?” The Greeks are Orthodox!’

This is something that will come up again and again in my research: although there is always a connection drawn between being Orthodox and being Belarusian in this area⁴—and sometimes between being Orthodox and being Russian—my Orthodox respondents always rejected the idea that they were a Belarusian minority even if they had family in Belarus.

My final tour of the graveyard took place towards the end of my stay in the town. This time I was in the company of an Oblate from the Sanctuary and Basilica, who possessed a wealth of knowledge, having just written a book on the history of the sanctuary and the town. As we walked, Father Jan narrated the history of the cemeteries. His narrative contrasted with that of Basyl and Henryk in delivery as much as it did in substance. Where Basyl was halting and undecided, willing to leave stories unfinished and conclusions open, unsure of his authority, Fr. Jan was certain. Where Henryk was riled when he sought evidence for the contemporary persecution of his faith, Fr. Jan was even-handed and spoke in a neutral tone. He was showing me the site as example of the complex but co-existing denominations of the area; he used the word ‘ecumenical’ frequently. Father Jan was the first of my guides to point out the Jehovah’s Witness graves in amongst the Orthodox ones, buried here as their families were originally Orthodox. He also showed me a small number of Greek Catholic graves, adding that as a rule they travelled to the next town to be buried. Here his use of the past tense resonated loudly. I asked about the conversions and Father Jan told me that people were free to marry without converting, it’s just they cannot do so in the Catholic Church. What about children? Do they have to be raised Catholic even if one of their parents is Orthodox, I asked? Fr. Jan avoided the question and told me the Catholic Church encourage children to learn about both of their parents’ faiths, and that the Orthodox still recognise the Pope, that ecumenicalism is important in Kościół. I in turn ignored his evasion and asked what he thought of the graves that were moved to make way for newer ones when the cemetery was split in two. Fr. Jan told me graves are frequently moved or emptied when there is limited space and that in the days following World War II the Church was not in a position to ask for new burial grounds from the unsympathetic government. As we left the graveyard we passed a large stone carving of the Holy Mother of Kościół at the head of a grave and he told me the story of the architect’s grave.

⁴ See for example the section on religion on the official Polish government English language website, polska.pl. Here it is explicitly stated that Orthodoxy is common among the ‘Belarussian minority in the East’.

When in the 1927 the basilica was returned to the Catholics, it had been sacked and emptied by the Orthodox. The professor from the University of Warsaw who helped to redesign and redecorate the Basilica (mentioned in the previous chapter) never saw the completion of his plans. He passed away in 1949 and the Church decided to honour him by burying him and his wife at the front of the graveyard, marked by a statue in the likeness of the Holy Mother of Kościół. However, there was already an Orthodox grave occupying this plot. Fr. Jan explained that they dug into the ground behind the original grave and six feet down there was still no signs of human remains. The architect and his wife were buried here, Fr. Jan tells me, without disturbing the remains of the older Orthodox owner of the plot.



Image 3.7: The Architects Grave

Henryk tells the story of the architect's grave too, but in his story there is something dubious about the Church's story of the undamaged and unmoved Orthodox corpse. Why, he asked me, does the Orthodox grave now face west, when all other Orthodox graves face east so that on the dawn of the day of Resurrection the corpses can arise to face judgement?

There were a number of processes at work as I made my way around the graveyards; escorted, guided, accompanied, and lectured to by three very different local men. Many of these processes were linked to the everyday political struggles over belonging to and

producing the sense of Kościół. I purposefully use politics with a small 'p' here; I am not interested here in the state's moves and machinations or in the grand notions of states in transition, but in personally political acts, meanings, and struggles. In the cemeteries I was faced with the presence of large-scale ideological transformations, and the traces of historical shifts as they were understood, acted, and expressed through the formation of an everyday politics of the borderlands. In her work on politically active corpses, Verdery is also interested in 'small p' politics, and in the role of affect and meaning in political action. She sees what she calls the 'political lives of dead bodies' as a key to the political realm of struggle over meanings and significances. She states: 'Bodies have the advantage of concreteness that nonetheless transcends time, making past immediately present' (Verdery 1999, 27). In my own situation it was not the bodies alone that made the past imminent. Equally important were the relations between the living and the dead. The everyday politics associated with dead bodies was not just about drawing up boundaries between different groups within the town and relating to history as members of those groups, it was also about making claims to space.

This means that in Kościół the corpses are also loci of the struggle their descendants face over local history and its role in the current situation,⁵ like Henryk asserting that his family had worked this ground as Orthodox locals for generations. The graveyard stands as a witness to local attempts at creating a central and homogenous local identity, in light of a history fraught with ruptures and discontinuities, shifting borders, and the alternate ascendancies of different denominations.

Cemeteries are places where spatial practices are particularly telling (Lefebvre 1991). The corporeal reality of the reburial of the dead and the splitting of the cemetery are evidence for Henryk that he is part of a locally significant, historical community, suffering the indignity of repression at the hands of a now powerful alternate denomination. To do this he has to simplify the narrative, presenting the Orthodox community as heterogeneous, ignoring evidence of ethnic plurality. For Fr. Jan the multiple groups of corpses at rest in the cemetery speak powerfully to the integration of the area. It is a perfect model of ecumenicalism, as here the Orthodox, Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Jehovah's Witness dead literally lay side by side, in 'unity and co-operation', exemplifying the spirit of the ecumenical movement. Similarly imaging this unity means that Fr. Jan must omit disagreements over the reburial of bodies and

⁵ There are many examples of political dead bodies in Poland mediating history: the investigation of the mass gravesite at Katyn, eventually proving that the 20,000 dead bodies there were Polish officers murdered by Soviet forces and not by the Nazis; the controversy over the exhumation of Sikorski's body from London and reburial in Wawel Cemetery as a war hero; the decision to bury divisive peacetime president Lech Kaczynski in Wawel after his death in the Smolensk airplane crash 2010.

the splitting of the graveyard, instead presenting a coherent narrative of the serendipitous multifaith nature of the spaces of the dead. Despite their different conceptualisations of the burial space, the practice of walking it, and of displaying it as an important part of their community, makes it a shared space. It is not just individual and competing identity projects that are informed and evidenced by the cemetery. The creation of local or borderland identity is also informed and documented in this place of the dead. That this one space can hold so many ambiguities, conflicts, and disagreements and yet still be considered a place for the construction of a shared sense of place characterises it as somewhat contradictory.

Lefebvre dedicates a significant chunk of his immense work *The Production of Space* to working out the challenges of contradictory space, albeit in the loftier realms of theory. Lefebvre's contradictory space is both divergent from and capable of reproducing hegemony. The ruling groups conceptualised space and then produced it to their advantage. To do this they formulate a division between real and abstract space, reifying abstract space as a priori to real, inconsistent, messy, lived space. Abstract space is the realm of town planning and social engineering (Lefebvre 1991). Changes are conceived in abstract space and then applied to lived space. This allows the colonisation and creation of space to become the jurisdiction of the dominant class, and thus implies their ownership of the space, if not legally than practically. This capacity to produce space is accomplished by a competition not for the meaning of space, but for the position of centrality within a space. Despite efforts to conceive of space to their advantage there is no actual division between real and abstract space, there is no empty space (Lefebvre, 1991, 308). The actions of people within space, how they use, ignore and fill it can act to counter the manner in which it has been planned, laid out, or colonised. Thus space becomes contradictory (ibid). As mentioned in the introduction, the ideal of centrality is that by making the centre static and *total* contradictory space can be bent to the will of the ruling classes. They can choose who and what to include and exclude, and the centre will form in the tensions between these two overlapping groups.

The architect's grave is located behind the gate the Catholic Church erected when they took charge of half of the graveyard. It is materially different to all those that surround it, mounted by a statue of the Virgin of Kościół, built in sandy stone, more like a monument to the man who resurrected the basilica from the ruins left behind after the Orthodox used it than a grave. It is a spatial attempt to designate the focal point of the cemetery, not only as Catholic space, but also as a space evoking the affronts of subjugation. It serves to remind people that the sanctuary was once 'sacked' by an invading power, the Orthodox Russians, before a Pole from one of the central Polish institutions restored it. But these attempts to declare a centre

are undermined by the reality of space and people's movement through it. When you enter the Kościół cemetery what you see, what you are drawn to, is the path running through it dividing one denomination from the other, like an ugly scar. Moving through the graveyard you constantly return to this path. The graves are so close together, so covered in flowers and candles that it is difficult to walk between them; making your way through the cemetery you constantly return to the main path. As you walk from one side of the path to the other the appearance of the graves, and their frequency, are so totally different. Here in this cemetery no denomination holds the centre; instead, it is held by the border, the division, despite the efforts of the current ecclesiastic ascendancy to stamp its mark on the burial ground. Yet this division is not total. Graves from one group end up on the wrong side. Flowers are laid on Orthodox graves during Catholic ceremonies and the man that maintains the place has a foot in both Orthodox and Catholic communities. Jehovah's Witnesses are buried among their family and friends despite their religious affiliation and two faiths now share a site originally consecrated by one. Much like the town the Catholic and Orthodox graveyards are normally sites where there is a joint effort to produce a sense of a shared community. However, once we begin to look closer multiple places within the space emerge.

3.2 Gilt and Ceremony: Materiality, Embodiment and the Dead



Image 3.8

All Saints Day

There are always candles. On the graves, next to statues of dead worthies, on sections of pavement where someone once died, in packets in the supermarkets next to the fabric softeners and other non-perishable housework goods. They are a variation on the same basic design: the candle is encased in a glass container and covered with a perforated tin lid. Often the glass is embossed with a sacred heart motif; coloured and bigger more expensive candles have ornate metal ends and odd shapes. Today there is an endless sea of candles covering the stalls—it is the first of November, All Saints Day. Róza and her mother select a variety of candles for their relatives. Róza and I clumsily hold a large number of small, simple, different coloured candles, and one large heart shaped one that she is buying for her great-grandmother's grave, as the stall owner decides how much to charge us. Róza is responsible for dressing her great-grandmother's grave today and Róza's mother laments that she has not picked the monotone colour scheme favoured by most families when dressing their relatives' graves. Róza is insistent and thinks it is right that the graves should be colourful. As we clear the leaves off her great-grandmother's grave and pour water over the stone to wash off stray lumps of clay I ask Róza what the candles mean. We are speaking in English as she has previously lived in England, but she tells me she does not understand what I am asking, and I attempt to clarify: 'Why do you light them?'

'To remember the dead'

'But why remember them this way, with candles? Is there a special meaning of them, a ritual meaning of them, a symbolic one?'

'I think there is something to do with the soul going to heaven... and the light has some meaning relating to the soul... and the path it travels. I don't really know. Candles are used to remember the dead. We know that, we do it, I don't know if they need a meaning.'

I continued to ask about the candles whenever I could. I was told that candles were associated with Easter and therefore with resurrection. I was told that candles represent something about the soul after death. Many people stated simply that they did not know. To paraphrase Bourdieu, what made graves worth the candle (1998)?⁶ Time and time again I was told that what mattered was what you did with the candles, that you placed it on the grave to mark that you remembered the dead person, and that they looked beautiful. The use of candles, it seemed, was part of the habitus of death. This denotes that laying out candles, as a memorial practice, was itself the meaning of candles, as any previous meaning was no longer accessible (Bourdieu 1977). The candles were part of a set of practices associated with the dead, embedded in the bodies of those who set out the candles and in society that encompassed them and their dead.



Image 3.9

⁶ 'Illusio is the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing the game is "worth the candle," or, more simply, that playing is worth the effort.' (Bourdieu 1998, 76)

I talked in the introduction about materiality and embodiment. The body is delicately entangled with the material objects that make up the environment within which it is active and actively shaping (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Here I want to add another layer to this discussion, by looking at how the dead body, the non-feeling body, comes to play a role in its environment. I have always felt that Bourdieu's 'body' is a very sterile body, a neat physical entity that is moulded and moulds without its physical processes intruding on any social process (1977). Perhaps then the dead body, the decaying, messy body, and the material objects associated and used by them can present us with another way of seeing the world of habitus.

Grave Dressing

We have finished cleaning the grave of Róża's Great-grandmother. Carefully Róża places a small candle on the each of the four points of the rectangular stone slab and stands back. 'Where shall I put the big candle?' We decide on the top centre, in front of some old plastic flowers that have discoloured slightly. Róża takes the wreath of plastic and fabric red roses she bought earlier and places it at the bottom, in the centre. We are in the Orthodox graveyard in the large town near Kościół. Róża and her mother are Catholic, but Róża's grandmother was a convert from Orthodoxy. Róża tells me all this as we dress the grave; of all her relatives she is most animated talking about this woman, an immigrant, perhaps a Russian or Slovenian, the wife of a general who travelled widely for her time. Róża uses the word 'independent' constantly in the history of her great-grandmother, and acknowledges that she looks for parallels in their lives, which she romanticises as 'lives of adventure'. When she was away from Poland Róża tells me she felt very distant from her family, this woman included. As she interacts with the final resting place of a woman she never knew Róża builds a relationship between them regardless of the boundaries of time and death and even religious difference (the manner of dressing the graves is identical for Catholics, Greek Catholics, and Orthodox). Hallam and Hockey suggest that objects 'are able to condense different times through their aesthetic, sensual or material properties' (2001, 51), and the plastic flowers and candles do just that. Every year Róża comes here with the same objects, and lovingly and carefully dresses the grave of her great-grandmother, disrupting the temporal space between them.

The bundling of the various meanings and materialities of the candles and the flowers is apparent in all of this (Manning & Meneley 2008). These are objects simultaneously at work in many different fields and roles. Their use by Róża brings certain aspects of their existence as social, material, and meaningful actors into focus. It also endows them with a secondary agency, and allows them to act upon the environment and the perception of the environment

as much as it acts upon them. To say all of this might seem redundant, like running in intellectual circles of shaping and being shaped. However, the focus on material objects does more than tie us up in tautologies. It allows us access into the felt-world, the sensory world, the embodied exercise of being in and of the world. Here then we can say that not only are material objects embedded in the shape and shaping of the environment and its other actors, they also productively encourage us to think about the actual processes of this shape and shaping. Kościół is more complicated than the imagined clear division of its denominations, and this is often made visible through material objects and practices. It is reflected in the following account of a winter funeral, which draws out and elaborates on several of the points made above.

A Winter Funeral

It is early December, cold but not freezing; everyone is worried that winter will be very late. The weather is bright and windy, the temperature a nasty minus five. So I wrap up warmly before going to the cemetery for the funeral. The man who died was elderly and had been in a hospice for some time, suffering from cancer. He had converted to Catholicism to marry, and until five years ago he had been active in both the Catholic and Orthodox communities. My landlady is planning to go to the service and the grave, so I decide to go with her. The service is in the basilica and is attended by Orthodox and Catholic friends. They pray together using the same words, but different movements. The Catholics stand, sit, and kneel at all the right moments, the Orthodox bless themselves, constantly, to the right first, with three fingers. As the mass finishes the priest blesses the coffin with holy water and the guests move in procession to the Rotunda. At the Rotunda, further prayers are said over the body and hymns are sung. We all stand tightly together: the room is barely big enough for twenty people and the massive door is swung wide open so that it is as cold within as without. The coffin is carried to the main graveyard, the drops of Holy Water frozen on its lid. My landlady remarks how light the coffin is, how fast they are able to move it; unsaid but understood is what this says of the dead body, shrunken and starved by disease. The ground was broken and dug yesterday, but the pile of earth by the plot has frozen during the night. This morning during the service at the Rotunda I could see Basył and another man out breaking the mound with picks. There are no real flowers—although everyone at the funeral has a bunch of plastic or fabric flowers—and the trees are leafless. Once the body is put in the earth and the priest has said his few words we move off to the House of Culture, where there is food and tears. The next day I return to the grave and see the flowers heaped upon it. Gaudy stems of birds of paradise, unseasonal tiger lilies, bunches of red and white roses in simultaneous full bloom, and a number of suspiciously orange daisy-like creations.

Winter finally comes in late December, bringing its yearly flurries of snow and temperatures of minus thirty. I pass the man's grave and see the flowers poking through the layers of snow. When spring comes around, also late, the flowers are displayed again—faded and a little tattered, but still there.



Image 3.10

This practice of using fake flowers in the place of real ones raises some interesting questions. They are impervious to decay, they lack the delicate texture and gentle fragrance of the real thing, they require no care in order to prosper, and they are frozen in their moment of greatest beauty. All the things that have been used to explain the symbolic presence of flowers at gravesites seem to be missing (Goody 1993). What does remain is the role flowers play in the performance and process of mourning. This use of flowers is particularly relevant in Poland where the language of flowers is widely known and has a political aspect, involving the flower

crosses that marked sites of government violence that were a large part of the resistance to the state during Martial Law (Klekot 2007). Rowbottom discusses the use and meanings of bringing flowers to the dead in relation to the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, and the sea of flowers that encompassed Kensington Gardens. Carrying flowers marks you out as a mourner (1999). Flowers are associated with friendship and love, and thus the act of giving them to a dead body ‘invokes (sic) a widely understood conviction that flowers express social and emotional ties’ (Rowbottom 1999, 165). Rowbottom further notes that the flowers left in memorial were not ‘death’ flowers, but flowers Diana might have been handed on any of her official trips. Goody has noted the importance of the short life of flowers and their use on graves; the fact that they need to be constantly refreshed serves to bring people back to the graves frequently (1993, 288). However, he also notes that in Irish and Italian Catholicism bunches of flowers are not brought to the graves; rather, flowers are planted and images and rosaries used to decorate the plot (Goody 1993, 288–289). Yet, even when the goods and flowers are not perishable the families still must return to ensure that the graves remain neat (ibid).

The flowers on the graves in Kościół do not simply tie the living and dead together in relationships of significance, they actively deny the capacity of death to destroy these ties. The flowers on the graves are the same ones that people use to decorate their homes. There is no need for the belongings of the dead to be only for the dead. The bundles of meanings, roles, and work that the objects carry with them impact on how we understand the dead, and affect our relation to them. Despite my contention that the corpse is the most physical of bodies, the ceremonies and practices of mourning allow it to remain social, embedded in the shape and shaping of Kościół. The man who died had many roles, and his religious background was just one aspect of his life; his funeral was a reminder of this.

If looking after graves keeps the dead active in the processes of managing identity in everyday life, what does a failure to care for a grave add to our understanding of these processes? In the next section I will consider abandoned Jewish graveyards, but first I would like to talk about other types of forgetting—less traumatic and more gradual. Many of the graves on the Orthodox side of the main graveyard have been left to the elements. Families have moved away, markers have rotted, the bodies under the ground are no longer social, their souls have departed, and their physical feeling and thinking bodies decayed.

When I walked in this cemetery with Henryk, the fallen headstones and rotten wooden markers of the Orthodox graves stood in stark contrast to the corresponding Catholic graves. When I returned to walk the graveyard on my own the landscape seemed a little different. I had already walked this space on two separate occasions with Basył and Henryk. This time I was moving through the space alone, and at my own pace. As I hunched over a ‘forgotten’ Orthodox grave I saw more clearly that the phrase was a simplification. The cross that had once marked it had been up-rooted and left on top of the plot; in fact there was no guarantee that this cross matched this plot at all. Not that it mattered; the weather had rotted the untreated wood and no name was visible. Yet despite these initial signs of decomposition there was a bunch of red plastic Chrysanthemums, a little faded, on the top of the plot. When I looked again I realised I had been oblivious to the floral tributes on each of these graves. People still visited these graves with flowers, they still cleared away the detritus and they still cared for them. Despite not knowing who was buried here, there was still an attempt by members of Kościół to maintain social relations with the dead.



Image 3.11



Image 3.12

This becomes even clearer when looking at these burial plots in comparison to those known as the German graves, also contained in the main cemetery. There is a void, in the bottom left hand corner of the Orthodox section of the graveyard, a sudden and jarring absence of graves—not even the tell-tale bump in the earth to suggest there was once graves there. This section is referred to as the ‘German Cemetery’.

During World War II this was where the German Fascist army chose to bury their dead, when they were in control of the town. Everywhere in this region the period of German Fascist presence manifests itself through absence. In Kościół there are the empty Jewish graveyards, with missing headstones, and here the unmarked burial places of German soldiers. When the Germans were defeated and abandoned Kościół to the Russians the locals destroyed their gravestones, and left their bodies in the ground to remain nameless and to be forgotten. Many different respondents told me about this action. I wondered if the Germans could really be considered forgotten when the tale of their graves' desecration was still so well known. The forgetting of the Germans is an on-going practice; despite the cramped conditions of the graveyard their section has never been touched. When Kościół's Catholics ran out of space recently they consecrated the new cemetery across the road.



Image 3.13: The 'German Cemetery' Kościół

This performance of active forgetting offers a mirror image of the other practices discussed in this section: the efforts to remember and keep relationships alive. Together these practices highlight the ways in which people act to build social relations with the dead, or, by contrast, to deny any sort of connection. Examining the material objects and embodied performances at the centre of these relationships clarifies how these relationships are maintained and transmitted across generations and across religious groups. In the first part of this chapter, walking through the cemeteries revealed their contested histories, and the role divisions and fissures play in identity strategies. In this section I looked at practices and performances that

suggest there is a sense of belonging that transcends these politically motivated partitions. I also explored how material objects and ceremonies offer a way of engaging in social relationships that exist across vast temporal distances. The relationships between the living and the dead are used to produce different spaces, or to aid community attempts at place-making, thus creating sense of place that encompasses memory through a community of the dead.

3.3 Abandoned Jewish Cemeteries



Image 3.14: The Forgotten Jewish Cemetery, Kościół

When I first visited Kościół—a year before my fieldwork started, as part of a trip to decide on a field site—I spent a whole day looking for the Jewish Cemetery. I had been told that there was one, but despite an exhaustive search of the town I found no trace. I started my fieldwork in October but it was not until December that someone took me to the gravesite. I had asked my respondents about the site repeatedly in the weeks leading up to my visit to the graveyard and my determination had surprised them. ‘There is nothing there’ or ‘it is unused, empty land’ they responded. Eventually Henryk agreed to show me the site, although only as part of a larger trip to meet some local old Orthodox women. The time at the graveyard was brief, we looked at it and we passed on. Because all I could see was a piece of land surrounded on three sides by roads, including the one Henryk had told me was paved with the headstones, I later returned alone determined to find more given more time to look. The area is covered in apple trees and a footpath is worn through the middle. There is not a single headstone remaining. For weeks I remained convinced that Henryk had deceived me, and yet when I passed the site with other respondents they confirmed it was indeed once a Jewish graveyard. After this I did not like to cut through the graveyard and I began to notice that older residents were similarly disinclined. However, when I asked my younger respondents about the abandoned cemetery they told me, with authority, that there was no Jewish Cemetery in Kościół, only in Sławatycze.

There is an unbearable silence regarding the Jewish population in Kościół. Occasionally I would hear a frightening story about collaboration or the actual deportation of local Jews to ghettos in larger towns, but they were isolated tales. I could never get corroboration; often the respondents who originally told me the stories refused to repeat them or gave me another version of the story on the second telling. Mostly there was silence. I can count on my fingers the number of times the extermination of the Jewish population was discussed during my year of fieldwork. More poignantly I never heard of tales of local Jewish culture, even when it was spoken of as a living tradition. The ways people moved through the landscape was synchronised with this silence. Only those who truly could not recall the Jewish community moved unhindered through the graveyard, and even they did not feel totally comfortable there. Even those who had not heard the story of the graveyard attached to the orchard know the story of the murder of Kościół's Jewish population. For them it is a dislocated memory that clings to a number of empty fields in the town. It is possible to identify these sites through a certain reticence in how people behave in a number of places in the town. In August the apples from the trees in the forgotten Jewish cemetery litter the ground, rotting—no one collects them.

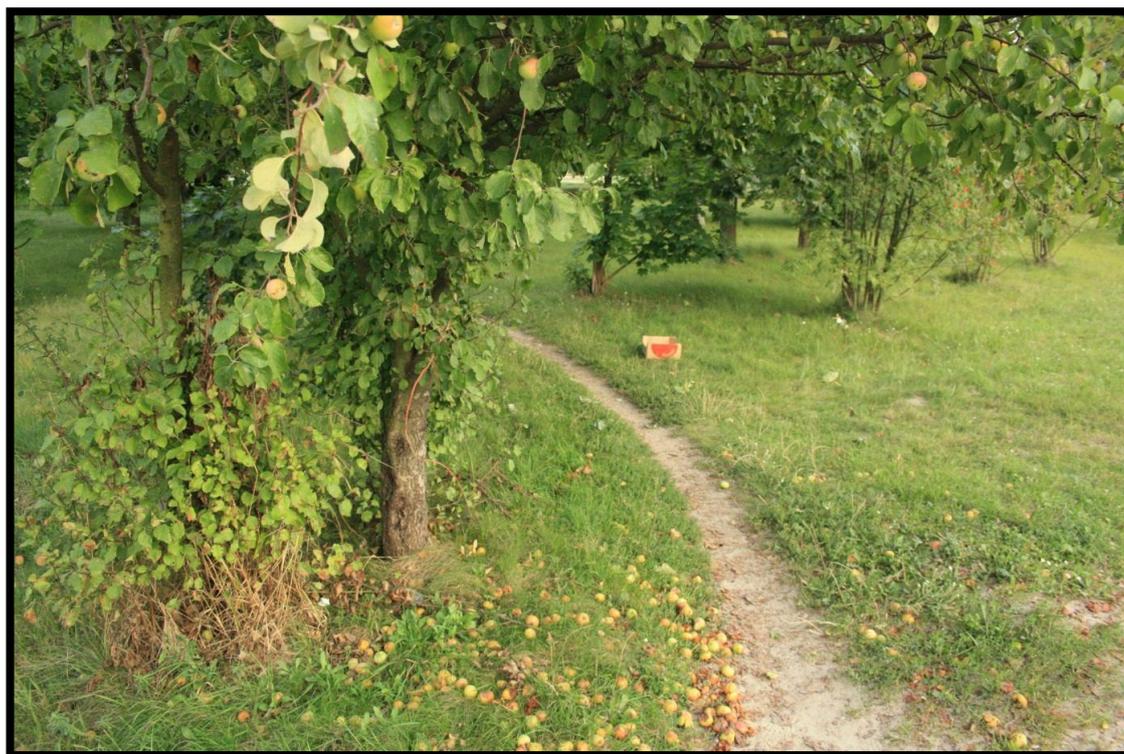


Image 3.15

Following Kwon (2006) we may consider the deaths of the Jewish population of Kościół to be 'bad deaths'; deaths that go un-mourned and unrecognised and infect the landscape with ghosts. Still, unlike the Vietnamese 'bad deaths' that Kwon follows as they are safely

reintegrated through ritual reinvention, the Jewish dead of Kościół remain threatening within the local landscape. When I visited Catholic, Orthodox, and Greek Catholic churches, cemeteries, and holy places I constantly heard and came into contact with the material reality of their transformations over the years. People spoke openly about Operation Vistula; about the 1875 partition and the destruction of Catholic Churches; about the intra-war refusal to accommodate new Orthodox Churches; about the controversial splitting of the local cemetery; about the 1874 Pratulin Greek Catholic martyrs; about the post World War II Ukrainian partisans. However, unless I pressed them, no one spoke of the Jews or the Jewish Cemetery. This refusal to vocally place the Jews in the local landscape was particularly powerful in light of Witeska-Młynarczyk's claim that Polish people self consciously historicise their surroundings (2013, 64). By this she means 'there was always a date, a historical event to refer to, and ... a personal story was always contextualised through a reference to a political episode' (Witeska-Młynarczyk 2013, 63); this is a way of orientating communicative memory according to events everyone recalls. Yet in the case of Kościół this tendency to historicise personal stories skipped over a 'historical event' that echoes throughout the world. This refusal to let the destruction of the Jewish communities in eastern Poland into conversation demonstrates that memories are not simply communicated through historical events that everyone remembers. The historical events are carefully chosen to adhere to a publically accepted narrative of the past—further entangling memory and history in Kościół.

In Kościół no one claims to be Jewish; there is no one who speaks of having Jewish heritage—while almost everyone speaks of their denominational backgrounds. Despite their disappearance from social life the Jewish dead remain in the landscape, not just as absence but also as physical bodies buried under an empty plot. The Jewish cemetery in Kościół may be abandoned and repurposed, but it is not forgotten. Almost seventy years since the destruction of the site it still evokes anxiety in Kościół's population. Here, without the gravestones, flowers, and candles, it is only the landscape and the local sense of place that evokes memory. No one tells the children not to pick the apples, but the fact that their elders leave them to rot is instructive. It is one a fragment of an event that creates the sense that something is not remembered in this site. This action, in conjunction with local knowledge of the events of World War II, suggests the site's previous use to younger generations and guides their interaction with it—even when they don't remember its original use. This is what makes the experience of moving through this cemetery uncomfortable. To move through the space and use it in everyday life people must ignore the reality of the space as a place of the dead, and avoid building a story from the fragments of memory that whistle among the apple trees.

3.4 Historical Graves: the Tartars



Image 3.16

The Bug Cycle Path

It is one of the hottest days of the summer so far and I am lost somewhere on a road that is supposed to lead to a Tatar Cemetery. I checked the map before I left and was sure I just had to cycle straight and eventually turn right at the village I had just passed. An older lady walking by stops to see if my bike is okay. 'Yes', I say, 'but I am lost'. She knows instantly that I am looking for the cemetery and directs me to continue straight. Within a few minutes the cemetery is easily spotted, with two signs outside the gate, one identifying it and the other giving a brief history and a map of other nearby sites of interest. The cemetery is on the 'Bug Cycle Path', an enterprise co-funded by the Lublin voivodeship, the European Union and the Regionalny Program Operacyjny⁷ that during the summer months is inundated with tourists who travel it to revel in the scenery and the history of the area. I walk through the gate and instantly I am aware that there is a stark contrast to the abandoned Jewish graveyard in Kościół. The paths through the graves have been cleared here, the headstones righted and in some cases put back together, the older ones cleaned of moss. In front of most of the graves are the candles so common in Polish graveyards; they are new, and one is still lit. This is a place of the dead where people still come to clean and care for them. As I make my way around the graveyard two noisy motorbikes pull up at the gate and two young couples dismount. They

⁷ Regionalny Program Operacyjny is a program of region development implemented by the Polish government from 2007 to 2013 and 2014 to 2020. It is co-financed by the Polish government and European Regional Development Fund.

wander around the graves for a while, trying to read the inscriptions, and then ask me to take a photograph of them in front of a headstone with a Muslim star and crescent motif. I ask politely why they are visiting. They were hoping to see the grave of legendary Tatar colonel Samuel Mirza Korycki, a contemporary of King Jan III said to be buried here. We talk a little about the Tatars. 'They were the last Polish regiment to surrender in 1939', one of the young men tells me. I am also told they were not really Muslim, that they attended Christian festivals and had the same saints as the local people. We say our goodbyes and they hop back on the spluttering motorbikes and continue down the 'Bug Cycle Trail' to see the fortress outside Lebiedziew.

It is difficult to know how many Tatars still live in Poland. In a 2002 census only 448 people listed their ethnicity as Tatar, however many more people claim to have a Tatar heritage. Sometimes a number of five thousand is given but three thousand is more likely (Dziekan 2011). The last Tatar family left Zastawek just before World War I. After the Eastern Polish Border was shifted west at the end of World War II many Tatars found themselves in the USSR and fled



Image 3.17

west across the new border into Poland. They tended to collect in larger cities rather than stay in the towns and villages of the borderlands. However, the region where I was based is still seen as the 'Tatar's little homeland' (Łyszczarz 2011, 66). The Tatars have a romanticised identity, associated strongly by Poles and Polish Tatars with a heroic temperament. The Tatars are associated with the victory in the Battle of Grunwald (1410), which freed the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth from the influence of the Germans and resulted in the Tatars who fought being elevated to noblemen (Dziekan 2011). The post World War I 'cultural movement' involved the publishing of three separate journals on Tatar culture. The Nobel winning author Henryk Sienkiewicz, himself of noble Tatar heritage, filled his exceptionally popular historic

epics with stories about them. Although the first Lipka Tatars are said to have had a shamanistic religion, those that settled what is now the north-east of Poland in the 14th century were Muslim. In the next 600 years their faith took on some of the elements of the local Christians and they are known to have co-educated men and women. However, the Tatars of Poland were and are still Muslim, obeying the pillars of Islam and increasingly making links with Arab Muslim organisations (Łyszczarz 2011). Despite this religious difference Polish Tatars lost their distinct language many years ago and incorporate Christian celebrations into their calendars; some authors have gone so far as to say they are completely acculturated (Dziekan 2011). When people spoke to me of the Tatars it was not of them as a living community but as a historic category, part of the history of Poland and its nobility.



Image 3.18 'The lands of Lebedziew conferred upon the Tatars 300 years ago by King Sobieskiego III'

In the Tatar cemetery we come across a place of the dead where those buried are no longer tied to the local population as genetic kin. Yet unlike the abandoned Jewish cemetery of Kościół, this graveyard is still cared for. The gravestones have not been repurposed; in fact, many were actively saved during the restoration. There are candles and flowers and official plaques celebrating a community whose members once owned this land. Here the work of creating social bonds with the dead continues in earnest. The graveyard could not in any way be considered abandoned and I think the term 'historic' suits it far better. It is part of a government funded and defined route that aims to highlight the scenic beauty and heterogeneous culture of the Eastern Lubelski region. Indeed as you walk the path through the

well-maintained forest, past headstones with their multilingual epitaphs and Muslim symbols, the impression is exactly this. While there is silence locally regarding the Jewish population, I was encouraged to visit the graveyard in Zastawek. It is not just that the Tatar's are visible though memorials in the landscape, but the people of the area speak for them too. The voice and activity conferred on the Tatar dead draw into sharp relief the silence and loss of the Jewish departed, and local refusals to interpret the scraps of their history still apparent.

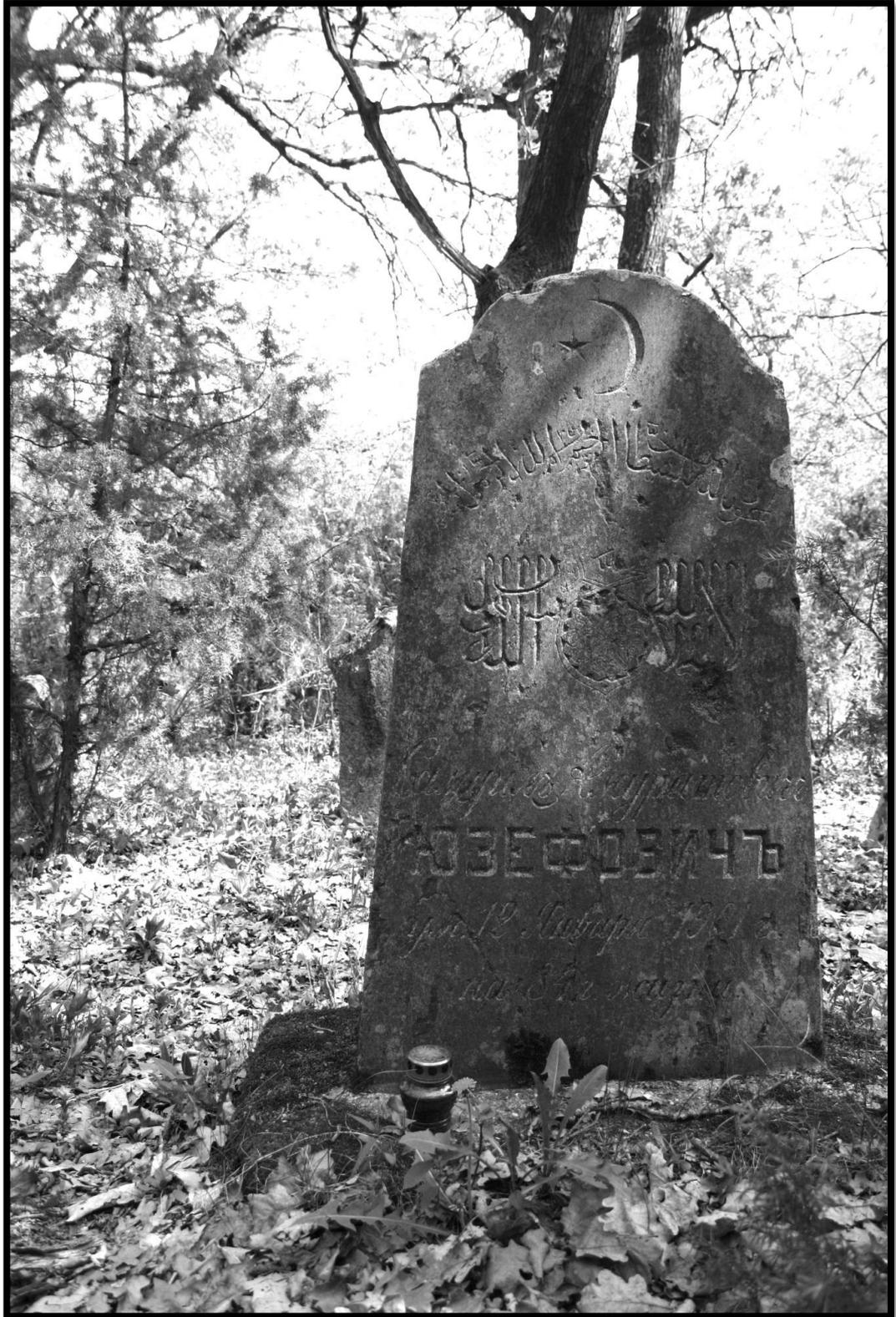


Image 3.19

3.5 Death and Abandoned Memorials



Image 3.20

Even when attempts are made to officially memorialise the extermination of the Jewish population they are rarely as successful as the restoration of the Tatar cemetery in Zastawek. When I went to visit one such nearby Jewish memorial in May 2012, what I found was a monument abandoned, in a double act of forgetting. In May 2008 Karen Greene attended a ceremony to mark the opening of the restored Jewish Cemetery and Memorial in Sławatycze. Afterwards she wrote a personal account of the event, which included the wish that ‘...perhaps the restoration of the Jewish cemetery in the small shtetl can serve as an end to a horrific chapter and the beginning of a more beautiful future’ (Greene 2008). In her piece Greene refers openly to one of the major unspoken problems of memorialising the lost Jewish community in this area of Poland when she articulates the fact that her grandfather refused to attend because he had ‘...no reason to return, really, to a town that turned its back on atrocities committed on its Jewish neighbours; or, even worse, actively participated in the unbelievable horror’ (Greene 2008). As she tells the story of the ceremony, where some people who had escaped the village as children returned to talk about their experiences, she notes the local community slowly coming out to see what the event was. There were meetings between local Catholics and returning Jews and eventually ‘promises to respect and care for the unmarked Jewish dead, just opposite the Catholics buried in their manicured memorials’ (Greene 2008).

But that is not what I found when I visited Sławatycze, a town near to Kościół, and an official border crossing to Belarus. Sławatycze and Włodawa are two parts of the Bug cycle trail that

have significant Jewish histories. Both towns were the site of World War II Jewish Ghettos. Yet the cycle trail only speaks of Włodawa's history, and even then the map lists only 'The Synagogue complex: Great & Small Synagogues, Jewish commune house (now museum of the Łęczna-Włodawa Lake District)' (Grzanka 2012, 29). The memorial at Sławatycze is not mentioned; when I read about it while on fieldwork and spoke of visiting it my respondents were surprised. Janusz, a local farmer, gave a typical response: 'there will be nothing to see, there are only, maybe, two headstones'. In the end there was something to see but it was a disconcerting visit nevertheless.

Forget-me-not

I cycle off the main road and turn down an even smaller side street. Then a giant memorial gate comes out of nowhere, signs on either side of it in Polish and English, the only place I've seen English in a while (in fact there is a Bug river tourist-information board opposite without English, but with Russian). Inside the gate the ground is so wild with nettles, wildflowers and long grass that for a second I see no graves. Eventually they come into focus among the summer greenery. There are only three gravestones and even these are overgrown with grass and weeds, including small blue forget-me-nots; the irony is not lost on me. Yet there is a small remembrance candle on one stone. In my fieldnotes I later find written in the margin 'at Tartar graveyard there were candles on most graves'. The whole place feels as though it has been abandoned twice, once after the Second World War and a second time after it had been made into a memory site. Kwon has said that through rituals intended to exorcise the ghosts of its war the Vietnamese '...may bring



Image 3.21

home from the street an idea of justice, and may awaken people at home, living or dead, to the idea that all human death—‘good death’ or ‘bad death’ and ‘from this side’ or ‘that side’—has the inalienable right to be grieved and consoled’ (2006, 183). These graveyards were once the sites of good deaths, where people were properly buried, marked and mourned. However, when the sites of the dead are desecrated or purposefully ignored they risk being made into places analogous to the places of bad deaths. The bad dead are the dead that haunt, that remain unsettled, and in doing so pollute the environment with the residue of their violent ends and loss of kin (Kwon 2006, 29). Far from this or the call to build bridges that Karen Greene wrote about in her personal response to the ritual unveiling, this site serves to highlight that the local community are not yet ready to open a conversation with the Jewish dead no matter how healing it may prove to be.

A few days later I am sitting at the dinner table in Paulina’s house. We have been catching up and waiting for Henryk, her husband, to come home so we can organise a trip to an Orthodox monastery. When Henryk gets in I have begun to tell Paulina about my visit to Sławatycze. I tell her that I don’t think the Jewish memorial is useful for locals, how maybe it was all too fresh, there is too much left to admit or forgive to remember it properly yet. I am still trying to work out my feelings on how the landscape becomes silent and bleak when evidence of the Jewish community is sought, and I value Paulina’s opinion. She agrees with me, adding that maybe people simply don’t know about these places—she herself was until now ignorant of them. Henryk disagrees, maintaining it is all to do with money. Note how the Tartar graveyard is on the tourist cycle track, but the Jewish cemetery is not, he pointed out. They need things to attract tourists on that track, and they pour money into them. Paulina adds that a Jewish graveyard would attract people, like the concentration camps do, so it had to be more than lack of money that saw it ignored, but Henryk insisted it was purely economic. ‘No one wants to know about the Jews or visit the graveyards because they are scared’ he insists. They are scared of the return of the Jews even as tourists, Henryk claims, scared they will want their land back. The discussion escalates into an argument about the motivation to forget: do people avoid remembering a past because it is wrought with trauma, or because they fear the economic consequences of remembering?

I began to see that the reason I had been discouraged from visiting Sławatycze was because the memorial was dangerous and my trip risked polluting Kościół on my return (Douglas 2002 [1966]). The history of the Jewish populations in the area challenges the idea that the region was a place of tolerant pluralism. More than this the current failure to embrace the Jewish dead suggests the area is still intolerant of Jews. This was an idea I frequently came

into contact with. When I told Polish acquaintances or many English colleagues I was researching religion in the Eastern borderlands they often wanted to speak about the anti-Semitism they were sure I would encounter. The only way my respondents could incorporate the Jewish dead into the making of a shared sense of place was if they remained silent. The questions I asked and my visit to the memorial risked awakening the presence of the Jews in the local landscape.

De Certeau speaks of how ‘the places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences’ (1984, 108). His image of spaces crammed with distinct and silent spirits waiting to be invoked is exceptionally appropriate for the empty graveyards I have spoken about in the last three sections. It also helps to close this one. To say that a landscape holds memory and identity, is shaped by it, is only half to the story. The people who move through that landscape, who know it by names and by wayfinding, are intimately involved in calling forth both of these things. The old graveyards of the borderlands in which I performed my research are all different because they are subject to different interpretations, sensations, and interventions by the people who reside near to them and move through them. People actively involve the dead in negotiating identity-building; even the dead they chose to ignore can be seen in the negative space of these projects.



Image 3.22: Photograph taken by Karen Greene in 2008 of the newly restored graveyard



Image 3.23: The Jewish Graveyard in Sławatycze (May, 2012)

The places of the dead in and around Kościół are made through relations among people, living and dead. Despite the complexity of the dead's affiliations different groups of people draw them into their orbit through material practices and by distinguishing aspects of their stories that can be used to prove they belong to one group rather than another. The relationships between the living and the dead demonstrate how kinship can be used to claim a stake in wider practices of place-making. By demonstrating that a long buried person is your ancestor and that they belonged to the same religious and social community that you do, you can assert your status in the creation of a local sense of place. However, beyond these conscious acts of place-making, the relations that Kościół has with a wider community of the dead also help to shape its sense of place. The positive affirmation of ties to the Tatars, imagined as cultured and heroic nobles, and the refusal to incorporate the Jewish dead—or to imagine them at all—display some of the characteristics that inform the local sense of place. However, this attempt to produce the appearance of tolerant plurality through selective interactions with the dead ultimately comes apart in the spaces where fragments of hidden histories reveal the troubled landscape of death and memory in Kościół.



Image 3.24

Chapter 4: The forest, the River and the Fields in a Landscape of Frontiers



Image 4.1

Every day throughout my fieldwork I took off from my house at the edge of the town, crossed a small offshoot of the Bug River near the army barracks, and wandered into the forests on the other side. If I continued straight through the forest I reached the Bug River proper and the Polish border within fifteen minutes. No one in the town differentiated between the Bug and its offshoot, and among tourists there was general confusion over which body of water constituted the border—a confusion most local people encouraged. The forest was an assemblage of spruce, oak, pine, and a raft of other deciduous and evergreen trees I was, embarrassingly, unable to identify at a glance. It was not the grand protected Prehistoric affair seen an hour further north in the UNESCO Białowieża Reserve. Nonetheless there was something inviting about the combination of river and trees, the latter all imposingly tall and tightly packed. Wavering paths worn through the woods appearing here and there, more often disappearing into new overgrowth than going anywhere in particular. The earth underfoot was oddly uneven for this flat area of Poland. At one point a set of small paths opened out into a wide track, cleared of trees and compacted so that the ground was very flat, which forestry employees drove along

occasionally in a large Ursus¹ tractor, dragging freshly-felled timber in their wake. There was the sound of small rodents and birds, the shadow of storks flying lazily above on their massive wings, and I would frequently start when a branch on the ground beside me turned out to be a small brown snake.

Throughout my fieldwork, walking helped to shape my research and, as I described in the introduction, it was an important part of learning the local orientation to the environment. I also walked around the churches with respondents, letting the conversations shape around our routes. I went on pilgrimages and talked with pilgrims, and I progressed with the rest of the congregation around the town on important religious holidays. However, my short daily strolls in the forest were not really a research strategy; rather, they were a way to get out of the town, to be alone, to sort through some new information in my mind. More than anything, they were a personal allowance. Yet, as often happens during fieldwork, this solitary rambling did not go unremarked upon by my respondents. My landlady fluctuated between concern about what I would come across all alone in the woods and a desire to teach me how to spot mushrooms and herbs with which she could cook. The areas where mushrooms grew shifted, and it was good to know of a new patch as yet un-reaped by one's neighbours. Other respondents seemed compelled to share the history of my paths with me, especially stories about bloody atrocities, Ukrainian partisans and tales of the 'boys' own' heroics of the Polish World War II resistance. Then there were the stories of wolves and bison and other apparently local fauna—the only stories that worried me to any real degree. Some of the soldiers stationed in the town would chat to me as I set out past their barracks and occasionally wave when they passed on quad bikes—part of the equipment used to keep the border secure. Local forestry employees would jokingly ask me to keep an eye out for illegal logging when they met me going about my actual research. I would often sit on the river bank only a few hundred meters from a man silently fishing, yet feel happily isolated. When leaving the woods I cut through a set of timber tourist cottages, the trees thinned out, and I passed an old manor house, now an old people's home. Just before the trees disappeared altogether I would normally happen upon one of my neighbours' chickens grazing among the unearthed roots and fallen foliage.

The small forest that edged out onto Kościół gave me my first opportunity to think deeply about the town's organic material world, about how it tangles itself into the life of the town, and about how it moves. I realised that I could not write about the town without reference to the arboreal, agrarian, and alluvial terrain. The biophysical world is an

¹ Ursus Tractors have a long history in Poland stretching back as far as the late 1800s. They are long-lasting and many like the one in Kościół are used for decades before being replaced.

important element in the evolving sense of Kościół. It is understood as landscape in the most traditional sense and it presented as the foundation upon which the town is built. The idea of 'natural beauty' is ubiquitous in comments about this region of Poland (see Tabor 1990 and Zarycki 1999) and this discourse is also apparent in the number of houses in the area owned by cosmopolitan elites as summer homes. The meaning of 'nature' in this context is more than the sum of its parts. Here the word nature encompasses non-human life, flora and fauna, and the biophysical material world, but it can really only be understood as part of a binary opposition. In this context, to talk about nature is to talk about something that is not culture, something that is the opposite of industry, something outside of time. Nature, of this kind, is at the centre of the growing tourist industry around Kościół, centering on the Bug Cycle Path, named for the river and designed to take tourists through managed forests, across colourful farmlands and alongside lakes.



Image 4.2

This idea that the 'natural world' is a pre-existing space humans can build upon, or that is the source of the immutable character of the area assumes that the biophysical world is stable and produced outside or without human intervention (Clark 2002). As Massey has pointed out, this assumption means that people use the biophysical material world to lend a sense of fixity to place (2005, 131). There is 'a background assumption that the "natural" world if left to itself would somehow, still ... be organised through that modernist territorial spatiality, settled into its coherent regions in rooted indigeneity' (Massey 2005, 97). Importantly, this use of the biophysical environment to ground people's sense of place

or to make certain spaces and objects appear coherent and fixed, is utilised by multiple groups in the Lubelskie Voivodeship. Through exploring the biophysical landscape I intend here to clarify how the Polish state, cross border traders, and tourists active in the physical environment surrounding the town all have an influence on the making of Kościół.

I also want to explore what becomes apparent when the idea that a physical landscape is historically constructed and constantly shifting is taken seriously (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 2005). The organic material world and its non-human life are also constituents of place-making, and thus require attention when we discuss the emergence of a sense of place in Kościół. The movement of non-humans, flora and fauna, unsettle a fixed view of the 'natural environment' of the town. Interactions between the biophysical world and humans impact and change the terrain and environment, evoking and embedding history and memory in and through the physical landscape. This chapter considers the physical landscape because the dynamics and negotiations of Kościół's emerging sense of place are directly influenced by the trajectories² of humans and non-humans within and beyond the Gmina.

Perhaps I should first make some clarifications about the words I will be using throughout this chapter. I will begin with 'landscape', as so far I have been using it in a very expanded form in this thesis, based on Massey's definition of '... one constantly emergent, on going, product of [the] intertwining of trajectories' (2006, 46). As I set out in the introduction, this understanding of landscape incorporates both time and space; it is not just interested in the material world but also in the processes sustaining it—thus it encompasses human and non-human actors. However, in this chapter I will frequently be using the word in its more traditional sense. Landscape is a sixteenth-century word that first entered the English language in relation to a style of painting. In the eighteenth century, about the same time that the English countryside began to be altered by landlords and enclosed to better resemble such paintings, landscape began to be used to describe environments that were thought to evoke the rural idyll (Hirsch, 1995). Thus the word landscape has a history associated with the birth of capitalism and powerful men³ who used it to present rural places as 'immutable elsewhere', places fixed and out of reach of the general population (Hirsch 1995; Bender 1993). Landscape in its bounded sense evokes a similar attempt to fix the biophysical world as 'nature' and the 'natural world'. In this chapter I will use landscape in both its expanded and bounded sense, and will clarify

² Trajectory is Massey's word; she explains that it means 'simply to emphasise the process of change in a phenomenon' (2005, 12).

³ The use of the masculine is, of course, intentional here.

as needed. There were two words that my respondents used when discussing the landscape: *ziemia* and *krajobraz*. *Krajobraz* (obraz: portrait; kraj: country) means landscape but in a manner similar to the eighteenth-century painterly use of the word; it was used when discussing the landscape abstractly. *Ziemia* literally means land or earth, but was the more common word used when discussing the landscape of this region day to day. Whereas *krajobraz* had romantic connotations, *ziemia* had a broader and more unbounded sense, since it allowed for the fluidity of the land and for multiple meanings to emerge.



Image 4.3: Translation 'International Border: Crossing is Forbidden'

In this chapter I will look at four intersecting groups who attempt to use and interpret the Kościół environment to fix or ground the town. These groups are not easily separated, nor are their boundaries impermeable, and all four are constructed and deconstructed through their relations with each other. I will start by examining the residents' use of landscape in place-making. In this section I will explore how history and memory form part of the local environment, and how the landscape thus constructed comes to be associated with the 'character' of the area. The second group I will discuss are tourists, both as a community moving within the region and an imagined group shaping

governmental and administrative handling of the biophysical material world. The third section of this chapter will return to the border and to the traders and customs officials. It examines the naturalisation of the border and how this has influenced local and external understandings of cross-border trade. It also explores what cross border trading can illuminate about the category of the 'inside'. The final section in this chapter explores how religious groups have tried to fit themselves into the landscape: through the embedding of large physical markers such as crucifixes and patriarchal crosses along the roads, and through their interaction with tourism. This chapter problematizes the idea that external forces do not play a role in negotiating Kościół's sense of place. It also clarifies the dialectical construction of the inside/outside discourse so many of my respondents used, and examines its importance in the creation of a sense of place.

4.1 Forests of Memory

In Kościół, when people talked about nature they were generally talking about the woods. In the town, as in most of this region, forests are busy, integrated parts of the community. Yet the woods are also places of multiple and overlapping 'shadow sites'.



Image 4.4

When they talk about shadow sites archaeologists are, strictly speaking, referring to the manner in which slight differences in ground level cast shadows so that when viewed from the air the site reveals traces of its past, the shadows marking out trenches or walls no longer visible when one simply glances at the landscape. Shadow marks rely not only on the position of the archaeologist, but also on the conditions on the day, the time of the

year, and so on. They lay bare the multiple pasts, movements, and transformations of a landscape. The biophysical landscape of Eastern Poland is a site of contestations over space, and such competition is a dynamic factor in the production of physical space.

The shadow sites of the forest are particularly potent as local people are constantly visiting and using the woods. People still use wood to heat their homes throughout the long winters. Even during the summer people put aside timber to dry and you can see the carefully tended woodpiles stacked in artistically complex loads to the side of nearly every house in the town. It is an environmentally sound method of heating: timber is plentiful, cheap and requires less transport than any of the other fuel options available, and also leaves a smaller carbon footprint.



Image 4.5

The forest is firstly a resource for local people. Therefore, when they discuss the woods they are also discussing wayfinding and other skills of orientating oneself in the environment and making use of it (Ingold 2000). These skills include the ability to know which spot along the river has the best fish, which mushrooms are dangerous to eat, which timber must be removed, which sections of the forest are largely left alone, and which sections are managed. The forestry services in Eastern Poland are run at a local government level, and most employees are from the area immediately surrounding where they work. It is steady employment and even when logging is forbidden, the employees are

kept busy removing deadwood⁴ and patrolling for illegal logging. The woods are owned by the local government, but most people in the town pick mushrooms and herbs in them, fish along the river and treat them as common land.

Despite the close relationship between forest and town, the woods—especially those further from the town—are treated with a particularly guarded respect. There is, occasionally, an atmosphere in the forest that is totally unlike the bucolic community air I describe at the start of this chapter. There are multiple paths in the forest of varying lengths. Many are so overgrown they reveal themselves only in the winter or autumn when the trees are barer than usual. Taking the wrong path can lead one deep into the trees, where there is near total silence, especially in winter. It is an uncomfortable feeling of hyperawareness and anxiety, where the threatening aspect of the imposing trees is heightened. After I myself had had this feeling, I described it to some of my respondents and I was relieved to find that they had had the same experience, often when they were quite young and still learning about the forests. Yet it also became clear that even having known the woods their whole lives my respondents still experienced a sense of unease stealing in occasionally as they made their ways through the woods. Sometimes the feeling was not associated with losing a sense of place in the forest but with coming upon one of the many pasts active in the production of the landscape.

There are mild differences in terrain throughout the forest but a sudden change, such as a long or deep hollow or a sharp short incline, often indicates an old foxhole or sanger. Both foxholes and sangers are military earthworks; the first is a hole dug to accommodate at least one person and to shield them from view or gunfire, the second is a low raised fortification constructed with stones or soil to shield a person when digging a foxhole is impossible. The forest is dotted with these, from as far back as the Russo-Polish war of 1831; discovering a foxhole or sanger as you walk through the forest thus becomes an unsettling memorial of war and death. The association appears more pertinent still because none of these hiding spots has remained untouched; in each subsequent struggle that followed the war of 1831 old foxholes were rediscovered, re-dug, and reused. The foxholes and sangers are a good example of the complex hidden histories of this area that I discussed in Chapter One. They invoke the official history of conflicts, but they also rely on local knowledge of the type of fighting that took place in the region's forests, which helps us understand why these particular forms originating in military intervention in the landscape are here. Partisan warfare has always been the primary means of fighting in

⁴ Deadwood is a nesting and breeding spot for a type of beetle that attacks tree bark.

these forests (Prusin 2010). The foxholes and sangers also indirectly conjure more recent memories of violence in the forest or personal memories of trauma.

Yet it is not always a specific spot or physical change that prompts such memories. There are memories in the forest that have no particular place, that emerge from a general knowledge about the people who dwelt or died in the woods. This is part of what Küchler describes as landscape as memory rather than landscape that is remembered: 'landscape as implicated as template in the process of memory work' (1993, 85). The 'constellation of processes' called the forest (Massey 2005, 141) includes the stories and emerging histories of lost Jewish graveyards, reclaimed by the tree roots and low growing ferns, the 'Kolonias'⁵ that used to fill the clearings dotted throughout the space, and the partisans (from all sides) digging their own graves at gunpoint. All of these things are remembered, but not precisely—no one can locate them in specific spaces or material objects. Part of the non-locatable place called the forest is the impression of loss, horror, and history unspoken. This is an area infused with memories, despite the fact that no one knows exactly where the particular events occurred.

In a recent *Focaal* special issue Haukanes and Trnka open by discussing the 'memory boom' that formed a large part of post-socialist studies (2013, 4), while Pine closes the issue by posing the question of what comes now for post-socialism as the members of a second generation are born with no direct memories of the socialist period (2013). This is an important question, and I think that the writers in the *Focaal* issue address it well by looking at generational differences and re-examining the role the 'past' plays in the wider temporal life of the people. Haukanes and Trnka see in the 'dynamic interplay between what is remembered and forgotten' a way of understanding what kind of futures people imagine, and are allowed to imagine (2013, 3). They look again at nostalgia, a much-used word in post-socialist studies, and see not just memory but a way of reckoning time. Boym has dissected nostalgia's dual role as a longing for the past and dream of the future in Russia (2001). Here, however, the authors turn to Berdahl's account of the former GDR, in which, she demonstrates, a longing for the past can be a comment on current politics and moralities (1997). In this instance, however, I am more interested in nostalgia as a way of reckoning and punctuating time. For some an idealised past allows for the politics of the future (Boyer 2010). For others the idealised past is forever relegated, so perfect that it is the 'realm of the impossible'; and therefore nostalgia can be a way of consolidating the current political status quo (Creed 2010, 42; Boym, 2001). Yet as people come up with new ways of reckoning time through memory so does the state,

⁵ Small settlements of up to three houses, or families named after the nearest town.

and Haukanes and Trnka caution that the 'hegemonic state narratives' of memory 'invoke specific modes of reckoning time that join together states and citizens' and permeate even those opposing modes of reckoning time (2013, 7). Like Benjamin's epochs, each dreaming the next and thus revising the past, this way of conceiving memory ties it to time and the political project of nation-building. Remembering and forgetting in the forest is not only a spatial project; it is also about the way that memory is organised, reformed, retold, and politicised in time. This means that remembering, in this case as in many others, is as much about the future and the present as it is about the past (Pine 2013).

During my fieldwork I wanted to talk about memory and the forest, but it was hard to find people who were willing to engage with me on this topic. My respondents skilfully bypassed direct questions about partisans or the life of the forest, but sometime addressed these topics in other ways. I was often told stories about the forest that began with 'My father told me...' or 'I knew a man who told me when he was a child...' These stories offered valuable insight into the chronotope of forest memories, the unique expression of time and space they hold (Bakhtin 1981, 84). This chronotope also identifies the manner in which people represent the past, and their moral attenuation toward it (Bloch 1996; Lambek 1996). These stories were memories that extended beyond individual lifetimes and defined the person in relation to past generations (Bloch 1996, 229), they were memories located in places and events that spanned generations, much in the same way as Hirsch's post-memories (1997). Thus they were a way for my respondents to represent themselves in the past; and as Bloch points out, it is incorrect to 'ignore how people represent themselves in history, because it is, to a certain extent, in terms of these representations that they will react to revolutions, migration or colonial conquests ...' (1996, 230). Thus the stories of the forest gave an insight into the ways that people mediated between their personal memories and morals and the memories and histories of the public world (Bloch, 1996; Lambek 1996).

There was another connection between memory and the forest. Lambek has discussed memory in terms of social relations, as an intersubjective and dialogical practice that resides in the individual mind and is also created between two or more people (1996, 239). When Lambek meets a friend in Mayotte after five years of distance, one of the spirits that posses her recalls an agreement they made on his last visit, a memory that can only exist in the relationship between the two of them (Lambek 1996, 237). I would add to Lambek's proposition that memory can exist between human and non-humans, in this case between people and the forest. Shaw (2002) writes of the memoryscapes of violent histories and how they are directly tied to modes of memory (Bloch 1996). She specifically

examines how, in her own research in Sierra Leone, her emphasis on a discursive mode of memory, and on the present, allowed her for a time to believe that the memories of the slave trade were not there. Similarly Cole, working in Madagascar, was surprised that on first encounter the village she was based in revealed little of its complex history of colonialism. In both cases, it was not until the anthropologists began to examine embodied practice in their divergent fields that they encountered memory. Cole began to see that memory ran under many everyday rituals ('like a subterranean brook') and that examining them allowed her to 'stumble upon the place where the brook wells up through the earth' (2001, 281). Remembering, exhuming, referring to, or reforming the underlying everyday memory can be understood as a moral practice (Lambek 1997; Shaw 2001). When Shaw began to play close attention to the spirits inhabiting the landscape and the rituals people engaged in to protect themselves she began to understand the memories of the slave trade. The memories were not in stories, but in the landscape, or, more specifically, in the way people lived in a landscape suffused with 'dangerous invisible presences' (Shaw 2002, 50).

In my own fieldwork, walks with people in the forest consisted of long periods of silence, punctuated by practical advice, 'those are no good to eat, see the bright colours'. Walking also involved avoiding certain paths or pausing in certain spots. More than this, my respondents frequently remarked on how tourists and traders used the forest. They also worried initially about my walks in the woods and the dangerous presences I might encounter. All of these practices and remarks on those practices demonstrated that memories existed in the relationships between people and the woods.

Before ending this section I want to return to the mobile forest. It is important that these memories are evoked in a forest that is changing. This means that residents must formulate their histories in relation to a landscape that frequently undermines or enlightens them. The forests around Kościół are swampy, and the ground sucks stones and dead wood into itself the closer you get to the Bug. The ground also divulges objects, such as gravestones. In the summer memories in the forest are limited as the abundant foliage conceals many of the objects and paths that contain those memories. Anthropologists working on memory in the landscape often refer to the landscape as a palimpsest (Basu 2007; Huyssen 2003; Shaw 2002). A metaphor more frequently found in other disciplines,⁶ the term relates to Medieval manuscripts. When vellum was scarce, older pages would have their writing stripped away with the edge of a knife. The pages were turned to a landscape orientation sewn together down the middle and written over. The

⁶ In Geography, for example. See Rabasa 1993.

writing stripped away was not always gone; rather it often showed through weakly, giving the text a ghostly double quality. I believe we use this metaphor unthinkingly. First, the making of a palimpsest is not simply a process of laying new text on old, but an attempt to obliterate the old because it is no longer needed, and the initial resources on which it was produced are scarce. The palimpsest also emphasises the idea of memory as inscribed, not as a process or set of practices (Massey 2005), thus underplaying the role of practice in memorializing. Finally, in thinking of landscape as a palimpsest Massey points out 'the things missing (erased) from the map are somehow always things from 'before'. The gaps in representation ... are not the same as the discontinuities of the multiplicity in contemporaneous space' (2005, 110). People encounter and create the past and the present dialectically through the moving and changing aspects of Kościół's physical landscape. The changes in Kościół are open to numerous interpretations depending on the groups of people interacting with the landscape. As tourism becomes an increasingly important part of Kościół's economy, tourists and tourist boards have a growing stake in the representation and interpretation of the town's landscape, and thus of the town itself.

4.2 On the Bug Trail

The bus back to the town from Warsaw stops in a nearby large town, where you transfer to a small mini-bus—gleefully referred to as a ‘suicide bus’ by one of my younger respondents. As the bus makes its way through the fields and villages on its journey to Kościół, there are particular things that begin to repeat themselves. Nearly every village the bus passes through has a village square where, standing proudly in the middle, are two signs. The first, a massive text-heavy white board, thanks the EU for funding some project and then lists the various sub-bodies that managed, monitored, and distributed the funds. The second is a much jollier bright blue and yellow affair, tall and thin and made up of two boards. The top board has a map of the area with a couple of routes picked out in pink, and the bottom has a list of local attractions, wildlife to spot, or places to stay; often there is a photograph of cyclists moving through the beautiful eastern Polish countryside. Tourism has become one of the most important economic activities along the Bug River, in particular the Bug Cycle Trail.



Image 4.6

The Bug Cycle Trail can be hiked or cycled on a two level difficulty scale. As stated in the previous chapter the creation, maintenance and marketing of the trail was co-funded by the Lublin voivodeship, the European Union and the Regionalny Program Operacyjny. The involvement of the RPO and through it the European Regional Development Program was often mentioned by residents of the town when discussing the type of tourism the path encourages. They were suggesting that the particular packaging

the Bug Cycle Path reflected the concerns of the European Union more than a particularly strong regional identity. Speaking about another Polish region Parkin has noted that the new structures of EU funding that move the responsibility from the nation state to the regional authority is behind the increasing 'fashion' for regional identity talk (2013, 120). Although initially aimed at national tourism, more recently there have been attempts to draw international tourism to the Bug Cycle Trail, which adheres to the EU policy of encouraging regional development to look across nation borders (Parkin 2013, 121). Attempts to appeal to international tourists focus on a romantic evocation of the frontier. Here, from the English-language website:

The third largest *Voivodship* in Poland lies along the eastern borderlands of the country. Its neighbours are Belarus and the Ukraine across the wild and twisting River Bug. This is the region where Polish and Russian, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish influences are all thoroughly mixed together. It is also a land which has seen many changes, a full-blooded borderland.⁷

The information for non-Polish speaking tourists also interestingly tends to emphasise the Jewish heritage in the area, despite the local silence around the history and memories of the Jewish population.

It has also been the place of the Holocaust and today the German concentration camps in Majdanek and Sobibór have been turned into museums as a reminder of those terrible days.⁸

There is a swathe of Polish funding dedicated to drawing international Jewish tourism. The old concentration camps, large Jewish cemeteries, and Jewish heritage tours in Krakow, Warsaw, and Lublin draw a large number of tourists every year. They are part of what has come to be called 'dark tourism' (Lennon and Foley 2000; Rojek 1993; Seaton 1996; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). There are a variety of forms of dark tourism, and at their centre all involve an encounter between the tourist and death (Lennon and Foley 2000). These encounters can be educational, cathartic, entertaining, about memorialising the dead, or about encountering mortality (Stone 2012). The dark tourism on offer in Poland is seen as educational; an outing to the concentration camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau is supposed to be an engagement with the past, in order to learn from it (Kugelmass 1992). Yet as the concentration camp visits are increasingly a normalised part

⁷ From <http://www.poland.travel/en/regions/the-lubelskie-voivodship-the-bug-river-trail> (last accessed 10th April, 2014).

⁸ Ibid.

of the tourist experience in Poland, the horror and didactic value of the site is increasingly vulnerable to inoculation. As Sharply and Stone explain, the normalisation of dark tourist sites involves taking the trauma of death gathered at these sites and ‘rendering [it] into something else that is comfortable and safe to deal with’ (2009, 127). Although sites like Majdanek or Auschwitz have regulations attempting to maintain an atmosphere of learning and respect for the dead these do not always prevent the erosion of the very real tragedy of these sites—see, for example, a recent Vice Magazine article on the trend for taking ‘selfies’ at concentration camps.⁹

But sometimes Poland’s dark tourism is about the construction of personal narratives, associated with the idea that through visiting places members of a diaspora can perhaps work through their collective trauma (Kugelmass 1992; 1995). They can bring their stories, ghosts, and memories, or even post-memories (Hirsch, 2008), and these spaces have the potential to contain them (Basu 2007). For the local Polish population this kind of tourism is complicated. On the one hand it is a significant part of the economy and a way for Poles to encounter and address their murky World War II history, but on the other hand it strongly associates Poland, and Poles, with the Holocaust. The promotion of dark tourism often rests on a decision about ‘whose history prevails’ when it come to representing a country on an international level (Lennon and Foley 2010, 162). The engagement with the past that underlies the educational and therapeutic reputation of this kind of tourism is not always practiced. As Kugelmass notes, the ‘scripted, nondialogical nature’ of visits to the concentration camps ‘makes them more a re-enactment than an engagement with the past’, presenting Poland as ‘a theatre prop in a Jewish pageant about national catastrophe and redemption’ (Kugelmass 1995, 281).

During my fieldwork the media were whipped into a frenzy when Barak Obama referred to ‘Polish death camps’ in a speech. Even in Kościół people discussed the comment animatedly. It was a comment that illustrates well the risks Poland faces by embracing dark tourism. Perhaps this is why the Bug Cycle Path puts little emphasis on its own Jewish heritage in non-English language information. There are multiple places near the cycle path where the landscape reveals the suppressed history of the Jewish and Greek Catholic population, in the ‘unremembered’ graveyards, the repurposed Synagogues, the history of Ghettos in Sławatycna and other once thriving Jewish towns, the churches with complex histories, the appearance of Ukrainian on some road markers, in monuments to the Pratulín Martyrs, and in the forests depicted as safe havens, and tombs for the innumerable oppressed.

⁹ <http://www.vice.com/de/read/25-hashtags-die-du-an-holocaust-gedenkstätten-nicht-verwenden-solltest> also the tumblr <http://selfiesatseriousplaces.tumblr.com/> which ridicules these images.

The Polish language website and information put less emphasis on the cultural mix and frontier and focus instead on the 'landscape' and 'natural beauty'. From the website:

The route allows one to explore the wildlife and landscape of the Bug area. The Bug is one of only a few rivers in Europe that has preserved its natural character. Clean air, a charming landscape, together with the richness of flora and fauna, offer perfect conditions for relaxation in natural surroundings far from the noise of the city¹⁰

This description is typical of how tourist organisations represent eastern Poland as a destination. In Polish literature and film this area has also always been characterized as a romantic and rustic arcadia, a supposedly untouched area of natural beauty. This is despite the fact that much of the landscape was altered during socialism when factories were built, and areas were levelled to make space for large cornfields (Korbonski 1965). The importance of 'nature', 'natural beauty', and 'timeless nature' in discourse, and the structuring of tourism in eastern Poland have an impact on how governmental authorities and local people interact with the biophysical environment. Moments when local practices and the practices of the states actors are dissonant lead to conflicts over the different group's attempts to produce the landscape. Such disputes are particularly common in the countryside along the Bug Cycle Path. One such occasion of conflict, which I would like to consider here in detail, is the clash over the Białowieża Forest Reserve. This is a conflict that my respondents understood to be about local versus national interests, rural and urban divides, and local practices versus 'modern' concerns. This conflict is also deeply rooted in the wider discussion of 'nature conservation'.

Białowieża Reserve is a UNESCO protected forest region north of Brest and east of Białystok, covering approximately 152 square kilometres, and on the Polish and Belarusian sides of the border. It is a primeval forest, preserved for many years due to having been a royal hunting ground. During the turbulent partition period its protected status was variously lifted and reissued, ending in 1888 when the Tsars instated the royal hunting reserve. From the start of World War I until the end of the Polish-Soviet war in 1921, the forest was without protection. Railroads, industry, and people encroached upon the area, with both the help and hindrance of German and Russian Soviet occupiers. In

¹⁰"Trasa umożliwia poznanie nadbużańskiej przyrody i krajobrazu. Bug jest nieuregulowaną i jedną z nielicznych dużych rzek w Europie, która zachowała naturalny charakter. Czyste powietrze, uroczy krajobraz oraz bogactwo flory i fauny stwarzają doskonałe warunki do wypoczynku na łonie natury, z dala od zgiełku miast." From <http://www.lubelskie.pl/index.php?pid=182> (last accessed 10th April 2014).

1922 the forest was, due to yet another border shift, very firmly positioned in Poland, and in 1923 was designated a nature reserve. However, after the outbreak of World War II in 1939 and the invasion and partition of Poland, the forest fell under Soviet control. The Soviets ousted and deported many of the Polish forestry workers, replacing them with Russian workers. In 1941 the German military moved into the East of Poland, and along with the other forested areas of the region the Reserve became a site, simultaneously, of resistance and mass executions as Polish and Russian partisans, Soviet and Polish inhabitants, and Nazi troops clashed. After 1947, and the fixing of yet another new border, the forest was split between Poland and Belarus, and the Polish government reopened it as a National Park. It received its UNESCO status in 1992, thus being recognized for its biodiversity. It apparently contains:

809 vascular plants species, over 3 thousand cryptogams and fungi species, almost 200 moss species and 283 lichen species. There have been more than 8 thousand invertebrate species, approximately 120 species of breeding birds and 52 mammal species. The forests in Białowieża National Park are characterized by large amounts of deadwood at the various stage of disintegration[.] (Białowieża Reserve website accessed 2013¹¹)

In the Białowieża Reserve people are forbidden to collect firewood, forage, hunt, or fish. The practice of clearing deadwood is also forbidden. The Białowieża Reserve authorities maintain that the beetles under the deadwood and the rotting timber itself are vital to the biodiversity of the forest. Rangers from outside the reserve complain that this allows the beetles to spread to non-protected areas, adversely affecting the trees there. Despite the reserve being treated as a discrete entity, it is joined to the forests that run throughout this area of Poland. Logging is also forbidden in the Białowieża Reserve, with the national discourse suggesting logging is only desired by 'greedy' local authorities. Again, local forestry rangers disagree with this. They believe that 'careful logging' will allow younger trees to grow, thus increasing the number of trees per square meter.¹² However, the authorities that represent Białowieża Reserve argue it does not need 'new trees', it needs to be preserved as it is, to allow time for it to change 'naturally'. Within these disagreements we can see multiple intersecting claims and conflicts. National government (often referred to as 'Warsaw' by locals) is dedicated to pursuing a conservationist approach to the reserve as encouraged by international bodies such as UNESCO. Yet their emphasis on 'natural change' fails to acknowledge that for as long as the area has been inhabited, human action has been part of this 'natural change'. As mentioned above,

¹¹ http://bpn.com.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=104&Itemid=178

¹² Information from personal communication.

Białowieża Reserve is part of a larger system of woods, yet its unique history of human intervention allowed it to retain its primeval flora, repopulate its bison, exterminate its wolves and gave it its dimensions.

Despite the fact that the Białowieża Reserve seems to run contra to local practices, throughout my fieldwork no one (except for some forest rangers) complained or spoke negatively of it in daily conversation. The integration of the forest, with its shifting ownership, into the wider Polish national narrative is important for local people, as is the reserve's capacity to draw tourists to the region. My respondent Janusz, trying to encourage me to visit the forest, drew out the line of this argument for me: 'sometimes in Warsaw they say, oh you are from Russia. But I can't be, see Białowieża, well that is here too and they never say it is Russian (laughs). If the trees are Polish so are the people' (he laughs). And although he was joking he does make an important point. Białowieża Reserve has been featured on the BBC, in the Guardian, and in the New York Times.¹³ While the articles tend to take the side of the national government and conservationists they still offer a view of eastern Poland as a fully integrated and important part of Poland. However, this also means—regarding Białowieża Reserve—that integration into the national narrative is conditional upon accepting the downgrading of local practices and the discourse of the forest as natural only when freed of human interference.

Much of the tourism along the Bug River relies on this sentimentalised view of the area as an untouched and unchanging 'natural' space. This view excludes the reality of the mobile and multiple biophysical environment and its human and non-human interlocutors. Lefebvre points out that ideas about what constitutes nature and tourism are deeply connected (1991). Tourism arises out of the bourgeois desire to abandon the city and the industrial work space for a qualitative space, for 'raw nature', sun, sand, and so on. The leisure idyll is created in opposition to the conceived and lived space of the city. Yet there is a deep contradiction at the heart of tourism. Tourists desire the exact type of landscape that, once produced, is quickly destroyed through 'mass migrations of tourist hoards into rustic ... areas' (Lefebvre 1991, 122). For Lefebvre tourism is at once the localizing of a place as desirable and the consumption of that place. Space is organised and homogenised and 'programmed to the nth degree' (ibid, 59) by tourists and those hoping to attract tourists. Obviously tourism has an impact on how local people interact with their environment, and tourists' own actions shape the areas surrounding Kościół. But this is

¹³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3059317.stm>, bbc (April 10 2014) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/apr/06/poland-environmentalists-foresters-primeval-forest> guardian (April 10 2014) http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/12/rallying-behind-a-primeval-forest/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0 NYT (last accessed 10th April 2014)

not a process whereby one group consumes the other. Tourism has become part of the 'character' of Kościół, and thus it is increasingly difficult to draw a binary opposition between the notions of insider/outsider when discussing how tourism impacts on, and is impacted by, the biophysical world.



Image 4.7

The 4x4

As the summer wore on and my feet got itchy more cycle tourists began to come to Kościół, many staying in the guesthouse run by my landlady. I asked them about their experience on the trail and eventually decided I wanted to explore it myself. I didn't get too far in either direction. First of all I only had my aged Russian-made bike, unlike the tourists who passed through the town on expensive-looking modern mountain bikes loaded with saddlebags and gadgets. Second, I had been in the town for nearly a year, and as such many of my respondents were baffled by my sudden desire to engage in tourist pursuits, and were decidedly unhelpful. 'Why would you go there?', they asked. 'There is nothing there, just more forest'; 'Oh that place is just swamp'. In the end I settled on a number of day trips, acquiescing to my respondents' insistence that no place to which I could cycle would amuse me for more than half a day. On my trips the people I encountered treated me as an outsider, but not a comfortable outsider as they considered the tourists. I seemed to be viewed more like an unknown and suspicious outsider. I had an old bike and small backpack, I spoke an accented and grammatically imperfect Polish, and most importantly I had none of the expensive gear, or wiliness to spend money,

usually associated with tourism. Local Poles clearly connected the tourists to a certain class, and over the weeks of my bicycle trips when I spoke to shop keepers and receptionists they told me the majority of tourists were from 'big cities', 'mainly Warsaw'.

There was also an acceptance that being a tourist gave one a license to behave in a manner unacceptable in the town. While cycling at the edge of the forest, through small settlements, I was nearly run off the track by a 4x4. The driver apologised breezily and continued joyously to drive off-road down the cycle trail. The trail later fell off into a swamp. I noticed the 4x4 parked in the yard of a farm next to the swamp, the driver and his companions nowhere in view. I called out to ask a man who was sitting in the garden and asked if he lived here. He nodded and I asked if he knew of another trail. He shrugged, not really. The 4x4's were not meant to use this one he told me; that is how came to recede into a swamp. Didn't it bother him? I asked pointedly, still unhappy about my own run-in with the 4x4. It didn't, he said, no one really cycles this path; it goes nowhere and at least with the off-roaders there were some tourists around.

Initially this alteration in the landscape seemed to produce a space where the inhabitants (human and non-human) were losing out to the bureaucrats and forces of capitalism. Alternatively, the scene could be read as another example of the movement of the landscape impacting on human desires, in this case the swamp rising slowly and ruining the 4X4 driver's fun. As Bender notes '[l]andscapes refuse to be disciplined. They make a mockery of the oppositions that we create between time and space or nature and culture' (in Massey 2005, 138). The landscape of Kościół emerges from the use the locals and the tourists make of the land and the land itself. It does not reflect the triumph of any one of these groups. Rather, it demonstrates the way in which the actions of each, whether in conflict or cooperation, mediate the making of place.

4.3 Neighbours and Trade

At different paces the forest expands and contracts, we see fields dressed in green then the silvery gold of old costume jewellery. The river races past, or slows to a frozen stop, decorated with the footprints of dogs and deer. Snow piles up, trees appear and disappear, now resplendent in leaves, now stripped bare. Homes move closer and closer to the woods and the forest itself appears slowly to flee. Storks and hawks cut through the sky and even the ground stirs, undulating as the earth is excavated, carried here and there or as small creatures scurry back and forth over it. People move too and it is impossible to talk of the place without talking about how people move.



Image 4.8: A striped border marker, at the edge of the basilica's land

It's the end of February. Because winter was late the snow is only just beginning to thaw, making the town an obstacle course of mini-lakes and rivers and covering my shoes and the ends of my trousers in an ugly brown-grey slush. I have to fly home for a week and this has caused a ripple of excitement among my landlady and her friends. When I first arrived in the town, head filled with pre-fieldwork training, I was determined to stay there exclusively for a year. However, within a few weeks I realised this idea did not reflect the reality of the town. As a place of pilgrimage Kościół has long been a popular destination and part of the larger Mariological byway in the area. Its position on the border, and

therefore its link to trading, has also integrated it into larger commerce routes, as has its location on the Bug River. During the socialist period travel was made even simpler by the addition of multiple daily bus routes from Kościół to larger local towns and nearby big cities such as Chełm, Lublin, and Warsaw. The buses were a source of constant complaint for my respondents. The company had kept the soviet-sounding PKP title after the breakup, yet was under completely new management. 'The drivers are the same,' grumbled my landlady, 'but now they have fewer routes and they can drive at any speed—no one watches them.' The direct bus to Warsaw was done away with and the other city buses were on a slightly erratic timetable. It is unlikely after all this time that the drivers really were the same, but the idea is part of a larger dissatisfaction about the place of the town in post-socialist times. As Berdahl notes in the context of the town she studied in the former GDR, my landlady's nostalgia for the buses is more of a comment on contemporary life than a true longing for a return (1997, 2009).

Travel was a positive and common occurrence for my respondents, with people often talking about which products they would pick up or friends they would go with or meet once they left the town. The memory of travel and the connection between movement and the history of the town allowed journeys out and away from it to be incorporated into the shared sense of place. The bus stop opposite the church where people say goodbye, the river they cross to Belarus, the road they take to the official crossing—all hold meaning and evoke memories for local people, and all are used as points of reference in locating and directing people's movements.

Wider travel is also known of, though less commonly undertaken. Younger family members quite frequently opt for economic migration and though they may no longer live in the town, their stories of it are well known. Land and landscape were also at the centre of local understandings and discussions of travel or living away. During my stay the televising of the Olympics (where Ireland won Gold in Horse Riding and Boxing) and the romantic comedy 'Leap Year' allowed people to speak of my country with some sense what kind of place it was ('always raining, and your mountains are so grey, but it is a lovely dark green place' Gosia assured me after watching Leap Year). Through similar technologies countries as diverse as the USA and Thailand were instantiated in the local imagination. For my respondents travel was common and I became a source of confusion the longer I stayed. They knew I had friends and university colleagues in Warsaw, yet I remained in the town. One week in November I was actively sent to Warsaw as my landlady was away and didn't want me to get 'bored' in her absence. When I eventually did travel further from the town I found myself at the centre of a discussion about distance

and land I had often participated in or heard from the outside when someone else in town was leaving or moving beyond East Poland.

Seas and Rivers

'How far is it, by plane?' Pani Danuta asked. 'About two and a half hours' I replied, and she shook her head. 'So far away from your mother, and will she be happy to see you. I know she is worried...'. At this point my landlady interrupted. 'And why should she be, I have spoken to her on the phone and Amelką¹⁴ has sent her some of her photographs. She knows where Kościół is. Amelką is doing her research for her doctorate; it is important and her mother will be proud'. Pani Danuta was unperturbed. 'But it is so far away, and Amelia lives beside the sea in Ireland, so her mother must worry about her', she said. 'The seaside is very different from Kościół.' Despite my constant reminders that I lived in London, my respondents preferred to think of my family home as my true place. Many Polish young people emigrated to London; it was seen as somewhere to make some money before starting your life properly somewhere else. My landlady folded her arms and affected a nonchalant air. 'The sea, the river, they are both water', she asserted, but Pani Danuta was insistent: 'The sea and the river are very different'.

Perhaps the reason anthropologists have traditionally focused on dwelling over travel is that it is harder ethnographically to research the movement of people, because it occurs at so many different levels, scales, and registers (Feld and Basso 1995). The anthropological project is to uncover and analyse social structure and institutions that have initially been understood as fixed or sedentary models through which people moved in and out; but the structure itself has been the focus of the analysis (Ortner 1994), at least until the postmodern turn. Later, we have seen a rising interest in transnationalism and multi-sited ethnography (Coleman and Hellerman 2012).

Returning to the conversation between Pani Danuta and my landlady we can identify some indications in the text about what is at stake in travel in this part of Poland. Speaking about movement, Blu (1995) lists factors she found helpful to consider when people were telling their stories of travel. How is direction and duration given, in time, distance, or according to place or landmarks? What is the general attitude to both the reason for setting out and the action of making one's way? What are the political motivations for going forth? Are there political considerations that determine who has the freedom to travel? How does the voyager engage with place along the way? Does she activate communities or draw them together (Blu 1995, 199; 200; 214)?

¹⁴ Amelką was a diminutive of Amelia normally used as a sign of affection. Initially my name was altered from the unfamiliar Aimée to the Polish Amelia, and from there to Amelką by my landlady.

Throughout my time in the town distance was always marked in time and mode of transport: 'three hours by bike', for example, or, 'a short time with the car'. Directions, however, were given through a combination of time and space. Landmarks were sometimes used but more generally the physical landscape was used as a compass. 'Go straight out of town, when the forest thins out you will see Kostomłoty on your right', or, 'There are fields all along the left side, it will be the third turn'. Even when discussing how far I was from home a difference in landscape was considered to be the biggest indicator of my dislocation. This is reminiscent once more of Ingold's wayfinding (2000); in the conversation presented above Pani Danuta was concerned with the different landscapes of sea and river because different intuitions were required for each. Her insistence that my mother was worried about me was based on an unspoken question: had I learnt how to orientate myself in Kościół?

My landlady's insistence that I knew my way in the region was more than a claim that I was safe in Kościół. She was also making a claim about my position in the constantly forming insider/outsider discourse *lokalny/obcy* (literally *lokalny*: local, *obcy*: foreigner/stranger). Knowing one's place in the landscape was a large part of being demonstrably on the 'inside' of the town. As I indicated in Chapter One, the hardening of the border that runs alongside Kościół is partially about making claims regarding who is outside or foreign at a national and international level. These claims are established in a number of border practices aimed at preventing people and goods from crossing the border with ease. At an everyday level the border is a more ambiguous object and idea, and the cross-border practices that some in the town engaged in reveal this. When the idea of a 'fieldsite' was first broadened, anthropologists were encouraged to stop focusing on isolated towns in the heart of far-off countries. Instead, Gupta and Ferguson called for a focus on borderlands and other 'hybrid' spaces (1997). Donnan and Wilson suggested that borders and frontiers needed to be studied as zones, which stretched beyond the borderlines and included the internal political boundaries of sovereign states (1999). As I stated in the first chapter this thesis treats borders as grey zones, blurred and imprecise, nebulous, difficult to locate, contradictory, and insecure.

After World War II the decision was made by the victorious powers to run the new post-war state border of Poland along the River Bug in the east. Rivers are associated with division, as are most bodies of water.¹⁵ To run the border along such a long-standing environmental divisor made it appear as a 'natural' and 'organic' boundary, and this gave

¹⁵ A number of truisms and proverbs relate this idea, such as the ancient Roman saying, 'The land unites, the sea divides'.

it a sense of permanency through the mechanisms discussed at the start of this chapter. In Chapter One I also explored the idea of the border as a multiplicity of religious, international, and economic boundaries. Newspapers and official television stations (most recently Poczobut 2013) also drew a 'democracy' border along the east of Poland, contrasting the country to the dictatorship of Łukaszenka in Belarus and the disharmony and corruption in post Orange Revolution Ukraine.¹⁶ This was particularly obvious during my fieldwork when TVP Info, the public broadcast news station, broadcast a great number of stories about Yulia Tymoshenko's¹⁷ imprisonment and the secret execution of two suspects in the Minsk metro bombings.¹⁸ It is among all these borders, and through the remembrance of historic partitions and the skirmishes over them, that the locals build an identity as *po granica*: from or on the border.

I came across the border and my respondents' understanding of it most clearly when I began to pay attention to exchange and trade. I have written about trading in a grey zone elsewhere (Joyce forthcoming) and here I wish to remark on it only in regard to how local people's creation of a sense of belonging through trade directly contradicted the state's perception and practices. Of specific interest is my respondents' frequent use of the metaphor of *dobrosąsiedztwo* (good neighbourliness) when discussing cross-border trade with Belarus. Cross border trading drew on ideas about obligations and reciprocities among family, friends, and neighbours; but there were two distinct discourses about trading linked to the different actors and methods of trafficking. The one I was most familiar with was small-level domestic cross-border trading. This type of trading relies on having a family member or close friend who lives in Belarus. In my fieldwork the majority of the traders I met, spoke with, and observed were older women. However, this may be specific to the size and location of my fieldsite. Plinska conducted research among small-scale cross-border traders in a city a few hours from the border and reports speaking almost exclusively with men (Plinska, unpublished MA thesis 2009). Trading and travelling-traders have a long history in this part of Poland. It's a romanticised occupation,

¹⁶ At the time of writing there were fears that Russia was conducting troop maneuvers around the eastern border as a response to events in Ukraine. See http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,15686828,Rosja_prowadzi_manewry_rakietowe_w_poblizu_polskich.html

¹⁷ Tymoshenko, former prime minister of Ukraine and co-leader of the orange revolution, was imprisoned in October 2011 for abuse of power. The trial was condemned as politically motivated by outside observers such as the Helsinki Committee. Throughout 2011 and 2012 the media reported frequently on Tymoshenko's ill health and ongoing trials. She was freed at the end of the 2014 political uprising and plans to run for office again.

¹⁸ After the 2011 Minsk Metro Bombings two young men, Dmitry Konovalov and Vladislav Kovalyov, were soon after arrested. Belarusian authorities convicted them on problematic evidence and confessions that activists, including Konovalov's mother, claim were given under torture. Both men were executed with a shot to the back of the head. Their families and the media were informed only after the execution was carried out.

and draws our attention to how locals can chose to orientate themselves to an imagination of the borderlands that defies the state's attempts to define those on the Belarusian side of the border as foreign.

My observation of cross border trading occurred late in my fieldwork when I knew the women and the landscape of the region involved well. The manner in which people closely guarded their methods of bringing goods over the border was reflected in the ambiguity surrounding the legality of this trading. Traders never discussed the law unless directly asked. Belarus allows up to 200 cigarettes, or 200g of tobacco, up to three litres of alcohol, five items of jewellery and up to five kilograms of food to be transported into the country without being declared.¹⁹ Poland allows for members of 'frontier zones' to bring up to half a litre of alcohol over twenty-two per cent proof and half a litre of alcohol less than twenty-two per cent proof; two litres of beer are also permitted. Tobacco products are severely limited: up to forty cigarettes, twenty cigarillos, ten cigars and fifty grams of tobacco are permitted.²⁰ None of the traders I spoke to ever gave me this kind of specific information. Their answers were always much more general and circumspect when it came to the amount of trade that was permitted by the state. But within this range of fuzzy answers there was a consensus: most told me you could bring in as much as you liked as long as you went to the right customs official. While this was a purposefully flippant response it indicates how specialised a field the traders operated within. The skills they used were built up over many years, and, although sometimes passed on by word of mouth, vitally, they were not widely known.

It was commonly recognized that I was an anthropologist and as such sharing this kind of skill or technique with me would render it useless as I might write about it and reveal it to others. Conversely, because this grey-zone trading was associated with a high degree of cunning, people loved to tell me stories about it. I was told how old women would tape the cigarettes to their waists and wear woolly jumpers to hide the bulges, or hide bottles of alcohol wrapped in undergarments among other 'unmentionables'. Even the trains were subject to this clever hide-and-seek operation. Cushions were pried off seats and hollows cut in the foam to hide bottles. Doors were broken so that they could be opened mid-journey. It is hard to tell how many of these examples were exaggerated. I never visited the border crossing at Terespol, though I frequently sat on trains heading there that had their doors flung wide open. Through speaking with my respondents, especially those not involved at all in this kind of trade, I began to see that the methods

¹⁹ Belarus <http://www.belarus.by/en/travel/customs-regulations>

²⁰ Frontier zones are described as the regions 'beyond the expanded borders of the EU'. See <http://poland.visahq.com/customs/>

and stories I heard about were the kinds of trading practices widely known and practiced only when customs officials were unlikely to be encountered. Once techniques were common knowledge it had to be assumed that border officials, often from the local area, were aware of them too. So using certain techniques required a combination of skill and a willingness to take a gamble.



Image 4.9: A respondent demonstrates a broken door on a moving train

Approaching the right border official sounds straightforward, yet it is hard to imagine how one would know what ‘approach’ means here, or even how to figure out who the ‘right kind of official’ was, without further knowledge or skill. Grey-zone trading was a delicate act of concealing and revealing, and the story-telling and exaggerated tales were part of this performance. My favourite example of exaggerated trading tales was about the smuggling of vodka. Twice I was told by respondents, with straight faces, that during the high summer vodka bottles were shoved into wooden barrels, and floated down the Bug River. To make sure they did not stray they were tied to a rope that occasionally was tied

to the Polish riverbank; at these points a man sat fishing and as the barrels arrived he would take out the correct number of bottles and send the barrel off down the next section. When I repeated this story later I was roundly ridiculed for taking it seriously. There is undoubtedly an element of the comic to these stories, and whenever I heard them I thought of coyote or fox, those cunning but flawed tricksters of myth and proverb, who as often as not come out poorly in stories told about them. The grey-zone cross-border trade that some of the townspeople were involved in seemed to be understood morally as a playful and necessary act. I hesitate to call it smuggling, as such a title stresses its illegality—an aspect that I found was barely discussed by my respondents.

The legality of their actions was not important because morally their trade was considered appropriate. Poland and Belarus were neighbours; in fact in many cases the traders were related. When I began to pay attention to trading I was surprised to find that my respondents had clearly oriented themselves towards the east and not towards the European Union. This was despite the fact that many children and grandchildren now worked in EU states and that Poland was drawing closer and closer to ‘Europe’ at a national level (see Chapter One). All trading in the town was associated with *dobrosąsiedztwo*: good neighbourliness. This kind of grey zone trading enabled my respondents to form closer ties to borderland neighbours. Cross-border trade became a way to avoid the possibility of poverty through the cultivation of neighbourliness. When I asked respondents directly about the morality of trading in these grey zones I was frequently told that Belarus was a neighbour, and when dealing with money you trust your neighbours.

However, the jovial tales of traders stop when people discuss large-scale smuggling. According to my respondents, such smugglers were cut-throat operators. Stories of bad smugglers were rarely told. When I did hear these stories they lacked the thick description I was so used to noting in tales about local traders and domestic trade. My respondents knew little to nothing of who these smugglers were, what routes they used, how they concealed their cargos, or even what cargos they transported. It was hard for me to know whether people personally knew any ‘bad smugglers’; the stories gave no indication that the people telling them were doing anything other than repeating rumours. There was a very clear line drawn between the morality of cross border traders who worked for the interests of local people and the town and those who worked without regarding it, and even brought danger to it. Often these stories seemed designed to highlight just how different the two types of traders were. Most importantly the bad smugglers were always outsiders. They were not Polish and Belarusian, but Russian and

sometimes Ukrainian. No one knew what goods they smuggled; the borderlands were not the destination, merely a waypoint.

On one occasion I had taken my inherited ancient Russian-made bike on a five hour trip to a nearby beauty spot, only to return to an anxious chastisement from my landlady. “What did you use?” she asked, and looked visibly relieved when I told her I had taken the main roads only. ‘Good. Don’t go by the forest roads’, she commanded, ‘Only use those roads in the tourist season’. When I asked why, she informed me that the forest roads were used by smugglers in the winter and told me that I would not want to see anything by accident. I began to imagine these outside smugglers as the ‘big bad wolves’ to the residents’ ‘cunning fox’; they carried guns, hid in the forests, and attacked unfortunate townsfolk.

In reality such a division is a crude line separating practices that often blur one into the other, and lose their clarity. Between the kindly *Babcias* and the gun-carrying people traffickers are a range of other traders of differing shades of morality. Even those people who appear to slot neatly into archetypes are not necessarily fully contained by them. For example there were some well-known local cross-border traders, but I avoided meeting with because they had reputations for violence. Most of the traders I did know were women, older men, or very young men, whereas those I avoided were men between thirty and fifty. It is possible therefore that there was also gender and generational reasons for the different levels of aggression that was associated with trading. Still, the fox and wolf division, which my respondents spoke of through the metaphor insider/outsider, was a vital part of understanding the morality of cross border trading. Once again Kościół was presented as the centre of rude health and good fortune. Those inside the town are physically and relationally proffered as clever and adept at getting around the forces that threaten them, try to curtail them, or merely hamper them with unnecessary rules and regulations. In this instance the inside was a porous concept. It stretched beyond the town and into Krakow and Minsk, including kith and kin, and also excluded many of the inhabitants who did not fit certain criteria—for example those who worked for the government. As I noted in Chapter One and at the start of this Chapter, the inside is constantly shifting and being reshaped, in this instance based on who is involved and what activities are undertaken. For cross-border trading the inside relied on the concept of the borderland.

The practices of cross-border traders hark back to a time when trade with and connection to Belarus were the norm. In revealing that time it allows the researcher to understand memories of loss that the borders at Terespol and the border markers along the Bug River

evoke in the local landscape (Zarycki 1999). Officially, interactions with those east of the Bug River were defined and controlled through the Polish state's border practices (Follis 2013). The rationale for cross-border grey-zone trading was not a direct challenge of the state's power; the traders I researched were not the rebel peasants of Hobsbawm's *Bandits* (1969). Economically it made sense to buy cheaper Belarusian goods, especially given the large amount of poverty in this region of Poland (see Chapter One). Additionally, cross-border trading was motivated by a sense that those areas of Belarus close to the Polish border were closer to the town than the governments in Warsaw or Europe. In some sense it was also motivated by a sense of ownership of the border. As the border was defined by the Bug River it was part of my respondents' landscape, an environment they used and controlled in their everyday lives (see the first section of this chapter). This whole borderland region was one large grey zone, insecure and ambiguous. The zone included parts of Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine, and it excluded a large part of Poland. My respondents were also making a clear claim about their own place by participating in good-neighbourly relations that enabled and normalised cross-border trade. They were demonstrating through their trading practices that Kościół was more closely related to the border zones of Belarus and Ukraine than to the centre of Poland.

4.4 Religious Pastures

To the south and west of the Bug Cycle Trail the forest has been cleared to make space for the cultivation of grain. The fields roll out ahead of the cyclists, flat and apparently featureless until the horizon. Unlike the forests and the river, the fields are not treated as common land. There was an attempt to collectivise agriculture in the area in the 1950s, and some large tracts of land were taken from their original owners and formed into a number of massive state farms. However, the Polish government abandoned its active collectivisation campaign in 1956, after massive peasant opposition, and most people were allowed to retain their land and continue small-hold farming (Korbonski 1965). Since the failure of collectivisation in the 1950s and the eventual collapse of the State Agricultural Farms in the 1990s, most of this land has been sold in small parcels to private owners; only the land on which the huge farm buildings were erected have remained in the hands of the state. Yet most people cultivate the same produce: wheat, oats, maize, barley, rye, and hops.



Image 4.10

This history and agricultural practice gives the fields a remarkably homogenous appearance, despite the fact they are privately owned and farmed. In such a level landscape any decoration stands out, and draws the passing cyclist's attention. One of the most common forms of decoration I saw along the path was large markers of religion people erected on their farmlands. There were towering crucifixes and shrines devoted to

the Holy Mother Mary, painted or decorated in vivid colours. To raise such a marker required no input from Church officials. They were simply made or commissioned by the landowners or a collection of land owners and erected somewhere visible.



Image 4.11

The towns also had a number of religious markers, though the situation regarding these was a little bit more fraught. Often they were, like the crosses in the fields, simply erected in someone's front garden. Sometimes, however, they were built on the sides of the road or paths, with permission from the local council. This was part of the Catholic and Orthodox community's attempt to delineate their territories by erecting large markers of their religion that were clearly visible to local and outsiders alike. It is a practice that I had come to understand as part of the on-going struggle for ascendancy between these two faith communities. Van der Leeuw says that the 'positioning of a sacred place [is] a political act' (1995, 8), partially because sacred space is powerful. The question is, do these markers count as a sacred space?

Kim Knott uses Lefebvre to analyse sacred space, and she is particularly interested in the politics of positioning and recuperating (2005b). She explores these themes through a spatial method of analysis based on Lefebvre's work, which has five principle interests: '(1) The body as a source of 'space' (2) the dimensions of space (3) the properties of space (4) the aspects of space and (5) the dynamics of space' (Knott 2005a, 156). However, Knott focuses mainly on Churches and other official seats of religion, and it is unclear how

she would approach the Polish markers. These are not official religious sites: neither the Catholic nor the Orthodox Church has a hand in their construction or maintenance. During my stay in the village a wealthy resident was roundly ridiculed for having a local priest come and bless the statue of the Virgin Mary he had recently erected in his garden. Despite their forms these crosses and shrines are rarely treated as sacred objects or spaces. There is something else about these markers for which Knott's five point method of spatial analysis does not account.

Considered individually, and according to bodily engagement, dimensions, aspects, properties, and dynamics the crosses and shrines lead to some interesting questions. However, they are not supposed to be considered solely individually. While these objects often represent status claims on the part of the families who erect them, they are also erected by groups and the council, so they have a meaning beyond this. The objects placed beside the road are supposed to form a religious landscape within the biophysical environment of the region. As I cycled west, the crucifixes were Catholic; the Holy Mother was clothed in blue and frequently accompanied by a Jesus figure.



Image 4.12.1: Markers, leaving Kościół going west



Image 4.12.2



Image 4.12.3



Image 4.12.4

However, whether travelling north or south, the Catholic markers, which were concentrated around Kościół, began to disappear, and as one approached Terespol or Sławaczyna Orthodox crosses and icon painted gates began to replace them.



Image 4.13.1: Markers on the way to Terespol, north



Image 4.13.2



Image 4.13.3



4.14.1 Markers on the way to Sławaczyna, south



Image 4.14.2

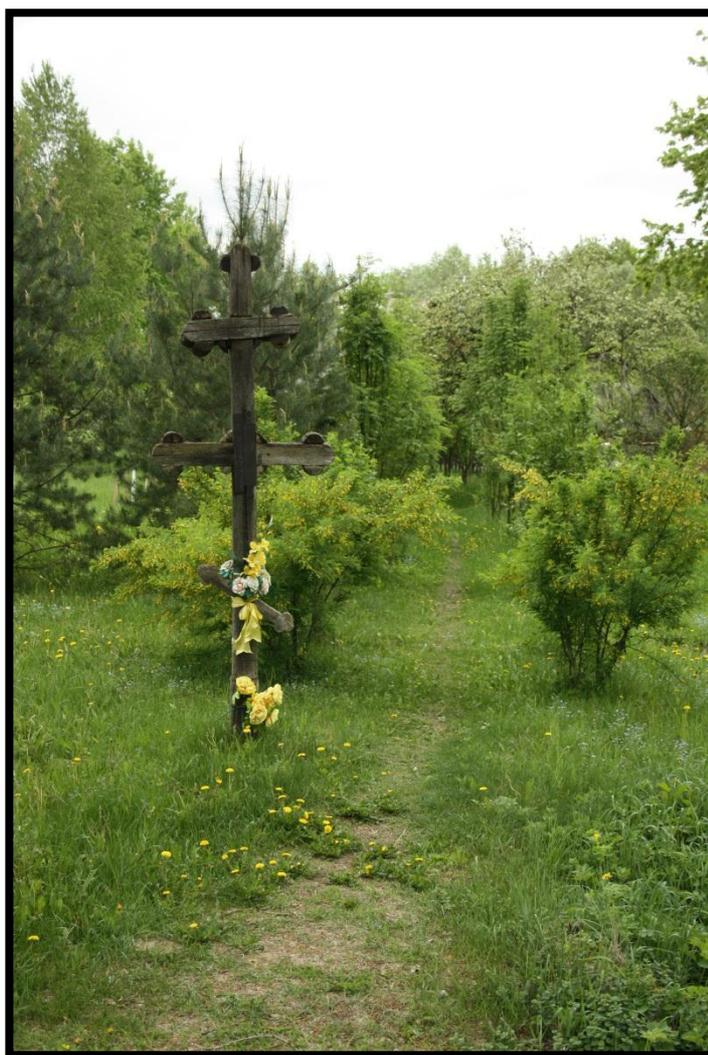


Image 4.14.3

Off the Bug Cycle Path this frenzy of markers was conspicuously absent. Villages had created a shrine to the Holy Mother or perhaps a crucifix but that was all. It seems that, knowing their position on the tourist trail, local Catholic and Orthodox people had taken the opportunity to try to produce the space as their own, through highly visual symbols of their faith. These markers may not have been intended to delineate sacred space, yet the volume and regularity of their appearance in the landscape gave the impression of a sacralised area to those who were unaware of the religious conflict over space here. I spoke to many residents of Kościół about these markers and also to two farmers who had erected crosses on their lands. The farmers told me they had erected their crosses to give thanks to the Lord. None of the residents gave this reason; they told me that only respected members of the community²¹ had erected the markers and that, as such, the markers showed that the town was Catholic. The implication here was that the moral majority in the community were Catholic, and therefore the town was also Catholic.

²¹ This helps to explain why the shrine of the Virgin Mary erected by a new, wealthy family was mocked. The family were strangers to the town when they started building the shrine.

The markers also, counter to the understanding of the local population, demonstrate the religious plurality of the area. Finally, they are an indicator that religion in the area is more than churches and monasteries. Many tourist books and pamphlets list regional sites of religious importance as cultural attractions. Like the basilica in Kościół, these sights offer official tours, museums, and souvenir shops. The markers remind tourists that religion is not a singular thing here, and that it is not only found in institutional buildings; but that religious plurality is embedded in the land itself through the wilful acts of the local population.

4.5 Inside/Outside

Throughout this chapter we have encountered the inside/outside binary and the role it has in attempts to fix a sense of place for the various groups operating in Kościół. I began this chapter by noting that my respondents invoke both the insider discourse and the biophysical world in an attempt to ground Kościół as a place that can be considered home. Both Lefebvre and Massey understood that the constant production of place and space was in part driven by the desire to have somewhere that was one's own, that one could return to (1991; 2005). In this chapter I have attempted to draw out why the production of a sense of place is such an important task for my respondents. Creating a sense of place in this instance is about creating a place to which one can belong. Yet Kościół has no clear insiders and outsiders; the tourists, traders and (as we shall see in the next chapter) pilgrims are all part of the multiplicity of place that is known as Kościół. Likewise, the forests, fields, and river are not a stable place that can contain the town, but a busy world of human and non-human interaction that further destabilises the town, both physically and temporally. This is not to suggest that Kościół cannot exist, simply that it is a place that is constantly emerging. I opened this chapter with an evocation of the forest, and then sought to problematize the idea of a 'natural landscape' through looking at people who move within the landscape. However, throughout the chapter what has become clear is that the constant building and breaking down of what it means to be on the inside is equally important. Kościół contains a number of groups and actors all attempting to create a sense of home, and often while doing this they seek to exclude other actors. Alternatively, their sense of what the 'essential character' of their place is is in fact created through their interactions with those they do not consider to be part of their place. Essentially this chapter is intended to demonstrate an idea that is central to this thesis, namely that 'what is special about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or of the eternity of the hills. Rather what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness [sic], the unavoidable challenge of negotiating the here-and-now' (Massey 2005, 140).

Chapter 5: Household Religion



Image 5.1.1

Joaska

Joaska lives with her elderly dog in a traditional wooden home. She is in her late seventies and all her children have moved away from the village. I first met her in the local House of Culture: she was part of the art and craft classes that I had taken to attending. After our initial meeting I would often sit with her during the weeknight Catholic masses.



Image 5.1.2

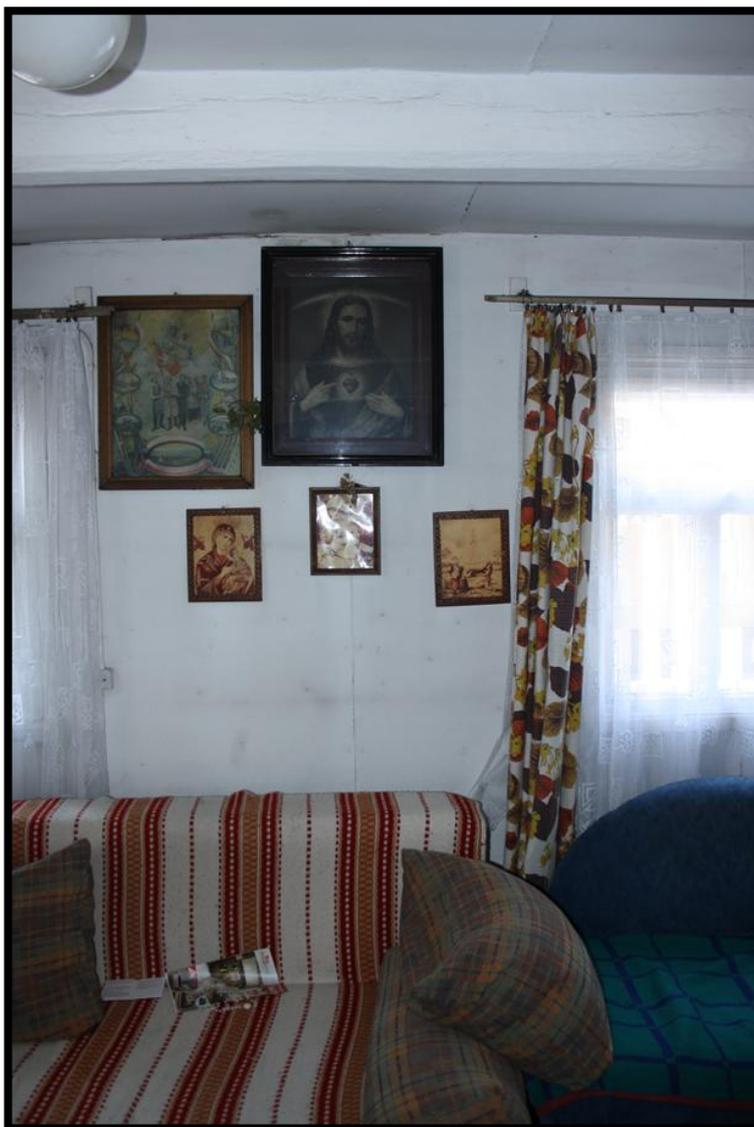


Image 5.1.3

Joaska is soft-spoken and patient with my at times halting and accented Polish. I had long wanted to interview her but she kept on putting me off, suggesting I talk with people she considered better placed to help with my project. Finally she agreed, after I interviewed her close friend, but on the provision that I provide the questions before the interview so that she could prepare. The day I arrive at her house to conduct our first formal interview her dog is sick but she is adamant that we should press on. I sit down and she insists

gently that I take some sweet black coffee and even sweeter Belarusian cakes. Above her bed, which doubles as a sofa during the day, hang six framed reproductions of holy images, three of which represent the Virgin Mary. On another wall there is a reproduction of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, with two local cult images of the Virgin Mary stuck into the edge frame. We talk about these, and she brings out a small book her grandfather received when he converted to Catholicism back in the early 1900s. She shows me how even this book opens with an image of the Virgin Mary. We talk and I ask questions which she patiently answers; when she wants to give the official 'Catholic view' she reads from a neatly hand written sheet in front of her. Then I ask about prayer: 'Have you ever had a strong experience when praying?' 'Yes', she begins quietly. Her mother had been very sick and she had sat in front of the Holy Mother of Kościół and prayed. Then she came home and prayed at the kitchen table with a little paper image of the Holy Mother in her hand. She begins to weep and asks me to turn off the recorder. When she has stopped and cleaned her face she sits back down beside me and apologises. 'It's okay' I say, a little

up icon of the Holy Mother of Lichen he brought for his wife on the only pilgrimage he ever made, and he still turns on the tiny twinkling multi-coloured lights each day.

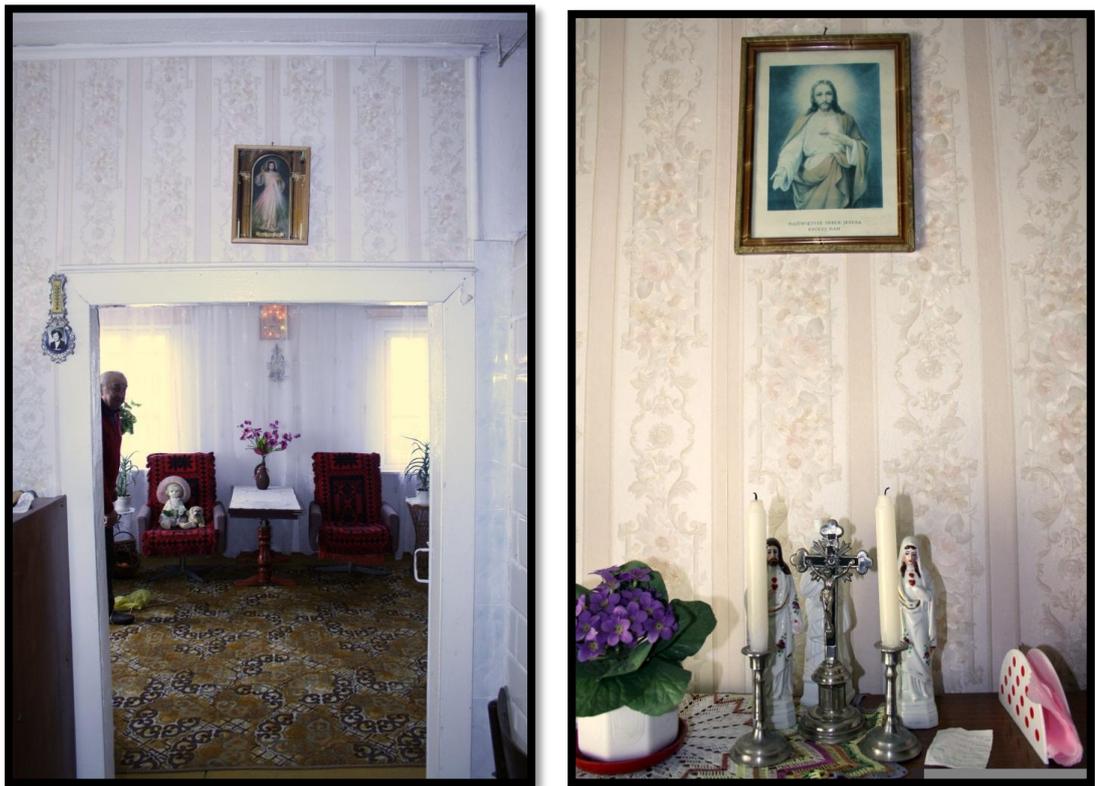


Image 5.2.2

What may have seemed 'kitsch' in another situation here evokes so much longing. I was deeply affected by Feliks' iconography and even as I write about it a lump forms in my throat. The only change Feliks has made to the house is the addition of a mass-reproduced tapestry of the last supper and a reproduction of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa to the wall beside his bed. Why, I ask? So that every night the last thing he looks at is Christ and the Virgin, he replies, and so that he can sleep knowing they look over him.

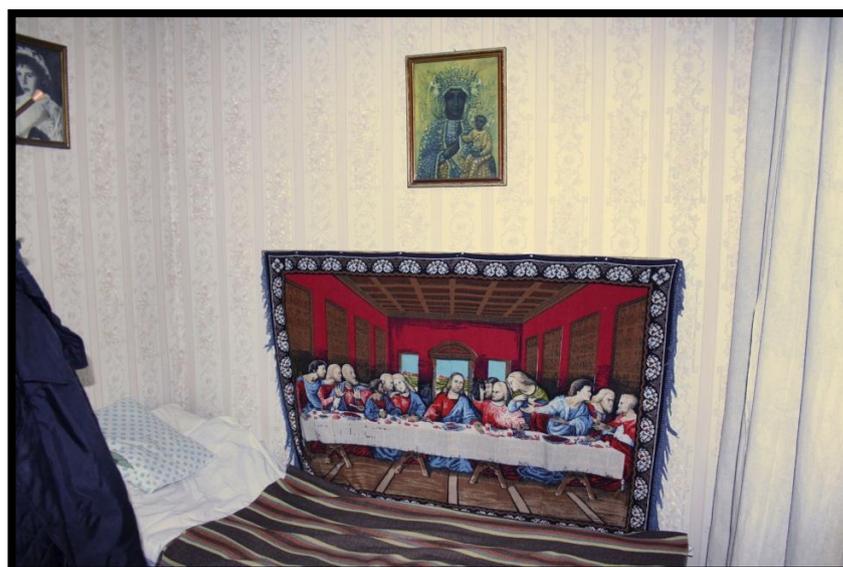


Image 5.2.3

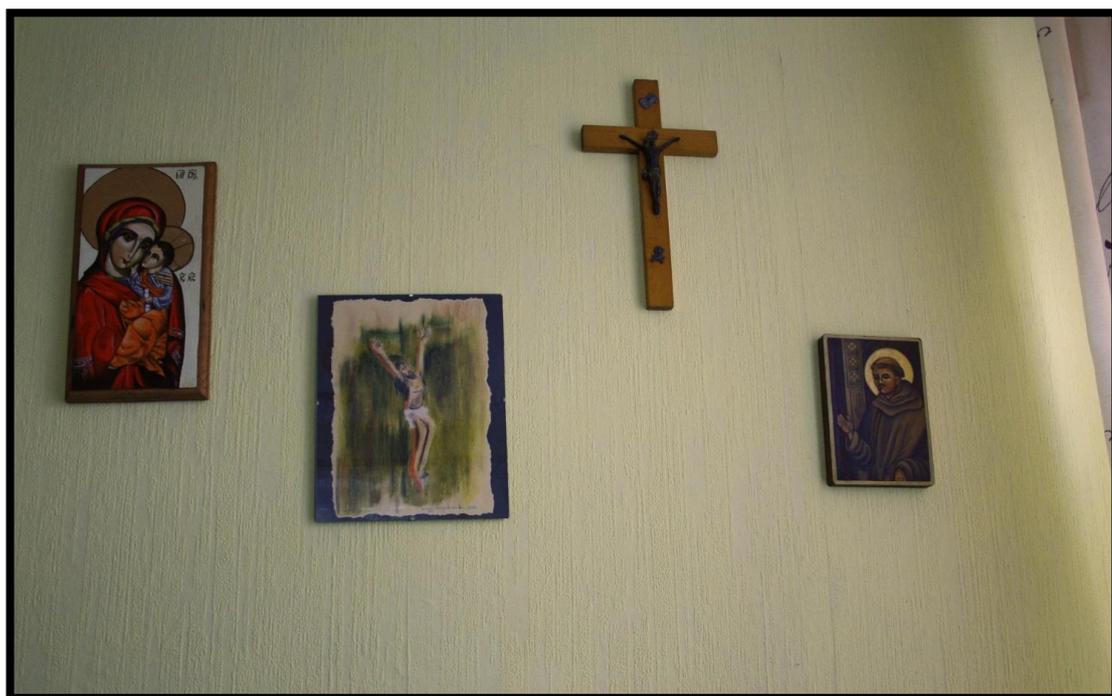


Image 5.3

Marzena

Marzena's husband will only allow her to have holy images on one wall of the house, because he finds them 'distracting'. Marzena's images are a mismatch of styles and origins: some hand painted, some mass produced, others carved. One image is Orthodox, another Catholic; she proudly shows me a hand-carved virgin who is 'American', so probably just 'Christian', she says, and shrugs. She also points to an image of Saint Francis, painted in a rather generic attempt at the 'naïve' style, which her son sent her back from Ireland, and asks me if this is my country's traditional style. I ask her if it matters where an image is from. 'No they are all holy, I like it better when they are handmade, but even a plastic crucifix is holy' she tells me firmly. I ask if she thinks there is a certain divinity in the images. 'No' she says again, 'they are just holy, because you pray to them, and you remember God when you look at them, and sometimes you remember to behave right, that God and the Saints can see you'.

These three vignettes are taken from a series of interviews I undertook with Catholic respondents. All the images discussed had been bought by my respondents from shops and churches; none had been specifically blessed, and only Joaska's book was a present from a member of the Church hierarchy. In art-market terms they were valueless, mass-reproduced works. What became apparent in my interviews and ethnographic observation, however, was that they provided a unique way of gaining access to what I have come to call everyday religion. I formulated a definition of everyday religion in the introduction to this thesis, but here I would like to elaborate on the idea further, on the basis of ideas contained in these three vignettes.

Everyday religion is, like 'everyday life': those aspects of religion that are hard to recall or separate out from the mass of the ordinary. This does not mean that everyday religion consists only of mundane experiences. Rather it is the manifestation of mundane and uncommon experiences side by side, so completely entangled with one another that it is not possible to fully separate them out. This means that everyday religion is a contradictory term. It can refer to daily religiosity as a beneficial force or as an estranging one. It also encompasses a broad range of practices, from attending mass and pilgrimages, to private prayers and the sumptuous materiality of domestic devotional objects.

I am going to begin by engaging with some of the contradictions inherent to everyday religion, through the stories that opened this chapter, particularly the moments of heightened intimacy and alienation my respondents experienced as a result of the practice of everyday religion, which are revealed through these vignettes. The second part of this chapter will move from the objects of religion in the homes of my Catholic respondents to discussing the different treatment and use of religious images by my Orthodox respondents. In doing so, this section will bring to the fore issues of religion and kinship, particularly mixed marriages and generational differences. This section builds on the previous chapters by considering in detail some of the work that goes into imagining and building homogenised religious groups. It also looks at how the experience of being a member of a firmly bounded, exclusionary, and excluded group shapes a sense of place for a number of people in the town. Further I explore how the sense of exclusion that emerges, as firmer boundaries between groups are drawn, risks destabilising negotiations at the core of the constantly emerging sense of Kościół. The third and final section delves into a particular example of this risk by paying attention to local Orthodox festivals. I will also be revisiting an issue mentioned in Chapter Three: the practice, perception, and experience of conversion, and its impact on the organisation and importance of Orthodox festivals.

5.1 Pamiątki: Religion in Catholic Homes

Of all the people I interviewed formally, only one did not initially object to my proposal. My interview process quickly took on a repetitive pattern. I would ask someone if I could record a conversation with them about religion and they would refuse. Insisting they knew nothing about religion, they would suggest I talk to someone else, someone who was strongly associated with the Church. I would explain that I was interested in day-to-day religion, and they would soften a little and consider my proposal. After a few days I would bring up the idea again and explain that I had interviewed many people in the town and I didn't want an expert; I also stressed that much of what I already knew came from the daily conversations I had with them and other respondents. Usually they would then agree, on the premise that they could see the questions beforehand and prepare. If they did not agree at this point I stopped asking them. When I did the interviews most people seemed perplexed by the fact that I had little interest in talking to 'experts'. I would explain that they were the experts in their own life but it was a concept that was not readily taken on board. No, I was assured time and time again, the priest and the lay ministers were the experts on religion in day-to-day life.

I challenged Joaska and Marzena on this presumption of expertise, or lack thereof. Joaska had a complex religious family history. Her close kin, her grandfather and grandmother, had been Orthodox and Greek Catholic—although, she told me, upon conversion they very quickly became 'properly [Roman] Catholic'. Marzena was a lay minister and read the first and second readings at most masses. Both women were experts on phenomena I wanted to investigate in Kościół. Joaska had a personal stake in—and many personal memories of—the long and complex interrelation of different faiths in the area. Marzena had nurtured her understanding of Catholic doctrine and dogma since her youth. She had given deep thought to objects like candles and the Holy Image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół. Yet, whether in the church or the home, religion was simply something they did in their daily lives with little thought. The idea that they would have to talk about religious belief and practice, extract examples of it in their day-to-day life and discuss all this in front of a voice recorder was difficult for them, and it highlighted how infrequently they considered such things in this objective way. Both women were religious, yet by asking them to talk to me about their religion I unwittingly forced them to talk about it as though it could be separated from their embodied practice of it, from the objects in their home that contained it, and from the relationships it existed between. It was not until I began to spend time in the homes of these women that I actually began to

understand the place religion had in their lives, and how, despite their strength of feeling, it might have been difficult to verbalise.

I want to go back and think about Joaska's extraordinary prayer experience. When I wrote the question—'Have you ever had an unusual experience while at prayer?'—I imagined that if people had had an exceptional prayer experience their reporting of it would make reference to elements of the supernatural, to miracles. Joaska's did not. Her mother was dying and she was praying to the Holy Mother of Kościół. Those prayers relieved some of the heartache she was experiencing, but there was no miracle for her mother, who went on to die. Later in the interview Joaska explicitly drew a link between her experiences and psychological wellbeing, when she noted that many people now go to a psychiatrist instead of to the Church. Many times Joaska had prayed for relief from suffering for her mother and for her dog. Occasionally such prayers give her solace: she reaches beyond herself and her pain and finds a cosmic tenderness, a mother who cares.

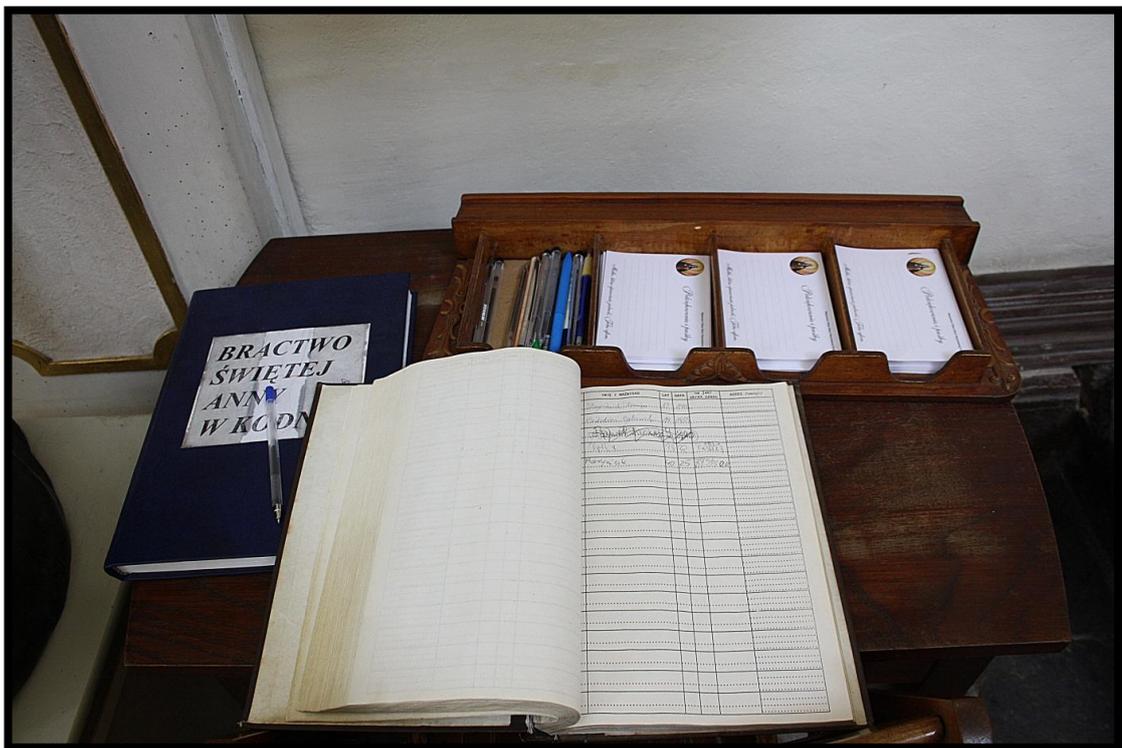


Image 5.4

Such events are not miracles, but they *are* moments of poesis. It is difficult to separate Joaska's experience of divine comfort from the routines involved in her everyday life. Her intercession relied on her understanding of how mothers behave, her incorporation of Catholic beliefs about the Mother of God, the place and importance of suffering, and the death and illness she had to deal with every day. Joaska finds love in religion because it is an important part of her everyday life, both in its presence and

absence. It is not the kind of love that priests or evangelicals proselytize about, the love that drove God to sacrifice his son and that enabled the son to endure sacrifice; it is an altogether more human love. It is a love that hears her prayers and acknowledges her sorrow, and in doing so it shoulders some of the burden.

Joaska's experience of the 'tenderness' of the Virgin Mary is definitely not divine love as it is explained in the Bible. Joaska did not use an abstract idea as a model to discuss the kind of love of which the divine Holy Mother was capable—she used my mother, and her own. Here she made a connection with her faith, and the connection was based on humanising the divine not reifying the human. It also explained religion in terms of kinship, drawing the divine into models of family and human relations.

In the second chapter of this thesis I discussed the holy image in the Catholic Church, and how the pilgrims desire to be close to her. Similarly, Joaska keeps an image of the Holy Mother beside her when she prays, in order to be close to her. Feliks keeps images of the Holy Mother and Christ above his bed to look over him. Yet when I asked directly both agreed with Marzena, that the images may be close and that the divine may be close but this did not mean they thought the divine was to be found *in* the images. As in so many of my fieldwork experiences and investigations, I began to see in the images 'absent presences'. Marzena's husband relegated the images to one wall in the house because they were 'distracting'.

Other respondents used the same word when we talked about images, especially my younger respondents. Beyond the town the word *rozpraszać* 'distracting' also came up whenever I spoke about religious objects in the home. A favourite complaint among colleagues in Warsaw was about returning to their family homes or visiting relatives to find a crucifix hung prominently above their bed. They could not sleep, they were constantly distracted by the crucifix, thoughts of sin swirled in their heads despite the fact they had long ago stopped going to church. It was something I felt myself: I lost my faith in my very early teens, yet I frequently felt intimidated by an image of the Holy Mother of the Sorrows hanging on my bedroom wall. She stared at me all day with baleful eyes until I took to turning her around. I was as firm in my lack of faith as I had ever been, and I think the image reminded me of something I lost, making me reflect back on the moment I began to doubt that there was life after death.

For those with faith, who practiced everyday religion, the images were an unwelcome reminder of the divine, a reminder that the person in question was not 'living

their life in Christ' as the priest asked them to. Marzena's husband told me that every time he looked at the crucifix he remembered that Christ died for his sins and he was ashamed that he could not even manage to go to evening mass.

Again I come back to what Belting called the 'very contradiction that will characterize images forever': 'images ... make an absence visible by transforming it into a new kind of presence' (2005, 46). Icons are essential to understanding everyday religion because of this 'distracting' quality. By making the absence of the divine apparent they force the individual to recognise that they tend to go about their life unaware of this absence in their world. Holy images, icons, and even mass-reproduced images of religious idols open up moments when people are made aware of their alienation from their faith. Poignantly, this is the why they also have the power to bring people closer to their faith. A holy image brings the devotee 'close' to divinity as it acts as a reminder to practice devotion to the divine, and thus to bring it out of the realm of the transcendent and make it imminent in daily life. This ability to remind the person of their shortcomings at the same time as invoking their power to relate to the divine is wrapped up in the medium of the image, and hence the idea that 'holy images bring you close to the divine' becomes part of the unexamined lexicon of everyday religion.

Holy images and objects are not only burdened with the heft of an absent presence, they are also enmeshed in the memories of the people who hold and behold them. Feliks' badges are a good example of such weighty objects. The badges represent various sacred people, holy places, and divine beings; they are also physical reminders of his wife's absence and they are linked to specific events in her life. More than this, as Feliks only made one pilgrimage with his wife his memories of this significant part of her life are almost entirely mediated by these objects. Each badge marks a year in his wife's life and a place where his wife went; they act as aides-mémoire for the stories she told him upon her return. Each badge also is an encounter with knowledge of his own alienation from his faith, and from the faith of his wife. It is the intersection of these qualities that makes Feliks' badges such heady religious objects. Compare the badges to the religious objects Feliks displays, the light-up picture of the Holy Mother, the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, and the tapestry of last supper. The last two were bought after the death of his wife and have little connection to his memories of her. (Although I did often wonder if they were tangentially related to his loss; in the absence of his wife did he feel the need to have someone watch over him, or keep him company at night?) The light-up Holy Mother was bought by his wife on pilgrimage, but this was the one pilgrimage they made together. The memories of that pilgrimage are both his and hers. While most objects in Feliks' home are

filled with his wife's absence, in some cases that absence serves to remind him of their time together, not just their time apart—temporarily when she was away on pilgrimage, and permanently after her death. What I did not recognise at the time was the possibility that when Feliks offered me his wife's badges he was not just giving them up because he is estranged from his religion; he may also have been trying to unburden himself from the pain of loss that objects can hold.

Questions of authenticity were unimportant when it came to the value of these personal religious objects. Often the images, plaques, and statues came into the home as *pamiątki*. *Pamiątki* translates as memorabilia; however, it is often used to mean keepsake, souvenir, or gift, with the word often carrying two or more meanings at once; in this chapter I use *pamiątki* to suggest all of the above connotations, as often my respondents did just this. Most images were bought from shops or churches where they were clearly one of many copies. Pinney (2001) and Batchen (2004) have both looked at the way that people re-author chromolithographs and photographs through various types of customization. I found frequently that images were layered, with multiple smaller cards slotted between the glass and the wood of a larger framed holy image, as in the photograph below.



Image 5.5

However, my respondents did not think of this as altering the images; rather, they understood it as ordering them differently. In ordering the images they forced them to become an instrument of meaning (Polte 2010). Sitting with my respondents and talking

about holy objects I could begin to see a narrative track leading from one image to the other. Into the gaps between the various elements stories or remembered events were inserted. Thus when Marzena talked me through the images on her walls she told a story of pilgrimages and of the links she had formed worldwide through her involvement in different church groups. There was one disconnected object: the image her son sent from Ireland. Into this she inserted a sort of narrative that explained its connection, commenting that she always thought there must be a reason for having an Irish image on the wall, and now she realised it was because I was going to interview her about her religious work. Commenting on photographic albums Langford has mentioned similar situations where order becomes not a transmission of meaning but a call to insert meaning. She points out the problem of seeing order when there is no 'real' connection between a set of photographs. In this case the narrative is a *post-hoc* explanation of the ordering of the photographs. There may not have been any intentionality behind the order of a given photograph album, yet when people see photographs grouped together they imagine relationships between the different images and create a narrative for them. Langford warns that the researcher must be aware that when looking at the manner in which photographs are ordered 'we find a style of photographic exposition that is never linear, but idiosyncratic, meandering, stubbornly non-Aristotelian' (Langford 2001, 20). It was not the position of holy images in relation to each other that clarified their meanings. It was the place that these religious objects found within the home, and the narratives and the everyday lives of the people living there that gave them their meaning and embedded them in social relations and religious practice. In the homes of my Orthodox respondents religious images had an additional role due to the group's position as an often overlooked or invisible minority in the town. In these spaces the presence of multiple religious images stressed the household's religious affiliation to the wider community of Kościół.

5.2 Przedmioty Religijne: Religion in Orthodox Homes

During my trip to Terespol to visit the weeping Orthodox icon of the Blessed Mother I also conducted interviews with a number of pilgrims. In one interview I ended up talking to Estera, Franciszka and Beata, three middle aged women from Białastok who frequently went on bus pilgrimages.¹ During the interview Estera opened her bag to show me reproductions of icons she always carried with her. She carried six images in her wallet, five of the Blessed Mother and one of the baptism of Jesus Christ. She also carried an image of the archangel Michael in a special pouch, though she admitted she only occasionally put this in her bag.



Image 5.6

Franciszka also carried images with her. In particular she carried a number of copies of the same image, the icon of the Blessed Mother from Grebarka. Franciszka insisted I take one of these images, telling me she carried duplicates so that she could give them to the people she met on pilgrimage. Beata had fewer images than the other two women. She carried a special ribbon covered in text, a set of red beads worn as a bracelet and two versions of the same icon of the Blessed Mary, one wallet sized and the other larger and gilded. When I asked why they carried the images I was told they were to remember visits to specific places and also that images were important to the Christian Orthodox community. I pressed further, asking why images were important to the Orthodox community. At first the women replied in a similar way to my Catholic

¹ I shall discuss types of pilgrimage in the next chapter.

respondents, citing memory and closeness. Yet they continued to repeat that ‘icons are important for the Orthodox’. Look at their Churches, they told me, they are covered with icons and frescos of the saints, angels and the Holy Trinity, and their homes are equally filled with holy images. Everyone knows what an Orthodox icon looks like, they continued, so they know you are Orthodox when you have one in your purse.



Image 5.7

Alongside the reproductions of icons, Orthodox homes frequently displayed Orthodox calendars, running the Julian and Gregorian dates alongside each other and marking out feast and fast days, as well as the Suppedaeum Orthodox cross. I was struck by the marked difference in the ways icons and religious objects were treated in different spaces. Looking back to the story of the Old Orthodox Church in the second chapter, it becomes apparent that this differentiated treatment of religious objects is not guided by the space in which they are at work, but in fact is constitutive of it. The old Orthodox church became a church properly when icons were brought into it. The difference between religious objects in the home and religious objects in the church was much clearer for my Orthodox respondents. Orthodoxy makes space for an embodied encounter with icons in its religious services, embedding a sensory experience of images in the formal practice of the church. This is how such religious objects had become identifiers of Orthodoxy for those within and outside of the community. Beyond the official use of icons, my respondents were attempting to draw out a certain tautology in the treatment of the icon in everyday religious practices of the local Orthodox community: the icon was an identifier of the Orthodox faith, so by owning one you were declaring yourself Orthodox; yet the icon

was recognisably Orthodox because it was owned by Orthodox Christians, decorated their churches and placed at the centre of official rituals.

Both Catholicism and Orthodoxy value the icon or holy image, and both use the same doctrine to explain the value of images in the Church. In Catholicism the phrases 'holy image' or 'sacred image' are often used instead of the word 'icon'. There are two practical reasons for this. First, the word 'icon' is popularly associated with the particular aesthetic of Eastern Orthodox art. Second, the accepted definition of an icon is a flat painted image; it does not extend to the statues and relics that Roman Catholics also venerate (Belting 1994). Yet according to the Vatican II council Catholics ought to treat their sacred images very similarly to the way the Eastern Christians treat icons (Sahas 1986). This is because the doctrine that governs the treatment of icons is from the 7th General Council of Nicaea, AD 787, a synod held before the partition of the Eastern and Western churches. The doctrine of this synod was accepted by the five Patriarchs as an essential part of the Christian faith, meaning that to be a Christian one had to accept it. So although the Second Vatican Council of 1961 laid down some new guidance for the treatment of icons, this did not affect the original rules on the veneration of them (Sahas 1986). This official understanding of the icon or holy image relies on the incarnation thesis. That is, that Jesus Christ was God made man, possessing both natures, and thus was at once immanent in the world and transcendent. In the same way an icon or holy image can manifest the presence of divinity in the world while divinity yet remains beyond the world. As mentioned in Chapter Two, this is an understanding of the power of images that appears congruent with many later theories on the subject (Benjamin 2008; Panofsky 1972). Yet it is not an explanation my respondents ever offered up, or one that they felt comfortable with when I asked them about it. So it was not an understanding of the icons as mediators of the divine that led my Orthodox respondents to connect them so strongly with being an Eastern Christian. What seemed to be important was that they had the 'particular aesthetic' of Orthodox art. Unlike the holy images in the homes of my Catholic respondents—which ranged from recognisable copies of well-known Holy images to idiosyncratic treatments of familiar figures or stories—the images my Orthodox respondents valued were all of a type. The subject of the icon varied, far more than it did in the homes of my Catholic respondents, but the style of the painting was the same. This style was the official church style—an aesthetic of Orthodoxy.

The Saint Nicholas Tapestry

The importance of this shared aesthetic became apparent to me in the early summer, towards the middle of my fieldwork year. I had been attending a number of small local

Orthodox festivals, and had become a well-known face to the local clergy. I was invited to dine with the priests and monks after the conclusions of the rituals. On this day I was in Zabłocie, seated at a large table in the local priest's home, uncomfortably aware that I was the only woman sitting, watching the other women rush in and out with food. The conversation was boisterous and tales of dangerous activity and amusing bravery during the Socialist era, particularly the period of martial law in the 1980s, were being exchanged. As it often did, the conversation shifted to other Christian congregations, with one priest animatedly describing a program on 'snake handling' Christian sects he had recently seen. Then it was my turn to introduce more interesting religious facts, as a scholar of religion. I decided to tell them how in Haitian Voudou the well-known image of the Częstochowa Black Madonna is used to represent the goddess of love (Desmangles 1992). One of the older monks was particularly interested in this fact. 'Do they know who the icon is? That it

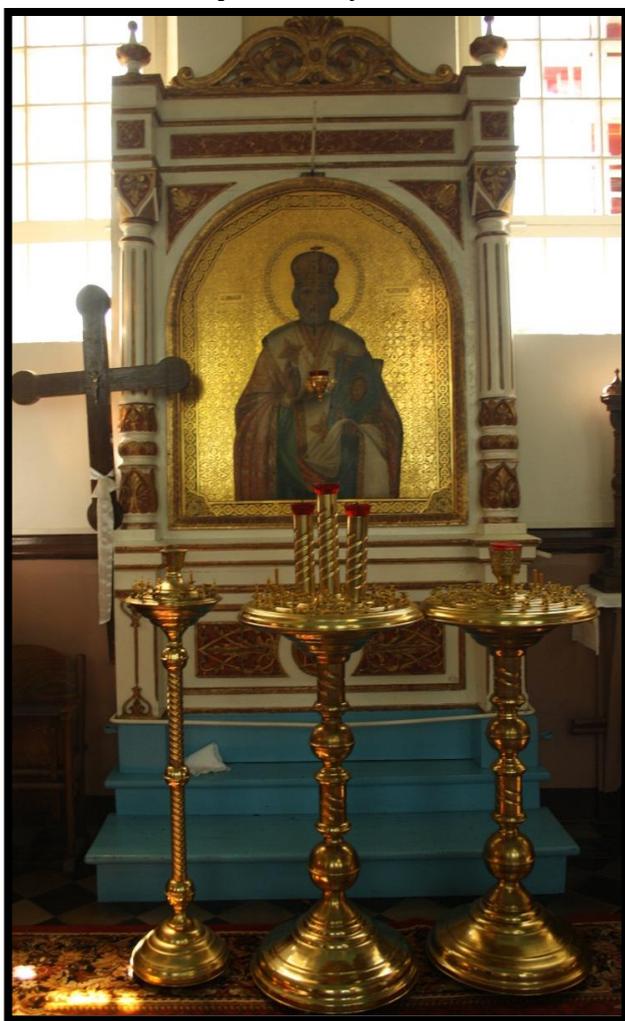


Image 5.8

is an icon of the Blessed Mother of God?' he asked. I was unsure. The monk continued. They probably didn't, he reasoned, as the image was unlike the other Catholic images of the Blessed Mother: she is in Catholic colour (blue cape, red dress) but in a tradition Orthodox icon posture, the Hodegetria.² He warmed to this topic, and explained to me the iconic differences between the Orthodox and Catholic images of the Blessed Mother, before concluding that it didn't matter because the Catholics painted the Blessed Mother however they liked. One of the other priests interjected to ask if I had been studying Orthodox icons. 'Yes' I answered anxiously. 'Well, who is that?' He asked, pointing to

a tapestry displaying a large icon on the wall, while everyone at the table chuckled. I did not actually know much about Orthodox icons; unlike Catholic ones, who normally carry a

² The Hodegetria—'she who shows the way'—is a position in which the Madonna directs the viewer to the Christ child with her hand.

symbol that identifies them (a wheel for St Catherine etc.), Orthodox icons only occasionally hold symbols but more frequently are identified through their dress, hair, positions, style, colour, surrounding figures, and facial expression. This makes it more difficult to identify them. However, I had seen this icon on multiple occasions in the last few weeks and despite not being able to put my finger on what exactly marked him out as different, I could identify the image of Św Mikolai, St Nicholas. The priests and monks were amused and impressed, and one announced that he was sure I would convert shortly.

Belting has categorized such a textual reading of icons as a facet of the 'era before art' (1994), yet textual reading has become an increasingly common way of dealing with aesthetics since the 19th century (Elkins 2001). In his short but helpful chapter on Indian chromolithographs, Pinney links this meaning-heavy approach to Fried's discussion of the change from theatrical to absorptive paintings in the 19th century, as well as to Buck-Morss' powerful article on the *anaesthetic* appeal of the artwork. Fried argued that in the eighteenth century 'a new conception of painting came to the fore that required that the personages depicted in a canvas appear genuinely absorbed in whatever they were doing, thinking, and feeling, which also meant that they had to appear wholly unaware of everything other than the objects of their absorption, including—this was the crucial point—the beholder standing before the painting' (Fried 2008, 26). Images were no longer to involve the audience, but rather to pretend the audience did not exist, separating high art from the low art of icons and ritual objects (Pinney 2001, 159). Buck-Morss had reconceptualised the trajectory of aesthetics and traced its political implications by first reconsidering its original meaning (1992). Rather than 'refinement of taste' or 'sensitivity to cultural norms of beauty' (1992, 6) she saw the origin of aesthetics as perception by feeling. In the article she traces how this 'discourse of the body' (Eagleton 1990, 13, cited in Buck-Morss 1992) was transformed into an 'overstimulation and numbness ... characteristic of the new synaesthetic organization as anaesthetics' (Buck-Morss 1992, 18). The alienation of the senses that led to a disinterested approach to artworks (and life) she labels anaesthetics. Pinney, considering the manner in which Indian villagers engage with, encounter, and enliven images, deploys the term *corpotherics* to mean 'the sensory embraces of images, the bodily engagement ... people have with artworks' (2001, 158). In the first part of this chapter it could indeed have been easy to think of the discussion as an examination of corpotherics. Yet when we turn to consider Orthodox responses to religious objects in their homes, despite the common-sense idea that Orthodox Christians are far more idolatrous in their beliefs, we can see that the response is often much less personally engaged. Their embrace of images is primarily a political embrace of images;

the senses are neither dulled nor enflamed. Rather they respond as they have been trained, recognising the visual form and the gilded feel, without any laboured thought-process.

A shared aesthetic makes the images instantly recognisable as icons and a political project makes the icons signifiers of belonging to the Orthodox faith. This shared aesthetic also connects the icons so strongly that in some instances individual reproductions are not wholly articulated as separate from the original image. The copies that Franciszka carried around with her are an interesting example of this. She bought a number of these small reproductions during the annual pilgrimage to Grebarka. They all carried the same image of the Hodegetria. Throughout the year as she went on different pilgrimages she would hand them to people with whom she spoke or spent time. She quickly ran through the original set and bought more from the small shop in her local church. Yet she still considered these copies to be linked to the pilgrimage to Grebarka. She knew they had a different origin—she told me this later on the day of her interview when she was purchasing items from the church-shop in Terespol—but they were ‘identical’ to the ones she bought in Grebarka and she therefore did not differentiate them.

The manner in which Orthodox icons moved from the Church to the home was an important aspect of their political efficacy. Purchasing a reproduction of an icon and bringing it back to the home actually means bringing back a bundle of meanings, particularly as the reproductions were never fully separate from the originals still active in Churches, Cathedrals, and Monasteries. But icons could also move in reverse, and this had an impact on the everyday religion of my Orthodox respondents. The miraculous icon in Terespol was an example of a home icon that moved back into the Church after it manifested particular powers. It was proof that both the home and the Church were spaces where divinity could manifest itself. While many Catholic homes have witnessed miracles they are rarely acknowledged publically in the way that the Terespol miracle was. The organisation of the Orthodox Church, autocephalous with a parallel hierarchy of monks and priests, allows for a much quicker process of recognition of miracles at a local level. This affirmation that a miracle could occur outside the powerful and sensuous experience of Church-based religious ritual interrupted the day-to-day understanding of divinity. It was a commanding manifestation of divinity in the most humdrum spaces of the mundane. When I visited Terespol the priest and many of the local congregation were more than happy to emphasise how basic the construction of the miracle icon was, that it was only a mass-reproduced image made of cardboard.

In the image-saturated Orthodox Churches—their walls and roofs covered in frescos—icons hang in gilded frames or rest on golden stands throughout the space and the iconostasis, with gaps in the wooden carving displaying images of the most important figures in the faith. And there is always a small shop where mass-reproduced icons can be bought.

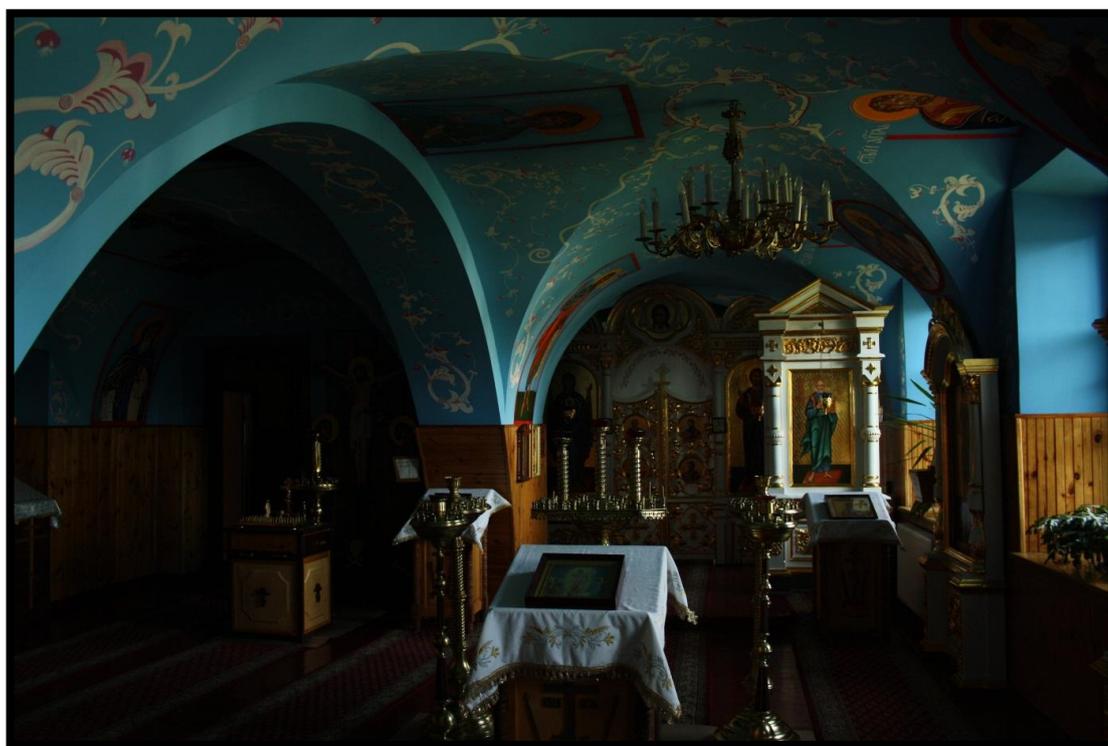


Image 5.9

Although the origins of the religious images kept in Orthodox and Catholic homes are similar, it is interesting to note that while my Catholic respondents often referred to the images as *pamiątki*—underlying the personal connection to the object as gift or memory—my Orthodox respondents more frequently called them *przedmioty religijne*: religious objects. While the Catholic title underlines the connection between the objects and the people, the Orthodox title emphasises the connection between the objects and the religion. While holy images in the homes of my Orthodox respondents could be personal and heavy with memory their most important function was to draw a clear connection between the household and its faith.

The connection between the Orthodox religious objects and political assertions of their faith was first suggested to me in an interview with Zofia, a fourteen-year-old Orthodox girl. Zofia was an extremely devoted student and an active member of many Orthodox youth movements. She was also an avid photographer, which is why we were originally introduced. I had known Zofia for a number of months before I asked her for an interview. When I asked about the religious objects or images in her home she sighed

deeply: 'You have seen my house, they are in every room'. Then she listed the rooms and the icons in each. She also noted the calendars and the books written in Russian. I asked whether there were any in her room. 'Yes, but only *pamiętki*, from pilgrimages and festivals', she replied. I asked, why weren't the other images she had listed *pamiętki*? Zofia shrugged, 'because you just buy them in the Church'. I thought about this division that Zofia implied between the types of religious objects in the Orthodox homes for a long time. I was also aware that when I visited the homes of my Orthodox respondents and asked about the images on the walls they discussed the content and the form but only very rarely the origin of the image. The next time I was in Zofia's home—having an impromptu English conversation in preparation for a test she had the following day—I paid close attention to the images. Zofia lived in a large apartment with her parents and one elder brother. The apartment was modern but welcoming, and in its decoration minimalist. Yet in all the reception rooms—the kitchen, the living room, and the dining room—there was a prominently displayed indication of Orthodoxy. In the hallway there was a large framed image of St John the Baptist; in the kitchen a large Orthodox calendar, displaying the Julian dates in bright red, was the sole occupant of the fridge door; in the living room the bookshelf held a number of conspicuous large books imprinted with Cyrillic script, and a suppedaeum cross hung on the wall; in the dining room the glass cabinet holding the crockery also held a number of small freestanding icons. To anyone entering the house the religious affiliation of the occupants would be clear.

Eventually, through interviews and participant observation I began to draw out the understanding discussed above, that in this part of Poland images have a political aspect for Orthodox Christians that they do not have for Catholics. But another incident with my landlady challenged this idea. After my visit to Terespol I had been given a reproduction of the miraculous weeping icon of the Blessed Mother of the Sorrows. It was a large gilded image printed on heavy cardboard—not unlike the original weeping icon, I was repeatedly told. I was also given a book. When I returned to my house with the image my landlady insisted that we hang it. She thought it was a beautiful image, and spent a long time examining it. I suggested that we could hang it in the living room as then she would be able to see it too. She was aghast: it was my *pamiętka*, how could I want to hang it in the living room? Instead she was insistent that we should hang it in my bedroom. She took away the small image of the Blessed Mother that had hung on my wall since before I arrived and I replaced it with the new image. For a long time following this she was in the habit of stopping to admire the image whenever she came to talk to me in the room. While the image was bigger than any of the ones she owned it was not otherwise as impressive in its form. Many of the images that she had in her home were carved from wood or

painted, rather than printed. A few weeks after the interview with Zofia, when I was beginning to theorise the political properties of Orthodox religious objects, I asked my landlady about the objects in her home. I was surprised that she articulated a particular personal connection with the objects and images. Speaking of the image I had received from the Church in Terespol she informed me that I was particularly fortunate to have received such an image.

First of all it was a *piękna pamiątka*, a 'beautiful memento', and the fact that it was a gift from a priest was also important. But mostly, she told me, it was identical to the miracle-working icon in the church, and was therefore a very powerful image. Here my landlady made the same association as many of my Orthodox respondents, drawing a clear line between the agency of a well-known icon and the power of a reproduction. However, she did not make this connection as a way of discussing the political efficacy of the image, as another orthodox person might have done, but as a way for me to understand how personally influential it could be.

I had hypothesised that this kind of close connection between the icons and their reproductions allowed them and their meanings to move from the personal to the public spaces of religious life, thus confusing the division, and playing an important role in framing the day-to-day lives of my respondents as 'religious lives'. Yet, it became clear that this was not a case of either emboldening the religious images as indicia of the Orthodox identity, or using the icons as a way of living religion that attempted to embed that religion in everyday life. While age and generation play a role in shaping what kind of an understanding an individual has of images, what became apparent was that once the icon became a symbol of Orthodoxy it was incorporated into future relationships as such. With striking uniformity the older generation viewed the images as personally powerful objects, while the younger two generations, the middle aged and youthful, saw them as signifiers. It was not that the older generation were unaware of the political efficacy of icons; they just chose not to attend to this aspect of their materiality. It seemed that the younger generations of the Orthodox faith did not see the personal significance of icons because, by insisting on the political symbolism of icons, they were simply less concerned with the biographies of the images.

As mentioned in the introduction, the end of socialism in 1989 allowed the Catholic Church to rise to a position where it could influence Polish state policies; it also became a recognised social care provider (Ramet 2014). This rise was coupled with an increasing conservatism within the Church and an attempt to establish a close connection

between the Catholic faith and the Polish people (Ramet 2014). For many of my Orthodox respondents, who came of age during this period, the effect was to make them feel like a minority. In this way, practices common before the 1990s took on a more sinister feel. One of the clearest examples of this is the issue of conversion.

5.3 Kinship and Conversion

For my landlady and her generational cohort, many of whom were grandparents or even great grandparents, divisions between the Catholic and Orthodox communities were not clear in daily life in Kościół. However, for the generations after this one, the division was experienced plainly. The rift had a direct impact on the everyday religious experience of my respondents, regardless of which side they fell on. Members of the oldest generation had friends from both communities and attended events that were not organised around religious affiliation. Even active members of their religious communities, such as Marzena, frequently attended non-religious events and called at each other's homes. Conversations occasionally alighted on religious topics, but on such occasions the religious topics in question were of the public and festive kind.

During my stay in the town my landlady held a feast to celebrate Orthodox Christmas, which fell on the 6th of January (in 2013 the date coincided with Catholic Epiphany), and invited all her friends. On the day the party was made up of seven people, only two of whom were Orthodox. Food and drink were plentiful and the conversation ranged across a vast array of topics, only alighting on religion via discussions of the Christmas just passed. Towards the end of the dinner religion was mentioned, partly because of my presence; the discussion was related to the events I intended to attend in the coming year. As I listed a few of the more important events I wished to be involved with, one of the women at the table remarked that she had never noticed previously how many Orthodox holidays there were. This provoked a chuckle and then another Catholic guest proffered, nervously, that she had always wondered why the orthodox go in the opposite direction when blessing themselves—head, chest, right and left shoulder compared to the catholic, head, chest, left and right shoulder. My landlady explained to her that for Orthodox Christians man is an image of god and not a reflection: meaning that when they bless themselves they go first to the right hand of god, whereas for the Catholics they go left as though they are a mirror image of god. There was a hum of interest and then the discussion moved back to considering which religious festivals I would enjoy most. The week before this dinner my landlady had helped to organise the *Sylwester* or Catholic New Year's Eve celebrations in the local House of Culture. On this occasion among the local guests were two older Belarussian Orthodox Christians, relatives of someone in attendance. As the night wore on and the dinner finished people began to sing various traditional songs. I remarked to someone that I found a certain song hard to understand. 'Of course' he replied, 'it is a Ukrainian song.'

The only occasions when this generation separated along religious lines was for events run by the Church or in the church. For example, in the run-up to the Christmas period there were two local carolling events. In the town the Oblates organised a brass band to accompany the church choir and children from the local school while they sang in the monastery behind the basilica. In Terespol there a large Orthodox choral festival was organized, with choirs from churches all over the east of Poland and a number of choirs from Belarus and Ukraine. Both of these events generated a lot of conversation in the town. In all the shops, regardless of whether they were run by an Orthodox or Catholic family, I was guaranteed to find myself discussing the upcoming choral events. So I was surprised that on the night I attended the Catholic carol service my landlady, an avid singer, elected to stay at home. Similarly, having discussed the 'beautiful' sound of an Orthodox choir with Joaska, I was intrigued that she turned down the offer of a lift to the festival in Terespol and back, instead electing to stay home. When I asked on both occasions what had prompted the decision to avoid these events both women said they would have been uncomfortable and embarrassed, 'zakłopotany'.



Image 5.10: Ukrainian Women's Choir

Attending the Carol Service in Terespol I noted that those organising and running the event all seemed to be under sixty years old. This was unusual for such events: both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in the area relied on small groups of retired or retirement-age members to help co-ordinate events that were not officially religious. Once again I met the Białystok television crew and a number of press photographers and young journalists. On this occasion even the audience was younger than usual. Initially I related

this to the fact that many of the choirs performing were from schools, and therefore many of those attending were parents. However, when I spoke with people during the the interval I realised that many of the younger people in attendance had no relatives performing; instead they were had come to see the Ukrainian and Belarusian choirs that were taking part. Naumescu (2008) has written about transnationalism and smaller religious communities, particularly about attempts to link a smaller community to a worldwide religion, thus ameliorating the difficulties of living a minority religious life. It is therefore pertinent that this occasion was a self-consciously transnational event. At the opening and closing of the choral service reference was made to the worldwide Orthodox faith and more specifically to the shared history of the borderland Poles, Ukrainians, and Belarusians.



Image 5.11

This sense of a large and geographically-scattered community was not just rhetoric. The middle generation frequently made visits to and received visits from Orthodox friends from many miles away, often as far as Belarus, and attended events up and down the archdioceses of Lublin–Chełm and Białystok–Gdańsk. They self-consciously socialised with a tightly-knit Eastern Orthodox Community. For the middle generation, those between thirty and sixty, who grew up during the era of socialism, the easy ecumenicalism of their parents was hard to replicate.

Perhaps the best example of the transnational and translocal character of the Eastern Orthodox faith in this part of Poland is to be found in a semi-religious event held at the start of January, Malanka. Malanka is a Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarussian folk

holiday held on Old New Year, or the Orthodox date of New Years Eve, normally around the thirteenth of January. Every year for the past thirty years³ the local Orthodox population has gathered in Biała Podlaska for dinner and dancing to celebrate New Year and the Orthodox Community itself. From the moment of my arrival in Kościół in late October my Orthodox respondents were excitedly discussing it. Henryk and Paulina were two of the main organisers, and every time I was out with either they would stop frequently to ask if people had bought tickets yet, or to discuss the food and music planned for the event. Most frequently the complaint was heard that despite the fact the celebration was a well-established cultural and religious event they would not get a day off. 'We never get the day off for any holiday, but Poland shuts down for Corpus Christi', one older woman complained to Henryk. Despite these inconveniences, most people had their tickets purchased and were busy buying more for extended family members visiting from Lublin, Minsk, and other places. On the evening itself I brought along a friend from Warsaw. When we got to the location I was unprepared for the sheer scale of the celebration.

Malanka

The foyer of the conference centre gave warm relief from the freezing air and snow-stacked paths outside, and was still resplendent in its Christmas lights. There were crowds of people in their finery, all milling about. We later discovered there were approximately two hundred people present. I spoke to a few people I recognised and slowly moved towards the dining room. The dining room was set with ten long tables covering the entire floorspace, each capable of holding about twenty people. Before sitting down I went to say hello to my landlady and her cousin from Belarus. We spoke briefly about how refreshing it was to see so many young people at the event. Very young children had been left at home, but otherwise the age range of those attending was incredibly evenly spread, with a larger number of people in their twenties than I had previously seen at any event. Many had extended their university holidays to attend. The people I spoke with came from all over the local area, stretching up close to Białystok and down as far as Lublin. Many came from towns and even more from villages and settlements I had never heard of. My friend and I had been put at the top table, alongside a local politician, the organisers, and the priests and bishops. Sitting opposite me was a young man who worked as a cross border trader, and beside him a young woman who was a hairdresser in a small village; she was a Ukrainian Pole. We spoke briefly of the difficulty of learning Ukrainian and keeping hold of that side of her identity, especially given the Polish animosity toward Ukraine. The event consisted of a formal dinner and then dancing; for 135zł (about £30) we were fed from

³ The celebrations started in 1983 as Martial Law drew to an end.

seven in the evening until two o'clock in the morning, and had as much alcohol as we cared to drink. There was also a live band. At the start of the dinner a speech was given about the importance of the gathering for the Orthodox community in the area; the speaker also made a point of adding that they had friends from Ireland attending. During the dinner the politician sitting near me took great interest in my project. He also made a point of asking about the Catholic Protestant 'conflict' in Ireland and was particularly anxious to represent this part of Poland as a healthy melting pot of culture.



Image 5.12

After a short period of dancing we returned to the tables for the countdown to midnight. As the lights went out, candles were lit and sheets of lyrics were handed out. Accompanied by the band, playing accordion, whistle, and tambourine, folk songs were sung. The folk band was playing Polish, Ukrainian, and some Russian songs; then a Belarusian woman stood up and sang a Belarusian song, with which a lot of people were able to join in. At midnight Russian champagne was popped, *Sto Lat*⁴ was sung, and cheers given. After this the lights went back on and the music and dancing started again. The event had an organic and anarchic character. My informant had joked in the weeks previously that he would get me to teach the party how to do Irish dances; it turned out he was not joking after all, and at one-thirty in the morning I found myself teaching the gathering how to Irish dance to

⁴ *Sto Lat* is a Polish song, sung at birthdays, weddings, and New Year's Eve; it is an all-purpose celebration song. Its lyrics wish the listeners never die, and instead live for a hundred years.

the tune of a Ukrainian Folk song. At about two forty-five my friend and I decided that it was time to leave. On the way out my friend commented that her mother would be surprised; she had told us we would spend the night listening to discopolo and dancing with girls who had spent the afternoon at the salon getting their hair backcombed. Her mother had been expressing the common idea that the Orthodox community was 'rustic' and generally backwards. My friend also expressed wonder that I knew so many of the Orthodox community. Later, this event, and my attempt at teaching people to dance, was cited by most of my Orthodox respondents as the reason they decided to talk to me.

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Poland was unique during the Socialist period for the role the Catholic Church was allowed to take in the public sphere. Hann (1993; 1998; 2010a), extrapolating from the available historic and ethnographic records, has shown that a side effect of this unique relationship was that Catholicism became the de facto religion for Poles; approximately 87% declared themselves Roman Catholic in the census around the time of my fieldwork (Polish Statistical Yearbook 2012). Hann (1993; 1998; 2010a) is interested in the effect this institutionalised repression had on the Greek Catholic Population of Poland, but I would venture that it also had an impact on the Eastern Orthodox community, especially along the eastern border. Immediately after the end of World War II the government instigated *Acja Wisła*. Toward the end of my fieldwork the Orthodox diocese of Lublin and Chełm began preparing for a month of *Acja Wisła* remembrance events, including a conference and an essay-writing competition for under-eighteens. *Acja Wisła* refers ordinarily to the second movement of the operation that involved the forced relocation of ethnically Ukrainian Orthodox Christians and Ukrainian Greek Catholics from eastern—particularly the *Kresy*—to western Poland in 1947. During the second movement the deportations were quickly and violently performed and people were often given only a few hours to gather their possessions. As mentioned in Chapter One, despite the emphasis on 'Ukrainian' ethnicity many Orthodox and Greek Catholics were moved with little attention paid to their heritage, due to the assumption that religion was the same as ethnic origin. The motivation for *Acja Wisła* was to counteract the continued actions of the UPA (the Ukrainian Insurgent Army) along the Polish/Ukrainian border, but for the local Orthodox community it has come to represent the beginning of a period of repression.

Throughout this time the Orthodox hierarchy in Poland were in the middle of a power struggle between the Russian and Constantinople Patriarchates and the Polish and USSR ruling parties. The Church had received its autocephalous status in 1924, from Constantinople, and in 1948 the Moscow Patriarchate declared the Constantinople

declaration void, while simultaneously declaring the Polish Patriarchate autocephalous itself. From 1947 to 1960 there were two Metropolitans, one recognised by Constantinople and the other recognised by the Church in Moscow. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the Church was reordered and many archdioceses were formally established. However, the idea of collusion between the Orthodox hierarchy and the state, both during communism and during the previous Nazi occupation, was widespread, slow to dissipate, and believed by the Polish—Eastern Orthodox Christians included. The outcome of all this was that people who grew up between 1947 and 1989 were suspicious of those at the head of the Church, and experienced a Poland that was actively hostile toward their faith. They were also aware of the increasingly popular idea that Catholicism and Polish-ness were inextricably linked, and its implication that the other faiths of Poland were the religions of foreigners.

In the 1980s there was a slow increase in the number of Eastern Orthodox Christian organisations in Poland. This included the establishment of many new Youth Organisations and a new archdiocese in Lublin-Chełm. This development has had a great impact on the social lives of the youngest Orthodox generation—those born in the 1990s and later. For the middle generation the experience of religious repression and a sense of exclusion from national religious life did not prevent them from socialising with their neighbours of all faiths. For men of this generation who wished to join the priesthood there were a few seminaries, but otherwise Catholic, Orthodox, and Greek Catholic populations were educated together. It was not until the 1980s that the middle generation had the option to socialise exclusively with Eastern Orthodox Christians, and this was normally small-scale or during one-off occasions such as religious festivals. Now an increasing number of Orthodox Youth Organisations, choral groups, and pilgrimage associations occupy the spare time of the youngest generation. While the oldest generation socialises regardless of religious affiliation, and the middle generation makes attempts to socialise exclusively with other Eastern Orthodox Christians at specific events, the youngest generation is the first to socialise predominately with other Eastern Orthodox Christians. Unlike their parents, who travel to be with Orthodox friends, members of the youngest generation meet other Eastern Orthodox Christians during their leisure activities. I interviewed three young people who stopped over in Kościół during a pilgrimage to Jabłeczna. I was amazed at the number of activities they undertook with a mono-religious group. All three were members of their local Church choir; one also acted as an altar boy frequently. All three were members of a youth organisation that held an annual week-long camping event in Grabarka every summer, as well as frequent meet-ups on feast days throughout eastern Poland. They all took part in a number of walking

pilgrimages during the summer, mainly as part of young people's groups set up by the Church but advertised through Facebook.

Parents encouraged this type of socialising but many young people felt their parents had ulterior motives. There was only a small number of Orthodox young people in the town but I managed to speak with most, and one thing that came up repeatedly in our conversations was a sense of pressure from parents to find Orthodox partners. One local young man told me he had attended Białystok University specifically to improve his chance of meeting and marrying an Orthodox girl. Another told me that although he was never told directly to find an Orthodox wife, the negative feelings about mixed marriages expressed by his parents left him in no doubt as to their preferences. These conversations with the younger generations were underlined by conversations I had with the middle generation.

I began to get a sense of the pressure the youngest generation of Orthodox Christians were under through my own experience as an unmarried twenty-five-year-old woman, a position often as important to people as my position as a researcher. A few weeks after moving to Kosciola, the particularities of both my project and myself had circulated throughout the small town. This list included the fact that I was an agnostic lapsed Catholic,⁵ which seemed particularly important to my Orthodox respondents. This became apparent to me at the first Orthodox festival when an older priest joked, half seriously, that I'd convert to Orthodoxy before the year was out. After this I often noticed that older Orthodox women whom I wished to interview would insist I spend time with their various unmarried male relatives before agreeing to sit down with me. Eventually I mentioned this to Paulina and she chuckled: 'they are crafty!' She explained that my status as a non-believer made it more likely that in the event of a marriage I would convert to Eastern Orthodox Christianity, thus any grandchildren would be raised Orthodox. 'Everyone is worried because the Orthodox in this area are dying out', she explained 'They marry Catholics and then their children are raised Catholic, every year there are fewer and fewer Orthodox children baptised'. This fear of conversion was an exceptionally common sentiment, and one to which young people were sensitive.

In the case of a mixed marriage, the official line is that people do not need to convert. However, under Roman Catholic Canon Law a mixed marriage (understood to be that between a Roman Catholic and another type of Christian) is seen as invalid unless the couple marrying receive special dispensation from the diocese. Further, to be sacramental

⁵ I was open with people about my own lack of faith from the beginning of my research.

the ceremony must be performed by a priest and attested to by at least two witnesses. This has the effect of necessitating that the marriage take place in a Catholic church. In order to marry in a Church one must convert. Canon Law on both sides of the marriage is not in favour of interfaith marriage; reading through the texts there are references to ignorance and schismatics, and undeniably hostile language. The Orthodox Church's view is much the same as the Catholic Church's, focusing on the need for a special dispensation. Yet for some reason, it is almost unheard of for an interfaith marriage to take place in the Orthodox Church in the town, or in the surrounding towns. I was never able to get to the bottom of this, beyond noting that most people were of the opinion that you 'must' convert to marry a Catholic, and perhaps the complicated Canon Law and negative attitude to interfaith marriages give this impression. The outcome was that local Eastern Orthodox Christians feared that mixed-marriages were chipping away at their congregations—and to a great extent they were correct.

In May I attended the marriage of my landlady's grandniece. Two generations ago the family had all been Orthodox, but the bride's father had converted to Catholicism to marry her mother. The wedding was held in the basilica, yet attended by Catholic and Orthodox locals and family. While certain bodily engagements marked the division—the afore mentioned differing styles of 'blessing', and confusions around when you should sit, stand and kneel—what I found most remarkable was the number of occasions when both faiths were in union: in the hymns, the liturgy, and in some bodily practices, such as standing for the Gospel. I also noted how on both sides the congregation was altering its practices to fit better with those of their neighbours: singing in Polish, standing for prolonged periods of time, and so on. And this was the aspect of interfaith marriages often missed by my respondents: that even after the marriage and the supposed choice of one faith above the other, families continued to be part of both communities. At an event in Zabłocie one of my respondents pointed to a woman and child, blessing themselves in the Catholic style. 'Mixed marriage', he grumbled. 'Well, she is still bringing the children to the [Orthodox] church', I offered. 'They are Catholic though', he retorted. This was not the only time I saw this kind of double religious life. Many of the interfaith families were active in both communities, regardless of which they officially belonged to. As I noted in Chapter Three it was not until death and burial that one really made one's final choice, represented by the location of your grave and carvings on your headstone.

I spoke to most of my respondents about the division between the various faiths in this area. Many Catholics like Joaska were the product of multiple interfaith marriages; over the years her family had been Eastern Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Roman

Catholic—as she told me, ‘we were everyone, everyone!’ Joaska saw no real need to divide the faiths, as she saw their main purpose as moral guidance: ‘they teach you not to be an animal’. Even those who could trace their heritage back as seamlessly Catholic saw little difference. As one woman told me: ‘We are all Christians, and the Orthodox are very close to us, they have the same belief in the Blessed Mother Mary. The Protestants do not.’ The challenge for my Catholic respondents was markedly different from the challenges faced by the Orthodox. The Catholics’ primary concern was the experience of their faith. For my Orthodox respondents their experience of daily religion was tied into their sense of exclusion from the cultural intimacy in Poland. If, as Herzfeld contends, cultural intimacy is a ‘recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality’, then ‘the familiarity with the bases of power ... may at one moment assure the disenfranchised a degree of creative irreverence and at the next moment reinforce the effectiveness of intimidation’ (1997, 3). Although the degree to which Catholicism is a source of ‘external embarrassment’ can be debated, especially given the increasing distance between young urban Poles and the Catholic majority, Catholicism in Poland is otherwise certainly one aspect of cultural intimacy. The historic category and continuing importance of being ‘Polish Catholic’ excludes Eastern Orthodox Christians from a place at the centre of Polish political life; and the strategies they have developed to cope with this exclusion, such as transnationalism and increasingly segregated social lives, only work to exaggerate their alienation.



Image 5.13: Stall at a festival selling Orthodox and Catholic icons and images

In Chapters Two and Three I explored how the negotiations, agreements, and disagreements between the Roman Catholic majority and Eastern Orthodox minority were constantly altering the emerging sense of place in Kościół. In Chapter Four I looked at how the biophysical world and material objects were involved in this negotiation and also at the need for a sense of place, the need to ground a community in something one perceives as stable and fixed. In this chapter I want to return to a point made at the beginning, that the groups negotiating the production of Kościół are not given. These groups, the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox, are constantly forming and reforming. The barriers between the two shift and become hardened and softened at different times and in different spaces. Importantly, each group constructs and settles its edges according to the other.

Chapter 6: The Pilgrim Landscape



Image 6.1

'True Pilgrims?'

I was leaning on my bicycle by the bus stop watching the pilgrims from Łukow line up by the church door to receive communion. The line stretched out past the gateway and into the road, winding down as far as the edge of the small park. The whole centre of the town was closed, and there were hundreds of pilgrims wandering around. Once they had arrived and received communion they were free to do as they wished until the evening ceremony. Many took the opportunity to explore the church grounds or to find their rooms in the pilgrimage centre. More filled the two small pamiętki shops attached to the basilica or rambled around the stalls in the small market that had sprung up during the night. It was August and the main celebration of the Holy Image of the Blessed Mother; August is also a month of pilgrimages in Poland and the month that the Catholic Church dedicates to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Despite this time of year the days were dull, the sky a dismal grey and there were frequent bursts of drizzly rain. Yet the pilgrims continued to arrive, thronging the streets from the north and south, singing and responding to the voice of a priest broadcast over loudspeakers carried by young men in the crowd. Banners announced each parish group as, sodden, decked in raincoats, and carrying packs they arrived and joined the line stretching from the church door. The queue also revealed the occasional glimpse of a small group in their Sunday best huddled under an umbrella. These were the car pilgrims, although their right to the title 'pilgrim' was contested by many of the locals. The young woman standing beside me offered me a flask of hot tea; she was the daughter of a local part-time hotelier. Crammed under the bus stop we all waited

for the guests who had booked rooms during this festival. Eventually a small group from the Łukow contingent approached and I identified them as my landlady's guests. Taking their bags on my bicycle I set off with them toward the house. I told them that my landlady had made lunch for them and asked why they had come on this pilgrimage. The oldest woman answered, 'We always come to Kościół for this festival, it is normally better weather'. I nodded and pointed out the small roadside shrine to the Blessed Mother. 'Are you Ukrainian or Belarusian?' the woman asked in response to my accent. I told her I was Irish, but had lived in the town for nearly a year. 'I'm an anthropologist', I told her. 'I study the relationship between the Orthodox and Catholics here', I continued, giving her my prepared response, then added, 'but I am interested in pilgrimage too'. The woman considered this for a moment. 'True pilgrims or the people who visit the shrine, with cars and buses?' she asked.

As I stated in the introduction to this thesis, pilgrimage was the initial reason I had based myself in Kościół. Like Edith and Victor Turner I began my PhD with a sense that pilgrimage was, for those who undertook it, beyond the day-to-day experience of religion (Turner and Turner 1978, 1–39). I wanted to investigate pilgrimage as an example of everyday religion at its most revolutionary. The work of the Turners (1978) and the later critique by Eade and Sallnow (1991) disagreed in terms of hypothesis and approach, yet their alternative key concepts—*communitas* (1978) and *conflict* (1991)—both imply that the pilgrimage and the sanctuary are multivocal places and events. As Coleman has pointed out, this relies on creating 'sociological vacuums in order then to fill the gaps with their respective views of what pilgrimage must essentially be about' (2002, 361). For the Turners this vacuum was related to the stripping of identity that preceded and created the formation of *communitas* (Coleman 2002; Turner 1978). For Eade and Sallnow this vacuum was the pilgrimage shrine, waiting to be filled with the competing discourses of the pilgrims and officials (Coleman 2002; Eade & Sallnow 1991). However, through my decision to conduct my fieldwork in a small local pilgrimage centre I quickly undermined my initial assumption about the exceptionalism of pilgrimage, an assumption that all-too-often pervades its study (Yamba 1995). During my fieldwork I came across a number of pilgrimage forms, each with their own set of processes and affective outcomes. I also came to focus on the life and history of the pilgrimage centre both during and outside of the pilgrimage season and to pay closer attention to the role of the region's landscape (in the broadest sense) in pilgrimage. This is how I came to understand pilgrims and pilgrimage as embedded in Kościół as one of the constituents of the place. In speaking of pilgrims and pilgrimages in this chapter I am drawing a hard boundary around a group of people and activities. This boundary, however, is much more permeable than my initial definition

allows, and throughout this chapter I will slowly demonstrate this by challenging the definition (centring on exceptionalism) I begin with. Interestingly I saw that the exceptionalism applied to pilgrimage by some anthropologists and the desire to 'straightjacket' it with clear boundaries (Yamba 1995, 9) was reproduced by many of the pilgrims themselves, who attempted to delineate and distinguish a 'true' form of pilgrimage from other activities that happen around the sanctuary.

While I will discuss this emic definition of pilgrimage throughout this chapter, my own approach owes a lot to Jill Dubisch. As Dubisch states, pilgrimage involves 'by definition separation and a journey to a different place, [yet] pilgrimage is intimately connected to the context of everyday life' (1995, 257). Dubisch's understanding of pilgrimage also takes space seriously. She states that pilgrimage relies on '(1) the association ... of certain events and/or sacred figures with a particular field of space and (2) the notion that the material world can make manifest the invisible spiritual world at such places' (Dubisch 1995, 38). I am interested in how the Clergy attempt to channel the deep emotion of pilgrimage into renewed faith and belief in the pilgrim's Church (Galbraith 2000, 61). Finally, my approach to pilgrimage also includes a particular interest in movement, embodiment, and rhythm. While based at the pilgrimage centre I took part in pilgrimages myself, and I spend time in this chapter discussing embodied 'movement to and movement at sites' (Coleman & Eade 2004).

In this chapter I will start from the space of pilgrimage. The first section focuses on 'getting there'. It begins by considering the modes of transport employed by people in getting to the shrine and moves on to consider the objects people bring and travel with. The second section looks at what happens when people arrive at the sanctuary. Both these sections look beyond Kościół and consider Eastern Orthodox shrines nearby, namely Grabarka and Jabłeczna. The third and final section contrasts the previously discussed pilgrimages to events organised by the Church in Kościół that are not described as pilgrimages by my respondents, despite sharing many of the features an anthropologist might identify as central to pilgrimage. Throughout this chapter I am interested in movement, and the analysis of flow and interruption. Circling back to the discussion of traders and tourists in Chapter Four, I again focus on the impact that visitors to the town have on my respondent's attempts to create a seemingly stable sense of home. As this chapter will demonstrate, unlike the other visitors the insider/outsider discourse is rarely enacted when discussing pilgrims. Rather, the pilgrims are part of the religious landscape, attracted by the sacredness of the place and, I hope to demonstrate, a vital part of maintaining and creating that sense of sacredness.

6.1 Getting There

During the August festival I managed to interview a number of pilgrims. Among them, members of the group staying with my landlady were more than happy to talk to me and over the course of two days I had multiple opportunities to discuss aspects of pilgrimage with them. One of the themes that continued to be brought up was the importance of walking to pilgrimage. This emphasis on the mode of transport was not unique to this pilgrimage; other groups that passed through, arrived in, or left from the town had firm opinions of what kind of movement was required by pilgrimage. There were three common types of transport used by pilgrims: foot, car, and bus. Most people, even those who did not go on pilgrimage, acknowledged that walking was the ‘truest’ form of pilgrimage, followed by bus pilgrimages. Those who chose to drive were definitely at the bottom of this hierarchy, and often were not even considered to be pilgrims but ‘tourists’.



Image 6.2

I walked back to Łukow with the pilgrims in August, partially in an attempt to do as Michael Jackson suggests, namely to use my body as others did in an attempt to find common ground and understanding (1989, 111). As discussed in the introduction, throughout my fieldwork I also found walking and the stop and start form of conversation it encourages a helpful way of conducting expanded interviews. Unlike the rest of my fieldwork, where I had the chance to constantly return to topics and questions with respondents with whom I had long-term relationships, interviewing the pilgrims who

came to Kościół was a one-off, so this was a slightly different research field. People came from many places, for one specific occasion, and then left, and my brief conversations with them reflect this process—the significance of the event, the place, and its history had for them, and also the rather ad hoc nature of their gathered ‘community’. Correspondingly, most of these conversations took place on the move, reflecting the kind of conversations of which pilgrimage is really composed. Rebecca Solnit frequently alludes to a similar connection between walking and thinking in *Wanderlust*, making reference specifically to the speed of walking. None of my respondents made specific reference to the speed of walking but implicitly the pace of the pilgrimage was important. Most pilgrims sang and prayed while they walked. At first I imagined such activity would be tiring; however, as soon as I joined the pilgrims I realised that the pace of the walk and the tempo of the prayers and songs acted to complement each other. Sean Slavin notes a similarity between song and pace in his work on the Camino (2003). He extends the comparison by demonstrating how pace is connected to rhythm, which pilgrims experience as both an inner and an outer phenomenon, and that singing often resolves this inner/outer tension (Slavin 2003, 11).

While the importance of pace was implied, most pilgrims I spoke to began the account of their experience by making reference to the power of walking and its relationship to space. I noted that when the pilgrims travelled they used main roads. The pilgrims walked in a loose group; those at the start were three or four abreast while toward the end they dwindled down to walking in single file with a significant degree of distance before and behind them. Although some pilgrims wore high visibility vests and attempted to police the edges of the groups, as marshals in political marches do, these cautionary measures were hardly necessary. It was difficult for cars to overtake such large groups of pilgrims, even on the long straight roads. Thus when they came into view the pilgrims often appeared to be at the head of a large cortege of cars, trucks and buses. Many local drivers avoided travelling by day during the festival period to avoid the pilgrims. The pilgrims walking the road were simultaneously drawing it into their religious environment. Stopping at roadside shrines and churches along the way, the pilgrims further eroded the separation between the road and the landscape. In this way their practice of walking through spaces normally reserved for cars claimed the road temporarily as a religious space. My respondents were highly aware of this spatial reordering. One young woman, a first-time pilgrim, told me that while walking to the shrine she felt ‘strange’ I asked her why. ‘At the start I felt like I was... trespassing. But now it feels like we should be here, on the road going to Kościół’.

The use of the plural pronoun 'we' was common practice among the pilgrims, but it is perhaps misleading. It reflected the fact that in order to make a pilgrimage on foot you needed to travel as part of a group. The roads were deadly if you marched them alone; most cars drove down the centre divider and pulled into the verge when they met vehicles coming from the other direction, usually with no indication or warning. Larger buses and trucks were known locally for the speed at which they travelled. As I noted in Chapter Four, friends from Warsaw and respondents also jokingly (and more seriously) objected to my travelling by 'suicide bus', named on account of the risks drivers took on the long empty roads. The act of walking the road needed a large number of bodies; alone you were a safety risk, together you undertook a transformative practice.

When asked why they came on pilgrimage most of the Łukow pilgrims responded that their church had organised the trip every year for the last few years, or that they always came to Kościół during the summer. None gave more specific answers without prompting. But they did say they thought that pilgrimage was an important part of the Catholic faith and that was why they brought along young children and other family members. In the case of the Kościół pilgrimage groups were organised by parish, sometimes subdivided into generational or gendered sets. This meant that the arriving crowds were remarkably and visibly diverse, formed of a range of parish residents who would not normally travel together.



Image 6.3

However, this diversity did not equate to Turner's *communitas* (1969: 1978), as there was no stripping of the identities of everyday life. Within the large pilgrim groups people walked within a small group of acquaintances or friends, and where this was not possible they tended to stick with their generational cohort. This kind of gathering was possible on large pilgrimages but the grouping on smaller processions, such as the midsummer Orthodox pilgrimage to Jabłeczna, was by necessity more heterogeneous.

At the end of May a group of youth pilgrims on their way to Jabłeczna passed through the town. Most of the local Orthodox population opened up their doors to the young pilgrims. I was invited by Marta to come and meet two of her friends who were on the pilgrimage and staying at her house. They were on their third day of a four-day pilgrimage, tired and a little grimy. This was the first day they had been separated, as the previous two nights they had all stayed together in a church, and then a monastery. Their group demonstrated a sizable level of diversity. Aged between fourteen and twenty-one, it included high school and university students. Some of the participants knew each other from Orthodox organisations or choir groups, but for a significant number this was their first pilgrimage with a group of this kind. There was also a small number from an organisation for people with learning difficulties, and two young men in training to become priests. Some seemed to be very devout, but the young man and woman I interviewed admitted they were there mainly to see old friends. They acknowledged that over the three days a sense of community had developed within the group, so that splitting up on this evening had felt a little odd. I asked how this feeling of closeness had developed and was corrected by the young man: 'it is not closeness, it is not like friendship. With some people maybe. But it's a different feeling'. After a brief discussion all three agreed the feeling was simply about being together, '*wspólnie*', an imprecise term with a tenuous link to the idea of *communitas* through its root in the word *wspólnoty*, community. *Wspólnoty* was originally an agricultural term referring to shared land or communal meadows, and was commonly used after socialism for the new forms of semi-communes that sometimes replaced collective factories. In this sense it is a very sympathetic term in Polish that incorporates place into the meaning of community. This sense of being together was arrived at through an understanding that pilgrims were an exceptional group. Galbraith also found the word *wspólnoty* was used by her young Polish pilgrims, with a particular emphasis on the shared intimacy of the suffering they had chosen to undergo together (2000, 64). A few days later I went to the monastery at Jabłeczna for the festival and met some of the young pilgrims again. This time they emphasised how different their experience was because they had walked, when most people took cars or coaches.



Image 6.4: An incorrectly dressed “day tripper” at the festival

Differentiation played an important role in shaping this sense of togetherness. In particular my respondents made reference to the difference between pilgrimage and tourism. Like most authors who write about pilgrimage, the people I spoke with, both locals and pilgrims, found that while the difference between these two groups seemed clear in theory, it was more complicated in real life. One of the few clear differences they could identify between the two groups concerned modes of transport. All of the pilgrims I interviewed made reference to the importance of how one got to the pilgrimage centre. Travelling by car was a sure sign of tourism, just as walking was the primary indicator of pilgrimage. Bus travel, however, was more ambiguous. Although many of my respondents suggested that bus travel was not pilgrimage, a lot of the older pilgrims believed it was less clear-cut. I had an opportunity to explore this complexity further when I undertook a bus pilgrimage to Grabarka in mid-August.

Every July there is a festival on the holy mountain in Grabarka. Eastern Orthodox Christians from all over Poland, as well as Ukraine and Belarus, come for the festival. Many come as pilgrims, carrying large wooden crosses in multiple colours to leave at the top of the mountain. I had intended to make one long pilgrimage, a five-day trek from Kościół to the holy Orthodox Mountain of Grabarka. However, the week before the pilgrimage I damaged my shoulder and on the day the pilgrimage was due to start I was still finishing a course of injections. I wanted nevertheless to attend the festival and found out through

one of my respondents that there would be a bus pilgrimage passing through the town. I went along under the care of two elderly sisters, Misha and Danuta. Misha, the more exuberant of the pair, explained that the bus would take about half a day to get to Grabarka, normally a much shorter journey. Along the way we would be stopping at a number of Orthodox churches, shrines, and places of interest. The coach had departed from Chełm, and before arriving at Kosciol had stopped in Sławatyczna, Jabłeczna, and Zabłobcie. The coach arrived half-full; the majority of passengers were elderly although there were two families with young and teenage children. As it passed through the countryside the coach stopped to pick up passengers at most villages. As people boarded in pairs or small groups the coach slowly filled; there was a low hum of conversation and food was shared across the aisle. At the top of the bus a priest held a microphone and as we moved through the countryside he narrated the Orthodox history and culture of the landscape in a monotonous baritone while a few people dozed and others chatted softly. We made three stops at which everyone alighted to make acts of devotion. When the bus arrived in Grabarka in the late afternoon we made the final journey to the top of the mountain and the forest of crosses by foot. While on the coach I asked my fellow travellers if they considered this to be a pilgrimage. All of them did, but they added that it was 'different' from a walking pilgrimage.



Image 6.5

The usual distinction that anthropologists make between a walking pilgrimage and journeys to pilgrim centres by car or coach is based on speed or pace (Slavin 2003). The

logic is that when asked about pilgrimage, walking pilgrims place much importance on the pace of their journey and frequently lament that travel by bus or car is too fast to be contemplative. So the emphasis on pace comes as a result of talking to one group of pilgrims and not the other. Without talking to pilgrims who journey by coach, or even by merely joining this type of pilgrimage, researchers are running the risk of making assumptions about coach pilgrims based on what is said about them and not what they themselves say or do. While on the coach I asked my fellow travellers if they considered this to be a pilgrimage. All of them did; however, most said it was 'different' from a walking pilgrimage. It became clear that pilgrims who walk understand the journey as a continuous progress through the landscape from an origin point to a final destination. In this case religiosity emerges from the pilgrim group and their continued contemplative interaction with the landscape through which they move. Thus pace, or rhythm, is an integral part of the pilgrimage, ensuring that they move at the right speed to thoughtfully engage with all facets of the journey.

The coach pilgrims understand the flow of pilgrimage differently. For them the journey is a series of points of heightened religiosity in the landscape that they move between on the way to the final destination point. They still have a rhythm to their pilgrimage but it is built on a constant play between flow and interruption. This understanding of what makes a coach pilgrimage also helps us to understand the occasions when travel by bus does not equate to pilgrimage. When the bus or coach moves through the journey without stopping along the way at different religious sites this is not a pilgrimage, it seems. Both of these styles of travelling have analogies in the Christian tradition. The symbolic imagery of travelling to or from place to place is a clear arc in the New Testament; the first most clearly seen in the tale of St. Paul and the road to Damascus, and the second in the Stations of the Cross.

There was one thing that all pilgrims I interacted with mentioned. That was a sense of 'being apart'. This sense was not associated with leaving behind social roles or being distant from the space in which they lived (Turner 1978; Eade & Sallnow 1991). Instead it seemed intimately connected with the travelling they did. There was a rhythm and flow to their progress that was remarkably different from the flow of their everyday lives. For the walking pilgrims rhythm was strongly connected with the body in the world, the way that sore feet and tense muscles restricted movement and later, as the blood flowed to knees and shoulder blades, strides became longer, gaits more comfortable, the way a heavy drizzle seemed to lead seamlessly to a sudden decrease of pace and enthusiasm or the dreary light allowed the eyes to pick up an underlying grey green in the

normally sandy-toned landscape, encouraging a more sombre song and slower pace. Rhythm was not solely dependent on a temporal difference, but was located at a unique connection of space, time, the body, and the expenditure of energy that occurred during pilgrimage. Pilgrimage was a totally immersive sensory experience: music, incense, the damp coldness of the ground on which you knelt as you stopped at roadside shrines—all overpowered one's normal experience of the of the countryside, and in the interaction of all of these experiences a new rhythm was set. This interaction of time, landscape, object, and body, and the rhythm it set can be seen in the much more restricted example of religious procession.

Boże Ciało (Corpus Christi) falls on the seventh of June and is a national holiday in Poland. I was in Biała Podlaska for Boże Ciało, staying with Roża's family. We got to the church for ten o'clock mass at a quarter to ten, but still we were stuck standing at the back. The service was in the style of tridentine mass, mostly in Latin, and with many additional prayers. Just after the Eucharist, when the mass normally draws to a close, members of the congregation began to pour out of the church. Swept along in the rush I noticed that long benches had been drawn up outside the Church and that the courtyard was filled with people. There were hundreds of people lined up ready for the procession, and they parted to let the leaders of the procession through. At the top of the procession were banners and a band proceeded by children carrying flower petals to throw into the path of the procession. Next were the priests and then the image of Jesus under a tent. Finally there were the unfortunate altar boys carrying loudspeakers in packs on their backs.

From the church the procession moved slowly toward the main square, singing. I was struck by the eerie quiet of the town. The shops we passed were all closed and frequently had makeshift shrines in the window, some to Boże Ciało but many to the Virgin Mary. At the square the first of the outdoor altars was set up. Here the procession halted and the pilgrims got to their knees as the priest led a prayer, a bible reading, another prayer, and finally closed with a song. It was a sight to look out over the main square of Biała Podlaska, usually so busy and noisy, and see it filled with people kneeling in prayer, all silent. The procession continued on in this way for a full four altars, and as they left each of them the people of the congregation stripped it of its flowers and greenery.

The solemnity of the sacred heart of Jesus falls a week later. I was in Kościół for this celebration. The day before the town was as normal, but at about three o'clock in the afternoon shrines started to go up in the main square. I met one of my respondents

helping with the flowers on one shrine and she told me that the women in the church groups organise the shrines, also asking their friends to help. At six in the evening I went to mass, which was not a tridentine service but did contain extra prayers and songs. After the Eucharist the congregation emptied out of the church—there were maybe a hundred and fifty or two hundred people there.



Image 6.6

A woman I know called me over and I walked with her. This time the procession was led by girls who had just made their first communion. They wore princess-style dresses, floral wreaths in their hair, and carried baskets filled with petals that they scattered as they walked. Members of the congregation were also carrying mini floral wreaths or little bunches of flowers. After the communion girls came the banners; a lone man held the central pole, from the cross bar of which hung four long ribbons and the four women who had been in charge of building the alters each held one in a square formation around the banner. Next came an ornate cushion carrying the host, which was held by a teenage girl. Three teenage girls stood either side of her, holding ribbons between them like a makeshift cordon. After the priests and the monstrance, carried under a tent, came a large brass band. The bells rang out, the band struck up a sombre tune, and the procession started off around the central square. The houses had makeshift shrines in the windows

and red, yellow, and blue ribbons¹ tied to the fences. The procession followed much the same process as the one on Boże Ciało.



Image 6.7

At each altar the procession stopped, prayed—led by the priest—, listened to the priest reading from the bible, prayed silently, and sang. Although I was walking with someone, we walked in silence. We walked slightly below normal walking pace and I found I had to make a concerted effort not to speed up and step on the feet of the people in front of me. The rearrangement of the town square, its transition from secular to religious space, was also an interruption to the normal organisation of the landscape. Procession was a totally immersive sensory experience: music, incense, the damp coldness of the ground knelt on overpowered the pilgrim’s normal experience of the town. In the interaction of all of these experiences a new rhythm was set. But it was a temporary difference. By eleven o’clock the following morning the altars had been taken down and the ribbons removed from the fences; only a few petals remained to trace the route of the procession. The flow of everyday life returned.

¹ Blue and white, red and white, and yellow and white flags were always flown outside the basilica. Blue is associated with Mary, and yellow with the papal yellow and white flag. Red is the colour of the holy blood, Holy Spirit, holy cross, the apostles, and the martyrs. In this case it may also be associated with the red and white flag of Poland.

To turn again to Lefebvre, there was presence in processions and pilgrimages that seemed to emerge from the creative tensions of the different rhythms they moved within (2004 [1992]). Their movement was temporally, spatially, and bodily specific; a dynamic intersection between the pilgrim as a social and cultural being and the different patterns of multiscale time in action in everyday life (Edensor 2010). While it remained unspoken, rhythm and flow, both internal and external, underpinned the sense of 'being apart' that so many pilgrims understood as paramount.

This exceptional rhythm was not confined to the group of pilgrims. In fact it had an impact on the landscape through which they moved. This impact appeared to be in part intentional. Whereas the pilgrims had no option about where they walked,² they could decide whether to announce their presence and intention through the use of various objects. Here I want to focus on two types of objects that pilgrims used while on the march to identify and announce themselves: banners and loudspeakers. The loudspeakers instantly attracted my attention as both ingenious and awkward. Due to the size of most pilgrim groups and the acoustics of the flat eastern Polish landscape the voice of the priest at the top of the group carried poorly. To ensure that everyone could follow and respond to the prayers and sing along with the hymns the priest spoke into a cordless microphone and was broadcast through speakers spaced throughout the crowd.



Image 6.8

² They could have made use of the Bug Trail, but this ran the risk of blurring the line between pilgrim and tourist and when I spoke of it to my respondents they seemed genuinely to have never even considered this route.

These speakers were carried by altar boys in a rather heavy rig. The transceiver (a combined receiver and transmitter) was welded to a large rectangular frame and two loudspeakers were attached to the top of the rig. The transceiver and the bottom part of the rig were encased in a rucksack that was worn on the back. The voice of the priest carried throughout the crowd and beyond. Before the pilgrims entered the town you could hear the voice of the priest, slightly tinny, through the speakers and the rumble of the pilgrims' response. In fact as they proceeded along their route the sound of the pilgrims became the dominant noise. As the sounds of prayers and devotional songs resonated through the forests and over the flat fields the very presence of the pilgrimage seemed to be shaping a sacred aural landscape. Pilgrimage was not simply a journey across the landscape; it was deeply involved in constructing a new religious landscape, temporary and relational.

The banners used by the pilgrims were of two types. The first was a religious banner, shown below, almost identical to those used during church processions. These banners are made of heavy cotton, brocaded silk, or dense water silk, mounted on substantial wooden poles. At their centre is a religious image printed onto the fabric and framed with embroidered ribbon. Around this central figure are phrases that relate to it in some way, and decorative elements, such as flowers. The end of the banner is weighted down by tassels. All of the elements are brightly coloured and the banners are quickly replaced when they fade. The whole banner is surprisingly hefty and stands out remarkably clearly against the natural landscape. This combination of colour and weight is pivotal to the effectiveness of the banner. Functionally it needs to be stable in a variety of weather conditions, and its bulk keeps it from waving around in high winds and rains. The eye-catching colours and beautiful design draw attention even in the height of summer when the bright weather floods the countryside with colour. As the pilgrims wind through towns they use their banners to visually imprint their presence. The second type of banner is less complex. These normally consist of a painted wooden board mounted on a wooden pole. The board bears the name of the village or town the pilgrims came from and sometimes the village's insignia. Sometimes pilgrims also bring a sign that gives details about the current pilgrimage, for example the destination and the dates. This ensures that the pilgrim group is instantly identifiable.

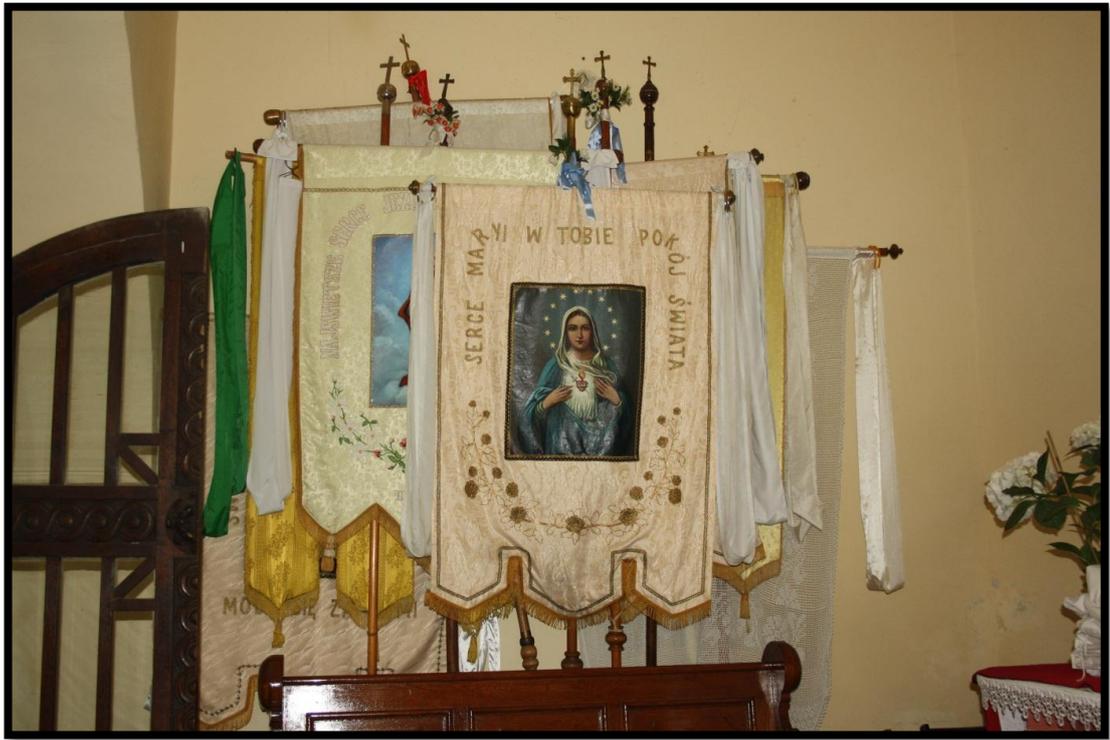


Image 6.9

The use of signs that denote belonging by groups on pilgrimage is good proof that social roles are not obliterated during pilgrimage (Eade & Sallnow 1991). Through these signs the pilgrims were still incorporated into their locality, and thus their social world, while on pilgrimage. While they might have found a 'community' with people they normally did not associate with, it remained a 'community' informed by previous social roles. Galbraith noted something similar on the pilgrimage to Częstochowa (2000). Here large groups are broken down for manageability and in the end young people walk in small single-sex groups from their home town. Even the large groups draw from a single area, thus for the length of the pilgrimage the young people are still in 'local' groups. On the final day when they arrive into Częstochowa and meet the other groups the activities are so hectic they do not get to share the intimacy of the journey with these unknown pilgrims, thus as a result the experience is almost entirely local (Galbraith 2000, 71). The shared experience of exertion while walking may make social division less essential but it did not obliterate it. I will discuss this in greater detail in the next section when we shall look at how the pilgrims split up when they arrived at their destination.

Yet the banners discussed above have many narratives, and they can also serve to emphasise the togetherness of the pilgrims. Returning to the discussion with the young pilgrims on their way to Jabłeczna, 'community' in this case is a vague concept that shares some but not all of the indicators Turner applied to *communitas*. The banners were brandished at the front of the march and served to identify all of the members of that

pilgrim group that followed as parts of an imagined whole (Anderson 1983). While in their everyday life someone may not have strongly identified themselves with their hometown, on the pilgrimage the imagined community of the town became the primary identifier. It was through this identity that pilgrims had a role at the heart of the festival. The religious banners pilgrims brought with them became part of the festival's procession the following day. These banners were the same ones used in their hometowns for processions on important days such as Corpus Christi, so their presence in the festival procession materially tied the pilgrimage to the pilgrims' local practice of religion. By looking at two of the objects that pilgrims chose to use we can better understand the impact of pilgrimage on its surroundings. Pilgrims on the roads around the holy sites of Kościół, Grabarka, and Jabłeczna did not dominate just the use-space, but the soundscape and physical landscape too. I want to close this section by looking at one final example of this claiming of space, this more permanent than the others: the forest of crosses at Grabarka.

The holy mountain of Grabarka is considered the most holy site in Poland by the Orthodox Church. It hosts a church, a convent, and a holy well. The fame of Grabarka originates in an event that occurred during the 1700s and is responsible for the current devotional practice of the pilgrims. According to tradition, during an outbreak of cholera God spoke to a local man and told him to erect a cross at the top of the mountain and pray there. The locals did this, and those who were ill recovered, and the rest were spared the disease. This is the reason pilgrims carry a number of small crucifixes and one large one with them on their way to Grabarka. Upon arrival at the mountaintop they dig into the ground at the edge of the forest of crosses and erect their largest crucifix. Around this they rest their small personal crosses. The large crosses are all of the Orthodox patriarchal or suppedaeum style. Some are painted and others are inscribed with the year and name of the parish and sometimes a sentiment the church intends to adhere to in the coming year—for example 'follow me and I will make you fishers of men'. Upon arrival pilgrims remove necklaces and bracelets they have worn on the journey and hook them onto the arms of the crosses. Much like the religious banners along the roads to Kościół, the crosses carried by pilgrims on their way to Grabarka are an instant identifier of their purpose and destination.

However, the crosses of Grabarka serve a further role in unifying the pilgrims. As I sat on the top of Grabarka Mountain I saw a group of pilgrims arrive at the gates. I was struck by the iconic symbolism of the tableau; two young men struggled with the cross, clearly exhausted from their long walk under the searing sun.



Image 6.10

I was reminded of the fifth station of the cross, where Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus to carry the cross, and I thought how often this image must have been evoked on the pilgrimage to Grabarka. At the foot of the mountain the young men had passed the cross to a middle aged woman who carried it for the first part of the climb, joined by another man

for the last section. The gross materiality of the cross, its weight and its awkward shape, make carrying it a difficult task—especially in the heat of August. The cross sets the pace for the pilgrims and it is certainly a laborious and halting pace. The shared task of transporting the cross, however, also builds the cohesiveness of the group. When carrying the large cross pilgrims hand their smaller personal crosses to others and in this process no one can be sure that the cross they end up with is the one with which they began. Even the coach pilgrims bring along crosses, large and small, and at each stop along their route they take out the largest cross and carry it to the Church or Shrine. The coach pilgrims’



Image 6.11

smaller crosses are carried in the luggage hold of the bus and after a time it is unclear which cross belonged to whom originally. This sharing of the physical labour of devotion and mingling of personal religious items may not be the basis for a *communitas* among the pilgrims; like the Catholic pilgrims I spoke to, those I met at Grabarka also told me they walked with smaller groups of friends or family within the large pilgrim group, and shared little personal information with people they did not know already. Yet the crosses and the labour involved in transporting the crosses did demonstrate some kind of imperfect community. Manning and Meneley (2008) have discussed how objects associated with religious rituals become bundles of meaning, and this is perhaps the best explanation for the weighty materiality of the crosses of Grabarka. Their physical weight is complemented by their heavy symbolism. Carrying the crosses to the mountain transforms the practice of pilgrimage and brings the pilgrims

smaller crosses are carried in the luggage hold of the bus and after a time it is unclear which cross belonged to whom originally. This sharing of the physical labour of devotion and mingling of personal religious items may not be the basis for a *communitas* among the pilgrims; like the Catholic pilgrims I spoke to, those I met at Grabarka also told me they walked with smaller groups of friends or family within the large pilgrim group, and shared little personal information with people they did not know already. Yet the crosses and the labour involved in transporting the

closer together, even if it fails to create *communitas*. The pilgrims then leave these resonant objects at the pilgrimage site as part of a ceremony of absolution.

The movements and practices of pilgrims in this part of Poland have another rhythm that is most important for the residents of Kościół. The pilgrimages begin in May and continue to the end of August; they reoccur every year. The striking noise and colour of this mass movement of people is part of the yearly cycle for the people living in Kościół. For the pilgrims that move across the landscape the rhythms of the progress are an interruption to the flow of everyday life, while for those that live in the pilgrim centre they are partially constitutive of it.

6.2 Being There

While the movement of the pilgrims to and from the basilica is part of Kościół's annual rhythm, their movement within the town is an equally important constituent of Kościół's sense of place. In this section I want to focus on the pilgrims' experience of Kościół and the impact this has on the residents and the space of the town. Pilgrims make their way to sacred sites for a number of reasons (Badone & Roseman 2004, 1–24), but in the case of my fieldwork all three pilgrimages on which I focused—Kościół, Grabarka, and Jabłeczna—were organised around a specific festival. During the festival period pilgrims mixed with local people and with people who drove up specifically for the main day. Each of these groups experiences the flow of everyday life differently. In the previous section an exploration of pilgrimage revealed its multiple rhythms. Here I want to explore how these multiple rhythms influence and are influenced by life in the town.

The Green Madonna

The pilgrimage to Kościół coincided with the Festival of the Green Madonna, an end of summer harvest festival. The pilgrims started to arrive mid-morning on Friday, and in the early evening there was a welcome mass. The following day the main events of the festival took place—a large procession and a mass for the Blessed Virgin—and on the third and final day of the weekend there was a Sunday mass before the pilgrims left in groups from about midday. The space of the town was radically altered by the festival and the presence of pilgrims over the course of the weekend. The town square was closed on Friday until after two o'clock, and again on Sunday following mass until about six in the evening. The pilgrimage marked the re-opening of the newly refurbished pilgrimage house. Along with the rooms and dormitories this building also contained a café, to which the local people flocked. The local seasonal pizzeria was badly affected by this and took to closing during the day, much to the chagrin of my younger respondents. All of the guesthouses were full and many people who, like my neighbour, had a spare room, took the opportunity to make a little extra money and host a guest. The volume of traffic through public space increased dramatically and had an impact on the behaviour of local people that extended beyond the pilgrimage. There were even more people on the street and in shops, and doors of guesthouses left wide open for pilgrims remained so for weeks after they departed and the houses had reverted to private homes. Perhaps this enthusiasm is related to the surge in income the festival generates: as well as the accommodation, pilgrims used local fishing guides, and hired canoes, horses, and quad bikes from local families and businesses. The Church used the whole of its grounds during the festival. The main service took place atop the flat-roofed building at the entrance to the church grounds, and special outdoor

confessional boxes were spread across the grass next to the Church of the Holy Spirit. This, combined with the tents erected on the playing fields, limited the amount of space available for walking, playing football, or for teenagers to hang around. This firmly reinforced the idea that, despite the use to which locals put the land, the church grounds were a religious space. It took a full week after the festival for the Church land to be reincorporated back into the daily paths of the locals. Partly this was for practical reasons, as the ground was badly worn by overuse during the festival. Yet even after the muck had dried people stayed away, while the intense religious activity of the weekend seemed to linger on in the landscape.



Image 6.12

The pilgrims I spoke with all acknowledged that they experienced a difference between getting to and being at the festival, but saw both periods as a break from their daily life. What struck me was how unlike a religious event the festival could feel at times. Not everyone could stay in the pilgrimage house or other local homes, so the church grounds were filled with tents. By the second day the weather was beautiful. People were walking around, hiking in the forest, cycling, playing football, or fishing. Alongside the explicitly religious events there were also concerts and lectures about Kościół and its history. The pilgrims were dressed for an adventure holiday. I noted this again later, in the Church on the final day of the festival. While locals were all dressed well, as usual, for Sunday mass, the pilgrims were clad in t-shirts and shorts. I had visited many of the towns

the pilgrims were from and attended their Churches. Normally people dressed formally for mass; being on pilgrimage allowed a relaxing of the normal dress code.



Image 6.13: The stalls that appeared during the festival

Many of the pilgrims spent time in the two pamiętki shops on the church grounds. While a few did buy images of the Kościół Mother of God, or books on the area or the liturgy of the Madonna, most bought honey made in the monastery. Taken individually it was hard to see what about this behaviour was all that different from the behaviours of tourists. A few weeks previously during the ecumenical festival in the town I spent a lot of time with two tourists staying with my landlady. Like the pilgrims they went walking in the forests around the village, bought honey at the pamiętki shop and visited the various churches in the town. They also attended the final service of the ecumenical festival. While the two tourists visited the same places as the pilgrims, took part in similar activities and even attended a religious event they did so with a different attitude. When they visited the church of the Holy Spirit they purchased the 'secular guide' from the monastery and as we walked around pointed out curiosities such as the smiling Christ on the Cross. Importantly the two tourists were also a self-contained group. As I mentioned in the previous section, pilgrims travelled in small groups of family or friends within the large pilgrimages. When they arrived, pilgrims spread out around the town and its immediate countryside and although the town was clearly buzzing it was hard to grasp scale of the influx. They appeared like small groups of tourists. It was only when the pilgrims came together for

religious services that the real number of pilgrims could be grasped: there were thousands. The five hundred hectares of Church grounds were absolutely packed with people and tents, and speakers emerged from trees far from the platform in order to broadcast the service to the back of the crowd. The visual and aural impact was extraordinary. While there may have been moments when in appearance and behaviour tourists and pilgrims were hard to distinguish from each other, my respondents always noted that pilgrims were part of a large group and their actions as part of that group made them different to tourists. Put another way, the strength of their group role was so marked that it overshadowed more ambiguous individual identities.



Image 6.14

Once they arrived in the village the larger groups of pilgrims broke up. People who had travelled with family or friends associated with them throughout the weekend. The groups did not come back together until the final day. Even then many pilgrims did not walk back to their towns, opting to catch a bus or be collected instead. It was exceptionally rare to find a lone pilgrim over the weekend; the whole thing seemed to be a family event. This was markedly different to the organisation of the coach pilgrims that arrived throughout the pilgrimage season to attend night vigils and private services in the Church. These events normally drew a mix of single people, groups of friends, and the occasional family. Over the weekend I spoke with Fr. Paweł, the old priest who had recently returned from the missions. We discussed how pilgrims had behaved in the past. Fr. Paweł had left Poland for Cameroon in the late seventies. He explained that the Church in Kościół had not

suffered too badly during Socialism. It had lost some land but its actions were not really curtailed. In fact, he told me, the monastery had more Oblates then it does today. He recalled that the festival had continued and although fewer pilgrims attended, and those that did were primarily local, it was still a big event. Pilgrims had arrived with giant floral arches carried by young communion-aged girls. I asked if people had also tended to come as families and he nodded. 'Yes. People always come as families to this festival, because it celebrates the blessed mother of God. People think it brings good fortune to the family, because you come here as a pilgrims to ask Mary to intercede for you as a mother.'

This emphasis on Mary as mother and the power of this motherhood was a common thread in my conversations with pilgrims. One young mother told me that she remembered that her grandmother bringing her to Kościół when she was very young, and one year she even got to hold one end of the giant floral arch as they entered the town. Once she got older she decided not to walk to Kościół and indeed stopped attending the festival altogether. She had not lost faith and she has always attended mass and practiced as a Catholic. Then in the last few years she had lost her grandmother, got married and became a mother herself, all in a short space of time. 'I now think of how strong my love is for my son and I think of how much my grandmother loved me. I think the strength of a mother's love is very important—and who had the strongest love of all? Mary. She gave up her son to die for us all and she became the mother of us all'. Motherhood reaffirmed this woman's connection to the Blessed Mother Mary and she decided to start attending the festival of the Green Madonna in Kościół again. Last year she came by car with her husband and new baby but she felt it was 'not the same' so this year she joined a walking pilgrimage from her town, pushing her son in a buggy the whole way. I asked her why she brought her son with her and she thought for a moment. 'I think, because I am a mother'.

Many of the families who attended were multigenerational: grandparents, parents, and children. One grandmother I spoke with had brought her grandchild with her on a coach to join the girl's grandfather who had walked. I asked why she brought her grandchild, a girl of about five or six, along and she told me that her son worked and could not come to Kościół for the weekend and that she thought it was important for her granddaughter to come. When I asked the girl whether had she enjoyed the festival so far she nodded enthusiastically; she had been able play with lots of other children and go fishing with her grandfather and she had received a picture of the Holy Mother of Kościół. She also loved the beautiful horses and banners in the great procession and all the flowers all over the stage. Her grandmother interrupted this flow of secular delights, asking, 'What about the Holy Mother of Kościół?' The girl's eyes lit up and she told me a truncated

version of the legend of the icon, strongly emphasising (like my local respondents had) that the icon wanted to be in Kościół. She finished off by telling me that the icon was the Queen of Podlaskie and that she had seen her crown in the Church museum.

This fascination with the localness of the story of the icon was common. Throughout the festival Fr. Jan gave tours of the Church grounds. I joined one, and found that the story he was telling had a number of interesting little differences of emphasis from the one he had told me back in November. The moment when Mikołaj Wielmoża was attracted to the icon and knew he ‘must’ bring it to Poland was given more time in this account, as was the crowning of the image in 1756. Most interestingly, the story of Mikołaj’s excommunication and eventual reunion with the Church was explained in greater detail than I had ever previously heard. Fr. Jan started this story by noting that after the theft of the icon from his apartment the Pope was ‘forced’ to excommunicate Mikołaj even though he knew him to be very devout and a powerful defender of the Catholic Church. At this point he diverted to give a brief history of the Wielmoża family, skilfully passing over the Calvinism of Mikołaj’s own father and focusing on the conversion from Orthodoxy to Catholicism without noting for how many generations the family had been members of the Eastern Orthodox faith. Finally he got to the moment when Mikołaj escaped his excommunication. A collection of Poland’s nobles had gathered to decide on the King’s marriage to a German princess of the Calvinist faith. Fr. Jan explained that just one veto would void the proposal, and despite intense pressure and his own imminent excommunication Mikołaj made this ‘brave gesture’. On hearing about this, Fr. Jan reassured the group, the Pope happily revoked Mikołaj’s excommunication. This defence of the realm is a compelling narrative emphasising the local connection to the history of the Polish state and to the history of the Catholic Church. Perhaps this is why, despite evidence that this story is untrue, it continues to be told. Many of the pilgrims explained the importance of the image to me through this tale, and the connection was not just discursive. The main procession was a fascinating example of what Hann refers to as religio-political (Hann, 2006) interconnectedness. Hann borrowed this term from Bellah and Hammond, who used it to discuss the impossibility of drawing a clear line between religion and politics in America. The line is unclear because both religious and political authority rests on the invocation of a higher power—the people in the first case and God in the other (Bellah & Hammond 1980). Hann sees the problem as particularly forceful in the post socialist case, where ‘religious revival was intimately connected to the politics of ethnicity and nationalism’ (2006, 7). Here we return to the point, made throughout this thesis, that Polish identity and Polish Catholicism have become almost inextricably intertwined.

The procession moves the holy Image of the blessed mother from her sanctuary in the church to an outdoor platform for the main service of the day. It is led by soldiers on horseback in formal uniform.



Image 6.15

They carry a number of flags from the local area as well as large Polish flags. Once the horses have passed by and lined up in front of the platform that doubles as an altar, the golden cross and Bible, carried by a group of altar boys, comes into view. Following the cross are the banners, each representing a town or village that had made the pilgrimage to the festival, as well as Kościół itself. A mixture of local lay ministers, local councillors, and politicians carried the banners. Surrounded by the Oblates and covered in a rainproof translucent sheet the image is carried after the banners.



Image 6.16

The Straz's (local fire brigade) brass band played out the official part of the procession and was closely followed by crowds of devotees. As the pilgrims filed into the field and the banners, priests, altar boys, and the holy image climbed the stairs of the platform the soldiers on horseback performed a short drill. Once they had finished two border guards from the town's barracks fired a small cannon and the service began. I had already attended a number of smaller festivals, including one in Kościół, at this point, but had not previously seen such a close intertwining of state and church.



Image 6.17

During televised memorials I was always struck by the large numbers of priests and bishops standing with the politicians, and here was the live action version. The discursive and practical interlinking of church and state at this event was the clearest attempt I had seen so far to claim the town as Polish *and* Catholic. The image and festival were being represented as at once local and national, while the more complicated aspects of their character were erased to ensure it was a strong link. The Orthodoxy and Protestantism of the Wielmożas was excluded, and the fact that this location also had a strong history as a sacred site for the Greek Catholics and Eastern Orthodox faiths was not recognised.

One of the local Eastern Orthodox sacred places was the Holy Mountain of Grabarka, two hours north of Kościół. Due to the small size of the Orthodox population and the transnational activities of the Polish Eastern Orthodox Church this 'most sacred

site' draws pilgrims from across Poland and Belarus; there were a small number from the Ukraine too. One of the clearest differences between Kościół and Grabarka is the type of space occupied. Kościół's sacred space very clearly overlaps the mundane space of the town; they are so close together that the sacredness of the space is constantly shifting, growing, and shrinking depending on the use it is put to and the time of year. The mountain of Grabarka is located at a distance from any town. A high sandy stone wall encircles the top half of the mountain and all the buildings are perched atop this small space. The buildings consist of the monastery, two churches, an administrative building, a small shop and interpretive centre, a shower and toilet buildings, and an outside pagoda. The rest of the mountaintop is covered with a large forest which smoothly transforms into the forest of crosses, a small graveyard, and then a cleared ground on which the pilgrims sit. Outside the wall are the holy spring and well that pilgrims crowd around during the weekend.



Image 6.18

Throughout the festival the mountaintop is crowded with bodies. As well as the buildings small makeshift stalls, selling candles and providing paper to write names to be read out, various services spill out onto the paths. Each building seems to have a specific set of devotional practices attached to it and pilgrims crowd around them attempting the movements with religious zeal. Tents are set up outside the wall, spilling all the way down to the bottom of the mountain. Buses and cars are parked among them and used as accommodation. Stalls selling religious objects, food, and pamiętki fill the space outside the wall's main gates. Makeshift kitchens are set up just outside the three smaller gates

and banks of portaloos are located further down the mountain. The facilities are basic and the food is appropriate to the fasting that should be undertaken during the festival. Although the atmosphere is cheerful, with old friends to meet and people happy to sit down and discuss pilgrimage with me, and the weather stunning, I spend the weekend uncomfortably aware of the oppressive sacredness of the landscape. The site is so compressed and isolated it is almost impossible not to be involved with the religious services no matter where you are. The sound of the chanting echoes around the tents and the smell of incense is constantly in the air.

Because it is such an isolated spot the nighttime is strange on Grabarka. The services continue until three in the morning and start again at six. The lights and loudspeakers are powered by a number of large generators spaced around the mountaintop, but only the essential areas are lit. Moving from the Shrine of the Holy Icon to the graveyard involves passing from the low yellow light of the church and groping your way through the dark toward the next pool of golden light until you find the right place. Because of the poor facilities there are fewer families at this pilgrimage than at those discussed above. People mostly come with friends as part of large pilgrim groups. Many of the services on offer overlap and, like most Orthodox religious services, continue for many hours. People tend to split up after the first of the evening services start, around six o'clock, and meet up again after the dawn service. The temperature drops at night and this makes staying in one place for too long difficult. Some people go to bed early while others move from place to place, occasionally meeting friends briefly and moving on again. Outside, the walled mountain is even more solitary. The noise of the services rings in the distance and most people are asleep or sitting silently eating and relaxing tired limbs. Despite this, none of the pilgrims I spoke with expressed the sense of loneliness I experienced. Mischa told me that she liked to be alone during the festival as it gave her time to think about the meaning of the weekend and to remember her dead husband.

We were sitting on a large tree stump outside of the wall eating a thick vegetable soup and occasionally talking about the day. I was alternating between eating and clasping a hot coffee cup in my hands in a desperate attempt to bring warmth back into my frozen fingers. Mischa finished talking and lapsed into what seemed like a significant silence. Around the weak light of the outdoor kitchen other pilgrims were sitting on a variety of makeshift rest spots quietly and eagerly eating their soup. Suddenly there was an electrical buzzing, the light died and the omnipresent speakers hushed. I saw the people around me look up and followed their gaze. Above me was a celestial dome of stars, clearer than I had ever seen them. My head was fuzzy with tiredness and my joints ached

from a day of standing, kneeling, and crawling through various devotions. I felt like crying. 'If ever there was a moment to believe in a higher power this is it', I thought. The silence continued as we sat in the velvety darkness, staring at the stars for who knows how long. Just as quickly as it went off, the power returned with a hum and the sounds of the festival recalled us all to the here and now. 'The glory of God', Mischa told me, with a ring of certainty to her tone. Even when she was alone here Mischa still had her belief, and it shielded her from loneliness. I got to know Mischa better after the pilgrimage and was surprised to find that in the town she could not bear to be on her own. She lived with her sister and the television provided a constant background noise in their home. She was often away visiting her grown up children or attending a truly massive number of groups at the local House of Culture. I looked back to this moment and realised that the flow of life was so different on the sacred mountaintop that she had managed to connect to her faith. I asked Mischa about this much later and she told me that she had just felt closer to her husband in Grabarka and she was happy to think about him. She told me that she felt a part of her religion in Grabarka, and that she does not normally feel this, or 'I don't notice if I feel it, do you understand?'

This sense of being part of something is reminiscent of the temporary and unstable 'togetherness' people experienced on the pilgrimage itself. On pilgrimage the sense of a common goal, the sharing of labour, and experience of physical exertion, as well as the way that being out-of-place forces you to share your life, all encourage the feeling of togetherness—even as social roles and personal attitudes keep you apart. For the pilgrims in Kościół this sense of togetherness became more delicate once they arrived at their destination. There were moments when it returned strongly, during the religious ceremonies, for example, but during their free periods pilgrims had such a choice of activities that it began to fade. The limited physical space and free time that pilgrims to Grabarka had kept this sense of togetherness at the forefront of their thoughts. This explains why when I spoke to pilgrims they all emphasised that this festival was most importantly a gathering for the Polish Eastern Orthodox Church. There are two miracles that earned this site its sacred reputation. The first is as mentioned above: the erecting of the cross and the subsequent averting of an epidemic. The other miracle relates to an Icon of Jesus Christ. The icon was found on the mountain and twice helped to save the local population from invasion. I asked many people about these stories and heard a number of different versions of the tales. Frequently people knew one but not the other, and often when I spoke to groups it became a joint effort to construct the stories, with each person adding the part they were certain about. The origin of the site did not seem important to people; what everyone did tell me, however, was that this site was the most sacred

Orthodox site in Poland. It seems that once it earned this title the origin of the honour became less important. Instead maintaining the sacredness of the site became vital. Of all of the pilgrimages I went on this was the one that had the largest number of devotional acts associated with it. I will explore the devotions at the main shrine next; I have already written about the carrying of the crosses in the previous section. Pilgrims also take part in a blessing of the convent's gravesite after midnight on the first day, and there are multiple ceremonies in the forest of crosses where pilgrims pray as priests read aloud the names of those who need help. There is a ritual bathing at the sacred well, and a procession around the smallest church that the pilgrims make on their hands and knees, kissing each of the icons as they pass them. It seemed that putting their bodies through this plethora of acts was an essential part of the festival for the pilgrims.

In one of the most important acts of devotion, pilgrims crawl, on their knees or on all fours, three times around the Shrine of the Holy Icon. At each side of the church they stop to prostrate themselves and say a prayer. This act of devotion was complicated by the fact that there were also crowds of people attempting to get into the Church to see the icon. To make the full three rounds required a lot of time. Pilgrims had to cover their knees, shoulders, and heads so for the rest of the day a pilgrim who had performed the act of devotion could identify the other people who had done the same by the dirty marks on their dresses and trousers.



Image 6.19

The second great devotion was not really sanctioned by the church officials and no one could tell me when the practice had started. Outside the walls there was a sacred stream and a small sacred well. Before I left my landlady had given me a number of handkerchiefs 'for the stream'. I remained confused until Mischa and Danuta took me to the stream. It was a very small and shallow body of water that emerged from under a wide bridge and quickly disappeared into a deep forest, so that there was very little room around its banks.

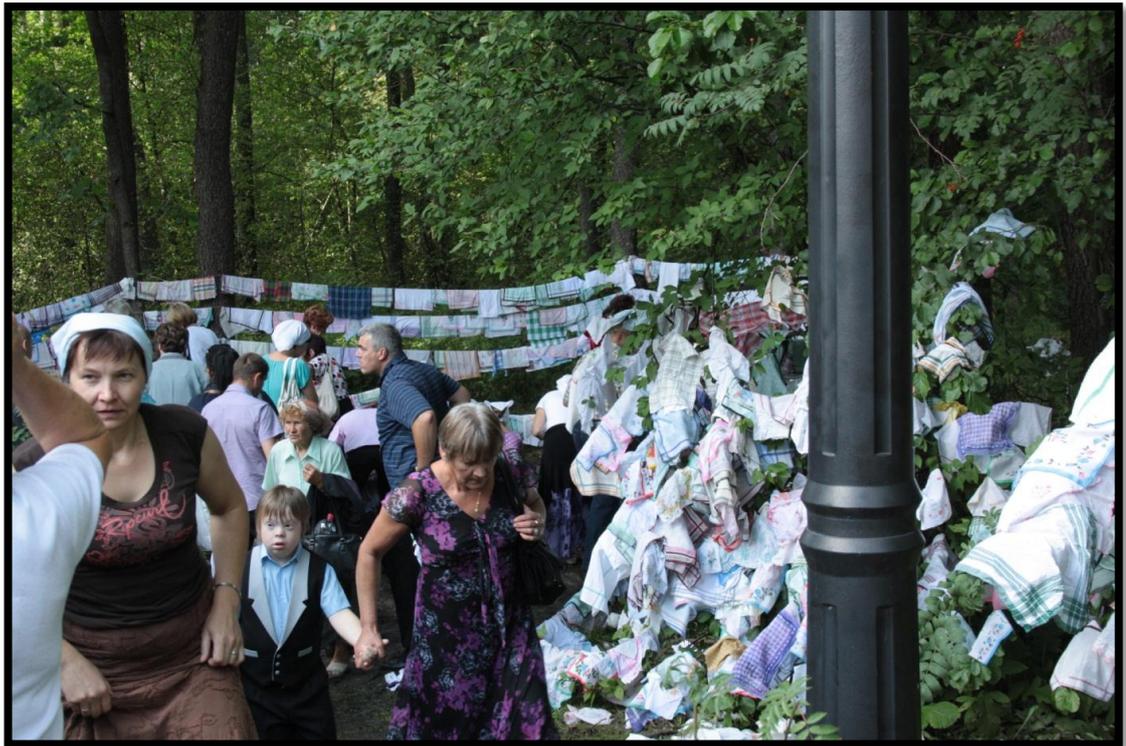


Image 6.20

Pilgrims crowded on each side, scrambling to dip numerous handkerchiefs into the water. Others stood on the bridge and passed their handkerchiefs down to those nearer the water. Danuta explained I needed to soak the material and wring it out, then leave it to dry on one of the ropes strung up in the trees. Mischa, who had already waded into the water, interrupted her, 'the water is healing, you should hold the handkerchief to your damaged shoulder before you wring it out'. Danuta joined Mischa and some other pilgrims in the water to soak her arthritic fingers and feet; beside me a woman poured water over a screaming child while I tried discreetly to put the freezing cold rag onto my throbbing shoulder.



Image 6.21

After we had hung up our handkerchiefs and worked our way out of the crowd we sat on the ground with some others, drying out in the sun. It was the first time I realised how much I was already feeling the bodily exertions. I asked the people to my side if they

did too; 'Oh yes' responded one man 'I can't come here every year, I am too old!' By the end of the weekend the combination of the practical devotions and my unsuccessful attempts to find a comfortable way to sleep on the bus had left me aching all over. A week after I got back to Kościół I met Piotr, a young man who acted as a lay minister in the Orthodox Church. Piotr had been at Grabarka and he had also made the five day pilgrimage there on foot, helping to carry a cross to the forest. 'I don't understand how all the Babcias do it', he joked, 'I could barely walk when I got home, I think I have permanently damaged my knees. Then today I met Danuta and she looks as healthy as ever!' We laughed about this and I asked him if he knew why so many acts of devotion were required by Grabarka. Piotr told me it was because the mountain was so sacred, and the pilgrims needed to recognise that. The bodily engagement was double-sided. It acknowledged the character of the site while helping to maintain it. Moving through the mountaintop in a highly ritualised manner sacralised a large portion of the landscape. It also reaffirmed the collective identity of the pilgrims as a group with a shared understanding of the power of the space. The implication here is that the pilgrims' movements of embodied faith actively create the sacred nature of the landscape of Grabarka. As I discussed at the start of this section, in Kościół the power of the pilgrims to bring forth the sacredness of the land was related to the sheer volume of them that came to the town and to a lesser degree to the acts that embody the pilgrims' relationship to their faith, which helped to acknowledge and also create the sacred nature of the site. In both places this sacralisation of the land was presented not as the work of the pilgrims but as an inherent quality of the place that drew the pilgrims. The implication was that the sacredness of the land may not be apparent in everyday life, but once people moved through the landscape the right way it was manifested. In other words the work of the pilgrims in creating sacred space was naturalised. In both Grabarka and Kościół this naturalising of the sacred character of the land had political implications. In Kościół the manifestation of the power of the Blessed Mother of God was directly linked with the state and nation. It was proof that Kościół was a Catholic space, and this meant it was a Polish space. On Grabarka the manifestation of the icon's power should have had a similarly grounding effect. However, two things acted to represent the Orthodox gathered at Grabarka as somewhat alien to Poland. The first was the attendance of the Russian Eastern Orthodox Patriarch Kyrill and the second was the number of cameras from all of the main television stations in Poland. Although most people were happy with the presence of the Patriarch, treating him like any other celebrity, there were a few voices of dissent.

There was a large armed security presence too, because of the Patriarch's presence, and the news stations were rolling cameras near them constantly. One woman

who initially quite rudely refused to talk with me later apologised, saying she felt harassed by reporters. Other complaints were less practical and instead focused on the political implications of the Patriarch's visit. One man quietly told me that he did not trust the Russian Church at all: 'It's filled with spies' he hissed. He felt inviting the Patriarch to the festival implicitly acquiesced to this type of behaviour.

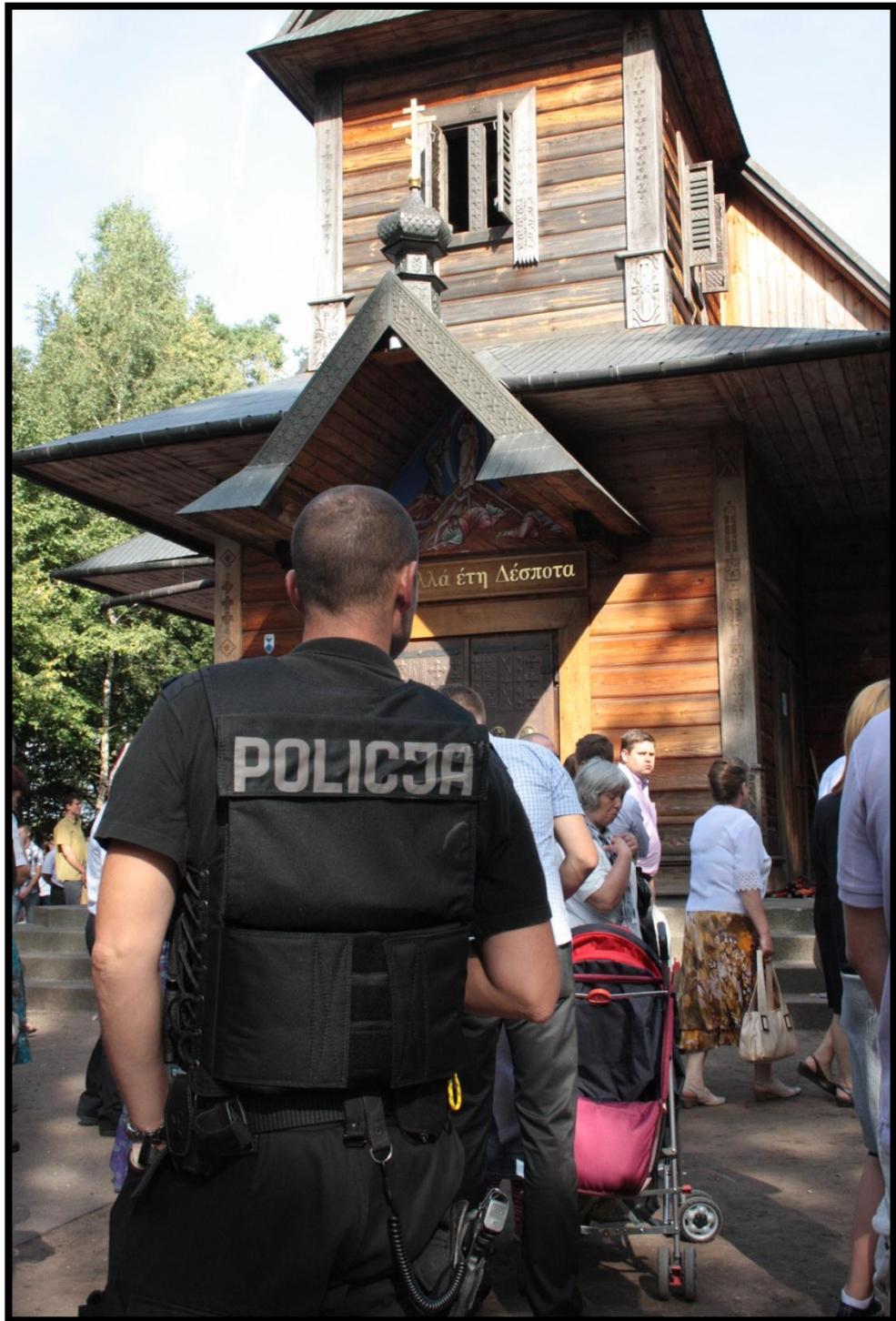


Image 6.22

However, the majority of the people who disagreed with the visit did so on the grounds that inviting the Patriarch made the festival a political event and also fed the belief that the Orthodox Church in Poland was a stooge of the Church in Russia. They felt this was part of the reason that Eastern Orthodox Christians were often treated as an alien population despite the undisputed fact of their continued existence in Poland since the ninth Century.

Alongside politics, consumerism and materialism crept in at edges of the festivals I attended. Before the first pilgrims had even arrived at Kościół, Grabarka, or Jabłeczna, another group of devoted people, the travelling traders, arrived.



Image 6.23

Outside the religious grounds they set up their stalls, which usually sold some religious objects in among the more mundane objects. They were in direct competition with the sanctioned stalls that the priests, monks, and nuns set up in the sanctuaries' grounds, but no one seemed too concerned. One mother in Grabarka told me that without the unsanctified stalls she would have gone mad, as her son would only behave once he had something to play with.

The importance of commerce in defining the festivals was very apparent during the festival at Jabłeczna. The monastery of Jabłeczna, dedicated to Św Onufrego, was close to the town and a very important site for Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Jabłeczna was the site of an acheiropoieta, an icon not made by human hands. One thousand years previously

an image of the saint rose out of the swampy ground and the monastery was built on the spot. Again the land is more consistently sacralised than Kościół, but the manner in which the icon appeared has also led to its having more political associations than Grabarka. In recent years the idea of the image rising from the soil has become a common metaphor for discussing the right the Orthodox community has to reside and worship as natives in this area. The logic is that, if the earth itself produced an Orthodox icon, then surely the Orthodox are intimately connected to the area. This is a kind of primordialist understanding of nationality, relying as it does on the notion of a set of a priori ethnic Polish groups living in this area (Nairn 1997). Św Onufrego's feast day falls directly after the feast of Św Jan, and both days are celebrated in the monastery. Since the late 1990s the monastery has organised this day and advertised it as a vital feast day for the local Orthodox community. It has become a massive Orthodox holiday and recently people from all over East Poland and further afield arrive to celebrate on the 24th of June, the feast of Saint John (Św Jan). Piotr drove Maciej (Marta's older brother), my landlady, and me to the monastery; both young men were in University but still acted as altar boys in the Orthodox Church whenever they were back in Kościół.

We pulled up a fifteen minutes' walk away from the monastery complex. Cars were parked bumper to bumper leading up to the monastery on either side of the road. When we were within five minutes of the monastery we came accross stalls selling everything from plastic toy guns, fishing hooks, icons, wickerwork, and books. The day was glorious; it was six in the evening but still around thirty degrees, and hundreds of people were swarming around the stalls. Once we got inside the monastery gates the crowds got larger. We could not get near the church; people had been there since twelve and the church was full—even the courtyard around the church was a crush of bodies. This was the main service and it was two hours long. The Church was in a small enclosed yard, and we stood outside in the gardens. It was hard to follow the service from where we stood. On two occasions a pair of priests passed, collecting donations with boxes built to resemble upturned bishop's hats. To the side of the courtyard's gates was another stall, this one staffed by members of an Orthodox youth group. It was selling the monks' produce, including honey, bread, apple juice, and eggs.

The next day was slightly different. Despite being the more central day of the festival it was a Monday so there was fewer people present. Maciej and Piotr switched driving duties and we arrived just as the service started, at ten. This time I found myself standing in the courtyard just outside the church watching the service through an open door. A temporary shop had been built, leaning up against the outside of the church,

selling candles, blessed beads, and small wallet-sized reproductions of the icon; my landlady joined a long queue to buy candles. When we left the celebrations that day she also bought honey from the 'Pamiętki' stand. I asked why she had bought the honey, and she noted that she already had some icons, and that honey from a monastery must be very good for your health. Before we got out of the gate there was a final stall with information about the upcoming commemoration of Ackja Wisła, staffed by some of the younger monks. As we walked out of the monastery, past the stalls, Piotr told me that getting a toy gun or car was always a reward for good behaviour at a festival.



Image 6.24

While they move from place to place on their way to pilgrimage centres, pilgrims are able to experience alternative rhythms. They may, as noted in the previous section, be part of the larger rhythms of the region, but such rhythms have a different temporality to the pilgrimage, and, as such, pilgrims rarely become aware of them. However, once the pilgrims arrive at their destination they become part of a shared space and, like all the other constituents of that space, they have the possibility to shape and produce it. However, their own actions, practices, and movements within the space become entangled in the politics, history, memory, economics, and creation of the place. The delicate and negotiated sense of being apart disintegrates and they become factors in the emerging sense of place of the shrine. Perhaps this is why all the pilgrims I spoke to identified an inexpressible difference between being there and getting there.

6.3 Planned Events

The adjustments of rhythm that pilgrims experienced were often intensely powerful and appeared to far exceed the connection to religion that they experienced in their daily lives. It makes sense that both the Catholic and Orthodox Churches would want to replicate these feelings. To this end there were a number of events planned by the Church in Kościół described as 'retreats' or festivals. These events were organised around a specific festival or conference. Normally run over a weekend, accommodation and meals were provided and the timetable was completely full. The primary focus was on the content of the weekend, with only a passing mention of the 'sacredness' of the landscape. In other words the land was a backdrop to the serious business of religion. In doing this the Church failed to account for the fact that the experience of the pilgrim was relational and that it relied on the place and the residents of the place as much as it did relationships with other pilgrims. The pilgrims' sense of separation was, as I discussed at the close of the last chapter, delicate and often did not last for the entirety of the pilgrimage. The pilgrims' connection to and production of the sacred landscape, through practice and movement, was vital and left an imprint of their pilgrimage in the sense of place even after they had left.

The first of these planned events I attended was the Kościół Ecumenical Festival. It was the first time during my fieldwork that I found my subject unpleasant, and it filled me with dread about the other planned events I planned to attend. Over three days, according to the events literature, the festival aimed to bring together Christians from all denominations to discuss, pray, and meditate in a friendly and sacred atmosphere. The second day of the Festival was the busiest, with a full day of events, talks, services, and panel discussions planned. Interestingly, right at the start of the festival we were told that the Orthodox Priest could not make it and this severely limited the input from the Eastern Orthodox Christians. Mainly the Festival focused on Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians. There was one Orthodox mass and one Byzantine rite Greek Catholic mass, but the rest of the services and talks were focused on Catholicism and Protestantism. There was very little interaction with the local community. It was not until the final talk of the weekend (a secular discussion of the architecture of the local churches) that I met people I knew from the town.

The Ecumenical Festival

The first speaker of the day reminded me starkly of one of the aspects of religion I had always found uncomfortable. He was aggressive, patronising, and insistent, his oration making the festival attendees feel like small children being shouted at for failing to live up

to expectations. He projected a sense that he was embattled, as though his Christianity was built not around love or fraternity (two of the event's themes) but rather was built against 'the secular'. I had two hours for lunch to digest what I had heard, and to shake off my residual discomfort and head back into the talks with a clear head. I found myself reflecting on a question Harding posed at the end of her study of the Scopes Trial and the representation of Christian Fundamentalism: 'Why are the margins in studies of culture not occupied equally by politically sympathetic and repugnant cultural 'others'?' (1991, 392). This was my first encounter with the form of Christianity I found uncomfortable and I was recoiling from it. In his study of the evangelical margins of the anthropology of Christianity Coleman spends time looking at some of the challenges facing ethnographers. Coleman suggests that in these instances one of the core problems anthropologists struggle with is how to ethnographically understand evangelicals without crossing the delicate line between practice and belief. Coleman notes that this is not unique to the study of evangelic groups, yet anthropologists in general worry less about this line when the field and home are less interwoven (Coleman 2008). In other words, the problem is not just that we find fundamentalists unsympathetic, we are also faced with the question: 'What do we risk when we attempt to gain proximity to a religious 'Other' who already had a well-defined identity within arenas of public discourse that surround us in our everyday lives?' (Coleman 2008, 43). In this situation a large part of my discomfort came from my position as a lapsed Catholic, from a country with a strong connection between Church and State. I found the language unnerving because it reminded me of my own experience of Catholicism, particularly in school. I was, for the first time, really understanding the double bind of participant observation.

On the first evening of the festival I had not had an opportunity to introduce myself to anyone and was worried about taking fieldnotes without people's permission. I managed to talk to Fr. Jan at lunchtime and before the next section he let the attendees know who I was and that I would be taking notes throughout. I was surprised that nobody complained. The group became much less inclusive once I was named as a researcher. But the second talk was less accusatory. The speaker was from the Catholic University in Lublin and was enthusiastic without being exclusive or too patronising. Afterwards the older woman who was beside me asked me about my project and told me she had come purely to hear the second speaker. A young man from a Catholic Youth missionary group gave the third talk. He wore a red t-shirt emblazoned with 'Jesus Loves You'³ on the front and 'He has a plan for you'⁴ on the back, and white Polish eagles on each of the arms. His oration was clearly in an unfamiliar style for most of the audience. Members of the mission

³ Jezus Cię Kochama

⁴ On ma plan dla twojego życia

were distributed throughout the audience and were in the habit of spontaneously 'hallilua'ing or 'amen'ing, yet others in the festival group appeared very unsettled by this. One man even went so far as to hush a woman who 'amen'ed a lot. The general theme of the three talks had been how to find common terms, and all three speakers, including the Catholic academic, turned to the Bible, as the written word of God, and not to ritual or practice or non-doctrinal belief. Bible-belief like this is normally an aspect of the Protestant faith (Kirsch 2008: Robbins 2003) and in this region of Poland few of my respondents owned a Bible, relying on the mass readings to learn the message it contained. It is also worth noting that while they superficially discussed common ground all three talks began with a negative definition of who they were, for example that they were Protestant mainly because they were not Catholic.

After the talks there was a trip to the Orthodox Church, the only opportunity to interact with Eastern Orthodox Christians in the timetable. About twenty-five people from the Ecumenical Festival and a few members of the local Orthodox community, many of whom I knew, were at the church. Three of the members of the Ecumenical Festival group wandered around during the service taking photos of the church and this seemed to puzzle and annoy many of the congregation present. At the time I found it hard to imagine that they would have behaved the same way in the basilica during the mass. This suspicion was proved correct by the end of the festival; none of them were as boisterous with the cameras at any of the other masses, except for the final Greek Catholic Byzantine rite service. At one point in the service one cameraman took a candid photo of a young woman (who was not Orthodox) from the Ecumenical Festival group praying. She was standing supplicant and when I asked him later why he had taken the photo he told me it was because she looked like a 'typical Orthodox woman'. She stood head bent in prayer, eyes cast downward, with a beautiful old-fashioned floral scarf covering her hair. This cameraman did not take a photo of any of the orthodox women of the congregation, many of whom were bare-headed or elderly. At best the festival group were treating Eastern Orthodox Christianity as a quaint cultural curiosity, but I was uncomfortably aware of the essentialism that this representation involved.

Aside from the two older women from Lublin, the various groups in the Ecumenical Festival kept to their relevant cliques and did not really speak to me unless I actively questioned them. For a festival designed to get beyond the 'cosmetic' differences of Christian groups, it instead suggested that the differences were often not at all cosmetic. Each group in attendance presented themselves and their identity as built in opposition to something else. The Catholic and Protestant speakers build their identity around

combating secularism, while the Greek Catholics defined themselves as ‘not Orthodox’, and the Orthodox once again presented themselves as an oppressed minority in Catholic Poland. The festival organisers appeared not to have made an effort to involve local people—people with a lot of experience of living in a religiously pluralistic town. Instead the speakers were from Lublin, Warsaw, and Krakow. Even the Oblates were reduced to hosting the event and given no opportunity to contribute to the debates.

The twelfth annual Festiwal Życie (‘Life Festival’) is a Catholic youth festival hosted in Kościół. It is organised by a number of groups, most of who are organised centrally by the Missionary Oblates of Mary, the same organisation in charge of the sanctuary. *Niniwa, Kokotek*⁵ (both Catholic youth groups organised by the Oblates) and *Wspólnota Dobrego Pasterza* (‘The Community of the Good Shepherd’, a group started by an Oblate) are the key organisers. There is additional support from *Katolicki Radio Podlasie* (‘Podlaskie Catholic Radio’) and *Podlasie24* (a regional news broadcaster with a link to the Catholic Church). Much like the Ecumenical Festival this event may take place in Kościół, but it is run and organised by outside groups. 2012 was the first year that families with young children were allowed to attend. It was estimated that five hundred and fifty people attended. Throughout the festival the marginal role of the basilica’s Oblates was always apparent. Masses were given by priests from outside and, aside from the Oblate who deals with youth affairs, no Oblates were listed in the festival brochure.

It was a massive affair, the Pilgrim House was full, tents covered the field next to the football pitches, as well as the field beside the small Church of the Holy Spirit. On the first day I took a look around; my path was blocked by a group of young people, including a priest in a long black robe, good naturedly struggling to carry a young man and dump him in the water at the centre of the ‘contemplation garden’. The whole event had the feeling of a scout jamboree. Despite the general good humour the festival aimed to keep the young people busy. Events started at ten to eight in the morning and ended at eleven pm with lights out. Their only reprieve from the schedule was a break from two to five for ‘recreation’. Yet the young people did not seem too inclined to attend every event and at any one time you could find a number of them sitting around relaxing, or accidentally come upon some young couple hiding out in a secluded corner. In the evenings there were concerts by Christian rock or pop groups, and during the day discussions on the theme of the day and overall theme of the festival, *Koniec Świata! The End of the World!* No one seemed to see the irony of having this as a theme for a Life Festival. Each of the five days

⁵ Niniwa is the Polish name for the biblical city of Nineveh. Kokotek is a gmina in Lubelskie

had a specific sub theme: death, the last judgement, hell, purgatory, and heaven. The dark topics seemed particularly incongruent in the bright summer weather.

As well as the packed agenda each attendee was expected to do homework. One young woman explained to me that the night before they were to prepare their ideas on a topic and the following day discuss it in group sessions and, if they liked, present something on the idea at the evening mass. The evening mass was very performative; throughout the service there were intervals for the young people to get up and present reflections on the gospels or give 'testimony'. There were guitar-based, popular renditions of church music and the priests spoke or sang with an emphasis on charisma. Like the last festival organised by the church the answers I got from a lot of the young people about the fundamentals of Catholicism seemed like an amalgam of Protestant performance and Catholic dogma. It was also interesting that all three youth groups were Catholic missionary and evangelical organisations. Niniwa takes its name from Jonah 3:2, where the prophet is instructed to go the city and preach for God. In some Biblical translations there is the additional comment that Nineveh was a city consumed by wickedness. All three groups also made specific reference to the importance of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. Perhaps it was this final aspect that most jarred, that the festival would be held on a site of intense local Mariological importance, and yet would place the emphasis squarely on the risen Lord and not on either the Mother or the Christ Child. This contradiction arises because of an understanding of the sacredness of the landscape that failed to explore how it is being produced as sacred and simply tried to utilise the sacredness of the land for its own purposes.

In both of the planned festivals that took place during my time in Kościół there was evidence that the organisers had a diminished understanding of why the sanctuary was a place of pilgrimage. The emphasis was on the historical and cosmological factors that made the land sacred. This static view of the sanctuary ignores much of what the pilgrims report as vital. It ignores the flexibility of the space and the manner in which practice and rhythm alter the conceived nature of the space. As Lefebvre notes, rhythm, chiefly awareness of rhythm, can 'change our perspective on surroundings, because it changes our conception' (2013, 26); rhythm is produced at the intersection of time, space, and energy.

While writing this chapter, and tracking the interplay of flow and interruption at the core of the pilgrimage experience, I began to see that there was an unexpected double process in my data. From one perspective, repetition and interruption are the forces that

determine the dominant rhythm of the pilgrimage. At the same time the rhythm of pilgrimage acts to disrupt the flow of the everyday. In this way pilgrimage is neither a liminal period, in which unlikely socially equitable communities are formed (Turner 1978), nor is it purely a 'realm of competing discourses' (Eade & Sallnow 1991, 5). As Coleman points out, these two approaches to pilgrimage—which have often been used as critiques of each other—are actually complementary (2002). Pilgrimage is a multi-layered phenomenon at once a time apart and part of the everyday cycle of life. As Galbraith tells us, both *communitas* and contestation can be present at once on different stages; 'communitas can itself function as an instrument of contestation' (2000, 62). This multiple view of pilgrimage is not apparent if we extract the journey and the pilgrims from the places and space they move through and toward. Pilgrimage is a negotiated practice; it is an intervention in the rhythm of the everyday; it is a disruption, resulting in 'antagonistic effects' (Lefebvre 2013, 52) that have the potential to open a gap in time and space for 'an invention, a creation' (ibid, 53). This is why pilgrimage is such an important constitutive of Kościół. The pilgrims' recurring appearance at the same time each year makes them part of the annual cycle of everyday life in the area. Yet the actions of the pilgrims and their movement through the land become part of the negotiations of place in Kościół, forever altering everyday life.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The final work on this thesis was undertaken as tensions in Ukraine mounted and English, American, and EU politicians continued to ‘talk tough’ to Russia. The rhetoric was reminiscent of the Cold War, with the press drawing a clear division between Russia and the West. The Ukrainian crisis, which began in December 2013, took a turn for the worse in February 2014 when pro-Russian militia seized buildings in Simferopol. Around this time a map began to appear across media outlets. It showed Ukraine split down the middle, yellow representing Ukrainian speakers, blue Russian speakers and a small red section in the Crimea labelled ‘ethnic Russian’.



Image 7.1 Screenshot from Al Jazeera News

Although Ukrainian media outlets and experts on Ukraine have problematized this map it continues to appear in the press at the time of writing.¹

I begin my conclusion with this map and by mentioning the crisis for three reasons. First, what is at stake in the Ukrainian crisis is important in terms of my fieldsite as both are part of what Prusin has called the ‘borderlands of Eastern Europe’, and both have been subjected to similar representation by external nations (2010). Second, the EU, America, UK, and Russia have represented the crisis as a simple conflict between Russian

¹ <http://www.rferl.org/content/ukraine-east-west-divide/25279292.html> from Radio Free Europe. <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2014/mar/01/ukraine-haze-propaganda/> Timothy Snyder in the New York Review of Books.

and Ukrainian speakers. Earlier issues that Maiden protesters highlighted, such as corruption, rising economic dependence on import, and the re-emergence of a pre-Orange revolution political elite have disappeared from news reports. Finally, this map demonstrates that alongside representing the crisis as a conflict between Russian and Ukrainian speakers, the UK, American, and EU press are assuming that these two groups are simultaneously linguistically and culturally opposed, thus representing the ethnicity of Ukrainians as fixed in place and rooted in their language.

This brings me back to the discussion of Chapter One, where I spoke about the fragmentation of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, the process of ‘becoming ethnic’ (Snyder 2003), and the later construction and deconstruction of nations and borders in this region. The result of all this movement was, as I noted there, an exceptionally complex border region that contained parts, which shifted at times, of Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and Lithuania. This thesis has been concerned with a fieldsite where language, religion, territory, and ethnic affiliation remain complex and are constantly negotiated. It has also been concerned with the spaces between the representation of groups in my fieldsite as ‘foreign’, and the reality of their complex nets of belonging. Underlying this focus is a challenge to portrayals, such as the map above, that seek to create discreet ethnic groups with shared linguistic and religious identities and to assign these imagined communities to a fixed portion of the earth. What this work has shown is that my respondents do not fit easily into preordained groups, that such groups do not exist, and instead are constantly created, negotiated, and deconstructed. Through these negotiations a sense of place emerges that has two contradictory justifications: first, the town is a borderland town influenced by its unique position between three nations. Second, in order to maintain the delicate equilibrium between different groups of residents, the townsfolk are constantly determining where the boundary between the inside and outside lies.

I begin here by gathering together my arguments about the negotiated sense of place in my fieldsite. In the first section I look closely at the processes that maintain the equilibrium of the town and conclude that the idea of the border plays a vital role in this set of processes. The second section returns to the insider/outsider discourse so frequent in the town and accounts for the popularity of this division. Both of these sections demonstrate that there are specific moments where the contradictions in the town become critical and are crystallised, but that inevitably there are strategies that attempt to contain these moments. The third section makes some suggestions about the meaning and importance of place and place making. In this section I also go back to Lefebvre, a theorist who has appeared throughout this thesis, and consider some of the problems I have found

with his analysis of spatial production. The fourth section emerges directly from the previous discussion of the meaning of place. This section takes the border and presents an argument that explains its use as a core metaphor by my respondents. The final two sections in this conclusion locate my thesis in the broader anthropological field and suggest further research that might complement the work presented here.

7.1 Getting Along

In the introduction to this thesis I mentioned the ‘ordinariness’ of my fieldsite. In the chapters that followed I tried to demonstrate that, despite the multiple contradictions and fractious identities of Kościół, its residents actively avoid open conflict. Disagreements sometimes sizzle, as we saw in Chapter Two, where I discussed debates over the original ownership of the small Church of the Holy Spirit. However, frequently the residents of Kościół simply hold the contradicting views simultaneously, without taking any clear side. The holy image of the Blessed Mother of Kościół is a good example of this strategy. My respondents understood her story either as a legend or as a historically accurate narrative, depending on the relational context in which it was told. The same respondents who told me the tale of the holy image as though it were history when we were in the basilica told me it was only a legend when we discussed it during art classes in the House of Culture. The ordinariness of my fieldsite relied on this arbitration of contradictions.

One of the schemas that underpins this inclination towards cooperation is the borderlander identity. This identity is constructed according to local practices of and beliefs about the border these people live next to. As I explored in Chapter Four, both local and national approaches to the border contain elements of romanticism. For the locals, the cross-border traders demonstrate the neighbourly relationships they have with those who live in the border zones in Belarus and Ukraine. The local landscape constantly evokes a specific version of a borderland, one that is (to paraphrase the Lubelskie tourist board) a pluralist cultural melting pot. A lot of what my respondents said about being from the border was reminiscent of Turner’s ‘frontier theses’ (2008 [1893]), which I mentioned in Chapter One. In conversations about borderlanders there was an always an emphasis on their uniqueness, ruggedness, distrust of authority, and preference for egalitarianism and community. This is perhaps because my respondents, like Turner, imagined the border as a constantly moving line and ever-adjusting edge (2008 [1893], 3). This imagination was not without a real basis; as I discussed in Chapters One and Five, the border has been exceptionally active historically and many of my respondents were the part of families with multiple communities of belonging due to conversion, resettlement, and the confusion of wars and pogroms. It was in this broadly positive sense that my respondents adopted the borderland identity. They then attempted to shape their town according to the characteristics they associated with this identity.

While they considered themselves borderlanders my respondents had no doubt that they were specifically Polish borderlanders. This is because they understood that

being on the margins does not mean they are entirely marginal. As Pine and de Pina-Cabral state, 'margins and centres are mutually produced There is no marginality without centrality but neither can be absolute' (2008, 4). What my respondents grasped was that this dialectic works both ways. While they were on the margins of Poland they were also actively producing Poland through their practices on the border. Occasions such as the Catholic procession during the August pilgrimage (Chapter Six) demonstrate the types of practices that aim to reproduce aspects of the Polish identity in the borderlands: the army, local politicians, and the Catholic Church all marching together. Yet often Kościół's residents challenge hegemonic versions of Polish culture through their practices. The singing of Belarusian and Ukrainian folksongs at local events (Chapter Five), the use of 'Russian' names, the celebration of the Tatars (Chapter Three), and constant cross-border trade that discounts official versions of legality (Chapter Four) are just some of the practices I have discussed in this thesis that offer a heterogeneous form of Polishness, a form that transcends a purely national identity. Alongside conscious challenges to the hegemonic version of Polishness my respondents often incidentally challenged it in belonging to multiple imagined communities. For example Basyl held a Polish passport, he spoke Polish and Russian as he had been raised Orthodox and attended an Orthodox Sunday school, and he was also a Catholic as he converted to marry his wife. My landlady had close family in Belarus, yet considered herself and her family Polish; she was Orthodox yet also a leading member of the local Pensioners' Society, often organising events to celebrate Catholic holidays. Joaska was Roman Catholic but her family was made up of Greek Catholics and Orthodox Christians; she also sang in Ukrainian as she learned to sing from her maternal grandmother who spoke Ukrainian at home. For the residents of Kościół, these life histories of multiple linguistic and religious affiliations are an ordinary part of living where they do. Yet when my respondents interact with Poles from outside the border regions the everyday pluralism of their sense of place undergoes another alteration. Tensions between the different religious, linguistic, and national selves reach breaking point, underlying feelings of exclusion or inclusion lead to the unmaking of everyday acceptance, and conflicts between different groups come into the open—for example the conflict over the Church of the Holy Spirit (Chapter Two).

My respondents grounded this sense of belonging in their town. Kościół looked like an ordinary Polish town with a few *non-sequiturs*: there was the town square, house of culture, fire station, block of flats at the edge of the town, and lots of square houses set on small plots of land as can also be seen in Polish towns closer to the centre of the country. Yet there was also an Orthodox church, an army barracks, and numerous signs and polls marking the Polish border. Everyday life in Kościół was equally ordinary;

discourse, practice and space were all potential sites of conflict, yet the residents worked to ensure the contradictions existed harmlessly. The existence of this day-to-day pluralism helps to explain why the region has become an increasingly popular tourist destination. Alongside the environmental beauty of the area tourists can experience a 'multi-cultural' Poland, a 'full blooded borderland' (Polska 2014). However, while the town's residents are dealing with a constantly emerging pluralism that requires constant negotiation in day-to-day life, the diversity of the area is simplified for the tourist (Chapter Four). In other words, Kościół and the surrounding area is marginalised as it is considered 'not quite' Polish; rather, it is thought of as a destination where Poles can experience a more 'exoticised' version of their country (Zarycki 2011). Difference is packaged and presented as heritage and contemporary praxis is ossified into quaint cultural curiosities, a process I have discussed predominantly in relation to the Orthodox Church in this thesis. However it is also visible in the treatment of other religious groups in the region. Despite the absence of a Jewish and Tatar Muslim population in the region their past presences are still invoked in tourist literature in order to frame the area as diverse (see Chapter Four). However, both groups appear in sanitised and contained forms. As I noted in Chapter Three, the Tatars' faith is reimagined as a syncretic form of Islam that involved celebration of Christian festivals. This is how the Tatars can be celebrated at the same time as the Polish press becomes increasingly anti-Muslim (Górak-Sosnowska 2011). In Chapters Three and Four I also considered how residents and tourist boards approach the Jewish legacy of the area. I have argued that in my fieldsite and throughout the region the violence of the Jewish genocide is either ignored or rendered 'comfortable and safe to deal with' (Sharply & Stone 2009, 127). I say all this by way of noting that in making Kościół the residents select and edit their surroundings, and the sense of place that emerges reflects their prejudices as much as their willing pluralism.

There are also times when the sense of place that Kościół's residents work to maintain comes apart. In this thesis I have focused on the moments when religion plays a part in these unravellings. In these moments the disagreements between two congregations become pronounced, and the hierarchy of religious groups in the area becomes apparent and is contested. These moments of religious conflict tend to occur around critical moments such as births, deaths, and marriages. As I discussed in Chapter Five, discourses about the unfair advantages that Roman Catholics receive in Poland were strongest when my Orthodox respondents were talking about marriage and conversion. Two critical events are involved in these discussions: the marriage itself and the (anticipated) birth of children. While I pointed out that religious converts maintain their ties with both faiths in everyday life, at the critical moments of life they choose one over

the other. Catholicism tends to come out on top (think back to the headstones in Chapter Three), and this leads to open clashes at these points. These critical events are 'moments when everyday life is disrupted and local worlds shattered ... they bring into being new modes of action ... their effects ricochet between different kinds of institutions, localities and actors ... [and they] are open to expression in many registers' (Das 1995, 4).

Conversion for marriage is a good example of one such critical event. Most anthropologies of conversion focus on the alteration of personal worldviews it creates (Robbins 2004). Conversion in Kościół, however, was rarely related to a transformation in belief. Instead conversion is a kinship strategy, it is an act that allows two people marry. For this reason many converts do not abandon their original beliefs and the children of most mixed marriages are raised in both faiths (although only baptised into one). It may initially appear that conversion is therefore not a critical event. However, conversions for marriage are at the root of the Orthodox discourse of impending extinction, and was one of the core reasons my Orthodox respondents offered for their sense of being a minority and their decision to encourage their children to socialise with an ever-shrinking mono-religious group of people. Critical events such as conversion constantly challenge the construction of Kościół as pluralistic, demanding negotiation between the groups involved in order to return to building a shared sense of place.

7.2 Imagining Outsiders

In the conclusion of Chapter Four I noted that the insider/outsider binary was a particularly pertinent discourse in Kościół. Yet it is a binary that demands constant revision as, for example, the pilgrims on which I focused in Chapter Six were massively involved in place making in Kościół and other sacred sites. Their practices and presence are vital to the sacredness of the earth. In addition, the pilgrims are part of the yearly cycle of Kościół; they arrive every August, altering the space they occupy and move within, and their appearance and the alteration of the countryside they cause are built into the residents' spacio-temporal landscape. In this way pilgrims are at once integral insiders, as their presence and practices are constitutive of Kościół. Nonetheless, they do not normally reside in the town so they are also outsiders. How, then, do my respondents decide which of the two categories pilgrims ought to be placed in? As I determined in Chapter Four, a person's position relative to the binary can only be understood relationally. In other words, when discussing the religious landscape of Kościół pilgrims would be treated as insiders because of their intimate connection to the holy image and the basilica. However, when considering the everyday life of the town, pilgrims are discussed as outsiders, as they do not spend the majority of their year there. The underlying tension of the insider/outsider discourse is that much like Lefebvre's centrality (1991, 386); it is a tool of exclusion that is potent in the hands of the elite. The insider/outsider discourse is about making claims to be inside and central to the emerging sense of place, and at the same time it is about claiming other groups are outside or marginal to the processes of place making. Plainly the insider/outsider discourse, that was so popular with my respondents, was an indigenous discourse of marginality.

The second interesting thing about the discourse of marginality my respondents used is that the groups they most frequently attempt to represent as marginal in fact have a big impact on the shaping of Kościół. Tourists, pilgrims, border officials, and certain religious groups (for example Jehovah's Witnesses) are frequently described as outsiders. Many of these groups would not consider themselves either outsiders or insiders. Instead they would consider the town part of a larger entity, of Poland or Lubelskie, and a marginal part at that.

I want to explain this by considering the border officials. These officials are shadows in many of the chapters in this thesis (Chapters One, Four, Five, and Six) but here I want to bring them into the light. The border guards (*straz graniczna*) are charged with maintaining the impermeability of the border, preventing undeclared goods and people

from entering Poland. The *straz graniczna* website homepage² has a prominent news section that updates constantly with details about the arrests of smugglers and people crossing the border without permission. Guards are stationed at border crossings and in mid- to large-sized towns along the eastern border. As well as making checks on the border in their garrison town, the guards also make daily journeys to smaller towns and villages along the border³. For the border officials the plurality of Kościół, the range of religious affiliations, the multilingual capacities of its residents, and the manner in which people's families stretch beyond the confines of the Polish nation are all indicative of its dangerous porous qualities. Yet the border guards and officials have a large input in the residents' place-making practices. The majority of cross-border traders I knew had been bringing the same goods back and forth from Poland to Belarus for most of their lives, yet with the hardening of the border, and the increased checks and advertisements about 'illegal Russian cigarettes', they were increasingly being represented as smugglers. At a higher official level the hardening of the border made travel to meet family and friends more and more difficult. Most Belarusian relatives had stopped visiting Kościół after obtaining a visa became exceptionally expensive and difficult following the Belarusian unrest in 2010. However, towards the end of my fieldwork the regime slackened and I began to meet more and more Belarusian visitors. It was equally difficult for my respondents to visit friends and family in Belarus, as the border regime on the other side of the EU frontier was even more obscure; I was also refused a visa to Belarus despite having a letter of invitation—and was never able to determine why. The actions of the border officials are a good example of how one group of residents of Kościół represented as marginal to their practices of place making in fact had a strong stake in it. The border officials not only shaped Kościół, they shaped it as a marginal space. Many of the external groups that shaped Kościół did the same: the tourists orientalised the area and the pilgrims saw the whole eastern borderland as a place of devout religiosity and miracles (see the end of Chapter One and Chapter Two). In other words, external actors forced the residents of the town to understand that the plurality so vital to their sense of place on the Polish borderlands could also be used to exclude them from Polishness.

Unsurprisingly, the multiple contradictions normally contained by the townsfolk's place-making tended to become apparent and problematic in these interactions between the town and wider Polish institutions and actors. In these moments or spaces of interaction the 'ordinariness' of Kościół began to come undone. Almost every chapter in this thesis has considered one of these moments or spaces: as well as the instance

² <http://www.strazgraniczna.pl/wps/portal?locale=pl> homepage in Polish (English translation available).

³ Personal communication from Kościół border guards.

mentioned directly above, Chapter One looked at the impact of the great powers in the area, the discussion in Chapter Three was about the architect's grave and Jewish memorial in Sławatycze, and Chapter Four was almost entirely made up of these interactions. Chapter Five's discussions of conversion and Orthodox festivals both involve such interactions and Chapter Six's account of the Russian Patriarch's visit to Grabarka is another good example of the same. One of the reasons these incidents are so useful to research is that they lay bare the various layers of contestation and conflict in a given situation. The visit of Patriarch Kyrill to Grabarka exposed tensions within the Orthodox community over how they wished to be represented, and to what autocephalous Church they wished to affiliate, as well as wider Polish suspicions about the political loyalty of the Orthodox minority in the east and suspicions over the ethnicity of Poland's Orthodox Christians.

7.3 Understanding Place Making

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to unravel the sense of place that was so vital to the residents of my fieldsite in their everyday lives. My overall argument is that in order to discuss place in my fieldsite you must first understand that the practices of people have impacts on a number of scales. There is not just a place called Kościół; here there are multiple overlapping spaces and relations that are imagined as a distinct location from distinct viewpoints. Before I begin this section I would like to clarify four terms I have been using and developing throughout this thesis: place, space, a sense of place, and landscape. Although I began with specific definitions for these terms I have reworked them through my data, so this is a good point at which to reiterate how they have come to be used. I have already discussed how I tend to use the word landscape in its expanded form in Chapter Four but, unless explicitly stated, when talking about landscape I am talking about processual landscapes, and the manner in which moving through the environment helps us to relate the “Foreground”, everyday social life’ and “Background”, potential social existence’ (Hirsch 1995, 21). In other words, when I use the word landscape I am talking about how people related to and moved through place (Ingold 2000).

Place is an interesting concept, as Casey’s extensive writings about it from a philosophical position (1993; 1997; 2002) indicate. For Casey we must be in place in order to perceive the world, thus place and being in place is a prior requirement for social life (Casey 1993; 1997). Place and the embodied subject are deeply entangled, according to Casey. ‘The living-moving body is essential to the process of emplacement ... Just as there are no places without the bodies that sustain and vivify them, so there are no lived bodies without the places they inhabit and traverse’ (Casey 1996, 24).

The sense of place is related to this interaction between individuals and their environment as the emergent property of this association. An emerging sense of place can also be understood in relation to the production of space. In this thesis I use the term space in the Lefebvrian sense—that is, space as social space not as an abstract a priori concept. If space is social then its production involves the interaction of various embodied actors and their environment, among other things. Therefore it is analogous to place and a sense of place (Lefebvre 1991).

As I discussed in my introduction, I first began to pay attention to the production of space when I encountered the works of Lefebvre, and throughout this thesis his work

has been relevant. However, Lefebvre does not fully encompass the type of production and making that goes on in Kościół. I first began to see the problems with a purely Lefebvrian approach to space when thinking about the bio-physical landscape of Kościół.

When Lefebvre attempts to explain why ‘natural space is disappearing’ (1991, 30) he turns to the creation of tools. Since humans began trying to dominate nature, he contends, they have been slowly destroying it. This is because humans were approaching ‘natural spaces’ in the same way they approached *all* space, conceiving of it as a void that contained various materials to be exploited.⁴ We have already discussed why ‘nature’ is a problematic concept in Chapter Four; however there are two specific problems with Lefebvre’s model. First, in conflating ‘natural space’ with nature, and in turn nature with the bio-physical world that is devoid of human actors, he fails to acknowledge that when talking about nature he is talking about the relationship between humanity and the environment. It is impossible to talk about nature prior to that relationship. Second, he imagines that the non-human world has been dominated in all relationships between humanity and the environment. While there is no doubt that high capitalism is concerned with the domination of the non-human environment, it is perhaps a leap to assume all relationships between humans and the bio-physical take this form. Just six years after Lefebvre wrote *The Production of Space* (1991[1974]), MacCormack and Strathern published *Nature, Culture, Gender* (1980). This book sought to challenge the assumption of the nature/society division (Mac Cormack & Strathern, 1980). As Strathern demonstrated, anthropologists had fallen into the trap of assuming many categories could be equated to nature/culture, for example domestic/wild (1980). Or as Bloch and Bloch explained, anthropology was heir to the uncritical use of the notion of nature, despite the ambiguity that the eighteenth century writers who first re-popularised its use felt that the term involved (1980). Bloch and Bloch’s chapter highlights a point similar to the one I make above, that eighteenth century writing on the nature/culture divide emerged as ‘attempts to undermine the legitimacy of’ systems of oppression were on the rise’ (1980, 39). In this way the nature/culture dichotomy was a reflection of the contemporary modes of production (Bloch and Bloch 1980).

In my field there was no sense that ‘natural space’ was made of discrete material entities reacting to each other. The residents of Kościół were primarily farmers and understood nature as a web of entangled objects, persons, and places: they believed that it

⁴ Perhaps the best example of this way of conceiving space is Isaac Newton’s billiard ball model of the universe. In this model the material of the universe was presented as billiard balls that collided and reacted together and the billiard table was the void they moved through.

was impossible to think of any detached object within it. This was apparent particularly in their relationship to the Białowieża Forest Reserve (Chapter Four).

The second problem with the simple application of Lefebvre's work to my fieldsite became apparent when I first attempted to write up my data. The data I gathered over my year in the field made it clear that in Kościół there were multiple levels and scales of production, use, and discourse around space concurrently occurring. Lefebvre's approach to space fails to account for the multi-scalar quality of this phenomenon. Instead he believes that the form of space is based on the dialectic of centrality: 'The form of social space is encounter, assembly, simultaneity ... social space implies actual or potential assembly at a single point, or around that point' (Lefebvre 1991, 101). As I discussed in the introduction, the contradictory inclusion and exclusion that help construct the centre was a good way to begin researching space in my fieldsite. In many places in the town the debate over who gets included, and who makes the decisions about inclusion, was clearly important to the emergence of social spaces. Yet, as we saw with the insider/outsider discourse above, there is not one centre or inside but many, depending on where one stands or what levels one moves between.

Once again Lefebvre's theory that all social space is defined by its form, and that its form relies on the dialectic of the centre, is determined by his prevailing interest in the space of capitalism. For Lefebvre space has been transformed into a commodity by the development of capitalism, and thus its form is based on the universal form of the commodity (1991). The form of the commodity is based on a contradiction between use and exchange value, and this contradiction remains unresolved and preserved in commodities (Marx 2011 [1906]). Lefebvre interprets the form of the commodity as a concrete abstraction and describes its form at its most basic level as 'the possibility of exchange conceived independently of what is exchanged' (Kipfer 2011, 73). In his description of the form of space, therefore, centrality becomes the core feature that can be exchanged and also conceived of independently of its exchange (Kipfer 2011; Lefebvre 1991). But if one does not agree that space is a commodity or that all place is equitable to social space the dialectic of centrality is not exceptionally useful.

Yet the core idea of Lefebvre's *Production of Space* remains important to my argument, in that the struggle against the alienation of life is not just a struggle for modes of production. Space is important because by changing space we can change life (Merrifield, 2006). This is the reason place-making was so important for the residents of Kościół. Space in Kościół contains people, objects, and numerous relationships, practices,

and controls. The production of space is ongoing and the negotiations over space are constantly deconstructing it and attempting to reassemble it from the parts remaining. However, it is possible to gain some insight into the processes of place-making that shape the residents' sense of belonging. In this thesis I have used religion and the border as two ways of accessing the production and use of space in the town.

When I began my fieldwork I was interested specifically in religious space and the contestations over specific religious sites. However, when I began to explore these conflicts in Kościół I realised that there was an archetype that was constantly used to explain them. This was the paradigm of the borderlands. I then began to pay close attention to local discourses and practices that related to the border as a way of understanding what was at stake in the production of place. Three things became apparent.

First I came to realise that place is a multiple event (Massey 2005), and that there are numerous social spaces that coexist within it any one point. Moving through places one encounters different spaces simultaneously and at different times and locations; one is aware of the contradictory nature of place. The town of Kościół contains many contradictory spaces, and its residents seem to be aware of this multiple nature when they declare that the town exists in the borderlands. The second outcome that becomes apparent through examining the production of place in Kościół is that it emerges through cooperation and conflict. Because of this it is a never-ending project, and the sense of places is always emergent, never complete. Finally, any cursory examination of a given location in Kościół demonstrates that all places are spatio-temporal, and therefore the appearance of solidity is an illusion. This means that movement, or the flow of time, people, objects, and energy—to use Lefebvre's concept (201)—is a vital component in the emergence of a sense of place.

The multiplicities of spaces and trajectories that construct Kościół are messy, volatile, and difficult to pull apart. Part of what residents are doing when they talk about their 'place' is attempting to give this chaos the appearance of coherence 'to tame it' (Massey 2005, 152). But my respondents' production of their town in the image of the borderlands, and their constant dialectic use of the inside/outside concept go beyond this. The town becomes a place where its residents encounter hegemonic discourses, practices, and expressions of Polish identity and attempt to respond to these. The dynamics of space in Kościół thus considered led me to Bourdieu's theory of the field. Briefly put, Bourdieu states the field is a setting where social positions and agents interact. It is the arena of

struggle. By making use of the rules of the field people can improve their position in relation to other actors and through their actions change the rules of the space (Bourdieu 1993). Thus Bourdieu's theory presents the field as a setting where people encounter and potentially challenge the structures of power; the field is the place where structure and agency meet. Both power and politics are at stake in my respondent's production of space: 'power and politics as refracted through and often manipulating space and place' (Massey 2005, 166). Through the negotiation of the sense of place Kościół's residents attempt to create a home that allows them to maintain their heterogeneous Polishness, without repudiating their belonging to the Polish nation.

7.4 Border Landscapes

The year of 1795 was a popular reference point for the residents of Kościół, the moment when the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth disappeared from the map and a Polish identity that conflated ethnicity with religion, language, and land emerged. My respondents frequently made reference to the date when discussing religion, politics, language, kinship, or neighbouring Belarus and Ukraine. The fragmentation and loss of 1795 was the ‘event centred frame’ through which my respondents ‘orient[ed] themselves in the stream of time that remains beyond their lived experiences’ (Witeska-Młynarczyk 2013, 63). It interested me that my respondents would choose to orient themselves according to this crisis rather than to more recent historic moments. Yet there was something about this event that harmonised with their contemporary everyday experiences. The commonwealth demonstrated that Poland had not always been homogenous in a linguistic or religious sense, and also that there was another way of conceiving belonging. Its destruction at the hands of the three great powers—Russia, Prussia, and Austria—corresponded with local ideas about the danger of the outside. 1795 was also understood as the beginning of a sequence of events that would move Kościół from the centre of the nation to its official edge. It moved Kościół into a borderland that was hopelessly nebulous, contradictory, and insecure, and that stretched across four countries.⁵ The sequence of events that started in 1795 also saw this borderland zone constantly deconstructed and reconstructed—the Polish map changed Kościół was represented as Russian (1795), central (1918), and marginal (1939).

By now the border has become such a central concept to life in Kościół it is impossible to untangle it from the emerging sense of place. The border is not just part of the discourse of everyday life; it has a role in the practices of everyday life and the processes that emplace the town. The relationships between the residents of Kościół and their neighbours in the borderlands of Belarus and Ukraine make separating this zone into its composite parts difficult—if not impossible. Green notes, in relation to the fractal nature of the Balkans, the sense of ‘meaningless fragmentation and combination’ (2005, 131) engendered by the constant deconstruction and reconstruction of the entangled places that has ‘led to numerous metaphors evoking the idea of impurity, pollution, mongrelism, miscegenation and so on’ (ibid., 137). While I am not explicitly comparing the two regions, the logic that associates fragmentation and borders with impurity is in operation in my fieldsite. The hegemonic discourse of a fractal Balkans that is imposed upon Green’s respondents makes them wary of using ideas of cultural heritage or

⁵ The eastern border of Poland runs alongside Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine.

multiculturalism advantageously (2005). Nevertheless, my respondents have been at pains to utilise the discourse of the border, which celebrates the plurality and heterogeneity of the area, in resistance to popular concepts of what it means to be Polish.

Nevertheless, as this thesis demonstrates, it was not always possible for my respondents to use the model of the border exactly as they wished. When I discussed the ecumenical festival in Chapter Six, tourism in Chapter Four, and the transnational and translocal Orthodox events in Chapter Five I was demonstrating some of the problems that come with celebrating the 'religious plurality' of the region. In all cases, celebration of the diversity of religion involved separating out the various religions into discrete groups and representing them according to a set of assumptions about the characteristics of the congregations. This is because all religions are not equal in Poland: the country is predominantly Roman Catholic (86% Polish Statistical Yearbook 2012) and there is a relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the State (Ramet, 2014). This means that Greek Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity are represented according to the hegemonic Catholic perspective.⁶



Image 7.2: Catholic Youth Group visiting Jabłeczna as a 'historic site'

⁶ Kościańska has discussed how the Brama Kumaris activity was limited in Poland when a Catholic priest declared them a cult. This led to the Brama Kumaris being labelled a 'dangerous sect' by the Polish media (Kościańska 2008).

In order to participate in the representation of the region as a ‘full blooded borderland’⁷ minority religious groups are tempered and diminished and the majority group’s practices regulated. This dual process is most apparent in the two Catholic events with which I ended Chapter Six. As I noted, the ecumenical festival represented both Greek Catholicism and Orthodoxy as quaint traditions rather than as active faiths; this kind of *heritagisation* of minority religion was apparent throughout the region. The monastery at Jableczna had become a popular destination for Catholic youth groups. The groups were offered a guided tour by a be-robed monk, which focused on the Orthodox history of the area and the story of the icon of Saint Onoufry that emerged from the river fully formed. When I visited the monastery with one of my respondents I received the standard tour, but I also spoke with the monks as they worked their land and learned more about the seminary that was based there. When I later returned to the monastery and spoke with the abbot I asked if the youth groups could also visit the farmlands. No, I was told, they never want to. Instead, the youth groups are offered a version of Orthodoxy that parallels their preconceptions, namely that it is a religion of monks and mystical events historically practiced in the region.

The other side of the process of *heritagisation* is apparent in changes being made to Catholic practices across Poland. The changes demanded are most apparent in Church-sponsored or organised retreats. These new practices put renewed emphasis on Jesus as saviour, narratives of salvation, adherence to the catechisms and canons of the Church, and the importance of the sacraments of confession and the Eucharist (Peperkamp 2006). Excessive devotion to Mary the Mother of God is discouraged, and the faithful are reminded that she is to be prayed to as an intercessor. I encountered a number of the observations listed above during the Catholic Youth Festival I discussed in Chapter Six. It was the practice of personal testimony that started me thinking about the impact these changes to the Catholic Church had had. Both Galbraith (2000) and Peperkamp (2006) witnessed the use of personal testimonies in the Catholic youth groups they researched. In the charismatic Christian tradition such testimonials are very popular. Coleman calls them acts of ‘narrative emplacement’, arguing that they are ‘self-descriptions, in personal or collective contexts, that locate identity in terms of a landscape of evangelical action’ (2000, 118). As Coleman goes on to explain, the use of narrative emplacement in an evangelical Protestant context is part of a range of speech acts that aim to bring the self into line with ‘idealised and universally shared incarnations of faith’ (ibid., 134). This makes sense because Evangelic Protestantism is a religion of the word, but what is the use of such practices in Catholicism? I see testimonials as part of an attempt to demystify Catholicism

⁷ From <http://www.poland.travel/en/regions/the-lubelskie-voivodship-the-bug-river-trail> (last accessed 10th April, 2014).

and differentiate it from other pre-reformation Christian faiths. This is part of a trajectory that can be traced to the Second Vatican Council, which aimed for the renewal of Catholic Doctrine in a modern world, yet the Council's legacy is frequently debated by Catholics (Kelly 2009). Often decisions intended to modernise the church, such as abandoning Latin in favour of mass given in the vernacular language of a congregation and changes to the visual and aural aesthetics of services, left many Catholics feeling their faith was being drained of its unique character (ibid.). I do not mean to argue for or against the changes of the Second Vatican Council. Rather, I mention it here to contextualise the changes to Polish Catholic practices. The outcome of these changes is that there is an increasingly visible and ritual difference between Roman Catholicism on the one hand and Greek Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Christianity on the other.

The heritagisation of Orthodoxy and the demystification of Catholicism, increasingly apparent in my fieldsite, give the impression that both faiths are more clearly demarcated than my research has demonstrated. This is part of a strategy of multiculturalism and ecumenicalism pursued by tourist boards and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Unlike the religious pluralism that relies on understanding the messy entanglement of religions in this area, these strategies of multiculturalism and ecumenicalism represent the religions of the borderlands as discrete individual groups that interact in given situations without relaxing their boundaries.

7.5 Future work

The relationship between the heritagisation and demystification of the religions in this region is one of the avenues of research that could further develop the arguments presented in this thesis. One way of exploring this relationship would be through involvements with Christian youth groups. Galbraith (2000) and Peperkamp (2006) have already conducted research of this type with Catholic youth organisations in central Poland. My fieldsite offers an interesting correlation to their work as, alongside a number of local Catholic youth groups, there also exist a small number of Orthodox youth groups. A comparison between the two groups could be an opportunity to explore how faith is transmitted intergenerationally. It would be an opportunity to see which aspects of their parents' and grandparents' religious practices were deemed appropriate to spread through Church-sanctioned groups. This would be one way to explore the heritagisation and demystification I discussed above.

Another approach to these processes would be to contrast Eastern Orthodox Christianity to the same practice in Ukraine or Belarus. As I mentioned in Chapter One, through studying the works of Buzalka (2007) and Naumescu (2008) I am aware that there are marked differences between the Ukrainian and Polish Eastern Orthodox Churches. The situation in Belarus is less clear: according to the government Belarus is an 'atheist Orthodox nation'. I met a number of Orthodox Belarusians during my fieldwork and, despite the complicated position of their Church in Belarus, their practice seemed remarkably similar to the practices of my Orthodox respondents. A comparison between the Orthodox Church in the Polish borderlands and Churches in the Ukrainian or Belarusian borderland would reveal whether the heritagisation of the Church in Poland was a singular event. This in turn would help us to understanding the use people make of the process of heritagisation.

Another question is raised by the idea of the borderland I discuss above; in particular how it is related to place making along this border zone and the negotiations involved in being borderlanders and also part of the Polish nation. Does the border feature so strongly in place-making along the Ukrainian or Belarusian side of the frontier? This could be approached through a multisited ethnography of towns in different national borderland regions. Such a multisited approach would be suited to exploring the entangled complex relationships that criss-cross this borderland. As Coleman and Hellerman note, a multisited approach to ethnography lays to rest any lingering sense the anthropologist might have that subjects 'can be found in natural units of difference such as

cultures and communities' (2010, 3). A study of the European borders of Ukraine may also be very timely. With the current media and political focus on the volatile and symbolically-potent borders in the east, the unpredictable former Galician border has been ignored. As I discussed in Chapters One and Five, the southeastern borderlands of Poland have a long history of tension, and also a strong sense of belonging that relates to neither Poland nor Ukraine. This border zone covers Galicia and Volhynia, lands that can be understood as both Polish and Ukrainian or neither Polish nor Ukrainian. Research in this area would go a long way to problematizing the simplistic representation of Ukrainian diversity demonstrated by the map that opened this section.

7.5 Placing my Research

This thesis is broadly related to a number of works that have recently emerged from the field traditionally called the Anthropology of Post-Socialism. These works include Follis (2013), who writes about the Polish/Ukrainian border regime; the Focaal special issue (specifically Haukanes & Trnka 2013; Pine 2013), which deals with generational approaches to past and future in a range of post-socialist countries; Hann's (2010) work on Eastern Christians; the opening of a department dedicated to the study of Eastern Christians in former socialist states at the University of Warsaw; Harboe-Knudsen's work on the Europeanisation of rural Lithuania (2012); Makovichy's recently published edited volume of writings on neoliberalism and post-socialist personhood (2014); and Richardson's (2008) fascinating exploration of place-making in the Ukrainian city of Odessa. Despite covering a range of topics, all of these works have given consideration to an underlying problem acknowledged in volumes on post-socialism for over ten years to date (Hann 2002). What does post-socialism mean in light of—among other things—the expansion of the EU, the continued onslaught of neo-liberalism, and an increasing temporal distance from 1989? Is there still a place for an Anthropology of Post-Socialism? While my research fits into this group I have avoided addressing the question of post-socialism directly. Instead, as Pine suggests, I have focused on post-socialism only in the moments when ideas about the concept are transmitted (2013, 72)—when discussing memory, trading, and the resurgence of pilgrimage, for example. Questions about post-socialism underpin this thesis because it is an argument about how people use, produce, and manage place to negotiate ways of belonging on the border of a Post-Socialist state and the frontier of the European Union.

My thesis makes a contribution to this anthropological field by focusing on a region where the alternative paths of a number of post-socialist states are advancing in strikingly different ways. Poland is increasingly incorporated into the EU; it is shaped by and shaping its visions of the future and past. Ukraine—as unfolding events suggest—is still represented as 'between and betwixt' Europe and Russia. Belarus is commonly called 'Europe's last dictatorship': since 1994 it has been ruled by Alexander Łukashenko who isolates the country from the EU and maintains close ties to Russia and a Soviet-style economy. My fieldsite incorporates all three of these countries in its production of place, thereby exposing the conflicting and contradictory nature of post-socialist trajectories.

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Appendix 1: Timeline

963	Mieszko I	The beginning of the rule of Mieszko I (sometime around or after 963) is considered the beginning of the Nation of Poland
966	Mieszko I Baptised	The baptism of Mieszko I brought Catholicism to Poland. Many of the nobles converted and slowly the process of converting the general population began
991	Under Protection of Pope	Placing the country under Papal protection amounted to making Roman Catholicism the official religion of the Polish Nation. This is despite the fact that a large number of the population had no relationship to the Church in Rome
1569	Union of Lublin	This Union, following many years of small wars and skirmishes marked the beginning of Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth. This was a dualistic state (headed by Poland and Lithuania) with a common monarch. It was ruled by the nobility through a Sejm, a type of Parliament.
1648	Khmelnysky (Хмельниччина/ Chmielnicki) Uprising	Cossack rebellion throughout the area now known as Ukraine and some of south eastern Poland. The Cossacks were joined by Crimean Tatars and this became a war of Ukrainian liberation.
1655	The Deluge	Complicated period comprising the Russo-Polish and Second Northern Wars. This period is now generally remembered for the Swedish Invasion that lead to three years of occupation. The Lipka Tatars played a prominent role in the defence of Poland eventually leading to recognition of their ancient rights in Poland and their place as great heroes in the popular imagination.
1772	First Partition	Resulting from weak government by the nobility and many aristocrats making contrary deals with neighbouring powers. The treatment of dissidents in the commonwealth was the spark that lit the disagreement. It resulted in Russia, the Hapsburg Empire and Prussia dividing 30% of the Commonwealths territory between them
1791	May Constitution	The 'first constitution in Europe' although Poland's Sejm was dissolved before it could be enacted. Put forward by the Sejm and signed on May 3 rd (still the National Holiday) it incorporated changes akin to those of revolutionary France. Marx later commented "the history of the world knows of no other example of similar noble conduct by the nobility"
1792	Second Partition	Another partition prompted by the writing of the constitution. In this case Russia and Prussia took another 40% of the Commonwealths territory between them.
1794	Kościuszko Uprising	Led by Kościuszko (newly returned from the American War of Independence) this attempt to repel the partitioning powers was put down in an

1795	Third Partition	exceptionally bloody manner, culminating in the siege of Praga where the streets ran with blood. Following the Uprising the third and final partition resulted in the total dissolution of Poland. Russia, Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire divided what remained of the Commonwealths territory between them and Poland ceased to exist as a Nation
1804	Duchy of Warsaw	Polish battalions joined the French during the Napoleonic Wars and as a reward Napoleon founded the Duchy of Warsaw in personal union with Saxony. After the final defeat of Napoleon the Duchy was dissolved in 1815.
1815	Congress Poland/ The Kingdom of Poland	Formed after the Congress of Vienna the Kingdom of Poland was in full union with Russia. Initially it was governed by a puppet parliament and later after numerous uprisings by a series of Namestniks (viceroys)
	Grand Duchy of Posen	Grand Duchy of Posen was part of the territories annexed by Prussia during the partitions of Poland. Also formed after the Congress of Vienna it was to include rights for Polish citizens and a level of autonomy but neither recommendations were fully implemented
1830	November Uprising	Began in Warsaw in November 1830. Soon troops and people from all over the former Polish territories joined. Eventually Russian forced crushed the Polish rebellion. The uprising ended in 1831 and was followed by great oppression and the curtailing of former rights for the Kingdom of Poland. The uprising and subsequent oppression lead to the 'great emigration' where large numbers of the elites fled.
1863	January Uprising	Began as a protest against conscription by younger Poles. Soon joined by former Polish and Lithuanian officers and soldiers. Unlike the November Uprising this was fought mainly as a guerrilla war and the final insurgents were only defeated in 1865
1918	Second Polish Republic	Following the First World War Poland was restated as a republic. It was significantly larger than the current state with more territory both east and west, although the state was positioned further east. The borders were only fixed in 1922.
1939	Invasion by Nazi Germany	On the 1 st of September Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany. Soon after pursuant to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact Soviet Russia invaded from the east. The government did not surrender but went into exile in London. Despite the failure to surrender by the end of October the country was effectively ruled by the occupying forces. The country was split between the two occupying powers.
1944	Warsaw Uprising	Beginning on the 1 st of August and lasting until

		November the Warsaw Uprising was an attempt by the Polish Resistance and Home Army to liberate Warsaw from the Nazis. The allies made no real effort to support the uprising. After seizing control of much of the city for two months the Polish resistance realised they would not receive support from the Soviet army camped outside the city and was making massive losses to the Nazi's. The Uprising ended on the 2 nd of October 1944.
1945	End of War	After World War II Poland's borders were again redrawn shifting the country to the West. Poland was now between the Curzon line to the East and Oder Neisse line to the West. At the Yalta Conference it was agreed that Poland would have a pro-Communist government, effectively making it a Buffer State
1945	Peoples Republic of Poland	Marks the formation of the People's Republic of Poland, a Socialist state.
1945	Operation Vistula	The first action of Operation Vistula involved the forced transnational repatriation of Jews and those considered to be Ukrainian or Belarusian across the new eastern borders and into the Ukrainian SSR, the USSR and Siberia.
1947		The second action in Operation Vistula began in 1947 and involved the forced movement of those considered to be ethnically Ukrainian from east to west of Poland (particularly the recovered territories)
1978	Pope John Paul II	The election of Bishop Karol Wojtyła to the papacy was an important moment for Poland. Wojtyła was a renowned anti-communist ally. After he was installed as Pope John Paul II he continued to work for the end of communism
1980	Strikes	Starting with the Gdansk Shipyard strike on July 1 st a wave of strikes rolled out across Poland crippling the country. The strikers had a list of 21 demands and a strong anti-communist message. On August the government signed the Gdansk Agreement a social contract with the government which marked the beginning of democratic changes in Poland.
1981	Martial Law	December marked the beginning of a period of Marital Law in Poland. It was a reaction to an increasing number of anti-state protests and the rise of Solidarność
1983	End of Martial Law	July marked the official end of Martial Law, although some controls on civil liberties and political life were still in place
1986	General Amnesty	A rise in street protests and popular support for anti-state actors resulted in some conciliatory efforts including the September general amnesty that cumulated in the release of political prisoners
1988	Student Protests	Starting with student protests there was another wave of strikes in 1988. The Polish government

1989	Round Table Talks	finally decided to sit down with the opposition. A series of negotiations held between Solidarność and the opposition and the communist coalition. Resulted in the legalisation of independent trade unions, foundation of the office of the president and the formation of the senate
	Polish Legislative Election	The semi free elections of 1989 marked a watershed moment for Poland. The opposition won all but one of the seats they were allowed to contest (a third of the total number of seats). The communist party failed to form a coalition and a new non-communist government began. Despite the sweeping changes they instigated the policy of <i>gruba kreska</i> (thick line) with the past and prevented violent anti-communist witch hunts
	Balcerowicz Plan	Beginning in 1989 and lasting until 1992 the Balcerowicz Plan was method of economic “shock therapy” intended to speed the transition from communism to a market economy. It caused wide scale economic devastation in Poland affecting the lives of countless citizens yet when growth was reported in 1992 it was heralded as a master stroke.
1997	Constitution	The constitution of 1997 officially replaced the amended Socialist constitution from before
1999	NATO	Poland joined NATO
2004	EU	As part of the 2004 enlargement Poland was one of ten countries to join the EU on the 1 st of May.