

How memory embeds in the city: Everyday cultural memory in Kraków, Poland

Abstract

Memory embeds itself in Kraków, Poland, through both visible and subtle means, particularly in the Planty parkland surrounding the Old Town. Rich with monuments and landscape designs, this area commemorates some personalities from the Romantic Era, a crucial period for Polish national identity. Monuments and cultural markers celebrate figures and events from this era, reminding passers-by of Poland's historical resilience. While some memory sites are overt, others blend into the everyday landscape, like old trees or historical paths, remaining unnoticed yet significant. The presence of Polish language inscriptions highlights a history of resistance against cultural suppression. Through an emplaced survey, I found that these embedded memories foster a continuous connection to the past, reinforcing Polish national identity. The Planty's visible and subtle markers ensure that historical narratives remain a vibrant part of Kraków's contemporary cultural landscape.

Keywords

Embedded Memory • national identity • Romantic Era • public monuments • Kraków • everyday landscape

Danielle Drozdowski¹

¹Department of Human Geography,
Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
e-mail: danielle.drozdowski@humangeo.su.se

Received: 29 May 2024
Accepted: 17 June 2024

Invisibility and memory

Underlying Calvino's 'Invisible Cities', I think, is the supposition that cities have the propensity for sameness; that one city morphs and blends into the next and that our contemporary cities are progressively bereft of distinction – place-based diversity has become invisible. As Polo stated: "Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice" (Calvino 1974, p. 86). Indeed, memes of large European cities and their similar geospatial characteristics are commonplace and include maps pointing to the Old Town, hipster quarter, riversides, foodie hotspots, government district, and so on. Perhaps other ubiquitous elements of the city's everyday landscape contribute to an impending sense of invisibility. Here, I am thinking of the common material markers of memory including war memorials, cenotaphs, street names, and of course, large statues often of (in)famous men. Such material markers of memory dot city landscapes, occasioning us to remember past events and people deemed important to that specific place. But if they are part of an increasingly generic city landscape, do we notice them? Do we stop in front of them and take time to consider why they are where they are? Do we ponder on the importance of that memory to the city landscape?

In asking if the city's memoryscape tends towards invisibility, in this paper, I have tapped into a longstanding argument that in constructing material markers of memory 'we encourage monuments to do our memory-work for us, we become that much more forgetful' (Young 1993, p. 5). Much memory-based scholarship (mine included) has focused on representations of memory in the landscape, asking and answering why a certain monument is where it is, why, and exploring the politics of memory therein.

However, after conducting much fieldwork in cities laden with material markers of their past, I have taken pause here to consider just how noticeable these monuments are *and* whether they indeed maintain the link between the city's past and present – an oft-cited *raison d'être* for material markers of memory (cf. Nora 1989).

In this paper I 'think-with' Calvino's musings on the city and its past, in particular his proposition that the city 'does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows ...' (Calvino 1974, p. 11). If the city contains its past – in material, affective and symbolic capacities – what happens when certain memories slip towards the realms of invisibility and/or into the otherwise everyday city?

The remainder of this paper is laid out as follows. First, I briefly detail the context and case study, contextualizing the spatial location of the Planty, in Kraków, and the monuments therein within their historical period of representation – the Romantic Era in Poland. Then, I tell a tale of two monuments, read for, and against their representations, but also with and alongside Calvino's musings on the complex and often invisible components that comprise cities. By centring on two monuments, Grażyna and Litawor¹ and Lilla Weneda, which represent two of the three bards of Polish literature from the Romantic Era, I seek to enliven and perhaps diversify how we approach readings of the public memory landscape in our contemporary cities.

¹The full title of the poem and monument is Grażyna and Litawor, as the focus of the chapter is on the two women depicted in the monuments, I will henceforth refer to this monument and poem as Grażyna.

Context and case study: The Romantic Era in Poland, and the Planty in Kraków

During the Romantic Era (1820 to c.1864), Poland was under partition by the Austrian, Prussian and Russian Empires². Kraków was under the Austrian partition. The partitioning of Poland was especially important to the emergence of a collective national discourse identity, forged through the common goal of reuniting the lost lands of the former Commonwealth and preserving and safeguarding Polish identity. The establishment of this national narrative was a reaction to the assimilationist intentions of the country's historical (and more recent) foreign occupiers and the 'constant endangerment of statehood, and the eventual loss of sovereignty in the eighteenth century' (Krotofil & Motak 2018, p. 84). In 1795, the partitioning powers attempted to remove the official language of the State and Church (Latin) and replace it with Russian and German in their respective partitions. Polish language was removed from schools – in 1864, 1869 and 1872 in the Russian, Austrian and Prussian partitions, respectively – further threatening the survival of the Polish language.

Cohen (1999) has argued that links between a collective historical consciousness and national identity are constructed and maintained through the shared meanings of language, and shared common spatial territory. As Brock (1969) has also acknowledged, the maintenance of Polish language was a crucial component in safeguarding national culture throughout the partitioned period. Moreover, he contended that this 'linguistic nationalism' became intertwined in this period with a traditional and 'older concept of the nation', the territorial state (Brock 1969, p. 316).

This safeguarding found purchase with the exodus of approximately nine thousand people from Poland, mostly to Paris³, and for whom Polish political thought, literature, music, history and poetry became their 'historical mission' (Walicki 2001, p. 18). This mission – 'to give spiritual leadership to the nation' – was in effect a continuation of the historical struggle for independence that began with the November Uprising⁴, but with the pen and not the sword (Wandycz 1974, p. 180). Included in this group were three men, now regarded as the bards of Polish Romantic literature, Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), Juliusz Słowacki (1809–49) and Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–59). Each took up issues of Polish nationalism with the effect of buttressing 'the construction of [Polish Romantic] identity discourse' through literature and the (re)production of characteristic motifs of Polish Messianism too (Skórczewski & Polakowska 2020, p. 93).

Indeed, 'Polish romanticism rose to its full stature in the emigration' (Wandycz 1974, p. 117); while also taking part in various uprisings, exiled Poles forged a new tradition through the production of tangible cultural artefacts, including poetry, literature, paintings and musical compositions, all infused with national sentiment. These art forms were a means of communicating national sentiment. In the context of cultural suppression, language, literature and other arts because mechanisms by which Polish identity could be championed and

maintained. The clandestine productions of these art forms, and their dissemination and distribution ensured that educated Poles were able to feel part of the resistance to foreign occupation in their everyday lives. Clearly, such literature and associated art forms were not accessible to most Poles who were either illiterate and/or during partition remained in Poland. Yet, the interweaving of a particular Polish brand of Messianism⁵ through these cultural outputs meant that Catholicism became an integral component of that same national discourse emanating from the émigrés in Paris. Messianic ideology cemented connections between the Catholic Church and Polish identity and ensured that the fervency of this national sentiment transferred to wider populations through the church's pulpit.

Representation of the Romantic Era émigrés also appeared in the public landscapes of the everyday cities in Poland, even while these cities were still under partition. The Planty in Kraków provides such an example. There are eleven monuments in the Planty (See Table 1). Six of these depict writers or artists who were active during either the Romantic Era or the succeeding period of Young Poland⁶. Further, the memorials commemorating the Romantic's contribution to identity maintenance in the Planty make the national cause visible in the vernacular landscape. They created an image in 'urban spaces and thus represent[ed] famous people and [the] history attached to specific areas' (Cudny & Appelblad 2019, p. 286).

This paper draws on data collected in two research encounters in this vernacular landscape of the Planty, both some time ago. The first comprised data generated as part of my doctoral fieldwork in Kraków (in 2005) on the spaces, places and representations of Polish cultural memory (Drozdowski 2008). Prompted by this data, in subsequent postdoctoral field research (in 2011), I examined how these memory representations were encountered and/or understood, or not, by the Krakowians passing through that same everyday space.

Much like Marco Polo's (re)telling of his journeys, this (re)telling takes place well after the fact and with the privilege and opportunity afforded by the retrospective reflexivity of my own situated knowledge. I too have had time to think-with the (re)telling of this story, how its component parts assemble and how the story in itself says something about the narrator, as much as it does about the places being narrated. On musing how to respond to Khan's question as to the use of all Marco Polo's travelling, Polo pondered how:

The more one was lost in unfamiliar quarters of distant cities, the more one understood the other cities he had crossed to arrive there, and he traced the stages of his journeys, and he came to know the port from which he had set sail, and the familiar places of his youth and the surroundings of home (Calvino 1974, p. 28).

While Kraków has only ever briefly been my home, I now think about the city's memory landscape differently, at least in terms of nuance and complexity, then I did when I first wrote about my doctoral research findings. Yet, the space itself, the Planty, remains; it still contains the same monuments I examined on the first visit; it is still used as thoroughfare into and out of the Stare Miasto (see Figure 1).

The Planty's suitability as a study site lies partially in its location. It is a meeting place, a place for exercise and for relaxation, and an innate part of the everyday landscape of the city. It was originally the moat around the fortified medieval city; the fortifications that remain form the inner boundary of the Planty, while the city's major ring roads comprise the outer boundary. The destruction of the fortifications in the early 1800s saw the Planty designated as parkland. Amid this green city space lies two

²The partitioning of Poland was actioned in three stages. First, in 1773, Russia, Austria and Prussia annexed 30 per cent of the borderlands of Poland and 35 per cent of its population. Then, in 1793, Prussia and Russia again annexed large portions of the former Commonwealth, reducing it to 60 per cent of its former size at only 200 000 square kilometres. Finally, in 1795, the three powers signed the last agreement effectively removing Poland from the map of Europe (Suchodolski 1987).

³Walicki (2001: 19) has also emphasised the importance of the location and concentration of these émigrés' communities in Paris. At the centre of a burgeoning revolutionary movement in the early 19th Century, the émigrés in Paris were exposed to current and emerging political discourses and philosophies from within France and Western Europe.

⁴The November Uprising (1830–31), was an attempted rebellion by the Congress of Poland (in Warsaw) against its Russian occupiers. It failed and was the impetus for Polish emigres like Mickiewicz to flee to Paris.

⁵I discuss Polish Messianism in more detail further on page 16.

⁶Only two monuments overtly memorialise political conflict – the monument to Colonel Narczyk Wiatr and the monument to the victims of a workers strike in Kraków.

Table 1. Monuments in the Planty, Kraków, Poland

Monument	Explanation of characters depicted in the monuments	Year Constructed
Colonel Narcyz Wiatr	Monument to Colonel Narcyz Wiatr who was killed by the Communist Ministry of Public Security (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego) on 21 April, 1944	1992
Michał Bałucki	Poet, journalist and comic playwright of the Romantic Era	1911
Florian Straszewski	Designer of Planty parklands and member of Kraków City Council	1874
Monument to the victims of a workers' strike	Monument to the ten victims killed as a result of police action to break a strike at the Semperit factory, Kraków, on 18 March 1936	1989
Bohdan Zaleski	Poet of the Romantic Era	1886
Jadwiga and Jagiełło	Queen and King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth	1874
Lilla Weneda	Character and title of Romantic Era poem by Juliusz Słowacki (1840)	1885
Artur Grottger	Polish painter and draftsman of the Romantic Era	1901
Mikołaj Kopernik	Polish astronomer and scientist	1901
Grażyna	Character and title of Romantic Era poem by Adam Mickiewicz (1823)	1886
Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński	Writer, satirical poet and literary and theatre critic	1985

Source: author's own research

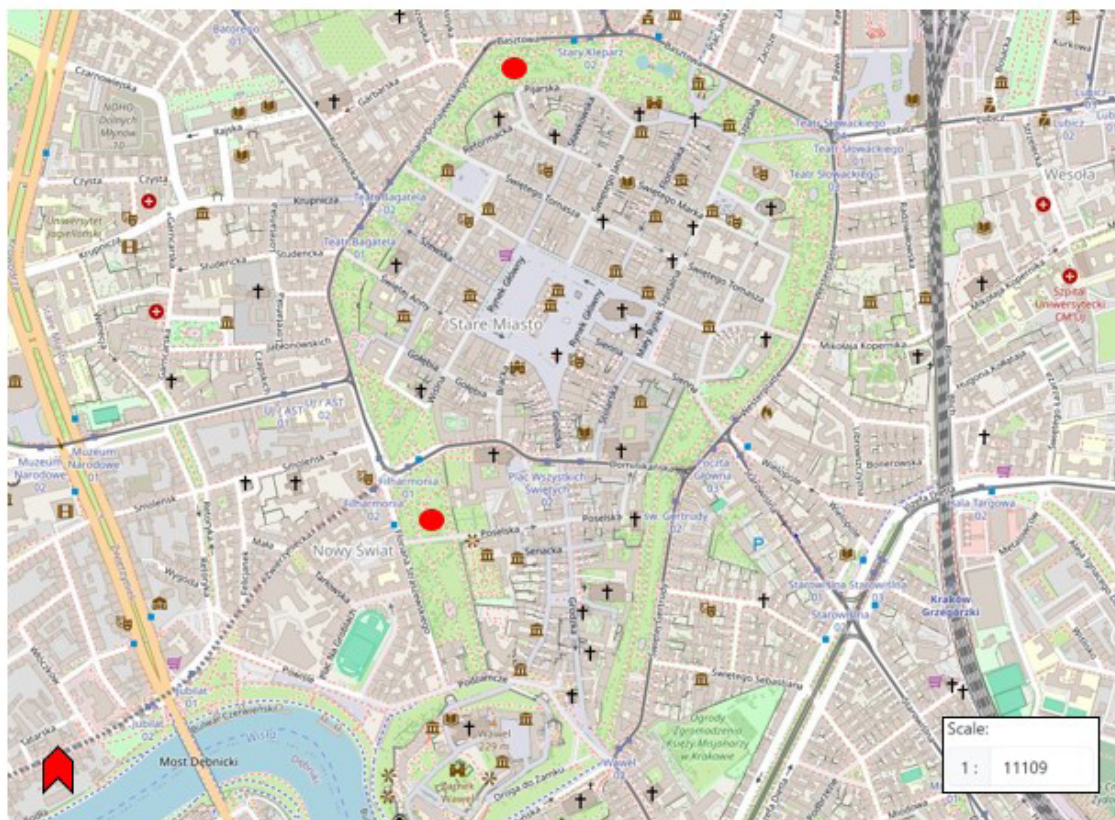


Figure 1. Planty Location Map. Two red circles denote location of Lilla Weneda and Grażyna

Source: Open Street Maps 2024.

monuments from the Romantic Era monuments – Grażyna and Lilla Weneda. They are the title characters of two poems by two bards of Polish literature, Mickiewicz and Słowacki, respectively.

In the participant observation fieldwork, I sought to gain a greater understanding of the everyday contexts of the Polish cultural memory. Thus, while readings of the landscape and visual methodologies were also data generation methods, as Rose (2001 p. 37) has contended ‘visual images do not exist in a vacuum...they are produced and interpreted through particular social practices’. I engaged in participant observation in the Planty to consider how contemporary audiences used this parkland and interacted with the memorial landscape there. I used combinations of field notes and still photography to record these observations in both periods of fieldwork (2005⁷ and 2011).

When I returned for a six-week research visit in 2011, the periods of observation were shorter, but also more targeted towards certain monuments and their surrounds – such as Grażyna and Lilla Weneda. I used a survey administered face-to-face with a Polish translator to ask passers-by about their knowledge of the Planty’s monuments. The survey had 16 questions and used a combination of open, close, scale and Likert questions. The responses were transcribed and translated with both the Polish and English text kept for cultural context. In total, there were 376 survey respondents. In the discussion section that follows I have drawn from both observation-based fieldwork (from 2005 and 2011⁸) and from data collected through face-to-face surveys in 2011.

A tale of two monuments

Calvino uses an allegoric strategy of a narrator to tell us a tale of cities far and wide. As narrator, Marco Polo indulges with sometimes fanciful descriptions of the cities encountered on his journeys. The tale provides insight, and provokes the reader to imagine themselves there and to find similar points of connection of in their own cities. Marco Polo often describes material physical structures in the city; setting the scene of what the cities looked like before meandering to spin the yarn towards more experiential encounters with the city and its inhabitants. It is this latter strategy that I have attempted to emulate in my (re)telling of a tale of two monuments. First, I narrate the two monuments in questions, what they look like, where they are and how they tether to Polish (Romantic) nationalism. In the second part of this discussion, I have tied in the survey data to explore how these monuments have been encountered by everyday passers-by. What is their experience of knowing, or not, about these two women in the Planty landscape? How visible, or invisible, is their message of the Polish nation?

Reading representation in the monuments

Grażyna is one of two poems in the second volume of Mickiewicz’s *Poezyje* (Poems) – a two-volume work known for its incorporation of folk motifs and rhythms. Miłosz (1969 p. 214) has argued that Mickiewicz’s use of ‘a heroic woman fascinated the public’; she is a heroine, a wife and a commander, and a love interest (Miłosz 1969). “Grażyna upholds her husband Litawor’s honour by foiling his disreputable pact made with the Teutonic knights – Poland’s enemies” (Drozdowski and Monk, 2020:258). In that pact, Litawor would have helped the Teutonic knights to overthrow the ruler of his homeland, the Grand Duke of Lithuania (Drozdowski and Monk, 2020). By fighting and dying in battle with the Teutonic Knights, Grażyna safeguarded her homeland,

and averted her husband’s ignoble association with the enemy (Drozdowski and Monk, 2020). Notwithstanding the patriotic sacrifice and replete with a decree of collaboration, Grażyna is far from Mickiewicz’s most patriotic or well-known poem.

When I first saw Grażyna in the Planty, I thought of her as an exception to the memorial norm. Here was a woman placed above her the male counterpart, who appears to be sleeping and motionless. In contrast, Grażyna is ready for battle, in motion, dressed in her husband’s armour, carrying a sword and wearing a helmet (Figure 2) (Drozdowski and Monk, 2020). Women are rarely depicted in the public memorial landscape in such overtly masculinist or militaristic contexts (Warner 1985; Drozdowski & Monk 2020). Women’s war efforts (and contributions to the nation) are more commonly invisible in public discourse, or more pointedly spirited to private realms of the home, where the minutia of cultural maintenance takes form in folklore, food, and narrative.

Similar to Grażyna, Lilla Weneda’s character is also an allegory for heroism and honour. The means of regaining independence for the Weneds – a poetic proxy for the Polish struggle during occupation – is the harp held aloft in Lilla’s arms. Despite its closeness, she is unable to “secure victory and freedom for her family and tribe” (Drozdowski and Monk, 2020: 259). Słowacki uses the motif of the snake to signify the immediacy of the peril facing the nation; its closeness to the harp symbolises how close evil and (and independence) is to being lost. Skórczewski and Polakowska (2020, p. 109) have contended that Słowacki’s heroes were often concerned with themes of honour, national interest and the ‘splitting of identity and loss of subjectivity of the heroes’. For Słowacki, the closeness of the threat is enacted by the trivial but ultimately decisive intervention of a marginal character who inhibits Lilla from taking the harp to her father, the leader of the Wened tribe, despite her efforts.

However, unlike Grażyna, Lilla is not depicted in the same masculinist garb. Rather, her portrayal is a much more common representation of women in the memory landscape. Lilla’s naked torso, her closed eyes and her demure composure present a classical representation of a feminine figure (Figure 3) (Drozdowski and Monk, 2020). This gendered representation of the female form, as closer to nature and pure of intention, obfuscates the heroism indicative in the poem. Further, Lilla’s figure did not seem out of place to me in the same way Grażyna’s did. Unlike Grażyna, whose figure sits atop a tall concrete plinth and in a cleared section of the Planty, Lilla’s figure is found along a side pathway, not entirely ‘out of the way’, but not out in the open in the same way Grażyna’s is. Lilla is surrounded by vegetation, a mix of shrubbery, bushes and the weeping branches of overhanging trees. Amid the vegetation, this setting augments the aforementioned naturalising character of her half-naked female form – it creates a representative atmosphere of normative gendered memorialisation.

These two monuments have given me substantial fodder for thought. In terms of the orthodox memorial landscape, they stand out as female characters. But adding to this exceptionality is the fact that they are women chosen to represent well-known male Polish poets. Through their associated poem and its author, they are intended to convey nation-based narratives synonymous with the Romantic Era genre. They both also extend this narrative of the nation’s struggle against occupation to women – literally concretizing this narrative visible in a well-used city space. Intriguingly, they also did so while Kraków was still under occupation of the Austro-Hungarian empire, with the monuments being erected in 1885 and 1886. There is then, I think, a complex rendezvous here with visibility/invisibility. On the one hand the choice of women potentially increases the visibility of the nationalistic narrative, if not only through the placement of women into a memorial landscape otherwise dominated by

⁷In 2005, I lived in Kraków for nearly seven months during my doctoral fieldwork; I came to know the Planty well.

⁸Both fieldwork occasions had ethics approval through UNSW Australia. The first, in 2005, was funded as part of my Australian Government Postgraduate Award, and the second in 2011, as part a Faculty of Science Research Grant, with Ethics approval no. 1573.



Figure 2. Grażyna, Planty, Kraków (1823)

Source: author's own photograph



Figure 3. Lilla Weneda (1839), Planty, Kraków

Source: authors own photograph.

men. Indeed, Davies (2005b, p. 44) has argued that 'the mechanism of transmission [of patriotic sentiment] owed a great deal to a particular breed of courageous and strong-minded women'.

Perhaps, this visibility gives the passer-by pause to consider the politics of this memory, for example what these women represent and why (indeed this provocation is discussed further through the survey data in the next section). On the other hand, perhaps by using women there was a deliberate gesture toward invisibility because women are so rarely attributed to supporting the plight of a nation in public spaces (Drozdewski & Monk 2020; Miłosz 1969; Krzyzanowski 1968, 1978). In this vein, Wedel (1990, p. 239) has contended that 'Poles often conceal their true convictions and activities as a result of living through continuously hard and uncertain, and sometimes fearful, times'. Perhaps these two women were meant to convey hidden messages of nationalism in the public landscape – for those who encountered them there. But why hide a message in open public space? Withers (1996, p. 328) has argued that 'memory, and its expression in memorial or act(s) of commemoration, is a potent means... [of]... connect[ing] historical meaning and contemporary cultural identity.' These monuments were constructed under a subversive norm of cultural repression. They (perhaps) had other uses – to convey hidden messages to Polish audiences of cultural expression through the Polish language.

Encountering memory in the city

When I first started researching representations of memory in everyday landscape, questions on the activation of these memory narratives – from past to present – pervaded my analysis. They also followed me to academic conferences, where I tried to (re)produce the tale(s) of these monuments. Often, these questions (my own and others') have been frustratingly difficult to address, especially in a nation-based context such as Poland where shifts in occupation have been frequent. Nationalistic sentiment is often

more than fervent, and, most poignantly, because sentiment-based questions about a monument's construction can only be asked to present-day populations.

Thus, to tell this part of the tale, then, I draw from survey-based research in the Planty, where I sought to clarify these monuments' visibility. I asked respondents questions about all the monuments in the Planty, their use of the place in its everyday context, and their understanding of the national narratives conveyed in monuments. Of the surveyed participants, more than two-thirds (67.39 percent) indicated that they either never (23.7 percent) or rarely (43.6 percent) stopped at the monuments in the Planty. Notwithstanding this rather sobering start to the tale of encountering memory in the city, non-encounter is not unusual in memory-based scholarship (Drozdowski 2016, 2018). Monuments often 'become part of their local neighbourhood' (Drozdowski 2016, p. 24); that they are hidden in plain sight (cf. Tyner et al. 2012) does not necessarily equate to a lack of knowledge or thought about them as one passes through the familiar landscape.

That we pass by these material representations of memory in everyday places is not merely coincidental, but part of a strategic spatiality of the politics of memory to increase the potential visibility of national narratives to citizens. Although as a highly pedestrianised thoroughfare, the Planty is characterised as place one passes through on the way to Kraków's Stare Miasto, over half of the respondents who stated that they did not ever stop to read the inscriptions on the monuments reasoned that they did not have enough time to stop. If these monuments, then, have become part of the background, were they then also invisible? Using a photo tagging exercise with images from the three bards of Polish literature⁹ represented, nearly two thirds of respondents (n = 274) matched the monument Lilla Weneda to Juliusz Słowacki, and just over half of respondents (n = 267) matched Grażyna to Adam Mickiewicz. Hence, passers-by knew the monuments and with whom they were associated. Perhaps their (in)visibility was ephemeral?

In chapter eight of *Invisible Cities*, Calvino (1974) describes a game of chess between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan. In this game, the chess pieces changed with subsequent journeys and the artefacts from city's brought by Polo to the Khan. In thinking through the character of these changes, Khan posits that there is an 'invisible order that sustains cities, on the rules that decreed how they rise, take shape and prosper, adapting themselves to the seasons, and then how they sadden and fall in ruins' (Calvino 1974, p. 122). He goes to lament the inability to grasp 'a coherent, harmonious system underlying the infinite deformities and discords' of the city (Calvino 1974, p. 122). In twisting this tale of two monuments, I'd like to tap into this complexity that troubled Khan about cities, that their shape and form, and the things in them do not necessary, or straightforwardly, help us understand these complex places – or for example ephemeral (in)visibility. We know that representations of the nation in the everyday landscape are important in exercises of nation-building and in creating and maintaining a consistent link to the past in the present-day city landscape. We also know that 'geographies of remembrance are complex, and their politics deeply knotted...in complicated geopolitical terrain' (Drozdowski 2020, p. 134). But what we know less about is how receptive the public is to these representations, what they know about the politics that engendered them, where they sourced this information from and whether any of these narratives associated with vast array of monuments and/or statuary in our landscapes matters Are they just part of an invisible order, in the sense as that they are what we 'expect' to see in then our city's public parks?

⁹In addition to Juliusz Słowacki and Adam Mickiewicz, Józef Bohdan Zaleski is also represented in the Planty, but he is not subject of this paper's discussion.

In the Planty, we know that most people could link the two monuments to two Polish bards. Yet, when asked if they knew the poems, only 45 percent of respondents knew Lilla Weneda and 53 percent knew Grażyna. Perhaps more interesting is that for both poems, over 90 percent of respondents who indicated that they knew the poems, also indicated that they had learned about the poem at school. Skórczewski and Polakowska's (2020, p. 96) have argued that Romantic Era literature still 'constitute[s] the main component of the humanistic education of successive generations [of Poles] ... [meaning that it has influence] ... in shaping their worldview, value system, and life stance and to a degree act as a filter for interpreting current social, political, and philosophical impulses'. Such sentiments regarding the impactful reach of this literature have been echoed by Jaskułowski et al. (2018, p. 78), who have argued that 'states use school history education to impose a sense of belonging to an imagined community through the construction of a national collective memory'. Speaking specifically on the linkages between history and nationalism in the Polish education system, Jaskułowski et al., (2018, p. 80) have also noted the predominance of a

collective hero – [where] the Polish nation [is] personified mainly by different political figures. The narrative of these history textbooks [are] shaped by a schematic narrative template (Wertsch 2002), which can be summarised in four points: the Polish nation lives peacefully; the peace is interrupted by some threat; there is a time of suffering and struggles, which inspires other nations; and, ultimately, the Polish nation triumphs over its enemies, thereby proving its love of freedom.

Mickiewicz and Słowacki's literature tracks through this schematic narrative template. Perhaps, as some have argued, their scholarship became 'the governing principle of constructing the national discourse'. They narrated the nation, contributing to the founding of its schematic template too (Wandycz 1974; Walicki 2001; Gross 1983; Kolakowski 1983; Skórczewski & Polakowska 2020, p. 92; Bhabha 1994). Although the question of an independent Poland loomed large, and successive failed revolts had 'marked the end of many Romantic illusions' (Walicki 2001, p. 21), much of this era of Romantic Era literature was geared towards the maintenance of Polishness and longing for Polish autonomy, highlighted via cultural expression through the Polish language. These linkages between Polish Romantic Era literature, patriotism and the nation were affirmed in the participants' responses to a series of Likert statements asked at the end of the survey (see Figure 4). Of note was very high positive response to the statement regarding '*the use of Romantic poets in the Planty monuments demonstrates the importance of Polish literature and the Polish language to Polish identity*'; 75 percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Such positive affirmation demonstrates this literature's role 'in the construction of identity discourse by constantly casting the past over the present' (Skórczewski & Polakowska 2020, p. 93). It also strengthens what Smolicz and Secombe (1985, p. 109) have called an 'indissoluble link' between the 'Polish language and the perpetuation of the Polish people as a distinct social and cultural group'. These two monuments "claim" contemporary Polish populations into their narratives that cultivate 'memory of one's distinctiveness and of sacrifices made ... [which feed] ... into the discourse of victimization' and occupation (Skórczewski & Polakowska 2020, p. 93; Azaryahu 2003; Królikowska 2018). The concomitant narrative of suffering and victimisation holds strong purchase in articulations of Polish cultural memory and identity (Drozdowski 2008) and especially with older cohorts of Poles for whom Soviet socialist occupation remains a 'felt' experience. Adopting this narrative of suffering – tightly bound with Messianism – facilitated, as Davies (2005a, p. 401) has argued was 'a refusal to accept the political situation as reality'.

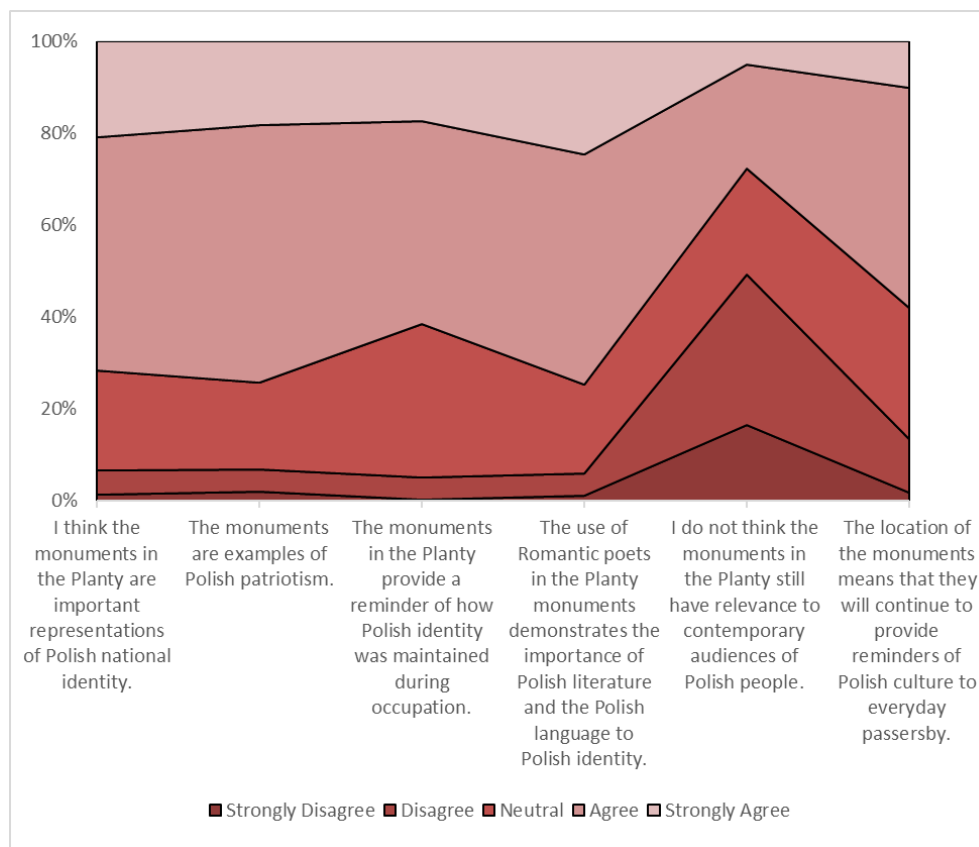


Figure 4. Response to Likert Scale Questions
Source: author's own research

Cultivated in the Polish Romantic literature, Messianic ideology, 'enabled them [Poles] to explain the national catastrophe of Poland and made them believe that her [sic] sufferings were not in vain, since, like the suffering of Christ, they served as a purifying force for the general redemption and regeneration of mankind [sic]' (Walicki 1982, p. 44). Skórczewski and Polakowska (2020, p. 99) have argued that 'the effects of messianic thinking are still noticeably in the political thought and collective behaviour of Poles'. Indeed, much of the overt and embedded memorials, plaques and monuments in the Polish everyday streetscape reference and this reinforces this narrative too (Drozdowski 2014, 2016). This point returns us, in part, to the question asserted at the beginning of the tale, does any of this public statuary matter? While the responses in Figure 4 cumulatively affirm these strong (re)assertions of Polish national identity linked to distinctive narrative threads from the Romantic Era, what makes these results more interesting is that only one-third of respondents would have been adults over the age of 18 in the 1980s, the last decade of the most recent foreign occupation of Poland. Most respondents were, at the time of the survey in 2011, between 18 and 34 years of age; their assertions of Polish national identity cannot come from felt experience(s) of occupation, rather they (would) have been learnt. Indeed, around half of all respondents who indicated that they knew the poems and had learnt them at school, fell into the two youngest age categories in the survey (18–25 and 26–34). Jaskulowski et al., (2021, p. 17) noted that the 'legacy of nationalist memory pedagogy has proved to be very persistent' and in line with a nationalist model of history education in Poland, which follows 'a common and coherent

national narrative to form the basis of a common national identity' (Jaskulowski et al. 2021, p. 15). Furthermore, these strongly positive affirmations of Polish Romantic nationalism by younger cohorts of respondents are also indicative of Skórczewski and Polakowska's (2020, p. 95) argument that:

Romanticism is still considered the fundament of modern Polish subjectivity, and the study of Romantic poets has moulded the imagination of young Polish readers for a long time and to an unrivalled degree; it has determined the framework of their later worldview, civic attitude, and hierarchy of (both aesthetic and existential) values. Its expression can be found in life preferences and ideological choices, or else simply the Polish "way of thinking" among both old and young generations.

These common and coherent narratives and ways of thinking have multiple forms of (re)production. In the Planty, they manifest as women upholding the moral fortitudes of their nation. They are part of the 'invisible order that sustains' a narrative schematic – founded in the Romantic Era – of the Polish nation, in the everyday landscapes of its cities.

Invisible order and the memoryscape

I have asked many questions in this paper; most culminate around a common thread – does a city's memoryscape matter, and if so, how? The short answer is yes, they matter. Monuments such as Grażyna and Lilla Weneda tell us something about how a nation conceives of and memorialises its past. That 'something' has deeply embedded roots in the politics of memory of the nation, a politics that is equally deeply entwined with (re)production of national identity.

Earlier in the paper, I motioned that the field data informing this position was collected some time ago. Like Polo, who always told his stories to Khan in retrospect, this tale of two monuments is also profoundly retrospective. I hazard to guess that I would have provided the same short answer – yes – back in 2011 when I completed the postdoctoral fieldwork. Yet, my response to the second part of the question – how? – has more nuance now. That distinction relates to better understanding the complexity of the politics of Polish memory *and* to recognising the interplay of (in) visibility and order in the memoryscape too.

A representation-based reading of the Planty as a memoryscape provided us with the context – socio-cultural and place-based – of two monuments. They are indicative of an influential and impactful period in Polish history when foreign occupation and cultural suppression provided impetus for political emigres to champion Polish nationalism through cultural and literary scholarship. However, their placement in a highly pedestrianised thoroughfare alone does not necessarily ensure that this national narrative conveys to the passer-by. Rather, in the case of these two monuments, the visibility of the cultural memory came to fore when reinforced by other modes of cultural transmission – evidenced herein through their (re)production in the education system. This supporting cultural narrative provides what Khan was looking for in terms of 'a coherent, harmonious

system underlying the infinite deformities and discords' of the city (Calvino 1974, p. 122). I suspect that this type of monument, which reinforces dominant cultural memory such as struggle and resistance against foreign occupation, is so ubiquitous in the Polish everyday memoryscape that it does represent an invisible order in Polish cities. That order is reassuring and purposeful in that the expectation is that memory of the nation is on show in public. But far from it being generic and/or tending towards sameness, the tale of these two monumental women show diversity in choice of *how* that national narrative *can be* depicted.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks goes to Ewelina Żurawicz, who provided research assistance translation and transcription, in the 2011 research project. I also thank Professors Kenneth Foote and Maoz Azaryahu for the opportunity to revisit my original thesis material, add the 2011 data to it, and then think through it with a Calvino lens. And to the late Professor Jan Monk, who I was fortunate to coauthor with, you were an inspiration for thinking through women in the landscape, thank you.

ORCID

Danielle Drozdowski  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6802-0540>

References

- Azaryahu, M 2003, 'RePlacing memory: The reorientation of Buchenwald', *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 10, pp. 1–20.
- Bhabha, HK 1994, *The location of culture*, Routledge, London.
- Brook, P 1969, 'Polish nationalism' in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, eds PF Sugar & IJ Lederer, University of Washington Press, pp. 310–372.
- Calvino, I 1974, *Invisible cities*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Cohen, SJ 1999, *Politics without a past: The absence of history in post communist nationalism*, Duke University Press, USA.
- Cudny, W & Appelblad, H 2019, 'Monuments and their functions in urban public space', *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift*, vol. 73, no. 5, pp. 273–289.
- Davies, N 2005a, *God's playground: A history of Poland, Vol. 1*, Oxford University Press, Norfolk.
- Davies, N 2005b, *God's playground: A history of Poland, Vol. 2*, Oxford University Press, Norfolk.
- Drozdowski, D 2008, *Remembering Polishness: Articulating and maintaining identity through turbulent times in Geography*, University of New South Wales, Sydney.
- Drozdowski, D 2014, 'When the everyday and the sacred collide: Positioning Płaszów in the Kraków landscape', *Landscape Research*, vol. 39, no.3, pp. 255–266.
- Drozdowski, D 2016, 'Encountering memory in the everyday city' in *Memory, Place and Identity: Commemoration and remembrance of war and conflict*, eds D Drozdowski, S De Nardi & E Waterton, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 19–37.
- Drozdowski, D 2018, 'Locating the geopolitics of memory in the Polish streetscape' in *The Political Life of Urban Streetscapes*, eds R Rose-Redwood, D Alderman & M Azaryahu, Routledge, pp. 114–131.
- Drozdowski, D, De Nardi, S & Waterton, E 2016, 'Geographies of memory, place and identity: Intersections in remembering war and conflict', *Geography Compass*, vol. 10, no.11, pp. 447–456.
- Drozdowski, D & Monk, J 2020, Representing women and gender in memory landscapes in *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Feminist Geographies*, eds A Datta, P Hopkins, L Johnston, E Olson & JM Silva, Routledge, London, pp. 254–270.
- Gross, JT 1983, *'In search of history,' in Poland: Genesis of a revolution*, Vintage Books, New York, pp. 3–10.
- Jaskułowski, K, Majewski, P & Surmiak, A 2018, 'Teaching the nation: History and nationalism in Polish school history education', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 77–91.
- Jaskułowski, K, Majewski, P & Surmiak, A 2021, *Teaching history, celebrating nationalism: School history education in Poland*, Routledge.
- Kołąkowski, L 1983, *'The intelligentsia,' in Poland: Genesis of a revolution*, Vintage Books, New York, pp. 54–67.
- Krotofil, J & Motak, D 2018, 'A critical discourse analysis of the media coverage of the migration crisis in Poland: the Polish Catholic Church's perception of the "migration crisis"', *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, vol. 28.
- Królikowska, AM 2018, 'The question of the persistence of romantic nationalism in Poland with regard to its religious aspects', *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 441–459.
- Krzyzanowski, J 1968, *Polish Romantic literature*, Books for Libraries Press, New York.
- Krzyzanowski, J 1978, *A history of Polish literature*, PWN-Polish Scientific Publishers, Poland.
- Miłosz, C 1969, *The history of Polish literature*, The Macmillan Company, London.
- Nora, P 1989, 'Between memory and history: Les lieux de memoire', *Representations*, no. 26, pp. 7–24.
- OpenStreetMaps 2024. Available from: <<https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=15/50.0596/19.9323>>. [29 May 2024].
- Rose, G 2001, *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*, Sage Publications, Wiltshire.
- Skórczewski, D & Polakowska, A 2020, *Polish literature and national identity: A postcolonial landscape*, Boydell & Brewer, Rochester.
- Smolicz, JJ & Secombe, MJ 1985, 'Polish culture and education in Australia: A review of some recent research and educational developments' in *Polish people and culture in Australia*,

- eds R Sussex & J Zubrzycki, Australian National University, Canberra, pp. 108–146.
- Suchodolski, B 1987, *A history of Polish culture*, Interpress Publishers, Belgrade.
- Tyner, JA, Alvarez, GB & Colucci, AR 2012, 'Memory and the everyday landscape of violence in post-genocide Cambodia', *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 13, pp. 853–871.
- Walicki, A 1982, *Philosophy and romantic nationalism: The case of Poland*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Walicki, A 2001, 'Traditions of Polish nationalism in comparative perspective', *Dialogue and Universalism*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 5–51.
- Wandycz, PS 1974, *The lands of partitioned Poland, 1795–1918*, University of Washington Press, USA.
- Warner, M 1985, *Monuments and maidens: The allegory of the female form*, Butler & Tanner, London.
- Wedel, J 1990, 'The ties that bind in Polish society' in *Polish paradoxes*, eds S Gomulka & A Polonsky, Routledge, Cornwall, pp. 237–260.
- Wertsch, JV 2002, *Voices of collective remembering*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Withers, CWJ 1996, 'Place, memory, monument: Memorialising the past in contemporary highland Scotland', *Ecumene*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 325–344.
- Young, JE 1993, *Texture of memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning*, Yale University Press, Yale.Press.