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A NEXUS OF TIME AND SPACE, OR ON THE ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY EVERYDAY IN A TENEMENT COURTYARD

**Splot czasu i przestrzeni, czyli o codziennej codzienności
i codzienności niecodziennej na podwórku w kamienicy czynszowej**

Abstract: The everyday is located in a space-time filled with various practices, problems, non-human creatures; it relates to human beings and places in which they exist. In the article, I reconstruct the ways of experiencing and practising the everyday in tenement courtyards. I present the image of the ordinary everyday as revealed by interviews with tenement dwellers of Maribor in Slovenia, as well as the image of the extraordinary everyday as reported in the diaries and memoirs of the residents of Warsaw tenements during the World War II. Taking the “courtyard everyday” as my example, I demonstrate that the everyday has more than one shape, that it is relative and situational in nature, and that its contents and structure change depending on, among others, people’s biographies, modes of behaviour, objects of which they make use, and their involvement in the constant process of constructing a place.

Key words: the ordinary everyday, the extraordinary everyday, a tenement courtyard, a tenement garden, Warsaw chapels, Maribor, Warsaw, World War II

Streszczenie: Codziennosc ulokowana jest w czasoprzestrzeni wypeŋnionej r3oznymi praktykami, problemami, nie-ludzkimi bytami, dotyczy człowieka i miejsc, w których on przebywa. W artykule rekonstruuje sposoby doświadczenia i praktykowania codzienności na podwórkach kamienic czynszowych. Przedstawiam obraz codziennej codzienności, jaki wyłania się z opowieści mieszkańców kamienic w słoweńskim Mariborze, oraz obraz niecodziennej codzienności rysujący się ze wspomnień i zapisu w dziennikach lokatorów warszawskich kamienic z czasów drugiej wojny światowej. Na przykładzie „podwórkowej codzienności” pokazuję, że codzienność nie ma jednej postaci, ma charakter relatywny i sytuacyjny, jej treść i struktura zmieniają się m.in. wraz z ludzkimi biografiami, zachowaniami, rekwizytami, zaangażowaniem w stałe konstruowanie miejsca.

Słowa kluczowe: codzienność codzienna, codzienność niecodzienna, podwórko w kamienicy czynszowej, przydomowy ogród, kapliczki warszawskie, Maribor, Warszawa, druga wojna światowa

The everyday

The everyday “is only seemingly without importance”, writes J. Brach-Czaina, adding that it is necessary to describe it with more precision, “talking about the entanglement into the struggles that accompany existence” (Brach-Czaina 1999: 71).¹ In this sense, phenomenologists emphasise that “the reality of everyday life is organized around the ‘here’ of my body and the ‘now’ of my present”, so it “embraces phenomena that are not present ‘here and now’”. This means that I experience everyday life in terms of differing degrees of closeness and remoteness, both spatially and temporally” (Berger, Luckmann 1991: 36). Everyday life embraces everything that occurs on any given day, covering both what is the commonplace and what is festive (Zadrożyńska 2003: 157). The everyday includes the parameter of the places in which a person exists (“the usual place”) and the parameter of time he or she experiences (“since forever”). To these spatio-temporal constraints, Roch Sulima adds one more parameter, the corporeal one: “The horizon of the everyday, that is of those things that daily

¹ All quotations from Polish-language sources have been translated for the purpose of the current publication.

‘chafe’ me, delineating the ‘here and now’ of my body, my experience, my perception of the social universe”. He also recalls that observation, made by A. Giddens, that “for those in most societies, and for most of the days in an individual’s life, mobility takes place within relatively constricted time-space prisms” (Giddens 1986: 114, herein after Sulima 2003: 238).

I perceive the everyday as a space-time filled with the actions and duties identified with what is “ordinary, commonplace, repetitive, routine, typical, customarily accepted, normal, and thus homely any obvious” (Tarkowska 1992: 68). This space-time pulsates in a variety of rhythms: some actions are performed several times a day, others – once in a while. Ewa Kosowska qualifies such actions as part of the “daily everyday”, often associated with “monotony and pressure of repeating actions (...) which are non-creative and which are present in every culture and on all levels of social life”, highlighting the fact that it is not identical for every person, since the everyday “is linked to the quality, pace and style of living” (Kosowska 2011: 172). One of the scholars to demonstrate that the everyday does not possess a single form was Yuri Lotman, describing daily life in the Russian culture of the late 18th and early 19th century. He defined the everyday as the “common flow of life in its real and practical forms”, adding that the “way of life is comprised of the things surrounding us, our habits and everyday behaviour” (Lotman, 1994: 10). Ewa Kosowska stresses the fact that a violent disintegration of the “daily everyday” is always possible, “resulting from an every that imparts an entirely new rhythm on our lives”; in effect, a person enters the realm of the “extraordinary everyday” (Kosowska 2011: 172), which often requires a reaction, „actions directed towards imparting order on what has been unexpectedly destabilized” (Kosowska 2011: 177).

The everyday is practised, writes Roch Sulima; this indicates that it materializes not only in everyday actions, but also in the objects which we use and which surround us, in the problems with which we struggle and solve as we go, in the non-human beings that exist in our reality. It is located in space, embedded in things and words from which the “everyday stories” emerge (Sulima 2000: 7). Thus, the everyday concerns human beings and the places in which they spend their time. Yi-Fu Tuan typified places as public symbols and fields of care. He singled out places that are fields of care – among which he counted the home and garden – on the basis of the close relation that people have with those places and experience thereof; those places are recognised from the inside and from a subjective

perspective (Tuan 1974: 4). To the list of places that are fields of care as presented by Tuan, I hereby add the courtyard; a place closely packed with meanings, faces and relations, one that stimulates the anthropological imagination, and I relate the two forms of the everyday singled out by E. Kosowska – the ordinary everyday and the extraordinary everyday – as experienced and practised within the space of the courtyard.

The empirical material made use of herein derives from several sources. To describe the ordinary everyday, I use the interviews I collected, concerning the courtyards of tenements in central Maribor. Within the framework of ethnographic research I conducted in July 2002 among the inhabitants of Maribor tenements, I carried out five unstructured interviews on the topic of courtyard life.² The picture of the extraordinary everyday, in turn, is constructed on the basis of Warsaw courtyards. The courtyards I selected for this purpose are those in which shrines had been erected during the Second World War (i.e. the German occupation and the Warsaw Uprising). I reconstruct the extraordinary everyday of Warsaw courtyards on the basis of materials collected by Magdalena Stopa (Stopa, 2009; Stopa, Bohdziewicz 2011), namely the reports of eyewitnesses who remembered the erection of those shrines and the accompanying events. I also make use of diaries and accounts authored by the inhabitants of Warsaw tenements during the war, reporting the reality of Warsaw under the occupation.

The ordinary everyday

Maribor, a city located in northern Slovenia close to its borders with Austria and Hungary, retained its agricultural character for a long time, namely until the 19th century, despite the fact that trade and crafts were developing there since the beginnings of that century. A new type of residential housing, tenements with rented lodgings, constructed in the plots of land located in the city centre, appeared in the urban landscape only during the latter half of the 19th century, as the role of industry was growing (cf. Godina 1992). The courtyards of those tenements accommodated artisan's workshops and various spaces related to trade, but also pigsties, cowsheds, rye granaries, toilets, laundries, cesspits, water wells, rubbish bins and ash containers, as well as vegetable patches and flower gardens, often with fruit trees, and even small vineyards (Ferlež 2001).

² Transcriptions of those interviews are in my archive.

During the inter-war period, and even after the war, the subsequent residents reduced or increased the capacity of the buildings (for instance by adding floors or porches), opened shops in ground-level spaces turned towards the street, and at the back, in the courtyards, they added, relocated or demolished buildings housing laundries, toilets, storage rooms and closets, pigsties and rabbit sheds; utility rooms were changed to residential quarters or rented out for storage or craftsmen's workshops. In large plots, two inner courtyards were laid out, sometimes divided by fencing or a building (one that enabled passage between them). The first courtyard related to the street and the type of craft practised therein; it was criss-crossed by communication routes frequented by the residents, lodgers and clients, and was filled with everyday life unseen from the street. In the back courtyard, the plot of land would be closed with a garden; these gardens varied in size (Pirkovič-Kocbek 1982: 12; Ferlež 2001: 74-75).

In the inter-war period, and earlier as well, the garden belonged to the owner of the tenement (who was often a craftsman or a trader at the same time), but it is difficult to say who was responsible for its appearance: the owner himself or some member of his family. In the 19th century it was possible to rent out the garden; usually some part of it was included in the lease of an apartment in the given tenement (Ferlež 2001: 197). After the Second World War, each of the residents was allowed to plant a small vegetable patch in the garden space, but it had to be done with the agreement of the tenement's overseer. From the 1990s onwards, on the plots of land where the matter of ownership has been settled and have not been built over with residential blocks, the owner decides whether a part of the courtyard would still continue to be used as a garden and how that garden would look like (Ferlež 2001: 199, 251).

In 2002 I conducted in Maribor ethnographic research concerning courtyards of tenements in the city centre.³ The most willing to talk to me were the elderly residents, who shared their memories of the daily life of the courtyards in the 1950s and '60s, that is in the period when they would customarily sit in front of the house, drink coffee, play cards, gossip, exchange views with the lessees of various trading units and craft workshops, and observe the children at play. They constructed their image of courtyards in those bygone days from the recalled scraps of reality

³ My guide to Maribor courtyards was Dr Jernieja Ferlež, an ethnologist, researcher and expert on the city's history.

defined by everyday objects, working in the courtyard gardens, the animals that accompanied them (usually cats or pigeons), memorable events (e.g. picnics shared by neighbouring families), children's games. Their nostalgic turning towards the days of the past did not yield a true image, but a subjective combination of memory and imagination; a fact of which they seemed well aware. On the basis of their memories I reconstructed the "courtyard everyday" of Maribor's residents living in tenements containing rented lodgings. Let us, therefore, begin our account from the courtyard garden.

Contrary to the popular name "family garden" used by Maribor's residents, this garden was shaped by one person. One of my interviewees (b. 1936) told me that the garden used to be looked after by his grandmother, occasionally helped by other members of the family to which the tenement belonged. His grandmother would go to the garden each day and my interviewee had to assist her (because, as he stressed, "my parents made me") in some tasks: remove weeds, tie beanstalks to poles, break up the soil in the seed-beds or hand her the tools she needed. The "commonplace everyday" of the garden imparted very different sensations and emotions on the grandmother and her grandson. Routine tasks connected with planning the crops and looking after the vegetables, fruit and flowers, as well as observing the effects of her work, were perceived by the grandmother as a rhythm that imparted structure on her life; gardening tasks were an essential component of her everyday life, or even her existence. The grandson considered accompanying Granny during gardening to be banally commonplace; he went to the garden "to avoid Father's grumbling", he reported. He was bored by the tasks she set him, he completed them quickly and without much care. Rüdiger Safranski is of the opinion that the reasons for boredom must be ascribed to the object as much as the subject. The person whose "way of experiencing things is dulled, weakened" and who notices little soon gets bored.

But [this way] cannot be too dulled, or they would not notice they are missing something. (...) Boredom requires a modicum of openness, curiosity and readiness to experience things. As to the object side of boredom, it happens that the reality offers too little and stimulates too weakly. (...) A thing that initially seemed attractive usually loses its charm as a result of routine and habit (Safranski 2017: 14).

He also refers to Artur Schopenhauer, who associated a penchant for boredom with the period of life, and points out that in youth, a person is constantly in search for new sensations. My interviewee – then a teenager – complained that the garden did not provide him with stimulation or thrill, and the company of his grandmother and the need to complete the tasks she set him tore him away from the “real life” unfolding in another part of the courtyard – the one turned to the street. Despite these differences in the perception of the realities of everyday life – differences resulting from individual sensibilities, imagination, preferences or values – it must be noted that this commonplace reality, the “object” of every person’s continuous experience (Szyszkowska 1985: 5-6), constituted a connection between the grandmother and the grandson who participated in it.

To pass on to the courtyard located on the street side of the plot of land; the reality of this segment of space was made up of varied, concurrent realities of many people – the adult residents of the tenement and their children, as well as the bakers employed in the bakery operating in a building inside that courtyard. Due to his age, my interviewee rarely participated actively in the everyday of the adults, but he perceived it in a multi-sensory way – it was attractive and exciting to him, pulsating with images, sounds and aromas. The main element in the landscape of this part of the courtyard were people – their interactions and social relations, highlighting the dynamic character of the place and its connection to time (cf. Massey 1994). Their activities resulted from their attachment to space; this is what David Seamon described as “time-space routines”, with “place-ballets”, that is, activities performed in a concrete place in a repetitive and predictable manner, being the result thereof (Seamon 1980: 157). The life in the courtyard differed depending on the time of day: various groups became active at different hours. My interviewee reported that beginning in the very early hours, the bakery generated movement which he liked to observe: horse-drawn carts loaded with sacks of flour arrived, workers transported bread to the shop in the front of the tenement in push-carts, they shouted at each other, quarrelled, talked, joked. The time until noon was dominated by children. The adults, especially women, became more active in the afternoon: one person was doing the laundry, another was beating a carpet, some even from the day before was commented on, a neighbour was looking after his rabbits in the shed, and the lady who lived on the first floor called to her hens and fed them. The hens were disliked by the tenement’s residents (“because they fouled everything and

the chicken coop stank”) and caused many quarrels with their owner. The air was often heavy with the odour of fresh horse dung, if that was not removed. Social life began in the evenings. My interviewee participated in the everyday of the adults while he spent his time in the courtyard, but also when he was at home and the windows giving onto the courtyard were open. The smell of freshly baked bread, the people’s laughter and conversations, the whinnying of horses and clucking of hens “entered” his flat, carrying with them the atmosphere of courtyard space and thus reinforcing his perception of the courtyard and his connection with it (cf. Stanisiz 2012: 108).

To return to the other part of the courtyard space, that is the garden: the everyday is cyclical, it resides in what has been repeated “since forever”. Botanists are of the opinion that a garden comes to life in early spring, when the soil starts to exude a scent, indicating that its micro-organisms began to process the remnants of last year’s insects, birds and leaves, and that summer heralds the end of this cycle (Zajączkowska 2020: 72). During the cyclical, recurring seasons of the year, human activity in the garden effectuates changes in the appearance of nature – the “different” yet repetitive “other” effects that are “measurable, imaginable, expected, permitted and tamed in their likelihood” (Kunce 2006: 211). Gardening practices construct this space each day, from every spring to every autumn; by supporting the annually recreated biological matter, gardening constantly turns the garden towards the future. Roch Sulima (2000: 24-25) described the universe of worker allotments in a large city in the following manner:

There are many signs of the future there, linked to agricultural practices that cannot be discontinued. There, everything must be done anew, experienced again and again (...). It would most probably be possible to take a plan of an allotment and draw on it quite precise lines recording movements and actions, thus producing layered “maps” of actions

– and this could easily be applied also to the reality of the gardens located in the courtyards of Maribor tenements.

So how does the agricultural everyday in Maribor tenement gardens look like? People perform – in the prearranged order and usually without much reflection – certain tamed and obvious actions: digging and turning the soil, laying out flowerbeds and vegetable patches, sowing, planting, removing, cutting, pulling, gathering, tending, spraying, fertilising, wa-

tering. These practices and their rhythm depend on whether the garden is used for vegetables and decorative flowers or whether it is a small orchard with a few fruit trees or perhaps a vineyard. In the past, water was brought in large containers from the first courtyard; today, rubber hose is used for watering the plants. Manure was supplied by animals kept in the stables, pigsties or cowsheds, also located in the first courtyard, but some gardeners had it brought from the countryside (cf. Vojskovič 1988: 15; Ferlež 2001: 197); today, gardens are fertilised with compost or manure bought at a garden centre. It was customary to reserve a place for a compost heap in the garden; this is where the owners put the organic waste of their households. Decaying compost attracted flies and wasps and, just like manure, emitted a foul smell; more reasons why my interviewee, and other residents of the tenement, tended to avoid the garden. Another Maribor resident observed that neighbours, then as now, tend to sit and talk in places located as far from the garden as possible – today because of the flies that gather at the compost heap, and before the war because of the intense stink of manure spread on the vegetable patches. Besides, no recreation spaces were reserved in those gardens where the crops were grown to be sold and where many vegetables and fruit trees were planted (Godina 1992: 68; Ferlež 2001: 197) – the tenement’s residents met in the part of the courtyard adjacent to the street. This situation changed in the late 20th and early 21st century: everyday gardening stopped being an economic necessity and became pleasure, and as a result people began to spend their leisure time there. But only the owners of gardens have the opportunity to do so.

Gardeners organise their gardens’ space, imposing hierarchies on it, giving a structure and meaning to distinct areas. As put by Rosario Assunto, a garden is “a space entirely *different* from the spaces which our daily life consumes, consuming itself in them”, which according to Mateusz Salwa means that garden space is qualitatively endowed, “the practical (utilitarian) dimension (...) is enhanced by the aesthetic dimension” (Assunto 1988, after Salwa 2015: 88, 90). A garden is a space of “living contemplation” which is active in its nature – it embraces “not only observing it from a distance, but all activity, from strolling to gardening” (Salwa 2015: 91). Some part of the garden section of Maribor tenement courtyards is reserved for flowers, decorative grasses or shrubs. Many women proudly point out that “this lovely little pink plantation” is under their care, that they have planted „this tree or this shrub” themselves

(Ferlež 2001: 197-198). One of the residents has a few fruit trees and some grapevines in his garden. In the autumn he produces a few litres of wine from the grapes and some plum brandy (*slivovitz*) from the plums. Other owners place the carefully gathered vegetables in storage sheds or cellars, process tomatoes or cucumbers to put them in jars, and turn fruits into juices and jams to enhance their menu throughout the autumn and winter.⁴ Thus, in essence, the everyday of actions undertaken in a garden does not differ from that of actions undertaken outside it: it is imbued with the experience of the present time; but in this case, this present time is “forward-slanting” (Sulima 2003: 238), “aimed at the future, because it contains a certainty not only that ‘tomorrow’ would come, but also that it would be similar to ‘today’ and ‘yesterday’” (Krajewski 2009: 198).

The everyday consists not only of repeated actions; it amounts to “a complex arrangement of things, actions, interactions, a very elaborate system of people and objects” (Krajewski 2009: 180) located in a definite time-space. It is precisely their spatial order that is indispensable to achieve the sense of safety and rootedness in the world. Today, the front courtyards are occupied by parked cars. Huddled to tenement walls are the decaying pieces of furniture and objects expelled from domestic spaces in which they one functioned – “now” they belong to the iconosphere of the courtyard and they reveal their existence in time; they are a symbol of daily human activity in the past and present. They also attest to a different aspect of the everyday, usually perceived as “arresting the passage of time, standing beside the course of daily matters” (Hernas 1997:115). In addition, these slowly disintegrating pieces indicate that the space by the tenement is filled in a shared manner. They are plastic chairs, stools, wobbly benches and worn tables of various sizes, their tops occupied by overflowing ashtrays, plates and bottles, abandoned children’s bicycles and toys. In some courtyards, electric cables and light bulbs have been installed, so that evenings too can be spent outside. There are also courtyards with two seating areas, located on the opposite ends of the space, which prompts us to suspect that there is some rift between the residents of the tenement (cf. Ferlež 2001: 204).

⁴ Before the war, the surplus was sold (Ferlež 2001: 197-199). Gardens in the suburban working-class districts were of particular importance in this context; fruits and vegetables grown therein constituted a much needed addition to the family’s meagre budget (Godina 1992: 68-69).

The extraordinary everyday

“The everyday materialises in the discontinuities of existence; it becomes problematic then, it lends itself to verbalisation and is accessible to deliberative consciousness”, writes Roch Sulima (2003: 243). One of such discontinuities of existence is war.

During the Second World War, with the escalation of terror in the form of raids, street round-ups and the ever increasing number of restrictions and prohibitions, the residents of Warsaw were pushed into the realm of the extraordinary everyday. The necessity of complying with the orders issued by the German occupiers resulted in a violent collapse of many everyday practices, a disintegration of their repetitive and monotonous rhythm. The structure of daily life underwent a rapid metamorphosis and acquired a new quality. People ceased to expect the everyday existence to be safe, and as a result they lost the certainty – to use Zygmunt Bauman’s formulation – originally applied to a different context but pertinent to the nature of the occupation period – “as to what will occur and what cannot occur, what to do and what to avoid” (Bauman 2009: 77).

Marek Krajewski reveals the paradox of the everyday: even though it is repetitive and predictable, it is experienced consciously only when it becomes extraordinary. In this case, “there appear reflection and self-consciousness, but also actions aimed at preventing chaos”, that is, there comes a moment which releases a person’s creative activity (Krajewski 2009: 197-198). The fact that the residents of Warsaw had their religious life drastically limited forced them to mobilise the forces and means to seek new ways of realising their religious needs. The nightmarish terror of the occupation resulted in the steady increase of piety, “religious ecstasy” even (Szarota 2010: 392), demonstrated through various forms of public confession of faith. The curfew and street round-ups made it difficult to reach churches; hence in the years 1943 and 1944 the custom of erecting shrines and small altars in tenement courtyards and gateways became popular in Warsaw; especially during the Warsaw Uprising those sites acquired the nature of cult places (Leociak 1994: 109). The accounts of their erection as related by the inhabitants of Warsaw tenements, as well as in the entries in wartime diaries recording the events of the German occupation, reveal not only the fact that those shrines embodied the extraordinary everyday of courtyard life, but also, more generally, the ways in which people cope when some element of their daily existence is shattered.

On 21 June 1943, Ludwik Landau wrote in his wartime chronicle:

In various districts of Warsaw – in Ochota, in Koło – residents of a tenement join forces to construct household altars, courtyard altars, or shrines, so that they can gather there after curfew for services or group prayers (Landau 1962: 507).

On 16 July 1943, the journalist Aurelia Wyleżyńska noted in her diary: “In many places, altars have been set up in gardens and courtyards. The priest came to consecrate them and they are used for evening prayers attended by the whole tenement. Those zealous put up candles” (Szarota 2010: 393). Such shrines were erected spontaneously, on the initiative of, and financed by, the tenement’s community (Szarota 2010: 393, *Matka Boska Kosmonautka...* 2009).⁵ The person to organise the venture was often the tenement’s caretaker: he collected the money to pay for the figure, which would either be commissioned from a sculptor or bought in a shop selling devotional articles (the second option being the more frequent one). One popular form was a figure of the Virgin Mary positioned on a plinth in the centre of the courtyard; another was a religious picture placed inside the shrine. The next step was to find a builder who would construct the shrine or altar. Wooden boxes with glass doors, sometimes set on a plinth, were mounted on the wall or in a niche, which often had to be specially made, in one of the tenement’s walls.⁶ Funds were collected in a number of ways; for instance, at no. 4 Słupecka Street, two concerts were organised in an apartment occupied by artists, attended by some thirty residents who came to listen to arias from several operas (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 128).

The tenement courtyard was a space located the closest to the house and separated from the street and the city outside. In order to reach the courtyard, a person needed to pass through the gateway, which constituted the boundary between the “inside” and the “outside” of the tenement, separating “my world” from “not my world”. Locked for the night, and often also during the day, the gate protected the interior of the tenement, which after curfew became a calm, safe place:

⁵ According to Szarota, in the course of a few weeks such small altars and shrines were built in all the districts of the city, with thousands of Warsaw residents spontaneously participating in their construction (Szarota 2010: 393). In those places where the pre-war buildings survived, those shrines still stand today.

⁶ Cf. the photographic documentation in the book *Kapliczki warszawskie* (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011).

The residents each gave a few coins and commissioned a shrine. During the occupation. (...) Initially it stood by the wall, on the left, so that it could not be seen through the gateway. Now it has been moved to the centre, said Waclawa Skrzypczak (b. 1930), who lived in the tenement at no. 27 Hoza Street (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 40).

The shrines imposed spatial order on courtyard space and constituted a piece of a “different” world. The site of the shrine acquired the character of a consecrated place, reinforced by flowers (“but not artificial ones, like today; real ones. In vases, too”, as emphasised by Elzbieta Kudelska, b. 1939 – Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 69) and burning candles put around it. The chroniclers of those days highlight the care – sometimes, in their view, an excessive one – invested into their decoration; they report that the decoration of the shrine constituted a topic of rivalry between courtyards. “The pious population of the capital competes for superiority as regards the beauty of flowers and profuseness of lights”, observed Ludwik Landau on 23 June 1943, and on 29 August he added:

The local dames boast: our shine cost this much. In some cases its installation took one thousand zloty, not including the daily offerings in the form of flowers, which today are very expensive. Woe betide the person of tender heart who dares to say: that sum would have been better expended on feeding the children of the poor. Tuberculosis is spreading in a terrifying manner (Landau 1962: 507).

Shrines installed in the courtyards of Warsaw tenements were a gesture and an expression of entreaty; they witnessed daily prayers to the Virgin Mary or to God, and inscriptions mounted on them to this day proclaim what was begged for and obtained. Residents of the tenement at no. 4 Słupecka Street erected their shrine in the autumn of 1943 as a thanksgiving offering. Carved on its plinth is the dedication: “At your feet, O Mother of God, we offer prayers in thanksgiving for saving all the residents of our house during the bombardment in the night of 12 May 1943” (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 128). The plinth of the shrine at no. 62 Marszałkowska Street bears the inscription: “Queen of Peace, pray for us 1944” (Zielińska 1991: 19).

During the occupation, “ordinary” matters ran differently than they used to during peacetime, as they had been derailed from their “normal” course. The routine, everyday actions were often interrupted by moments

of stillness or altered rhythm; moments in which the unavoidable obviousness of clock time was suspended. Those “rifts in the everyday” (Kowalski 1994: 57) were often filled with prayers at courtyard shrines, helping the population to cope with the horrors of war. A courtyard with a shrine or little altar became a site on which the resident’s social life focused – people united in shared prayers for the saving of their own lives or the lives of their family members, for the house and a better future, for saving their tenement from tragedy: “Everyone was pleading for the fulfilment of their own requests”, said Wanda Skrzypczak (b. 1930) (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 40). In many courtyards, the tenement’s caretaker called the residents to prayer at an appointed hour and intoned the songs (Zielińska 1991: 9).

“After 9 p.m., when the din of outside life is quietening, tenement residents are gathering for shared prayers”, wrote Landau in his diary on 23 August 1943 (Landau 1962: 507).

We came to Noakowskiego Street [no. 10] for the rosary. Usually when the night began to fall. Dad, Mum, my sister, my brother and me. Only we did not come together, because it was not allowed to walk in such a large group. When the people had gathered, the caretaker would lock the gate, and at times there would be up to a hundred people standing in the yard. Not only adults; many children. Because in that place, some people would have five, even seven children (Elżbieta Kuberska, b. 1930) (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 69).

Felicja Grabek (b. 1928), who from January 1941 resided at no. 11 Brzeska Street, recalled:

Life was hard. People wanted to pray. For freedom. So those more pious put their heads together and began to collect the money for a figure. In the year forty-three they put it up in the first courtyard. Right afterwards the neighbours in the third courtyard made a shrine, too. But a small one; they hung it between the windows. In summer, when the curfew started, the caretaker locked the gate and people were signing songs (Stopa 2009: 344).

From August 1944 the courtyards with shrines substituted for the churches, which were unreachable due to street fighting. Priests from nearby churches came to say the mass, to pray with the residents, to hear their confessions or distribute the holy communion:

They built a shrine in the early August, right after the uprising started. (...) Insurgents from the 'Ruczaj' Battalion were quartered in our tenement. They brought corpses from below the Little PAST-a building to the courtyard. We prayed at the shrine. A priest came from the church of St Alexander, he heard confessions, gave communion. There was even a wedding, recalled Emilia Kopiczyńska (b. 1918), who lived at no. 13 Krucza Street (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 56).

During the Warsaw Uprising, the courtyard with a shrine at no. 62 Marszałkowska Street

became the only zone of free movement, where one was not in danger of getting under fire. (...) Units returning from direct fighting gathered in the courtyard. At the shrine, the people sang, looked for comfort. Services were held in the evening. A priest would come from the church of the Saviour, recalled Witold Thumenas (b. 1935) (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 63).

At some point during the uprising the residents went down to the cellars, and so did the prayers; only the insurgents buried around the courtyard shrines remained aboveground. Hanna Kulczycka (b. 1952), resident at no. 43 Marszałkowska Street, remembered those days:

The husband [of her father's sister] was killed during the uprising, wounded by a chance shrapnel. He was buried in that courtyard, he was taken to the Powązki Cemetery only after the war, on a wooden cart with a shaft for pulling (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 59).

During the uprising, eleven or twelve bodies were buried in the flowerbed around the shrine. The husband of the neighbour from number twenty-one, Mr Rowiński, lay there, too. He was killed at the barricade in Nowogrodzka Street. The exhumation was organised immediately after the war. Everyone took their own person to the cemetery, said Zofia Rachuba (b. 1931) from no. 19 Nowogrodzka Street (Bohdziewicz, Stopa 2011: 76).

In conclusion: regarding the everyday in the courtyard

A courtyard in an urban tenement containing rented lodgings is a rectangular space floored with beaten earth, asphalt or stone cobbles, sur-

rounded on three or four sides by the walls of buildings with windows and balconies, or by a wall or a fence, and organising the “inside” world. Thus enclosed, a courtyard, like any delimited space taken into possession and subjected to certain rules, acquires – to use Stefan Czarnowski’s phrase – a spatial individuality (Czarnowski 1982: 430). In speaking about the spatial unity of a courtyard, we mean that it constitutes a space where the life of the residents – which is the “social façade” of the tenement – is organised “here and now”. Domestic life spills from the apartments into the courtyard, turning it into an extension of residential space. Courtyard space, similarly to domestic space, is not “regulated by instructions, procedures, statutes”, but “sanctioned by tradition and custom” (Sulima 2003: 234). The dominant events in the courtyard are meetings, during which the neighbourly community is actuated – and meetings, as demonstrated by Mikhail Bakhtin, are chronotopic by nature, as spatial and temporal aspects unite and intersect there within the framework of a meaningful whole (*Bakhtin. Dialog...* 1983: 310-311). Yet also people and events from the street, from the “outside” world, enter into the courtyard. As rightly noted by Edward Relph, a place has a different meaning, and thus a different identity, in our perception depending on the degree or manner of being “outside” or “inside”. The act of “being in a place” amounts to having a phenomenological experience of that place, to the act of identifying with it. The sense of belonging to a place, similarly to “being outside”, has its degrees (Relph 1976: 49, after Seamon, Sowers 2008).

In a courtyard, these two spheres, the inside and the outside one, are mutually pervasive, influencing each other and completing the practised and experienced everyday with routine and repetitiveness, peculiarity and exceptionality; thus, they influence the changing aspects of that everyday. What needs to be stressed, therefore, is the processual quality of everyday experience, and also the fact that in the human perception a courtyard is “set in time” (the Polish neologism *uczasowić* is proposed as a term by Aleksandra Kunce 2008: 203). Time is responsible for the development of a deep connection with a place and of the sense of continuity; it is also responsible for the emergence of a type of relationships which Relph describes as “existential insidedness” (Relph 1976, after Seamon, Sowers 2008), that is situations involving a deep and unconscious immersion in a place.

In addition, the passage of time results in many forms of behaviour observable in this place acquiring a routine character, and thus it facil-

itates the performance of everyday actions. The contents and structure of the courtyard everyday “pupate” (Aleksandra Kunce 2008: 207) together with human biographies, gestures, behaviours, props and involvement in the ongoing creation of a place. A courtyard is created in the process of the everyday, routine practice, during “commonplace occurrences” (Brach-Czaina 1999: 70). The enduring habits and daily repetition of seemingly mundane actions cause the courtyard to become “a site of the tamed normalcy of a given time and place, a definite socio-cultural space-time” (Kędzierzawski 2009: 8). However, all it takes is a disruption and disintegration of the everyday rhythm and the ingrained scheme of repetitions; all it takes is that the boundaries of the “normal” are moved and events imposing a new rhythm on life intervene – and the human being begins feel threatened; when it is so, actions aimed at grasping the difficult situations and phenomena are undertaken in the space close to home. Then, the courtyard lends its space to practices that exceed the limits of normalcy and to actions that are “not in their place”. A “different” everyday enters the courtyard, forcing us to perceive the powerfully expressed individual and collective experiences in terms of the extraordinary everyday.

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