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**THE RHETORICAL SITES OF POLONIAN WOMEN'S COLLABORATION AND
CONSCIOUSNESS-BUILDING IN BALTIMORE: IN FACTORIES AND AGRICULTURE,
THEY WORKED AND GAVE STRENGTH TO OUR CULTURE**

by

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Abstract

THE RHETORICAL SITES OF POLONIAN WOMEN'S COLLABORATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS-BUILDING IN BALTIMORE: IN FACTORIES AND AGRICULTURE, THEY WORKED AND GAVE STRENGTH TO OUR CULTURE

Jolene Carr

Baltimoreans often trace their ethnic roots back to the nineteenth century immigrants who settled along the city's eastside. While the community associates Polish immigrant women with canneries and culture clubs, they typically overlook these locations in mainstream discourse for their association with everyday practices. However, examining spaces of work and leisure reveal traditional roles as powerful rhetorical devices. This thesis situates traditionally feminine sites alongside dominant landmarks in order to form a more inclusive collective identity, and explores how Baltimore Polish women accessed the public sphere through socially accepted maternal, domestic, and benevolent acts in canneries and ethnic organizations like the Polish Women's Alliance.

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Wstęp¹

In this thesis, I examine the rhetorical strategies of twentieth century Polish women as they are represented in newspaper clippings and obituaries from local archives, along with firstperson accounts from community members. As feminist rhetoric scholar Cheryl Glenn describes, rhetoric is “the relation of language and power at a particular moment including who may speak, who may listen or who will agree to listen, and what can be said” (Glenn 1). Since local archives include only minimal first person narratives of these women, a lot of my discussion will focus on how these women resisted dominant society even amidst apparent silence in the archives. Similarly, Susan Jarratt notes that “If the Western intellectual tradition is not only a product of men, but constituted by masculinity, then transformation comes not only from women finding women authors but also from a gendered rereading of that masculine rhetoric” (Jarratt 1). Most of my research focuses on rereading the way authors in historical mainstream publications present these women, allowing me to ultimately revive and revive their stories here.

Another strategy I use is Glenn’s concept of remapping rhetorical terrain. Glenn describes this process as a necessity to reposition women on the map without erasing the preexisting map (Glenn 4). In this thesis, I will metaphorically and literally map Polonian women and their rhetorical practices in Baltimore by responding to the works of feminist rhetoric scholars including Cheryl Glenn, Nan Johnson, and Lindal Buchanan. The driving force behind my research is a “passionate attachment” that stems from my own Polish ethnicity and a persistent interest in uncovering my heritage with fragments of family stories.² Chapter One examines the rhetoric of space, place, and memory that exposes the importance of these women’s

¹ Polish term for “introduction” ² Royster uses this term in *Traces of a Stream* to remind researchers that “knowledge has sites and sources and that we are better informed about the nature of a given knowledge base when we take into account its sites, material contexts, and points of origin” (Royster 280).

stories in modern society. Reconsidering who we remember historically shifts rhetorical power as we shape a new collective identity from our chosen memories. Chapter Two focuses on how Polish women employed their own version of Johnson's parlor rhetoric to develop a voice through their organizations. Parlor rhetoric recognizes the domestic realm as a valid site for studying alternative available means for women speakers and authors. Exploring how women transposed the limitations of domesticity leads us to question patriotic dominance. Chapter Three analyzes their roles as cannery workers and berry pickers through the rhetorical lens of collaboration. Considering collaboration creates an awareness of how women might mask socially acceptable roles like motherhood and marriage as rhetorical tools for access to the public platform. Overall, a focus on Polish American women in Baltimore not only reveals traces of their heritage that still exist in the city today, but also helps forge a more expansive rhetorical tradition for other forgotten voices.

Chapter One: Dead Ends Leading to Multiple Paths: A Rhetorical Memory and Walking Tour of Baltimore's Polonia

Introduction

Bmore. Monumental City. Mobtown. Crabtown. Nickel Town. The City That Breeds. The City That Bleeds. The City That Reads. Charm City.

Madison Smartt Bell begins *Charm City: A Walk Through Baltimore* contemplating the city's many nicknames. These monikers reveal the city's rich pedigree from Edgar Allan Poe, H.R. Mencken, and John Waters, to Betsy Ross, Francis Scott Key, and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Bell sets out to unearth Baltimore's history using these nicknames to guide his travels by foot. His journey sheds light on some of the monikers' origins. For example, Baltimore became Mobtown in 1861 after onlookers around Pratt Street witnessed bloodshed between Massachusetts troops and Southern sympathizers, while adman Bill Evans coined the name Charm City in 1974 to add tourist appeal. On his quest to unfold the history behind Baltimore, Bell eventually heads east to the Fells Point, Highlandtown, and Canton neighborhoods. He frames the area around their roots to the Quaker ship's carpenter William Fell (Bell 95) before describing east Baltimore then and now:

...these blocks were once dominated by Ukrainians and Lithuanians and Poles... We're in Canton now...so dubbed by John O'Donnell when he settled here in the 1780s...Saint Casimir's Roman Catholic Church, its doorway flanked by goldtopped towers, fill the entire block west of O'Donnell Square... Factories and canneries replaces the shipyards on the Canton waterfront...a hundred or so new canneries sprang up all around the harbor's edge...most of the workers were women...canneries along Boston Street began to be converted into condos...we're crossing Broadway Square...stepping over a vestigial footprint of a masonry gazebo that was ripped out a few years ago...the lower Broadway covered market is still standing—neon squiggles of the coffee-shop signs shining through the twilight. (Bell 95)

Bell steps back in time to reveal the history of east Baltimore's O'Donnell Square area. After mentioning the city's prominence along the waterfront in the eighteenth century, he exposes the presence of Eastern European immigrants and the places where they lived, worked, worshipped, and shopped. This exposure provides a platform for readers interested in Charm City to further research the area's history.

When I first moved to Baltimore, I used books like Bell's as my own compass to discover the history of my new home. Learning that the blocks of Eastern Baltimore were once "dominated by Ukrainians and Lithuanians and Poles," and that canneries depended on the labor of women, I began to notice the presence of Polish immigrant women. Particularly interested in Polish immigrant women because of my own Polish heritage, I use passion attachment to motivate my archival research and discover more about their lives. I discovered a selection of obituaries of Polish American Baltimore women who lived on the east side from the 1880s1990s. What might first appear to be a simple death notice contains historical clues embedded in memories that provide a glimpse into these women's lives. These memories in return make urban space come alive. Each obituary's headline also includes a name, date, and defining role that the women played in Baltimore society. In a sense, this descriptor serves as an epitaph. The epitaphs help us reminisce about people and their pasts.

Bell undergoes a process of reminiscing and observing during his walk to portray Baltimore to his readers. By placing the city's past alongside its present, he contests the traditional linear history that moves us from past to present. It's important, however, to take note of what Bell emphasizes. Bell and his walking companion fixate on Canton's shipyards and founder, while devoting little time to Boston Street. He recognizes structures that traditionally represent societal and economic progression: churches, factories, markets, and urban housing.

During his walk around East Baltimore, Bell mentions by name figures like William Fell and John O'Donnell, white Anglo-Saxon men who founded parts of the city. Bell references female cannery workers, yet names or details are unavailable. Although women were not traditionally founders of townships, they played large roles as worshippers, cannery workers, and wives/mothers/providers in the domestic sphere at home. They still had a strong public and private presence. To explore this presence, we must look to alternative sources outside of dominant historical artifacts. How can we demonstrate the presence of these women?

In this chapter, I wish to create historical presence for the Polish American women in East Baltimore who often remain silent and overlooked with the mundane. I will use their obituaries as a starting point to trace their rhetorical space through East Baltimore to essentially create a walking tour. I will also illustrate how their epitaphs, or verbal praise in obituary headlines, can be used to reconsider stories of the city's history that are forgotten or little known. I purposefully leave the women's stories disjointed, including only what I discovered from the obituaries and revealing only the fragments of their stories that relate to a particular place along my path. Exploring a less traditional, linear path that links the women through time periods allows us to recognize multiple stories simultaneously. This approach also demonstrates how history, although static, helps form collective memory that builds a communal awareness of people, places, and events. Our present collective decisions on who and what we choose to remember also reveals who holds rhetorical power.

Serving as poignant yet silent evidence of presence in the past, cemeteries traditionally preserve collective memory. By distinguishing the graves of common people like millworker Louisa Wells from those of prominent historical figures in the Lowell Massachusetts cemetery,

Elizabethada A. Wright demonstrates a strategy for building collective memory. When we read epitaphs, we usually know nothing of the author, assigning rhetorical power to the silenced voice of the deceased. Wright explains that with this form of rediscovery, “A memory can be saved. Yet, unlike the physicality of the cemetery, the saved memory is not real and is therefore open to numerous interpretations” (Wright 55). This causes us to constantly question and reconsider history. Fowler 156). I essentially view obituaries as archival graves that also allow for this questioning and reconsidering. In my walking tour, I will connect Wright and Fowler’s theories by viewing the descriptions of the Polish American women provided in their obituaries as epitaphs buried in archives. These obituaries build collective memory by bridging the traditionally absent voices to the presence in mainstream media sources.

Barbie Zelizer also notes the capabilities of collective memory through visual aids. However, she also points out that collective memory does not rely on collective experience (Zelizer 219). Zelizer explains that “Collective memory is not linear, logical, rational. The memory of common people are often appropriated by elites, professionals, and other cultural brokers. In most cases, power wins out” (Zelizer 223). Collective memory does not depend on holidays, monuments, or museums. Furthermore, it allows us to be comfortable with forgetting things from the past so we can constantly rewrite what we consider important (Zelizer 220). This beckons us to question the “staying power” of well-known histories and rewrite, but not erase, presences as we understand them. New stories become social, personal, and political that remained silent before. Although we don’t need structured places like monuments to recognize new memories, they still gain strength through space.

To create this space and visualization that’s necessary for building memory, I turn to

Michel de Certeau's bottom up approach that captures the everyday city (Certeau 92). To de Certeau, memory remains static and uncontained. Walking allows us to search every corner and expose the mundane:

The dispersion of stories points to the dispersion of the memorable as well. And in fact memory is a sort of anti-museum: it is not localizable. Fragments of it come out in legends. Objects and words also have hollow places in which a past sleeps, as in everyday acts of walking, eating, going to bed, in which ancient revolutions slumber. What can be seen designate what is no longer there: 'you see, here there used to be...' but it can no longer be seen. Demonstratives indicate the invisible identities of the visible: it is the very definition of a place, in fact, that is composed by these series of displacements and effects among the fragmented strata that form it and that it plays on these moving layers (de Certeau 109).

Space to de Certeau still helps shed light on the past, but memories remain inconstant. Within any given block, we might see a skyscraper alongside a tenement home. We might also see a patch of grass where people used to live and work. This is when we rely on stories to resurrect what was once present. Elissa Rosenberg builds on this notion of walking as a way to uproot silenced stories and expand collective memory. Rosenberg's research involves placards that reveal information about past Jewish citizens prominently displayed in a popular area of the Bavarian Quarter in Berlin. Displaying these placards transfers the public's attention to the everyday lives of former Holocaust victims. Rosenberg declares that "walking shifts the burden of memory onto the individual on the ground, stressing the ethical dimension of remembering as an active, participatory practice" (Rosenberg 134). When we walk, we look to either side of us, becoming aware of the prominent and subtle alike. We can extend this method to activities like

driving or bicycling.² My goal for this chapter is to use the bottom up approach to a walking tour in order to expand Baltimore history as we know it. By using the bottom up approach, we make more inclusive observations and recognize sites associated with everyday life like homes, places of worship, and schools as opposed to only noticing typically dominant structures like skyscrapers, memorials, and other major tourist attractions. This approach also serves as an example of how we can make the rhetorical tradition more inclusive and hear the voices of groups who are still silenced today. I now turn to my walking tour and begin listening, observing, creating, and questioning Baltimore's Polonia.

² Although I walked along several of the streets referenced in my thesis, the modern roadways of Baltimore City required me to drive to some of the sites. However, I refer to the overall journey as a "walking tour" to emphasize the bottom up approach rather than merely the physical activity.

Walking Tour

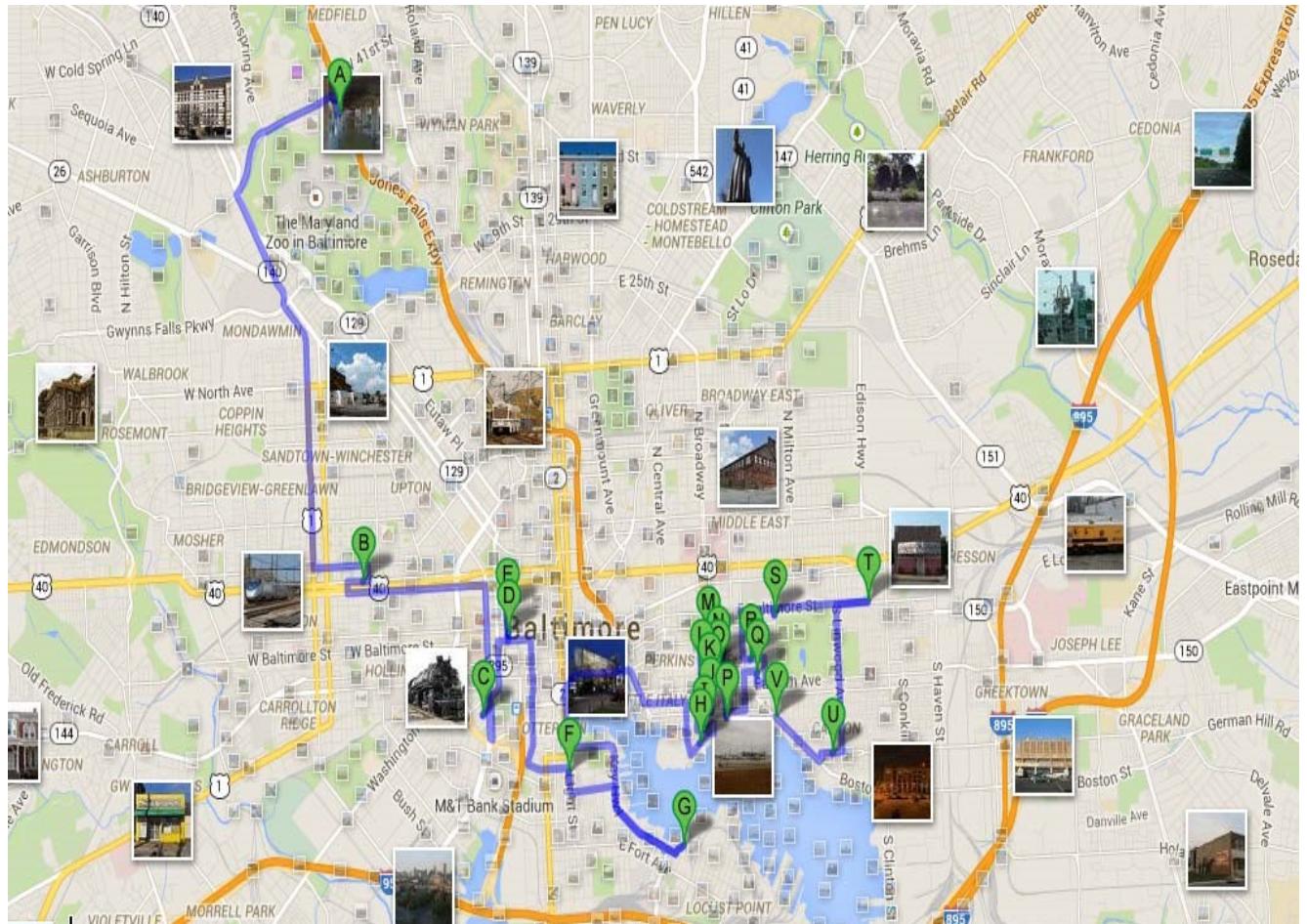


Figure 1: Map of a walking tour around Baltimore's Polonia. The letters feature places discussed in the obituaries, while the images feature popular landmarks around Baltimore City.

Traveling to the east from my north side home, I drive past the Clipper Mill neighborhood where Estella Budka, “leader of a larger family,” worked as a seamstress at the Clipper Textile Mill (Letter A in Figure 1) (“Estella Budka”). Westbound, I drive along West Franklin Street where the Eagle Dress Corporation once stood. Mary Rose Dashkevich a woman who “made WWII uniforms” worked here (Letter B in Figure 1). Dashkevich migrated to Baltimore from an area of Poland previously occupied by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Born Mary Rose Tokarz, she arrived at the age of eight. Dashkevich knew no English but managed to

learn quickly and win a grade-school spelling bee. She devoted 45 adult years to the garment industry and joined the International

Lady Garment Worker's Union in 1945. Her son Joseph Dash recalls hearing his mother discuss the dangerous factory conditions. He writes, "It didn't take much of a miscue for there to be an accident. Those industrial machines worked at several times of the speed of a home machine...There was no such thing as going to the emergency room" (qtd. in Mary Rose Dashkevich).

Driving across the west side of the city, I approach Lombard Street. As indicated by the obituary of Dorothy M. W. Krolicki, "seamstress," the area surrounding the nearby corner of Lombard Street and Paca Street (Letter C in Figure 1) was formerly a garment district. Krolicki, born Dorothy M.

Wojciechowski, worked in this area during the 1920s (Dorothy M. W. Krolicki). Nestled between Fayette and Paca Streets is the famous Hippodrome Theatre on Eutaw Street (Letter D in Figure 1). At a nearby snack shop called Tastykorn, Agnes C. Rawa, known as the "cake lady," found work in the 1920s serving nuts and popcorn to theatergoers ("SunSpot"). Passing Camden Yards and the

Harbor to head east, I picture "pioneer female cabdriver" Veronica Jacobson taking the same route to drop clients off at the Lexington Market (Letter E in Figure 1) and Light Street piers (Letter F in Figure 1) (Veronica Jacobson). Across the Harbor along Key Highway, I make out the familiar Domino Sugar plant smokestacks (Letter G in Figure 1). Eleanor M. Burke, "Domino Sugar lab worker," labored here during the

Depression after dropping out of high school to help support her family. She would later volunteer at Bon Secours Hospital (Eleanor M. Burke). I park by the waterfront at Henderson's Warf and walk to the 1600 block of Thames Street (Letter H in Figure 1) where Jacobson was

born and raised. Born Veronica Marie Jachimowicz, she married a streetcar motorman in 1929 named Milton Jaronczyk. After Jaronczyk was laid off from United Railways, he and Veronica purchased hack tags for a Chevrolet Sedan and worked for New Broadway Cab Co. Milton and Veronica also occasionally chauffeured for the Baltimore City Police Department. Their daughter Mildred Trawinski recalled her mother cropping her hair and wearing a tailored pantsuit so she looked more masculine on the job. Veronica recalled that Thames Street would be cluttered with carburetors and other car parts. She writes, “I could change a tire in five minutes. I relined the brakes on the car before my husband got up.” Veronica brewed and sold bootleg beer during the Prohibition Era and enjoyed bowling, bingo, and poker (Veronica Jacobson). I walk to Shakespeare Street (Letter I in Figure 1) and wonder which row home used to be the home of Marie Obrycki Witold. Witold, who “helped Polish immigrants”, was born on February 7, 1904 in her family’s home above their bakery during the Great Baltimore Fire. People in Marie’s life knew the following about her birth:

The irony of her birth during such a momentous event on a street named for the great bard in a community where Polish was the dominant language was not on this eldest daughter of Aleksander. . .It was symbolic of her strong sense of history, literature, and culture . . .a legacy she leaves to her grandsons and close friends” (Marie Obrycki Witold).

Her parents Aleksander and Barbara Obrycki arrived in Baltimore in the 1890s after the Polish Czar signed a death warrant for Aleksander for his progressive political activism. Aleksander continued to spearhead Polish rights in America. Marie would greet Nobel award winner and scientist Marie Skłodowska Curie and other notable guests of her father with a bouquet at their Shakespeare Street home. She married Poet Laureate of the Polish Language, Katejan, in 1929, and would teach newly arrived Polish immigrants the English language throughout her life.

Next, I travel down Aliceanna Street and pass the Broadway Market (Letter J in Figure 1). Bertha Fabiszak, “political activist,” was one of five generations from her family to sell items like chicken and sausage here. Her daughter Carolyn F. Krysiak recalled that “My grandparents had a house on Shakespeare Street, and my parents moved to Gough Street. That’s about as far as anyone got” (Bertha Fabiszak). Bertha worked with the Polish Women’s Alliance of America to help provide insurance for Polish women.³ In her 70s she flew to Chicago to help rewrite the organization’s bylaws. Past the Market, I reach the corner of South Broadway Street and Eastern Avenue, where Marie would ask for money after World War I for Polish relief (Letter K in Figure 1). She would stand for hours bowing her head down, quietly giving a “thank you” as people dropped coins by her feet (Marie Obrycki Witold).

I cross over to South Bethel Street on which Josephine M. Puppa, “Hecht employee”, was born (Letter L in Figure 1). Puppa enjoyed baking cookies, especially chruscikis, or “angel wings or pig ears,” which were bowtie-shaped pieces of lard, dipped in powdered sugar. Puppa studied English after her classes at Church because her family spoke only Polish in their Bethel Street home. She worked at a Southeast Baltimore sewing factory during high school to help pay the bills. In the 1940s, Puppa worked at a bakery before getting a job at Hecht Co. Department Store. She enjoyed taking bus trips and cruises and also traveled to Poland three times. Her granddaughter Monica S. Wilson remembered that her grandmother “told stories about old Baltimore, rich in detail about a family’s and a city’s history. One of her favorite stories, and thus one of mine, was how she went to the country in the summers to pick strawberries for 25 cent a basket” (qtd. in Josephine M. Puppa). When I reach the corner of South Broadway Street

³ I will be returning to the PWA of A in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

and East Pratt Street (Letter M in Figure 1), I envision Veronica and her daughter waiting for clients and collecting 10 cents fare (Veronica Jacobson).

After heading down Gough Street (Letter N in Figure 1) where Bertha and her husband once lived, I reach Bank Street (Letter O in Figure 1). Marie Anderson was born Marie Victoria Janocha Anderson on Bank Street. A “hotel worker, restaurateur”, she was known to “work hard all of her life” (Marie Anderson). Anastasia Czygier, who “gave aid to needy,” owned a confectionary somewhere on Bank Street with her husband. The confectionary “became a focal point of the community because it had the neighborhood’s only ice box—and later it turned into a tavern” (Anastasia Czygier). I continue traveling along Bank Street until I reach South Ann Street. Clara M. Cichowicz, “baker of cakes,” was born Clara Wolters in 1907 somewhere along this street. She also reportedly enjoyed bowling. At 700 South Ann Street (Letter P in Figure 1). I reach the immense vestibule that was once Saint Stanislaus Kostka Roman Catholic Church. Former parish members included Clara, Veronica, and Agnes. Clara attended the Church’s grade school. While Veronica attended school here until sixth grade when she dropped out to work in the garment district, Agnes left after eighth grade to work at Tastykorn (Clara M. Cichowicz). I also look for old school buildings on this street where School #6, Bertha’s school, possibly once stood (Bertha Fabiszak), but notice only a cluster of row homes.

I cross South Broadway Street once more and head down South Chester Avenue. Once I reach 408 South Chester Avenue, I see another place of worship with a strong Polish American population: The Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church (Letter Q in Figure 1). Marie and Bertha were both parish members. It was here where Josephine would sing in the choir and meet a baritone soloist who emigrated from Poland, Adam Puppa, who she would marry in 1930. Victoria A. Lukaszewski, “an activist in Polish groups,” also attended Holy Rosary (Josephine

M. Puppa). I then walk further up and see Castle Street (Letter R in Figure 1). Agnes was born Agnes Czernikowski on this street. She enjoyed baking pineapple upside-down cakes and pound cakes for community members. When I reach 10 South Patterson Park Avenue, I see the row house that Anastasia turned into the nursing home “Samopomoc,” meaning “self help,” after seeking donations door to door with other local housewives (Letter S in Figure 1). Anastasia also encouraged two Polish-American women to go to Poland in 1932 and take their vows with the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate. The nuns would eventually return to help run the home. She solicited supplies from the milkman, bread man, and nearby grocery stores, and also eventually established a nursery for the children of working women. Anastasia would also help establish homes for 18 families who survived the Holocaust, and I wondered if these homes were also nearby.

From here, I travel down to the corner of East Baltimore Street and South East Avenue (Letter T in Figure 1). Marie owned and operated the former Anderson’s Restaurant that was located here. Somewhere along East Avenue, 21 year-old Anastasia bought a home with her first husband, Walter Swicrczewski, a stevedore. Bedridden and pregnant with her second child, she taught herself how to read and write in both Polish and English using a prayer book and newspaper. She also organized an insurance society that guaranteed decent funerals for community members (Anastasia Czygier). Going down East Avenue, I find myself in the Highlandtown neighborhood. Estella used to own a bar called Mother’s at the corner of South Conkling Street and Elliot Street. People called her “Busha,” short for “babushka,” an affectionate term for an old woman. Estella would help her family raise 10 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren.

South Conkling Street connects to O'Donnell Street, which takes me back to the Canton neighborhood. As I make my way to the 2700 block, I see the massive gold domes on top of St. Casimir's Church (Letter U in Figure 1). This Roman Catholic Church also had predominantly Polish American parishioners, including Anna Howanitz, who was "active in Polish Community." Born Anna Smitniak, Anna was a member of the Ladies of Charity, the church choir, and later the Beautiful Years Club (Anna Howanitz). Eleanor lived somewhere in the neighborhood with her Polish immigrant parents ("Sun Spot").

O'Donnell Street runs into Boston Street. I stop at the 2300 block near the end of Patterson Park Avenue and look three blocks down. The notorious Cannery Row used to occupy the 2300-2600 block of Boston Street (Letter V in Figure 1). Although none of the women or their relatives refer to Boston Street directly, many mention working in canneries. I envision 17 year-old Anastasia stuffing vegetables into cans in the building that now occupies the Outback Steakhouse, where she was hired shortly after joining her sister in Baltimore from Budzyn, Poland. She would work here until she found work at a downtown shirt factory with higher pay at \$3 piecework. Dorothy also worked in local packing houses (Dorothy M. W. Krolicki), while Clara quit school to work in the canneries (Clara M. Cichowicz). On my way back to Fells Point, I stare at the abandoned factory buildings and consider how any of them could have been the one where Mary rolled cigars for money after sixth grade.

Conclusion

What we can draw from the descriptions provided for these Polish American women in their obituaries is that they remained devoted to the daily functions of life that they contribute to the community by baking cakes, collecting funds, or stitching uniforms. We know that many had a strong presence in Baltimore's industrial era, working in the canneries and garment districts.

Most of the women lived, learned, worked, and worshipped along the city's east side.

The strength of my activity in mapping Baltimore's Polonia lies in generating new questions and new fissures or gaps.

According to Foucault, "Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people" but rather identifies "the accidents, the minute deviations" (Foucault 146). What I once thought could be developed into a small walking tour including a cannery, Church, and row home ultimately spanned several blocks and several unknowns. These unknowns, however, create multiple paths rather than dead ends. For example, it's quite possible that digging further in the archives would still not reveal where the factory Mary Rose Dashkevich rolled cigars was/is located. Searching for this factory somewhere in Fells Point takes me on a journey where I recognize other places that can tell stories. It's also quite possible that analyzing archival documents like census records and working papers would expose alternative stories to those told in the obituaries, like the actual previous addresses of the women. Information in obituaries comes from families and friends who remember stories from the deceased. Most of these women continued telling stories about their lives well into their 80s, 90s and for Anastasia, their 100s. Stories stem from memories, which are consistently rewritten and reshaped to ultimately form an unfixed collective memory. The obituaries might point to only vague locations: a street, a neighborhood, or a factory somewhere in the city. The inconsistent nature of these memories does not make them faulty starting points for a walking tour. Rather, we build a collective awareness of these women, and their stories of everyday life resonate with us on every East Baltimore block.

Chapter Two: To Organize is Just the Way of Her People: Rhetorical Strategies of Women's Groups in Baltimore's Polonia



Figure 2: Women and girls in traditional Polish folk costumes in front of the General Casimir Pulaski Monument in Baltimore's Patterson Park.

Several historical, public images featuring the women of Baltimore's Polonia like the one above show demure figures wearing traditional attire from the mother country with modest traces of pride in their expressions. These women are typically portrayed in pictures surrounded by men with Polish and American flags against the backdrop of the Pulaski Monument. At first glance these women merely exude society's traditional femininity. However, my research on PolishAmerican women's organizations points to a conventionality based on rhetorical strength. Feminist scholars like Nan Johnson refer to this type of rhetoric as "parlor rhetoric," which provides a way for women to create "rhetorical identities as a reflection of their roles as wives and mothers" (14). Similarly, post-antebellum women without elite husbands of social status to share space in the public arena with relied on benevolent rhetoric. Wendy Sharer describes how women-only associations would emphasize their innate compassion and religious agenda to

justify their presence in the political realm while advocating reform over issues like antiprostitution, schooling, and temperance (17).

The women of Baltimore's Polonia employed similar rhetorical strategies that justified their presence in the political sphere. From greeting visiting Polish ambassadors and standing along street corners to collecting donations for Polish war relief to forming subgroups of the Polish National Alliance (PNA) and eventually branching off to create the Polish Women's Alliance (PWA), these women gradually carved out public platforms accepted by both their male counterparts and the overall American society. But what was the goal of these women? Can we consider them feminists alongside those with more subversive tactics for contesting women's subservience?

William Galush responds to these questions by examining the role of women in Chicago's Polonia. Although most of these women remained in organizations devoted to the Church, orphans, and the sick, their overarching goal was to collectively preserve the Polish culture. This type of feminist rhetoric blended benevolence and ethnic pride:

...in the face of traditional passivity, a dynamic minority among Polish American women sought entrance to the corridors of power and status in the new land. The particular nature of their background conditioned the thrust of their effort. Uncomfortable with the American language and culture, and ignored by most native-born female activists with their middle-class orientation, the newcomers expressed their concerns in an ethnic context. Though conservative, they were definitely feminists. These women sought not merely marginal participation in the organized life of Polonia but recognition as equals. When denied this, they showed no hesitation in forming appropriate structures under their control, grounded in an ideology of equality and voiced in an ethnic rhetoric. (Galush 5)

Chicago Polish women still embodied traditional beliefs of the domestic sphere while expressing the need to work alongside rather than behind men. Moreover, these new arrivals had no desire to Americanize but realized the need for a niche in their new country. Galush refers to this

double agenda as “patriotic feminism” (Galush 5). Baltimore’s Polish women also exhibited patriotic feminism. Understanding this requires a brief background on the city’s Polish colony.

Baltimore received a wave of Polish citizens who migrated around the 1880s, with a population that reached 40,000-45,000 by 1925. These immigrants often faced racial stereotypes and marginalization associated with low income and foreign languages and customs typically faced by immigrants (Przeuszeqski 40). Discourse surrounding their arrival points to Baltimoreans having a superior “big brother” stance towards Poles, often underscoring their limited available means, yet appreciating their hard work ethic that coalesced with American values and remaining fascinated by their humble traditions. Historically, Poles and Americans also joined during times of war. Around World War I, the Baltimore Polish community remained isolated without evidence of Americanization. Americans, believing this was due to the Poles’ nonstop work and attendance in parochial schools that denied children cultural emersion, remained hopeful that the National Army would bring the two cultures together (“Polish Money and Blood Answer”). However, although only about 10,500 citizens of “Little Poland” were foreign born in 1938, over half of the population still didn’t speak English by 1940, and only 25% by this time became naturalized citizens (Przeuszeqski 40). This demonstrates Baltimore Polonia’s interest in solidarity and resistance to assimilation.

Despite their disinterest in conforming to American society, the men of Little Poland acknowledged the women’s public presence as supporters for their home country. A 1918 article in the “From the Lives of Poles in America” section of the Chicago Polonia’s publication *Dziennik Chicagoski* includes a submission from Baltimore’s Polonia that recognizes the contributions of women:

Not only Polish men, but Polish women as well, went to come to the aid of the Fatherland. Our Polish women want to serve, too, they want to show by their labor that they love the Polish nation and are worthy of freedom. Seeing the actions and effort in the work around the Polish Army,...tears swell up in one's eyes for joy that the women undertake this labor so diligently and willingly. Not long ago a Kolko Polek (Circle of Polish Women) was organized, and it already has more than 30 members, all of whom toil like ants, they spare neither their time nor their hands, for they've made so far 20 mufflers, 15 oversleeves, and 10 sweaters, all for Polish soldiers (qtd. in Hollowak 66)

This article exemplifies Baltimore's Polish women transposing the domestic sphere. While encompassing their role as nurturers of society through traditionally feminine activities, men accepted that they organized a group unhinged from the patriarchal society and had their story represent the nationalism of the city's Polonia, forging a presence in the public sphere.

A 1918 piece in *The Baltimore Sun* parallels this appreciation of the local Polish women's involvement in charity, stating that:

The women in the Polish army are quite as active as the men in work for the Polish National Army. Thirty-three of them form a volunteer ambulance corps, which is about to go into training, and which will leave for France with one of the Polish units in the autumn...There is also a ladies' auxiliary circle, which has made hundreds of sweaters and pairs of socks for the Polish Army and is now making surgical dressings...

Baltimore's newspaper deems Polish women and Polish men equally committed to Polish National Army contributions. The women's traditional role of clothing donations still prevails, but here the article also references mobility among the volunteer ambulance corps, elevating women's status in the public domain. The women of Little Poland were also praised at a liberty loans meeting for collectively investing \$1500 in bonds ("Avenge Their Lands").

Examining articles like these, along with more recent articles that highlight the role of Senator Barbara Mikulski in the community, I highlight Baltimore Polish women organizations' use of patriotic feminism and benevolence as rhetorical devices that appealed to mainstream

society and allowed for creating space in the public arena. These actions point to a two-fold agenda of protecting “Polishness” in their new country while gaining equal footing among their male counterparts in the Polonia community. Researching these women promotes a reconsideration of alternative rhetorical strategies when traditionally dominant forms like speeches and writing are missing, beckoning historiographers to analyze the stories buried at the intersection of feminism, culture, and social class and transform absence to presence. I begin with a discussion of how the Polish women in Baltimore accentuated the camaraderie between Poles and Americans over General Casimir Pulaski and follow with the story of Polish women organizations affiliated or belonging to the Polish National Alliance (PNA).

One of the ways Polish women in Baltimore continuously upheld ethnic pride in their new land while reminding society of a historical unity between Poles and Americans was through traditional celebration of General Kazimierz (Casimir) Pulaski. A Polish war hero, Pulaski represents the sanctities of Polish power and American individualism. After facing exile when an uprising he was involved in against Russian domination failed, the military officer Marquis de Lafayette and Benjamin Franklin recommended Pulaski to George Washington as a successful candidate to defend America’s freedom. He soon proved successful and earned the title of Brigadier General after using war tactics to prevent the British from defeating the Continental Army cavalry. Pulaski soon formed the Pulaski Cavalry Region in Baltimore. While visiting a wounded Lafayette at the residence of the Moravian sisters in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Pulaski complimented the women’s needlework. Soon after, Baltimore women who were believed to be relatives of his legion’s members raised funds for the Moravian sisters to craft a banner for General Pulaski.

Over a century later, the women of Baltimore's Polonia sustained General Pulaski's mark on their new land, placing wreathes on a monument dedicated to the Revolutionary hero while President Taft paid tributes "(Poles Honor Heroes").⁴ Polish girls greeting Prince Lubomirski, the first Polish minister to visit America, and the Princess, would serve tea and cakes and sing the Polish national anthem while women presented Pulaski's hand-sewn banner to the honored visitors. The banner read "No Alien Shall Rule," a staunch reminder of both country's persistent struggle for liberty and the Polish citizens' vow to maintain loyalty to their country across continents ("Prince Lubomirski Greeted By Polish Girls"). Taking a more subtle approach to access in the public realm, the Polish women utilized General Pulaski's influence in America as an instrument for patriotic feminism.

A group of Polish women also constructed a replica of Pulaski's flag that was now too fragile to carry during cultural parades, and tried tracing the ancestry of the women who generated money for the original banner ("Replica Being Made of Pulaski's Flag"). Furthermore, Anastazia Czygier represented a Polish women's auxiliary at a digging ceremony to transplant American soil on the grounds of Fort McHenry and Baltimore and Grant Streets, the location of Pulaski's headquarters to a memorial site in Cracow, Poland for former dictator Marshal Joseph Pilsudski ("Fort McHenry Dirt Dug"). Rarely did media reference Polish men at ceremonies welcoming Polish figureheads or honoring their ties with Baltimore. While collectively conforming to ideal domesticity through the roles of entertainer, seamstress, and silent supporter, these women formed a public space around the Pulaski monument situated between femininity and ethnicity.

⁴ This is the same monument visited in my walking tour during Chapter One.

Baltimore Polonian women also flexed their rhetorical resourcefulness through circumscribed domesticity in the PWA. While several of these stories were generated from Chicago's Polonia where women first formed the organization, my narrative includes archival fragments surrounding local lodges in order to have their stories resurface in feminist rhetorical history.

Founders of the PWA modeled their group after the PNA, adapting to a fraternal structure. Generally speaking, society associates the term "fraternal" with men and sororities with women (Pienkos v). Stemming from the eighteenth century European Enlightenment ideas of communities striving for social improvement, however, fraternal agendas aligned with core Polish values (Pienkos vi). Russian, Prussian, and Austrian partitions from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries left Polish territory fractured, enhancing the population's devotion to unity and cultural preservation. Polish scholar Bianka Piotrow notes that although women's concerns over suffrage remained secondary, "Polish Society's readiness to revere women is even supposed to have increased during the partitions." Family matriarchs in the heavily Roman Catholic country symbolized the "Matka Polka," or "holy mother of Poland," who served as Mary's descendants to raise children with morality and Polish pride (qtd. in Pienkos 18). Following a lifestyle similar to America's Republican Motherhood assigned women important roles as a stepping stone to patriotic feminism.

These national sentiments carried over to the American Polish colonies. While Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants all joined Roman Catholic parishes, fraternal organizations remained exclusively Polish (Pienkos x-xi). Tailoring fraternal ideals therefore helped persuade Polonian men to accept women in their alliances and form sister organizations in order to support patriotism. Polish women also differed from their American women counterparts who solely

organized to generate rhetoric from social reform without any further needs (Galush 7). Mainly lower-class, these women needed financial and social interdependence, creating a unique resistance/survival duality of parlor rhetoric.

The extent of involvement Polonian women originally had in the PNA based on my research remains uncertain. Some historical evidence reveals that Polish woman Teophila Samolinska played an inadvertent part in founding the organization. Formerly involved in Polish uprisings to support her country's independence, Samolinska migrated to Chicago in 1865 and published work in the Polish community's publication, *Gazeta Polska*. Wanting to support Poland even from her new country, Samolinska wrote to fellow Polish activist Agaton Giller, asking for organizational strategies for members of Little Poland that would help them collectively support Poland's independence. From his home of exile in Switzerland, Giller indirectly responded to Samolinska and other Chicago Polonians in an essay first published in the Austrian partitioned Polish territory of Lwow and then in America. The essay summoned leaders in Polish societies to form a nationwide group based on the goals of improving social conditions in American Polish colonies and advocating for the mother country's independence. Men aware of this essay established the PNA in 1880 in Chicago. Members avoided inviting Samolinska to join, but her involvement in Polish uprisings and support for Poland's independence persuaded men to acknowledge her as an auxiliary supporter of patriotism.

Similarly, after Baltimore Polonian men formed Council 142, the first PNA group in the city in 1896, members slowly "permitted" women to join the organization only through female exclusive subgroups (Przeuszeqski 52). In Mary Swanson's 1925 "A Study of the Polish Organizations in Baltimore," Swanson references the Alliance's Constitution, stating that:

Every male or female person of good moral character, after completing his or her sixteenth year of birth, descend, consanguinity or relationship reckoned as belong to the Polish, Lithuanian, or Ruthenian nationalities, may become a member of the Polish National Alliance provided they have declared their willing and have taken an oath of loyalty and observance of all the laws and fundamental statutes of the Polish National Alliance. (qtd. in Swanson 13-14)

Possibly denying them access to fundamental activities, the Alliance originators still markedly considered women in their agenda of continuing heritage, providing an outlet for patriotic feminism. Another locally-based article praising Poles for supporting their mother country acknowledges the Alliance's women members:

Numbers of Polish women belong to the various beneficial organizations of the Polish National Alliance which have women's lodges. They are not, as a whole, very active in war relief work. Most of them work either in garment factories or at seasonal trades, such as oyster packing, canning, and berry or vegetable picking. Consequently they are away from home for weeks at a time and have little strength or leisure for war work. ("Polish Money and Blood")

The author dismisses the women's overall active involvement in war relief while remaining aware of their presence in the Alliance. Moreover, the narration attests to the Polish women's unique role as a domestic rhetor working collectively with men: Women gained mobility and transported their maternal role from home to workplace in order to stretch their family's financial means and preserve Polish pride stateside, while men congregated in the Alliance to preserve ethnicity in their native land.

Other Polish organizations also granted women limited participation. Chicago Polonians formed the Polish Falcons Alliance in 1894 as an homage to the Falcon societies in Poland that promoted calisthenics and exercise (Pienkos 25).⁵ While women like Samolinska and future

⁵ Local Baltimore newspaper articles point to offshoots of the Polish Falcons Alliance in the city, like the Sunday Polish Falconettes. Irene Mrockowski collectively ran the girl's division with her sisters in January 1942. Athletic

officers of the first PWA Stefania Chmielinska and Honorata Wolinska accounted for one-third of the club and instructed the physical fitness exercises, men still denied them formal membership and elected officer positions. Falcons President Casimir Zychlinski defended the club's decision to protect the Alliance's transition to "an army of skirts" once they started training young Polish men to militarily defend Polish independence (Pienkos 26). This influenced Chmielinska to organize other Polish women on May 22, 1898 in her mother's home to form the PWA. Interestingly enough, Chicago Polonian women gained rhetorical strength after shifting from the public to the private realm, dismantling traditional associations with the spheres.

Chmielinska's goals for the PWA succinctly related to the "Matka Polska" ideals in Poland. An article published in Milwaukee Polonia's publication *Kuryer Polski* five months after the first PNA meeting included a proclamation to Polish women in America, encouraging membership:

Respected countrywomen...we can accomplish much by joining together in the work on behalf of a good idea, having above all as our aim the nurturing of good values among our young Polish boys and girls. Our nationality will be in the future, depending on how our next generation develops. It is our duty to stand guard on behalf of the training of our young people, and to prepare them to be good Polish sons and daughters (qtd. in Pienkos 23).

The proclamation advocates feminine camaraderie among Polish women as mothers vested in preserving nationality. Excluding reasons for organizing related to political power, the PWA encouraged Polonian women to accentuate their roles already revered by society. Men also promoted the PWA. At the November 20, 1899 PNA convention, General Secretary Theodore Helinski endorsed the PWA, advising members to make their organization "comparable to the men's fraternity" (qtd. in Pienkos 28). Polonian men embodied a "separate but equal" stance

towards Polonian women's rhetorical potential. Mainly absent from dominant ethnic organizations, women still found a method for collectively creating a space that bridged the public and private spheres and allowed them to adapt leadership roles.

Polonian women continued exerting their parlor rhetoric in the public domain at the first annual PNA convention on June 12, 1900 at Chicago's Pulaski Hall with 264 women from eight different PNA councils attending (Pienkos 23-24). The agenda primarily related to the Polish women's normative roles as mother, cultural preserver, and social reformer, with specific goals of earning enough money to allot \$500 in burial assistance to each member once they reached 500 members? (ibid 29). An underlying issue the PNA discussed, however, was struggle of "rownouprawnienie," or "equal rights" (ibid 20). Using their charitable motives, Polish women could now discuss the benefits of gender equality to work as a cohesive unit with men and strengthen Polish nationalism. The PNA also created the publication *Glos Polek*, or "the voice of Polish women," selling 1,000 copies of their first issue in 1902 that discussed women's suffrage (ibid 19). Baltimore's Polish colony was also considering women's voting rights. The *Baltimore Sun* recognized Poles at an Equal Suffrage League meeting at American Hall on January 24, 1911. Polish pastors advocated for suffrage, while other speakers promised the passing of the Pure Milk Law and city hygiene improvements with women's votes, since men "can't do without women" ("Poles Favor the Cause"). Excluding the number of Polish women present, the article still points to the conscious support of Baltimore's Polonia for women's suffrage. Moreover, Polish citizens attended a gathering with both sexes attending to discuss how women could guarantee social improvement through their ballot, demonstrating the rhetorical influence of benevolence.

Polonian women shifted their priorities back to patriotism and social aid within the following years during World War I. PNA members attending a September meeting discussed their concern over Polish war relief, stating that “...we resolve and commit ourselves to mobilizing our national energy and using every appropriate occasion to present the Polish issue to the forum of world opinion, and first and foremost to join together in constant effort to gather goods and moneys on behalf of the Polish people” (qtd. in Pienkos 54). Polish women emphasized their collective role as a mouthpiece, informing other nations of Poland’s needs. Similar to the ways women gained public notice for their domestic activities like sewing sweaters, stockings, and scarves for Polish citizens and organizing groups like the Polish White Cross to assist Poles with medical needs (Pienkos 62). They also focused on patriotic pride in the States, making the PWA more inclusive by adding youth divisions known as “wianek,” or “garland,” for children under 15 years old in 1910 (*ibid* 69). Records indicate three such youth divisions present in the state of Maryland in 1938 (*ibid* 72). These groups participated in cultural activities, ensuring second generation Poles raised in America still identified with the home country. Realizing that preserving cultural lineage would engender more resistance from younger citizens, Polonian women also rhetorically appealed to American citizens by emphasizing their devotion to their adoptive country. At the fifteenth Polish Women’s Alliance of America (PWA of A) convention, members stated: “We pay homage to our noble country, the United States, with its starry standard, and promise to it our constant and sincere loyalty. We affirm our impassioned love for our Mother-Poland and our attachment to the Catholic Church” (qtd. in Pienkos 80). Here the women admire the country of their current location but still pledge devotion to Poland and their Catholicism.

Polonian women continued to show appreciation for their surrogate country and dedication to their home country during World War II. Adapting a protective maternal role over Poland, PWA of A President Honorata Wolowka issued appeals to the U.S., Britain, and French governments, along with “all women and mothers of the world,” to do all they could to cease fighting (qtd. in Pienkos 97).⁶ Polish women again organized clothing drives and raised funds, including the PWA of A’s purchase of \$250,000 in defense bonds (Pienkos 99). Seventy-five Polonian women in Baltimore met at the Polish Center to enroll in the Polish Samaritans and send money to the Polish Red Cross through Washington (“Polish Groups Organize Here”).

While society validated American women for their patriotic support through victory gardens, rationing, and factory work, they also recognized women in the Polish colonies for their dedication to the homeland. Baltimore media described Polish women as traditionally sacrificial in times of need:

Typical of the volunteers, she said, was an elderly woman of Polish descent who had risen from a sickbed, a short time before, to enter the campaign. Because her husband was a war worker she had to run their store in a crowded neighborhood, prepare meals for menfolk who had overlapping shifts in the war plants and mother their grandchildren. She refused to rest, saying she had too much at stake to sit idle, so she volunteered to help out in the Red Cross solicitation (“Fund Group Given Orders”)

This anonymous woman embodies subtle patriotic feminism, tending to her husband’s work while he fulfilled war-related duties. Collectively caring for community member’s children and nourishing male workers, followed by volunteering for the Red Cross, she demonstrated Polonian women’s ability to freely weave together the domestic and political arenas.

⁶ President Wolowka attended the third annual PWA of A regional convention in October 1940, meeting with delegates representing Maryland, Washington D.C., New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania and touring Baltimore and Annapolis (Convention Of Polish Women)

Similarly, on November 13, 1944, *The Sun* commended local Polonian women for “demonstrating love for their adopted country and loyalty to their native land.” While presenting an ambulance and Polish flag to a Polish embassy representative, members of the Polish White Cross also presented Baltimore Mayor McKeldin with a handmade American flag (“Polish Women Present Flags And Ambulance”). Performing charitable acts and presenting handcrafted items related to both Poland and America at the Polish Home Club relocated their domesticity to the public arena and demonstrated appreciation on behalf of Poland for Americans allowing them to maintain their patriotism in a new nation.

Polonian women also transformed discourse into political action by helping form the Polish American Congress. After discussing ideas at the PWA of A Chicago headquarters for supporting Poland during World War II and protecting Polish independence from the Soviet Union, Polonia leaders, including Wolowska, formed the Polish American Congress to earn support in their new country for their home country. Observing the inaugural parade on May 28, 1944 in Buffalo, New York with more than 2,600 delegates, a key White House member reported to President Roosevelt that he believed this would “go down in history as the most colossal piece of organizational work” (qtd. in Pienkos 108). As an elected officer, Wolowka would meet with Roosevelt to discuss a memorandum stressing America’s responsibility to support the Polish cause during the War (Pienkos 110). Wolowska’s patriotic feminism granted her access to the public domain alongside men.

After the Second World War, Polonian women would continue supporting their mother country while examining their presence in America. With an expanding membership, the PWA of A formed District 12 in 1951 to cover the greater Maryland and D.C. area (Pienkos 130). The Baltimore Polonian district leader, Martha Welzant, loyally devoted her time to strengthening the

wellbeing of Polish families, landing round trips to Florida for local families from 1941-1972 (“We live here: Polish community, proud of works, resents the jokes”).⁷ Travelling to Jamestown, Virginia with other PWA of A figures in 1958 to commemorate the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the first Poles landing in America, Welzant acknowledged Polonia’s ethnic roots embedded in not only Poland but also the United States (*Ibid* 140).

Other women continued serving as ambassadors to help citizens in their home country. In 1958, Anastzya Czygier and her daughter Sylvia Maloney helped entertain two Polish women known as Lapins, who were formerly exploited as medical guinea pigs by the Nazis.⁸ Just as newly immigrated Polonian women desired a special reminder of their home country, Czygier, Maloney and other members of the Baltimore Lapins Committee collaborated with other local Polish women to ensure their visitors received comforting reminders of home through traditional Polish meals when they arrived in Baltimore to stay for three months and undergo hospital treatment (Przeciszewski 64). Czygier worked collectively with both Polonian men and women in benevolent roles to preserve ethnic pride and enrich their lives in America, including serving as the first woman Commissioner of the PNA for Maryland and D.C. in 1936 and founding a home for the elderly after placing her home for collateral and collecting furniture donations. As described in an article on Baltimore’s historical Polonia: “To Organize Is Just The Way Of Her People” (“We live here”).

More female Polonian youth joined older women like Czygier in cultural organizations by the midcentury. Maryland had five wianki groups by 1947 (Pienkos 121). Aware that younger members born stateside related more to American culture, women supported ethnic hybridity as a

⁷ The PWA in Baltimore first elected Martha Welzant as President in 1943. (“Elected By Polish Women’s Alliance”)

⁸ Lapin is the French term for rabbit

strategy to instill Polish heritage. Wianki members joined a youth congress, attending seminars with topics like: “What I Do and Don’t Like About the Daily Life of a Young Woman”, “Dieting”, “Teaching as a Career”, and “How Does Your Polish Ancestry Make You a Better American?” (Pienkos 128). While most of these topics elude to overall concerns of Western World femininity, asking Polish American girls how their ethnicity enhances their American citizenship strengthens a collective Polish patriotism across generations. Women preserved their role as Matka Polka to resist Polonia’s complete American assimilation.

Similar to their original presence in the PNA, Polish women exercised parlor rhetoric in other cultural organizations, like the Polish-American Democratic Club. At a September 6, 1966 meeting, an article from *The Sun* reported that members of the PNA ladies’ auxiliary disagreed with the men’s voting guidelines, so they developed their own system for selecting which Maryland Congressional District they would endorse: “The club itself does not allow the women as a group to participate in such weighty decisions as to whom to back for nomination. But the women have minds of their own—as they showed the other night” (“Auxiliary Sets Own Vote Lines”). While Polonian men still circumvented women’s full membership recognition in groups, women used their segregated collaboration as a rhetorical device for recognition, and the club ultimately recorded the axillary’s vote.

Taking a more direct rhetorical stance, Barbara Mikulski, a Polish American woman from Baltimore, emerged in the early seventies and earned support as a then candidate for City Council’s First District through her promotion of ethnic revival. At the 1971 PWA of A convention in Harford, Connecticut, Mikulski advised her audience that a “new national spirit” among ethnic-Americans “would be a powerful and essential alternative to the chic rhetoric of obscenities and disruptions,” and that focusing on local problems would help prevent “our

beautiful churches that have preserved our religion and language from being bulldozed” (Baltimore Sun, “Miss Mikulski Calls for New ‘National Spirit’”). Mikulski’s words echo early sentiments of PWA members who taught each other that Polish patriotism influences social reform. Despite decreasing membership in the seventies and eighties, three Baltimore lodges ranked in the top 50 in membership in 1981.⁹

Mikulski continued employing rhetorical ethnicity to enhance community wellbeing. In 1981 after visiting Poland by invite from the National Council for Polish Women, she assured 150 citizens at one of the major Polish churches, St. Stanislaus Kostka, that providing food aid to Poland was unnecessary. Mikulski reasoned that assistance would be unnecessary because Poland had successful food co-ops coordinated by women (“Mikulski cautions against food aid to Poland”). This kept in tradition with transnational support among Polish women. During her Keynote Address at the Polish Cultural Clubs 35th Annual Convention August 17, 1983, Secretary for the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Adele Wilzak underscores the similarities between Mikulski and historical Polish women. Wilzak first described how Polish scientist Marie Curie continued the ethnic tradition of benevolence through her work:

She didn’t patent her discovery, so that other scientists could use it freely in research to benefit mankind. She herself continued research with radium until she exhausted her funds and couldn’t afford to purchase more radium. So, she came to the United States, hoping to raise the money to continue her work. And, it was the Polish Women’s Alliance in Chicago that raised the funds, through their churches and other organizations, that permitted Dr. Curie to buy the radium she needed to continue her research. Marie Curie could have held control of radium, and probably have become rich. But, in the Polish tradition, she used her skills to give to society, not to profit from it (Wilzak 4-5)

⁹ These lodges were: The Baltimore Society group in 8th place (founded in 1921), the St. Ann’s Society group in 21st place (founded in 1935), and the St. Francis group in 29th place (founded in 1937) In 1998, 3 lodges in Baltimore again ranked among the top 50 in membership: Baltimore Society group in 7th place, St. Bernadette Society group in 10th place (founded in 1942), and St. Ann’s Society group in 33rd place (Pienkos 185-186).

Wilzak portrayed Curie as the traditional selfless Polish women with maternal skills, more interested in benefiting society than pursuing fame. Moreover, we see the theme of mutual aid among Polish women organizations resurface. Wilzak continued by bringing her audience back to Polonian women's present heritage, describing United States Congresswoman Mikulski as "a resident and representative of Baltimore City, and a Pole," and "one of the outstanding supporters of this concept of cultural pluralism and ethnic diversity (Wilzak 8). Wilzak consciously chooses to call Mikulski a Baltimorean and a Pole rather than Polish-American, amplifying each identity's importance. This also situates Mikulski with the women in Baltimore's Polish enclave.

Men also supported Mikulski for her balance between Polish and American patriotism. When she became a Senator in 1986, Baltimoreans praised her for living the American dream without forgetting the prominent "Laszczyński, Sansone, and Gosk" names of Polonia. Celebrating Mikulski's victory at the Polish Home Club, police lieutenant John Baron told a crowd that: "She wasn't born with a silver spoon in her mouth. She's self-made. I'm proud of my daughters, and I'm proud of Barbara Mikulski" ("Polish neighbors cheer Mikulski as one of them"). Polonian men and women felt confident in Mikulski's ability to strengthen society on a local and national level. While Americans historically portray success as a type of manifest destiny with people moving away from their meager upbringing associated with struggling immigrant ancestors, Mikulski's supporters gathered in a traditionally ethnic space to celebrate her victory, demonstrating their belief that cultural roots lead to success.

Present-Day Echoes of the PWA

*Today, at this great monument,
We honor those of Polish descent.*

*In factories and agriculture,
They worked and gave strength to our culture.
They work so hard without relaxin'
They're just as great as Reggie Jackson ("Polish-Americans honor Pulaski")*

Listening to City Comptroller Hyman A. Pressman recite a poem commending Polish Americans for their contributions of hard work to American society, the then 82 year-old Welzant sat with friends and contemplated a waning interest in ethnic awareness.¹⁰ Except for a group of young women in traditional clothing to perform in the "Krakowiaki Dancers," most of the 150 Polonians in attendance at Pulaski Day were elderly. Welzant recognized this generational disconnect, commenting that "it's the young people who don't come anymore. I guess they want something new and are just not interested in the heritage we're so proud of." Why did Polish pride appear to dwindle among the younger generations? Did patriotic feminism among members of Polonian organizations like the PWA of A impact modern Polish Americans?

Members of the PNA and PWA today still have similar agendas of patriotism and family strength. The PNA's homepage boasts that the organizations provide insurance to nearly two million men, women, and children, with images transitioning from a senior couple preparing for retirement to young girls in Polish folk costumes under the heading "Preserving our Polish culture" (<http://www.pna-znp.org/>). The PWA of A's site identifies their mission to remain "dedicated to preserving and fostering the traditions and cultural identity of our heritage" through "financial strength and security" with over 50,000 certificate holders (<http://pwaa.org/>).

A small print subheading reads "Over 100 years of women helping families," preserving the Motka Polka symbolism of the Polonian woman nurturing and protecting society.

¹⁰ Welzant was currently serving as president of the PWA of A's District 7, which represented members from Maryland and Washington D.C. She held this position from 1951-1979 (Pienkos 228).

Locally, several PWA of A groups have gradually disbanded. Those still active dedicated resources to maintaining Polish heritage in the new millennium. After financial strain uprooted the annual Baltimore Polish Festival from its Patterson Park location near the Pulaski Monument, members of the PWA chapter 805 strategized relocation in 2012. President Shirley Kalinowski advocated for holding the festival in Dundalk for its close proximity to the city and historical ties to Polish culture.¹¹ Kalinowski described the chapter as “still very active” with 119 members (“Polish Festival might relocate to Dundalk for 2012”). Without indicating the general age of her members, Kalinowski argued that moving the festival farther out in the county to the Timonium Fairgrounds would pose barriers for seniors who felt uncomfortable driving longer distances. This infers members involved in PWA of A activities were still primarily older generations.

One Saturday afternoon, I visited a quiet brownstone on Eastern Avenue that remained the PNA Council 21 headquarters since the twenties. Climbing the stairs to reach the Henryk Sienkiewicz Library, I could hear muffled sounds of children shoes collectively tapping to music during a folk dancing class. Housed in a small annex, the library includes primary and secondary resource books, historical brochures and pamphlets, encyclopedias, posters, and maps, all exuding Polish culture in varying capacities. Librarian Adam Mazurek explained to me that these artifacts were mainly community donations. Finding some secondary sources relevant to my current interest in Polish women organizations, Mazurek’s accounts of Baltimore Polonia and his own mission of retracing local heritage remapped my route for locating the women’s stories.

Scholars are often complacent only in pursuing research areas abundant with speeches, journals, and relevant secondary sources. But studying dominant rhetors leads to a historical

¹¹ Although Dundalk’s part of Baltimore County, the village rests on the city/county line, providing cultural spaces like the Sacred Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church for Polonians residing in neighboring East Baltimore (“Polish Festival might relocate to Dundalk for 2012”).

stalemate, showing students we believe only those who follow white, western patriarchal patterns will succeed. Weaving evidence of Baltimore Polonian women through the history of larger Polish colonies to shed light on their strategies of patriotic feminism and parlor rhetoric will encourage others to explore alternative forms of rhetoric and create presence from perceived absence in history. Polish immigrant women collectively adapted to new spaces and resisted assimilation by remaining nurturing figures in order to convince society they needed a public platform. Their stories have not disappeared, but merely slipped back to the private sphere, buried in archival records. Now it's our job to retrieve their stories and rhetorical abilities by representing them in our discourse and writing.

Chapter Three: Cultural Preserves: Baltimore's Polish Women Canners and Bean Pickers and the Rhetoric of Collaboration

The most prominent images of women in the American Industrial Revolution are typically Bostonians wearing work boots and modest dresses on a crusade for financial autonomy while openly protesting meager wages or immigrant girls of urban garment factories, silently laboring in unsafe conditions. While these figures represent historical actualities, we need to examine less-known stories of industrial women. Where did they work? Why did they choose to work? How did their labor create presence in a public domain? In this chapter, I will use these driving questions to observe the interactions among Baltimore Polish women workers and expand Lindal Buchanan's discussion on rhetorical collaboration as a multifaceted tool for women to access the public sphere. My work focuses on the Polish women who shifted seasonally from city canneries to countryside farms. Mothers, daughters, and friends employed in the canneries engaged in a strategic yet traditionally inconspicuous rhetorical tactic known as supportive collaboration to maneuver the public sphere while carving a collective identity of Polish Baltimore working women. Assuming the role of a responsible feminist historiographer like Jacqueline Jones Royster, however, I cautiously avoid "speedy claims, static conclusions, or overgeneralizations" that potentially mask other Polish women's unique stories (Royster 8). Understanding Polish women cannery workers in Baltimore requires knowledge of the industry and how this impacted the city's Polonia.

Situated along the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland canneries became large industrial contenders during the nineteenth century when companies marketed the luxury of preserved oysters. Thomas Kinsett owned one of the first Baltimore canneries established in 1826, which included canned produce like corn, tomatoes, and peas by 1832 (Keuchel 355). These factories

garnered more popularity during the mid-nineteenth century when participants of the California Gold Rush and Civil War troops demanded nonperishable foods that were efficient for travel. Baltimore canneries were also the only companies to offer canned pineapple shipped directly to the city from the West Indies in the late nineteenth century.

By 1899, Baltimore packing factories carried canned pineapples, peas, strawberries, cherries, gooseberries, blackberries, raspberries, string and lima beans, and tomatoes (“The Canning Industry”). A piece in *The Sun* claims that this Baltimore industry employed 50,000 men, women, and children. Technological advances in the early twentieth century enhanced packing house production. Machines now helped workers seal 120 cans daily (“Canneries Here Take Over”). According to the 1923 consensus, the city was now home to 32 canning factories, with 431 statewide. Maryland boasted a 1924 record of producing 3,886,242 cases of canned tomatoes. Although this article excluded a new statistic of how many workers occupied canneries, it more importantly identified most of their nationalities as Bohemian or Polish.

Other leading states in the canning industry relied on a Polish workforce. In New York, another state dominant in the canning industry, only six of the 128 factories were in urban locations in 1912 (Keuchel 43). These factories hired fewer working Polish wives and mothers who had little time to travel away from their domestic responsibilities. Contrastingly, several Maryland canneries were situated in Baltimore, allowing Polonian women to work, raise children, and attend Church in the same neighborhood. While their husbands worked as longshoremen or other skilled laborer positions, these women toiled in the canneries until summertime when they continued their tradition of temporarily migrating to the countryside with children to pick berries and beans. Many Polish immigrants in the late nineteenth century maintained work as agricultural day laborers or farmers in their home country, making cannery

appealing. Moreover, the overarching goal of Polish laborers was family survival over independent success. Polonian men therefore accepted their wives working out of the mere necessity for a two-income household. The women were typically disinterested in strikes that might threaten their paychecks, making them ideal labor for employers (Bucowczyk 26-27).

During an oral history project, Linda Shope interviewed several Baltimore Polonian women and discovered a cross-generational experience: most women who worked with their mothers or their grandmothers in canneries described this ritual as “their whole life” (192). Unlike their counterparts in states like New York, Shope explains that the “rhythm of cannery labor helped shape a social identity that could not be adequately explained by conventional gender-based analyses grounded in middle-class women’s lives” (Shope 192). Women’s role in the packing houses challenge dominant histories that reveal traditionally separate spheres where women typically remained in the home. Moreover, a working rhythm defining social identity suggests women might have had pleasant experiences and might have had mutually benefited from each other. In other terms, this mutual benefit exhibited a form of collaboration that helped build a Polish, feminine identity in America.

We can consider the Polish women’s collective identity as rhetorical collaboration. Feminist rhetoric scholar Lindal Buchanan notes that “antebellum women worked closely with friends, family, and hired help to create and deliver rhetoric, negotiate conflicting private and public obligations, accommodate gender norms, and construct ‘feminine’ ethos” (43). Working in the canneries and traveling to communes for picking beans and berries in the summer, Polish women embodied their traditional role as support of the family while consistently shifting from the public to private sphere. Classifying types of strategic collaboration, Lindal defines productive collaboration as women working with others to create books, speeches, sermons, and

articles used as dominant modes of rhetoric, and supportive collaboration as women employing maternal, domestic, indirect, and invisible rhetorical tactics. History typically dismisses rhetorical collaboration as a natural role typically bestowed to women, but examining these relationships sheds light on how marginalized groups like women used available means to develop presence and voice. Archival artifacts on Polonian women reveal that they engaged in collaboration with men in order to sustain their family, with women to garner working rights, and with members of their maternal lineage to preserve ethnic identity.

Similarly, in “Weaving Women’s Lives: Three Generations in a Navajo Family,” Louise Lamphere provides oral histories of three generations of the women in a Navajo family. These matriarchal figures collaboratively shape a fluid, female identity. After sharing memories of her “Kinaalda” ceremony that celebrates a Navajo girl’s puberty as a form of rhetorical education, the granddaughter Valerie admits she appreciates her mother and grandmother for giving her a tradition that would help her hone Navajo values for becoming an effective wife, mother, and health educator. Lamphere believed that her former book on Navajo society needed to include stories from multiple generations to provide insight on how they adapted traditions and beliefs for today’s economy and society. Similarly, several women who worked with their grandmothers and mothers in the canneries in their younger years developed an awareness for a Polish female conscious through memory and discourse.

Lamphere and the Navajo women view her book “as a collaboration, though each participant brings a different point of view, and I, as the primary author, have shaped the presentation of the narratives” (Lamphere 3). Presenting multi-generational stories in the Navajo community highlight rhetorical patterns for how women from different cultures formed identities. Although she refers to her process as “shaping” the presentation of the narratives,

Lamphere avoids pigeonholing Navajo women under one identity, but rather finds common threads that demonstrates how each generation adapts tradition to preserve culture. Taking a similar approach as Lamphere through a rhetorical lens, I will examine the collaboration between Polonian women with men, fellow Polish working women, and the matriarchs of their family to preserve family and Polish traditions while transcending public and private spheres. Examining the decisions these women made regarding where and how they worked demonstrates a conscious goal of using labor as a form of collaboration to create rhetorical presence in the public domain.

Mąż and Żona¹²

Polish immigrant women maintained traditional domestic roles as wives and mothers. In 1910, the average Polish foreign-born woman in America between the ages of 35-44 had six children, compared to other white foreign-born women who had four (Pienkos 10). As a figure of family preservation and reform, these women were also responsible for collaborating with husbands to ensure financial stability. Along with monitoring the family budget, Polish women frequently found work outside of the home for supplemental income. As one Polish man joked, “If your wife is thrifty and hardworking and you didn’t drink in bars and saved your money, you could get somewhere and buy a house” (qtd. in Pienkos 10). By 1925, roughly 60% of Poles in East Baltimore owned their own home (Przeciszewski 40). Working primarily menial labor jobs, home ownership would be difficult without dual income households.

Baltimore society also recognized Polish families’ financial savviness. An article in *The Sun* in 1906 described how they would leave their Fells Point neighborhood in August to travel to Harford, Kent, and Talbot Counties, or southern states like Louisiana and Mississippi, and

¹² Polish terms for “husband” and “wife”

earn wages shucking oysters. Families would return in May with \$500-\$600 that would be used effectively for family and community wellbeing. The author notes that although this sounds like an excessive sum, “Money will not be wasted...for they are a thrifty class, and when they have satisfied their wants and desires the balances of their wages will be placed in a building association.” Polish migrant workers earned enough for comfortable yet modest living conditions. The women laborers traveled alongside their family, since “the life that these Poles and their brethren of the Old Word have chosen in this country does not permit them to call any one place home for any length of time” (“Like Migratory Birds”). Similar to their involvement in the PWA, Polish women in this sense adapted to mobility, shifting their traditional private sphere activities to the public realm.

This experience was more of a sustainable mobility than an upward mobility, however. Polish women seldom worked for independent means. According to a 1927 U.S. Department of Labor Women’s Bureau report on women’s employment in Delaware vegetable canneries, ninetenths of the 736 white women were Polish or Italian, and two-thirds of these women reported they were wives.¹³ Interestingly, the report states that “almost all named the husband as the chief wage earner, but this does not mean that the wife’s earnings were not economically important.”

In 95 cases, women labeled themselves the chief wage earner (Anderson 35). This reveals that Polish women mainly took a humble standpoint regarding their economic contributions while still remaining aware of their importance as working mothers. Roughly two-thirds of the women identified cannery employment as their first jobs (Anderson 37), indicating that Polish women perhaps had limited work options, enjoyed this type of labor, or appreciated the mobility that also

¹³ Over half of the women workers in these Delaware camps identified Baltimore as their home (Anderson 29).

allowed them to continue their domestic duties. Overall, the report points to a salient tradition of Polish women cannery workers that relies on collaboration to preserve culture.

Polish woman and former cannery worker Vera Piechocki also highlights benefits of cannery work in Baltimore. Remembering her experience in the packing houses, Piechocki emphasizes the opportunity and flexibility of the job:

When you needed money you could always get a job at the packing houses....If you got tired of one, you went to another one. I used to cut spinach and string beans....My husband worked a swing shift. That's how we managed. I'd go out at 4 or 5 in the morning. If the whistle blew, that meant they had work for people. Then I'd come home a little later to make sure the children got off to school. Then, I'd go back to work until it was time for them to come home...We went through the Depression. My husband worked at the Copper Works at that time. He only got \$13.50 a week...After my daughter was born I went back to the packing houses and that's what saved us down here. You got your pennies and nickels from the packing houses and that kept you from going hungry. You just walked in, found yourself a place, got yourself a tray, and went to work (qtd. in "Fells Point Remembers")

Piechocki describes Polish women's confidence in obtaining cannery work. More than just a survival story of making ends meet, Piechocki's account "Then I'd come home...Then I'd go back to work" resonates with Shope's description of a rhythm of cannery work that defined their identities. Frequently moving from home to workplace gave Piechocki free access to both public and private sphere, although she viewed this as a family necessity.

Pracownice¹⁴

Canneries were also rhetorical sites of collaboration among working women. Although I could locate little archival evidence of Polish women's union protests, some articles and firstperson memories reveal possible resistance to unfair labor laws or wages. For example, one

¹⁴ Polish term for "working women"

article supports the sentiments of cannery workers to permit long hours. Polish citizens organized a large meeting on February 6, 1912 at Saint Stanislaus Kostka Church to protest a proposed law that would prevent women from working over 10 hours in the canneries each day. One person commented that this law would “deprive the women of an opportunity to earn a living,” suggesting that cannery work granted Polish women personal satisfaction. Another proposed that: “There are always a great many men without jobs. Let them take them into the packing house on a man’s pay and they won’t need to overwork women and children.” Although the author of the article comments that workers remained silent to prevent a record of their protests, this statement exemplifies the feminine ethos of collaboration and sympathy, proclaiming that Polish women worked only because their husbands were jobless or received low wages. The anonymous op-ed author firmly states his advice to “let the workers speak for themselves and you will learn the truth” (“Contends That The Employees”). Whether for economic independence or working hard to support their families, Polish cannery women were evidently respected in Baltimore.

Veronica Lukowski also recalled collaborating with women to increase wages at the Southern Can Company: “Then the girls said, ‘Let’s go on strike for more money.’ A union didn’t come in it was just that we all got together and said, ‘No work till we get more money. We won.’” Without following the dominant tradition of work protest through forming a union, Lukowski and her coworkers persuaded their employer to increase pay. Lukowski describes how after she began working at National Can and a man working at Southern Can Company asks her how much she earned, he didn’t believe she was making 35 cents an hour compared to his 30 cents. Considering several jobs still pay women lower wages than men today, this highlights how canneries valued the Polish women workforce. Similar to Piechocki, Lukowski couldn’t recall a

time when she didn't have an opportunity for cannery work and demonstrated an interdependence between Polish women and the industry. While canneries always opened their doors to her, Lukowski enjoyed the industry's flexible environment. She continued shucking oysters until the night her first son was born, when her mother had to inform their boss why Lukowski was absent the next morning. This experience enhanced Lukowski's awareness of a collective identity that shed light on her personal characteristics: "I was strong then. I'm still strong." Similarly, she enjoyed working at a place where she could consistently see familiar faces from the neighborhood, emphasizing comradery between Polish women ("Fells Point Remembers: Veronica Lukowski: A Life of Work").

On off-seasons when Polish women had no cannery work, they transitioned to migrant farm work in the counties or other states. Around May, a row-boss would invite women in the Polish colony by word of mouth to bean and berry picking work ("Stella Elizabeth (Lewandowski) Wilson interview"). Men generally stayed in the city for their year-round jobs, but children went with their mothers ("Best and Worst Side"). Baltimoreans would recognize a lineup of wagons along East Baltimore streets, aware Polish families would leave for seasonal work until fall. At the work camps, Polish women would collaborate with each other to form temporary "Little Polands," work with their children to instill ethnic pride, and ultimately transport their role in the private sphere to the public arena.

Maryland citizens noticed this ability of Polish women to juxtapose domestic and work duties. At a Jessup settlement of 75 Polish migrant workers in 1890, an article described how: "...while the mother strings beans or peals tomatoes with her hands she rocks the baby with her feet" ("Life in a Polish Settlement Near Jessups"). Recognizing the women for skills and past traditional housewife roles, the article states that they surpass abilities of working men: "They

shoulder a two-bushel bag of peas and tuck a baby under one arm and walk off as if they thought nothing of such burden. They labor as hard as the men.” Women and their families in Anne Arundel County worksites generally resided in 100x30 ft. shanties with a wall splitting 50 people on one side and 50 on the other. Occupants used blankets for doors, and buildings had no plumbing. Despite these mediocre living conditions, Polish women and children have fond memories of the camps. Poles had nightly folk music and dance sessions, playing fiddles and accordions (Sandler 25-29).

On weekends, husbands would come to visit and help construct outdoor brick ovens (Shopes 20). Lukowski recalls how women would bake homemade bread and cookies for the children together at night, then wake up at 4a.m. to resume their toils. (“Fells Point Remembers Veronica Lukowski: A Life of Work”). Since employers paid Poles for berry and bean picking as piecework, children often assisted their mothers. As Shope describes, mainstream society often criticized Polish women for allowing their children to live and work in poor conditions:

By all accounts, this was tedious, exhausting, dirty, and low paying. In the early 1900s, a cannery woman, with the help of her children, might earn four or five dollars a week, about half the earnings of other working women. Yet for families with few choices, this income provided the necessary margin to purchase shoes, pay children’s tuition to local Catholic schools...Reformers criticized mothers for taking their children to the canneries and the fields, accusing them of ignorance and neglect. But many women chose to work in these places, instead of more tightly organized factories, precisely so they could bring their children with them, as much to keep an eye on them as to have their help with work. Hine quoted one mother disapprovingly when she explained that she brought her daughters with her to the canneries because she was ‘learnin de trade.’” Yet the mother was quite proud that her daughter was learning necessary habits of hard work and family assistance. (Shopes 20)

Although Polish women worked mainly out of necessity, they also had choices and made a conscious decision to resist alternative labor environments to keep family together. While

Maryland reformers disapproved of Polish women allowing their children to work alongside them, Polish women in a sense were all acting as social reformers, working to better the lives of children in the community. Some Polish women reportedly attended Parent Teacher's Association for their children's schools upon their return to Baltimore ("The Bean Pickers Push"). Moreover, women preserved Polish pride and values across generations by teaching their daughters. A July 1937 article indicates generational differences in the field as elders watch others pick berries in sweatshirts and slacks. However, all of the pickers, most of whom were born in America, chose to speak Polish ("The Bean Pickers Push").

Matka and Siostrzenica¹⁵

By the mid nineteenth century, the technology that created the canning industry also crushed it. Adapting to modernity, Polonian women collaborated together socially and crossgenerationally to preserve traditions, memories, and learned values from their work in the packing houses and bean fields. In September 1969, a bus transported Polish American women, mostly over the age of 65 and widowed, to Stewartstown, Pennsylvania to work at the Charles C. Shanbarger's Cannery. The women received 40 cents for each bucket of peeled beans, a total compensation of \$700-\$1,000 and a banquet with Polka music by the end of their stay. When asked whether the work is daunting, Mrs. Mary Zuchowski replied "Hard work? Well, it isn't easy. But this is almost like an old tradition" Another commented that: "The Polish people are just used to this kind of work. They all love it; they are a very independent kind of people...There ain't nobody that can beat these Polish people here." While most of these women went from supporting families to seeking work for independent economic survival, the tradition of hard work prevails.

¹⁵ Polish terms for "mother" and "daughter"

As a second-generation berry picker, Julie Zarachowicz identifies how working in canneries and fields with her mother and grandmother shaped her values:

I worked all my life and I'm very proud of that...On Sundays we had the day off and could relax and have fun. ...We each had a row to pick. If grandmother got too far ahead she'd come back and scold us and say that we were playing...Grandmother was strict. She made us work hard, but, thank God, because we all turned out good. My father stayed here and worked. He didn't come to the country with us. The whole time, grandmother would be saying to us kids, 'Let's work harder so we can show your father how much money we've made.' That's how we were able to buy this house. Everybody pitched in" ("Fells Point Remembers: Julie Zarachowicz: 76 Going Strong").

Zarachowicz forms a collective identity with her matriarchal lineage, learning hard work from her mother and grandmother. Her recollections of collaborating as a family in order to buy a house relates to other women's stories of mothers and daughters providing financial support for buying homes. Zarachowicz also describes her family's history in "this house," indicating that she still occupies the same private space that her collaborative work with mother and grandmother in the traditionally male-dominated public sphere funded.

Polish American women in more recent generations never worked in a canning factory or bean field. Rather, they relied on family memories. Mary Zajac calls her process of listening to her father and aunts discuss working as bean pickers "harvesting stories." After her family members recall life at the work camps and earning a penny per pound, Zajac describes her unique way of preserving Polish values:

I usually associated Busia with the Polish food we had at holidays—the cheese-filled *pierogis* and crispy *kruschiki* cookies that were as much a part of her as bead necklaces and flower-shaped brooches. But this bean soup, this scent, is the Busia I saw on afternoon visits, the one who wore flowered house-dresses while she ironed and hummed in the kitchen. This soup is working food ("Green Days").

Zajac adapts her stance as a younger generation Polish woman in Baltimore, associating the bean picker heritage with food. Coined "working food," the soup also recalls her ethnicity's traditional

hard-working values. She strengthens the believability of hard work as a Polish tradition by collaborating with her ancestors, presenting stories to join their collective identity.

Conclusion

You have to do some searching today for hints of Baltimore's Polish canning history. Factory buildings along the neighborhood's Cannery Row where Polish women once stuffed tins with hominy and pineapple continues the ultimate transformation to department stores and studios. Catching a glimpse through one of the narrow windows running up the side of a converted factory building, you can picture women pealing beans with shells strewn around their feet and daughters with their own bushels lagging behind. At the Polish Home Club, children of these children gather annually to celebrate the migrant work that introduced their parents to each other. These Polish Americans collaboratively share stories to find commonalities and enrich their heritage.

As a family-centered culture, Poles traditionally collaborated to preserve ethnic values. Relying on rhetorical tools, Polish women collaborated with husbands, coworkers, and daughters alike to ultimately cultivate a collective identity focused on hard work and dedication while also transcending spheres. As scholars, our job is to also take on the role of collaborator to combine stories like those of the cannery women into a more inclusive rhetorical tradition.

Zakończenie¹⁶

The Polish Home Club was one of my first stops for research. Except for nights with larger activities, the club includes the regulars I met that night, all around in their 60s-80s. Talking over the live polka band, I tried asking the ladies questions to exercise their memories. In a traditional

¹⁶ Polish term for "conclusion"

Baltimore accent, one woman's stories took me from a trip to Poland with her husband, to St. Casimir's Church, to arguing with her mother over taking Polish lessons in a struggle between old and new values. Most fleeting memories unearthed short glimpses of the past in relation to my research: remembering the site of old schools, having a third cousin who just might still be in the PWA of A, or recalling a friend's mother who once toiled away in canneries, possibly one where there's now a shopping center. They asked me to join them in their traditional conclusion to each weekend gathering: holding hands to sing first the Polish National Anthem, then God Bless America. Here, echoes of Baltimore's Polonia still prevail. Leaving without many notes for my particular research areas, my enthusiasm revived and I thought about my Polish family.

I pictured my mother's Babka I never met through the stories I heard: a woman with calloused hands wearing a *babushka*, hunched over her crops on the family farm. I recalled my Babka in the kitchen, and going with my mom to have our priest bless an Easter basket full of boiled eggs and kielbasa. My monikers might be "Hard worker," "Resourceful," and "Traditional. "As scholars, we have the responsibility of making the rhetorical tradition more inclusive. In doing so, we should first listen and share our own stories. As Senator Mikulski quoted Harry Truman while Christmas Caroling with the East Baltimore Polish village, "As long as you know who you are and where you came from, you can't do wrong."

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Designing syllabi, assessment items, lecture notes, and course content
for Pearson online learning courses

Elmira College

Tutor

2008

Tutored students for U.S. Women’s History

PRESENTATIONS

College English Association Middle Atlantic Group (CEAMAG)

“Is Tweeting Making Students Twitty, or Witty?”

2013

MEMBERSHIPS

Triota

Omicron Delta Kappa

