Migration to the Self: Education, Political Economy, and Religious Authority in Polish Communities

by

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DEDICATION

For Chad and Zosia, with love

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ABSTRACT

"Migration to the Self: Education, Political Economy, and Religious Authority in Polish Communities" examines the experiences of peasant labor migrants from the Polish lands as they moved across Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and notably how migrants narrated the changing labor conditions associated with capitalism. Rooted in interdisciplinary approaches to scholarship, I argue that the larger process of labor migration involved new ways of thinking about one's obligations to self and society, as well as the potential for imagining new forms of relationships between laypeople and clergy. Utilizing archival sources like diaries, memoirs, and letters, along with school textbooks and disciplinary records, visa applications, and life insurance claims, I consider four separate spaces where individuals encountered and weighed ideas of modern subjectivity: the school, the border, the mutual aid society, and the church. In so doing, I demonstrate that peasant migrants were both shaped by and actively shaping global economic forces, and that such trends had an impact on how migrants fashioned themselves as self-sufficient, upwardly mobile, and autonomous actors. Far from being a source of universality, however, I maintain that these individuals were participants in developing the structures of differentiation—the division of migrants into worthy and unworthy categories—that define border politics in the modern world.

Introduction

Changing Conceptions of Liberal Subjectivity

In the summer of 1913, a teenage Hipolit Wagner left the village of Idalin, thirty miles South of Lublin, in the Russian partition of Poland, otherwise known as the Congress Kingdom, for the United States. Like thousands upon thousands of other peasant migrants, Wagner had hoped to find steady, well-paying work in a city; he was nonetheless disappointed. Bouncing from job to job and enmeshed in the industrial labor market for the first time, Wagner struggled to find stable employment—he first found work in a Detroit factory cleaning cast iron molds and later took a position as a kitchen apprentice, eventually working his way up to pastry chef. Ultimately, Wagner would settle in Hamtramck, Michigan, where he divided his workday between managing a general store and working the afternoon shift at Chrysler, but not before returning briefly to a recently unified Polish state in the spring of 1919 to fight in the Polish-Soviet War. He nonetheless decided, for reasons that aren't entirely clear from his writings, to come back to the United States after the war ended; he would live in the Detroit area with his wife and five children until his death in 1960.[1]

The story that Wagner's journal relays is in many ways a conventional narrative of the Polish diaspora—a young rural laborer, almost always male, leaves his family in order to escape poverty and accordingly turns to the factories in the Midwest in search of economic opportunity,

[1] Hipolit C. Wagner diary, 1912-1919, Hipolit C. Wagner Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

in the end defining himself either as a Pole or as an American. But while Wagner devotes many of his entries to his longings for Poland—and, indeed, his strong self-identification as a Pole in exile—he also pays considerable attention to money: what to do with it, what not to do with it, how to navigate the financial temptations and risks of life in a big city, and how to process the dramatic ups and downs of wage labor commodification.

Much of Wagner's story gets lost, however, if we look at his experiences only through the framework of nationalism or national belonging.[2] Take, for instance, Wagner's description of his first day in Detroit. "When I thought it was morning, I went out into the street, where I was approached by a stranger who began to speak to me in Polish," Wagner wrote. "Walking along the street, suddenly my companion looked around and picked up fifty dollars in banknotes. He glanced around and told me to keep it a secret that he found fifty dollars. He then offered to share it with me. I understood immediately that this was a trick. I said, 'Pardon me, but you found the money, so it belongs to you.'" Wagner then promptly left the company of the stranger, balancing the need to protect himself from a potentially unscrupulous individual with polite decorum. Wagner's writings suggest that he was proud of his ability to navigate the perils of modern life. He suspected that someone was trying to take advantage of him, even if the workings of that scheme aren't immediately clear, and he accordingly worked his way out of the situation, at the same time learning an important lesson: trust no one outside his immediate contacts, even those who speak his native language. He presents himself a natural modern—a sort of working-class flâneur. A man who could, on one of his first days in a new country (and

[2] The process of collecting and archiving Wagner's story similarly reflects the significance of reading migration as national experience. Wagner's son, who donated the collection to the Bentley Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan included, along with the diary and account ledger, an appendix that situates Wagner's life on a timeline of significant dates in Polish national history, which he titled "My Journey in the World."

his first day residing in a city!) traverse urban space, detect a financial scam, and remove himself from harm's way.

Wagner is satisfied with his ability to understand his new surroundings and diagnose financial risks—and he's emphatic that he has already adopted the proper stance toward saving money and continues to promise himself that he will send his wages back home to his parents, when possible, and place any additional savings in the bank—and he is likewise critical of those who don't act in a similar way. He names his friend Bronisław as a principal offender. "[Bronisław] cared only about his own welfare, he sought his own pleasure, he lived a loose life," Wagner observed. "He was not interested in his native land, not even about his family's welfare—more so since his job made him feel wealthy. Apparently his only thoughts seemed to be about women." From Wagner's perspective, Bronisław had not adopted an appropriate modern subjectivity; he was a feckless individual who placed sexual gratification and materialism before the needs of his family. His priorities were skewed. Wagner's use of the phrase "loose life" referred to Bronisław's irresponsible attitude toward finances as well as his cavalier approach toward women, and both vices, in fact, went hand-in-hand. Womanizing, for Wagner, was as much a financial transgression as a moral one, particularly as it had the potential to prevent Bronisław from taking care of the much more pressing responsibility of providing financially for his parents back home in the partitioned lands. Bronisław was a wanderer, Wagner concludes, a migrant so detached from his past that he felt no connection to anything or anyone. "There were some unenlightened people . . . for them it did not matter where they lived, whether it be Poland or America or any other place," he concludes. "[T]hey merely lived wherever and accepted the hospitality of various countries they happened to be in . . . . Bronisław

belonged to this group."[3] Mobility, it seems, would need to be regulated with both internal moral and financial precepts.

Stories like Wagner's that revolve around discussions of money and commodified labor are commonplace in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet materials like Wagner's diary are often viewed primarily through the frameworks of national history or of individuals becoming national, which suggests the centrality of migration as national experience.[4] There are nonetheless transnational, or rather supranational, implications for Wagner's story. For many peasant migrants, the questions of money—how to earn it, how to save it, and how to spend it—became paramount and indeed informed experiences across the Atlantic, reflecting large-scale changes in how individuals viewed their place in the modern world. Looking at attitudes toward financial responsibility and the impact that money and labor commodification had on the imagining of self thus helps us rethink broader national narratives and suggests a need to situate Polish history within a framework of modern life.[5] Wagner's diary

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[3] Hipolit C. Wagner diary, undated entry.

[4] For discussion on the nationalizing effects of migration in diasporic communities, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). There's, of course, an extensive literature on theories of nations and nationalism, which is too large to cite in its entirety. Some key texts that investigate the internalization of national identification include: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991); Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976); and Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[5] An important exception to the prevalence of nation-based studies of Polish migration is the scholarship of social historians in the 1980s and 90s that focused on economic structures and labor politics, as well as community and family dynamics. In this regard, see John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), along with John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University

lends itself to this type of analysis in part because of its content, but also because of what's included in a supplementary ledger: a number of pages documenting purchases that Wagner—a meticulous and organized numbers cruncher—had made and credit that he had extended to his customers at his grocery store.

This dissertation focuses on how peasant migrants from the area we now call Poland experienced modernity, and more specifically how ideas of self as economic actor changed within the context of mass migration, broadly conceived as both internal migration from the countryside to city and external migration across international boundaries—and, in fact, many people who made that journey would first travel from village to city in search of seasonal work and then later on would travel abroad.[6] Two aspects I am particularly interested in are the impact of labor migration on the internalization of liberal economic norms and values and changing ideas of religious authority within migrant communities. Indeed, I maintain these processes are interconnected: that the experiences of peasant labor migrants demonstrate how important the adoption of liberal subjectivities was as individuals moved throughout the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and had a profound impact on understandings of clerical authority and religious identity in Polish and Polish-American communities. Such an approach

Press, 1987). See also, *Polish Americans and Their History: Community, Culture, and Politics*, John J. Bukowczyk, ed. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

[6] For discussion of seasonal labor in the Prussian partition, see Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). On seasonal migration during the interwar period, see Włodzimierz Spaleniak, *Emigracja sezonowa polskich robotników rolnych do Niemiec (1919-1939)* (Zamość: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Zawodowa im. Szymona Szymonowica, 2010).

requires that we shift our attention on mass migration from raw numbers inward, to the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings of migrant laborers as they navigated the structures of modern political economy and reconciled their beliefs with outside forces of authority and power.

On Polish (and Rural) Modernity

Examining the formation of the modern economic self and its impact on conceptions of religious authority requires that we turn to some of the historiographical trends that are currently shaping the fields of world history, the history of education, the history of capitalism, and east European history. And here it is important to recognize that a number of contemporaries, in a variety of unexpected contexts, considered Polish peasants as representative of largescale political and economic changes. Rebecca Karl's study of Chinese nationalism, for instance, opens with an examination of an opera that intellectuals staged in 1904 as a warning to others about the need to support social and economic development in the face of political adversity. The decision of Chinese nationalists to place the opera's story in partitioned Poland was, Karl argues, an attempt to underscore the importance of supporting a form of collective advancement decoupled from the ultimate goal of statehood.[7]

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[7] Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). See, in particular, Karl's discussion of the opera, *Guazhong lanyin*, and the hopes that the performance would spark a popular awakening of collective identity outside statehood, pp. 27-49. Here I also acknowledge the important role that scholarship on Poland played in world systems analysis, and notably Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011). Wallerstein maintains that Poland's peripheral status was rooted in weak, decentralized political power and the exploitation of labor. Still others have remarked on the participation of Poles in the reshaping of potentials for democratic citizenship. On this point, see Susan Buck-Morss's

My dissertation follows suit in that I consider the topic of Polish migration from the seemingly un-radical perspective that Poland's history was average, in the sense that the experiences of individuals from the Polish lands were characteristic of global developments and that the study of peasant migrants can help us understand phenomena that normally fall outside the confines of nation-based studies.[8] And yet, given the stakes of histories of Poles and Poland, as well as the politicization of Polish history today, examining Poland's past as unexceptional is significant in countering victimization narratives that privilege loss of political freedom, constraints on individual agency, and heroism over other forms of experience. It is also an approach, as historians have shown recently, grounded in evidence. As Brian Porter-Szűcs put it recently in his survey *Poland in the Modern World*, "It might seem odd to start a book on the history of Poland by acknowledging that the country is rather ordinary, but I would argue that it is worth studying not because it is exceptional, but precisely because it is not . . . . [Its] in-between status makes Poland a useful portal for anyone hoping to view the broad tendencies and characteristics of the modern world."[9] Accordingly, this dissertation will approach the experiences of Polish peasant migrants as intertwined with larger processes and developments in world history, and notably the history of modern political economy and labor migration, and in so doing it is an attempt to narrate a history that looks at Polish experiences outside of the focus on revolutions and political oppression. This requires that we expand our interest beyond the

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discussion of Polish aristocratic participation in the Haitian revolution. See Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 75.

[8] For an argument on the need to approach migration history from a more global vantage, see Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900-1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 4-10.

[9] Brian Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 3.

familiar linear benchmarks of Polish history—1795, 1830, 1863, 1905, 1918, 1939, 1968, 1989—to consider actors and events typically absent from national histories.[10]

Foregrounding Polish history's connections to world political economy complements the many studies in the fields of Polish and east European history that seek to challenge the primacy of nations and nationalism by pushing back against narratives that emphasize Poland as an example, indeed *the* example, of national martyrdom.[11] Scholars have done so in a variety of ways: by questioning the teleological trajectory of national development that even the best national studies can adopt; by emphasizing how historical actors viewed national affiliation as flexible or were "indifferent" to national identity, to use Tara Zahra's term; and by noting how the ethnic and religious diversity of the region facilitated hybrid approaches to identity and senses of belonging.[12] Not surprisingly, many of these studies counter clear-cut visions of national development or affiliation by turning to localism, hence the focus on town life and everyday social interactions as a way to highlight the complexity in the seemingly always present

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[10] A classic treatment of Poland's political march toward statehood is Stefan Kieniewicz, Andrzej Zachorski, and Władysław Zajewski, *Trzy powstania narodowe: Kościuszkowskie, listopadowe, styczniowe* (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1992).

[11] For criticism on the centrality of the nation in Polish history, see Brian Porter-Szűcs, "Beyond the Study of Nationalism," in *Nationalism Today*, Krzysztof Jaskułowski and Tomasz Kamusella, eds. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009). For a criticism of nation-focused histories and linearity, as well as an argument for adopting complex, contradictory narratives at a variety of scales, see Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

[12] On the concept of "national indifference" in eastern Europe, see Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011). On hybridity and complexity in ethnicity, see James E. Bjork's work on Silesia, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008). See also Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

and always becoming idea of the nation. These scholars, it's important to emphasize, don't reject the nation outright as a category of historical analysis. Instead, they discuss the nation as a significant feature in modern history and note how individuals ultimately became enmeshed in a web of nation-states, with the possibility of national ambiguity becoming less and less likely as the twentieth century advanced. Zahra argues, for instance, that within the context of the development of nationalized primary education in the Bohemian lands the Habsburg state forced previously indifferent, free agent parents to choose their national affiliation, in that case by selecting language instruction for their children in either Czech or German.

Others have applied "modernity" as a heuristic to examine eastern Europe's global entanglements. Nathan Wood's *Becoming Metropolitan* is instructive in its treatment of modernity in that Wood shows how urbanism became a primary form of affiliation for residents of Cracow, one that has been overshadowed in scholarship focused on the nation but was nonetheless significant. As he maintains, although discourses of the nation often took precedence among elites in early twentieth-century Cracow, for the vast majority of the city's inhabitants, urban life became a significant marker of identity, something that most people arguably would experience at a deeper, more meaningful level than national attachment. Moreover, urban identity, Wood writes, could provide opportunities for shared bonds across nations. "[Cracovians] were aware of their commonalities with urbanites abroad, and they preferred the amenities of city life—paved roads, running water, electric streetcars, electrification, cafes, theaters, schools, and hospitals—to the general absence of these in the

countryside. In daily life at least, the myth of modern European civilization was often more immediate and compelling than the myth of Polish Athens."[13]

The concept of modernity and its underlying belief in progress is nonetheless a source for debate among historians—some of whom find the term too vague to be useful and others who have criticized the norms and Western evolutionary trajectories that the concept entails.[14] Modernity nonetheless has a certain staying power, even as many historians readily acknowledge the risks, both historiographical and moral, of advancing a Eurocentric view of the past. And yet modernity, outside secondary interpretations, also held importance for contemporary historical actors who relied on the concept and its normative trajectory of progress to make sense of their world.[15] Indeed, in the Polish context, scholars such as Jerzy Jedlicki, Andrzej Walicki, and Larry Wolff have shown how central perceptions of backwardness and progress have been to ideas of the nation among Polish intellectuals and to the cultural imaginings of eastern Europe from Western Enlightenment thinkers.[16] Despite its problems, then, modernity continues to be an

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[13] Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 14.

[14] For an example of how historians debate the merits and limitations of modernity as concept, see the following forum in the American Historical Review, "Historians and the Question of 'Modernity,'" *American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011). In particular, see Richard Wolin's discussion of the dangers of imposing Western norms of progress on non-Western societies and of the need to embrace "alternative modernities" from that volume. Richard Wolin, "'Modernity': The Peregrinations of a Contested Historiographical Concept."

[15] For a description of modernity's characteristics, as well as an understanding of modernity as a world-historical process involving ideas of progress, see Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 16-17.

[16] See Jerzy Jedlicki's classic *Jakiej cywilizacji Polacy potrzebują: studia z dziejów idei i wyobraźni XIX wieku* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo WAB, 2002), translated as *A Suburb of Europe: Nineteenth-Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999), as well as Jedlicki's more philosophical treatise *Świat zwyrodniały. Lęki i wyroki krytyków nowocześności* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2000). See also, Andrzej

indispensable conceptual device and mode of analysis. Moreover, for individuals who experienced the changes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, modernity implies not merely change or rupture, but rather signals the need to investigate the importance of transformation, reconciliation, and the revisiting of social bonds that often fall outside studies focused on national affiliation.

Rebecca Karl's work, again, is helpful in resolving the strengths of modernity as concept with its limitations. As she maintains, synchronic understandings of modernity provide an alternative to Eurocentric trajectories of development and similarly allow for weighing the participation of historical agents around the world, while still acknowledging the allure that visions of progress held for disparate actors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the power dynamics at play. Here Karl sketches out a framework that reaches beyond linear timescales and instead approaches modernity as "synchronic uneven global space in a coeval temporality."[17] There are advantages to this construction. Looking at modernity in synchronic terms allows historians to consider the various entanglements and structures of power and hierarchy at play at a transnational level, while still being attuned to actors' awareness of their position in this globalizing world. Moreover, synchronicity helps us weigh opportunities for universal connections, based on marginalization or otherwise shared experiences. Could peasant migrants in partitioned Poland find commonalities with their contemporaries—people who

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Walicki, *Poland Between East and West: The Controversies over Self-Definition and Modernization in Partitioned Poland* (Cambridge: Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University, 1994); Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994). For an economic take on the issue of "backwardness," see the classic text *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages until the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. Daniel Chirot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[17] Karl, *Staging the World*, 84.

shared similar experiences with labor and mobility—in other places around the world? What were the possibilities for developing common or universal understandings of humanity rooted in particular social conditions, understandings of labor, conceptions of self-transformation, and ideas of progress? Put differently, if, as Karl observes, Chinese intellectuals could see the experiences of peasants in the Polish partitions as providing insight into their condition of statelessness and rural poverty—and, as we'll see later on, Chinese intellectuals weren't alone in this regard—did their Polish counterparts embrace the same opportunities for universality?

Some contemporary commentators on the experience of migration, in fact, did entertain the possibility that migration from the Polish lands could signal a turn to universalism, as we'll see in Chapter One, even though I take Charles Bright and Michael Geyer's cautionary remarks on world historians' attempts to look for the seeds of universalism everywhere to heart.[18] Another play, this time from a Polish playwright, sheds light on the matter as it demonstrates how significant the trope of universality was for contemporaries. *Dzieci Słońca* (*Children of the Sun*), from 1922, opens with the following scene, set in the U.S. Civil War: Union army officer and native of Poznań Ludwik Żychliński is in the heat of battle when a messenger arrives with two newspapers. The papers confirm, the messenger tells Żychliński, that Poles in the old country are rising up against Russian rule – that "[t]he entire world is under the sign of Mars"

[18] I agree with Geyer and Bright's observations about the need to develop new approaches to world history that take into account our present moment of globalization and interconnectedness, and I share their concern about the need to develop approaches to globalization that challenge a triumphalist narrative that ties globalization to Western development. As they write, "Global integration is a fact, now part of the historical record; but, because it has little to do with the normative universalism of Enlightenment intellectuals or with the principled particularisms of the *tier-mondists*, nothing is gained by spinning out ideas about the westernization of the world." Michael Geyer and Charles Bright, "World History in a Global Age," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 4, (1995), 1037.

and "[t]he glows of war illuminate the 'old land.'" Żychliński, overjoyed at the news of the insurrection in the Russian partition, vows to fight for his homeland: "I stand here among you helpless as Poland calls us to service for which we've longed . . . . It is time for me to return; I must go."[19] Before he leaves, however, he must request permission from his commanding officer. The scene ends with the officer promising that he will do what he can to help Żychliński as "[t]he cause of freedom is holy," with the implication that the fight against slavery in the United States was analogous to the lack of political freedom in the Polish lands.[20]

That such narratives have a universal undertone is clear, and they have tremendous staying power within popular understandings of the Polish migrant experience and the promotion of victimization narratives. They can also obscure how migrants from the Polish lands were embedded in the structures of hierarchical power and differentiation that were under construction at the time. The weight of the story of Polish migration as representing the potential for universalism carries on to this day, even if the sentiment behind such constructs, which suggests that Poles today should find commonality with other migrant groups, is laudable. For instance, the acclaimed Museum of Emigration in Gdynia, which opened in 2015, includes the following statement, titled "Universal Experiences," in its exhibition guide:

> What is this phenomenon for us as a national group, a society living in a country located in the middle of a united Europe? What meaning does it have for a community in which our ties among members are based not on military sacrifice but on collaboration and actively building a collective future? Is [migration] an opportunity or a threat? . . . . A person removed from the context of one's home environment remains naked against their personal freedom and discovers what about themselves is authentic. Independent of questions of selfhood, where someone is going and who someone is becoming,

[19] Stanisław H. Łempicki, *Dzieci Słońca: Utwór patryotyczny na tle życia wychodztwa Polskiego* (Milwaukee: Polish Book Club, Co., 1922), 25-26.

[20] Ibid., 29.

> [migration] creates space for understanding a universal experience through contact with the other.[21]

While many of us see value in the message that we can find commonality based on a shared history of migration and of cross-cultural exchange—and of course this is a matter that continues to be of importance in Poland today, particularly as politicians reconcile Poles' position in a post-Brexit European Union—there is, in practice, a tension between acknowledging migration as universal experience, and therefore as basis for common ground, and understanding the differentiating tendencies embedded in labor migration. That the question of "where someone is going and who someone is becoming" has the tendency to differentiate as much as unify is a matter at the core of this dissertation.

That a study of modernity has a deep history rooted in peasant experience nonetheless might seem odd, but such stark juxtaposition between peasants and modernity nevertheless belies the ways in which rural economic life transformed in the nineteenth century and overlooks the increased mobility that peasant migrants often embraced.[22] Indeed, one of my claims is that there is a need to consider the rural when examining modernity and its associated developments, including urbanization and the construction of capitalist labor practices.[23] Other scholars of eastern Europe have noted this dynamic, particularly Alison Fleig Frank's work on the rise of the

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[21] Karolina Grabowicz-Matyjas, "Uniwersalne doświadczenie," in *Łączymy historie: Muzeum Emigracji w Gdyni* (Gdynia: Muzeum Emigracji w Gdyni, 2014), 4-5.

[22] On the topic of peasants and capitalism, see Jan Borkowski, *Chłopi polscy w dobie kapitalizmu* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1981).

[23] The key theoretical text on the relationship between rural and urban development is William Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis*, which looks at the rise of industrial Chicago as connected to the natural landscape. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991).

Galician oil industry at the start of the twentieth century and Kate Brown's comparison of Westward migration in the United States to the settlement of Poles in the Soviet Union borderlands.[24] Most recently, Tara Zahra has reminded us in her study of mass migration from eastern Europe, in her words, that "anxieties about emigration [from the 1880s on] were bound up in a broader discussion of the meaning of freedom, free labor, and slavery in a global labor market."[25] Even the most remote of villages was connected to the outside world in myriad ways—through information networks and interpersonal connections, of course, but also through internal economic and political development.[26]

Memoirists from the time remarked on the significant impact that migration had on peasant communities, in both material and psychological terms. Stanisław Pigoń, who authored the autobiographical *From Kombornia Into the World* in the 1940s, wrote the following on how he perceived the exoticism of return migrants, and of migration in general, during his childhood in a Galician village:

> I don't know when exactly this new phase of migration began, or who from the village was the daredevil who first ventured across the ocean. In my childhood it was already a general phenomenon. In any event, anyone who could earn or borrow the money left for

[24] Alison Fleig Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Kate Brown, "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana are Nearly the Same Place," *American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (2001): 17-48. David Hoffman's exploration of urban migration in the early Soviet context is also informative. See David L. Hoffman, *Peasant Metropolis: Soviet Identities in Moscow, 1929-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

[25] Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 16.

[26] On the matter of villages and modernity, and more specifically on the creation of a rural public sphere, see Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). For a discussion of how modernity affected relationships between Jews and non-Jews, in eastern Europe and beyond, see Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

America to labor. When some of our neighbors who left returned, we children would gather around, bashfully, hoping to hear something about American curiosities….

> Emigration, and in particular leaving for America, played a large role in raising the level of the village, in both material and intellectual terms. Those who first went to Hungary and Bukowina [in the first wave of migration from the village], worked their way a little around the world and saw how things worked abroad. They were able to experience a higher standard of living, they had finally won a few of the material remedies that could break their poverty. They were no longer intimidated or afraid, forced to manage among the foreign and indifferent. For those "Americans" everything happened at an even higher level. After a few years of living in more civilized conditions, they returned with a slightly different social outlook and were dressed well, and they would try to maintain these conditions in the village. The homes of former emigrants differed from those of their neighbors: they had a chimney, larger windows, a porch, and they no longer had a thatched roof.[27]

Pigoń's comments capture many of the themes that will emerge over the following pages: the importance of material advancement, financial growth, norms of consumption, as well as the changing world views of those laborers who made the journey abroad.[28]

Shifts in conceptions of labor and social relations lie at the heart of my analysis, and here Martha Lampland's examination of labor commodification in the Hungarian countryside is instructive. As Lampland reminds us, capitalism is a historically grounded phenomenon that has an all-encompassing impact on structures and society alike. The totalizing features of capitalism likewise extend to individual beliefs and understandings of selfhood. Lampland argues thus:

> Another way of stating my position is to say that labor becomes a category of economic life, social action, and cultural speculation only with the arrival of capitalism . . . . I am not suggesting that people do not work (in the most general sense) outside capitalism. Rather, following Marx's analysis . . . I am arguing that labor is a category unique to capitalism. In capitalism, labor is the touchstone of social life: it is material property of

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[27] Stanisław Pigoń, *Z Komborni w świat: Wspomnienia młodości* (Cracow: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza "Wieś," 1947), 42-43.

[28] Writing of the migration of Jews from the Polish lands in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Rebecca Kobrin has argued that we need to complicate ideas of population shifts to consider Jewish migration a global phenomenon, as well as consider the possibility that such experiences had an empowering impact on migrants themselves. Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Białystok and Its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

> human actors, bearing physical, nearly tangible qualities. It is also the touchstone, the foundation, of subjectivity and morality.[29]

Following Moishe Postone's work on the subject, she maintains that under the conditions of capitalism, labor has unique qualities that distinguish it from any formulations of transhistoricity.[30] If under pre-capitalist arrangements, social relations dictated the nature of physiological labor, that character becomes inverted in the modern era, effectively subsuming and determining social relations. Labor, moreover, is abstracted in the process, creating a powerful structure while still retaining the veneer of tangible physiological work. Nothing is immune to change in this shift, even if the impact of that change tends to be both obscured and personalized. In fact, it's the personalization of labor attributes under capitalism—the way that things like time management, beliefs in economic uplift, and realizations of self as autonomous actor—that remains one of the most prolific, and yet generally unexamined, features of modern political economy.

These are not merely philosophical matters. This dissertation considers the shifts in social relations, beliefs, and practices that emerged from the world of commodified labor through the lived experiences of the individuals who navigated these new structures and formed new senses of self. How did historical actors make meaning from their experiences? And how did they personalize the abstract features of modern political economy? Here we are faced with a

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[29] Martha Lampland, *The Object of Labor: Commodification in Socialist Hungary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 11.

[30] Moishe Postone's analysis of Marx notes that labor under capitalism has a dual nature, one that masks the distinct character of abstract labor and then recasts it in the image of concrete labor. The result of this is that we underestimate the significance of abstract labor in structuring our lives and suggests that attempts to address the conditions of labor with the palliative devices of social democracy or with valorization of the working class are problematic. Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

puzzle: Why were the very people who felt the weight of labor objectification, the people whose lives were uprooted in the process, the ones who adopted complicated, and often positive, attitudes toward the promises of capitalism and liberal individualism? The following chapters examine the affective reach of labor practices, noting the centrality of ideas of uplift and personal responsibility in the experience of labor migration.

Alongside changing ideas of self, labor, and social bonds, structures of state power were a central feature of migration experience, and peasant migrants developed methods and sought out resources to navigate increasingly rigid state controls. This, after all, was a time of border solidification, as well as enhanced surveillance and bureaucratization, all of which came to a head in 1924 in the United States, as Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act. (Chapter Three, indeed, resituates the history of 1924 as significant not simply for curtailing mobility but also as a moment of enshrining liberal economic values in border regulation.) As individuals encountered these structures of authority, they developed strategies to prove fitness for mobility, citizenship, and labor. The construction of the modern self and the affective elements of economic subjectivity, I argue, went hand-in-hand with the construction of world borders as we know them today, all of which had a concrete impact on one's potential for mobility.

Setting the Stage for a History of Migration

Some background on the political and economic backdrop of peasant migration from the Polish lands in necessary before we begin. The late nineteenth century was a period of rapid economic change in rural Poland–indeed globally–and the transition from coerced to free labor shaped the politics of citizenship and popular concerns about rural mobility in both the partitions

and the United States. In Poland, which ceased to exist as a discrete political entity in 1795 following the tripartite divisions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth by the Russian, Prussian, and Habsburg Empires, land reform proceeded slowly, unevenly, and sometimes violently.[31] Starting in 1520 with the Edict of Toruń (*Przywilej toruński*), which required peasants to fulfill a labor obligation of at least one day per week on their lord's property, peasants in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were typically tied to land through a system of *corvée* labor, with labor obligations connected to acreage allotments. While the structure of feudalism varied dramatically across the Commonwealth, most scholars agree that over time serfdom became more oppressive. "In [some] regions of Poland-Lithuania," writes Daniel Stone, "most peasants worked the land as serfs under somewhat worsening conditions. The lack of cash meant that they could no longer commute their labor obligations into cash payments or hire help to carry out those obligations."[32] By the start of the seventeenth century, increased feudal regulations connected to a number of factors, including labor shortage, excess land, economic stagnation, and wars with Sweden and Russia, had significantly restricted peasant movement.

Still, serfdom in the Commonwealth, at least during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, allowed peasants to maintain a certain measure of economic freedom: serfs enjoyed limited usufruct that allowed them to sell their excess produce at urban markets, and many fulfilled their labor obligations by hiring itinerant peasants, which suggests that serfs had some disposable income. Moreover, most serfs retained some legal rights, even though from the early

[31] For detailed statistics on the impact of land reform across the partitions, see *Historia chłopów polskich*, ed. Stefan Inglot (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1972).

[32] Daniel Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 293.

sixteenth century on they were no longer able to file charges in royal courts. Serfs in the Polish-Lithuanian lands could bring complaints against their lords in peasant tribunals, appeal legal decisions to both noble and municipal courts, and, in some cases, even provide formal testimony.[33]

As economic conditions in the Commonwealth deteriorated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, individuals became increasingly immobilized. Peasants who had once been able to meet their responsibilities to the manor through hired help or cash payments found themselves fulfilling more responsibilities through their own labor due to the limited supply of money and increased tax obligations. By the end of the eighteenth century the situation had become so dire that some Polish intellectuals, notably the author of the May 3 Constitution of 1791, Hugo Kołłątaj, began to call for land reform. Of particular note, following the 1794 Insurrection against Russia in the wake of the second partition, Tadeusz Kościuszko, who organized an ill-fated rebellion against imperial rule, abolished serfdom and granted peasants property rights. These reforms were short-lived, however. By October of 1794 Russia had defeated Kościuszko's forces, and by November of 1795, the Habsburg, Russian, and Prussian Empires had divided what was left of the Commonwealth.

The partitioning powers therefore inherited a large-scale social and economic problem involving the peasantry. Habsburg, Russian, and Prussian authorities, nonetheless, did not embrace or approach social reforms in an identical manner. In Prussia, the emancipation of the serfs started relatively early, in 1807, though it would take another fifteen years for the government to issue a final indemnification decree and yet another decade before land reforms went into effect. Under the conditions of the Prussian decree, peasants received property rights

[33] Ibid., 70.

to the land they worked, with the stipulation that they provide compensation to their landlords for lost property. In practice this meant that peasants paid long-term rents to the nobility or provided labor in lieu of cash payments, which often reinforced the economic vulnerability of the peasantry. But this result was by no means uniform. As Piotr Wandycz describes the effects of peasant emancipation in Prussia, land reform accentuated class divisions among the peasantry; while affluent peasants were able to buy land outright or received credit to purchase land, those of lesser means were left with few options. "The wealthier peasants were able to own farms that were economically efficient," writes Wandycz. "[But the] poorest strata became landless."[34] The consequences of this were far-reaching as opportunities for employment in Prussian Poland were scarce at best. Thus, many landless peasants had little choice but to leave for the industrial centers in the Prussian Empire, an internal migratory trend that would prefigure *Polenpolitik*, the policies of *Kulturkampf,* and the debate over the ethnocultural/*völkisch* composition of the German nation-state following unification in 1871.[35]

As in the other partitions, in the Austrian territory economic policies concerning the peasantry went hand-in-hand with imperial politics. Under the rule of Maria Teresa and Joseph II, for example, peasants gained a number of personal and property rights. "Inspired in part by fiscal and demographic and in part by humanitarian motives, Josephinism sought to regulate landlord-peasant relations under the control of the state," argues Wandycz. "In 1782 personal subjection of the peasant was abolished and a moderate serfdom . . . introduced."[36] These

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[34] Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 70.

[35] On this point, see Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 125-32.

[36] Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 12-13.

reforms included, among others, inheritance rights, access to common pastures, and, significantly, the right to leave the manorial estate. Many peasants looked at the reforms, which limited the power of the gentry, as a sign of imperial good will, even though the changes also included higher tax obligations. Thus, as Keely Stauter-Halsted notes in her study of Polish peasant nationalism in Austrian Poland, Galician peasants often identified themselves first and foremost as subjects of the Habsburg state, a trend that continued into the early twentieth century.[37]

Economic conditions in Austrian Poland were nonetheless dire. Industrial growth in Galicia was limited during the nineteenth century, and Habsburg authorities shipped many of Galicia's raw materials directly to the metropole. In this environment many peasants struggled to meet even their most basic needs. Stauter-Halsted writes, for example, that a limited supply of land and low levels of agricultural productivity, paired with cholera and smallpox epidemics and famine, made the conditions of peasant life at this time extraordinarily challenging.[38] In his landmark study of poverty in late-nineteenth-century Austrian Poland, *The Misery of Galicia*—a study we'll return to in Chapter One—statistician and social theorist Stanisław Szczepanowski highlighted the problem of overpopulation and lack of access to farmable land:

> Apart from Italy the only countries with population densities similar to Galicia are the province of Bengali in eastern India and China, as the former numbers 110 farmers and the latter 83 farmers per kilometer [compared to 60 farmers per kilometer in Galicia]. But these are tropical countries whose lands are both fertilized with the water from great rivers and blessed with natural and artificial irrigation, in which a significant proportion

[37] "The Austrian crown had long attracted the loyalty of its rural subjects by promulgating laws designed to protect them from the worst abuses of their gentry landlords," writes Stauter-Halsted. Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village*, 8.

[38] Ibid., 21-27.

of lands seem to have two or three harvests per year, and therefore are in an entirely exceptional position.[39]

Such conditions ultimately contributed to the downfall of serfdom in Galicia. Whether driven by fealty to the Austrian Empire, hatred of the gentry, or the deplorable conditions of agricultural life, or a combination thereof, Galician peasants participated in a *jacquerie* against the gentry in 1846 that ended with the deaths of over two thousand landowners.[40] Hoping both to prevent a recurrence of these events and to quell democratic initiatives during the Springtime of Nations, the Austrian government proclaimed freedom for the serfs in April 1848, though, as in Prussian Poland, enfranchisement would ultimately reinforce class hierarchies and limit opportunities for economic advancement.[41]

Like peasant emancipation in the Austrian partition, the shift to freehold ownership in Russian Poland would only take place after a major episode of social unrest, in this case the January Insurrection of 1863. But as Stefan Kieniewicz has observed, Russian imperial officials had already begun to pay close attention to earlier events in Galicia, so that by 1846 Nicholas I had instituted reforms on peasant servitude, using Austria as a model. The reforms of 1846 set off large-scale debates about the peasantry, and notably about the nature of land ownership, free

[39] We shall return to Szczepanowski in Chapter One, due to the significance of this work and Szczepanowski's interpretation of the average peasant and his discussions of universal experience. Stanisław Szczepanowski, *Nędza Galicyi w cyfrach i program energicznego rozwoju gospodarstwa krajowego* (Lviv: Gubrynowicz i Schmidt, 1888), 3.

[40] Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 135.

[41] Regarding the details of the final indemnification scheme adopted in the crownlands, see the preface of Stefan Kieniewicz, *Galicja w dobie autonomicznej, 1850-1914* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolinskich, 1952).

labor, and the right to contract.[42] While Russian imperial officials had hoped the reforms would quell social tensions, the opposite in fact was the case. Reforms contributed to a decline in agricultural labor productivity and general instability in the countryside, as more affluent peasant bargainers did not want to commit to long-term contracts with their status in limbo and landowners released less affluent peasants from their smallholdings out of fear they could lay claim to property rights in the future. The volatility of the 1840s contributed to the January Uprising of 1863. While the political events surrounding the links between insurrection and peasant emancipation are beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to note that members of the Provisional National Government in Warsaw, the body that announced the uprising, granted emancipation for those peasants who participated in the revolutionary events. In particular, the decree promised peasants property rights to the land they worked or, in the case of landless peasants, a share of royal lands. This action left Russian officials little choice but to address the situation of the peasantry. In an attempt to repress support for the opposition movement and weaken the power of the landowners, the tsarist government issued a declaration in early 1864 freeing serfs from all labor obligations.

Much like the Austrian decree, the terms of Russian emancipation failed to remedy the underlying social issues in the Congress Kingdom and, in fact, aggravated class tensions. On the one hand, as Piotr Wandycz notes, peasant land ownership increased by eight percent in the years following emancipation, with gains mostly coming at the expense of the lower gentry. On the other hand, impoverished villagers frequently remained landless or without workable acreage, as allotments mimicked the small, fragmented plots of land under serfdom and as

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[42] On this point, see Stefan Kieniewicz, “Crisis of the Feudal System,” in *The Emancipation of the Polish Peasantry* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969): 140-53.

wealthier peasants were most often the beneficiaries of land reform.[43] Thus peasant emancipation in Russian Poland had a disproportionate impact on two groups: poorer members of the gentry, who either lost their land entirely or were unable to pay peasants to work their land for them, and landless peasants.

Both of these groups had limited employment prospects inside partitioned Poland. One of the main effects of emancipation, especially in Galicia and the Congress Kingdom, was therefore the wave of emigration that involved the low-level gentry and destitute peasants. While some of these individuals chose to enter the burgeoning industrial labor markets in cities like Warsaw and Łódź, many peasants, as many as 250,000 by the start of World War I, took up seasonal agricultural employment in Western Germany, a continental migratory trend that had a profound impact on anti-Polish sentiment in the Kaiserreich.

Still others looked across the Atlantic for the promise of a better life. Census data indicates that from 1890 to 1920 the number of Poles in the United States increased ten-fold, and by 1920 over 1,480,000 Poles, many of whom were impoverished and illiterate, had made their way to the great industrial cities of the Midwest in search of work, making Polish immigrants the fourth largest ethnic group, behind Italians, Jews, and Germans, even when factoring in their high return emigration rate of around 33%.[44] Still others would look to South America, so much

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[43] Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 199.

[44] For statistics on immigration to the United States from 1880-1924, including estimates for return emigration, see Thomas J. Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), 118-19.

so that scholars estimate that in the early 1890s, around 60,000 migrants left the Congress Kingdom and another 25,000 left Galicia for Brazil.[45]

Some historians have argued that labor migration abroad had a transformative impact on economic life in home villages. Adam Walaszek, for instance, writes that by the turn of the century, peasant migrants were sending approximately 3.5 million dollars in money orders to family members in Austrian Poland, and return migrants or visitors would personally transport another 4 million dollars over the border. The average family in Galicia that had relatives in the United States thus likely received around $140 per year from abroad. Walaszek estimates the rate of money coming into the Russian partition to be comparable, though he was also able, in the case of the Congress Kingdom, to ballpark the influx of money that came from letters sent from family abroad—what amounted to an additional $12 million per year. Based on these numbers, Walaszek concludes that migrations had a "spectacular impact on the economic situation of the village and on peasants' attitudes."[46]

Historiographical Contributions

This dissertation bridges the fields of world history, eastern Europe, the history of capitalism, religion, education, and migration studies to examine constructions of the modern

[45] For numbers on migration to Brazil, see Krzysztof Groniowski, *Polska emigracja zarobkowa w Brazylii, 1871-1914* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1972).

[46] Adam Walaszek, "Preserving or Transforming Role? Migrants and Polish Territories in the Era of Mass Migrations," in *People in Transit: German Migrations in Comparative Perspective, 1820-1930*, Dirk Hoerder and Jörg Nagler, eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 107.

self. In particular, I approach the question of how peasant labor migrants came to see themselves as economic subjects while navigating the challenges associated with labor migration and urban life. These changes had a profound bearing on how peasant migrants moved through the world, and notably how they imagined themselves as self-sufficient economic actors and viewed their bonds with others, both of which are historical constructs grounded in time and place.[47] Doing so, however, required that they debate meanings of religious authority and reconcile their attitudes toward Church leadership, which often sparked conflict in communities. Notably, as we'll see, community representatives and migrants themselves challenged the involvement of parish priests in schools, which became a source of discord and debate on both sides of the Atlantic.

Such an approach relies on the close consideration of so-called "egodocuments"—letters, diaries, and memoirs—as well as documentation from the popular press and bureaucratic documentation like visa applications, passport photos, and life insurance policies to track the changing conceptions of self. How should we define the modern subject/citizen? Why do we see certain individuals as worthy of inclusion and economic advancement and others not? And how did constructions of self affect how peasant migrants navigated the world? Ultimately, this dissertation is a story of mobility and transformation, of the promises and failed opportunities for expansive understandings of humanity, and of the tensions and limitations that are built in to the

[47] Seth Rockman's work is helpful in its consideration of labor and class consciousness. As Rockman argues, recognition of collective class consciousness need not be limited to self-recognized identity but rather a matter of a shared social condition. To do so, he maintains, helps scholars to balance personal experience with economic structures. He writes: "[H]istorians must look for the larger system constituted at the intersection of [the categories of class, race, and gender] and seek the overlapping 'relations of ruling' that organized the lives and labors of workers of divergent subjectivities and identities." Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 11.

experience of liberal selfhood. I also argue that the stories we tell about our economic lives—of uplift, work ethic, thrift, sacrifice, and grit—matter, but not in ways that are most immediately apparent. That those conventions for narrating economic lives have a normative quality that makes them appear natural and universal but are in fact mediated by factors like religion, and ultimately race, provides insight into both the allure of economic uplift and the differentiating tendencies of liberal order.

Roadmap

The following chapters seek to understand the ways in which peasant migrants experienced the changes associated with modern economic life. I do so by zeroing in on four sites of identity formation—places where individuals reflected on their lives or otherwise debated the features of modernity in relation to their own personal experiences: the schoolhouse, the border, the mutual aid society, and the church.[48] While some contemporary scholars and social theorists saw peasant migrants as providing both insight into the challenges of modern life and opportunities for expansive understandings of belonging based on the tenets of liberal autonomy—a matter I'll turn to in Chapter One when I focus on John Dewey's study of Polish laborers in Philadelphia—those same scholars ran into difficulty when it came to reconciling questions of religious authority with economic autonomy within Polish communities. Social thinkers who looked to liberal autonomy for the promises of universalism nonetheless failed to

[48] The utility of "identity" as a concept has also been subject to debate. On the question of whether identity is useful, along with a call to use precise language when relying on the term, see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1-47.

distinguish their anticlerical views from anti-Catholicism, a blurriness which points to the limitations and unreconciled tensions embedded within their project.

Chapter Two challenges the stark dichotomy of theory versus practice by turning to the politics of the schoolhouse, where administrators, teachers, and students alike sought to clarify education's role in the development of the increasingly mobile peasant. Here these actors actively debated the characteristics needed for social advancement and primarily the fostering of a malleable laboring class that would thrive in both rural and urban settings. Such a task led education officials to focus on peasant behavior, in the hopes of fostering a form of transformation that would help peasants adopt attitudes that would instill the norms of economic advancement. Unlike the education of elites, who frequently envisioned themselves as leaders of the Polish nation, peasant schools focused on self-improvement, though literacy campaigns, hygiene programs, and industrial training. Again, though, peasant schools faced the question of the role of the parish priest in facilitating change, a matter that came to the fore most dramatically in a transatlantic scandal in the popular press.

Chapter Three turns to the border as a site for enacting and reinforcing both liberal norms and surveillance practices. Here migrants would encounter state mechanisms of control, but migration also provided them with the opportunity to demonstrate their own self-transformations. Such performances nonetheless were rooted in constructions of masculine and feminine labor norms, as the second part of the chapter, which looks at the importance of financial narratives at the mutual aid society, will highlight. While men could tap into a narrative framework of transformation and financial autonomy at the border, women's ability to claim similar narratives of self-sufficiency and mitigate economic risk was constrained by ideas of gendered labor, and in

particular attitudes toward household work, marriage, and the obligations of motherhood, as restrictions on their life insurance payouts suggest.

Chapter Four returns to questions of religious authority and conflict within Catholic communities. Instead of considering these instances as the products of personal quarrels or seemingly natural ethnic conflicts, however, I approach these violent episodes as intertwined with questions of liberal individualism. As the Catholic Church developed its own stances toward its role in the modern world, as exemplified in its fight against "modernism," the faithful likewise struggled to reconcile their changing conceptions of self and property with their obligations to religious authority. Here I turn to episodes involving violence and conflict surrounding Church leadership within industrial centers, which demonstrate the need to complicate the simple equation of Polishness with Catholicism, as well as explore the tensions regarding religious authority within Polish communities.

In the end, this dissertation seeks to uncover the ways in which ordinary laborers—the very people many of us look to as a reference point for our own lives and experiences—navigated and narrated the shifts to the modern economic world. It does so not to highlight sacrifice and struggle but to weigh lost opportunities for commonality and address the centrality of economic uplift as we assess the ways in which our perceptions of work, success, and responsibility continue to shape our understandings of belonging. That is, it is my contention that peasant migrants weren't simply Americans or Poles in the making, or some sort of hybrid national construction, but rather moderns who experienced both economic tension and opportunity and who also had to reconcile complex visions of self and society. In short, instead

of asking how individuals became Polish, I hope to elucidate how peasant migrants came to see themselves as actors in the modern world, worthy both of mobility and inclusion, and how their ideas of belonging and religious authority changed through their experiences. Only by looking beyond the confines of the nation can we surface the attitudes, beliefs, and practices that constitute modern life in all its promises and limitations.

It's to the sociological debates on peasant migration and the unfulfilled longings for universalism that we'll turn to next.

Chapter 1

John Dewey and the Failed Promises of Universalism

On April 17, 1918, Dr. Albert Barnes wrote to a young graduate student from Columbia University, Irwin Edman, with a proposal for summer work. He explained: "Mr. Dewey had to leave for Chicago today so he might not have had time to tell you that I would like you . . . and the two Blanshards to come to Philadelphia about the first of June, and make a scientific study of the forces operative in the Polish colony in this city, which is composed of upwards of twenty thousand people. The idea would be to work out a practical plan, based upon first-hand knowledge, to eliminate forces alien to democratic internationalism and to promote American ideals."[1] The Mr. Dewey Barnes referenced was, of course, John Dewey, the famous philosopher, pedagogue, and author of *Democracy and Education*. Indeed, Barnes attempted to sell Edman and the rest of the potential cohort on the significance of working closely with Dewey. "You can satisfy your identification impulse by remembering that you are identified with the finest cause in the world, namely, democracy and education," he wrote in a memo. "In addition to that," Barnes concluded, "you are identified with the greatest American thinker," by which he meant John Dewey—something so obvious to Barnes that he didn't feel he had to mention Dewey by name.[2] In return for work on the project, which Barnes planned to bankroll

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[1] Albert C. Barnes, Letter to Irwin Edman, April 17, 1918, Albert C. Barnes Correspondence (ACB), Barnes Foundation Archives, Philadelphia, PA.

[2] Albert C. Barnes, Letter to Irwin Edman titled "Here is a Seminar Subject for All of You," undated, ACB.

from his own fortune in pharmaceuticals, he offered each of the students a salary of $125 per month, "for a period of three or four months, as the situation required," along with living expenses.[3] Two weeks later Barnes sent a follow-up proposal, with the hopes of getting Edman to commit. "I suggest the following plan: Leave New York via Pennsylvania Railroad on either the nine or ten o'clock train, and get off at North Philadelphia station, where my car will be waiting to take you to the several Polish districts. After you finish, come to my house where we can talk things over, have dinner, and then return to New York on the train leaving Philadelphia at either eight or nine o'clock Sunday night." He added that he would provide additional information once Edman arrived and could tour the area. "A bird's-eye view of the neighborhoods on Sunday when the population is free might be suggestive of plans and thoughts."[4]

Barnes's itinerary hinted on one of the key themes that the students would examine: the connection between peasant migrants and their supposed retrograde attachments to Catholic institutions and clerical authority, which Barnes and Dewey suspected contributed to rising antidemocratic sentiments both in the United States and Poland. And yet both were clear that they weren't interested in Poles for reasons of ethno-national exceptionalism. Similar to William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's claims in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, Barnes and Dewey believed that Polish migrants were an appropriate subject because they provided insight into a larger social condition—the development of the modern self—interests that first piqued Barnes's curiosity as he observed his factory workers and which he developed alongside his friendship with Dewey. Barnes would reiterate that point in a letter to Dewey in which he

[3] Albert C. Barnes, Letter to Irwin Edman, April 17, 1918, ACB.

[4] Albert C. Barnes, Letter to Irwin Edman, May 1, 1918, ACB.

explained that he hoped the project would allow them to put the philosophy of *Democracy and Education* into practice. Reflecting on his experiences in Dewey's seminar at Columbia, where the two first met, Barnes told Dewey that the discussions during class "increased my wish to see your philosophy made dynamic in its democratizing possibilities, instead of the present intellectually-attractive but, nevertheless, static system." He added, moreover, that as long as they could find the right people to conduct the research, they would find out whether Dewey's ideas had "practical value" and then, in his assessment, "it will not take long to do some real, intelligent and honest work for the advancement of civilization."[5]

There are a number of ways to frame Dewey's examination of Poles in Philadelphia, but for the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on the following question: What was it about the experience of Polish migrants that led scholars like Dewey to want to examine Poles as emblematic of a larger condition of economic and social life in the modern world, and, more specifically, the potential for embracing universalism through the tenets of modern selfhood? Looked at in this light, Dewey was simply one in a line of disparate scholars, including the aforementioned Thomas and Znaniecki, as well as Booker T. Washington and the Galician economist Stanisław Szczepanowski, who saw something in Polish peasants or peasant migrants that could provide insight into broader issues of citizenship and belonging in post-emancipation societies. Barnes admitted as much in a letter to Dewey's daughter, Evelyn, when he wrote:

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[5] Albert C. Barnes, Letter to John Dewey, May 15, 1918, ACB. Dewey would respond: "I appreciate what you say about the dangers of a philosophy which calls for dynamic application itself remaining static. Teaching is a kind of sideshow at best. On the other hand, there is something in the opportunity to influence the men and women who are going out to do things . . . . Such a thing as this undertaking this summer might well be a normal part of graduate instruction, a kind of field work to give experience and also to test a man. The task of re-forming our big existing institutions from within seems to be practically hopeless." John Dewey, Letter to Albert Barnes, May 16, 1918, ACB.

"The fact that we have selected the Poles as a working example is irrelevant—it could be done equally well in a lower-class neighborhood composed of people of any birth."[6] But there was nonetheless something about the position that Polish migrants inhabited—the uprooted nature of life, the transition of individuals from rural serfdom to urban self-sufficiency, the development of industrial labor practices, the creation of politically active citizens in an era of increasing enfranchisement, the role of religion and education in society—that made Polish migrants seem like an appropriate and fruitful object of scholarly fascination. Their position as exemplifying many of the tensions of modernity, their averageness rather than their "Polishness" per se, provided social theorists with the data they would need to study some of the key problems associated with modern life.

This chapter thus examines how Dewey's Philadelphia study sheds light on contemporary thinking about the condition of Polish peasant migrants, and specifically how social theorists approached the relationship between migrants and clergy within dynamic community structures. Before we turn to the details of this project, however, it is important to situate it within the context of other sociological studies from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that placed Polish peasants at the core of analysis. Doing so not only sheds light on how social theorists conceived of the normality of Polish peasants, but also demonstrates how social thinkers considered peasant migrants as illustrative of larger social and economic changes and also the potential for shedding light on other marginalized groups. In other words, Poles and Polish peasants weren't exceptional because they were Polish; rather, it was their role as labor migrants and potential citizens that made them, and makes them, of interest to those hoping to

[6] Albert C. Barnes, Letter to Evelyn Dewey, June 7, 1918, ACB.

examine the connections between economics, politics, and religion, as well as the hopes for universalism and social integration in a post-emancipation world.

The Average Polish Peasant

At the same time as Dewey and Barnes embarked on their study, a more famous study of Polish migration had just been published.[7] In what scholars today consider one of the landmark works of the discipline of sociology, and the founding text of the Chicago School, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki developed a methodology that would shape social research for the next century: the life story.[8] Throughout their five volume project, Thomas and Znaniecki would examine family correspondence from fifty case studies, in the hopes of ascertaining the changing attitudes and social values of peasant migrants. For them, looking at individual lives would offer a window into the process of social evolution for migrants whose lives were in a state of flux. In other words, the life story wasn't significant solely as method; Thomas and Znaniecki paired their approach with a desire to

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[7] Barnes tried repeatedly to acquire the first volume of Thomas and Znaniecki's *Polish Peasant in Europe and America*—what he called "Thomas' Book on the Poles"—in May 1918, asking Edman to track down a copy and, when that didn't work, contacting a Brentano's Bookstore in New York directly. It's unclear whether he was successful at the time, but unlikely that Thomas and Znaniecki influenced Barnes and Dewey in a significant way during their summer work, though Brand Blanshard did cite *The Polish Peasant* in his individual report to Dewey, with the caveat that he was unable to access the work in its entirety.

[8] Rebecca Lemov has argued that *The Polish Peasant* was a departure from previous scholarship that utilized life stories in its "self-conscious method," or rather that is was "methodologically aware of its own methodological stance." Rebecca Lemov, *Database of Dreams: The Lost Quest to Catalog Humanity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 191.

understand the connections between the individual self and social solidarity in the midst of the dislocation caused by mass migration.[9]

The Polish Peasant nevertheless wasn't the first text to attempt to analyze social conditions based on the experiences of peasants and peasant migrants from the Polish lands. A generation earlier, Stanisław Szczepanowski published *The Misery of Galicia in Figures* (*Nędza Galicyi w Cyfrach*), which sought to explain, much in the same spirit as Booker T. Washington's *The Man Farthest Down* two decades later, why the segment of partitioned Poland with the most political freedom was the same entity that experienced the greatest degree of poverty. If Washington would use his travels in Galicia to bolster his call for a form of economic uplift that existed outside the realm of political rights—an observation he would then use in support of his claims for self-improvement among freed slaves in the American South—Szczepanowski would likewise connect political autonomy with economic underdevelopment.[10] The problem for Szczepanowski, however, went deeper. As Larry Wolff has argued, central to Szczepanowski's understanding of economic impoverishment was the impact that poverty had on the individual, what Szczepanowski called "the average Galician."[11] Drawing from discourses on east European backwardness, as well as contemporary positivists' understanding of organic work,

[9] For discussion on Thomas and Znaniecki's thoughts on social development, see the contributed volume *Florian Znaniecki: myśl społeczna a wychowanie*, ed. Halina Rotkiewicz (Warsaw: Żak, 2001).

[10] On Booker T. Washington's analysis of Galicia, see Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 65-67.

[11] Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 276. On the importance of the "average" individual in social theory, see Sarah E. Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 28-30.

Szczepanowski linked large-scale poverty to individual pathology. His solution to the misery of Galicia was thus as much internal as external. "There is no economic rebirth without moral rebirth!," Szczepanowski opined. "Only after we recognize the vast poverty within ourselves will we be able to have the experiences of wealthy countries. Only after we understand the universality of our moral decline will we be a healthy society. In every respect, be it truthfulness, work ethic, responsibility, savings, or education, the average Pole is behind his average European counterpart."[12] Not surprisingly, perhaps, Szczepanowski called for the development of schools as a way to promote internal growth and ultimately social and economic progress.[13]

Thomas and Znaniecki would expand Szczepanowski's focus to foreground examination of individual transformation. The individual was of noted importance because, as they maintained, they were interested in what they deemed the active man—a construct that would gain significance, they believed, as individuals detached from their traditional family units. If, before, peasant behavior had been regulated in the social context of the family—Thomas and Znaniecki argued that "[t]he family is practically the only organized social group to which the peasant primarily belongs as an *active* member"—an individual's values and beliefs would not be checked in relation to one's social position, leaving one unmoored in an increasingly chaotic

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[12] Stanisław Szczepanowski, *Nędza Galicyi w cyfrach i program energicznego rozwoju gospodarstwa krajowego* (Lviv: Gubrynowicz i Schmidt, 1888), 148.

[13] For discussion on the political impact of *Nędza Galicyi*, see Michał Śliwa, "Nędza Galicyjska: mit i rzeczywistość," in *Galicja i jej dziedzictwo*, I, *Historia i polityka*, eds. Włodzimierz Bonusiak and Józef Buszko (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Rzeszowie, 1994).

world.[14] For Thomas and Znaniecki, the exclusive focus on cross-generational family ties and connections to land not only limited the opportunities for peasants to participate in modern society as individuals or to establish other types of community associations based on personal connections, it also restricted peasants' ability to become political and economic actors in their own right. "The complete lack of political rights until the end of the eighteenth century made the peasant only an object, not a subject, of political activity," they wrote.[15] In this context it was easy for peasants to react passively to political changes or, worse, to view politics and economics as part of a supernatural framework of good versus evil rather than rational and regulated human activity.

Such was the case of Władek Wiszniewski, a man who transitioned from peasant origins to urban worker, whose life record Thomas and Znaniecki profiled in the third volume of *The Polish Peasant*. Wiszniewski's experiences, they argued, were particularly valuable as they would help tease out the centrality of associational life on the development of what they called the "commonplace man," which they placed in opposition to the "creative man." As they framed the value of their approach, "[O]nly the study of the commonplace man can make us understand why there are commonplace men. It will make us realize also that the greatest defect our entire civilization has been precisely the existence of a culturally passive mass, that every non-creative personality is an educational failure. It will show the sources of such failures and thus open the

[14] William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an Immigrant Group*, vol. 1, *Primary-Group Organization* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1918), 140 [emphasis in original].

[15] Ibid.

way for a more successful social education in the future."[16] Thomas and Znaniecki noted that autobiography of the commonplace man would facilitate the study of the process of democratization, which they defined in broad terms as a phenomenon that extended outside the confines political participation. "The growing recognition that democracy is the only order compatible with our highest humanitarian ideals must be accompanied by a growing understanding that the removal of political obstacles is only the first step toward this order, that what we call democracy has been mainly ochlocracy, and will be until the culturally passive mass becomes a thing of the past."[17] Wiszniewski was an apt case study since he exhibited one of the primary tendencies of commonplace people: that his development as an individual was rooted entirely in his social relationships. On that point, Thomas and Znaniecki didn't waver. "[Władek] is always completely and exclusively dependent upon society…And, as in the peasant, it manifests itself in two ways—as desire for response in immediate personal relations with individuals, and as desire for recognition in relations with a group."[18]

This tendency for peasants to base their behavior exclusively on personal bonds led to Thomas and Znaniecki to criticize the lack of development in economic attitudes in peasant migrants, including the inflated value that many recent immigrants placed on real property, an attachment so severe that peasants would pay "absurd" prices for land or would desire to return

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[16] William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an Immigrant Group*, vol. 3, *Life Record of an Immigrant* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1919), 82. For a discussion of Thomas and Znaniecki's categorization of individual types, see Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 229-30.

[17] Thomas and Znaniecki, *Polish Peasant*, vol. 3, 82.

[18] Ibid., 402-03.

to their native villages to purchase a farm. "How strong and one-sided the land-hunger can be is proved by some examples of emigration to Brazil," they argued. "Peasants who had twenty morgs of cultivated land sold it and emigrated, because they were to get there, at a cheap price, forty morgs of land . . . . So the mere difference of size between their actual and their future farm was a sufficient motive to overcome the attachment to their country and the fear of the unknown."[19] Only by breaking these pre-modern social attachments to extended family networks and land could peasants become what Thomas and Znaniecki called the "economic man," or an individual who had "almost completely detached [the economic side] from the social side" of his life.[20]

Still, the transition from backward village life to modern, and presumably more rational, economic life presented severe drawbacks. However primitive decision making was in the old country, at least it was predictable and regulated internally in the family. Once these traditional relationships broke down as a result of mass migration, Thomas and Znaniecki maintained, peasants often became rootless itinerants whose sexual behavior ran unchecked in the bright lights and mass consumerism of the metropolis. This was particularly dangerous, they maintained, for second-generation girls, who, because of their lack of education, dissatisfaction with life at home, and increasing desire for consumer goods (particularly the many luxuries they saw in department store windows), turned to deviant sexual behavior for emotional and material fulfillment. Here it is worthwhile to quote the conclusion of Thomas and Znaniecki's chapter "The Sexual Immorality of Girls" at length:

> Sexual immorality may be an end it itself (satisfaction of the sexual instinct), or a means to other ends (amusements, clothes, freedom, etc.), or both. The first situation seems to

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[19] Thomas and Znaniecki, *Polish Peasant*, vol. 1, 191.

[20] Ibid., 193.

> be rather rare, for the sexual desire is seldom sufficiently conscious or strongly developed at the age at which most of these girls are brought into court . . . . The first sexual relations are rather incidental, come in connection with other interests. In the Korowska case the sexual intercourse is just part of a joy ride, probably one of many amusements of the kind; the Wieczorek girl, shiftless, untidy, incapable of permanent work, thinks it is "easier to make money that way"; Marien Stepanek treats it as a condition of her "high life," including restaurants, moving pictures, hotels and showy clothes, Katie Leśniak begins as a vagabond and sells her body just as she does occasional work or borrows money – in order to support herself from moment to moment on her vagabonding tours, sexual intercourse being only a means by which freedom from school and work is obtained; Mary Młynarczyk wishes to escape from the demands of her parents' home; Mary Puchała begins by stealing to satisfy her desire for pretty clothes and "good times," then has illicit relations for the same purposes; Frances Sikora has for some time undiscovered sexual incidents in her career of freedom and fun, occasionally interrupted by short periods of good behavior. And nothing can show better the small importance ascribed to illicit sexual intercourse than the plain story of the many relations of Annie Andrzejkowska.[21]

Whether a loosening of moral values, innate pathology, increased consumer consumption, improper understandings of labor, or sheer boredom contributed to female promiscuity, Thomas and Znaniecki placed the issue squarely in the context of urban life, which provided peasant girls with the opportunity to transgress traditional social boundaries without the necessary family bonds to check unruly behavior.[22] What was needed then was a way to regulate peasant entry into new social structures. Thomas and Znaniecki found a solution in the creation of associations. "The prevalent general social unrest and demoralization is due to the decay of the primary-group organization, which gave the individual a sense of responsibility and security," they determined. "This system has given way partly to the forces making for

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[21] William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: Monograph of an Immigrant Group*, vol. 5, *Organization and Disorganization in America* (Boston: Gorham Press, 1920), 336-37.

[22] Thomas and Znaniecki's characterization of the dangers faced by peasant girls in the city forms the flip side to the transgressive opportunities available to young women at this moment. On this point, see Alys Eve Weinbaum et al., eds., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

individual efficiency, and we have developed nothing to take its place – no organization which would restore the sense of social responsibility without limiting the efficiency of the individual."[23] Associations, and in particular community groups that interacted closely "with American society," were the key to "economic self-dependence, for the prevention of demoralization, [and] for the development of active solidarity."[24]

Thomas and Znaniecki were nonetheless silent about how associations should work, or more precisely whether the state had a responsibility to sponsor the groups that would help facilitate a pluralist identity, one rooted in common aims and based on economic cooperation. But they were clear that the development of the individual was contingent upon the collective. "The Polish immigrant is an essentially social being—not 'man,' not 'woman,' not 'child,' in the abstract, but a group member, to be dealt with *in groups*," they posited. "There is the enormous, almost untouched field of economic cooperation. A countrywide net of thousands, hundreds of thousands of small cooperative associations, with the active participation of various nationalities, coming together on a basis of real equality and united by serious common aims would do incomparably more for economic self-dependence, for the prevention of demoralization, for the development of active solidarity . . . than anything that has ever been done to achieve these aims."[25] Without a comparable social organization to take the place of family networks, a peasant migrant would remain adrift in American cities, without the skills and stability needed to navigate the faceless industrial labor market.

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[23] Ibid., 344-45.

[24] Ibid., 344.

[25] Ibid.

Dewey's Polish Study

Dewey's attempt to construct a study that would test the merits of *Democracy and Education* would share many of the same goals as Thomas and Znaniecki's work, including an interest in fostering individual development through education and associational life. Dewey nonetheless approached the condition of the peasant migrant in a more expansive manner. While Thomas and Znaniecki argued repeatedly about the centrality of the subordination to an idea of America and the acceptance of Americanization as a way to demonstrate to the peasant migrant that "he *belonged to something*," Dewey seemed concerned about the characteristics of a more universal form of citizenship, what Dewey referred to in *Democracy and Education* as "the reconciliation of national loyalty, of patriotism, with superior devotion to the things which unite men in common ends, irrespective of national political boundaries." On this point Dewey would elaborate:

> Accomplishment of this end demands not only adequate administrative provision of school facilities, and such supplementation of family resources as will enable youth to take advantage of them, but also such modification of traditional ideals of culture, traditional subjects of study and traditional methods of teaching and discipline as will retain all the youth under educational influences until they are equipped to be masters of their own economic and social careers.[26]

Dewey subsequently took aim at the form of associations that he saw as dominating Polish communities, namely the role of Catholic clergy in social and political life, as well as education—something he would then connect to the rise of antidemocratic sentiment among

[26] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 114.

Polish migrants, a matter that became all the more pressing as he anticipated return migration once Poland regained statehood.[27]

But there's a much larger issue at play in this story outside the study itself—namely the work that summer signifies the attempts of social theorists to understand how personal economic and religious beliefs, as well as education, influenced the potential for authoritarian rule and the impediments for international solidarity, risks that came into relief in the context of the global "Wilsonian moment."[28] Criticism of the Catholic Church, for Dewey, was connected to what he saw as the allure of autocracy, something that could potentially undermine the stability of political institutions and the possibility for universal democratic order in an era of restructuring political and economic beliefs. Importantly, Dewey saw this as a community issue connected to the practices of everyday life, including religious beliefs, and notably the negotiation of the relationship between individual constructions of self and society at large, which is a matter that Barnes asked him to keep in mind as they embarked on the study. "If you should have any time between now and when you arrive," Barnes advised Dewey in May 1918, "I wish you would think over the general tendency of the Catholic church to hold in a condition of intellectual and physical serfdom the large part of the population. We have encountered it here, but shall make no fight until you arrive and have sized up the situation."[29] But before we turn to how Dewey and the rest of the team positioned the risk of anti-democratic politics on international and

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[27] For a scholarly treatment on the topic of return migration to Poland, see Adam Walaszek, *Reemigracja ze Stanów Zjednoczonych do Polski po I wojnie światowej, 1919-1924* (Cracow: PWN, 1984).

[28] The term "Wilsonian moment" comes from Erez Manela's monograph of the same name. Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[29]Albert C. Barnes, Letter to John Dewey, May 24, 1918, ACB.

national levels, as well as the ways in which Dewey believed clerical authority affected migrants' integration into the larger social fabric, it's necessary to return to the Polish study and its attempts to understand Polish migrants and their potential for embracing universal beliefs. It's only within that context that Dewey's criticism of what he called autocracy within Polish communities makes sense.

Frances Bradshaw and the Study of Parochial Schools in the Richmond District

Dewey's study was never *his* study in an exclusive sense; instead it was a team effort that drew from the research of four graduate students that took place over the summer of 1918.[30] And the most recognizable capstone for the work that summer, a pamphlet titled *Conditions Among Poles in the United States* that Dewey sent to the Wilson administration as a warning about the risks of the radical right in Poland and its attempts to usurp representation at the Paris Convention, was a text that deviated significantly from the original sociological aims of the project. Still, the original focus of understanding the links between individual development and

[30] For a general overview of the Polish study, as well as a discussion of debates surrounding Dewey's understanding of democracy, see Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 212-23. Westbrook also addresses exchanges between revisionists and anti-revisionists on the Polish study and the implications of such disputes among historians of education. In that regard, see Charles L. Zerby, "John Dewey and the Polish Question: A Response to the Revisionist Historians," *History of Education Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1975): 17-30. See also, Clarence J. Karier, "John Dewey and the New Liberalism: Some Reflections and Responses," *History of Education Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1975): 417-43, and J. Christopher Eisele, "John Dewey and the Immigrants," *History of Education Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1975): 67-85.

democratization, or rather the impediments to democratization, remained, even as the stakes became heightened on the eve of Polish independence.

Barnes and Dewey selected a team of graduate students who would later distinguish themselves as prominent philosophical thinkers and social commentators in their own right.[31] As Dewey explained in the report, Brand Blanshard, who would later become a leading philosopher of reason and Christian ethics at Yale, worked on "religious conditions and the activity of the church"; Irwin Edman, who would join the philosophy faculty at Columbia University in 1920, the "study of general intellectual, esthetic and neighborhood activities"; and Frances Bradshaw, a future dean of Smith College, who married Brand Blanshard a month after they completed work on the study, "educational conditions, including both public and parochial schools." Anzia Yezierska, who often went by her married name Mrs. Arnold Levitas in contemporary correspondence and who would just a few years later become a successful novelist and narrator of Jewish immigrant experience in the United States, would provide translation services, in addition to research on "conditions affecting family life and women." Dewey either removed Paul Blanshard entirely from the acknowledgments or relegated his contribution to the role of being "engaged in library research from time to time."[32]

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[31] Barnes had initially asked Sterling P. Lamprecht, later a professor of Greek philosophy at Amherst College, to join the project. He either declined or responded less than enthusiastically to Barnes's offer, leaving Barnes to quip: "[M]y experience has convinced me that one of the defects of college training is its failure to teach men to recognize opportunities. I have seen it so many times in men whom I have tried to push up the ladder that I consider it axiomatic." Albert C. Barnes, Letter to John Dewey, May 3, 1918, ACB.

[32] John Dewey, "Confidential Report of Conditions Among the Poles in the United States," in *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, vol. 11, *1918-1919*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), 260. Jay Martin argues that Barnes and Dewey dismissed Paul Blanshard before the end of the summer due to Blanshard's myopic interest in Catholic theology and thus, supposedly, his inattention to broader social issues. Jay

Once the grad student team was in place, the first line of business was to establish the community connections necessary to conduct interviews and collect other information about Polish migrants in Philadelphia neighborhoods. Working out of a house at 3007 Richmond Street that Barnes had purchased expressly for the purpose of the study, the students embarked on their individual research tasks, and the nature of the research that the students conducted depended, to a large extent, on personal interests and approaches to the assigned topics. Of all the researchers that summer, Frances Bradshaw appears to have done the work that most closely comported with the study's initial goals—to test the merits of Dewey's educational philosophy in practice—with her future husband Brand Blanshard a close second.[33]

Martin, *The Education of John Dewey: A Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 294.

[33] Barnes had complained to Dewey that the students were unfamiliar with *Democracy and Education*, in addition to other key texts that they would need to understand in order to participate in the project. Albert C. Barnes, Letter to John Dewey, June 28, 1918, ACB. Barnes had also recommended Frederic Lyman Wells's *Mental Adjustments*, which he said would introduce the team to "the psychological principles which dominate the unconscious forces operative in every station of life, and which will be particularly encountered in the Polish situation." Albert C. Barnes, Letter to John Dewey, April 20, 1918, ACB.

Figure 1: Helena Paderewska and Ignacy Jan Paderewski with Anne von Moschzisker. Photograph from a fundraiser for Polish relief aid, the Emergency Aid in Pennsylvania's "2nd Made-in-America Bazaar" (as written on von Moschzisker's sash), December 17, 1916 (George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress). Much of Dewey's attention that summer would turn to the future prime minister's support among Polish migrants in the United States.

Bradshaw thus spent a large part of the summer conducting interviews with teachers and other school officials on the matter of school reform, focusing on how schools could foster the type of habits and beliefs that would help the children of Polish migrants, in an increasingly mobile world, gain access to the type of education that would help them realize themselves as individuals who contribute to society at large.[34] Not surprisingly, then, Bradshaw would zero in on the practices of parochial schools in Philadelphia, in order to determine whether Catholic schools in the Richmond District were, as she put it in her report to Dewey, providing "its

[34] One of the few accounts of Bradshaw's work attempts to revisit Bradshaw's negative conclusions of the merits of parochial schools, with the argument that Catholic schools were, and continue to be, a force for good within communities. The author thus reexamines Bradshaw's work in light of the changes that he perceives over what was then an almost century of developments in parochial schools. Francis J. Ryan, "Revisiting Bradshaw's 1918 Ethnographic Study of the Philadelphia Polish Catholic Schools: A Ninety-Year Retrospective," *Polish Review* 53, no. 3 (2008): 283-315.

children the variety of experience preparing them for intelligent citizenship."[35] Bradshaw, needless to say, would answer that question in the negative.

Far from setting out to disparage parochial schools, however, Bradshaw started her research by surveying the educational system in Philadelphia on the whole, as well as attempting to get a sense of whether the children of peasant migrants were receiving the type of education in parochial schools that would help them become self-sufficient. This began with her assessment of resources available in the community, including a focus on the importance of literacy and student behavior. She wrote, for instance, in her notes of an interview with a librarian from the Philadelphia Free Library in the Richmond District, that the lending library contained a "[c]ollection of Polish books, novels, histories, etc., including Polish translations of English works on science, English novels, such as Pickwick Papers, German Philosophy (Kulpes Modern Philosophy). Fiction especially in constant circulation. Polish encyclopedia on reference, but no Polish-English or English-Polish dictionary." She likewise recorded approvingly that "[t]he Polish children read a good deal, attend the story hours at the library, take out books for their parents. The children are well behaved in the library and pleasant to deal with."[36] Another interviewee, John Foster Carr, the head of the Immigrant Publication Society and author of the *Guide to the United States for the Immigrant*, which Bradshaw underscored in her notes was available in Italian, Polish, and Yiddish editions, concurred about the importance of lending libraries in a given community. Bradshaw wrote: "Mr. Carr thinks that the public libraries offer

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[35] Frances Bradshaw, Report titled "Democracy and the Polish Parochial Schools," 1918, ACB. [Note the spelling of the Bradshaw files at the Barnes Foundation; the documents are listed under the name "Francis Bradshaw."]

[36] Frances Bradshaw, Interview with Librarian from Philadelphia Free Library, June 5, 1918, ACB.

infinite possibilities for researching the immigrants. They use the libraries without the loss of self-respect involved in reaping the benefits of a philanthropic institution. Lectures, classes, club work of all kinds can be centered in a library most advantageously."[37]

As Bradshaw continued to collect data over the course of the summer, her records suggest that she was interested in not only understanding the people involved in the education of migrants, but also of the structures and professionalization that help build effective school systems more generally. Hence, in one interview with Theodore McDowell, the Associate Superintendent of Public Schools in Philadelphia, she wrote that he emphasized how high school teachers in public schools needed to have both a college degree and a passing score on written and oral certification exams in both major and minor subjects, and that scores and recommendations from instructors at the prospective teacher's normal school help the city place the teacher on a priority list: "Mr. McDowell was very explicit in regard to all the details of the system in order to make clear that there was no chance for favoritism or political influence."[38] In another set of interviews with municipal officials, Bradshaw highlighted how difficult it was to remove school board members ("No provision is made for ousting the members") and how school board members had little education ("six almost illiterate") and none had any background in educational theory ("[T]hey are all reactionary, and avail themselves of no opportunity to become informed on educational matters. They have no vision, but see schools merely in terms of mechanical management and of the spoils system.").[39] Entrenchment of the aging board

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[37] Frances Bradshaw, Interview with John Foster Carr, undated, ACB.

[38] Frances Bradshaw, Interviews with Theodore McDowell, Walter George Smith, and Nellie Bradley, undated, ACB.

[39] Frances Bradshaw, Interviews with Gruenberg and Bruce Watson, undated, ACB.

members ("[a]verage [age], 67; several over 80"), combined with the lack of progressive education policies ("due to ignorance and conservatism of Board") and the lack of structural design ("Philadelphia has no school system; it 'just grew,' happened…No high school system—just wherever they happen to be."), she noted, impeded the development of public schools.

Bradshaw juxtaposed her observations of public schools with those of parochial schools in the Richmond District. While the public school system could be characterized by certain structural deficiencies, Catholic schools, in Bradshaw's assessment, faced much deeper problems related to the goals of the schools, school administration, teacher training and recruitment, and curriculum development. Her notes indicate, for instance, that when she visited St. Adalbert's on Allegheny Avenue, she observed "overcrowded" and "not very sanitary" facilities, a "[v]ery limited playground, without swings slides, etc.," and a "[l]ack of instruction in—1) Manual Training; 2) Physical training," which was part of a larger criticism that schools were too focused on religious education, to the detriment of students' physical and emotional well-being. School teachers, moreover, she assessed, were "kind and polite, interested in answering my questions," but with "far from perfect" English. On the whole, she surmised, "[t]hey appeared to be women of average intelligence, but of far less than average social background and experience."[40] At other parochial schools in the area, in this case the Catholic Girls High School, other interviewees, including Father William McNally, the Assistant Superintendent of Parish Schools, argued that children weren't encouraged to continue their schooling due to the absence of education as a cultural value in Polish communities: "Lack of interest, rather than heavy economic pressure, causes them to take children out of school as soon as they can go to work."[41]

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[40] Frances Bradshaw, Interview with Sister Superior, St. Adalbert's, June 10, 1918, ACB.

[41] Frances Bradshaw, Interview with Father William P. McNally, undated, ACB.

Bradshaw agreed with the point that the children of Polish migrants left school too early, though she deviated from McNally's suggestion that there was something natural or intrinsic about the rejection of education in Polish communities. Instead, one of the major problems that Bradshaw observed was that Church educational leaders, like public school board members, didn't embrace progressive educational policy, in this case opting instead to focus on religion and instilling a sense of pride in Polish heritage—a matter she saw as so detached from students' reality that it contributed to the schools' high attrition rates. In an interview with Father John E. Flood, the Superintendent of the Parish Schools of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, Bradshaw recorded the following perspective, which would form the basis for her criticism of parochial schools: "Manual training is foolish. Education should train children's faculties, make their lives richer. Learning a trade has nothing to do with school education." Moreover, Bradshaw wrote, Catholic schools wanted to present religious education on equal footing with liberal education: "The Catholics believe in the necessity of religious education. If a child spends five days a week in secular education and one hour in religious training he is bound to consider religion of minor importance. Therefore the Catholics wish to have it made a very important part of each day's curriculum in each school." She concluded, based on her conversations with district priests, that parochial schools were "intensely conservative in education theory."[42]

By the end of the summer, Bradshaw's voice was starting to come through more in her notes, or at least she would blend her voice with those of her subjects. Following one interview with a priest she would posit, disparagingly: "The object of the parochial schools is to keep a religious control over the people."[43] And foreshadowing the conclusions she would later make in

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[42] Frances Bradshaw, Interview with Father John E. Flood, Aug. 8, 1918, ACB.

[43] Frances Bradshaw, Interview with Father Godrycz, Aug. 1, 1918, ACB.

her report to Dewey, she determined the following, during an interview with a public school teacher, when writing of what she deemed were the merits of progressive public schools when compared to parochial schools:

> Mrs. Wilson is an object lesson of the kind of teacher and principal which will make possible the realization of democratic ideals in education. She is a woman of fifty-five, full of energy and enthusiasm, and keenly alive to the possibilities of progress in education. She stands for what she calls the cosmopolitan high school, which combines academic and vocational courses. This type is better than the old-fashioned strictly academic school or than a separate trade school because it attracts girls with varieties of interests. They see what different fields are open to them so that they really choose their work and don't merely drift into one line because it seems to be the only possible one. She criticizes the old girls' high school as undemocratic.
>
> She is interested in introducing vocational guidance into the schools. Girls have a chance to try out different kinds of work before they decide what their own course is to be. Broader experience in possible vocations is aided by the cooperation of the high schools with the manufacturers of different instruments used in offices, for instance, the dictaphone, the Elliot-Fisher Billing Machine, the Evans Duplicator, etc. She realizes the importance of greater plasticity of curriculums in the schools. The principals should keep in touch with needs of employers, modifying old courses, instituting new ones, to supply the present demand of skill.[44]

In this case, Bradshaw believed the decentralization of public schools, combined with the incompetence of school board members and other administrators, actually worked in favor of creating opportunities for vocational education. "[T]he teachers are pretty independent within their own four walls," Bradshaw added. "While the system is not ideal, it puts very few obstacles in the way of real originality and initiative."[45]

If there was any doubt that the summer's work had converted Bradshaw into a Deweyian in terms of her understanding of educational theories, one need only read her final contribution to

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[44] Frances Bradshaw, Interview with Lucy W. Wilson, Principal of the South Philadelphia Girls High School, July 30, 1918, ACB.

[45] Ibid.

the study, which she titled "Democracy and the Polish Parochial Schools." While she emphasized that economic conditions in the Richmond neighborhood were actually quite favorable to the creation of effective schools—the area, she wrote, wasn't affluent by any means but still provided adequate financial support for schools—the impediments to the education of Polish migrant children, in her opinion, were many and were connected to the schools' attention to fostering of cultural and religious beliefs to the detriment of the practical skills necessary for personal development. Bradshaw's solution was to advocate the introduction of real life activities into the curriculum that could present students with the kinds of situations they may face as active participants in a democratic society. "We no longer attempt to train 'faculties' by carefully planned mental gymnastics," she argued, criticizing liberal arts education in a way reminiscent to Dewey's work on school curriculum. "A child learns to discriminate by actually discriminating in vital situations. School must reproduce the conditions of life as far as possible, and of life as it is important to children, in order that classroom training may prove of genuine value in later life."[46] This work, she believed, wasn't simply reflective of the desire to prepare the children of peasants for a lifetime of drudgery in the factories of the industrial Midwest, or at least she didn't cast her support for vocational education in this light.[47] Instead, Bradshaw championed the need to provide students with a variety of educational experiences and to help children understand the connections between the seemingly disparate aspects of the curriculum they were expected to master—the disciplinary content in the humanities and sciences—and the

[46] Bradshaw, "Democracy and the Polish Parochial Schools."

[47] Dewey's views on capitalism, social control, and the education of workers have been the subject of controversy among historians of American education. On this point, see Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 189-92.

practical aspects of learning, in the form of employment or even their choices in leisure and entertainment. School curriculum, it followed, should be associated with the construction of self and with self-realization, even for future factory workers. "Knowing is not reproducing a body of facts arbitrarily imposed . . . . [I]t is the mastery of more and more factors in a personally important situation."[48] This process required "intimacy," in the sense that students would have to know themselves first in order to develop into citizens of community, nation, and world. "In a word, education should give a child the greatest possible variety of experiences made coherent by their intimate relationship to himself and his needs, both present and future," she argued. Such an approach would place demands on teachers to develop a curriculum that could be tailored to a variety of students. "[A teacher] adapts the curriculum to the needs of each, enabling every one to make his individual contribution to democracy," she concluded.

Democracy, for Bradshaw and others on the project didn't refer to simple political participation. Rather, she explicitly defined democracy as a concept rooted in self-realization of rising above class interests and of the possibility of and access to social advancement. This last part was key to Bradshaw. "Democracy, as a form of associated living, is distinguished by the absence of fixed classes," she included in her report to Dewey. "Neither a man's career in life, nor his social position, is arbitrarily determined by accident or birth . . . . Since work and interests of one type are not confined to one class of men, new human material is continually being brought to the face the old problems in science, politics, economic and social relations. The danger of inbreeding, of clinging indiscriminately to old methods until they become stereotyped is reduced to a minimum."[49] Whereas liberal arts education was static, based on the

[48] Bradshaw, "Democracy and the Polish Parochial Schools."

[49] Ibid.

memorization of content knowledge, and helped reinforce class-based European societies where luck of birth determined education and career, Bradshaw saw schools as providing the opportunity for individuals to become self-reflective citizens and to make connections and build intelligence, which she understood as the ability to develop dynamic ways of responding to real life situations in a more egalitarian, meritocratic world. The curriculum of parochial schools in Philadelphia, which Bradshaw maintained was based on deference to authority, religious indoctrination, and blind nationalism, as well as "Catholic ancestral pride," was ill-suited for the type of skills that most students would need later on in life.

There are a few ways to view Bradshaw's criticism, however. While she maintained that Catholic schools in Polish neighborhoods were focused too much on proselytizing and fostering a sense of Polish national identity, she wasn't necessarily hoping to counter that with Americanization policies—as if Bradshaw were thinking about education solely in terms of national affinities in an exclusionary sense or in a binary. She wasn't arguing, in other words, that the type of education that students in these schools was unsatisfactory simply because it was Polish or Catholic, or even that it wasn't American. Instead such an emphasis was problematic because of the way it dominated the curriculum to the exclusion of other subjects and approaches that would help students understand the meaning of democracy as a personal attribute, as well as the value of pluralism in a holistic sense. "In the first place," Bradshaw criticized, "the religious and national segregation creates a narrow class within which the experience of the children is confined." She insisted that she had nothing against religion or nationalism being addressed in schools, so long as "morality [is] taught without generating sectarian antipathies" and teachers introduce students to universal forms of belonging. "If pride in the exploits of Kosciusko [sic], Pulaski, and Lafayette arouses little Poles and Catholics to consciousness not that this is a

Catholic or Polish country, but one to which Catholics, Protestants, Poles, Jews, French, and many others have made indispensable contributions, they will feel the meaning of democracy," she maintained. "But any partisan propaganda presenting exclusively one aspect of a complex matter limits experience, impedes choice, and thus stifles intelligence." The result of this was that children educated in this environment would be unable to understand the complexity of both nation and world, and develop plastic skills that they could then apply to various aspects of life, including future employment. Such schools treat religion and education as divorced from reality, and thus, in her words, "[t]he pupils are left with two separate sets of experience" and this separation "stunts the growth of intelligence by limiting thought and judgment to one field."[50] The priests who run parochial schools, Bradshaw decried, were "constitutionally conformists, never pioneers."

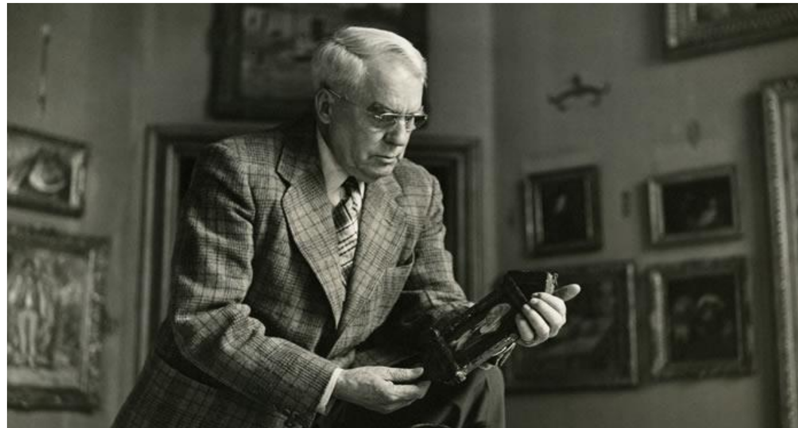

Figure 2: Albert Barnes, in the collection gallery of his home. John Dewey helped Barnes arrange his art collection in the years following the Polish study (Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia)

[50] Ibid.

Brand Blanshard and the Politics of Anticlericalism

While Bradshaw saw parochial schools as ineffective both in terms of preparing students for entry into the work force and for the fostering of democratic beliefs, aspects of modern life that she treated as inexorably connected, Brand Blanshard would use similar evidence, and in many cases interviews with the very same individuals, to zero in on issues concerning the supposed overriding presence of clerical authority in Polish communities. Blanshard, much more than Bradshaw, would look to the internal fissures among clergy, including conflicts between local priests and bishops at the Diocese level, particularly those that involved ownership of parish property, as well as debates about property within schismatic movements, though here he appeared to have difficulty collecting data from representatives within the Roman Catholic Church. Instead, Blanshard would focus his attention on breakaway movements within the Philadelphia region. He would note, for instance, during his interview of Bishop Franciszek Hodur, the head of the Polish National Catholic Church, that there was a need to create mechanisms for local clergy to be more transparent with their parishioners' monetary interests, including property rights and financial control over Church assets.[51] Blanshard's transcripts from that interview include the following observations:

> The chief evidence for Roman exploitation in this country lies, [Hodur] thinks, in the consequences of the rule which places parish property in the hands of the bishops rather than in those of the people. It is true that late declarations from Rome say that the church properties should really belong to the people and not to the heads of the diocese, and

[51] We will return to Bishop Hodur and the Polish National Catholic Church in Chapter 4, as it played a central role in anticlericalism in Polish communities, but for now it is enough to underscore that Hodur's views were by no means unique.

> hence it is not so much the fault of Rome as it is of the local episcopacy that injustice is done.[52]

Hodur would elaborate that, in his opinion, Church officials rejected all attempts to reform parish finances as such initiatives would "lessen their hold upon the parish and their power of taxation would be decreased." Moreover, control over property allowed bishops the possibility of reigning in any "recalcitrant congregations who refuse to support the priests they nominate." Such tensions, Blanshard recorded, led to at least two church riots in the Philadelphia area, the first in northern Philadelphia, in the Nicetown neighborhood, and the second at Św. Stanisław, to the south. This unrest, as Hodur explained, had its roots both in petty personality squabbles—the replacement of a priest who was popular among congregants, or jealousy among priests who would petition the bishop for transfers of their rivals—and in socioeconomic conditions, namely property ownership and conflicts resulting from parishioners' claims to church finances. Hodur argued that while he had facilitated a more egalitarian and transparent process of cash flow in his own church, this went against the common practice of Roman Catholic parishes placing control of church property exclusively with clergy. Graft among parish priests, Blanshard noted, was likewise a constant source of tension in Polish communities:

> Hodur declares that in the last twenty years at least a million dollars is definitely known to have been stolen by Polish priests in this country, and a vast amount in addition has no doubt been taken by secret methods. The Roman priests frequently demand payment of five of ten dollars for a confession, and in addition to the ordinary contributions of the parishioners they expect special fees for baptisms, weddings, and burials. It is stated that the usual charge for a funeral is fifteen to twenty dollars, and when an address is given by the priest, fifty dollars is commonly asked. If higher officials are present, the payments are proportionately larger. These extortionate charges, Hodur claims, are unknown in the Independent Church because the modest style of clerical living requires less financial support.[53]

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[52] Brand Blanshard, "Data Secured from Conversations and from Pamphlets by Bishop Hodur," undated, ACB.

[53] Ibid.

Such power over church finances, in Hodur's view, was problematic because of the way priests attempted to influence parishioners' political beliefs by basing future salvation on the reflexive following of clerical demands.

The result of clerical greed, Blanshard would argue in his report to Dewey, was the undercutting of democratic rule, as well as the possibility that citizens, or potential citizens, would fail to realize their importance as individuals in the democratic system. In this context, money was both a source of political corruption on a grand scale and of the stifling of the self-realization necessary for active citizenship. "If, in certain Polish communities, in spite of a large percentage of capable and intelligent Poles, public positions are not filled by these, it is the priest's policy that is to blame," Blanshard quoted Hodur as saying. "We cannot require that the foreign politicians who are buying our votes from the priests should also nominate candidates from among ourselves." Blanshard would later summarize the details of Hodur's excommunication as being rooted in his "complaining that the method of holding property and the treatment of Polish priests were unjust."[54]

Other renegade clerics would elaborate on the issue of graft among Roman Catholic priests in a similar way. Reverend Jan Panfil, who would eventually serve as pastor at St. Valentine's Polish National Catholic Church under the direction of Hodur, when asked by Blanshard about the exploitation of parishioners, responded that it was "carried on almost universally," to the point where church members paid out of pocket, in an a la carte way, for services.[55] Panfil expanded on Hodur's catalogue of costs for sacraments:

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[54] Brand Blanshard, Interview with Father Pienonzek, undated, ACB.

[55] Panfil also went by the Anglicized form of his name, John B. Panfil. Brand Blanshard, Interview with Father Penfil [sic], July 31, 1918, ACB.

> The ordinary Catholic church member is expected to attend at least one mass every Sunday. If he attends a low mass, he makes a contribution at the door of five cents, if high mass, ten cents. Besides this contribution at the door he is expected to contribute two or three times during the service when the contribution box is passed around. In most of the churches each parishioner is supposed to pay a lump sum of six dollars each to the church and to the parochial school. To assure the payment of the church fee, the priests are in the habit, or have been, until recently, of issuing tickets to all members who have paid and demanding the presentation of these tickets before confession at the Easter festival. This practice has led many Catholics to the conclusion that it was confession itself which was being charged for.[56]

Everything had its price, Panfil explained. Low mass would cost a dollar, and high mass at least $2.50. Priests would charge up to $30 for a wedding, while baptisms would run between $3-5. Likewise, parishioners would pay up to $30 for a funeral, and those who couldn't afford that would have to settle for just a "sprinkling of holy water upon the door," for the price of $5. "All these extra payments are considered as personal payments to the priest, of which no account is necessary, and which are at his disposition," Blanshard included in his notes. "It is thus clear that the amount of money which is in the hands of the priests and of which no account need be rendered may rise to exceedingly high figures."[57]

Of course criticism of how the Church administered its finances and charged for religious services was nothing new. But Blanshard's notes and subsequent report suggest the links between such condemnation of the Church as a financial actor and the modern political process, with clergy and laymen from the Polish district commenting on how what they saw as the radicalization of the left among working-class migrants was related to clerical attitudes toward property, as well as schismatic movements within religious communities. Blanshard wrote that such criticism led not only to the excommunication of Catholics who supported socialism, but

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

also to the refusal of fraternal life insurance organizations, which had only tenuous links to Church officials, to provide financial benefits to those involved in labor organizing—in a subversion of classical liberalism. The pull of the Catholic Church was so great that, in Blanshard's view, Church involvement in such overt political and economic questions had the result of impeding the development of workers as individual actors, as there was little room for them to realize the possibility, or indeed necessity, of their participation in democratic politics. Only those estranged from the Church were free to embrace radicalism, and thus while Blanshard was no supporter of socialism himself, labor rights, in his mind, became something of a litmus test for one's ability to embrace democratic values. The results of Church involvement in politics thus contributed to the lack of self-realization needed for active citizenship, and here Blanshard cited the paucity of membership of Polish migrants in socialist organizations as proof of the Church's antidemocratic tendencies. He cited the paltry numbers in his notes: "There are two groups of Polish socialists in the city. One, containing 23 active members, with about $180 in the treasury, and the second, which has fifteen members, with a present capital of $47. The members are practically all out of sympathy with the church."[58]

The issue at play for Blanshard wasn't the merits of socialism per se, and there's nothing to suggest that he or the rest of the team considered socialism to be a viable or attractive solution to political and economic issues within Polish communities. Rather, he objected to how Church leaders supposedly used their influence to shut down democratic exchange, instead positioning themselves as the sole arbiters of political truths among workers. "There is a large variety of public questions on which the Church has adopted an unequivocal position and on which,

[58] Brand Blanshard, Interview with Father Panfil (2), undated, ACB.

whenever they clearly appear in a political contest, its members are supposed to take the ecclesiastical stance," he concluded in his report. "Precisely what makes this influence so powerful is that it declines to regard these questions as political, and taking them as purely moral, asserts the right of infallible judgment upon them."[59] It followed that there would be little room for controversy or debate when the Church tied politics to matters of personal salvation. The result of the requirement that parishioners conform to the political beliefs of Church officials, Blanshard remarked, was a "hostility" to democracy, with democracy in this context understood in a more procedural sense—the ability to participate in the kinds of discourses that allow both self and community to flourish. Polish migrants who wished to stay participants in the Church would, according to him, have to follow the political whims of priests or be subject to reprimand, including excommunication by Church officials or punishment in an otherworldly sense.

Blanshard nonetheless remained conflicted about the merits of the Catholic Church. At other points he referred to the Church as "a natural gift" to Polish communities, particularly as it provided followers with a sense of connection with their pasts, something that would prove integral as migrants reflected on, and ultimately narrated, their shifts from peasant to modern. The migrant, Blanshard argued, "cannot wipe out his past, and he feels the need of some link between the old world and the new, some shelter where he can hold his identity while adventuring in new fields."[60] Blanshard theorized that this continuity could help peasant migrants deal with the psychological impact of an uprooted life, notably the stress that

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[59] Brand Blanshard, Report titled "The Church and the Polish Immigrant," 1920, p. 56, ACB.

[60] Ibid., 30-31.

accompanied labor migration—he cites linguistic difference and the "cramped" nature of the city, as well as the "strenuousness" of industrial labor, as aspects of life that would require relief. He therefore saw a benefit in the familiarity of the Church, even if that benefit was rooted in naivety or backwardness. "The songs, the chants, the altar and its vessels, the vestments of the priests, the order of the mass, the kneeling of the congregation, the candles, crosses and wafers, the baptismal font, the friendly Virgin of stone, the familiar Gothic building," all provide links to the migrant's past, Blanshard argued.[61] Such aesthetic trappings, he conceded in hyperbolic terms, provided the migrant "his only ideas of beauty and magnificence" when compared to "his own meager life."[62] But the advantages offered by the Church in terms of offering a sense of connection to past nonetheless came into conflict with the need for democratization within communities and the individual self. The Church's hold, Blanshard concluded, "is such as to create a many-sided and in some ways impassible barrier to the real democratization of the communities it controls."[63]

Blanshard's writings on the Catholic Church that summer, nonetheless, indicate that he struggled to conceptualize the role of the Church in the Polish community, to a significant degree relying on surface information concerning Catholic beliefs and traditions. His notes, for instance, contain the following observations on the format and practice of the Mass: "The Mass in the Roman Church is always in Latin and is not meant to be participated in by the people"; "All Roman Catholics are compelled to attend the observance of Mass every Sunday under pain

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[61] Ibid., 31.

[62] Ibid., 71.

[63] Ibid., 30.

of mortal sin, which, in the case of gross disobedience, would lead to eternal damnation"; "The Catholic attitude on Sunday amusement differs fundamentally from that of the Protestant in that Protestants demand that the day be given over to sacred activity. The Catholic is willing that, provided no work is done, it should be given over to amusement."[64] Blanshard would conclude in his report to Dewey that parishioners were under the full control of priests, to the point that they were unable to formulate their own political selves—which was a serious matter that not only affected adults, but more significantly for Blanshard, children. It's at this point that Blanshard's work dovetailed with Bradshaw's analysis of parochial schools:

> The Catholic Church attempts a control of the daily life of its members which no Protestant church ventures to claim. The school life of its children is steeped in its atmosphere, and by daily masses, compulsory attendance on Sundays and regular visitation of private homes it is sought to retain this atmosphere to the end. As soon as the child has received its confirmation there are numbers of Church societies and confraternities awaiting him, and he is expected to become a member of one . . . . The habits of obedience to Church rules thus planted so firmly during years of youth are very likely to remain through life.[65]

Such control, ingrained in the self from a young age, would lead to beliefs and prejudices that were reactionary in form, among them beliefs in magic and the supernatural. Blanshard cites the wearing of scapulars and other "trinkets," along with possession of rosaries and relics and the practice of "quarantines" as a type of penance, as "evidence of the curiously mechanical character of Catholic magic."[66]

All of these factors, Blanshard argued, led to division between Catholics and non-Catholics, as well as the shutting down of interactions, to the point that fruitful exchange of ideas

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[64] Brand Blanshard, Notes on the Catholic Mass, undated, ACB.

[65] Blanshard, "The Church and the Polish Immigrant," 72-73.

[66] Ibid., 41.

proved unlikely, if not impossible. "[D]iscussion," in this context, "is not a joint inquiry," he wrote. "[I]t is viewed by the Catholic as authoritative statement on one side and error, which tends to be willful, on the other."[67] The solution he came up with—that priests could find a way to continue to be a moral voice within communities while abstaining from politics—would require a total retooling of clerical authority. "There is finally the course of making the Church concentrate her efforts on this moral and religious mission and give up her pretense of direction in intellectual and political affairs," he concluded. "This seems to me the only course which is open if the Church is to remain a Church and still be democratic."[68] Along with removing politics from its purview, Blanshard also recommended that the Church reassess its relationship to the communities it served. Only then would Church leaders "realize that their position rests not on a permanent organization above them but on the satisfaction and approval of those whom they serve."[69] Chief among his suggestions was that Church officials revise their approach to education.

Visions of Autocracy in Paris

As Bradshaw and Blanshard were busy collecting data on education and clerical authority from Church leaders, teachers, and factory owners in the Richmond District of Philadelphia, the remaining members of the team focused their attention on what they deemed the more pressing

[67] Ibid, 54.

[68] Ibid., 77-78.

[69] Ibid., 78.

matter of Polish political independence. Here team members followed Dewey's cue and zeroed in on what they saw as attempts by clergy and right-wing politicians to speak for Poles in the mainland and abroad, in an attempt to appear as the lone voice of Poland in an anti-democratic power grab. As political leaders prepared to stake their claims for national self-determination in the months leading up to the Paris Peace Conference—which included efforts that merged local, national, international, and transnational interests—Dewey perceived that many of the dangers involving clerical authority and autocratic politics they had been investigating were close to fruition.[70] Here the question of democratic representation became of immediate importance, as Dewey believed that Ignacy Paderewski, the world renowned pianist turned politician and future prime minister of an independent Poland, who was purportedly backed by local priests, along with fellow National Democrat Roman Dmowski, were attempting to gain international recognition illegitimately as "representatives of the Polish people" in the peace talks in Paris.[71] As Dewey warned in an article for *The New Republic*: "A convention of Poles is to be held in Detroit in the last week of August. The convention is heralded as the visible sign of the united will of the four million Poles of America. Its conclusions will profess to voice authoritatively the desires of all patriotic Poles concerning the next steps to be taken on behalf of free,

[70] As Manela observes, the "Wilsonian moment" involved a "simultaneity" of ideas and claims that moved "across the boundaries of nations, regions, and empires." As such, he maintains that "the story of the Wilsonian moment . . . is one about the role of power, both real and perceived, in the dissemination, adoption, and operationalization—the conversion into purposeful political action—of the new norms of international legitimacy and practice that Wilson championed." Manela, *Wilsonian Moment*, 10.

[71] Dewey's report also notes that on July 18th, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Gilbert Hitchcock introduced legislation that would give the National Democrat-backed Polish National Committee diplomatic recognition in the United States. Dewey, "Confidential Report," 301-02.

independent and united Poland."[72] Barnes echoed the concern that right-wing ideologues had rigged the composition of the convention: "In fact the Convention represented the Paderewski faction exclusively (an extremely small minority), was 'packed' by prime machine methods; not a delegate had the right of free speech, and no liberals could possibly gain access to it."[73] Edman would express a similar sentiment to Dewey, "Benefit societies, churches, and similar organizations allied with the church are the chief agencies for electing delegates to the convention . . . . There is no conceivable possibility of anyone being opposed to the scheme . . . [and even if that happened] the official Washington endorsement of [the convention] would shut them up."[74] For that reason, Barnes and Dewey sent Edman to Detroit, where he gained access to the meetings as a writer for the *New York Evening Post*. He would report back to Dewey that representatives from parishes were planning to pass a resolution asking for international recognition of the Paris Committee, and thus the National Democratic Party, as constituting the Foreign Office and War Department of the newly constituted Polish state.

Much of the graduate students' work on politics late that summer would then shift to combatting the position of Paderewski as a revered political figure in Polish communities, and Dewey's hope to reveal Paderewski as a celebrity huckster. As such, Irwin Edman detailed the inner workings of political power in and outside parishes, while Anzia Yezierska turned to the suspected mismanagement of war relief funds by Paderewski and his wife, Helena. By tracking the relationships between politicians and priests, the team was committed to demonstrating how such autocratic practices damaged Poles as potential citizens—and here Dewey warned that

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[72] John Dewey, "Autocracy Under Cover," *New Republic*, August 24, 1918, 104.

[73] Albert C. Barnes, "Democracy, Watch Your Step!," *Dial*, December 28, 1918, 587.

[74] Irwin Edman, Letter to John Dewey, July 29, 1918, ACB.

Polish migrants were falling prey to rhetoric advanced by priests that they would have to sacrifice their "Polish" identities in order to adopt surface "American" traits if they were to belong. In Dewey's verbose phrasing, politicians and priests manipulated the masses by relying on a "whimsical expression of the feeling that an attempt is made to impose external habits upon the immigrant," thereby denying the sort of internal development that would allow individuals to envision themselves as part of "an association of equals and between equals," aspects of modern citizenship that cut across national lines.[75] It's in that context, Dewey maintained, that the Paris Committee represented the Wilson administration's failure to protect democracy, and instead its facilitation of a form of conservatism that collapsed any distinctions between the interests of priests and politicians.[76]

Here Dewey would expand on Edman and Yezierska's work to argue that there were two threats to democracy in Poland: autocracy, rooted in the practice of migrants receiving their political views wholesale from parish priests, and graft.[77] More specifically, Dewey's attention shifted to combatting the forces of autocracy, in this case, the right-wing, antisemitic National Democrats, as well as the financial mismanagement of donations for war relief, which would once again put him at odds with Paderewski. Dewey, again, saw both of these issues as undermining the potential for popular participation in democratic institutions and practices, which he couched in the following terms: "The mass of the Poles are unorganized and have no

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[75] Dewey, "Autocracy Under Cover," 104-05.

[76] On Dewey's estrangement from Wilsonian democracy following the Polish study, see Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy*, 219-20.

[77] Ibid., 103-06.

articulate means of expression . . . . Since the mass of the Poles are good Catholics, it is comparatively easy for the priestly party to profess to speak for them and to manage matters."[78]

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A few observations are in order with regard to the Polish study, by way of conclusion. First, while participants frequently mentioned "America," "American," and "Americanization," as well as "Poland" and "Polish," the identity politics at play during that summer project were, in practice, quite fluid and more complex than national labels normally imply. That is, rather, the ways in which participants referred to things like belonging, identity, and citizenship often surpassed what we normally consider national traits—things like language or shared sense of past—to encompass universal concepts. In this regard, Dewey, Barnes, and the rest of the team attempted to foster values that could be applied in any number of contexts or settings. Chief among those values was the importance of liberal selfhood, which involved envisioning oneself as an active member, both economically and politically, in society. In contrast, Dewey argued, the politics in Polish communities in the United States demonstrated "the forces which work unceasingly to maintain segregated masses in a block amenable to ready exploitation by autocratic managers." He concluded that the masses of Poles in the United States have "the

[78] Dewey, "Confidential Report," 44.

same need for self-determination and unhindered access to [educational] materials" as their politically subjugated brothers in Europe.[79]

For Dewey and the rest of the team, however, such questions of the individual's role in modern society and their hopes for social integration ultimately became wrapped up in the matter of whether one could be both an autonomous subject and Catholic. It's here that participants, notably Bradshaw and Blanshard, examined the links between education, clerical authority, citizenship, financial responsibility, and selfhood—connections that, to them, revealed the importance of public schooling on the construction of the self and potential for one's future political engagement. And members of the team saw promise in peasant migrants as future citizens provided they adopted what members deemed appropriate attitudes toward participatory citizenship, labor, and property. At the same time, the team warned of the danger to selfhood that clergy posed, even as members remained divided on the question of whether the Catholic Church could continue to serve communities by offering moral guidance. All of these issues seem to have gotten sidetracked due to the perceived immediacy of risk posed by the radical right in the weeks leading up to Paris, but the issues at the heart of the study remained: What was the impact of clerical authority on the construction of the autonomous subject-citizen?

While these were larger issues that other scholars, including, as we'll see in the next chapter, education experts and practitioners in Poland, had considered for years, the problems associated with migrant citizenship became much more acute in the aftermath of the Great War and the preparation for the Paris Peace Conference. Dewey and others didn't see this as simply a matter of high political theater in an era of Wilsonian self-determination, even though letters from Barnes indicate that he and Dewey quickly became disillusioned with Wilsonian

[79] Dewey, "Autocracy Under Cover," 105.

approaches to democracy. As the study moved from its sociological origins—a project dedicated to the practical application of Dewey's theories on education—to an attempt to demonstrate the risks that radical politics in Poland presented to democracy in the postwar context, the team's interests shifted in part to highlighting, to a wide audience, how unrepresentative priests' views were, as well as how dangerous their role was in society. But although the project devolved into a warning about the political clout of the radical right, it retained its focus on fostering the internal development of the liberal individual who would ultimately realize his or her stakes in society. Education, of course, would play a large role in this type of self-realization, but so would challenging the primacy and authority of parish priests within community structures. Priests, in other words, were problematic not just because they meddled in political activities; they were problematic because they thwarted opportunities for liberal selfhood. Dewey and his fellow advisees that summer, nonetheless, weren't alone in tying together these issues. Indeed, as we'll see in the next chapter, the connections between religious authority, education, citizenship, and economic selfhood were features actively debated on the ground in villages and cities alike. It's to those matters, notably how teachers, school administrators, and social reformers on both sides of the Atlantic viewed the transformation of the peasant, that we'll turn to next.

Chapter 2

The Social Project of the Schoolhouse

"Look, children," the teacher said, writing the word *house* [*dom*] on the blackboard, "what a smart thing writing is. These three symbols are so small and take up so little space, and yet they mean house. You only have to look at the word and immediately you can see the entire building: the door, windows, rooms, stoves, benches, and pictures on the walls. In short, you can see the house with everything it contains."

Antek rubbed his eyes, leaned forward, and looked at the word written on the board, but he couldn't see a house at all. Finally he poked his neighbor and asked: "Do you see the house that the teacher is talking about?"

"I don't," responded his neighbor.

"It must be a lie!" Antek concluded out loud.

The schoolmaster heard this comment and yelled: "What is a lie? What is a lie?"

"That there is a house on the blackboard. There is some chalk, but I don't see a house," Antek answered naively.

The teacher grabbed Antek by the ear and dragged him to the center of the room.

– From *Antek*, Bolesław Prus

In the above passage, taken from the short story *Antek*, first published in 1880, the positivist writer Bolesław Prus, most famous for the novel *The Doll* (*Lalka*), criticizes what he sees as the backward education given to young peasants in the partitions. The story concerns Antek, an unsophisticated yet ambitious boy who dreams of building windmills like the ones he sees across the Vistula. Antek has a hard life. His sister, we learn, died tragically when a local

healer placed her body in an oven in an attempt to treat a fever, and his mother struggles to keep the family farm operational following the death of Antek's father. Nonetheless, his mother, who noticed that her young Quixote was not suited for the kind of agricultural work needed at home, manages to save enough money to send him to a nearby schoolmaster. Much to Antek's dismay, however, his teacher does not discuss windmills. Instead, lessons involved rote memorization, with his teacher rarely moving beyond the first three letters of the alphabet. Harsh discipline, moreover, was a central feature of Prus's village school. As Antek quickly discovers, a wrong answer or a sarcastic comment is grounds for a beating.

Prus's criticism of peasant schools was part of a larger discussion of the place that education should have in preparing peasants for life in the modern world, a question that had particular resonance in the Galician region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as parts of the Congress Kingdom and the industrial cities of the Midwest. Indeed, as we've seen in the previous chapter, many prominent social theorists, including John Dewey, were interested in this very question. Built on a lengthy lineage of concern about "backwardness" in rural communities, these debates on the relationship between peasants and modern life didn't take place solely at the level of grand philosophy and cultural elites. In fact, one of the premises of this chapter is that we need to push back against the dichotomy of lofty thought versus practice, to consider how school administrators, teachers, teacher educators, government inspectors, education reformers, journalists, and, when we find traces of them, students themselves understood and shaped education in a rapidly changing and global social environment. The resulting picture is chaotic—something unavoidable given the context—as a large number of

interested parties weighed in on this matter; the decentralized nature of education in the partitions and across the ocean therefore makes generalizations tricky.[1]

With those caveats in mind, however, some important introductory points are in order, points that cut across this messy scene of singular actors. The first, and perhaps most important, is that despite diverging settings, people across the world and in differing contexts were interested in education both in terms of teaching the content and the imparting of behavioral norms that they believed would serve peasants and peasant migrants well in the coming years. The purpose of education was a matter that connected a variety of actors in a number of social and economic environments, in spite of the disparate settings. Of course, some interested parties packaged their arguments as national ones—something along the lines of in order to have an independent Polish state, one needs to support the creation of an engaged, educated citizenry,

[1] The Polish-language scholarship on the topic of education is extensive and provides nuanced treatment of the various policies and practices. Nevertheless, the scholarship in this area tends to focus on national development in the face of political adversity—and this is particularly the case with regard to examination of Russification policies in the Congress Kingdom following the January Uprising—as well as the local studies of education in particular locations. For an example of scholarship that highlights national triumph over Russification in the Congress Kingdom, see Leonard Szymański, *Higiena i wychowanie fizyczne w szkolnictwie ogólnokształcącym w Królestwie Polskim 1815-1915* (Wrocław: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1979). For an overview of different types of vocational and agricultural schools in Galicia, as well as the key policies that governed them, see Jerzy Krawczyk, *Galicyjskie szkolnictwo zawodowe w latach 1860-1918* (Cracow: Universitas, 1995); for a parallel and classic treatment of vocational education in the Congress Kingdom, see Józef Miąso, *Szkolnictwo zawodowe w Królestwie Polskim w latach 1815-1915* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1966). An important exception is Andrzej Smolarczyk, *Szkolnictwo powszechne i oświata pozaszkolna w Województwie Poleskim w latach 1919-1939* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii Nauki Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2014), which examines the importance of nationalization policy in the eastern borderlands but does so with an eye to localism and ethnic and religious diversity in the region. On education of Polish migrants in the United States, see Józef Miąso, *The History of the Education of Polish Immigrants in the United States* (New York: Kosciuszko Foundation, 1977).

and that would require the enlightenment of the masses.[2] This was particularly the case, as we will see, for an organization called *Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej*, or the Society of Peasant Schools (TSL), which was based in Cracow but had branches across Galicia and parts of Silesia, and this is how scholars interpret some of the main tenets of Warsaw positivism.[3] But to see education solely in nationalizing terms misses the fact that outside the confines of national rhetoric, there was debate over what peasant education would look like and accomplish, and notably the relationship between social progress and education. Still, some details remained up in the air. Would peasant education follow the framework of a classical liberal arts education, a knowledge base that the children of elites had received for centuries? To be sure, no one suggested that peasant schools teach Greek or Latin or other specialized subjects—a matter that would separate peasant education from the education of future civil servants, doctors, college professors, politicians, and others slated for leadership roles in society. Nonetheless, to simply see education as a method of nationalizing in such clear-cut terms misses the point that those involved in peasant schools often were interested in the social question of how to build a modern peasantry, not just a modern Poland, and were active participants in defining what that meant. This chapter accordingly takes a bird's eye view in order to examine the ways in which school officials and social reformers on both sides of the Atlantic saw education of the masses as

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[2] On the topic of peasants and nationalism, and specifically on peasant agency in the imagining of the Polish nation, see Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Rural National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). See also, Jan Molenda, *Chłopi, naród, niepodległość: Kształtowanie się postaw narodowych i obywatelskich chłopów w Galicji i Królestwie Polskim w przededniu odrodzenia Polski* (Warsaw: Neriton, 1999).

[3] See, for instance, Stanislaus A. Blejwas, *Warsaw Positivism, 1864-1890: Organic Work as an Expression of National Survival in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).

transformative in terms of the crafting of the modern subject. This reframing, I argue, allows us to see how a variety of individuals throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries tied education to personal development, and more specifically to the construction of liberal selfhood.

Education nonetheless tends to be a matter studied within the framework of the nation, and historians in both the American and Polish contexts have debated the nationalizing features of schooling. This is of particular significance in the Congress Kingdom, where, as Robert Blobaum has written, educational options were bleak and focused predominately on russification policies in the wake of the January Uprising.[4] And while these studies have traced how schools played a central role in fomenting ideas of national belonging, they were not the only ways in which students experienced education, nor are they the only ways that individuals understood the importance of schooling. This chapter maintains that teachers, administrators, and education reformers all saw social and economic issues outside the nation as significant within peasant and peasant migrant schools, and chief among their goals was fostering internal transformation into modern subjects. Focusing on selfhood, moreover, helps us return our attention from the intellectual debates between revisionist and anti-revisionist education historians of the 1970s and 80s—who disagreed over whether schools were sites of control, mis-education, and the capitalist production of inequality—to consider the construction of the liberal self as a key feature of modern education practices.[5]

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[4] Rather than resulting in cultural russification, however, Blobaum maintains that Russian imperial authorities' actions ended up contributing to general illiteracy in the region. Robert E. Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,1995), 8-9.

[5] We will return to this topic in due course, but for an overview of scholarship on revisionism and its impact on the history of education, as well as the stakes involved in the revisionist debate,

At the heart of this chapter thus are questions that should strike the present-day reader as familiar, if equally unsettled: What is the purpose of schooling in society? Is education about providing opportunity for economic advancement? Or is it about preparing students for future work, or less favorably put, future drudgery? Do educators have a responsibility to improve the lives of the impoverished? Is education about social progress? And ultimately what are the links between education and political economy? School administrators, teachers, and educational reformers never adopted a conclusive stance on any of these issues, and indeed a tension ran through reports on teacher meetings on the purpose of peasant education. All of this took place within a context of flux and mobility, in the cities, of course, but also the countryside, which was also—it's important to acknowledge—a venue where individuals enacted modern life. One option, the option that Prus found necessary was, in fact, migration, perhaps because he was skeptical about the ability or willingness of rural elites to foster the type of social change necessary for peasant advancement, even if he didn't provide much in the way of guidance. *Antek* ends accordingly with the following charge: "Maybe one day you will meet a village boy looking to earn a living and to get the kind of learning he couldn't find among his own people . . . . If you do, give a helping hand to this child. It will be our little brother Antek, who outgrew his home village and therefore went out into the world, giving himself to the care of God and

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see *Rethinking the History of American Education*, William J. Reese and John L. Rury, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

good people."[6] The name "Antek," not surprisingly, became a slang term for the impoverished and unmoored boys who roamed city streets in Warsaw and Łódź.[7]

In the end, those involved in peasant schooling saw themselves as attempting to come to terms with a changing world and the place of rural life in an increasingly industrializing, urbanizing, and mobile environment. They concluded that in order to do so they would need scientific, rational methods, including the collection of statistics on a number of demographic features of peasant school children, and the development of modern schooling techniques—both with regard to pedagogical methods and the material outfitting of the classroom. The goal for many schools was to foster internal change, not simply to support the learning of liberal arts content or rote memorization of the kind that Prus denounced. Peasant children, upon completion of their schooling, it followed, would not only have a solid grasp of basic subject material in terms of literacy, math, science, history, and farming; they would also know the importance of hygiene, work ethic, punctuality, morality, and "good" behavior, and they would act accordingly. And, of course, they would need to know and internalize, and ultimately be able demonstrate to others, these skills and characteristics, whether they ended up in the village or the city, at home in Galicia or the Congress Kingdom, or later in a reformed Polish state, or in a

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[6] There is evidence that migrants in the United States found the message of *Antek* particularly meaningful. *Antek* was serialized in *Dziennik Polski,* a newspaper in Detroit, in March 1904. Following the last installment of the story, the newspaper published a message from the editor that read: "The previous story by the exceptional author Prus about Antek was of great interest to all. The suffering of Antek was sad and everyone who shares the same fate as Antek can expect to be treated with compassion, because none of us rests on our laurels (*nikt z nas na różach nie spoczywa*). We are currently printing a second story by the same author . . . and expect the same level of interest from our readers." *Dziennik Polski*, March 12, 1904.

[7] Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan*, 41.

factory or field abroad—and we'll examine what such demonstrations and performances entailed in Chapter 3.

The focus of school officials, teachers, and intellectuals on self-transformation nonetheless could spark conflict with local priests over questions of authority and the role clergy should have in the peasant community. Notably, interested parties often disagreed about the role of clergy in imparting behavioral norms and managing access to academic content, including reading materials, and, interestingly, Prus's own views on the subject reveal the tensions at the heart of education as a modern project. Others, nonetheless, disagreed with Prus on this point, something that would spark a transatlantic conversation about the impact of clerical authority and education on the construction of the modern self.

Monitoring Peasant Behavior

When Adolf Ryłko gathered his teaching staff—which consisted of two other teachers, both young women, one of whom was his wife, Katarzyna—for their monthly conference at the end of October 1902, he had hoped to brainstorm solutions for what he considered the most pressing problem facing his school: student attrition. Ryłko was the director of a small primary school in the Siepraw-Myślenice area, in a village just south of Cracow, and in addition to his administrative duties he was in charge of teaching one of the school's two grade levels. During such meetings he would regularly complain that students weren't attending class, and this session was no different—in fact, he maintained that this issue was much more acute as the harvest season approached. One of his co-teachers recorded his comments in the school's ledger: "The head of

the school recommended . . . that the group of teachers advertise to children a memo for students of both sexes on the responsibility of attending school in order to complete their studies, because in the month of October there was very weak attendance on account of farm work." She continued, this time switching voice and registering Ryłko's comments as though the staff were speaking as a collective: "In turn, we recommend that teachers write a memo at the end of each month to the parents who are not sending their children to school on a regular basis. This should be prepared on the 30th or 31st day of every month."[8]

Just what the others thought of Ryłko's assessment and solution to a complex problem is hard to say, given the documentary evidence that remains. If the rest of the staff grew frustrated with Ryłko's penchant for addressing problems in the school with more paperwork and bureaucratic tasks, responsibilities that he tended to farm out to his female employees, we'll never know—nor will we know whether the staff agreed wholeheartedly with this approach, or anything in between. There's also nothing to suggest that school employees ultimately contacted students and parents about school attendance in such a regimented way, though if the staff did, it probably didn't have much of an impact. Attendance and grade reports from teachers at the school indicate that absences continued to be a problem well into the 1930s, to the extent that in one class of 52 students, only 37 were promoted to the next grade on account of inadequate attendance.[9] Common were the annotations in grade books like "insufficient progress as a result of frequent absences and lack of knowledge in the class" for a student, the son of a farmer, who missed 89 school days in 1934, or even "lack of clothing—poverty" for a classmate who recorded 213 absences in the same

[8] Archiwum Państwowe w Krakowie (APK), ANK 29 1846, 44.

[9] APK ANK 29 1846, 16. See tables listed under "Zestawienie ruchu uczniów i wyników rocznej klasyfikacji w roku szkolnym 1935/36" for attendance figures.

year.[10] Another student who was required to repeat the school year received the following assessment: "Unsatisfactory grades a result of a lack of basic knowledge from previous years, in addition to laziness."[11] He had missed 61 days, in a school year that ran from the first of September until the end of June.

Ryłko's suggestion that the teaching staff should inform both students and parents of the importance of going to school on a regular basis nonetheless signals how much weight teachers and administrators placed on internal, and supposedly rational change. His comments were rooted in the assumption that the problem of attrition could best be addressed by changing attitudes toward education—if only students and parents understood the value of education, or were gently and periodically reminded of their responsibilities, then the matter would resolve itself without having to address any of the larger social inequities or economic issues in the countryside.

Attendance wasn't the only challenge Ryłko highlighted during teacher conferences that he believed would best be addressed with self-transformation. Closely linked were other behaviors and attitudes he saw as detrimental to peasant education, things like lack of work ethic, excessive tardiness, poor hygiene, and above all disciplinary problems like the mistreatment of teachers. And indeed, these problems often seemed to go hand-in-hand, as the above example of the "lazy" student with poor attendance suggests. Importantly, by removing these matters from their social context, Ryłko could cast them as personal shortcomings that required behavioral change and in-class monitoring, and not systemic issues grounded in poverty, the need for land reform, political intervention, or economic restructuring. For instance, the same school teacher recorded Ryłko's concern that students were not only not paying attention during class but were

[10] APK ANK 29 1846, 15.

[11] Ibid.

also actively disrupting lessons. "At the end of the teacher's conference, the director of the school warned that discipline in level two is out of hand," the teacher wrote in the report's minutes. "The children talk throughout class." One solution that Ryłko promoted—one that will strike the reader as humane and measured, as well as professional, especially given Prus's presentation of physical discipline in peasant schools—was to "remind students before beginning lessons of the rules" so that the class guidelines would be fresh in their minds.[12] Furthermore, he suggested that teachers meet at regularly scheduled points during the school year to discuss how to address the problem of misbehavior in the classroom. (At an earlier meeting Ryłko had informed the other teachers that it was their responsibility to monitor the school entrance before and after class to make sure students were behaving properly and that the students had come to class prepared with chalk and erasers.[13]) This proposal took place around the same time that teachers in the school voiced concern about the multitude of methods used to punish wayward students, which they argued created too much variation in responses to the point that children couldn't possibly understand expectations. What was needed, Ryłko argued, was standardization of punishment, frequent reminders of students' responsibilities, greater supervision, and additional record keeping in order to get to the roots of disobedience in the classroom.[14]

Such regimented approaches also influenced classroom instruction and curriculum design. Ryłko told his teachers in 1901 that mathematics lessons should include the following four components: "1. The concept of numbers, which should provide children with an understanding of the subject [of math], 2. The symbols of math, 3. Exercises in mathematics, and

[12] APK ANK 29 1846, 44. Report from October 30, 1902.

[13] APK ANK 29 1846, 44. Report from September 3, 1901.

[14] APK ANK 29 1846, 44. Report from January 23, 1903.

4. Discussions on practical application."[15] He then provided examples of how to teach math in a practical, personally relatable way, in the form of word problems. Ryłko also emphasized the importance of providing authentic situations to practice in the context of Polish language lessons. He explained: "In order to methodically study consonants, one should begin by giving children a short conversation of the kind in the back of their primer. In that the teacher chooses an appropriate sentence, and then the children repeat it several times. Then the teacher says the sentence once more slowly and counts the words. At the same time the children repeat it quietly to themselves. In this way, a teacher shows that a sentence is constructed of individual words."[16] He went on to explain how teachers should encourage the mechanics of moving one's mouth when speaking—that teachers should ask students to observe the movement of the mouth to see, in part, how many times he or she opens and closes the jaw when pronouncing words. When doing so, Ryłko advises, teachers should also buttress the lessons by writing consonant clusters on the board and urging students to copy those letters on their tablets for reinforcement. If there weren't enough school books for children, a constant problem in the school, the teacher should recite out loud the activities from the primer. In the case of one lesson, he relayed, children should "read out loud . . . [a poem or short story in student primers called] 'Sunset' without separation of syllables . . . . There will be some who will read slowly, however. They should be encouraged to learn how to read faster."[17] Repetition for Ryłko, it seems, had a deeper purpose: to create a routine in order for students to internalize literacy skills, so that students would adopt the proper motions, cadences, and speed to facilitate language fluency.

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[15] APK ANK 29 1846, n. 44. Report from October 3, 1901.

[16] Ibid.

[17] APK ANK 29 1846, n. 44 (report from October 30, 1902).

Data Collection and Peasant Vocational Education

Ryłko's approach to student behavior and learning found a corollary in how Austrian state officials mandated the monitoring of student progress. Imperial officials encouraged, and indeed required, school teachers and administrators to collect statistics on a number of features related to peasant education. In terms of data collection, the state asked administrators to compile extensive records on the overall number of children who attended schools. The questionnaires that the central office sent to local districts also asked school officials to provide the sex of students, broken down by age and class year, as well as the main language of instruction. State officials asked schools to provide information about students' religious backgrounds, specifically the number of children from Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Evangelical, and Jewish households. Likewise, questionnaires included requests concerning the number of children in a given school district who received education at home, who attended catechism classes on Sundays, and who frequently missed classes. In addition to questions related to the demographics of the school population, the state also requested information on the advancement of students in various subjects (including religion, Polish, German, mathematics, history and geography, natural science, writing, drawing, singing, physical education, agriculture, beekeeping, and handicrafts) and details concerning the material conditions of the school—whether the school kept outdoor, fresh-air spaces like gardens or fruit groves, the physical condition of the school building, how many books were available for needy children, the number of globes, maps, and alphabet tablets in the classroom, and the number and quality of furniture in the school (the form singled out, in particular, benches, tables, chairs, wardrobes,

chalkboards, and clocks). The state also wanted to know the backgrounds of teachers—including names and qualifications, years of service, and salary. Finally, inspectors asked where schools received their funding, specifically whether a school's operational costs came from the town school board or other sources at a district or state level.[18] Similar instructions to school inspectors, sent in 1880, asked for "the opinion of the district school inspector on the hygienic conditions of the school" and for an assessment of the "physical fitness of the students."[19]

School and state officials alike also weighed in on the type of reading material that peasant children had access to. For instance, logbooks indicate that state investigators sent out messages warning school administrators and teachers in the Cracow area to purge libraries of any books deemed unsuitable for young students. One general announcement, dated July 13th, 1886, noted the state's alarm that schools were allowing students to gain access to unsanctioned books and threatened disciplinary investigation for any school providing unauthorized materials to teachers or students. In the event that the school received such books as a gift, the inspector wrote, school administrators were obliged to inform imperial officials of the materials in order for them to determine the appropriate course of action. "Teachers should remain on alert that improper works don't get into the hands of young people and therefore should collect the books that children bring to school if they see any impropriety, and consult further with parents or the proper caretakers, or in very grave cases with state school inspectors," one report advised.[20]

Just what authorities deemed dangerous isn't clearly outlined in such directives, though it's possible to infer definitions of appropriate and inappropriate from other circulars. Some state

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[18] APK KEN 1, 493.

[19] APK KEN 1 (titled "Instrukcja dla Przełożonych Szkół").

[20] APK KEN 1, 2245.

investigators recommended books on animal husbandry, like the aptly titled "Raising Rabbits," as well as other materials concerning farming and breeding. Indeed, many recommended titles focused on fostering knowledge of practical aspects of agricultural life, including how to care properly for cattle and other domestic animals—aspiring teachers were, in Galicia, tested on the subject of "farming science" (or *nauka gospodarstwa*), which included the subfields of cattle raising, pomology, apiculture, and sericulture. Such recommendations extended to school officials, with the hope that exposure to scientific materials would trickle down to the larger population and become part of a routine—the same inspector advised teachers to subscribe to 'Practical Husbandry' (*Praktyczne go chodowca*), "in order to strengthen the desire of the population to subscribe to that magazine."[21]

Investigators nonetheless promoted books beyond the agricultural world, and here it's important to note the focus that state officials paid to issues of morality and the question of what type of work was advisable for young peasant women. Handicraft work for girls was permissible, and even encouraged, though at the same time the state sought to regulate its implementation. "Librarians of peasant schools of all categories, along with teachers, by the decree of March 20, 1880 should recommend the book by …Grzywieński with the title 'Learning Women's Needlework in Lwów' (*Nauka Robót Ręcznych Kobiecych we Lwowie*)," listed one such letter sent to schools in Galicia.[22] (Though here it's interesting to note that state officials also prohibited, at least on paper, the teaching of needlework to girls under the age of 10 if that work required close detail that could potentially strain the eyes, and that even for older

[21] APK SNK 13 (titled "Odpis Rada Szkolna Miejscowa w Podgórzu do Zarządu szkoły w Płaszowie, 24 Listopada 1879.")

[22] APK KEN 1, 802.

girls the state required classrooms to "have sufficient lighting and be equipped with adequate work tables."[23])

Teaching Work Ethic and Difference

State approaches to student behavior and learning found a corollary in how textbooks presented the obligations of peasant laborers. Elementary primers from the time emphasized the internalization of work ethic, and they did so in a way that promoted an idealized form of non-commodified labor based on personal characteristics like diligence, gratification, and finding joy in both educational and physical tasks. Take, for instance, this poem included in primers in Galicia and the United States:

A happy peasant in the field says;
Things are going well for me, praise God!
I do not grow tired from work; I abhor laziness.
I am not ashamed of anything, not of my labor.
The plowmen in the field sing it far and wide:
Without work there is no gain.[24]

Happiness and work here went hand-in-hand, and even the most physically demanding labor could be cast as both self-fulfilling and a source for individual and collective economic advancement. Significantly, textbooks present work as a personal characteristic, the opposite of laziness and a source of personal pride, as well as a requisite for future progress and something

[23] See directive in APK KEN 1 (titled "Rozporządzenia z dnia 26 listopada 1878").

[24] This example comes from *Druga książka do czytania i nauki języka polskiego dla szkół ludowych* (Vienna: C.K. Nakład Książek Szkolnych, 1871), 209. See also *Trzecia książka do czytania dla szkół ludowych w Ameryce* (Chicago: Druk. Spółki Nakładowej Wydawnictwa Polskiego, 1910), 141.

that could be controlled through individual will. Other books followed suit by highlighting the connection between manual labor, in both agricultural and factory settings, and progress. For example, another primer posed the following question to students: “One may ask why a person, in spite of the fact that physical labor is straining, must spend the time he could be relaxing at work?” The author answered with the following statement on the meaning of labor: “The reason for this is progress, that God’s law planted in man’s heart the seeds of work, the need for activity, the desire for honor. Again, a person who does nothing and lives, eats, and drinks what others have earned will in the end die of hunger and the people around him will despise him and reject him as a useless idler.”[25] Another, an introductory primer for students in the United States, notes that while there are differences between city and village life, labor was a uniting feature of both settings. “Workers live in the village. In addition to farmers, there are artisans. In cities live mostly artisans, merchants, and clerical workers. Everyone who lives in a city or a village should work.”[26] Here, again, work ethic is cast as within the individual purview, and this construction pits personal integrity against public disgrace, and the author attempts to collapse any distinction between town and country under the banner of work. Significantly, textbooks tended to remove overt references to money, even if they arguably implied monetary gain in their references to progress. The goal, nonetheless, was the same—to strengthen the idea that one’s work ethic was a personal attribute, and either a source of individual pride or ignominy. This was almost always done in reference to physical labor, giving the impression that honorable

[25] *Trzecia książka do czytania i nauki języka polskiego dla szkół ludowych* (Vienna: C.K. Nakład Książek Szkolnych, 1872), 19.

[26] *Obrazkowy elementarz polski, czyli nauka czytania i pisania dla polskich szkół elementarnych w Północnej Ameryce* (Chicago: J. F. Smulski & Co., 1899), 73.

work was done with the body first and mind second, even if texts present elementary education as a laudable goal.

Some primers did, however, introduce the young reader to more abstract ideas of production and exchange. One section of the textbook the *Fourth Primer for Peasant Schools in America*, titled "How Factories Work," describes the economic logic behind factory production and division of labor as follows, though it does so, in this case, by presenting Adam Smith's pin factory in a favorable, if inaccurate, light:

> If a worker in a pin factory makes an entire pin from beginning to end, the most skillful of workers could make around 1000 pins per day, and his earnings would be quite low, barely enough to meet his most basic needs. But that is not how it works in an actual pin factory. There one worker pulls wire, a second cuts it, a third turns up the end, a fourth prepares the pinhead, a fifth attaches the pinhead, and a sixth packages it. In this way ten people can make 60,000 pins per day, meaning that each of them make 6000, not 1000, making their pay larger, and pins considerably cheaper.[27]

The implication of this discussion, of course, is that not only do factories increase the output of cheaper goods, they also enhance workers' earnings. There's no mention of factory conditions, alienation, or exploitation—the human costs of modern labor practices—just the notion that the factory setting and labor commodification produce positive outcomes for both worker and consumer, as long as the factory laborer worked hard and efficiently.

If textbooks presented strong work ethic as the defining characteristic of the peasant laborer, a characteristic often sanctioned by a divine power, they would occasionally juxtapose this construction with a depiction of Jews as the epitome of laziness, dishonesty, and financial duplicity. Such an inversion positioned peasants as having the potential for economic progress, with Jews standing in opposition to their economic and social advancement. Importantly, this

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[27] "Jak pracują w fabrykach," in *Czwarta książka do czytania dla szkół ludowych w Ameryce* (Chicago: Druk. Spółki Nakładowej Wydawnictwa Polskiego, 1911), 144-45.

wasn't the antisemitism of familiarity—of matchmaking rituals, religious difference, divisions of labor in a manorial context, or accusations of magic within rural communities—that would have been recognizable to many peasant children.[28] Instead, some textbooks taught children that Jews were a danger to their economic progress and threatened non-Jewish commercial activity within the capitalist structure. "Among national minorities the greatest plague for contemporary Poland are the Jews . . . . The Jews in Poland enrich themselves at the cost of others," one textbook, published by the Felician Sisters and geared toward middle-school students in the United States noted. "The dishonest Jew, when he can, destroys commerce. Because he manufactures flimsy things, he can sell them for very low prices. People who don't know of the value of these goods then buy them from a Jew because they are cheaper, and it bankrupts stores. In this way Jews seized almost the entire commercial sector in Poland in their hands. Poles to this day must fight with Jews for their own commercial territory."[29] By presenting Jews as the foil to respectable labor, textbook writers, and presumably the teachers who used them, could construct difference through work. While historians have noted the distinct division of labor between Jews and non-Jews in pre-modern Poland—divisions rooted in prohibitions of possession of land—this construction was decidedly modern in its depiction of financial integrity, as well as its otherizing of Jews and Jewish labor. This is in stark contrast to the depiction of the pin factory, where resourceful and diligent workers thrived and innovated, even as those workers drove down the cost of production.

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[28] On the topic of differences between premodern and modern antisemitism in Poland, see Alina Cała, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1995), as well as Alina Cała, *Asymilacja Żydów w Królestwie Polskim, 1864-1897: postawy, konflikty, stereotypy* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1989).

[29] Maria Cyryla, *Polska: Podręcznik do Nauki Dziejów Ojczystych dla Szkół Parafialnych w Ameryce, część II* (Chicago: SS. Felicjanek, 1931), 89.

On Teacher Training

Pedagogy training programs, for their part, focused a great deal on discipline with regard to future teachers—whom school administrators expected to act as exemplars of moral behavior—and also to the pedagogy involved in the teaching of morality. We get a sense of the importance of morality and discipline from a variety of places inside teacher training programs. Austrian government directives to such schools, for example, "strongly recommended" that all teacher schools purchase the pamphlet "Rules for acceptable behavior among middle school students," published in Lwów in 1912, for their libraries. According to state school bureau memos, this material provided "a perfect supplement of disciplinary regulations for middle school students, providing pithy and accessible methods for regulating behavior in the company of others, and in various places and environments, and in addition among parents, siblings, older men and women . . . in schools, churches, in the home, parks, stores, during visits to others' homes, at the table, on the soccer field, during excursions, sports events, dances, concerts, etc."[30] It was particularly important that schools provide "free copies," the memo added, "for completely impoverished students."

Students who wished to become teachers but who studied privately needed to obtain a certificate signifying their completion of studies (*egzamin dojrzałości*); they did so for a variety of reasons—often because an illness or family emergency prevented a student from completing the school year or because a student lacked the financial support to attend a formal training

[30]APK SNK 46, March 21, 1912 ("C.K. Rada Szkolna Krajowa Do Dyrekcyi wszystkich szkół średnich i męskich Seminaryów nauczycielskich").

program. A student in that situation would have to complete a dossier of materials that would typically include, in addition to other materials—among them a list of books mastered during their education, a certificate of health, and proof of physical fitness—a testament to their morality (*świadectwo moralności*). In his application materials, for example, a twenty-one year old named Witold Nasalik provided the following statement, signed and stamped by both a representative from the Gmina Stanisławice and a local parish priest: "The signer below affirms that Mr. Wit Nasalik, born in Kwaczała in the county of Chrzanów, and who moved to Naprawa in Myślenice County, 21 years old, single, Roman Catholic religion, a student who lived in Jordanów with his parents from June 29, 1910 until May 19, 1911, behaved in a peaceful and moral way during his stay."[31] Similarly, Michalina Burghardtówna, a twenty-year-old prospective teacher from Stanin, a village just north of Lublin, included this statement, signed and notarized by a town official, and notarized a second time by the local parish priest, attesting to her morality in her petition for a waiver of a Polish language exam: "The signature below affirms that Ms. Michalina Burghardtówna, a Roman Catholic, [and] single, a candidate for a teaching position, lived here with her parents, and conducted herself with respect to morality in an exemplary and religious way, and to the highest satisfaction of the public interest."[32] Students needed to get the endorsement of both local and religious representatives to apply for such waivers and needed to do so through official channels, in this case by receiving notarized statements documenting their moral qualifications, with morality presumably tied to Roman Catholic precepts or at least subject to some degree of clerical oversight. Another candidate, Zofia Bury, provided this CV, which is as much a testament to parental supervision as it is proof

[31] APK SNK 46, 409 (Witold Nasalik materials, May 19, 1911).

[32] APK SNK 46, 351 (Michalina Burghardtówna materials, February 8, 1912).

of her professional credentials: "Zofia Bury, born on April 26 (May 9th in the Julian calendar) 1891 in . . . the Minsk province, studied privately in her family home; in 1908 she passed an entrance exam to the Sixth Class private middle school in Cracow and completed the Seventh Class. Throughout her time in middle school she lived on Ulica Dolnych-Młynów number 5, under the care of her aunt Jadwiga [last name illegible]. In September 1910 she left the school and moved into her family home under the care of her mother in Kiev on Nazarjowski Street number 17, to prepare for her teaching exam. During that period, she spent two months in tutoring at the private Polish school of P. Zukiewiczowa."[33] Such declarations combined official sanction with personal relationships, and in particular highlight the continuing significance of demonstrating morality, good behavior, and oversight for prospective teachers.

Teacher examination reports provide a much clearer picture of how state officials and pedagogy experts thought about peasant education, and here it's important to emphasize the comprehensive nature of teacher preparation for individuals hoping to work in peasant schools. Prospective teachers in Galicia received the opportunity to sit for an oral qualification exam after completing a general course of study, as well as an additional two years of pedagogy training. The exam covered a wide variety of subjects, usually mathematics, natural sciences, physics, religion, Polish, German, history, geography, literature, and pedagogy (sometimes combined with psychology), but also including less frequently homemaking, agriculture, drawing, singing (or other musical specializations like piano or violin), gymnastics, calligraphy, and French, and depending on the thoroughness of the examiner, each subfield could take up to forty-five minutes. Examiners tested students both on subject-related content and pedagogical issues—that

[33] APK SNK 46, 377 (Zofia Bury materials, January 1912).

is, students would have to demonstrate that they had a firm grasp of content *and* could effectively teach that content to peasant children.

A typical examinee would sit for the test one-on-one with an examiner, though it was also common for students to take the exam with peers present depending on demand and the availability of examiners. On a given day, exam questions could range from practical household knowledge—the components of milk and signs that milk is fresh, or the effects of salt and vinegar on meat—to factual recall (some examples include: Who was Pericles and what was he known for? When did the Vasa house rule Poland? What caused the 30 Years' War? Draw the rivers in Austria, starting with the Elba. Where are the Alps? Ballads and romances belong to what type of poetry? What's the difference between them?), to pedagogical training (How does one shape the intelligence of children? How should one react when a student gives a wrong answer? How does one build a child's memory?). Examiners might also require students to read a passage from a selected text—a poem by Schiller or Goethe, if the student was taking the German portion of the exam—or a text by Mickiewicz, if taking the Polish exam—and the examiner would then comment on language fluency (accent, speed, pronunciation), as well as ask the student questions related to the content of the piece. Marya Wyrobiszowna's results showed, for example, that she read a passage from an unidentified book in Polish "loudly enough with an appropriate accent and intonation good enough" and her understanding of satire (what it is, and what kinds of forms it takes, who writes in that genre—including a description of Ignacy Krasicki's life and works) was "entirely good."[34]

[34] APK KEN 7 ("Protokół egzaminu na nauczycielki szkół wydziałowych," Marya Wyrobiszowna, February 1874).

Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej

The state wasn't the only party interested in promoting a certain type of peasant education for advancement. Another institution—*Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej*, or the Society of Peasant Schools (herein TSL)—was an important, non-state voice in the discussion. Founded by poet and positivist thinker Adam Asnyk in 1892, the group sought to provide the impoverished masses with basic schooling, and to help cultivate a system of peasant education in order to combat poverty in villages in Galicia, and particularly in what would later form the borderlands of independent Belarus and Ukraine, though the group did have "circles" elsewhere. Asnyk's focus, at the same time, was decidedly nationalist. As one member of the TSL, in a pamphlet dedicated to the memory of Asnyk shortly after his death in 1897, described the group's approach to peasant education: "Indeed the Polish masses have numerous miseries, but the greatest and most painful among them is ignorance. A peasant is lacking the education necessary not to go astray and is lacking the national education (*oświata narodowa*), which would introduce him to the great traditions of the nation, and in whose name he would feel the pride of the Polish peasantry." The author continued: "And in the Kresy (borderlands) the peasantry fights a foreign element…slowly but steadily the foreign powers weakened traditions and the national consciousness, and in this way subtly and slowly shrinks the Fatherland and if we looked at this indifferently, that's what we would see in the heart of Poland—after years in the Kresy."[35] Not surprisingly, then, the group depicted itself as the solution to this problem, with Asnyk, as TSL's first president, projecting himself as a leader who would spark a larger national awakening in the villages of what he deemed the Polish borderlands.

[35] APK TSL 25, 4.

But it would be a mistake to position the TSL entirely as a "nationalist" organization, though, as members were involved in a similar social project of peasant education as other interested parties. From the outset, the TSL's main branch in Cracow (*Zarząd Główny*), as well as other TSL circles saw their mission as "helping districts establish peasant schools and build school houses," "supporting advanced learning for teachers in peasant schools, and providing them with books, periodicals, and other educational materials," "establishing peasant libraries and promoting the free lending of books," and "advertising scholarship contests for villagers."[36] The organization's statutes are clear that membership to the TSL was open to both men and women, provided they pay an annual fee of 1 Austrian krone, a one-time fee of 20 Austrian kronen, or a 100 kronen fee for "founding member" status, and presumably those who sought higher positions within the organization would gain commensurate social prestige.[37] Women were represented among members of the organization's main branch at its founding, albeit in a limited form—three out of sixteen members were women, though only one woman, Kazimiera Bujwidowa, held a leadership position within the organization.[38]

The work of the TSL took place in "circles" (*koła*), which members organized at local levels, though much of the organizational work of the group took place in the main branch. By 1893, the TSL had 33 circles with over 5000 members. As the main branch, which was formally constituted in 1897, outlined in its promotional materials, the TSL divided its work into three sections: schools, organizational work within circles, and financial affairs. In turn, the section devoted to schools focused on three areas: support for a flagship schools like the one in Biała (a

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[36] APK TSL 1.

[37] Ibid.

[38] APK TSL 25, 36-37.

town in the Galician crownlands), spread of literacy and the establishment of village lending libraries, and fundraising for scholarship students and school costs, notably including the creation of a lottery to back, as one ticket reads, “the founding of peasant schools, the founding and support of nurseries, elementary schools, and schools for older illiterate children and adults, the founding and strengthening of libraries for peasants or other institutions that lend books for free, and the establishment of community centers.”[39]

Figure 3: TSL lottery ticket in support of peasant schools. The contest promised a total payout of 30,000 Kronen (1905, APK TSL 117)

As important as the nationalizing project of TSL was—and it was, to the extent that property contracts involving local circles contained language that land would revert to the main branch of the TSL in the event the school’s language of instruction changed from Polish to

[39] APK TSL 117 (on back of ticket).

another local language—such work existed alongside a larger social project of how to prepare peasants for the modern world, both inside and outside schools, and in terms of economic and cultural development. Take the following description of the organization, listed in the TSL's promotional materials: "The work of the TSL takes place in both the city and the village. The standard of living in the Polish countryside rises visibly with the influence of schools and compulsory schooling, but the biggest influence is exerted by the knowledge gained beyond school walls through cooperatives, libraries, community centers, participation of peasants in political life, and economic emigration (*emigracya zarobkowa*), etc. . . . . So educational work is gaining momentum in the countryside, with hundreds of schools and libraries abounding, the building of more and more new community centers, the developing of theaters and village choirs, and books and newspapers by the thousands circulate among the peasant masses."[40] Education for the TSL was thus holistic—the need for the type of learning the TSL hoped to promote wasn't confined to the young, which meant that the organization's circles developed adult education programs, primarily focused on developing literacy skills for peasants in the villages and later, following World War I, among military veterans. Education also wasn't solely about gaining information; TSL members believed that schools should have a role in developing the practical skills necessary for peasants to participate in the modern world.

The TSL flagship school in Biała provides a helpful point of reference. TSL opened this school in 1898, and in two years the school grew to host 380 students (at least when the school year began, although actual attendance would likely be much lower), spread across four grades, which reports indicated was up slightly from the numbers of the previous year.[41] Classes were

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[40] APK TSL 30, vii-viii.

[41] APK TSL 27, 20.

mixed, with both boys and girls sharing the same crowded spaces, to the point that administrators were concerned that there weren't enough opportunities for students, particularly girls, who left school to help their families but who wished to finish their education at some point in the future. Because of the overcrowding issue, TSL officials posited the possibility of limiting new admissions in future years to provide space for returning students. (Ultimately, the TSL established a finishing program for girls who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to complete classes. And in 1902 the school became the boys-only Tadeusz Kościuszko 4-Class Common School in Biała and officials founded the 4-Class Queen Jadwiga School for girls in the same building. The girls school moved to its own facilities in 1912.[42]) The schools pulled students from a number of villages and towns in the Biała region.

Figure 4: Students and teachers from Uhrynów Szlachecki. The Galician village, located in present-day Ukraine, 100 km north of Lviv, celebrates the opening of a TSL school in 1924 (*Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe*)

[42] APK TSL 31, 33-34.

The school provided instruction in the following general classes: music and singing, mathematics, calligraphy, natural sciences, physics, Polish, German, history and geography (combined into one course), and freehand geometric drawing.[43] In addition to those offerings, students in the first and third grades also had to complete a course, directed by a physician (in the 1910s by a doctor by the name of Maciej Kwieciński), on personal hygiene and dental care. Like the vast majority of other elementary schools in the region, the facility at Biała provided religious instruction in the form of Catechism classes; the school brought in a local priest, in this case Ks. Jan Krzemieniecki, to teach religion to all grades. The school offered Russian as an elective beginning in 1913, for two to three hours per week depending on grade level.[44]

What instruction looked like inside the TSL classroom is difficult to ascertain in its entirety, even though promotional materials offer some guidance. TSL officials and school administrators promoted forms of hands-on learning, notably in their insistence that schools be well stocked in science cabinets, globes, maps, and gardens. Above all, however, officials wanted to show that the schooling they promoted was up-to-date. Take the following statement from the TSL in describing the importance of the facilities, and in particular the garden, in the Queen Jadwiga School in Biała: "The school building has multiple stories, gas lighting, a new type of plumbing system and water supply, and in the near future we will require the building of at least two additional classrooms because as a result of the increased enrollments we find ourselves in today already in tight quarters." The author continues: "Next to the school is a large garden and an extensive yard, where children spend their recess. In the garden girls take care of

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[43] Ibid., see pages 19-21 for a list of course offerings, as well as a teaching and administrative roster for the school.

[44] Ibid., 21.

flowers and shrubs, and in the summer drawing classes and needlework take place there. The school collections in history and geography are sufficient, while the natural sciences cabinet and drawing supplies, suffering from a lack of funding, are not duly equipped." Schools, in other words, should have appropriate lighting and access to supplies. Returning to the importance of a gendered education, the author emphasizes how the school is well outfitted to support a young girl's schooling: "The school owns four sewing machines. Handicrafts take place in older classes for two hours or more, depending on what the curriculum requires in order for students to refine their skills in cutting and sewing intimates by hand and machine."[45] The school also offered French as an elective, and boasted of a library donated by other schoolchildren, the fruits of a book drive in Galicia. Referring to the support of the library for peasant children, the author notes, "Energetic action in this direction is based on many things; children very willingly read, and at home they along with adults take advantage of books."

A Global Positivism

Social thinkers across the partitions had long been interested in education as a way of understanding and influencing peasant development. If the failed revolution of 1863 sparked the birth of a seemingly apolitical liberal movement—one that promoted work and social advancement over hopes for independence—it also provided an opportunity for intellectuals to redefine the nation in innovative ways. As Brian Porter-Szűcs has argued, the Warsaw positivists were born from the need to develop a non-revolutionary approach to national

[45] Ibid., 33-34.

development.[46] For individuals who had witnessed the backlash following the January Uprising—Russian imperial officials had, in fact, imprisoned Bolesław Prus for his support of the insurgency—positivism offered an alternative. Instead of political engagement, positivists would push for internal social and economic development, combining scientific ideas of evolution and progress with economic advancement. "The Warsaw positivists of the period between 1864 and 1905 rejected the Polish heroic tradition of Kościuszko and Mickiewicz and turned to a more modest but also more practical philosophy of small deeds, gradual change, and economic self-betterment, so-called organic work (*praca organiczna*)," writes Theodore Weeks. "In a sense, the positivists were the Fabians of Polish nationalism: they did not necessarily reject the ultimate goals of the previous struggles, but they most certainly condemned the methods and unbridled passion that had accompanied those struggles."[47] The positivists applied scientific rationalism to questions of social progress among the masses, and concluded, not unlike Booker T. Washington, that economic development would form the basis for future advancement of the peasantry.

While many scholars have suggested that the significance of the Warsaw positivists had died out in the generation following the January Uprising of 1863, many influential positivists continued to weigh in on peasant education, and indeed their contributions reverberated across the partitions—as we've seen in the work of the TSL—as well as across ocean, notably in the work of *Ameryka-Echo*, which frequently published articles on the importance of self-study, as well as formal education.

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[46] Brian Porter, "The Social Nation," *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[47] Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), 112.

Ameryka-Echo's colorful founder Antoni Paryski—the paper was a liberal weekly published in Toledo, Ohio from 1889 until 1972—supported education and saw the popular press as an instrument to encourage literacy among Polish industrial laborers. *Ameryka-Echo*, whose circulation grew from 8,500 in 1895 to over 100,000 in 1923, had a didactic purpose; readers were encouraged to use the paper and other materials published by the Paryski Publishing Company as a foundation for self-study.[48] One columnist underscored this point by referencing Bolesław Prus's argument that self-study would lead to social development. "Prus places great emphasis on self-education and self-learners, and sees it as the most effective way of acquiring knowledge," opined this particular writer. "[As Prus says] 'A clever self-taught man (*zdolny samouk*) will someday rule the world.'"[49]

Ameryka-Echo argued that self-study required an incremental, calculated approach to education. One of the paper's most prolific writers, Jan Kłos, the pseudonym of Melania Nesterowicz, maintained that workers who wished to pursue self-study should first master the basics, namely reading and writing, before moving on to more advanced subjects like history or the hard sciences. In the aptly titled article "Where Should Self-Education Begin?: Those Wanting to Pursue Self-Education Need to Start at the Foundations, and not the Peaks," Kłos reasoned:

> Above all education demands patience and systematic work involving the gradual development of the mind, and does not tolerate violent or abrupt jumps. We know that learning how to read first requires familiarity with the alphabet. A person who knows the consonants but has no understanding of vowels will not be able to read. Reading is impossible without familiarity of all letters of the alphabet. Subjects like philosophy, chemistry, physics, higher mathematics, and astronomy demand that the mind be

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[48] Anna D. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, "Between Polish Positivism and American Capitalism: The Educational Agents' Experiment in the Polish-American Community, 1889-1914," *History of Education Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (2008): 491.

[49] "Bolesław Prus o wychowaniu," *Ameryka-Echo*, March 26, 1910.

> adequately prepared to accept them. It is thus necessary to study beforehand in order to understand the disciplines and how to derive benefits from them.[50]

She concluded, "We need to study systematically and thoroughly, without haste. Although it is difficult, anyone who wants can become educated and intelligent."[51]

Self-study, though integral to their overall platform, was just one piece of the paper's larger educational philosophy. Writers from *Ameryka-Echo* combined support for self-study with other initiatives that were meant to promote education and literacy skills among the working class. According to them, school attendance – in particular, participation in educational programs that would prepare young migrants for the labor market in the United States – was necessary if children were to gain the practical skills, logic (*rozum*), and moral development necessary for success in their new homeland.[52]

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[50] Jan Kłos, "Od czego rozpocząć samokształcenie?: Chcąc się kształcić samemu, trzeba zaczynać od podstaw, a nie od szczytów," *Ameryka-Echo*, October 2, 1909.

[51] Ibid.

[52] *Ameryka-Echo*'s emphasis on the spread of logic can be seen in its annual Christmas edition from 1909, which included a front-page editorial where, in accordance with the Polish tradition of offering wishes for loved ones in the new year, the paper announced: "We need health, because without this gift of fate we would not have the strength for physical labor, which is the foundation for our existence here [in America]. We need money, which today is recognized as a deity in the world. But of all the gifts of fate, at the present time the most necessary for us is logic. We should follow the model of the biblical King Solomon, who didn't ask God for power or property but for logic; we desire for ourselves great logic and wish this for our brothers." *Ameryka-Echo*, December 25, 1909.

Figure 5: The relationship between Polish intellectuals and illiterate workers. The caption reads: "The Polish intelligentsia tries to master learning for its own benefit but does not care at all about those who cannot read. The number of illiterate Poles in America is very large, up to half of the general population. Illiteracy, when compared to the intelligentsia, is like a handicapped beggar in the presence of the beautiful and proud lady, who likes to speak about the need to spread education, but at the same time has no intention to sacrifice anything of her own to further that goal." "Intelligentsia" holds a purse that represents knowledge (*wiedza*), which suggests a relationship between wealth and literacy (*Ameryka-Echo*, May 8, 1909).

The importance staff writers placed on schools is evident from the six-month series that *Ameryka-Echo* produced on the educational opportunities available to Poles in the United States. In the final installment of "How to Obtain Education" ("*Jak Osięgnąć Wykształcenie*"), staff writer Helena Piotrowska summarized the educational obligations of Polish Americans as follows: "1. Each Polish child must attend a public school or an equivalent parochial school until age 15. 2. Each father and mother must fulfill the most sacred of responsibilities and give their child, after finishing elementary school, the type of higher education that is most suited to the

child's talents and disposition. 3. Each worker who does only physical labor must also systematically work his mind, either in the evening or in the day when he finds downtime."[53] *Ameryka-Echo* therefore supported self-study and evening training programs as appropriate and effective ways to educate adult workers; at the same time, however, they urged parents to send their children to schools and later to higher education programs. Still, for all their talk of the need for universal access to education and their criticism of the intelligentsia, staff writers did not advocate social equality. Instead, they fully accepted that some students, the "most talented" as Piotrowski called them, would attend college, while the masses would learn trades. [54] Education, in short, was meant to integrate former peasants into American society – and elevation of the masses did not require parity between workers and intellectuals.

Piotrowska gave two reasons why the majority of young Poles should attend "practical" higher education programs. First, she argued, students received material advantages from this type of practical education. Second, and more important to Piotrowska, was her belief that higher education generated moral and spiritual benefits (*moralne i duchowe korzyści*) for both the individual and society at large. "Spiritual benefits are connected to the satisfaction that man derives from work that he loves, which he skillfully completes and in which he can utilize his highest talents and which reflect social ideals," she reasoned.[55] Citing a statistic that over 73

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[53] Helena Piotrowska, "Jak Osięgnąć Wykształcenie: Część III, Rozdział XVII, Rzut Oka na Całość," *Ameryka-Echo*, June 11, 1910.

[54] Piotrowska was clear on this point: "The most talented Polish youth, rich or poor, should go to college, and even finish a master's degree or earn a Ph.D. In general, the entire mass of Polish children should, without exception, finish elementary school up through grade six and attend trade school." "Jak Osięgnąć Wykształcenie: Część II," *Ameryka-Echo*, April 30, 1910.

[55] Piotrowska, "Jak Osięgnąć Wykształcenie: Część III, Rozdział I," *Ameryka-Echo*, March 12, 1910.

percent of workers in upper-level positions in the United States had received some sort of higher education, Piotrowska concluded that in order for migrants to succeed collectively they must, at a minimum, gain a post-elementary education. As she put it, "Thought, feeling, and will are harmonized in an educated man, which gives him an advantage over an uneducated man . . . . The kind of scientific, moral, and intellectual gains [that come with education] place those with a higher education at the head of the nation."[56]

Ameryka-Echo's interest in schools and education had strong roots in Warsaw positivism. In addition to Prus, positivist writers including Aleksander Świętochowski, Piotr Chmielowski, Henryk Wernic, Adam Wiślicki, Aniela Szycówna, as well as TSL's Adam Asnyk published extensively on childhood education and pedagogy in the Polish-language press. Education was important for the Warsaw liberals because, as they argued, it created independent and moral thinkers – the type of thinkers who would be reluctant to support political revolution. "In our opinion," Chmielowski wrote in reference to positivist ideas on education, "the baseline for every human being is without exception: to gain access to self-sufficiency (*samodzielność*) in thought, in feelings, and in actions."[57] Świętochowski, who would later establish and run a vocational education school for peasant children in Gołotczyzna,[58] a village forty miles outside

[56] Ibid.

[57] Piotr Chmielowski, "Co wychowanie z dziecka zrobić może," in *Pedagogika Pozytywizmu Warszawskiego*, Ryszard Wroczyński, ed. (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1958), 131.

[58] Świętochowski and his partner, Aleksandra Bąkowska, opened the "Practical Household Farm for Village Girls" in 1909, followed in 1912 with the creation of a similar agricultural school for boys. Nicknamed "*Bratne*," the latter school, which became co-educational after World War II, is still open.

Warsaw, echoed Chmielowski's sentiment in an article that appeared in *Przegląd Tygodniowy*, a well-known positivist paper, in 1874:

> The purpose of a child's upbringing is to develop to the highest intensity all inherent strengths of man and prepare those strengths for skillful deployment in lifelike conditions. Therefore, the specific goals of childrearing are: in the physical realm – education of the body through the production of abundant power in the organism, in the mind – education of logic through the production of clear and thorough ideas, in morals – education of the will through the production of honest instincts, and in aesthetics – the education of feelings through the production of beautiful and noble desires. The time of upbringing takes place at the age during which man develops passively – that is, from the first hours of his life until the time that a self-sufficient existence appears and is internalized.[59]

By defining the goals of childhood education as the internalization of self-sufficiency and preparation for adult life, the positivists would face two major problems. The first, which Prus discussed in *Antek*, was the lack of educational opportunities available for most young peasants. The second, which Henryk Wernic highlighted in his essay "The Necessary Reform of Philological Gymnasia," was the primacy of classical studies, most notably the emphasis placed on knowledge of Greek and Latin, in elite Polish schools. Wernic addressed both issues by offering a solution that Polish liberals in the United States would later embrace: vocational education. "In the [modern] school there should be enough time for work done with the hands (*robota ręczna*), and a child should learn at least one trade well," he opined. "This is because work completed with one's own hands provides joy."[60]

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[59] Aleksander Świętochowski, "Nowe Drogi," in *Pedagogika Pozytywizmu Warszawskiego,* 36-37.

[60] Henryk Wernic, "Konieczna Reforma Gimnazjów Filologicznych I Pierwsze Jej Próby," in *Pedagogika Pozytywizmu Warszawskiego*, 28.

The Struggle to Save the Kruszynek Village School for Girls

Writers from *Ameryka-Echo* promoted vocational education – both in the form of technical high schools and specialty trade schools – as a way to elevate the masses, and it's here that we again can see overlap with positivism, as well as an expansion of ideas meant to suit labor conditions in the United States. Jan Kłos, for instance, advised parents that they should not keep their children out of vocational education programs in order to save enough money to purchase real property. "Higher education for youth is very necessary because today there are too few Poles receiving an upper-level vocational education. We should therefore do everything in our power to increase the number of children [in these programs]," Kłos reasoned.[61] Instead of treating education as a burden, she urged parents to view vocational training as an investment that "[did] not completely prevent economic advancement, [including] the acquisition of homes and land."[62] Once parents realized that the long-term benefits of education outweighed any temporary economic or social costs placed on the family, Kłos postulated, they would be willing to pay for vocational training; this was the case even if parents could only afford to send one child in the family to school. Helena Piotrowska concurred. "Apart from elementary schools," she wrote, "trade schools are the most necessary form of education for Poles in the United States."[63]

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[61] Jan Kłos, "Majątek czy nauka?" *Ameryka-Echo*, February 12, 1910.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Helena Piotrowska, "Jak Osięgnąć Wykształcenie: Część II, Rozdział V," *Ameryka-Echo*, January 8, 1910.

Ameryka-Echo's commitment to vocational education–as well as its stance toward religious authority–can be seen in its support for an agricultural school for girls in Kruszynek, a village in the Congress Kingdom. After a local parish priest, Father Jędrychowski, convinced authorities at the Society for the Support of Domestic Industry (*Towarzystwo Popierania Przemysłu Krajowego*) to cut the school's funding, the paper started a campaign to save the program. Over the course of two months, writers from the paper and Paryski himself asked readers to donate money to the school.[64] "Helping them uplifts them as it uplifts us," wrote one unidentified columnist. "Our material help, and more importantly our memory of their pain, worries, and needs, gives them courage, inspiring them to work toward uplift . . . . Will we be our own enemies and close our pockets, thinking only of ourselves, or will we open them wide for the exploited and needy peasants?"[65] As an incentive, the paper published the names of donors, along with the amount contributed. The top benefactor was Paryski, who donated $100 (which today would be around $2,500), and in June the paper sent a money order to the peasant magazine "Zaranie" for over 800 rubles.[66]

Jędrychowski's objections stemmed from his belief that the school spread agnosticism among peasant girls. According to *Ameryka-Echo*, he demanded that administrators increase religious education and remove anticlerical literature from the school's collection. Despite administrators' insistence that they already met those demands, the priest published complaints

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[64] Anna Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann describes this episode as an example of the reach of Polish positivism in the United States, as well as the links between positivism and populist politics. *The Polish Hearst: Ameryka-Echo and the Public Role of the Immigrant* Press (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 49-52.

[65] "Prośba o Ofiary na Szkołę w Kruszynku," *Ameryka-Echo*, April 30, 1910.

[66] *Ameryka-Echo* placed a picture of the money order on its front page on June 11, 1910.

in a number of newspapers and sent letters to area clergy in which he encouraged them to advise parishioners not to send their daughters to the school. As a result of the priest's criticism, the school lost financial support and its enrollment declined. Jan Kłos condemned both the priest's actions and the decision of peasants to remove their children from the program. In a scathing article, Kłos implored Poles on both sides of the Atlantic to support vocational education for the peasantry: "Why do we complain about the Russian government's decision to close our schools? They only follow the wishes of a certain segment of Polish society that prefers ignorance because it has already satisfied its desire to control others. We ourselves are worse than the partitioning powers."[67]

Paryski insisted that his support for the Kruszynek village school was not rooted in a hostility toward religion but rather in a distaste for clergy who mixed religion and politics. Responding to an article in *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* in which Bolesław Prus accused the school's director, Jadwiga Dziubińska, of promoting anti-religious fanaticism,[68] Paryski issued an open letter declaring that religion did not require blind faith in the Catholic hierarchy:

> I, in my own conviction, am a religious man. But religion is a thing so holy for me that I will not use its name in vain. Priests call me an irreligious man, an unbeliever. Why? Precisely because I am religious but don't want to be a "man of the priests." Our priests are very good people but they demand of us that we do not occupy ourselves with anything but praise for priests. And life, hard life, demands from us many other things.[69]

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[67] Jan Kłos, "Sprawa Szkoły w Kruszynku w Krolestwie," *Ameryka-Echo*, April 16, 1910.

[68] Prus praised Dziubińska for her pedagogical abilities and dedication to peasant education. He nonetheless criticized her "strong and cutthroat" response to Jędrychowski's accusations – a response that, Prus alleged, cost the school its funding. "In summary," he wrote, "it appears that there are no Polish schools, whether for boys or girls, general or household-industrial, in which an understanding and fair priest cannot be a benefit. Lofty religious and moral truths have not been eclipsed by . . . bigotry and heated fanaticism." Bolesław Prus, "Kruszynek," *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, nr. 15 (April 9, 1910), 291-92.

[69] Antoni Paryski, "List Otwarty do Bolesława Prusa," *Ameryka-Echo*, April 30, 1910.

Religion, Paryski declared, should exist in its own realm, and, at the very least, priests should be open to criticism when they combine religion with other disciplines. "If the Church gave us religion, only religion, and did not try to give us 'religious politics,' 'religious commerce,' 'religious literature,' 'religious farming' and the like, there would be no controversy between people and priests," he opined.[70] The power and influence of priests, not religion, he maintained, were at the heart of his criticism.[71]

Beyond Paryski's distrust of clergy, *Ameryka-Echo's* endorsement of the Kruszynek village school was based on its belief that vocational education was the key to modernization of the masses on both sides of the Atlantic. The education of peasant girls was of critical importance, staff writers argued, all the more so since village mothers were often responsible for the education of their children. "An educated woman in the village – what a great thing! The entire family becomes educated!" averred one writer.[72] The program at Kruszynek was seen as particularly significant because it required students to complete classes on hygiene. One writer for "Zaranie" underscored this point by describing, in a graphic manner, the deplorable sanitary conditions in village homes:

> Do those who want to harm Kruszynek know what life is like in the village – in the village shack? . . . . Do they think about how village children are raised? In what kind of conditions they develop? Here in a room, without a floor, children sleep with their parents in one bed that is full of fleas. Their heads and clothing are covered with worms,

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[70] Ibid.

[71] *Ameryka-Echo's* anticlerical rhetoric was often tied to its promotion of literacy. For example, Jan Kłos urged readers to use the Bible as a tool for self-study. "Continue to study your religion and everything that relates to it on your own," he implored. "Don't let a priest teach you the Catechism, the history of the Old and New Testaments, or the history of the Church – take on the work of the priest and teach yourself." Kłos, "Poznajcie waszą Religię," *Ameryka-Echo*, December 3, 1910.

[72] "Prośba o Ofiary na Szkołę w Kruszynku," *Ameryka-Echo*, April 30, 1910.

> and their mother happily places their heads on her knee to kill the vermin – as their Sunday entertainment! . . . . This is why Kruszynek is necessary! It's necessary like eyes are to sight, like hands to work. If Kruszynek educated all of today's ignorant women, superstition, witchcraft, and sloppiness would disappear from our villages.[73]

The remainder of classes at the school were designed to prepare girls for two related areas of life: work at home and work in village industries. Students learned how to raise farm animals, cultivate gardens, and care for bees. They also had lessons on linen production, sewing, millinery, embroidery, and bookbinding.[74] As Jadwiga Dziubińska described the school's contributions in a thank-you letter to the readers of *Ameryka-Echo*: "Work is intertwined with song and poetry. A beautiful garden that students alone care for brings them great pleasure – they tend to the orchard and grow vegetables . . . . It is strange how quickly a girl accepts the spirit of the school."[75]

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This outline of approaches to peasant schooling demonstrates how central the formation of the modern self—and in particular the internalization of norms meant to regulate life in the village and city—was to education reformers in Polish communities, broadly defined, and doing so allows us to return to the historiographical debates that continue to shape the history of education field with an eye to education's global features. If scholars in the 1970s and 80s argued, often in heated exchanges, over whether schools were forces for fostering good

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[73] Zośka z Bielik, "Czy nam Potrzebny Kruszynek?," *Ameryka-Echo*, May 7, 1910.

[74] For a longer list of classes offered at Kruszynek, see "Czego Uczą w Kruszynku," *Ameryka-Echo*, August 13, 1910.

[75] "Listy z Kruszynka," *Ameryka-Echo*, August 13, 1910.

republican values or bad social control, there has been substantial debate over how to reconcile these tensions in the field, with many scholars calling for "middle ground" or some form of synthesis that reconciles both approaches.[76] This chapter cuts across the traditional dichotomy that shaped the history of education. Instead of the Manichean juxtaposition of coercion and manipulation versus republicanism, we see a dedication, across the board, to the construction of the tenets of liberal selfhood in the name of collective progress. Education reformers, school administrators, teachers, and teachers-in-training, in the Polish lands and the United States, were concerned about the broader social implications of their work, and they were active participants in the project of how to create the modern subject, which complicates claims that schooling, particularly in the United States context, was an imposition from above.[77] They likely did not see these features as aspects of control, at least in those terms—a matter that highlights how the binary of revisionism and anti-revisionism fails to capture the complexities of modern education, as well as obscures the agency of individual actors who weighed in or participated in peasant schools. This doesn't mean, however, that social engineering was off the table; indeed, as we've seen, these were integral ideas that undergirded their approaches to peasant education.

Control, monitoring, discipline, and authority were part of a global conversation about schooling and society in peasant and peasant migrant communities, and, while interested parties

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[76] In the midst of the revisionist debate, Christopher Lucas concluded, for example, "The upshot of this examination suggests that in years to come historians will be asked to go back to historical data once again, this time in search of a middle ground between the cynicism of radical revisionism and the simplistic optimism of earlier traditional accounts of the role of schools in American life." Christopher J. Lucas, "Schooling and American Life: In Search of a 'Post-Revisionist' Interpretation," *Journal of Thought* 10, no. 4 (1975): 281.

[77] Along similar lines, some ed scholars have noted that immigrant communities maintained a high degree of autonomy when developing education policies and practices. On this point, see Paula Fass, *Outside In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

understood the social implications of education policies, they did so in ways that aren't necessarily captured by national, assimilationist, or even pluralist models, or by looking at Warsaw positivism in the limited light of the nation. Reformers were well aware of economic structures and structures of authority and sought to envision peasant education in expansive terms that would suit the needs of an increasingly mobile population. That doesn't necessarily equate to a glorification of their views—in operating within the purview of modern political economy they entered into a realm that involved both hopes for economic advancement, of joining the economic status quo, and ideas of constructed difference and authority.

Those characteristics weren't mutually exclusive; in fact, they paired together in ways that underscore the ambiguities and tensions at the heart of modern education. Such a concern about the nature of authority helps explain the exchange between Paryski and Prus over the role of priests in education. We'll return to popular challenges to clerical authority in Chapter 4 when we examine the prevalence of church riots in migrant communities, though it's important to underscore how even if individuals disagreed on the nature of student monitoring in schools, they were in accord on the importance of oversight and the need for self-transformation.

It's nonetheless strange to remove questions of the nation out of these matters entirely, as those who entered into this conversation often tied conceptions of the self, and education's importance to that task, to national development. One shouldn't lose sight of the fact, however, that even though liberal rhetoric relied on an almost sacred vision of the individual as a member of a larger national community, with certain obligations and behaviors, those involved in the project of the schoolhouse also understood the importance of providing a malleable skillset that would serve peasants in the village or city. Theirs was a global vision rooted in mobility and transformation. Such an acknowledgement also raises the possibility that positivism didn't

simply wither after a generation when offered a stronger political alternative. Positivists, and those inspired by them, instead turned their attention to the work of schooling, and they did so in ways that had non-national implications.

These observations signal the need for revisiting the debates of the 70s and 80s in order to broaden our understanding of modern education, which is a matter that a number of ed theorists have observed, and some points are in order, by way of conclusion. First are the close relationships between education, self-transformation, and economic advancement. Peasant migrants were expected to progress both intellectually and economically, and these traits were part of an ongoing discussion of peasant modernization. Education in this context not only introduced students to work, but also to the norms that would be expected of them in the future. This went beyond the claim of revisionist scholars like Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, however, who famously argued that schools are forces of state socialization rather than content education.[78] We see instead a convergence of actors who were interested in not just educating to work but rather educating to see themselves as self-sufficient economic actors in their own right. That difference may be slight, but it nonetheless significant, as it goes a long way to explaining why narratives of transformation, respectability, and individualism have been such a potent force in society. Second, the fact that education reformers in Poland and abroad focused on personal transformation doesn't entirely obviate the criticisms of revisionist scholars when it comes to tracing the links between capitalist development and education. Nonetheless, the conversation about peasant and peasant migrant schooling suggests not so much a conscious conspiracy in the name of corporatism but rather a much more subtle and widespread buy-in to ideas of progress

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[78] Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

and economic advancement—raising the possibility that, alongside understanding economic structures, we should also pay close attention to the allure of narratives that stress upward mobility. Put slightly differently, by acknowledging the participation of a wide variety of education reformers, we can examine the affective reach of economic progress and its links to the construction of the modern self.

Assessing the school thus requires a development of scholarship in this area that transcends the language of good and bad or success and failure. It also allows us to revisit some old debates with new eyes. If prior revisionist scholarship was highly critical of public education as a tool of capitalism, with schools tasked with creating compliant students who would serve factory managers quietly and efficiently, this chapter has suggested that a more subtle dynamic was at play, and that the top-down imposition of norms—of education for oppression—doesn't grasp the nuances of how a variety of actors understood the importance of education and the adoption of narratives of internal transformation. It's the details of those narratives, and more specifically how peasant migrants developed and deployed their stories of economic uplift, as well as how those narratives contributed to conceptions of belonging, that we'll examine in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Narrating Modern Selfhood

When Jakub Plata sat down to write his memoirs, he thought carefully about how to express the economic changes he experienced over the course of his life. Born in Ćwików, a village close to Tarnów, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1885, Plata moved to Chicago before ultimately settling down in the mill town of Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, outside Springfield. Plata's parents were smallholders, and the young boy worked on his family's land until he was old enough to leave for the United States, in search of a job and a higher standard of living. Mapping out his life trajectory in this way, from poverty to respectability, sheds light on how Plata came to identify himself as a modern subject, and in particular a "rational" economic actor, a process that he maintained had a start not in an urban center, but in Zakopane—the rural resort town in the Tatra mountains that today has become synonymous with Poland's ski industry. Plata's physical journey back and forth across borders mimicked his journey of internal discovery, what he described as a transition from peasant to modern, and when he organized his reflections into a cohesive narrative toward the end of his life he likely smoothed over some of the ups and downs he experienced along the way. Instead, Plata chose to tell his life story through an arc of gradual progress on an individual level—of moving from the poverty of his childhood in a Galician village to the education he received in a vocational school to the difficulty of finding employment in Chicago and then finally a marriage and financial stability on the East Coast of the United States. By the time he completed his memoir, in 1936, he was fifty-

one years old, and married with two children. He shifted to more collective observations in his conclusion, possibly reaching out to those undecided about making the journey to the United States:

> The level of life of the average Polish peasant migrant . . . is high. He lives in a four- and sometimes six-room modern apartment with a bathroom, nicely furnished, and nourishes himself well (eating meat dishes every day), dresses well on Sundays, and his daughters are at the cutting edge of fashion. Each home has a radio, which as a result of mass production isn't expensive. Gramophones and automatic pianos have already fallen from favor, replaced by radios.[1]

Plata foregrounds his story with the importance of material advancement, which he connected, at least in part, with a past filled with suffering. For him, it was important to emphasize, in a rags-to-respectability way, that he experienced economic progress over the course of his life. Indeed, he contrasted his story of upward mobility with a childhood filled with financial hardship and personal tragedy. He notes how his parents didn't have enough money to send him to school, and that his father's sudden death placed a tremendous burden on him to provide for the rest of his family. But Plata's narration of his journey and self-introspection demonstrates much more than money matters, or that Plata could lift himself up by his bootstraps, and his decision to leave the Polish lands for the United States can't be reduced to the story of an immigrant who was looking for a better life and then found working-class respectability in the factories of the industrial Midwest. That's not to say that money wasn't important to him—it was central to how he presented his immigrant experience and his overall life story. But Plata, and thousands of other peasant migrants like him, had a complex relationship with money that went beyond the raw accumulation of money or commercial goods.

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[1] Plata, who is not named in the body of the text, can be identified by the press release listing the finalists. "Pamiętnik nr 2," in *Pamiętniki emigrantów: Stany Zjednoczone*, Janina Dziembowska, ed. (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1977), 190.

As the above quote indicates individuals like Plata looked to wealth not simply as the counterpart to poverty, but also as material, outward evidence of internal change. It wasn't enough to accumulate money; one had to know how and when to purchase goods, how to save for the future, and how to find employment. By demonstrating knowledge of economic practices like mass production and the consumption of certain types of products and services—in this case that he could equip his house in a forward-thinking way, supply both nourishing and luxury food for his family, and act as a provider for his fashionable daughters—Plata could showcase that he had adopted a "modern" sensibility and had successfully transformed into *homo economicus*. In short, it wasn't just that he had money, but also that he could use money as an expression of self-transformation and proof that he thought about finances in what he, and presumably others, deemed an appropriate way.

This chapter examines how forms of self-narration and personal expression, from constructions of self at the border to insurance documentation to memoir, can help us unpack peasant migrants' attitudes and beliefs toward personal finance and wage labor in the abstract.[2] It's here that we will encounter a tension—the desire of some migrants to convey their own fluency with economic structures to a larger audience, be it family, extended kin, or village acquaintances, and the harsh realities of the industrial labor market, both in terms of the physical conditions of labor and in the difficulties of finding and keeping employment.[3] Claims of

[2] Martin Pollack's examination of migration from Galicia, which looks at encounters with globalization through individual stories is instructive on this topic. See Martin Pollack, *Kaiser von Amerika: Die große Flucht aus Galizien* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay, 2010).

[3] It's useful to keep in mind Seth Rockman's description of the market as less of an emancipatory site and more of a brutal and violent space that facilitates impoverishment,

fluency or mastery, however, don't necessarily imply their potential to surpass the structural limitations of labor markets, and plenty of narrators tried to walk a thin line between claiming some sort of understanding of modern political economy and their ability to transcend its parameters. Still, there's a seductive quality to many of accounts of peasant migrants—of the possibility, against all odds, that they have been the ones to prosper—that suggests the allure of liberal subjectivity.[4] One of the goals of this chapter will therefore be to examine this mythical quality of capitalist narratives in order to understand why some of the very individuals who were in the position to feel the harsh realities of industrial labor practices in the most acute ways possible were also, at the same time, building senses of self and community belonging around the tenuous promises of modern political economy.

These narrative structures that emphasize upward mobility, financial stability, and respectability had tangible, real-life applications, which I explore in the first part of this chapter: the presentation of oneself to border agents. Here I zero in on how prospective migrants tried to convince consular officials and border control that they had adopted proper narratives of self-sufficiency in order to combat accusations of itinerancy and financial insolvency. This performative aspect of selfhood was of special relevance after the institution of quota visas following the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which dramatically restricted the mobility of peasant migrants from eastern Europe. Accordingly, the performance of the border shows how the

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inequality, and instability. See Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

[4] For a general history of migration from Poland, see Florian Stasik, *Polska emigracja zarobkowa w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki, 1865-1914* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1985). See also, Piotr Kraszewski, *Polska emigracja zarobkowa w latach 1870-1939: praktyka i refleksja* (Poznań: Polska Akademia Nauk, 1995); Andrzej Bonusiak, *Migracje polskie: historia i współczesność* (Rzeszów: FHU APIS Sławomir Guzek, 2010).

ability to present oneself as a modern economic actor had become a way to demonstrate fitness as a potential citizen, even if many or most migrants at this time weren't successful. Appropriating the language of self-sufficiency and being able to display, by narrating one's life story, that one had adopted suitable attitudes toward money and labor could help migrants make the case that they were worthy of mobility. The border was thus a site for demonstrating and enacting one's modern sensibilities.[5]

The second part of this chapter then turns to the limitations of these narrative forms, notably in how the language of liberal individualism, which relies on the perception of universal application based on economic principles and the right to contract, was, in practice, mediated through gendered norms. Here we will turn to another site, the mutual aid society, to consider how women who bought life insurance policies had to balance risk management with gendered ideas of liberal respectability, namely the financial duties they had as "good" mothers. Such a discussion demonstrates the limitations of liberal individualism, even for women who embraced the ethics of financial responsibility and risk management.

The final section of this chapter returns to the story of Plata in order to consider the centrality of economic uplift, and notably how individuals like Jakub Plata found the narrative tropes of upward mobility useful in explaining the trajectory of their lives. This construction of the life story, I argue, has a particular staying power and continues to influence how we view the normative economic experience of migrant laborers, especially as the conventions of uplift and self-sufficiency became data points for social theorists who wished to explore the peasant migrant experience.

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[5] For a present-day reflection on performance and fashion at the border, see Karla Cornejo Villavicencio, "The Costume Immigrants Wear," *Elle Magazine*, March 7, 2018.

A Note on Sources

Before we turn to examples of self-narration, some background on sources is helpful in order to understand why self-reflective writing of this type was so important in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In the final section of this chapter I'll be looking primarily at a collection of documents that Katherine Lebow calls "social memoir," which includes narrations like Plata's. Social memoirs involved presenting one's story to a larger audience in a polished form, in this case in the form of memoir competitions sponsored by social theorists to present the most "authentic" or compelling rendition of one's past. Part sociological data, part outlet for demonstrating the potential of the enlightened masses, Lebow notes that social memoirs were, as she puts it, "deeply embedded in the Enlightenment conceptions of the human subject," and thus the task of writing a social memoir allowed individuals to showcase how they saw themselves as autonomous actors.[6]

The project Plata's narrative came from, *Memoirs of Emigrants* (*Pamiętniki emigrantów*), was the brainchild of prominent Marxist sociologist Ludwik Krzywicki, who in the 1930s developed an interest in life stories. Sponsored by the Institute of Social Economy, *Memoirs of Emigrants* followed the lead of other sociological studies, including those by Florian Znaniecki, co-author of the *Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (see Chapter One), that offered peasants and peasant migrants the opportunity to tell their "authentic" life stories to a larger audience,

[6] Katherine Lebow, "The Conscience of the Skin: Interwar Polish Autobiography and Social Rights," *Humanity* 3, no. 3 (2012): 306.

with winning entries published in collected volumes.[7] "The Institute of Social Economy is collecting materials that will give a picture of the life of Poles in exile and the conditions that led to their difficult fate of having to search for work and bread outside the borders of their country," the initial call for applications described the contest.[8] Lebow, who focuses on another of Krzywicki's projects, this one titled *Memoirs of the Unemployed*, observes that despite Krzywicki's intent to use these studies to demonstrate the hardships of industrial labor, many of the examples adopted a progressive narrative structure, what she calls "a *Bildungsroman*, tracing authors' paths from ignorance and dependency to maturity and self-realization."[9] Social memoirs, moreover, suggest the centrality that personal finance and more specifically the perception of economic transformation and self-sufficiency had at the time, as well as the importance that individuals placed on knowledge of economic structures and the self-monitoring of financial behavior. For instance, the list of potential topics of interest enumerated in the call for applicants, which was published in papers in both Poland and the United States, included the following: "Are your earnings enough to save, and if so, do you send money back home to family, or can you also save money on your own? Have you lost any money you've saved and, if so, how (bank failure, collapse of real estate value, fraud)? Have you been able to buy land in the United States or abroad, to work the land or purchase a store or workshop?"[10] Many of these narratives also suggest the importance that people placed in presenting themselves as having

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[7] For background on this collection, see Adam Andrzejewski, "Przedmowa," in *Pamiętniki emigrantów*.

[8] "Odezwa Instytutu Gospodarstwa Społecznego w sprawie konkursu na pamiętnik emigranta w Stanach Zjednoczonych ogłoszona w maju 1936 r.," in *Pamiętniki emigrantów*, 109.

[9] Lebow, "The Conscience of the Skin," 306.

[10] "Odezwa Instytutu Gospodarstwa Społecznego," in *Pamiętniki emigrantów*, 111.

static identities, once those individuals reached a certain level of development. There's little room for backsliding, and while there are some more nuanced examples, on the whole narrators present their progress in a linear fashion.

The narrative form of individualism and self-sufficiency had particular relevance on the border, a site where such characteristics could help migrant laborers show they embraced ideas of economic uplift and ownership of their labor. While the border might not be the most obvious place to examine the process of modern identity formation, it is nonetheless a site that embodies greater meaning than one might expect, especially as we tend to think of borders as places we pass over quickly in transit. There are important exceptions to this, of course, but many of us cross borders frequently without concern that we'll be denied entry or that a border guard will question our identity. For those of us counted among the favored, we simply approach a border official, passport in hand, and answer perfunctory questions about how long we'll be staying and purpose for travel, something that obscures and perhaps even reinforces the power embedded within border policing.

The process was and is much different for migrant laborers, which made the task of combining border presentation with the trappings of working-class respectability all the more important. How that structure came to be—not just the surveillance and documentation aspects but also how certain groups became privileged over others within the context of global migration, an active jostling for respectability within systems of power and privilege—involved not only interactions between individuals and state authorities, but also private companies that both sold tickets for passage and provided information and, not infrequently, coaching services. Company agents and brokers, whose businesses relied on moving people across the world, had a

vested interest in teaching the skills migrants would need to cross borders. Their ventures, at the core, depended on successful carriage. But mobility was also connected to one's ability to demonstrate worthiness of the label "free migrant," or rather who was qualified to sell labor as a free migrant, which was a matter, as Amy Dru Stanley has argued, of fierce debate in the post-emancipation world.[11] It's here that migrants from the Polish lands occupied a sort of middle ground that made performance markers of self-sufficiency crucial. Who were migrants from the Polish lands? Were they respectable workers? Were they fit for citizenship? If their supposed attachment to religion and religious authorities, along with accusations of financial insolvency and unsavory political leanings, made them suspicious, performing the outside markers of liberal respectability became a way to show they belonged. In that way migrants could claim a vision of the world in which they could successfully incorporate themselves into the dominant social fabric, even though, in reality, their lives were much more precarious and thus not easily assimilated into such a stable social environment. Peasant migrants nonetheless had the opportunity to make their case for belonging, and border entry, for them, could be cast as a matter of skill or potential rather than a matter of innate, immutable characteristics.

Take the case of Jan Laszenik, a migrant laborer from Scranton, Pennsylvania, who listed his profession as "laborer" on his passport, though he would supplement this description with a statement that he had been employed as an "agricultural worker" from 1922 on. The included passport photo presents Laszenik with an air of confidence—he is dressed in a dark sport coat with a crisp white shirt, complete with black tie, knotted with precision. Along with his passport, Laszenik carried an affidavit (*świadectwo tożsamości*), dated June 19, 1923 and signed by an

[11] Amy Dru Stanley, *From Bondage to Contract: Wage Labor, Marriage, and the Market in the Era of Slave Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

administrator from his home district of Nowy Sącz, an area formerly in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, testifying to his fitness as a worker and potential citizen: "It is maintained that the above cited individual is from both a political and moral perspective beyond reproach."[12]

We don't know much about what happened to Laszenik, only that he had purchased a passage fare through the United States Lines, one of the largest steamship carriers in the country, possibly to visit family or re-emigrate, and had gone to the trouble of obtaining visas from the Polish Consulate in New York for travel to Poland, via Bremen, Germany, for mid-July 1923. The specifics of why ended up in the United States or whether he settled anywhere permanently, we don't know, though we do have some information from his initial entry. His name, date of birth, departure and arrival ports, as well as his birthplace—the village of Szczawnik, which today sits on the Slovakian border, approximately 100km from Cracow—show up in Ellis Island ledgers, and on these documents Laszenik indicated that he was married, or at least this was the case when he arrived in New York in 1904 at the age of 26. Nonetheless Laszenik's story, however inchoate given his limited archival footprint, suggests a high degree of mobility, both physical and social. Here was a middle-aged man, born in a village in Galicia, who moved to the United States presumably in search of work and who had enough fluency with the proper bureaucratic channels to travel back and forth across the Atlantic. He knew enough to apply successfully for travel documents, including a passport and transit visas, and his presentation of self seems composed to deflect any suspicions of impropriety and financial insolvency.

Others would do the same, though the details depended on one's personal circumstances and available resources. Karol Korbiński, likewise a self-identified laborer, presented himself as

[12] Jan Laszenik, "Świadectwo tożsamości," Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), Linie Stanów Zjednoczonych/United States Lines (USL), sygn. 222.

a proud, respectable family patriarch, and when he traveled abroad from Detroit he listed his wife Marja and his three sons, nine-year-old Tomasz, eight-year-old Bronisław, and almost four-year-old Mieczysław on his documents. His children posed for his passport photo in nice if slightly baggy clothes, with Marja positioned in the center, clutching a white linen handkerchief. Korbiński sits above his family, as if he's presiding over the photograph—the patriarchal cultivator of working-class respectability. Andrzej Krasula, a migrant worker who lived in Brooklyn, looks unkempt compared to Laszenik and Korbiński—he appears tired, his hair disheveled—but he seems no less concerned about his image. He supplemented his passport with tax receipts, along with a statement from the Treasury Department that he was travelling from the United States without unpaid debts. Denis Karbacz, a factory worker from Dearborn, Michigan, similarly provided tax records, along with a federal "Declaration of Intention," when he applied for passage abroad, possibly to visit his wife Justyna who was living in Poland at the time. The stock declaration, dated September 19, 1922 stated: "I am not an anarchist; I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein." Still others were more vulnerable, with diminished ability to protect themselves or prove fitness, economic or otherwise. Michał Wityszyn, a nine-year-old boy from Grąziowa, a village near the Carpathian Mountains, set out for New York with a prepaid ticket, likely purchased by a wealthy relative in the United States, for travel on the New Rochelle steamer, part of the Baltic Steamship Line, on New Year's Eve, 1920. His passport was stamped "illiterate" (*nie umie pisać*), in the comments section. Kate Lass, a thirty-year-old housewife who listed "Poland" as her place of birth, held an American passport when she visited family abroad in order to take care of a "property matter" (*sprawa majątkowa*). She signed her passport with an X.

For migrant workers and their relatives, it was important to demonstrate familiarity with the norms of finances, family life, work ethic, literacy, hygiene, political beliefs, and even clothing style, to the best of one's skills and resources. There was perhaps no place more crucial to present oneself as modern—both with regard to self-sufficiency and other traits of good citizenship—as a site where image could potentially affect entry or dismissal. These were personal traits as much as social ones, and indeed presenting a passport, along with visas, stamps, and other documentation attesting to fitness, was, and still is, akin to narrating a version of one's life story, however curated in form. Representation here was crucial, and a family patriarch might find it advantageous to fashion himself as a successful provider for his wife and children, just as an itinerant bachelor might want to downplay or deflect any accusations of financial carelessness. Marriage and birth certificates, state and local identity papers, bank account balances, life insurance certificates, enlistment documents, union membership cards, affidavits from religious leaders or other community members, and school records could become ways of filling out the picture, bits of evidence that could bolster one's argument that that individual was progressing to respectability. Paul Yawaski, born in Galicia, would carry his certificate of competency from the First Anthracite Coal District of Pennsylvania to show employment, or more specifically union-backed employment, as well as knowledge of safety standards. Rachel Reznik, a girl born to Jewish parents who died in 1906, travelled with a statement from the emigration bureau in Lwów, in 1921, testifying that she was an orphan fleeing the pogroms in Ukraine. The letter specified not the dangers she faced nor the humanitarian importance of offering refuge to asylum seekers, but rather that she had training as a seamstress and had "conducted herself morally and has never been accused of a crime."[13]

[13] Rachel Reznik, untitled document, AAN USL, sygn. 222.

Just how did a migrant laborer know what to expect or how to behave, particularly when the stakes were so high? Certainly some individuals were more adept at navigating bureaucratic channels, and literacy skills, personal networks, and, of course, money certainly helped. But the structures of border policing touch on issues beyond personal aptitude or natural ability, even if those were key elements of the performance. In an era of solidifying uniform border controls—a matter that scholars have shown was tied to the construction of racial hierarchies and centralized surveillance practices—how did one learn to present oneself as a self-sufficient, "free" economic actor, grounded enough to erase suspicions of itineracy and yet mobile enough to find work and embrace upward social climbing? As Adam McKeown has argued, such a process didn't simply involve investigation into one's background, as if border officials were tasked with discovering the truth of people and their pasts. "[T]he main achievement of identification procedures was not to document identities but to produce them," he writes. "[The] discovery of 'real' identities was much less important than the process of compelling migrants to appropriate and continually reproduce new identities that were now entrenched within new cross-referenced networks of surveillance."[14] McKeown's observations suggest that the development of standardized border protections emerged alongside or was part of a concomitant process of self-fashioning, performance, and claims making. Migrants would need to remake themselves in appropriate forms and jump bureaucratic hurdles in order to pass surveillance checks. To do so successfully required specialized knowledge of forms of performance and presentation. And if a prospective migrant laborer had the means, they could purchase help from a booking agent, as the following cases demonstrate.

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[14] Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 18.

Some scholars have examined the matter of borders primarily from the level of state centralization, in application of Foucaultian concepts of power and liquidity. For instance, John Torpey has argued that modern labor migration depended on the consolidation of state authority, and more specifically on state monopolies of violence. It's within that context that states were able to claim sole mandate over the movement of individuals, the ability to bless one's status as worthy or not. "The creation of the modern passport system and the use of similar systems in the interior of a variety of countries—the product of centuries-long labors of slow, painstaking bureaucratic construction—thus signaled the dawn of a new era in human affairs, in which individual states and the international state system as a whole successfully monopolized the legitimate authority to permit movement within and across their jurisdictions," he writes.[15] There's a global dimension to this story, of course. It followed that as large swaths of previously unfree laborers, slaves and serfs alike, gained the ability to move if not without restriction, then at least with increased opportunity depending on status, states across the world developed regulatory mechanisms to control their mobility. Borders are thus an exceptional site, though at the same time a place where we can observe many of the key features of modernity, including surveillance practices, bureaucratic norms, and changing understandings of citizenship.[16]

Others have emphasized how such structures were (and continue to be) entwined with value judgments embedded within state regulations. McKeown's work, for example, deals, in part, with conceptions of "civilization" and "civilized," or rather how claims to that label were

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[15] John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9.

[16] For insight into the idea of "exceptional" geographic sites as fruitful objects for scholarly inquiry see Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

integral to one's ability to gain admittance at the border. This was part of what McKeown calls a "rite of passage," marking the transition, or rather appearance of transition, from uncivilized to civilized. For Chinese migrants, such a linear progression was fraught with contradiction: the state's insistence that it was developing legal structures that it would apply in a neutral fashion, at the same time it constructed categories rooted in racial discrimination and differentiation.[17] Such structural inconsistencies resulted in what he calls a "liminal" position—a position not of economic opportunity and the forging of new social bonds, but rather incarceration at immigration centers, what he describes as a "grim liminality, clearly shaped by the structured weight of the state."[18] That these practices could be seen as part of a ritual of belonging—perhaps unpleasant, but simply a stage through which all new migrants must pass before integration into society—helps mask the discriminatory practices at the heart of the border control system.

Migrants from the Polish lands shared some of these experiences, but certainly not all, and what liminality meant for them was much different in practice. There's no Polish equivalent to *Chae Chan Ping* or *Yick Wo*, two of the leading Supreme Court cases from the late nineteenth century involving Chinese migrant rights that have enumerated whether the state has the ability to exclude and regulate based on race and national origin. An examination like this requires we turn to knowledge production—just how did migrants from the Polish lands get the information they would need to cross borders and curate appropriate identities? How did they know what documents they would have to collect? What questions would they have to anticipate from border officials? And how did they view their mobility—as an adventure, economic opportunity,

[17] McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 285.

[18] Ibid., 288.

or as source of worry and a symbol of their uprootedness, all of the above, or something in between?

Border Coaching and Narratives of Progress

"Michael Klimek is a native of Poland and came here over 29 years ago and is a naturalized citizen. He is married and has one child. A banker by trade, he was formerly connected with his brother in business on the southwest side of Chicago for some years. In 1933, after repeal [of prohibition] he started in the tavern business at 2421 S. Troy St., and has continued in that line since, without interruption." Klimek included this description in a report published by independent financial assessor Dun & Bradstreet in an attempt to demonstrate that he could support his cousin, Józef Orszulak, a migrant worker from Brzesko, a town just east of Cracow, if and when Orszulak joined him in Chicago. In the report Klimek noted that his income was approximately $5000 per year, that he owned a house, valued at $10,000 (with a mortgage of $2000), and that he had $1600 in bank accounts, as well as $800 in "cash on hand." In addition to these assets, Klimek reported that he owned a car worth $900 and business investments, in real estate and other non-disclosed areas, worth $21,500. Elsewhere he itemized his real property holdings—in addition to his house, he owned his tavern on Troy Street, as well as a two-story brick building on W. 57th Street, which he rented out at a rate of $50 per month. On the cover sheet for the report, the financial assessor estimated his total net worth as $20,000, just under $400,000 today. When prompted, that assessor answered the question of whether Klimek "lives within his income" in the affirmative and stated that "[Klimek's] reputation for paying bills" was "satisfactory." He checked the "yes" box to the question "In your opinion is he

a desirable credit risk," which he enumerated with the following: "A good responsibility is indicated and he is reported paying his bills promptly."[19]

Orszulak did his best to demonstrate that he was not at risk for becoming a public charge when he attempted to join his family in Chicago—something he tried to do by associating himself with a distant relative, a relationship that consular officials thought fraudulent, who had the outward trappings of financial success—but it was a difficult case to make given his history. At the point when Klimek submitted his financial assessment, made at the behest of agents at the United States Lines, Orszulak's file had been in limbo status at the visa office, with officials denying his application as he had previously entered the country illegally. "The passenger was a deportee and did not have permission to apply for readmission to the United States," the initial reviewer admonished. Orszulak kept bumping into bureaucratic barriers, based on his legal status. Once the consulate agreed to hear his case, that office refused to accept any of his documentation as the evidence he had submitted had, in the consul's opinion, become out of date. The consulate ultimately rejected the financial assessors' report, as it failed to include receipts or other concrete evidence that would support Klimek's wage declarations. "The Dun & Bradstreet report only states that he 'claims' an income of $5000, annually," a letter from the Warsaw office of the United States Lines, the carrier that had sold a ticket to Orszulak, sent to another of its offices in Hamburg, in an attempt to brainstorm possible solutions. "We would, therefore, suggest that you send us without delay a certified copy of Mr. Klimek's last income tax return and evidence of its payment." The office also requested further proof that Klimek's salary would provide adequate support for Orszulak's entire family, including Orszulak's wife and dependent children, even though there was no indication that he was planning to bring his

[19] AAN USL, sygn. 172.

family with him, as well as documentation that Klimek would guarantee long-term employment. "The Consulate is also interested in exactly how Mr. Klimek will assure the passenger's support after his arrival in the United States and an affidavit from Mr. Klimek, stating whether he will give him room and board in his own home, furnish him employment with him at a fixed salary for a lengthy period, would be helpful."

Orszulak grew increasingly impatient with the delays in reviewing his case file, as a number of letters and telegrams he sent to the Warsaw office attest. Officials from the United States Lines pushed for a satisfactory resolution to his case, despite their acknowledgement that the family relationship between Klimek and Orszulak "is somewhat distant and remote and they have no means of proving it." Both Orszulak and the United States Lines became enmeshed in bureaucratic red tape, with the United States Consulate insisting that it couldn't move forward with the case until the men provided updated financial documentation, as well as proof of citizenship. In addition, the Consulate refused to make a decision until the Department of Labor authorized permission for Orszulak, as a deportee, to reapply for permission to enter the country. Once that finally happened, in a move that quite probably irritated Orszulak, the Consulate requested that he and Klimek once again resubmit their documentation, including, in addition to financial statements, birth certificates, morality references, proof of residency and employment, as well as information listing the "whereabouts and citizenship of the passenger's wife and children."

Orszulak thus became trapped in a bureaucratic mess— and he grew frustrated with the documentation loop in which consular officials placed him, a sort of indeterminate status in which officials asked for documents, only to reject them for one reason or another: the financial report, though it came from an independent assessor, was insufficient because it didn't include

official receipts; the documentation he provided didn't convince officials that the relationship between cousins was legitimate; the information didn't conclusively show that Klimek would provide financially for Orszulak's family. In the end, however, Orszulak received his visa, and, not surprisingly, he appears to have made the trip without his wife and children. Census records from 1940 have Joseph Orszulak as a lodger at 2421 South Troy Street in Chicago, with Michael Klimek listed as the head of household.

Whatever swayed the Consulate's decision, Orszulak and Klimek made their case by tapping into a narrative framework that equated financial success with fitness for mobility, labor, and citizenship. In its rawest form, this would mean that Orszulak could argue that he was less likely to rely on help from the state, in the event that he was unable to find suitable long-term employment, and though it's unclear whether Klimek promised to provide Orszulak with a stable job, others would try to make their case based on their ability to contract labor. Curiously, however, Orszulak focused on numbers—bank account balances, aggregate assets, income levels—rather than more descriptive documentation, including statements from neighbors, family members, or community leaders. He didn't seem the least bit concerned about presenting himself as a family patriarch. Even the tax receipts that the Consulate requested would have shown that Klimek fulfilled his obligations to the state, but here the statement that he paid his bills on time was certainly a nod in this direction. Both men nonetheless seemed to hope that they would be able to demonstrate certain positive characteristics from financial records. There could be many reasons why they would do so: they didn't have other forms of documentation on hand; they wanted to deemphasize Klimek's perhaps morally questionable work as a tavern owner while at the same time showcasing his distinction as a businessman; or they were convinced that above all the state was interested in admitting workers who were poised for

financial success—and it's possible that Orszulak had hoped his documentation would suggest to consular officials that he had an apt mentor in Klimek. In any event, both men didn't seem overly bothered by the image they portrayed. Orszulak had previously been caught without documentation and had been deported just a few years prior to his application for readmission, and the men didn't provide records to demonstrate family ties, even after officials notified Orszulak of their skepticism. Even the consular office's request for additional documentation to show morality and work ethic seems to have gone unanswered.

Whatever the reasoning, the two men relied on a method for claims making that had become established in previous years and then carried additional meaning after 1924—one that equated one's ability to sell labor as a free worker to a particular construction of financial success. And in the end they prevailed. The perception of unsavory, even fraudulent, behavior wasn't enough to convince officials that Orszulak didn't belong or deserve a second chance. Money, at least in this case, seems to have trumped other forms of documentation and even suspicions of fraud or over unsavory behavior. Theirs is an extreme case, but one that had roots in the years before and continued after the introduction of the quota system.

Such was the case of an individual identified only by the last name of Haberman, who was hoping to support his brother's visa application by submitting his own success story to consular officials, in this instance by highlighting how financial stability was an integral part of his process of self-transformation, something he presumably thought would have a positive impact on his brother's application. He had likewise received information from United States Lines agents. "I arrived in New York harbor on September 3rd, 1907, on the 'Kronland'—Red Star Line—from Antwerp, Belgium. That was on a Sunday; Monday was Labor Day, and on Tuesday, September 5, I was cleared and admitted, with $15.00 in my pocket, with just a friend's

address who was gracious to give me employment in his shop," Haberman wrote. "From meager savings in the years of 1907 to 1911, I managed to start a business and have since been identified with the manufacture and sale of minute photo cameras in the United States and in Latin America." Haberman goes on to detail how he devoted himself to his work, which, in contrast to Klimek and Orszulak, he emphasized he did not for his own advancement but for the financial security of his family and for the greater social good. "I am about the only one from [my] family with the direct Haberman name, and I have managed to keep same without a blemish in moral, financial and commercial integrity and honesty," he wrote. He enclosed his naturalization records, along with, in his words, "the bank books showing amounts of bank deposits, including the references from the Santa Cruz Seaside Company, a million dollar corporation of the city of Santa Cruz, wherein I have resided for sixteen years and have been affiliated and worked for the good cause of the Democratic Party." He also included a statement that although he didn't owe taxes that year—he had apparently taken a hit during the Depression—he had paid taxes in previous years. "I do like to pay income tax," he added humorously, spinning his own economic loss in as positive a manner as possible.[20]

At a base level, such statements were meant to verify access to a steady income, even if there was no guarantee they would have an impact on the consular official reviewing a particular case file. But the letter, a narration of self-transformation in which Haberman underscores the value he placed not just on financial acumen and personal honor but on the outward projection of those traits, of being recognized as stable, hardworking, honest, and responsible, and of valuing upward mobility, also suggests that migrant workers could attempt to demonstrate transformation by proxy—in this case, if one brother couldn't make a case entirely on his own experiences, or

[20] AAN USL, sygn. 154.

lacked documentation to show those traits, he tried to do so by connecting himself with a relative who could provide both an income and mentorship. Transmission of liberal values thus became a way that a migrant worker could reveal his or her own values and potential longings of self-transformation, without having to gather evidence of one's own proficiency. For the individual who was able to show a connection to a relative who had already made that journey of internal discovery, documentation of those beliefs became a way to demonstrate potential. Haberman's brother may not have had a respectable bank account balance or a membership card in the Democratic Club of Glendale, California, but he could promise a connection to someone who had.

Risk Management and the Gendered Limitations of the Economic Mind

The experiences of women labor migrants are often overshadowed by those of men, in part because the stories of the single young man who goes abroad to provide for his family back home tend to stand in for all migrant experiences, but also because of how the forms of work done by women—including domestic labor and work in the clothing industry—have been undervalued by contemporaries and scholars alike.[21] Literary depictions of migrant experience likewise tend to gender migration as a male experience and, in particular, downplay the complexity of women figures. Henryk Sienkiewicz's "Mary" in *After Bread* (*Za chlebem*)—a character whose fate is entirely at the mercy of her father, suitors, and wealthy male benefactors,

[21] There are a few notable exceptions in memoir and literature, including Anzia Yezierska's work (see Chapter One) and Hilda Satt Polacheck's *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

and whose ability to control her life seems limited to her ability to upsell her beauty—is a prime example.[22]

Women migrants faced not only unique challenges but also limitations on their ability to embrace the tenets of free labor and economic uplift, which is something that fraternal organizations that provided insurance policies for women sought to address. In stark contrast to the constructions of right to contract and risk management options provided to men, women migrants, many of whom sought to manage abusive relationships by embracing economic autonomy, would face restrictions in their ability to claim financial independence, something that comes through in their economic narratives. Like their male counterparts, these writers emphasize the importance of finances, the need to transition from poverty to financial solvency, but additionally they suggest how they saw self-sufficiency as a way to combat patriarchal hierarchies, break free from abusive or otherwise unwanted relationships, and help them gain greater control of their lives, both in terms of personal finances and familial relations. Whether these attempts proved fruitful is another matter, though it's my contention that such accounts provide insight into the intersections between economic practices and gendered social hierarchies, and more specifically between conceptions of liberal selfhood and intimate family violence.

Maria Kulczycka's narrative is instructive in this regard, with the very important caveat that her account is difficult to read given the rawness with which she describes the violence in her home. Kulczycka, who later adopted the more Anglicized name Mary Colchiska, described herself as "a servant from New Castle, Pennsylvania, the daughter of a farm worker, born in

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[22] Henryk Sienkiewicz, *After Bread: A Story of Polish Emigrant Life to America* (New York: R.F. Fenno & Company, 1897).

1886 in Stary Czortków in Galicja." She submitted her memoir after reading a description of the contest in *Ameryka-Echo*, though in her opening sentences she notes that her motivation was "less about getting a prize" and more about "getting to tell intelligent people what has been on her heart for more than 30 years." She noted, for instance, how she was able to obtain her immigration papers through an arranged marriage to a man whom she considered a less than ideal spouse.[23] This arrangement, she emphasized, came on the heels of a dysfunctional family life—one characterized by her parents' and other caretakers' poor financial decisions. She writes of how her mother and father lost their property on account of their "frivolous life" [*zabawne życie*] when she was three years old, and how an aunt subsequently took her to an orphanage. Once there she attended a nearby school, though unlike other entrants she writes of her disdain for school and that she learned "only out of fear" of her teachers.[24] She later begged her aunt to collect her, which her aunt did reluctantly and only after underscoring the extent of poverty the family faced. Kulczycka recounts her aunt's warning: "[Y]ou know that now we don't have a cow so we've no milk because your uncle drank away [our money] and now we have only cabbage and potatoes and can't afford bread and you will have to work in the fields." The time Kulczycka spent in her aunt's village was, not surprisingly, difficult. She writes how she toiled for food, and how her drunk uncle was unable to provide income for the household. Outside her family, however, she provided some thoughts on the general conditions of life in the village: "I observed the life of peasants, where there was cleanliness but it seems to me more filth and great

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[23] Kulczycka was listed as one of eight honorable mentions in *Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny* on December 9, 1938. See article titled "Rozstrzygnięcie konkursu na pamiętnik emigranta." She received a copy of the published volume as a prize. For more information about the award winners, see "Przedmowa," in *Pamiętniki emigrantów: Stany Zjednoczone*, 11.

[24] *Pamiętniki emigrantów*, 571.

helplessness, and also what struck me as great laziness," she writes.[25] For Kulczycka, these problems of poverty, hygiene, and malaise were compounded by a lack of agency. In this environment she felt the inability to control of her life, as the larger structural issues she faced shaped her every move—including whether she would marry, not for love, but rather to acquire a larger plot of land.

It wasn't until she turned 18 and both her aunt and uncle died, however, that she decided to emigrate, and this was after she had returned to the orphanage that had provided care during her childhood. A male cousin in the United States had written to her with an offer: a ticket to New York, in return for marriage to an unknown man. Kulczycka writes that she never understood why her cousin extended this offer in the first place, but she accepted nonetheless. And at the end of 1906, during the Christmas season, she began the sixteen-day voyage across the Atlantic, which she describes as consisting of a mix of people and languages, and a cacophony of music, dancing and other forms of debauchery that she wanted no part of, along with outbreaks of illness. She added to this her antisemitic observation that "It was terribly dirty [on board] and there were the worst Jews," though she didn't elaborate on what she meant by this.[26]

Kulczycka's memories on her arrival to the States were somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, she writes of her confusion concerning her first train ride, that in the chaotic atmosphere of noises and languages she couldn't understand what was going on. On the other hand, however, she describes this scene as one where her imagination ran free and allowed her to envision herself as rising to a different social and economic class. She doesn't describe the

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[25] Ibid., 572.

[26] Ibid., 573

disorientation of the experience in a negative light: "It was as if in that moment a dark curtain had lifted before my eyes, clearing my mind. It was like I had been born again and understood that life could be happy if I took the whole world in my hands and kissed it." She continued: "To live, to live without measure, I want to live in order to send money to my village . . . . Now I know even better what it means to live well and have a beautiful home. But that [initial] experience I'll never forget."[27] She, in particular, remembered how the train ride allowed her to interact with social elites, whom she postulates were doctors, as she moved through her cabin. "Equality and kindness from both sides [meaning both elites and workers] washed over me, though it's true I only felt it then and didn't know how to articulate it verbally. Most of all I never noticed this type of interaction between workers and elites before in Poland."[28]

But if her train journey allowed her imagination to run free and consider the possibility of upward mobility, Kulczycka notes how she came crashing down to reality once she arrived at her cousin's residence in Pennsylvania—she describes her cousin as running a group home for workers. Upon arrival, her predatory cousin attempted to force Kulczycka into the arranged marriage, and her first evening there Kulczycka heard her cousin shout to a man outside that "his wife was here, come see her." Kulczycka writes of her reaction: "My God I was speechless from fear. I didn't want to marry outside my village." These feelings compounded when she learned that her prospective husband had a less than stellar reputation. "I lacked courage, I was afraid of my cousin, and my cousin's wife also was afraid of her husband, so much so that she'd only advise me to quietly to ask for another suitor, even if he was a Russian."[29] She ultimately

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 574

begged her cousin for another option, though he would reject her requests. Following a series of charged interactions with her cousin and the local priest, who suspected she wasn't a willing participant in the relationship, Kulczycka married the man whom she refers to as Mieczysław. Her description of the ceremony is telling: "The mass started, and it was time to go to the altar. God save me. I felt the ground melt under my legs, as the priest asked [Mieczysław] to place the ring on my finger and it seemed that the cold sphere was squeezing me."[30] She then notes how she had to give all the money she received from wedding guests to her cousin because "he threatened that he paid for my passage, and insisted that I was his slave."[31]

Kulczycka's married life didn't get better, and her intimate discussions of her home life are at times difficult to read. Her husband was abusive, and she relays several episodes of physical and emotional violence in painful detail, including an incident on Easter when her drunken husband returned to the house and proceeded to attack her. She begged him to beat her in silence so she wouldn't feel ashamed that her neighbors knew of, and presumably discussed, what was happening in their house, but to no avail. Laziness, moreover, was a frequent accusation and at the same time a slur against her value as a person, with her husband using the word as a form of verbal abuse that cut to the heart of Kulczycka's ability to claim economic self-sufficiency—i.e., she couldn't be responsible for herself and her dependents if she never held a steady, paying job outside the household. (Of course her work as the mother of three young children didn't factor into Mieczysław's assessment.) Indeed, Mieczysław seems to have used accusations of laziness as a tool to manipulate Kulczycka into working in less than ideal

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 574-75.

jobs, namely her position as a housekeeper in a boarding house for male workers—a position she hated because it required contact with drunken and sometimes dangerous patrons.

Here it's helpful to take a step back and unpack how work ethic, motherhood, and wifehood operate within Kulczycka's narrative. At various points in Kulczycka's memoir, she relays how Mieczysław challenged her fitness as a mother, though he does so in curious, unpredictable, and likely ineffective ways—ways that demonstrate to the reader Mieczysław's petty and malicious character. She boosts her case by juxtaposing her husband's behavior with her own religious piety and selflessness, as well as her seemingly natural capacity to navigate the capitalist world. According to Kulczycka's presentation of Mieczysław, she wasn't a bad mother because she was abusive to her children, neglectful of her children's needs, or failed to put her children's interests before her own, all of which would have served as a stronger indictment of her ability to behave like a good mother—the definition of which depends, to this day, on context and various layers of social meaning. Rather she notes the hostility of her husband when she was, for years, unable to bear him the son he desired, anger that Kulczycka presents as misguided given the grim economic realities of life in industrial centers. She circumvents the accusations that daughters are financial drains on the family by describing her daughters' contributions to the household, including their willingness to hold paying factory jobs outside the house and at the same time their commitment to education and self-betterment, a trait she proudly passed on to her children. On top of that Kulczycka needed additional medical treatment following her pregnancies, and Mieczysław treats her as a nagging wife when she asked him to call in, and pay for, a doctor—she notes that the doctor successfully revived her daughter who would have otherwise died during birth.

Kulczycka countered her husband's accusations with small gestures that demonstrate her fitness as a wife and mother. Take her description of her home life during the first part of their marriage. She notes how Mieczyław would come home from his job working on train lines and attempt to pick fights with her. Her response was to try to be "tender" and be a "good wife": "I prayed, God please help me have a peaceful home. I really didn't like to fight, and when I was in the village I would always promise myself that when I had my own home there wouldn't be anything of the sort."[32] Again, Kulczycka demonstrates her fitness by evoking her faith and religious practice when describing her husband's abuse. After relaying one serious incident, she writes: "I was numb when [Mieczysław] came home from work. The whole day I was in fear of what would happen when he came back. When I prayed, crying out I don't want fighting in my home, the words of my priest came to my mind—be obedient to your husband, words that I had heard from older people during my childhood that you should never start a fight in your home and don't escalate situations happening in your house."[33] Here Kulczycka pivots—if Mieczysław accused her of being a bad wife, she would react with calm, and defer to the recommendations of her family and priest, and in doing so demonstrate that Mieczysław was a bad husband. This was an easy case to make. Kulczycka doesn't hold back many details of the abuse she suffered at the hands of her husband. "For three weeks he beat me, dragged me by the hair. [I] was crying inconsolably, he sat down next to me and asked for forgiveness." Instead of taking care of his wife in her time of need, he would send her and the children to live with extended family in Poland, where she would once again encounter poverty.

[32] Ibid., 575

[33] Ibid.

In her memoirs she juxtaposes her work life with that of her husband, who floated from job to job and refused to work for long periods of time, which Kulczycka uses to deflect accusations of laziness on to her husband. She never does so in an overt way, but rather through a comparison of their work lives—hers based on flexibility and willingness to cobble together the resources necessary for economic advancement, his rooted in selfishness, weak work ethic, and vulgarity. "[His mother] had already rented a three-room apartment for us and purchased the necessary household items, and when work was a necessity my husband didn't want to find a job, saying that he had already worked hard enough and that it was time for him to rest a bit (at that time he was 31 years old, and I was 26), for money go do what you need to do for the bastards."[34] Kulczycka did just that, though she emphasizes the difficulty in having to place her moral worldview to the side while she scraped together money serving less than savory individuals. Such a position only compounded her anger for her husband, but it also demonstrated her commitment to self-sufficiency and betterment.

Kulczycka's story demonstrates how attitudes toward money and labor could carry both hopes for emancipatory potential and ultimately the limitations of liberal selfhood. Kulczycka can only do so much in her account, as her role as wife and mother, at times, constrained her ability to act in her own best interests. The language of self-improvement and work ethic nonetheless allowed Kulczycka to envision a life without fear and abuse, and it's only after she takes on two positions that offer her financial independence—managing a small bar and then working at an aluminum factory—that she leaves her husband. Her attitudes toward money and self-improvement form the basis for uplift in a traditional sense, of course, but also allow her to transcend an abusive relationship, while still attending to her children.

[34] Ibid., 579

Intimate Family Violence and the Economic Responsibilities of Motherhood

Kulczycka's memoir suggests how women had to balance the conventions of liberal subjectivity, free labor, and good motherhood, and, all things considered, she had a favorable outcome. The language of good motherhood, however, could restrain the ability of women to embrace economic uplift, as was the case with the murder of Władysława Stańska. While some of the details are hazy, what we know is that on May 17th, 1906, Józef (also known as Joseph) Stańska returned to his home on West 25th Street in Chicago and accused his wife, Władysława—a migrant from the Congress Kingdom—of cheating on him. During the ensuing argument, Józef ordered Władysława to place their youngest child down on the ground, after which Józef produced a gun and shot his wife twice in the abdomen. Władysława was then taken to Saint Mary of Nazareth Hospital where she struggled for nine days before succumbing to her injuries on May 26th. The coroner's report from Cook County lists "pneumonia and meningitis of the spine due to a gunshot wound inflicted by one Joseph Stanska" as the cause of death.[35] Władysława Stańska was 23 years old.

Press reports from the time stress the courtroom drama surrounding Józef Stańska's murder trial, even if—true to the standards of early twentieth century journalism—the lines between sensationalism and objective reporting are unclear. During the run-up to the trial, for example, the *Leavenworth Times* in Kansas ran a piece detailing how Stańska reneged on a plea

[35] Death Certificate of Władysława Stańska, issued by the Cook County Coroner (1906) located among the papers of the Polish Women's Alliance Death Benefits section, unprocessed, Newberry Library, Chicago.

arrangement with the States Attorney's office once he realized the deal meant he would never qualify for release. Alongside his affirmative defense that the killing was justified by his wife's alleged infidelities, Stańska maintained that he did not want to spend the rest of his life in prison and would instead prefer the death penalty. Described in the article as a "Lithuanian cabinet maker," Stańska remarked the following about his impending fate: "Hanging is much better, to my mind, than serving the rest of my life in prison…I'm only 42 years old, and I'd have a mighty long time to serve probably. What would there be to it? Nothing. Wouldn't it be better to have the thing ended right away, as quickly as possible? Why, I'd so much rather be hung that there isn't any use talking about it."[36] The States Attorney, John R. Newcomer, doubted that Stańska would follow through with his request. "I have had two or three cases in the last few years where a murderer has insisted that he would rather hang rather than get a life sentence. In every instance, however, when the matter was brought to a final choice the prisoner weakened and took a life term," Newcomer opined. "If he really wants to be hanged, though, I have little doubt the jury which tries his case will accommodate him."[37] On that point, though, Newcomer was wrong; Stańska opted for a jury trial and, in what one paper described as among the fastest procedures in Cook County criminal court history, was tried, convicted, and sentenced to 14 years in prison in just under 7 hours.[38]

The media spectacle that surrounded Stańska's trial, however, obscures another legal procedure at the time—this one involving the economic agency of Władysława Stańska. Like

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[36] "Life in a Cell? No, Wants Rope," in *The Leavenworth Times*, 29 November 1906, p. 7.

[37] Ibid.

[38] See, among others, "Wife Murderer Railroaded to Jail," *Tyrone Daily Herald* (Tyrone, Pennsylvania), February 1, 1907.

thousands of other peasant migrants from the Polish lands, Stańska had taken out a life insurance policy with a fraternal organization called the Polish Women's Alliance (or *Związek Polek w Ameryce*, or the PWA). Such policies provided up to $500 (or $12,500 in today's terms) in benefits to designated family members in the event of the holder's death. But Władysława Stańska's case stands out because in between the time of her shooting and death, Stańska changed the beneficiaries of her policy from her husband to her adult sister, passing over her four children, the oldest of whom was 5 years old. While we can only speculate as to her reasoning, it seems plausible that Stańska hoped that doing so would ensure that her husband, as the surviving parent, would not profit from any windfall that resulted from her murder. Whatever her motivation, however, the PWA objected to the change, citing Stańska's obligation as a mother to provide for her children in the event of her passing. Thus Władysława Stańska's decision signifies the need to pay attention to the economic lives of women migrants. Doing so sheds light on how women laborers understood financial risk and sought to mitigate the harsher effects of capitalism, while also attending to the links between intimate violence, ideas of femininity and motherhood, and economic indeterminacy that characterize modern economic practices and urban migration in general.

There's an emerging body of scholarship on the development of financial institutions in the modern world, and historians such as Jonathan Levy have noted the importance that risk played in cities in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century America. In his book *Freaks of Fortune*, Levy argues that contrary to the common assumption that risk is a timeless or universal feature of economic relations, risk is instead tied to the context of global industrial capitalism and therefore can be analyzed as a historical phenomenon—one connected to the expansion of corporate capital and ideas of productive labor. For Levy, the rise of life insurance corporations

reflects the growth of the liberal ideal of self-ownership through contract, as well as what he calls "productive risk taking." This was the case even though there were debates over the utility of competitive speculation and skepticism of the type of abstract labor involved in actuarial science and high finance, particularly when compared to the more tangible results of industrial work. Nevertheless, as people attempted to lessen the harmful effects of capitalism—the hazards of industry, the flux of wage labor markets, and financial collapse—they often turned to insurance companies in hopes of achieving security.

But there were alternatives to corporate insurance to help individuals navigate the seemingly random vagaries of modern economic structures, including insurance policies sponsored by fraternal organizations. Levy writes that such institutions differed in a number of respects, including their rejection of capital accumulation, their shunning of contracts, and their attempts to help individuals traverse financial disasters. Nevertheless, there were some similarities between the two insurance schemes, notably the ways in which fraternalism helped tie ideas of labor productivity to masculinity and patriarchal individualism. As Levy concludes about the centrality of masculinity to fraternal insurance organizations: "The fraternals . . . embraced the masculinization of productive labor and the family wage. Gender and sex difference were long implicit in the ethos of fraternalism, and the local lodge continued to be a site of male fraternization. Only a few of the leading fraternals offered membership to women or created parallel female orders."[39]

One of those few fraternal organizations dedicated to protecting the financial lives of women was the Polish Women's Alliance. Founded in Chicago in 1898, the PWA sought to

[39] Jonathan Levy, *Freaks of Fortune: The Emerging World of Capitalism and Risk in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 202.

provide urban migrants, the majority of whom were from the region of Galicia, with opportunities for financial security, and notably extended to members the opportunity to purchase life insurance at a low rate. (Members paid an initiation fee between $1.00 and $2.50, depending on age—what would today be around $29.50 to $62.70—as well as a monthly premium based on an annual assessment. For instance, in 1932 a 35-year-old woman would pay $ .81 per month for $500 of coverage, while a 45-year-old would pay $1.17.) Applicants would also have to pay between $1.50 to $2.00 for a medical physical, during which a doctor would certify that the applicant was in good health. Between 1906 and 1918 membership in the PWA grew exponentially from 4,301 to 21,109, a number that more than doubled by 1931.[40] Likewise, the organization expanded beyond the Chicago and Milwaukee regions so that by the early 1920s there were PWA branches in a range of cities across the Midwest and East Coast, in places like South Bend, Indiana; Cleveland, Ohio; Holyoke, Massachusetts; Middletown, Connecticut; Hamtramck, Michigan; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Scholars who have looked at fraternal groups among Polish-Americans have emphasized the "national" character of such organizations. Take Angela Pienkos's study titled *"In the Ideals of Women is the Strength of a Nation,"* in which she underscores the importance that "patriotism" played in the early years of the PWA. She writes, for example: "No discussion of the Polish American fraternal movement can be complete without noting its ethnic solidarity. From the start, a commitment to Poland's independence and well-being was the hallmark of the Polish fraternals in the patriotic wing of the immigrant community . . . . By the outbreak of the First World War, … all of the fraternals . . . had come to identify with the work of restoring unity

[40] Numbers provided in Angela T. Pienkos and Donald E. Pienkos, *"In the Ideals of Women is the Strength of a Nation": A History of the Polish Women's Alliance of America* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2003), 44-66.

and independence to partitioned Poland."[41] This focus isn't surprising considering how the PWA defined its own mission. For example, Article 2, Paragraph 3 of the PWA's Constitution states: "The goals of the PWA are preserving the national soul, maintaining Polish ideals among the younger generation through education in Polish history and literature, in addition to demonstrating the need to have permanent contact with Poland, and in this way contribute to the cultural strengths that define the Polish nation."[42] Just below that statement, however, are the following objectives: "To encourage members to lead independent lives, and to help them obtain higher education and to participate in politics" and "To establish a Bureau of Information . . . for independent working women."[43] Those are, of course, in addition to another goal: "[To provide] mutual aid (*wzajemna pomoc*) and insurance benefits throughout [a member's] entire life, . . . in addition to providing insurance to girls from ages 2 until 16."[44] Therefore, if the PWA sought to bolster feelings of national belonging among members, those ends existed concurrently with members' needs for financial security and social support, and, at the very least, the patriotic goals of the PWA didn't undermine the organization's larger financial and social purposes.

Leaders of the PWA outlined the cultural and social ideals of the organization in the PWA's weekly newspaper, *Głos Polek* (The Polish Women's Voice), and it's here that the PWA's progressive message concerning women's empowerment through education and financial security comes through—though it's also important to note that such attempts left ample room

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[41] Ibid., xi-xii.

[42] *Konstytucja i Ustawy Związku Polek w Ameryce* (1931), Artykuł II: Skład, cele, i środki ku ich osiągnięciu, 5.

[43] Ibid., see points (c) and (d).

[44] Ibid., paragraph 4.

for antisemitism and racism. This focus on empowerment is clear in the summation of *Głos Polek's* editor-in-chief in the 1930s, who described the purpose of the PWA in the following terms: "We women—women from all nations—must work together in order to raise better and more noble people . . . . It follows that our goals are two-fold: abstract-ideological and realistic-material, and these two areas are often connected and complement each other. Providing insurance at such a large scale, we stand on the lasting ground of security for our families in the event of death, when money is the most needed . . . . [W]e bring relief to terrible material conditions."[45] Another writer for *Głos Polek* concurred, noting the importance of collective work for women's rights even if husbands object to their wives participating in the PWA: "When a woman goes to an organizational meeting, her husband can barely control the anger in himself and then finally explodes: 'What—for what? You don't have time for that . . . . It's some sort of pretense . . . . You'd be better off cleaning the pots'…. [But] a man today must and should realize that a woman in addition to her responsibilities to her husband, children, and entire family—also has an important obligation to herself, as an equal human being (*człowiek równy*)."[46] The writer goes on to explain that such progressive work entails providing women with opportunities for literacy and other forms of education, as well as work aimed at social and economic betterment and autonomy through organizations like the PWA.

But the PWA's understanding of empowerment through self-sufficiency and education also had its limits, particularly with regard to marriage and children. On the subject of divorce,

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[45] Jadwiga Karłowiczowa, *Historia Związku Polek w Ameryce: Przyczynki do Poznania Duszy Wychodztwa Polskiego w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki Północnej* (Chicago: Związek Polek w Ameryce, 1938), 188.

[46] "Kobieta wobec Męża i Pana," *Głos Polek*, September 13, 1917.

for instance, another writer for the paper argued the following: "We see in this country how easy it is to break one's marriage vows. Marriage is stripped of its greater beauty, in a country of business, marriage is treated like business. One goes to the clerk at a public bureau, and there signs a contract and then a couple leave husband and wife."[47] The author continues that in the United States, where business principles shape interpersonal relationships, after a short amount of time, a wife sees her husband's faults and his poor work prospects then decides to "liberate herself, whatever the cost of leaving." As the author describes the process, "The 'free' woman leaves home, flies to court, accuses her husband publicly, breaks her vows, and is then liberated." It's the innocent children who suffer when women treat marriage as a business deal or contractual arrangement, the author concludes, and the solution for this lies entirely with the woman, even when the relationship involves abuse.

To illustrate this point, the author presents the story of a woman from Philadelphia who married a violent man. After just a few days of marriage the woman escaped to the police station to seek help after her husband had beaten her, and in that time the husband fled their home, "never to be heard from again." The author nonetheless concludes from this anecdote that this was an "atrocity" and a "disgrace" because "[the wife] didn't know the man at all" before they married, and "she went to her wedding already thinking about divorce." Calling women who seek divorce as approaching "the level of animals in the woods," the author infers that "the fundamentals of life and culture are endangered" by such behavior. Instead, "Polish women" who "breed children without thought" should remember that "children are people, not toys." The author concludes: "The feelings associated with marriage should be sacred, the wedding should connect people, and the connecting of hands means a shared life—until death. Yes, until death."

[47] "Rozwód—a Kobieta," *Głos Polek*, June 7, 1917.

If such a response strikes the present-day observer as cruel and short-sighted given the realities of intimate violence, it nonetheless underscores the importance motherhood played in the PWA's understanding of women's empowerment. By connecting a motherhood that focused on proper child rearing in a material sense—which included providing healthy meals, hygiene, and education —as well the responsibility for a child's happiness and well-being, to their claims for women's rights and economic autonomy, the PWA embraced a vision of rights that was based on a moral imperative that a woman should provide for her children within the context of the family, no matter the cost for her. Such an approach constrained the ability of members to develop other understandings of economic independence outside the realm of familial relations and motherhood. Of particular note, this construct also signaled the willingness of the PWA to limit notions of classical liberalism and economic relations, something that can be seen when the organization attempted to restrict Władysława Stańska's ability to control what would happen to her financial assets after her death.

Władysława Stańska's murder therefore demonstrates how visions of economic autonomy and financial security for women remained linked to ideas of what it meant to be a "good" mother. From the perspective of PWA leadership, by switching beneficiaries from her husband to her sister, Stańska committed the sin of failing to care for her children, and perhaps even the sin of selecting a husband in haste. Once Stańska's sister, Jadwiga Szymańska, filed the necessary paperwork to change beneficiaries and submit a claim, the document reviewer warned: "Remember that Sister Stanska has four small children, so we believe that it is not the place for [Szymańska] to collect the entirety of the death benefit . . . . The benefit should go to her

children because Mrs. Stanska did not know what she was saying because she was too weak."[48] To preempt any allegations that Stańska wasn't of sound mind when she changed beneficiaries, or that there was fraud involved in the case, Szymańska sent additional paperwork to the General Secretary of the PWA, in an attempt to get the organization to issue a new insurance certificate. This request included Stańska's "mark" (noted on the form as "jej znak"), as Stańska—like many other women migrants—was illiterate, as well as the signatures of two witnesses.

None of this evidence persuaded the PWA to issue a new certificate or disburse funds, and it took the threat of legal action to convince the PWA to move on the matter. On October 15th, 1906, Szymańska's attorneys sent a note to the PWA warning that they would "start suit against you and on behalf of Mrs. Szymanski on . . . October 17th unless her claim is paid at that time."[49] Attorney Julius Smietanka then sent a follow-up letter to the organization five days later noting that he had discussed the matter with the PWA's council, Frank Koraleski, and that Koraleski concluded that "my client . . . is rightfully entitled to the benefit fund arising upon the death of Mrs. Stanski."[50] While the PWA ultimately reissued Stańska's certificate to reflect the change in beneficiaries and paid out Szymańska's claim, the move continued to generate controversy within the organization. In the end it likely took the support of the head of Stańska's branch—Benedikta Belinska, President of Group 45, the office that issued the initial certificate—who sent a letter in support of Szymańska to the PWA on the grounds that "[Szymańska] cared

[48] "Aplikacya Spadkobiercy Lub Spadkobierców o Wypłacenie Pośmiertnego," filed by Jadwiga Szymańska in May 1906, uncatalogued, NLC.

[49] Note from Pease, Smietanka, and Polkey, Attorneys at Law to the Polish Women's Alliance, October 15, 1906, uncatalogued, NLC.

[50] Note from Julius F. Smietanka, partner at Pease, Smietanka, and Polkey, Attorneys at Law to the Polish Women's Alliance, October 20, 1906, uncatalogued, NLC.

for [Stańska] when she was in the hospital and also arranged the funeral" and that in any event a notary was present for the document signing, so any allegation of fraud would be groundless.[51] Furthermore, Belinska argued, the possibility that Stańska's children would benefit at all from the funds was minimal at best, particularly if the father who killed their mother was responsible for their care.

Not surprisingly then, Belinska's arguments were couched as much in moral terms about the politics of motherhood as they were in legal procedure. Szymańska was a worthy beneficiary, in part, because she exhibited the proper characteristics of a woman—she dutifully cared for her sister on her deathbed and then organized her funeral, and she was presumably more inclined to think of the children's interests when compared to their murderous father. Still, the PWA was walking a fine line. On the one hand they supported women's financial self-sufficiency and rights as wage laborers; on the other, however, their support for liberal autonomy for women ended within the realm of marital relations, the obligations of women as mothers, and quite possibly the contractual obligations wives had to their husbands. By objecting to the application of liberal principles to the family—for instance in advocating that women shouldn't break the marriage contract for the sake of the children or requiring that members adopt the persona of a good mother as a condition for life insurance benefits—the PWA qualified the rights of self-ownership. In doing so, the PWA came into conflict with women who didn't conform to those standards, and sought to constrain women's ability to control their assets, even as the organization actively promoted women's rights outside the family structure.

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[51] Letter from Benedikta Belinska to the Polish Women's Alliance, dated October 11, 1906, uncatalogued, NLC.

The Self-Narration of Experience

The documents of Kulczycka and Stańska suggest the limitations of constructs of free labor and mobility, even as both women readily embraced the norms of liberal selfhood. Both examples, moreover, show how women migrants attempted to gain greater control over their lives, in these cases how women in abusive relationships tried to assert themselves as economic actors. Their efforts nonetheless were complicated by how others, including mutual aid society representatives, mediated liberal norms through the responsibilities of wives and mothers. All of this begs the question: How did more unfettered economic narratives facilitate the development of liberal norms?

Before we turn to some of these examples of self-narration, though, we need to take a step back to consider the relationship between literary forms—even in the most traditional of sources (i.e., memoirs, diaries, and letters)—and the fashioning of self. Put another way, what can historians tell about an individual's past from looking at personal reflections, published or not? And what broader generalizations can we make based on singular experiences? Mary Karr's recent treatise *The Art of Memoir* provides insightful commentary on this issue. Karr delves into the process of reflecting on one's past and of putting that story on paper in narrative form, noting the complex internal negotiations that the process entails. As she colorfully describes the psychological mediation at play: "In some ways, writing a memoir is knocking yourself out with your own fist, if it's done right . . . . The form *always* has profound psychological consequence on its author . . . . [N]obody I know who's written a great one described it as anything less than a major-league shit-eating contest. Any time you try to collapse the distance between your delusions about the past and what really happened, there's

suffering involved."[52] For Karr, the very act of narrating one's experiences, or rather self-perceptions of those experiences, requires a level of introspection that involves laying bare aspects of one's past that might otherwise remain sheltered.

Of course, not all memoirists aspire to a label of greatness, nor do they necessarily attempt such a psychologically taxing project that requires reflection on intimate trauma, though some do, as we have seen. Nonetheless, Karr points to the complexities involved in the construction of memoirs—that they absorb the interplay between perception, event, and aspiration. The takeaway here for scholars examining memoir is that the most interesting question isn't necessarily whether a particular example is true, in the sense that it provides an objectively accurate representation of one's reactions, feelings, and beliefs. I take it as a given that many memoirists, diarists, and letter writers took liberties for any number of reasons that may or may not be intentional, though Karr's point that memoirs must be grounded in some sense of reality, enough that individuals implicated in the narrative can recognize themselves or validate as needed, seems plausible enough. For my purposes, whether a given document is true—in Plata's case, whether he actually went from an impoverished peasant to a self-reliant economic actor in a steady arc of progress— isn't as important as examining why that narrative proved so seductive and how adoption of that narrative form shapes one's understanding of self and community. In other words, we may never know whether individuals were lying through their teeth or stretching the truth or relying on any other shade of pretext when they presented their life stories to others. But that matter is secondary to the larger question of why individuals

[52] Mary Karr, *The Art of Memoir* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2015), xx-xxi.

choose to tell their stories to others, either family members or the general public, in that particular form.[53]

Foucault's understanding of subjectivity is similarly helpful. Instead of searching for a form of authenticity, of operating under the assumption that the individual being exists and then gets acted upon from without, Foucault posited that the construction of the individual subject was itself a manifestation of power. That is, there is no autonomous self that exists in isolation of society, as if we could chip away the layers of power to reveal the true nature of a particular being. Instead, he believed that all humans were manifestations of power, and it's through individuals that power finds expression. Foucault thus offers a biting critique of liberal subjectivity. It is the myth of the liberal subject that allows the origins of power to remain obscure, veiled by the assumption that the self both stands in opposition to structures of authority and exists in isolation of outside influence.[54]

Yet that veiling is nonetheless central to subjectivity, and many of the writers profiled in this chapter viewed themselves as individuals who were coming into their own as moderns through the changes they experienced during migration. They were modern precisely because they saw themselves as actors who were, to a substantial degree, capable of controlling their futures. It was the process of migration that allowed these individuals to gain insight into who they were and how the world worked. They would express this self-transformative quality in and

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[53] For insight into the importance of narration in the context of migration, see Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

[54] For further discussion of Foucault's understanding of subjectivity, see Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

through their writing. Jochen Hellbeck observes this phenomenon in his study of Soviet diarists. He writes: “Modern subjects cease to recognize social roles predetermined for them; they seek to create their individual biographies. Subjectivity thus subsumes a degree of individuals’ conscious participation in the making of their own lives.”[55] The modern subject, moreover, was closely tied to ideas of the free migrant, with mobility and the labor contract mutually reinforcing concepts. The conditions of migration, in other words, provided the backdrop for introspection and the re-imagining of their life trajectories.

The Financial Journey of Jakub Plata

Jakub Plata’s memoir illustrates many of the normative characteristics of peasant migrant narrations.[56] Plata’s entry, which came in second-place and earned him a prize of $50 [around $900 today], provides a concrete example of the importance of narrating financial transformation as connected to the development of self and the negotiation between the responsibilities to self and collective—and here it’s useful to trace out some of the details of Plata’s self-narration, as it

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[55] Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 9.

[56] For a take on peasant memoirs that focuses on constructions of family life, see Roman Pelczar, “Rodzina chłopska w Galicji na przełomie XIX i XX wieku w świetle literatury pamiętnikarskiej,” *Społeczeństwo i Rodzina* 51, no. 2 (2017): 7-25. For a broader examination, see Stanisław Siekierski, *Etos chłopski w świetle pamiętników* (Cracow: Zakład Wydawniczy “Galicja” Fundacji Artystycznej ZMW, 1992).

demonstrates some of the key elements that peasant migrants like Plata would use when constructing and conveying their experiences in narrative form.

Beginning his life story in chronological order, Plata emphasizes the hardship of his upbringing, as well as the backwardness of peasant finances in general, which he then places at the center of the story of his childhood. He criticizes inheritance norms in Galician villages, and in particular mentions how his father had to support the family after the death of his grandfather, and that a sizable part of the family property went toward securing dowries, so that in the end the family plot was whittled down to only 4 acres of land. That amount of property, he stressed, was too little to support his family through subsistence-style farming. Conversations between Plata's parents, moreover, often involved finances, and he wrote how he would wake at night to hear his mother and father arguing about how to obtain money, with his father insisting that they avoid debt at all costs. (His father, interestingly, described debt as "a rope that hangs around one's neck," which was a lesson the young Plata would take to heart.)[57] Plata worked on his parents' land, despite the fact, as he put it, that he wasn't predisposed to that type of employment. He begged his parents to send him to a gymnasium after he finished his general schooling at age 12, but his father told him that he would have to wait until his sister completed her education before he could attend. Plata called this solution better than nothing "because I didn't like working on the farm."[58] To make up for his lack of formal schooling, he began traveling to a neighboring village to read books at a library sponsored by a local branch of *Towarzystwo Szkoły Ludowej*, which instilled in him the desire for self-study and self-improvement. Such focus on individual

[57] *Pamiętniki emigrantów*, 125.

[58] Ibid., 128.

betterment, Plata wrote, would cause him to come into conflict with the local parish priest who viewed his consumption of peasant magazines as contributing to social unrest in the countryside.

Upon the death of his father, Plata came to the realization that he would need to learn a trade if he were to escape his lot in life as a smallholder, and though he writes of the sadness of his father's death, it's that loss that ultimately frees him from the grasp of his familial responsibilities. He won a small stipend to attend a technical school in Zakopane, but in his narrative minimizes the woodworking skills he learned, and instead frames his experience as part of a financial transformation as he learned to manage money while living on his own for the first time. He writes of the frustration of trying to extend his meagre savings, as his fellowship payments wouldn't kick in until the following semester, and the generosity of his teachers who, upon learning of his difficulties, offered to provide him lunch and clothing until he received his stipend. Still, Plata underscores that he felt conflicted about relying on charity. He writes, humbly: "I had scruples about taking advantage of the good deeds of others, but what was I to do? I had no other way."[59] He later describes a situation in which his landlord ransacked his personal belongings and stole his money. Things got better, however, in his second year when he was able to save up enough to afford luxuries like extra wood for the stove and the occasional dinner out on Sunday nights. Following his first year at school, when he was able to afford short trips home to visit his mother, he recounts how others from his village recognized and reacted with awe at his transformation, which was already well under way: "After arriving at home people from the village were very surprised at how I looked and that I was dressed so beautifully, even though I hadn't had any help from my family for a year."[60] Despite the severe material

[59] Ibid., 132.

[60] Ibid., 133.

conditions he experienced, Plata emphasizes that he finished his program at the top of his class and on time—a nod to the importance he placed on self-study, industriousness, thrift, as well as cleanliness and style, in the face of poverty.

Plata capitalized on these skills in a position at a construction company in Lviv, where he helped build a power station and a number of large buildings, which marks the first time he spent time in a city and encountered the structures of modernization. Although he had completed training in drafting and woodwork, he notes how he quickly rose up the ranks to become a manager—he would arrange transportation for workers to job sites, and later would relay how many employees showed up for work and whether they needed additional materials to complete the job at hand. His employer trusted Plata so much that Plata eventually worked as a courier for the company, taking the firm's checks to the bank to cash, and then returning to his office with the money. Plata notes this with satisfaction—he was reliable and honest, and understood the importance that his work played in his employer's success: "I had such trust in my boss, that when he went away with his family in the winter, he entrusted me with the care of the office and even gave me authorization to fill out fiscal documents. I appreciated that from my end and never abused that trust."[61] Just as important, however, he made efficient use of his time and prioritized his obligations to his employer, even if it came at the cost of his own human needs. On work days, he writes, "I went to bed no earlier than 10pm, on more than one occasion hungry, because I didn't have enough time to go to a restaurant for dinner."[62]

These lessons on thrift, responsibility, and work ethic helped Plata acclimate to life in the United States—a journey he made two years later. He tells this story in a way that highlights his

[61] Ibid., 136.

[62] Ibid.

maturation, even in the face of difficult circumstances. While Plata certainly notes the adversity and uncertainty involved in finding stable employment—for instance, he describes how unscrupulous Polish employment agents would take advantage of "greenhorns" like himself (he uses the English term)—such episodes seem a mere blip in his progression to a modern economic man. What comes across from his writings, instead, is aptitude in navigating the industrial labor market and of managing the social relations that had been upended in the process.

Take this excerpt where Plata describes how once he found stable employment, fellow Polish migrants attempted to take advantage of him:

> At home various people began to visit me, once I had established a circle of acquaintances. They were mostly workers from the factory where I had been employed, or people from my home surroundings in Poland—people with whom I had discussed Poland or matters relating to work in American factories. But I really wasn't satisfied with such familiarity. Most of the time they would come to me asking to borrow money, giving me the assurance that it would only be for a couple weeks. I'd almost always refuse because I had heard stories from others about what it's like to be a creditor. Others wanted to draw me into American or Polish insurance schemes, or to sell me a plot of land somewhere outside the city . . . . All of them assured me of their benevolence in an attempt to persuade me. But these and similar propositions struck me as funny—because not long ago, when I couldn't find work, nobody wanted to help me, and now people felt that I had money and they could intrude on me violently under the guise of care and benevolence.[63]

Plata's insistence that he was able to recognize individuals who attempt to take advantage of him on a personal level demonstrates his ability to separate the bonds of social relations from individual economic behavior—for example, in his willingness to draw a line between the kinship bonds held by distant relatives or fellow migrants who came from neighboring villages and his capacity to understand financial scheming. The problem for him was all the more

[63] Ibid., 145-46.

pressing when it came to fellow Poles, who could potentially play on emotions based on national ties and norms of charity. His comments suggest that he was convinced of the need to promote and protect his own individual economic advancement and that he saw national affiliation and kinship as impediments to progress. And yet at a certain level Plata's comments suggest a sort of persistence of social bonds—and it's the presence of those bonds that provide the backdrop for Plata's conversion into a modern economic actor, something he can't escape by rejecting the pleas of his co-workers or family or acquaintances from neighboring villages in Galicia.

Plata and other entrants of memoir contests were hardly alone in mapping out their lives in this way. Take the following narrative, likely cut from a church newsletter or community bulletin and then pasted on the back of a family photograph. Under the title "Andrzej Dąbrowski with family," the note lists milestones from the life of Dąbrowski, who, we learn, was born in 1853 in a village close to Kielce in the Congress Kingdom. The writing follows a similar progressive arc to that of Plata: After a young Dąbrowski completed his service obligation in the Russian army, he married Maryanna Smołczyńska, and shortly thereafter the young couple started a family. They had five daughters, two of whom—Jadwiga and Bronisława—survived into adulthood. On May 10, 1905, Dąbrowski left partitioned Poland with his wife and daughters for the United States, where he found work in Detroit's automobile industry. Approximately ten years later he purchased a small plot of land just off Jos. Campau Street in Hamtramck, Michigan. By 1916 his older daughter had married a man named Aleksander Dąbkowski, while his younger attended school at Saint Stanislaus Parish in Detroit.[64] Although this note was written in the third-person, it shares some characteristics with Plata's memoir—namely it presents Dąbrowski's past as involving a shift from poverty to economic respectability, though

[64] Photo uncatalogued in collection of Hamtramck Historical Museum (1916).

the writer in this case places greater weight on presenting Dąbrowski as a responsible breadwinner. Again, though, both seem invested in defining modernity in a patriarchal sense, that is through one's ability to raise "fashionable" or respectable daughters. Significantly, the note ends with the following: "In 1916 he [Dąbrowski] acquired land on 237 Poland Street in Hamtramck, where he is building a beautiful residence that meets modern standards" (*według nowoczesnych wymagań*). That Dąbrowski was able to purchase land underscores his financial viability—a necessary characteristic for any patriarch—but the description that he was building a home that "meets modern standards" also demonstrates a certain knowledge of the world. While we don't know exactly what Dąbrowski or his relative meant by the words "modern standards," though it's possible that was a reference to indoor plumbing, they signal to the reader that Dąbrowski had enough fluency with modernity that he could understand how to equip his house in an appropriate, forward-thinking manner, and even recognized the importance of good hygiene and comfort, or at least that the writer recognized the importance of presenting him in this light. In that way, Dąbrowski's family and friends could envision the progress he had made, from peasant to modern, even if the actual change that Dąbrowski experienced was anything but clear cut.

Of course not everyone felt the same excitement in recognizing the importance of economic transformation or of adopting the language of self-sufficiency and economic betterment, and here it's useful to look at another memoir for comparison. Another entrant, who described himself as "an unemployed laborer from Newark, New Jersey, the son of a 'middleholding' peasant, born in 1894 in the village of Bracijowice" summed up his decision to leave for the United States in the following terms: "Today I know that I was wrong, oblivious, and the readers would judge that hardship and stupidity are born from poverty . . . . But I

desperately wanted to go to that beloved America."[65] Instead of finding opportunity, this person found hunger and instability. He describes his work as a coal miner through the following: "The pay wasn't per ton but per wagon, 55 cents, so every day I would earn about 1 dollar and 65 cents. Immediately I'd convert that into rubles, which would make 3 rubles and 30 kopeks. And once again I'd return home along the potholes and steps, barely making it, exhausted and black like a chimney sweep, and I'd recall the words of my brother that here [in the United States] is toilsome work."[66] He continued on to explain how his life consisted entirely of labor, with moments set aside for trips to church and the bar, but nothing that offered a more fulfilling life: "There was no discussion of school or magazines or books. From work to the bar, or on Sundays to church, and after church to the beer keg, and that was the entirety of life for Polish immigrants."[67] But in the end it wasn't dissatisfaction with working conditions or with low pay but rather of the ways in which labor cut through social bonds that made his work life untenable. He notes that the final straw for him was his intense work schedule in the run up to the Christmas holiday—and the feeling that he was simply going through the motions of saving money without sensing any larger social attachment. As he put it: "[I] even began saving money in the bank . . . but I wouldn't feel satisfied unless I could meet people who would work with me toward collective advancement."[68] It was that realization that prompted him to take a holiday trip to New York, where he fell in love, quit his job at the coal mine, and began what he called his new life, even as he continued to struggle to find full-time employment.

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[65] *Pamiętniki emigrantów*, 483.

[66] Ibid., 485.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 487.

Both of these memoir contest submissions suggest the need to pay attention to how peasant migrants told their financial life stories, and in particular how individuals conceived of their relationships between self and community. As Katherine Lebow has argued, the project of "social memoirs" in Poland was a complex combination of sociological theory (including attempts to understand the relationship of individual consciousness to the collective), literary forms, social activism, and citizenship claims. She concludes, however, that such memoirs constituted a counterbalance to ideas of liberal selfhood, and instead served as an opportunity for participants to develop affiliations based on a universalist conception of human rights—her argument focuses on how memoirists referenced the body, which Lebow maintains constitutes a form of claims making based on, in a reference to Joan Scott, "fundamental human sameness."[69] Regardless of questions of outcome or intent, or whether materials of the type that Plata composed signal a moment where peasants articulated universalism, memoirs of this kind signal a nexus consisting of the restructuring of social relations and authority, as well as a moment, as we saw in Chapter One, where sociologists and laymen alike sought to understand the construction of self and collective. That such a process left room for discussions of both egalitarianism and hierarchical individualism shouldn't be seen as contradictory. Instead, these experiences, born in the late-nineteenth century village and then articulated in the context of global migration, demonstrate the need to examine the reorganization of social relations that happens across borders, as well as the reasons why certain individuals did or did not embrace broader forms of social relations and the exclusionary dynamics of mobility, borders, and narrative.

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[69] Katherine Lebow, "The Conscience of the Skin," 308.

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This chapter has considered the central role that narrations of economic life had in describing the experiences of peasant migrants, at the border and within community life, and also through social memoir. Not only did such narrations allow individuals to demonstrate how they had triumphed over challenges and progressed to respectability in their communities, they also became ways that individuals could show that they embraced concepts like free labor and upward mobility. At the same time, however, one of my goals is to highlight how such experiences were wrapped up in a process that inhibited other forms of belonging and identification. As migrants encountered structures of state power, through bureaucratic procedures and encounters with border control officials, they not only became connected with nationalizing forces in a more customary sense—the need to carry passports or identify oneself as national—they also staked their claim as moderns in an exclusionary sense, as worthy of belonging not just to a nation, but to a group of individuals who are worthy of mobility.[70]

[70] Labor scholars have noted how important labeling workers with certain positive characteristics was to those individuals' employment prospects, and the flip side was also true: being labeled as itinerant, ungrounded, or lacking the proper attitudes toward stable family life is part of a long tradition of denying social and economic opportunities. William Jones's work on African American lumber workers, for example, highlights how, within the context of the Jim Crow South, labor unions and employers countered black laborers' attempts to raise wages and better working conditions by promoting the idea that blackness was tied to general fecklessness, as well as the inability to hold stable employment. William P. Jones, *The Tribe of Black Ulysses: African American Lumber Workers in the Jim Crow South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005).

Chapter 4

Church Riots and the Finances of Faith

On February 15, 1914, riots broke out at St. Casimir's, a Catholic Church on the west side of South Bend, Indiana. Newspaper reports from the time describe the chaotic scene: over 1,000 individuals, objecting to the installation of Reverend Stanisław Gruza as parish priest, defied court order and attacked police officers who were escorting Father Gruza to his new position. The results were violent—the *South Bend Tribune* listed the names of injured police and laypeople alike, among them Thomas Reed, a detective whose "head [was] cut by flying glass," George Schrock, a local reporter whose "head [was] bruised when hit by a thrown marble statue," and Mrs. Charles Niedbalski, whose "scalp [was] laid open by a policeman's club."[1] Still others occupied the church complex, ringing the bell to call in backup from neighboring homes. It wasn't until state leaders threatened to send in National Guard troops that rioters disbanded. The most disgruntled parishioners would later break from the Roman rite and go on to establish an independent Polish National Catholic Church parish. Several months later, after tensions cooled, Gruza took over his position as head pastor without incident.

The skirmish at St. Casimir's is just one of a number of conflicts between church authorities and laypeople that occurred in Polish communities on both sides of the Atlantic in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, which as we've seen was a time of increasing

[1] "Bloody Sunday," *South Bend Tribune* (South Bend, IN), Feb. 16, 1914.

mobility. Most often, scholars present such conflicts as the product of local concerns—in this case, parishioners' opposition to the appointment of an individual whom they saw as representative of the diocese's failure to attend to their needs, or nationalist tensions between ethnic groups, usually cast as conflicts with either German or Irish bishops. The same general point on the significance of local roots holds for similar riots in industrial cities, as scholarship on the so-called "Kolasiński affair" in Detroit suggests, as well as the formation of the Mariavite movement in the Russian partition of Poland—this despite the fact that scholars have demonstrated that the hotbeds for anticlericalism were located in industrial centers like Łódź, Warsaw, and even Toledo, Ohio.[2]

It follows that there is a larger story here, one that cuts across singular cases and personal quarrels, that involves peasant migration, industrial labor production, and changing conceptions of individual economic agency, of the broader changes that exemplified the transition to imaginations of the self in modern life.[3] This interpretation comes into relief, for instance, in

[2] Yedida Kanfer's dissertation on the Mariavite movement is an exception as it places conflicts within religious communities in the context of industrial development in Łódź. Yedida Kanfer, "Łódź: Industry, Religion, and Nationalism in Russian Poland, 1880-1914," PhD diss., (Yale University, 2011). For treatments of church riots in the United States, see Lawrence D. Orton, *Polish Detroit and the Kolasiński Affair* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981). For an interpretation of Marianism among Polish-Americans as rooted in the mysticism of Polish nationalism, as well as the teachings of parochial schools in the United States, see John J. Bukowczyk, "Mary the Messiah: Polish Immigrant Heresy and the Malleable Ideology of the Roman Catholic Church, 1880-1930," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 4, no. 2 (1985): 5-32. Bukowczyk has elsewhere criticized attempts to examine religious conflict within Polish communities in isolation of broader social and economic issues. See his review essay of Orton's *Polish Detroit and the Kolasiński Affair* in the *Journal of American Ethnic History* 1, no. 2 (1982), 107-09.

[3] On the conceptualization of migration, as well as defining connections in world history, see Patrick Manning, "The Problem of Interactions in World History," *American Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (1996): 771-82.

accounts of the parishioners' raiding of the church rectory: "Someone yelled, 'Take the goods. We paid for them!' and a wild stampede started for the rectory," the *Tribune* reported. "Women reached the house first. Tearing down the curtains from the walls, hunting out the costliest items of bedding." Such a description raises the possibility that anticlericalism and violence in church communities went beyond the purview of local power struggles or personal disputes among elites and were instead tied to popular understandings of property, consumerism, and labor commodification.

This chapter thus places the large-scale changes that peasant migrants from the Polish lands experienced in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries into conversation with debates concerning changing conceptions of clerical authority. As we've seen in previous chapters, as peasant migrants moved into cities in country and abroad, and often returned to their home villages to visit family or return permanently, they assimilated knowledge in a way that was transformative in terms of the formation of the modern subject citizen, and in particular the construction of the self-sufficient economic actor, even though what that meant in practice varied greatly from person to person. That this had an impact on religious beliefs and practices shouldn't be surprising. Ever since Max Weber famously made the claim that capitalism was distinctly tied to Protestantism, scholars have recognized that religion was inextricably linked to the formation of a capitalist subject.[4] But unlike Weber, who treated religion as a causal force in the fashioning of self, with economic practice a side effect of belief, this chapter explores the connections between religious authority and economics in order to suggest a more dynamic reading of this relationship. That is, this chapter will consider the modern self as an entity

[4] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*, trans. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (New York: Scribner, 2002).

formed at the nexus of religion and economics, and that individuals formulated new ways of thinking about their lives and meanings of labor and social obligations through the intersections of religious and economic practices. It is my contention that only by looking at inward changes can we begin to understand the nature of popular anticlericalism in Polish communities. In the spaces where peasant migrants were forging new economic lives, anticlericalism provided the language they could use to express their modern sensibilities, even though such sentiments often brought them into conflict with Church leaders.

A few introductory points are in order. First, I follow a number of scholars, notably John Bukowczyk in the Polish-American and Brian Porter-Szűcs in the Polish context, in arguing that looking at the complexities of Polish Catholicism challenges easy secularization narratives that equate modernity with a loss of religion.[5] Instead, what we see is a persistence of religion, even if the meanings it held were contested, sometimes in problematic ways. Second, the story of Polish Catholicism demonstrates the malleability of religion within migrant communities—and this chapter takes as its premise that the practitioners of Catholicism re-worked their beliefs and practices in ways that suited their experiences, but that doesn't mean their attempts were accepted wholescale by Church leaders—quite the opposite, in fact. There was no single vision of Catholicism on the ground; rather conflict, tension, and negotiation were the norm. Finally, while previous chapters have made a case for looking at the everyday economic experiences of peasant migrants, this chapter treats those experiences as anything but mundane. Indeed, one of my claims for this chapter is that the centrality of liberal self-transformation formed the backdrop to the dramatic anticlerical sentiments present in contemporary popular and religious discourses.

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[5] On this point, see Brian Porter-Szűcs's introduction in *Faith and Fatherland*. Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and Fatherland: Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

That these ideas undergirded challenges to clerical authority and broader community violence provides a necessary correction to scholarship on the topic that emphasizes the charismatic nature of schismatic movements and the seemingly inevitable persistence of inter-ethnic conflicts in Polish communities. I conclude with some thoughts on whether it makes sense to differentiate anticlerical sentiment from anti-Catholicism in this case, and how to situate the rhetoric of Polish liberals within the broader scope of anticlericalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[6]

The Church and the Fight Against Modernism

Before we return to the turmoil in Polish parishes, some background on the broader state of the Church is necessary. Scholars of the Catholic Church have laid out nicely the challenges faced at elite levels of the hierarchy at the turn of the twentieth century, including how the Vatican contended with issues of modernity, and more specifically individualism at the time, with the discussion bookended between Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, on the one hand, and Pope Pius X's *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, on the other—what Church leaders often called a

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[6] Much of the work on anticlericalism in the history field has been tied to nationalism, and scholars have emphasized the importance of anti-Catholicism in the development of British and American national belonging. In the German case, scholars have seen anti-Catholicism as connected to the *Kulturkampf*, and most historians highlight the ways in which anticlericalism became a way to forge exclusive forms national identity or mediate interactions between state and citizens. On the former point, see Michael B. Gross, *The War Against Catholicism: Liberalism and the Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004). On the latter, and for a discussion of anti-Catholicism and the creation of a British identity, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). Still others have discussed the importance of anticlericalism in Enlightenment thought, including anticlerical rhetoric in the *Haskalah*. On the topic of the Jewish Enlightenment and anticlericalism, see Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

backlash against "modernism."[7] If *Rerum Novarum*, released in 1891, signaled the possibility to square aspects of liberalism, including self-sufficiency and individual property ownership, with Catholic doctrine in order to develop an expansive vision of social rights, active citizenship, and worker-employer obligations—an option famously enshrined in Leo's pronouncements that industrial workers suffer under the conditions of wage labor and that the state has an obligation to curtail the excesses of capitalism—that spirit of openness, activism, and support for regulation would famously be curtailed sixteen years later by Pope Pius X in *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, an encyclical that condemned modernist intervention in rather broad strokes. Released in 1907, *Pascendi* presents the "modernists" as a coherent group, an almost singular mindset, even if, as Pius X charges in conspiratorial fashion, modernists appear to represent different interests. Modernists, he claimed, twisted the generous intentions of Leo, and did so in order to undermine the authority of the Church. "It is one of the cleverest devices of the Modernists . . . to present their doctrines without order and systematic arrangement, in a scattered and disjointed manner, so as to make it appear as if their minds were in doubt or hesitation, whereas in reality they are quite fixed and steadfast," *Pascendi* reads. If modernists tried to package their ideas in a fragmented manner, as Pius argued, it was only to obscure their true intent to undercut Church leadership and grab power for themselves.

While scholars have listed some probable modernist culprits whom Pius had in mind, the question of who the modernists were is arguably not as important as how their ideas, in a more

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[7] There is some debate surrounding Leo's supposed liberal stance, with some scholars arguing that Leo only partially embraced democratic transformation and pro-workers' initiatives. On this matter, see Paul Misner, *Social Catholicism in Europe: From the Onset of Industrialization to the First World War* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

abstract sense, posed a danger to Catholicism.[8] Pius argued that what was at issue for the Church went beyond the ills of secularism to challenge visions of faith based on progressive evolution and personal experience—a matter that would strike at the heart of Church authority. To this point Pius would criticize modernists for attempting to apply scientific theories of change to Catholic doctrine and practice: "The primitive form of faith, [the modernists] tell us, was rudimentary and common to all men alike, for it had its origin in human nature and human life. Vital evolution brought with it progress, not by the accretion of new and purely adventurous forms from without, but by an increasing perfusion of the religious sense into the conscience." The danger outlined by Pius, curiously, wasn't the outright rejection of Catholic beliefs nor the growth of anti-religious sentiment per se; it was whether religious truths existed in an objective fashion or revealed themselves through an individualized process of introspection, what Pius referred to as "that most pernicious doctrine which would make of the laity the factor of progress in the Church." *Pascendi* thus can be read as both a text in opposition to particular individuals and a critique of a vision of authority that places the roots of progressive change in the minds of ordinary believers. It was the nature of religious truth and, more specifically, of a modern disposition that saw religion as formed in a dialectical relationship between Church and individual consciousness of laity that was at issue. On the risks posed by individual authority, Pius would admonish: "What is imputed to [the modernists] as a fault they regard a sacred duty. They understand the needs of consciences better than anyone else, since they come into closer touch with them than does the ecclesiastical authority. Nay, they embody them, so to speak, in

[8] For a list of potential scholars see, Darrell Jodock, "Introduction II: The Modernists and the anti-Modernists," in *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context*, Darrel Jodock, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

themselves." Modernists, Pius claimed, rejected the presence of external truths in Catholic belief and instead saw truth as formed through evolutionary progress, something suited to the needs of a particular place and time and varied from person to person. As Darrell Jodock explains Pius's backlash, *Pascendi* finds fault in both agnosticism and immanentism, which he argues are two sides to the same philosophical coin—whereas agnosticism locates, in a negative sense, truths in external phenomena, immanentism sees, on the positive side, religious truths as pervasive in human experience and consciousness. The danger for Pius thus was not the belief that religion couldn't serve a purpose in the modern world or that anti-religious views were beginning to permeate the minds of the faithful but rather the claim that religious faith originates in the individual or is otherwise the creation of the individual mind. "Modernism wrongly asserts, according to *Pascendi*, that religion arises out of the human subconscious and that faith has no basis outside this internal religious sentiment," Jodock writes.[9] Such claims, from Pius's perspective, went beyond accusations of personal hubris to cut to the core of Church authority as the external arbiter of religious truths.

Pius's response was to attempt to tighten access to scholarship that promoted individualism, and he accordingly tasked Church officials with restricting the sale and even publication of what he deemed "bad books" by instituting internal review of publications and setting up other censorship practices at a variety of levels from the top down. Pius, moreover, forbade the application of natural sciences to theology, effectively drawing a line in the sand between evolutionary progress and sacred truths. Attempting to square Leo's pronouncement that priests should consider the natural sciences as a form of "brilliant discovery" with the need

[9] Darrell Jodock, "Introduction I: The Modernist Crisis," in *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context*, Darrel Jodock, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4-5.

to curb evolutionary views of progress within the Church, Pius instructed Church leaders to treat scientific and religious phenomena as occupying separate spaces.

Cast this way, we can see why Church officials saw such ideas as dangerous. Once *Rerum Novarum* provided at least a nod in the direction of liberal individualism in Leo's acknowledgement of property rights and the right to contract for wage labor, based on the sanctity of all human beings, as well as the need to embrace social reform, it opened a window for modernists to envision a more expansive role for individualism in the Church. Pius would backtrack in ways that shaped clerical policy for decades after *Pascendi*, most famously in the anti-modernist oath that all priests were required to take until 1967.[10]

A Tale of Two Movements

Pascendi represents a moment of tremendous upheaval within the Church. It was the culmination of attempts to deal with tensions that affected the highest levels of Church leadership but was also manifested on the ground in individual parishes, outside the confines of scholarly theological debates, and would continue to do so for many years after. If Vatican

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[10] The "Oath Against Modernism" stated, in part, "I profess that God, the origin and end of all things, can be known with certainty by the natural light of reason from the created world, that is, from the visible works of creation, as a cause from its effects, and that, therefore, his existence can also be demonstrated….I sincerely hold that the doctrine of faith was handed down to us from the apostles through the orthodox Fathers in exactly the same meaning and always in the same purport. Therefore, I entirely reject the heretical misrepresentation that dogmas evolve and change from one meaning to another different from the one which the Church held previously . . . . I hold with certainty and sincerely confess that faith is not a blind sentiment of religion welling up from the depths of the subconscious under the impulse of the heart and the motion of a will trained to morality; but faith is a genuine assent of the intellect to truth received by hearing from an external source."

officials had to grapple with the challenges brought about by individualism at the ecclesiastical level, turmoil and violence were also features of local Church politics, places where the features of economic life were being actively debated and enacted, and this was of particular significance in Polish migrant communities, spaces of modernity *par excellence*.

Two movements here are important for our purposes: the Mariavites, a devotional movement with roots in the industrial center of Łódź, which based its interventions on the necessity of clerical reform, and the Polish National Catholic Church, formed in the United States as a response to the material and spiritual needs of Polish migrants. Reading these two groups together helps underscore the extent to which the Church's battle with individualism played out on the local level, in challenges to clerical authority on the ground that were then met with swift retribution, and both cases would end in high-profile excommunications of leaders. In a sense, this helps explain in part why the response of Church leadership—in both the Vatican and local dioceses—was so potent and decisive. The threat that such ideas posed wasn't merely abstract but was rather a feature of local Church experiences involving anticlerical attitudes in burgeoning industrial centers across the world.

The numbers involved in such challenges suggest the extent of the challenge that anticlericalism posed within Polish communities in urban centers. At its peak following, the Mariavites counted as many as 160,000 members, with 22 parishes in the main industrial centers of the Congress Kingdom, as well as smaller pockets of followers in Riga, Vilnius, Kiev, and even stretching across the Atlantic to the Detroit area. The Polish National Catholic Church, founded in Scranton, Pennsylvania, would grow to include over 200 parishes in the United States, with approximately 250,000 followers, as well as 50 parishes in interwar Poland. Those numbers are significant, but they also don't capture the entirety of the anticlerical challenges, as disputes

involving clerical authority ran much deeper than raw numbers of these two breakaway movements suggest. Virtually all Midwestern cities with sizable Polish migrant populations would see popular riots in Polish parishes that would result either in complete fractures or reconciliation efforts with the Roman Catholic hierarchy. These episodes, which often had features that facilitated sensationalist readings, would receive extensive media coverage in both Polish- and English-language papers.

To give a sense of the permeating nature of anticlericalism within Polish communities, take, for instance, the coverage of *Ameryka-Echo*, one of the largest papers in the United States that catered to Polish-language speakers, and one that championed the virtues of labor, and in Chapter Two saw how the paper played a prominent role in promoting peasant and peasant migrant education.[11] The popularity of the paper raises the possibility that anticlericalism wasn't solely within the purview of renegade priests, but rather had broader social and economic roots and was likewise a topic for popular discussion. Anticlerical cartoons like the ones below are instructive in demonstrating the criticism of clerical authority within certain segments of Polish communities.

[11] Anna Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann cites *Ameryka-Echo's* circulation numbers as rising from 8,500 in 1895 to 40,000 in 1922. Those numbers grew exponentially throughout the mid- to late-20s, until they reached their peak of 120,000 for their Sunday edition. Anna Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Polish Hearst: Ameryka-Echo and the Public Role of the Immigrant Press* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 62-63.

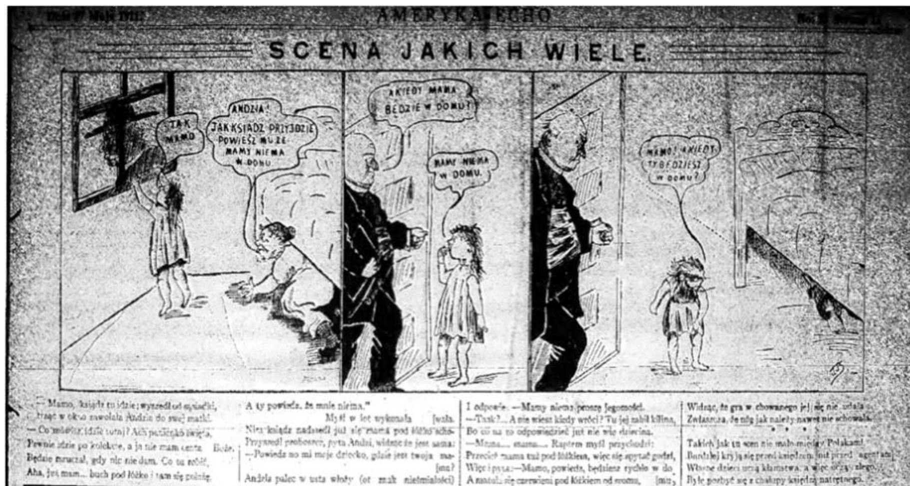

Figure 6: "An Ordinary Scene." The cartoon depicts an encounter between a priest and a mother over money, and more specifically shows a mother who asks her daughter to lie to the family priest while she hides under a bed. (*Ameryka-Echo*, May 17, 1911)

The author of this particular example, titled "An Ordinary Scene," presents a parish priest knocking door-to-door in search of donations for the church collection. A poor mother who is unable to contribute sees the priest at her door and hides under the bed, instructing her daughter to tell the priest she isn't there. The barefoot girl does as she is told, but when the priest asks when her mother will return, the young child, flummoxed, whispers to her mother "Mommy, when will you be home?," exposing the ruse. The author remarks that this cartoon demonstrates how the tensions involved in Church finances affect home life in a negative sense, creating an environment where parents, or rather mothers, create habits of dishonesty in their young children, to the detriment of family and community. As the author suggests, the greed of parish priests affects home life and serves as a source of corruption for innocent children. Here morality gets flipped on its head. Instead of being the source for internal growth, the presence of priests does the opposite, adding to the debasement of children who are taught to lie, and often

this was an issue connected to finances. In this case, the greedy priest goes door-to-door to collect money that is unnecessary from a struggling family. The mother of the family, presumably embarrassed that she has nothing to contribute, is unable to fulfill her obligations to her daughter, to promote her daughter's moral upbringing. The tragedy here is thus two-fold, of a young girl who learns to lie and of the mother who fails in her duty to teach her child right from wrong.

Still, understanding the nature anticlericalism requires attention to scale, moving outward from local to global, though scholars tend situate these pockets of Church tension in isolation of any shared underlying causes. This is the case with the rise of the Mariavite movement within the context of imperial tensions, with Russification policies and the 1905 revolution forming the political backdrop to the formation and growth of the sect, as well as other schismatic "modernist" movements in the region.[12] And situating Mariavitism within the context of the flux and social change of industrializing Poland continues to be of interest to historians, even if English-language scholarly treatments remain lacking.[13] Even if that's the case, however, we tend to lose track of the connections between and across these movements and episodes, as well as the importance that migration and mobility had in these communities. For instance, the region

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[12] On this point, see Robert E. Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904-1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 245-49.

[13] Jerzy Peterkiewicz's sensationalist account of the Mariavites, which delves into the Mariavites' views on sexual intercourse, notwithstanding. Peterkiewicz, *The Third Adam* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975). A few Polish-language treatments exist on the formation and expansion of the Mariavites, including Artur Górecki, *Mariawici i mariawityzm: narodziny i pierwsze lata istnienia* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2011); Stanisław Rybak, *Mariawityzm: dzieje i wspólczesność* (Warsaw: Agencja Wydawnicza CB, 2011); and Stanisław Rybak, *Mariawityzm: studium historyczne* (Warsaw: Lege, 1992).

where Mariavitism first emerged, the administrative territory of Płock, experienced among the highest levels of emigration in the Congress Kingdom, first to the Prussian lands and later to other countries across Europe and North and South America. The numbers, once again, are substantial. From 1882 to 1889, Krzysztof Groniowski estimates, the number of emigrants from the Płock region rose steadily from 141 to 1277, and between 1890 and 1893 those numbers would rise to around 2200 per year.[14]

Significantly, for Mariavites, theological claims don't seem to have been much of an issue as they held particularly orthodox stances toward Catholic doctrine, notably in their promotion of the adoration of Mary as mother of God and the veneration of the Eucharist as the most holy of sacraments—both uncontroversial and relatively conservative stances within the Church to say the least, as suggested by papal decrees from the time.[15] The strong and swift backlash to the movement, Brian Porter-Szűcs maintains, was instead in reference to the Mariavites' stance on individualism, and primarily the stress that the Mariavites placed on the authority of the Church resting on the individual faith and character of priests. "Once again," Porter-Szűcs concludes in reference to the Mariavites, "the issue at stake was the transcendent

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[14] Groniowski notes that between 1890 and 1893, 7458 individuals emigrated from the Governorate of Płock. For a detailed breakdown of emigration from the Congress Kingdom, see Krzysztof Groniowski, "Emigracja z ziem zaboru rosyjskiego (1864-1918)," in *Emigracja z ziem polskich w czasach nowożytnych i najnowszych (XVIII-XXw.)*, Andrzej Pilch, ed. (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 197-99.

[15] Indeed, as Leo XIII would write in 1902 in *Mirae Caritatis*, the movement to promote the Eucharist among various organizations was to be encouraged. On this occasion, Leo announced he would continue to support groups that emphasized the centrality of the Eucharist: "It gives us much pleasure to recall to mind that we have officially approved, and enriched with canonical privileges, not a few institutions and confraternities having for their object the perpetual adoration of the Sacred Host." Nonetheless, I take Yedida Kanfer's point that during this time, various groups contested the figure of Mary and therefore appropriations of Mary as symbol should be seen as heterogenous. Kanfer, *Łódź*, 294.

power of the Church as such—a power that should be honored regardless of the virtue (of lack thereof) of particular members of the clergy."[16]

That the founding of the Mariavites took place during the advent of industrial development in the Congress Kingdom is no coincidence. One of the hotbeds for Mariavitism, Łódź, experienced dramatic economic growth in the 1870s and 1880s due to the rapid expansion of the city's textile industry, which was based primarily on cotton and wool production. The statistics are dramatic when it comes to not just the enlargement but also the rapid consolidation of large factories. Between 1869 and 1900, the number of textile companies that employed between 5 and 15 workers fell sharply from 218 to 34, while the number of companies that employed between 101 and 500 workers rose from 4 to 61, a change of 1,525%. The numbers are even starker for firms of over 500 workers. In 1869 there was one such factory; in 1900 there were 24. The employment numbers from those factories—the ones with over 500 workers—rose by 5,550% in the same time period, with the single large factory in 1869 employing 576 workers and the 24 factories in 1900 employing 31,966.[17]

The numbers don't capture the dire material conditions of labor in Łódź, however—a matter that famously formed the backdrop to the storyline in Władysław Reymont's *The Promised Land* (*Ziemia obiecana*), which depicted the harsh atmosphere of the city's factory life.[18] Scholars of Łódź have noted the impact that rapid industrialization had on workers, and

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[16] Porter-Szűcs, *Faith and Fatherland*, 29.

[17] For these statistics on city economic growth and employment numbers, see Wiesław Puś and Kazimierz Badziak, "Gospodarka Łodzi w okresie kapitalistycznym," in *Łódź: Dzieje miasta*, vol. 1, Bohdan Baranowski and Jan Fijałek, eds. (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1980), 260-61.

[18] Delphine Bechtel provides an excellent summary of *The Promised Land* as, what she calls, "a complete cartography of urban society," including an introduction to the controversies

the city's expansion was combined with relatively few social, administrative, and medical services, owing in large part to the city's secondary status in the Russian Empire. As Stanisław Liszewski summarizes urban development in Łódź in the late-nineteenth century, "Łódź was a huge monofunctional center dominated by the textile industry, densely populated, with a chaotic spatial layout and a lack of tertiary services."[19] The paucity of available healthcare, as well as inadequate sanitary conditions in the city and harsh working conditions, contributed both to shortened life expectancies for adults (around 34 for men and likely lower for women because of childbirth) and high infant mortality rates of between 30-40% in the first year of life.[20] Outside the difficult conditions of urban life, on the whole, the population of Łódź was multicultural, and a number of scholars have examined the cosmopolitan nature of urban life in a space with sizable German, Jewish, and Polish populations. The overall picture of Łódź in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries is thus a dynamic mixture of cross-cultural interaction, rapid growth, deplorable factory conditions, as well as rising class tensions, matched with a lack of social services that could have ameliorated some of the negative effects of industrial growth.

The Mariavites can only be understood within this context of industrial expansion, class conflict, and political radicalism. Built from her experiences with another local but much more orthodox church agitator, Honorat Koźmiński, founder Maria Franciszka Kozłowska would

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surrounding Reymont's antisemitic depiction of Jewish industrialists and urban wanderers. Delphine Bechtel, "Urbanization, Capitalism, and Cosmopolitanism: Four Novels and a Film on Jews in the Polish City of Łódź," *Prooftexts* 26, no. 1-2 (2006): 79-106.

[19] Stanisław Liszewski, "The Origins and Stages of Development in Industrial Łódź and Łódź Urban Region," in *A Comparative Study of Łódź and Manchester: Geographies of European Cities in Transition*, Stanisław Liszewski and Craig Young, eds. (Łódź: Łódź University Press, 1997), 29.

[20] The numbers cited here are from the 1850s. Jan Fijałek, "Położenie ludności: stan sanitarny miasta i zdrowotność mieszkańców," in *Łódź: Dzieje miasta*, 318.

establish the order—which she would call the Mariavites (a combination of the words "Maria" and "vita")—based on the necessity of clerical reform and spiritual growth. Growing from mystical visions, which Kozłowska detailed in her writings "A Work of Great Mercy" (*Dzieło Wielkiego Miłosierdzia*), the Mariavites would merge support for clerical reform with elements of traditionalism.

The nature of Kozłowska's visions provides insight into the roots of the group's criticism of the clergy and its focus on internal development. She described those experiences using chaotic, transcendent language:

> On August 2, 1893, after hearing Holy Mass and receiving Communion, I suddenly became detached from my senses and stood before the Majesty of God. A light surrounded my soul and I was then shown a depiction of the general corruption of the world in its last days, and later the dissolution of the morals among the clergy and the sins committed by priests. I saw God's justice in punishing the world and the mercy he gave to the dying world, and as a last salvation, he gave the Blessed Sacrament and Mary's help. After a moment of silence, the Lord said to me: "In order to spread this message, I want you to establish a congregation of priests called the Mariavites, with the motto "All for the glory of God and the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary."[21]

Kozłowska goes on to explain how she attempted to suppress that experience, fearing it was a temptation from Satan, and yet she continued to received messages from Christ ordering her to establish the group, even if it would cause her personal harm. Then, on the Feast of the Assumption, Kozłowska had another encounter, and this time Christ announced he would give her total authority over clergy. "And the Lord added: 'the most dear to me are my priests, and I shall give you power over the priests.'"[22] Significantly for our purposes, when Kozłowska expressed doubts about Christ's commands to take a leading role in clerical reform and

[21] *Dzieło Wielkiego Miłosierdzia* (Płock: przy Świątyni Miłosierdzia i Miłości, 1927), 5.

[22] Ibid., 11.

questioned whether her illusions were in fact from Satan in disguise, Christ asked her to look inward to understand her faith. He said to her, she writes, "All good thoughts, inspirations, movements, and enlightenments of the mind, in short everything that happens in the soul are hidden from Satan," and as such, she would note, internal spiritual development and personal relationships with Christ remained necessary aspects of religious life. In her visions, Christ continued to stress the importance of individualism and religious experience, and when Kozłowska asked for clarification on what he meant when he said he would grant her "power over the priests," he replied that such authority wasn't to be understood as external or objective. Instead, she should focus on the transformative, introspective aspects of religion. It was through internal development that she would gain power over the priests.

Cast in that light, we can see why Kozłowska's movement came into conflict with Church authorities, the otherwise mainstream elements of her message and practices notwithstanding, especially when compared to the challenges that other groups posed at the time.[23] The gender dynamics at play are, of course, hard to overlook, and the vitriolic response of Church officials—Pius would refer to Kozłowska as "that woman" in official writings—to an institution that granted a woman clerical authority was indeed extreme, which is something Kozłowska addressed in her writings. Describing the development of the movement, she noted "The Mariavites began to grow more and more and soon their number reached the dozens. Still, other priests would mock them, finding every opportunity to hurt their reputations and paralyze their activities." The "gravest accusation" of the priests, she noted, was that the Mariavites were

[23] Robert Blobaum describes the Mariavites as moderate compared to other schismatic groups in Łódź, precisely because of the Mariavites dogmatic focus on restoration and traditionalism. Blobaum, *Rewolucja*, 247-49.

"under the direction of a woman."[24] In this context, the veneration of the Virgin Mary, an otherwise uncontroversial stance, could have the potential to be interpreted in a more threatening way. The combination of power for women, along with glorification of Mary, sent a radical message of the role women could play in Church leadership.[25]

The Mariavites, however, didn't limit themselves to spiritual development. They would combine their focus on individual growth of clergy and laity with an interest in providing social services and education that were sorely lacking in industrial cities, and group members founded a number of institutions aimed at improving the internal and material lives of workers and their families, including schools, libraries, reading rooms, and orphanages that served children in the regions of Płock, Łódź, Warsaw, and Lublin. They would rely on a vision reminiscent of the Warsaw positivists, one that emphasized social and economic development through individual labor. Still, as theologian Tomasz Mames argues, the Mariavites' pedagogical focus differed in some significant respects from the positivists, even if there were overlaps with positivist ideas of organic work, utilitarianism, and rational empiricism grounded in scientific methods. But while both groups embraced social progress, Mames writes that the Mariavites were unable to break entirely from the spiritual realm of the romantics. Writing of the overlaps between positivism and the Mariavite movement, Mames argues that the Mariavites can be distinguished from the positivists in their view that it is impossible "to understand experience in the world only through

[24] Ibid., 24-25.

[25] Notwithstanding the overt challenges to clerical authority, Kozłowska's writings also suggest that the Mariavites adopted rather unconventional stances toward female mysticism and sexual experience, which Yedida Kanfer notes became a source of contention and ridicule among Mariavite opponents. Kanfer, *Łódź*, 303-04.

natural methods. [They believed] you cannot reduce human existence to scientific practices, because there is space outside it where we need to reevaluate materiality."[26]

That interest in merging the messianic tradition of the romantics with the positivists' attention to individual and social development influenced Mariavite approaches to schooling. Mames, for instance, writes that the Mariavites' interest in education derived from their belief that the mind doesn't develop autonomously, or from schooling narrowly conceived, but rather through active work in authentic situations—a perspective that overlaps nicely with Dewey's approach to schooling. They accordingly embraced aspects of the romantic messianic tradition, notably the importance of spirituality, while attempting to reconcile their focus on lofty ideals and internal sentiment with the positivist message of social and economic growth, as well as attention to material conditions. Such attempts would require the Mariavites to come to terms with their skepticism of philosophers like Herbert Spencer, with their interest in creating new men (and women), as well as affirming the centrality of the individual in the larger social body.[27] They would do so by connecting internal moral development to the need to provide social services in the booming, yet destitute, labor sector of the Congress Kingdom.

They would continue this work without official sanction from the Vatican. When a group of Mariavite priests travelled to Rome in the hopes of receiving formal recognition in the spring of 1906, the timing was auspicious, at least they initially believed. Pope Leo XIII had just died, and the new Pope Pius X, like his predecessor, had a reputation for promoting the veneration of Holy Communion. The Mariavites would be disappointed. On April 5, 1906, Pius would release

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[26] Tomasz Dariusz Mames, *Oświata Mariawitów w latach 1906-1935* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2015), 124.

[27] Ibid., 125-26.

an encyclical titled “Tribus Circiter” to Church leaders in Warsaw, Płock, and Lublin, ordering Mariavite priests to submit to their authority and break with the order. Noting that in general he approved of the adoration of the Eucharist, Pius denied the divinity of Kozłowska, whom he refused to call by name, instead arguing that her followers had been “blinded not so much by conscious pride as by ignorance and delusion.”[28] Pius would accordingly require Kozłowska’s followers to reject the Mariavites in the strongest possible terms. “We again confirm the decree whereby the society of Mariavites, unlawfully and invalidly founded, is entirely suppressed, and we declare it suppressed and condemned, and we proclaim that the prohibition is still in force which forbids all priests, with the exception of the one whom the Bishop of Plotsk shall in his prudence depute to be her confessor, to have anything whatever to do on any pretext with the woman.” Offered the opportunity to rejoin the Church, provided she disbanded the Mariavites and accepted the authority of Church leaders, Kozłowska balked. The Bishops of Warsaw would follow through with their threat of excommunication, and in December 1906 the Church formally expelled Kozłowska, along with other Mariavite followers.

Like the Mariavites, the Polish National Catholic Church (PNCC), as suggested in Chapter 1, had roots in industrial development, and indeed both the PNCC and the Mariavites ended up joining the Union of Utrecht, a federation of “Old Catholic” churches that have broken from the Roman rite and accordingly do not recognize the doctrine of papal infallibility as

[28] Pope Pius X, “Tribus Circiter: Encyclical on the Mariavites or Mystic Priests of Poland to Our Venerable Brethren, the Archbishops of Warsaw, and Bishops of Plotsk and Lublin,” April 5, 1906.

defined under the First Vatican Council.[29] Significantly, they would also develop doctrine that was rooted in ideas of individualism, though their focus would veer toward developing individual property rights rather than fostering spiritual growth.

Founded in Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1897, Rev. Franciszek Hodur, created the PNCC in response, as he put it, to the need to combine nationalization practices, including support for Polish language training and less tangible affective stances to one's national identity—inspiring a love for Poland, for instance—in addition to greater financial transparency and clerical autonomy. Some scholars have argued that the PNCC was a result of conflict between the traditional hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church and the more democratic institutions of the United States. Sociologist Hieronim Kubiak places the roots of PNCC's conflict with the Roman Catholic Church, for instance, in two possible areas: the first being "the influence of the American environment on the conflicts in parishes came down to the conflict between autocratic and democratic patterns of social organization," which Kubiak sees as grounded in the influence that associational life, including the various mutual aid societies and political organizations that catered to migrant laborers in the late-nineteenth century, had in Polish communities in the United States; and the second, the ongoing ethnic conflicts between Polish clergy and their German or Irish superiors, and more generally the persistence of inter-ethnic tensions in urban centers.[30]

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[29] The PNCC, as of 2003, is no longer a member of the Union, due to its stance against the ordination of women.

[30] Hieronim Kubiak, *Polski Narodowy Kościół Katolicki w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki w latach 1897-1965: Jego społeczne uwarunkowania i społeczne funkcje* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1970), 94-95.

PNCC leaders nonetheless described the church's founding not so much as an organized schism but rather as the result of a protracted conflict within the Sacred Heart parish in Scranton over property rights and the use of parish funds to build an addition to the cemetery—a move that prompted parishioners, many of whom were peasant migrants, to push for the formation of a committee that would provide checks against what they saw as the financial mismanagement of church affairs by their parish priest, Rev. Richard Aust.[31] When their demands weren't met by the diocese, parishioners barred Aust from the church and again demanded the establishment of a parish committee formed from elections of a general assembly. *The Scranton Tribune* reported the following from the parishioners' meeting on August 10, 1896 based on an interview from one attendee: "Six trustees and four collectors were . . . appointed. This committee shall exist for one year and shall manage faithfully all the affairs of the church. We also wish to say that we had between six and seven hundred legal members of the church at the meeting which had appointed the committee."[32]

The setting of Scranton, Pennsylvania has parallels to Łódź in its industrial setting. Between the 1880s and the 1910s, the city's population boomed from 45,000 to 129,867, based on civic publications from the time, with the same publications highlighting the dramatic growth in coal mining and textile factories, notably in silk manufacturing.[33] "It has been truthfully said," boasted local engineer William Griffith in describing the industrial expansion in Scranton, "that

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[31] On this matter, see Rev. Stephen Wlodarski, *The Origin and Growth of the Polish National Catholic Church* (Scranton: The Polish National Catholic Church, 1974), 20-29.

[32] "The Polish Church Trouble," *Scranton Tribune*, August 12, 1896.

[33] Numbers listed in *Scranton: Being an Illustrated and Descriptive Booklet of the City of Scranton, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.* (Scranton: Scranton Board of Trade, 1912).

the nation that mines the coal will rule the world. The history of Scranton has also proved that the city that mines the coal is bound to grow (without watching)."[34] The rapid development of Scranton's mining industry coincided with a similar spike in school attendance. Albert H. Welles, principal of Central High, remarked enthusiastically that enrollment in city schools had grown from just under 7,500 in the late 1870s to over 21,000 pupils in 1911. The numbers didn't capture the entirety of the progress Scranton schools had made. Welles noted that city schools offered three tracks for college-bound students—a liberal arts program for students interested in attending a humanities college, a "scientific" program for engineering schools, and a "general" course of study for students who would enroll in a normal school—along with separate manual training programs for boys and girls. Welles summarized the condition of schools at the time as "commodious and sanitary, [with] the corps of teachers doing faithful work all along the line from the first year primary grade to the last year of the high school."[35]

Hodur's explanations of national tensions and anticlericalism tended to be rooted in financial matters, or rather would merge both ethnic and financial tensions, as he would write in his pamphlet "The Sure Path" (*Pewna Droga*), published by Antoni Paryski's *Ameryka-Echo* group. "The Pope knows that Irish bishops around fifty years ago established regulations that were good for them and their nation, but disastrous for Poles, and because of their strength, those bishops now control close to 1000 Polish churches, schools, and cemeteries as their own property, stealing from us close to $50,000,000 in property and pulling from them every year

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[34] William Griffith, "Mines and Mining," in *Scranton*, 19.

[35] Albert H. Welles, "The Educational Interests of Scranton," in *Scranton*, 39.

various taxes, payments, and levies of around a quarter of a million dollars," Hodur wrote accusingly.[36]

As such, money matters played a central role in early policy, as reflected in the discussions during the first PNCC synods. The notes from the Fourth Synod in 1921 state, for example, "A longer discussion ensued regarding the compensation of priests, offerings for clerical services such as baptisms, weddings, funerals, and such, and finally it was accepted as a principle that Father pastor is to have as compensation from the parish: a free residence, light, heat, a salary of at least $100 monthly, and freewill offerings for the various religious services provided above."[37] Church finances and compensation for priests were a subject of intense debate, as the material conditions of work and the need to make a living seemed to clash with criticisms of Roman Catholic priests and their extravagant use of money—an issue that the researchers on Dewey's Philadelphia study highlighted.

The difference in settings was significant for Hodur. It was only in the context of emigration, he believed, that Poles could critique the Church, and the institution's status in the United States—and notably the relationship between the Church and capitalism—brought the necessity of assessment and criticism of both the Church and clergy into relief. The structures of capitalism, for Hodur, were a mixed bag, as they allowed for the financing of Polish parishes—"in the great spaces between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans rose over 300 churches in the span of the last 25 years," Hodur would remark. At the same time, however, the development of parishes was a matter regulated by financial rather than moral decisions, and it wasn't Poles who

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[36] Ks. Franciszek Hodur, *Pewna droga* (Toledo: A.A. Paryski, 1915), 8.

[37] "The Fourth Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church," in *The Polish National Catholic Church: Minutes of the First Eleven General Synods, 1904-1963*, Casimir J. Grotnik, ed. (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2002), 109.

were in control of their parishes. Hodur's criticism of Church financial arrangements found a corollary in what he deemed leaders' attempts to control individual faith. Writing that Christ taught that salvation came from the relationship between God and man and something that wasn't mediated by priests or the Church as an institution, he argued that priests treated religious concepts like faith and grace as grounded in the relationship between clergy and laity as a way to assert their authority.

Internal transformation of the individual believer was key for the PNCC, and it's here that he broke entirely with the Church hierarchy. At a speech in Jersey City, New Jersey in 1910, Hodur expressed his belief that the Church would exist only insofar as it met the demands of individual parishioners:

> I acknowledge the meaning and mission of the Roman Church. I even acknowledge the enormous services which the Roman Church gave to human culture. But I also see the faults in this organization which disposed me to cast it aside. Every free person should belong to any organization so long as he has spiritual benefit, as long as the teaching of the Church meets the soul's desires, as long as he finds an answer to the highest questions of existence, pacification of the soul's yearnings, and national problems. If he does not find this in a given Church, he should leave it.[38]

Hodur, significantly, inverts the message of Pius in *Pascendi* in a dramatic, direct way. The Church, he states, is like any other institution or voluntary association and therefore should answer to the needs of its members, not the reverse. In this way priests are no longer guides to religious truths but instead should serve the personal development of the individual. He made this point clear later on in the same speech when he argued:

> The greatest adornment of a person is his character. Not everyone is given talent but each of us can slowly acquire the character of a strong person if he will behave honestly with himself and will fulfill in life those principles which may be found in his mind. When it is the opposite, if between our internal life, that is, the life of the soul, and

[38] Bishop Francis Hodur, *Sermon Outlines and Occasional Speeches, 1899-1922* (Scranton: Central Diocese Polish National Catholic Church, 1999), 43.

> external life there is distraction, discord, then such a person is a great liar, a most unhappy person.[39]

If Hodur wasn't clear enough in his intent, he'd follow that line to its logical conclusion. Until the Roman Catholic Church started paying attention to the individual development of its members, it would and should continue to lose followers. "That is why life is so sad, full of spiritual conflicts. The laity especially do not believe today in their Catholic dogmas and practices." Associational life, it follows, was significant for Hodur, who saw the Church as an extension of other forms of voluntary associations, and with that the Church would exist only so long as it catered to the needs and development of the faithful.

Beyond criticism of the Roman rite, Hodur would likewise underscore how the PNCC would have to keep that practicality in mind in order to survive, and doing so would require that the PNCC understood the needs of its parishioners, who were mostly industrial laborers. Notably, Hodur would extend that language in order to explain the relationship between clergy and parishioners, applying ideas of labor exploitation to the religious life of the worker. Speaking at the Seventh General Synod of the Polish National Catholic Church in 1935, Hodur would explain to fellow officials: "[I am describing] not only considerations of a financial nature, but the brazen exploitation of the Polish people by the clergy of the old Church." Hodur explained this exploitation involved "not only the matter of parish properties," but also the inability of Church authorities to support parishioners' spiritual growth that led followers to break from the Roman rite.[40]

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Hodur, *The Polish National Catholic Church*, 198.

Here we see overlap between the PNCC and the Mariavites. While the Mariavites were much more attentive to theological debates and questions of social progress and the PNCC seemed grounded in matters of property and financial dealings, both groups ultimately sought greater awareness of what they deemed the Church's inability to support parishioners' development. And it was that attention to the individual that brought both Hodur and Kozłowska into conflict with Church authorities. (Hodur had been excommunicated in 1898.) In both cases, criticism of the Church could be read as something bigger—as a challenge not to specific leaders but rather to the Church's unassailable authority.

The Economic Foundations of Midwestern Discontent

The broader movements outlined above found local corollaries in episodic church violence in Polish communities, and indeed Hodur at times situated the formation of the PNCC in the context of other examples of anticlerical violence in Polish communities in the United States.[41] One of the more dramatic incidents, the so-called Kolasiński affair, emerged after a German bishop released charismatic priest Dominik Kolasiński from his duties at St. Albertus's Parish in Detroit in 1885. While some historians have emphasized the intra-ethnic undertones of

[41] Hodur would explain in his pamphlet "New Roads" (*Nowe drogi*) that the issues that facilitated the formation of the PNCC were also present in a number of other Church communities. He listed several prominent examples of conflicts between parishioners and clergy, including the cases of Rev. Dominik Kolasiński in Detroit, Rev. Wojciech Mielcuszny at Holy Trinity in Chicago, Rev. Franciszek Kołaszewski in Cleveland, Rev. Antoni Kozłowski at St. Hedwig's in Chicago, and Jan Pitass in Buffalo. Franciszek Hodur, *Nowe drogi: kartka z historyi wolnego Kościoła polskiego w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki Północnej* (Scranton, Pennsylvania: Straż, 1972), 10-11.

the incident—a German bishop dismissed Kolasiński—it also highlights the centrality of money and property interests in struggles involving competing church factions, a matter that is readily apparent.

The case of Kolasiński in some ways is unique among church riots in Polish communities, if only in degree rather than kind. The protracted nature of conflict, as well as the long line of legal cases that worked their way through the courts over the better part of a decade and the visibility of the conflict, which was covered extensively and in dramatic fashion in Detroit's English-language papers, lends itself to a focus on the more sensational aspects of the conflict, and arguably detracts from its larger economic roots. It wouldn't be a stretch, then, to frame the "Kolasiński affair" as an event that was rooted primarily in financial matters: the initial conflict between Kolasiński and Bishop Caspar Borgess involved Kolasiński's refusal to provide the diocese with financial disclosures involving church expenditures. At the time Kolasiński had supervised the construction of the largest church in Detroit, which drew attention to Kolasiński's management, or mismanagement, of church finances.

Looking at instances of anticlerical violence suggests that such incidents were popular in nature, in the sense that ordinary parishioners used them as a way to express their dissatisfaction with Church leadership and expected a say in the decision making done at a diocese level. Riots thus had a dual function—as a form of communication to Church officials when parishioners believed local bishops were unresponsive to or unfamiliar with their needs and as a way to articulate their property interests.[42]

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[42] For a discussion of church finances and property at the heart of parishioner unrest, see Anthony Kuzniewski's study of church riots in Wisconsin, and in particular the chapter titled "From Resistance to Revolt." Anthony J. Kuzniewski, *Faith and Fatherland: The Polish Church War in Wisconsin, 1896-1918* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980).

Such was the case with Reverend John Kubacki, the priest in residence at St. Adalbert's in South Bend, Indiana, who was dismissed after a scandal involving improper use of Church collection funds. As stated in internal diocese documents, Father Kubacki broke from Church guidelines when he sent a substantial part of the parish's Christmas collection to a charity for Polish refugee children, setting off a controversy about how much of a say parishioners could have in designating church donations. As the diocese report into the controversy states, "When Rev. Kubacki sent me less than one hundred dollars for his Christmas collection for the year 1919, I wrote him inquiring if that was the sum total of his Christmas collection. He responded very promptly: 'Of course not. I sent $700 of it to Poland for orphans there." The misappropriation of funds was compounded with the diocese's charges that Kubacki instructed parishioners to reserve donations at particular times during the year, in order to augment the coffers of his choice. "Father Kubacki spoke to the people in church and out of it against these collections and instructed them to withhold their offerings on those days," the diocese charged. Church officials suspected he did so not to support a cause close to his heart, but rather to incite violence within the church. "[Kubacki] had made his presence intolerable, since his conduct proved over and over again that his insubordination to ecclesiastical authority was stubbornly such, and could no longer be tolerated."[43]

Kubacki was dismissed in early February, which caused concern among officials that his firing would encourage discord among parishioners, or even spark riots. Speaking of the transition to a new priest, they would remark: "[Kubacki] placed his successor in a difficult position . . . . The parish committees were and are still opposed to sending the total collections

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[43] Report titled "Case of Rev. John Kubacki, former pastor of St. Adalbert's Church, South Bend, Indiana," undated, Frank Renkiewicz Papers, PIASA 40.131.

prescribed by the diocese. Some of them told me they would not sign the annual report, if they saw too much money given for the diocesan collections." Herman Alerding, Bishop of Ft. Wayne, would respond to the report with the following question: "Does the parish of St. Adalbert's side with their pastor in the stand he is taking? This is a serious matter. If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, the removal of the pastor cannot be effected without causing an open revolt of the parish." Referencing the riots at St. Casimir's, Bishop Alerding would add cryptically, "Our past experiences tell us what that means."

Kubacki had for some time been acting as an unofficial banker for at least one parishioner—an elderly woman, Mary M., who entrusted her savings of $500 to the parish in exchange for Kubacki's promise to take care of her funeral, and Kubacki likely gave her a small loan to cover her living expenses. As Kubacki explained to Bishop Alerding in the year before his dismissal from St. Adalbert's, the woman was concerned that her family would contest any will and would therefore fail to act in her best wishes. She thus set aside $115 for a casket, hearse expenses, and pall bearers, as well as a funeral mass. The remaining funds would go to the Church for masses, one per month, for a period of six years. Kubacki would also charge a small fee for this service. Bishop Alerding approved of the arrangement on June 7, 1916.

The Kubacki incident could easily be cast as one involving nationalist tensions between a Polish priest and German superior, and there's some evidence that Kubacki relied on nationalist rhetoric to stir up parishioners. "Not content with [insubordination] he strove to excite the people against the Bishop representing American Bishops as great enemies of the Poles—enemies who had decided by concerted action to deprive them of their language in school and even in the Church," an internal affidavit sent to Bishop Alerding noted. Nonetheless, that would overlook other deep-seated tensions involved in Kubacki's tenure. Indeed, the Diocese of

Grand Rapids had banned Kubacki from saying mass or otherwise working within its domain in 1915 after he delivered a lecture voicing his support for prohibition. He would continue to be a thorn in the side of the Diocese of Ft. Wayne until the mid-1940s, and following his removal from St. Adalbert's, he was transferred to St. Dominic's in Bremen, Indiana and later to St. Patrick's in Walkerton, parishes located outside Polish communities. There he championed two causes that, once again, brought him into conflict with the diocese: an anti-alcohol campaign and a push to stop "mixed" (Catholic and non-Catholic) marriages, both of which he discussed in financial terms. Writing to Bishop Alerding's successor, Bishop John F. Noll, Kubacki would refer to priests who supported such marriages as "Judases" who were willing to sell out the Church for money, though he saw his own popularity measured through financial success. "Witness the donations in kind (3 altars, 5 statues, a large Crucifix, votive candle stand, chimes, Communion paten, etc.) to the value of over $2400 just because [my parishioners] think I am 'just right.' Weak Catholics prefer to go to the 'seminary' for mass where they hear no sermons against their worldliness," he would write sardonically to his superior.[44] Significantly, however, any risk that Kubacki's presence would cause conflict between laity and Church leadership would be a non-issue once he was removed from St. Adalbert's, and the priest's eccentric and inappropriate behaviors caused parishioners to call for his removal. In 1939 the parishioners from St. Dominic's sent a petition from "more than a majority of adult members left in the Church" asking for Bishop Noll to remove Kubacki from his position. Kubacki held on to his position in Walkerton until his retirement—he left more or less on his own terms—in August of 1947. (Upon tendering his resignation, Kubacki would announce to his congregation: "Goodbye

[44] Rev. John Kubacki to Bishop John F. Noll, May 15, 1941, Frank Renkiewicz Papers, PIASA 40.131.

unprogressive, fogy town—Dogpatch. The town fits the people and the people fit the town. I have no regrets leaving it."[45])

Anticlericalism or Anti-Catholicism?

The nature of the challenges to clerical authority among Polish communities raises the issue of whether we should situate anticlericalism within a broader story of anti-Catholicism, and indeed that line between reform and undermining of Church authority is tricky to delineate, as is the difference between seemingly legitimate hopes for reform and stereotyping and hatred. While many liberal detractors argued that they were good Catholics and openly supported Catholic teachings, only objecting to the attempts of parish priests to regulate the personal lives of their parishioners or openly advocating stances sympathetic to modernism, many priests who came into conflict with Church authorities would have to decide whether they would break with the Roman rite in order to join the PNCC or another separate protestant denomination. Gauging the extent to which ordinary parishioners left the Catholic Church outright is likewise thorny, even though the attempts of local dioceses to reign in recalcitrant parishioners or otherwise address popular concerns suggests that the problem was, at the very least, on their mind.

Again, though, the question of whether locating the roots of anticlericalism within the larger social and economic changes in Polish migrant communities was grounded in the same sentiment as the more familiar nativist, anti-Catholic movements like the Know-Nothings is a

[45] Unidentified clipping titled "Father Kubacki will retire from service September 1," undated, Frank Renkiewicz Papers, PIASA 40.131.

difficult one. Were Polish clerical reformers internalizing the same cultural anxieties about migration and economic life as their protestant counterparts, even if they came at the issue from a different vantage point? Here we do see some similarities, including the persistence of anxieties about modern economic life, though it is significant that some parishioners saw themselves as practicing Catholics who continued to believe in Church doctrine, even if their attempts to reconcile liberal individualism with clerical authority were in vain.

It's important, though, that church riots likely had broad participation—which is something often obscured in press accounts from the time as well as secondary literature. Some of these cases were dramatic, and indeed papers at the time played up the more sensational aspects of these episodes. But we shouldn't lose sight of the possibility that changing attitudes toward self and ideas of labor and property often undergirded challenges to clerical authority.

This chapter considered how the broader themes associated with modernity affected conceptions of clerical authority within local Polish communities and notably fomented ideas of anticlericalism, both in a more formal sense through the creation of schismatic movements like the Mariavites and the Polish National Catholic Church and in popular challenges to authority, as represented by church riots. If, as I've argued, anticlericalism can be understood only by examining changing conceptions of economic agency, such an observation suggests the ways in which the forces of destabilization operate in the context of mobility and migration. That might not seem significant at first glance. As scholars of social integration have noted, as much as the language of modernity relies on universalist visions—the hopes or expectations of integration, provided one adopts the "correct" images, behaviors, and attitudes—the reality is much different. As Mica Nava has argued in her work on cosmopolitanism in Britain, difference is an integral

component of modern life, and she locates the source of difference in modernity's dialogical qualities.[46] Moreover, such manufactured difference has an impact not only on global structures—for instance, borders, as we examined in the previous chapter—nor on in-group/out-group dynamics, but also on internal community dynamics, in this case conceptions of religious authority that formed the backdrop to schismatic movements and popular violence at the time.

Acknowledging the complexities and tensions within communities brought about by migration, as well as the limitations of universalist possibilities for belonging, suggests the need to revise any neat equation of Poles with Catholicism. What we have seen instead is the significance of conflict and malleability of religious beliefs, which were constantly under negotiation during the era of mass migration. In many dramatic instances, such negotiation led to episodic violence, as instances of church riots in a number of industrial cities, including Scranton, South Bend, and Detroit, suggest, as well as outright breaks with clerical authorities.

The question, then, is where do we locate the source of such conflict? Nava's argument that modernity entails the seeds of negation is an important one, of course, and this chapter has made the claim that discord, rather than integration, is a central feature of the transition to liberal norms of selfhood. That Church officials sought to mitigate the effects of such broad economic changes on clerical authority is clear from *Rerum Novarum*, but *Rerum Novarum's* attempts to ameliorate the material impact of capitalism on workers also set in motion the need to square capitalism's affective changes, a matter that played out in local parishes and in schismatic movements in Polish communities.

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[46] Mica Nava, "Cosmopolitan Modernity: Everyday Imaginaries and the Register of Difference," *Theory, Culture, & Society* 19, no. 1-2 (2002): 81-99.

That, of course, doesn't mean that nationalism didn't have an important role in localized violence, and renegade priests would often resort to national rhetoric in order to instigate or otherwise explain conflict, as seen in the many references to supposedly conspiratorial German and Irish bishops. Even those references, though, were inflected with financial matters involving local churches—whether parishioners should pay for real property or church renovations, as in the case of the PNCC in Scranton, or have a say in where their donations were used, as in the conflict at St. Adalbert's.

Acknowledging the centrality of economic conflict and changing conceptions of economic agency isn't an inconsequential matter. As this chapter demonstrates, contrary to the easy equation of Polishness with Catholicism, the period under study was rife with tensions that not infrequently exploded in episodic violence and schismatic breaks with Rome. That in and of itself suggests the need to understand the diversity of experiences among Polish Catholics, and raises the issue of why challenges to clerical authority could come from the very people who likely considered themselves faithful Catholics.

This begs the question: Should we consider the internal challenges of Catholic liberals in the same vein as external opposition? If the question of how to situate the anticlerical beliefs promulgated by reformers and critics is a fraught one that tended to rely on stereotyping and "clash of civilization" type arguments, then what do we make of the anticlerical rhetoric that emerged from the faithful?[47] Those who held such views walked a fine line between reform and outright anti-Catholicism, though contemporary Catholic leaders undoubtedly would have found such a distinction problematic. At the same time, however, the language of anticlericalism

[47] Ari Joskowicz makes this point in a different context. See Joskowicz's introduction in *The Modernity of Others: Jewish Anti-Catholicism in Germany and France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

became an important tool for Polish migrants to articulate the problems they faced as they traversed the world, and signals the importance that the liberal worldview had in their communities. As we've seen, these individuals often went in different directions, forming break-away factions like the Mariavites and the PNCC, creating a publishing empire—in the case of Paryski's *Ameryka-Echo*, or simply voicing discontent in the form of episodic church violence. The language of anticlericalism thus provided individuals the ability to express their desires for more autonomous economic practices within their communities.

These examples, disparate as they were, nonetheless shared certain characteristics that can only be explained by placing their anticlerical views in the context of modern mass migration and their understandings of labor and property. It's telling that the cornerstones of some PNCC buildings are inscribed with the words "Własność Polskiego Ludu" ("Property of the Polish People"). Instead of focusing on the Polish adjective, though, this chapter has made a case for looking at why conceptions of property played such an important role in anticlerical sentiment. The language of anticlericalism provided church reformers and peasant migrants alike with a way to express their dissatisfaction with the Church hierarchy, as well as showcases their internal self-transformations.

Conclusion

This dissertation has sought to explain how experiences of migration and ideas of productive labor affected conceptions of selfhood among peasant migrants from the Polish lands in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Of particular note is the way in which migrants internalized new, historically contingent notions of economic subjectivity, including the centrality of progress and uplift to conceptions of self. To be seen as a productive laborer has a profound impact on both one's future prospects and personal worldview, and it has long shaped political discussions involving citizenship and belonging.

This continues to be the case. We need only look to present-day debates over the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to see how the norms of productive labor shape public discourse on who is deserving of mobility, inclusion, and opportunity. Take this opinion piece from the *New York Times*, written by Joseph Tobin, the Archbishop of Newark, who ties support for DACA to the workplace productivity of migrants: "If the Dreamers are deported, it will do great harm to this country. According to the Center for Migration Studies of New York, two million or so young people . . . have integrated successfully into our society. Sixty-five percent work, with over 70,000 self-employed . . . . Removing them would hurt our country economically and socially."[1] Still others focus on aggregate economic impact. "Ending the 'Dreamers' Program Could Cost Hundreds of Thousands of Jobs," reads

[1] Joseph W. Tobin, "If You're a Patriot and a Christian, You Should Support the Dream Act," *New York Times*, Feb. 26, 2018.

one headline from *Fortune*.[2] "DACA Deportations Could Cost US Economy More than $400 Billion," reads another, this one from *CNBC*.[3]

The ideas that undergird support for the DACA program are the same ones that labor migrants from the Polish lands relied on and contributed to in an era of mass migration. But it's important to emphasize that even though those ideas of work ethic and fitness for mobility are not a given, it seems impossible to imagine a conversation about migration and inclusion without relying on that language. That's not to say some haven't tried. In another opinion piece for the *Times*, the author, Antonio Alarcón, a DACA recipient and community organizer, notes how ideas of family and community are lacking in congressional debates surrounding immigration. "Over the past 17 years, since the Dream Act was introduced in 2001, politicians have played with our lives, particularly during election years like this one," Alarcón writes. "They go out of their way to say they care about our community, while sending members of our community to detention centers."[4]

Labor is nonetheless a double-edged sword for undocumented workers, who face claims that they steal jobs from more deserving citizens. Take White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders's claim that "Dreamers" take opportunities from African American and Latino workers, a move that media outlets interpreted as in line with the Trump administration's

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[2] Alana Abramson, "Ending the 'Dreamers' Program Could Cost Hundreds of Thousands of Jobs," *Fortune*, Aug. 31, 2017.

[3] John W. Schoen, "DACA Deportations Could Cost US Economy More than $400 Billion," *CNBC*, Sept. 5, 2017.

[4] Antonio Alarcón, "Senators, Dreamers Have Been Watching You," *New York Times*, Feb. 16, 2018.

attempts to pit minority workers against one another.[5] "It's a known fact that there are over 4 million unemployed Americans in the same age group as those that are DACA recipients; that over 950,000 of those are African Americans in the same age group; over 870,000 unemployed Hispanics in the same age group. Those are large numbers of people that are unemployed that could possibly have those jobs."[6] Lest we think this is language limited to the United States, the UK Independence Party (UKIP), a populist political party that pushed for Brexit, continues to claim that British workers are being undercut by Polish migrant laborers. UKIP faced criticism in 2014 for running an advertisement depicting a purportedly Polish worker, sitting on a sidewalk in a hard hat and reflective vest next to a pan handling cup, with the headline "EU policy at work. British workers are hit hard by unlimited cheap labor." UKIP had to weather the fallout when media reported that the party had hired an Irish actor to play the Polish beggar/worker.[7]

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[5] Tracy Jan, "White House Claims 'Dreamers' Take Jobs Away from Blacks and Hispanics. Here's the Truth," *Washington Post*, Sept. 6, 2017.

[6] White House Press Briefing by Sarah Sanders, Sept. 5, 2017, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/press-briefing-press-secretary-sarah-sanders-090517/

[7] "UKIP embroiled in row over use of actor in poster campaign," *BBC News*, April 25, 2014.

Figure 7: Billboard from UKIP's national campaign. The poster, from the run-up of the 2014 European Parliament elections, purportedly depicted a Polish worker, until the claims were debunked in the British press. (*UKIP National Billboard Campaign: http://www.ukip.org/ukip_national_billboard_campaign*)

The subtext of such debates, whether DACA or Brexit, is that migrant labor is either presented as necessary for a country's economic advancement or harmful to native marginalized job prospects, depending on one's political leanings. That the depiction of UKIP's Polish worker blurs the lines between worker and beggar demonstrates how central ideas of productive labor are to conceptions of and potential for citizenship and belonging. Both sides of that axis, however, accept that labor is at issue, and, not surprisingly, participants in this conversation argue over the personal qualities of migrant laborers: Are the individuals in question hard workers or lazy? Do they complete the undesirable, underpaid labor that citizens won't do or do they steal jobs from others who are more worthy? Are they the next tech barons or future criminals?

Some scholars have argued that glorification of labor is at the root of the problem.[8] Just what would it take to change the conversation from one that equates worthiness for belonging with labor productivity? It's tricky to imagine an answer to that question, in part because, as we've seen, the language of liberal selfhood and labor commodification is so ingrained in the experience of modern migration. Indeed, as I argued in Chapter 3, there were direct benefits to adopting the language of economic self-sufficiency and demonstrating self-transformation at the border, and the significance of that transformation had far reaching implications—it affected everything from approaches to education to conceptions of religious authority. A potential first step, however, would be to recognize the affective reach of capitalism, including the centrality of internalizing norms of labor on understandings of self and world. As the new history of capitalism continues to examine the structures of modern political economy in hopes of understanding our particular corporatist economic moment, we should also pay attention to ways in which the aspirational and imaginary forces of capitalism continue to influence our visions for self and society, as well as our expectations for what we deem normal economic behavior.

Imagining alternative futures, however, is something that social reformers and theorists experimented with within the context of liberal structures of power and authority, and as John Dewey's study of Polish migrants in Philadelphia suggests, such attempts had limited efficacy. If Polish migrants could represent the possibilities for inclusion and universality through adoption of values of self-sufficiency, uplift, and managing financial risk, they would run into the same problems of social differentiation and control. Indeed, we continue to see a similar tendency in popular depictions of Polish migration, and of migration in general, as representing a

[8] On this point, see Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

universal experience of shared humanity. Mobility is nonetheless a historically contingent process, even if we tend to see it as a natural feature of life, and the stories we tell about our economic journeys—who we are and how we got here—can cloak the processes of power and the normative tendencies of economic narratives.

Instead of being the bearers of the exceptional, this dissertation has operated from the premise that Polish labor migrants were no better and no worse than any of their contemporaries. Their everyday experiences were by no means singular, and they suffered, toiled, and sacrificed, to be sure. But they also were enmeshed in larger world historical processes, and examining those entanglements and experiences with modern political economy requires a different language. This dissertation has thus been a case for studying the unexceptional and quotidian ways that Polish migrants participated in the structures of global labor and made meaning from their economic experiences. It has also been a case for understanding the importance of subjectivity in the context of navigating complex economic structures. In their constructions of selfhood, Polish labor migrants were consummate moderns—historical actors whose collective visions helped establish the norms that regulate the modern world.

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