

THE PAPAL SHAWL AND GOLDEN
STATUETTE: LEGITIMATING BUSINESS
IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND

by
Pauline Gianoplus

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The Papal Shawl and Golden Statuette: Legitimizing Business in Contemporary Poland

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Introduction:

In this paper I am concerned with the ways in which two groups of contemporary Polish entrepreneurs are reinventing "traditions" to constitute themselves as respected and respectable social actors--respectable and legitimate to both themselves, government policy makers and to other wider publics who are increasingly skeptical of liberal market reforms as the post-communist panacea.¹ In my analysis I focus on two apparently different associations of business people in the Warsaw area: **The Business Centre Club** and **The Chamber of Crafts and Small Businesses**. I'm interested in the ways that these particular organizations and their members are invoking, generating and recreating national traditions in the process of identity *reformation* in the current period. Here I set about untangling at least a part this admittedly large task by examining the discursive practices of these communities in the form of *cultural productions*.²

What follows, then, is an analysis of some of the stories told by the Business Centre Club and the Chamber of Crafts and Small Businesses about their roles in this socially, politically, and economically tumultuous period in Poland's history. I am most interested in how these stories--perhaps more appropriately thought of as myths, fables or tales-- are seeking to forge national traditions on behalf of the associations' political-economic interests.³ In short, I suggest that

¹ The most obvious example of this skepticism can be seen in the results of the parliamentary elections in September 1993 when many people affiliated with the former Communist Party won seats. at the expense of those affiliated with the politics of Leszek Balcerowicz, the architect of shock therapy, Poland's program of radically liberal economic reform .

² Sonya Rose, Limited Livelihoods. Gender and Class in 19th Century England, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 8-9.

³ I am not suggesting that each of these group's interests are coherent and uniform. In a lengthier version of this paper I would also like to elaborate how the discourses internal to the organizations are conflicting and even oppositional in certain cases.

these manufactured discourses of nation constitute --at least partially-- each organization's attempts to legitimate their interests in the highly contested and continuously negotiated new bourgeois public sphere in post-communist Poland.⁴ Additionally, these discourses of nation work recursively to shape interests which are also continuously shifting.⁵

I have analyzed a sample of each organization's cultural productions, focusing on a few exemplary cases: For the Business Centre Club (BCC) I am drawing on internal monthly newspapers and yearbooks both as subjects of analysis themselves and as reconstructors qua transmitters of salient events in the annual life of the club, including their yearly gala where "Business Leader of the Year" is named, and their annual hosting of an internationally famous political figure such as former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1992 and former President George Bush in 1993. In the case of the Chamber of Crafts and Small Businesses (Chamber) I am drawing on the series of yearly speeches by the governing board to representative members, and also on several history books published by the Chamber.

Some Key Concepts:

Before beginning my analysis I'd like to briefly explain how I'm employing a few basic concepts in this context. First I'll start with Sonya Rose's explanation and "operationalization" of cultural productions since they are most central in what I set out to do here. In her 1992 book Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in 19th Century England, Rose writes,

They are composed of shared cultural symbols which are used to mediate between what is already widely known or understood and the articulation of ideas about something new.

⁴Constraints of time and space prevent me from reviewing the literature on the development of the concept of bourgeois public sphere, although clearly my analysis presupposes a familiarity with Jurgen Habermas's writings, especially The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (Trans. Thomas Burger, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991). Perhaps more importantly, though, my understanding and "operationalization" of the term draw significantly from Habermas's critics. See Habermas and the Public Sphere, ed. Craig Calhoun, MIT Press, 1992.

⁵ The interstices of the mutually constructing relationship between discourses of nation and interests -- are also worthy of explication in the context of this analysis. Unfortunately, though, this too must be put aside for now.

They are rhetorical devices meant to persuade. Cultural productions include rituals such as street demonstrations and parades as well as speeches, newspaper articles and letters to the editor, pamphlets, scientific reports, photographs, drawings, and cartoons...[Cultural productions] offer their intended audience interpretations of events and experiences that may become a stimulus for political action. These interpretations are particular constructions which cast the events within a limited and limiting perspective. The constructions repress, negate, or remain silent about alternate views... They call upon previously formed subjectivities and work on common sense understandings to generate solidarity and consent. They appeal to particular aspects of people's experiences and connect these experiences to facets of their identities (pp. 8-9).

I understand cultural productions to be discourses which are self-consciously performative⁶ (although not necessarily self-consciously making meaning), if discourse refers to the individual's social standing.

Importantly, the term cultural production has the possibility of acknowledging the material circumstances of experience without making them foundational and without suggesting that the material is only existent within a discursive field. Rather, I would take a "third way" (a la Bernstein) which suggests that the material world can only be comprehended and have meaning within a discursive field.⁷ When I use the term national traditions I'm referring to a variety of discourses about the meanings of Polishness in specific historical contexts. And when I refer to

⁶ I cannot help but think of Erving Goffman, the sociologist and symbolic interactionist who made William Shakespeare's well-known phrase "all the world is a stage" an aphorism for his own work on identity formation. See, for example "The Arrangement Between the Sexes," 1977.

⁷ Purvis and Hunt place ideology within the western marxist tradition and discourse within the postmodern tradition espoused first by literary theorists and then taken-up by Foucault. By drawing on Larrain, Foucault, Laclau & Mouffe, Gramsci, Marx, Althusser and Halle, they suggest the plausibility (quite tentatively) of a "third way" in which discursive analysis augments and deepens our sociological understanding of ideology, without discarding its materiality...The authors usefully highlight the ways in which ideology and discourse refer to the same things: "the idea that human individuals participate in forms of understanding, comprehension or consciousness of the relations and activities in which they are involved; a conception of the social that has a hermeneutic dimension, but which is not reducible to hermeneutics. This consciousness is born through language and other systems of signs, it is transmitted between people and institutions, and perhaps most important of all *it makes a difference*; that is, the way people comprehend and make sense of the social world has consequences for the direction and character of their action and inaction. Both 'discourse' and 'ideology' refer to these aspects of social life." (474) They espouse a position of "soft-realism" which "accepts the post-modern claim that knowledge claims can never be verified and that there is no vantage point external to discourse from which truth claims can be validated. Yet our position is 'realist' in that we insist that there is a non-discursive realm that can be known even though that knowledge can never be more than fallible, always liable to be displaced by some better account"(477).

discourses of nation discourses I'm talking about the generation of national traditions through cultural productions.

Some Background History and a few Structural Coordinates:

a. The Business Centre Club

I'll begin with some background information about these two associations: The BCC was founded in June 1991⁸ by the former Minister of Industry, Andrzej Zawislak and several other government people who thought it was necessary to establish a group whose purpose was to fight for business interests, free-market development, and the fostering the "Polish spirit of capitalism." Their major goals as laid out in their statutes are: 1a.) build the group prestige and power of the business community, b.) provide mutual assistance and cooperation, c.) gain a sense of professional security - both as a group and as individuals, d.) derive satisfaction and pleasure from meetings in the Club member circle 2.) The BCC is a forum for cooperation and discussions related to the issues of economy and environment, 3.) The BCC achieves its goals by way of actions in public, its presence in the mass media as well as its own initiatives and projects. 5.) The BCC is an apolitical organization collaborating with other organizations in the interests of its members as well as the welfare of the country. 5.) The BCC strives to improve the image of entrepreneurs in the society and the level of their social affirmation. 6.) Members' activity in the Club's actions is a way of asserting business status and the desire to develop professional contacts in the framework of the Club's activities 7.) The BCC strives to represent the interests of the business community in Parliament, both directly (through MP's) and indirectly (through lobbying). 8.) Members of the BCC recognize the Statute of the Business Centre Club as obligatory.

The Business Centre Club (BCC) is an elite association of Poland's biggest companies and wealthiest people. Potential members must be invited to submit an application, go through

⁸ The circumstances of the BCC's founding are not documented in any of the organizational literature that I have come across thus far. The managing director of the club told me that a few business people who "just knew each other" decided that there was a need for such an association.

interviews, solicit letters of recommendation, submit financial statements for review by the BCC board, have a clean legal record (that means no financial funny stuff that's caught the public's attention), and pay the yearly fee of 35,000,000 to 54,000,000 Polish zloties (which is about \$1,800 to 2,600, or 8 to 13. times the average monthly salary). Successful people from private business were immediately invited to apply, and the BCC has been rapidly growing since then to a current membership of 700 firms, a number almost double the 1992-93 figure,⁹ about 60% of which are in the Warsaw area.

It is quite interesting to note how the BCC classifies its member companies. As of June 1993, the following categories were found in their literature: a.) "the post-war" period. Over half of their members are firms which were founded between 1945-88, called the "post-war period" opposed to the "communist period" or the "period of socialized industry," both of which would be more descriptive economic terms than "post-war." b.) "new companies." Another 42% have only a short, post-89 history and are called "new companies" rather than companies from the "post-communist" period (a good number of these are spin-offs from recently privatized state firms).¹⁰ It is significant, I think, that nowhere in the BCC's literature is there explicit reference to the "communist period" or even use of the word "communist." This reluctance to use the word "communist" as a referent or semantic coordinate for the BCC is an important issue that I will discuss in more detail below. c.) "firms with *tradition*." The last and smallest category of BCC companies includes pre-1918 firms and inter-war period firms. The oldest firms with "tradition" go back as far as 1709, 1760, and 1766.

⁹ Rocznik, Business Centre Club 1992-1993; Rocznik Business Centre Club 1993-94.

¹⁰ There are somewhere between 640 and 684 members and 432 firms. Types of firms: production - 48% ; trade - 46% ; foreign trade - 17%; export - 6%; service - 59%; research 5%; "projektowanie" - 20%.

Other data which testify to the financial power of BCC as a group is the fact that BCC firms account for over 60% of participating companies on the Warsaw Stock Exchange, with at least 80% of these being founded before 1989.¹¹

b. The Chamber of Crafts and Small Businesses

The Chamber of Crafts and Small Businesses in Warsaw traces its origins to the 14th century when there is the first documentation of craftsmen organizing themselves, usually in defense of Warsaw. The current organization, however, was legally founded after WWII in 1945, drawing to some extent upon their organization and resources from the inter-war period.¹² However, since Warsaw was utterly destroyed, virtually flattened as Hitler's army retreated, there was not much to salvage. During the communist period, and even the Stalinist period from 1948 to 1956, the craftsmen were permitted to continue their work under various forms of cooperative arrangements (oftentimes small, 2-3 person firms) according to *cech*, which was and is a sub-organization arranged around type of work and professional qualifications. For example there is a different *cech* for carpenters, mechanics, bakers and so on.

A significant reason that the Party condoned such organized and overt petty bourgeois activity was that these small businesses-- ranging from clock makers to carpenters to hairdressers to producers of smoked meat--helped to fill some of the gaps created by centralized economic plans concerned largely with the rapid development of heavy industry. These small businesses greased the centrally planned economy's very rusty wheels. Until recently these craftsmen who I'll call "communist entrepreneurs" for lack of a better term, were in *relatively* good material positions; they were the closest thing Poland had to a "western" European petty bourgeoisie or

¹¹ Polish sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis theorizes this process of *political capitalism* in which Party nomenklatura (upper-level managers of state firms and former Communist Party officials) become the actual or defacto owners of the privatizing state property. See The Dynamics of Breakthrough, 1991. It seems to me that the composition of the BCC is a concrete testimony to Staniszkis's theory.

¹² XX - Lecie Izby Rzemie Iniczej w Warszawie. 1929 - 1949, Leba: Biuro Wydawniczego Rzemieslnicznych R.P., Czerwiec 1964, pp. 56-65. Aside from this book, there is very little on the pre-1945 Chamber. Most of the literature is published during the communist period, and manages to ignore everything up to the war.

middle class, although the middle level managers and white/pink collar workers in state enterprises were clearly the new communist middle class.¹³ Since the economic changes associated with Balcerowicz's shock therapy were instituted, the small firms have not been faring very well. More than 35% of them have either gone bankrupt or decided to close down (In 1988 there were approximately 7,500 and now there are approximately 4,500).¹⁴

Today the Warsaw Chamber's structure consists of a managing board of directors and a general assembly to which the Warsaw-area cechs send their representatives to debate and vote on issues of concern to their members. Currently there are 23 cechs in the Warsaw jurisdiction associated with the Chamber, although information on most of them is not to be found. This is due to the fact that membership and organizational affiliation are now voluntary for the first time since 1945. The cechs are acting more independently, and not necessarily keeping the central chamber up to date on their activities, membership and opinions. The central board, in turn, is frustrated because they have no authority to enforce responsibility upon their affiliates. The director and vice-director of the Warsaw chamber believe that unity is necessary to "protect the craftsmen and small businesses from big capital," to provide avenues for bank credit and representing small business in the government. Although thus far the Chamber's leadership have not been very successful in rallying member activity, they seem to be increasingly effective in raising members' awareness of the issues facing them. Some of the small business people are beginning to see the necessity and utility of defending their interests in the face of what they perceive to be the disproportionate influence of "big business"-- exemplified by the BCC-- on the creation of a new legal system and government policy in general.

So we see that the differences between these associations are rather large: The BCC is a new organization representing and creating the concerns of big capital and big industry. As a new

¹³ See "The New Communist Middle Class," *Sociological Bulletin*, IFiS Publishers, Warsaw, 1990.

¹⁴ The Chamber's records are disorganized to non-existent, depending upon the period of time we're looking at. These figures are based on my sorting through the Chamber's somewhat random records and registration forms.

organization they have manufactured themselves according to their own visions of Poland's future by trying to nullify the "recent tradition" of the communist period , and likely their own activities within this period.¹⁵ The BCC is engaging big industry, big capital and has direct and frequent access to government policy circles. At the moment they seem to be a rising political power in Poland. Similarly, however, they both want access and some degree of control over what I'll call the bourgeois public sphere in a society that is increasingly "anti-businessman."¹⁶ The Chamber, on the other hand, is a relatively old organization engaging small business and small capital while simultaneously struggling to keep its head above water. Small businesses associated with the Chamber feel their positions dissolving in the face of new economic realities despite their conviction that long years of practical experience and organizational tradition make them the rightful and legitimate players in Poland's rapidly marketizing economy.

What the two groups have in common is that they both want dominant voices in the creation of a new bourgeois public sphere. Their differences enable them to and necessitate that they draw upon different discourses of tradition and types of cultural productions to render coherent identities for themselves. Here we're specifically concentrating on the ways in which discourses of nation are employed by these two groups in a particularly unsettled historical period where the upheaval of a political system, discourses of neo-liberalism, changes in property relations and economic structures have fostered the creation of what I'll term here *identity fissures*. I would argue that one of the primary ways in which discourses of nation function to

¹⁵ In Poland the identification and punishment of former communist party members by putting them in prison, denying access to government positions, etc., called *lustracja*, has not met with much support. This is especially the case when Poland is compared to the Czech Republic where communists and ex-communists have been punished and purged from public life in an extreme and sometimes divisive manner.

¹⁶ Increasing hostility by broad segments of the population is virtually *ad hominem*; scorn and contempt are directed at the business type because they are perceived as being all image and little substance. For instance, the stereotypical "biznesmen" drives in his German or American car from restaurant meeting to restaurant meeting, posing ostentatiously with his cellular phone constantly at his side. It is no wonder, then, that the small business people whom I interviewed were oftentimes reluctant to identify themselves as "biznesmen."

legitimate access to the bourgeois public sphere is by filling in these identity fissures or smoothing them over -- that is, by rendering identities unbroken and consistent.

Each of the two organizations has different identity fissures with which to grapple. For instance, the BCC paints the image of itself as a group of capitalist heroes at the helm of free-market reforms. This given the fact that well over half of its members are affiliated with former state companies or their spin-offs, and the old communist nomenklatura. How then do they legitimate their access to and increasing power within the bourgeois public sphere, both to themselves and others? I suggest that particular discourses of national tradition help render their experiences meaningful and coherent in the light of apparent historical incompatibility. The discourses of national tradition generated by the BCC imply that Polish national tradition was disrupted by external and uncontrollable means between 1945 and 1989. Since the post-war communist period is purported to have no national tradition even though or perhaps because a large percentage of BCC members are indebted to that same period for their current positions of power and material success, the Club harkens back to a pre-communist time in Polish history, an ambiguous time when Poland was "European", which means "*western* European," and there was no communist "other." Interestingly, the BCC's definition of tradition is not so dissimilar from the Chamber's except that the Chamber does not posit their tradition as broken by the communist period. Instead, their tradition is continuing despite history's obstacles.

Structural differences coexist with differing legitimating strategies in each historical context. In the two cases of the BCC and Chamber, structural conditions interplay, interact with and influence the form and content of their cultural productions. The varying form and content of the cultural productions point us toward understanding the different identity fissures which each organization is trying to "fill-in." I suggested above that because the BCC has strong ties to the former communist party nomenklatura and because they are so resented by the broader public, it is necessary for them as a group with shifting interests to manufacture a benign but potentially authority-granting tradition for themselves. Similarly, because the Chamber has been losing money, prestige and political clout in the face of free-market reforms, it is necessary for its leaders

to invoke glories of the past via carriages of heroic nationalism in an attempt to halt their slippage from the transforming public sphere.

Cultural Productions:

First I'll talk a bit more specifically and concretely about some of the BCC's cultural productions. In the BCC Gazeta, which is regularly written partly in English, much space is devoted to foreign and national paparazzi visiting the BCC. The most celebrated guests to date have been Margaret Thatcher and George Bush. The newspaper is chock-full of conversations between member x of the BCC and government ministry; they write extensive articles about how foreign officials such as the Russian premier have solicited the council of their club. Also, in each issue are at least several profiles of outstanding Polish business people, who are of course always members. Pictures of members chumming around with parliamentarians at the Club's weekly cocktail hour abound, as do self-congratulatory articles concerning this or that opinion sent to the government or parliament. In one summary issue, the editor claimed, "We have succeeded in fulfilling our goal of becoming a place where politics and business can meet together over a drink and a cigar."¹⁷

The BCC Gazeta viewed as a significant cultural product seems to be internal public relations more than anything else. It is created by **them** to remind **them** that they are *the* important business leaders of Poland and therefore should consider themselves the new vanguard constructing their nation's future, which is precariously situated due to "populist" anti-business, anti-capitalist sentiment increasing over the past three years. It is as if their monthly publication highlights and celebrates how important and influential they are by documenting the minutiae of their brushes with the world's famous and rich. The production of this newspaper may also be understood as an attempt by the group and its members to construct their understanding of

¹⁷ One director from another Warsaw group told me that the BCC really does not accomplish much of concrete value in terms of creating or affecting policy. This opinion was corroborated by random members of other groups whose sentiments seemed to be along the same lines, though who articulated them less decisively.

themselves as a group of capitalists and as individual entrepreneur-capitalists with a more clearly articulated sense of "us versus them." This is rather an understandable attempt to anchor oneself and interests in a *revolutionary*¹⁸ historical period; that is, to make sense out of one's experiences in a context where previously understood links between interests, meanings and identity have become unhinged in an unusually sudden way. The very suddenness and sharpness of this process has made the normal process of simultaneous reforging links impossible, thus permitting the emergence of identity fissures. I see, then, the newspaper not merely representing or reflecting the BCC's interests and identities, but creating them too.

Not only the BCC's internal public relations are extensive and persuasive. The Club manages to receive substantial coverage in the Polish press, including the major dailies and weeklies,¹⁹ by issuing press releases regularly, staging weekly press conferences and organizing special roundtable discussions between their members and journalists from prestigious national media such as *Rzeczpospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*.²⁰

Finally I will briefly discuss what is perhaps the BCC's most ostentatious and illustrative cultural production, the annual December "Gala" where the "Polish Business Leader of the Year" is elected along with runners-up and honorable mentions. The event receives lots of build-up in the BCC's own internal newspaper as well as in the national and local press, with the culmination being a black-tie event at the renovated palace which is the Club's home. On television and on the pages of national newspapers there are photos of elegantly dressed members and their spouses

¹⁸ Edmund Mokrzycki, sociologist at the Polish Academy of Sciences, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, argues that the social changes occurring in Poland since the 1980's are better described as revolutionary than evolutionary for their radical impact on social structure.

¹⁹ Here I am referring to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Polityka* and *Wprost*, the four publications that I have analyzed from 1988 (or their inception) through 1994. These newspapers and magazines have the largest nationwide circulations in Poland.

²⁰ Here again I reiterate a point mentioned in a previous point. Several outsiders to the Club who are themselves successful business people have told me that the BCC is "lots of show but no substance. They don't get much done."

laughing with senators, parliamentarians, artists and even a few international dignitaries. It takes days for the press coverage to die down after the "golden statuette" is awarded.

In light of the previous discussion of the various functions and roles of cultural productions, it is pertinent to mention here the procedure for choosing the Polish Business Leader of the Year. Nominations are made *by* members of the Club *for* other members, and then all members vote on the nominations. Therefore, the Polish Business Leader of the Year is always a member of the BCC. The ease with which the BCC has created its authority in this realm is astounding: The gala has become a "tradition" and the awards are prestigious markers of legitimacy in the world of business. It is as if the Club has written a play for itself with its own scripts and roles, and then distributed tickets to the performance in order to create a captive audience. The palace venue and general elegance are central in establishing this gala as a revered national tradition; these symbols of aristocracy very self-consciously recall Poland's idealized noble heritage, which is inexorably "European."

The Chamber of Crafts and Small Businesses relies on large, official meetings and newsletters to reach their decentralized and dispersed community. The yearly meetings are the one time when policy is recapped and official policy views are articulated. Their media coverage is haphazard at best, and the Chamber's commentary on economic policy and laws are generally not conceived of as influential by the Chamber itself or the print or broadcast media. Their functions are certainly not framed as great events either; rather, the Chamber appears to be an organization almost desperately trying to create a significant space for itself in the emerging post-communist social structure; that is, desperately trying to legitimate themselves as necessary actors with a rightful historical legacy in the new socio-economic order. In the past few years speeches delivered at their annual meetings have been characterized by a celebratory and self-congratulatory tone; historical references to their lineage of national loyalty and martyrdom dating back to the 14th century abound.

For instance, they cast themselves as the rebuilders of post-war Warsaw, the protectors of entrepreneurial tradition and private dignity. As the discourses and cultural production of

Walicki, Konwicki and Mickiewicz testify, the theme of martyrdom and sacrifice in Polish national history abound. The Chamber's purported lack of political affiliations in the "past" -- i.e. not being an organ of the communist party, and virtually "timeless" connections with the Catholic Church are recalled with pride and conviction.²¹ These people are not trying to cultivate a new image so much as resurrect an idealized heroic oppositional one. This is one of the ways in which they combat their image as "communist leftovers. Their history of martyrdom continues today as they rail against the influence of "big capital" and foreign products ruining their chances for survival and development. According to the Chamber's rhetoric, their extinction as small businesses is largely attributable to the government and parliament being run by old communists who are looking to perpetuate their own interests--which are the interests of big industry.²²

To illustrate the above points about the Chamber I will briefly discuss one particularly relevant cultural production which recently took place in Warsaw. In 1994 there was an awards and commemorations ceremony to recognize outstanding craftsmen and small businessmen²³ in the Chamber's building, presided over by the Cardinal Joseph Glemp, the Catholic Church's most visible and powerful figure in Poland with the exception of Pope John Paul II. Glemp's speech and even his very presence at the ceremony speak to the organization's self-conscious effort to link itself to the Catholic Church's mythologized and homogenized role in Poland's history as

²¹ Here it is worth noting that according to some sources outside of the Chamber, the group did have a relatively comfortable relationship with the Party. Although there were clear ties with the Catholic Church and members of the Chamber were not necessarily members of the Party, it is also true that the main leadership positions such as Director and Associate Director were filled by PWP members until 1991(which was the requirement).

²² In her influential book The Dynamics of Breakthrough, (1991) Polish sociologist Jadwiga Staniszkis explicates the process of *political capitalism* whereby Party nomenklatura or elites of the communist era become the economic elites in the post-communist era due to their access and control of the means of production.

²³ I use the term *craftsmen* and *businessmen* rather than *people* and *women* because these are the terms that I find in the texts and interviews I'm analyzing. In fact, most of the successful crafts and small business people are men. See above for brief breakdown according to sex.

defender of Polishness, opposer of foreign invasion and contamination, and embodiment of dignity in the face of the undignified.

Conclusion:

In sum, my analysis of some of the BCC's cultural productions points to a few conclusions. First, BCC members are creating themselves in the image of Poland's nobles of years past. Granted, they are capitalist aristocrats who posit themselves as pioneers and take on a vanguard role to change the mentality of the people. This paternalistic outlook is quite similar to that of the nobles in the 18th and 19th centuries who were defenders of the Polish national spirit in the face of external threat. Similarly, these aristocratic capitalists like their noble predecessors understand their interests as Poland's interests, despite the views of the backward masses. They rely on international figures and contacts with high level government officials to make themselves credible, to lend them the flavor of European cosmopolitanism that was so characteristic of elite Polish national identity before World War II. How do they draw on the past to reinvent national tradition? They draw on Poland's vague and imprecise European past, its tradition of noble democracy and positivist nationalism to act as the redeemers of natural law. They have a sort of amnesia about the immediate past which makes them focus on themselves as heroes of the present--unlike the people from the Chamber who focus on their heroism of the past in an attempt to interpret, understand and invent their present situation.

The cursory analysis of the Chamber's cultural products indicates that the Chamber is less cosmopolitan, more Polonocentric and inward-looking than the BCC. They are also more likely to talk about their self-interests in very concrete terms, as opposed to the BCC's talk about what's good for Poland. The Chamber's "other" is a government that caters to big industry, both privatized and privatizing. They invoke a continuity and martyrdom (i.e. their role in the rebuilding of Warsaw despite no tools and depletion of their ranks from death and migration). The Chamber represents constancy and stability in the Poland's chaotically contingent history, and the same constancy and stability in the national economy.

The Chamber's self-conscious and cultivated connection to the Catholic Church is a putatively powerful means of asserting the authenticity of their loyalty and their constantly created traditions of nationalism more natural, less invented. While this close affiliation with the Church may smooth over the Chamber's identity fissures as their members are displaced by big business, it does not seem to have much effect in increasing their access to the new bourgeois public sphere. However, this affiliation and its concomitant themes of authenticity, continuity, and loyalty do indeed seem to bolster their shared sense of legitimation. Public opinion research indicates that small business people like the ones who are members of the chamber are perceived to be hard-working and honest. This is quite a contrast to the popular image of the "biznesmen" mentioned earlier. What does this say about legitimation and access to the bourgeois public sphere? My findings imply that there is no correlation between legitimation and causality. As far as the importance of ways of reinventing traditions, it seems that it matters only for understanding connections within group dynamics. Unlike the BCC, the Chamber does not posit their tradition as broken or significantly disrupted by the communist era. Their story is dominated by themes of perseverance despite unfriendly state policies and changing governments.

In asserting an identity or reasserting a reconstructed identity both of these groups want to make a moral claim to justify their positions in the newly reconstructing bourgeois public sphere.

The way in which these national discourses are being reformulated is important for several reasons: Basically, they are, along with these entrepreneurs, constructing the new Polish bourgeois public sphere (to use Habermas's term without implying his rather uncritical elevation of this sphere) and simultaneously deciding who fits best in this sphere, who has access. It appears that it is increasingly or newly masculinized. That is it is increasingly less women-permeable. It is, as I have hopefully begun to show, the fluid/never static culmination of the mutually implicated processes constituting the post-communist entrepreneurs, which are intricately nationed and gendered. That women are a small fraction of the people forming influential policy, becoming private business owners, is not new: It's just different. In Poland

today we have the opportunity to see how exclusionary practices work in yet another context in another revolutionary situation.