

Trump's Warsaw Address, or How the "West" Was Widened

Rebecca M. Townsend*

In his first major address in Europe, President Donald J. Trump relies upon visual and historical scenic elements to argue for battle in a clash of civilizations. In so doing, he broadens the notion of the "West," which relies upon a purified perspective, one whitened and Christian. Using Burkeian rhetorical theory, this essay explores the Warsaw address for its scenic development of identity as the location for this symbolic battle with material consequences. The address engages in a victimage ritual that united an oppositional interpretation of the physical locale, traces of President Kennedy's Berlin Address, and retells parts of Polish history to support Poland's right-wing government's anti-immigrant and nationalist policies. Notable as well for its absences, the address fails to bolster democratic principles like the rule of law or the independence of a judiciary and instead amplifies white supremacist rhetoric.

Keywords: Trump, Poland, West, scene, agency, victimage ritual, clash of civilization, white supremacy

Unless we can relate it to ourselves personally, history will always be more or less of an abstraction, and its content the clash of impersonal forces and ideas.¹

Every circumference, no matter how far-reaching its reference, is a reduction.²

U.S. President Donald J. Trump chose Warsaw, Poland, for his first major address in Europe on July 6, 2017. Why he chose Warsaw, and what he said there, needs a critical understanding, analysis, and interpretation. This essay's Burkeian rhetorical analysis of Trump's Warsaw address draws upon the text and the contemporary context of Poland. My own observations, active examination of the place, and the specific site where Trump spoke, lends other layers of detail to the scene as reported. Trump's speech relies upon a pastiche of visual and historical scenic elements to argue for battle in a clash of civilizations³: West versus "radical Islamic terrorism" and other

* Rebecca M. Townsend (Ph.D., the University of Massachusetts Amherst) is an Assistant Professor of Communication in the Humanities Department at the University of Hartford. The author can be reached by email at Townsend@Hartford.edu.

¹ Czesław Miłosz, *Native Realm: A Search for Self-Definition* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 20. Noting the influence of the Teutonic Order on people as they made their way east, Miłosz experienced a different version: "The epic of the Christian mission was, in effect, an epic of murder, violence, and banditry, and for a long time the black cross remained the symbol of an evil worse than the plague. All my sympathies, therefore, went out to the 'noble savages' who defended their freedom and knew why they defended it: because wherever the Teutonic Knights were victorious, there they built their castles and transformed the local population into a herd of slaves toiling for the profit of the Order." (9)

² Kenneth Burke, *Grammar of Motives* (1945. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1969), 96.

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2011). "In the post-Cold War world flags count and so do other symbols of cultural identity, including crosses, crescents, and even head coverings, because culture counts, and cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people. . . . One grim Weltanschauung for this new era was well expressed by the Venetian nationalist demagogue in Michael Dibdin's novel, *Dead Lagoon*: 'There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we

“forces, whether they come from inside or out, from the South or the East.”⁴ Trump legitimizes the battle in Poland to align a newly repressive Eastern European government with the “West.” In so doing, he broadens the notion of the “West,” which relies upon a purified perspective, one whitened and Christian—an old and misleading assumption.⁵ This essay explores the Warsaw address for its scenic development of identity as the location for this symbolic battle with material consequences. This address uses an oppositional interpretation of the physical locale, traces of previous presidents’ rhetoric, and retellings of parts of Polish history to support Poland’s right-wing government’s anti-immigrant and nationalist policies. Notable as well for its absences, this address fails to bolster democratic principles like the rule of law or the independence of a judiciary. His use of Polish history enacts a victimage ritual that, rather than ameliorating guilt, fosters resentment among the Polish people of non-white, non-Catholic immigrants or refugees.

Presidential Rhetoric Abroad

Scholarship on presidents’ foreign affairs rhetoric affords contrastive insight into Trump’s rhetoric. Whether for interventionist or exemplarist functions,⁶ the values of democracy, freedom, and justice have been core motivators of rhetorical action; not so for Trump. Of the limited scholarship on presidential rhetoric abroad, the connection to place or “spatial setting”⁷ has received the greatest attention. President Kennedy’s Berlin speech has been hailed as a successful moment in presidential rhetoric abroad, in part due to its scenic arguments.⁸ Physically backed by the columns of the Brandenburg Gate, draped with flags to prevent a view of East Berlin, Kennedy articulated a vision of a united future. Salama’s analysis of the “reconciliatory discourse” in President Obama’s Cairo speech shows how the speech location, Cairo University in Egypt, “the meeting-point of all Arabs, be they Muslims, Christians or Jews, of all possible political stripes and intellectual persuasions,”⁹ has great symbolic importance for a future based on pluralization, a future absent in Trump’s rhetoric. Prash’s analysis of President Reagan’s Pointe du Hoc speech argued that the speech was “a deictic epideictic address, or a speech in which the rhetor uses the physical place, the immediate scene/setting, and the assembled audience as physical evidence to commemorate

hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are. These are the old truths we are painfully rediscovering after a century and more of sentimental cant. Those who deny them deny their family, their heritage, their culture, their birthright, their very selves! They will not lightly be forgiven.’ . . . For peoples seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, and the potentially most dangerous enmities occur across the fault lines between the world’s major civilizations” (20). See also Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–49. Huntington argues that “the paramount axis of world politics will be the relations between ‘the West and the rest’” (48).

⁴ Donald J. Trump, “Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland,” The White House Office of the Press Secretary, July 6, 2017, Krasinski Square, Warsaw, Poland, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/07/06/remarks-president-trump-people-poland-july-6-2017>.

⁵ Norman Davies, *Europe East and West* (London: Random House, 2006).

⁶ Jason A. Edwards, *Navigating the Post-Cold War World: President Clinton’s Foreign Policy Rhetoric* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008).

⁷ Amir H.Y. Salama, “The Rhetoric of Collocational, Intertextual and Institutional pluralization in Obama’s Cairo speech: A Discourse-Analytical Approach,” *Critical Discourse Studies* 9 (2012): 211–229.

⁸ Isabel Fay and Jim A. Kuypers, “Transcending Mysticism and Building Identification through Empowerment of the Rhetorical Agent: John F. Kennedy’s Berlin Speeches on June 26, 1963,” *Southern Communication Journal* 77 (2012): 198–215.

⁹ Salama, 226.

the past and chart a clear course for present and future action.”¹⁰ Prasch claims that the speech is “a superb example of deictic epideictic rhetoric through its reliance on the physical place, the immediate scene/setting, and the assembled audience as evidence.”¹¹ What do we do when the rhetor uses a pastiche of place, when the reliance is upon a partial use of the setting, when the symbolic scene is not authentic to that which the physical setting conveys? A notion of authenticity or fidelity may be assumed necessary for marking deictic epideictic as superb; otherwise, there is something off-kilter, or almost fraudulent about it. Further, this pastiche promotes a vision of the future and course of action that is unlike that of his predecessors.

Places of Public Memory

Within these presidential addresses, place is a container for histories and memories. Because the setting for Trump’s speech is a memorial, the work of scholars of public memory and place writing about commemoration in the U.S. can help make sense of the ways history is contained in certain places more so than others. Edward W. Said observed that “Memory and its representations touch very significantly upon questions of identity, of nationalism, of power and authority.”¹² Memorials like the World War II Memorial,¹³ the AIDS quilt,¹⁴ or tombs of the unknown¹⁵ are often hotly contested. Indeed, as Blair and Michel claim, “public memory is often the very battleground upon which are fought issues of contemporary concern.”¹⁶

The notion of “the West” is a prominent symbol in American discourse and history. The myth of the frontier¹⁷ and descriptions at the borders of places in the West, as represented by the US government and by Blackfeet people,¹⁸ present stories that are “foundational” to the U.S., as Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki claim. Museums collect, exhibit and “[re]present”¹⁹ artifacts from the past. In the case they studied, the Buffalo Bill Museum, they argued that the museum “(re)tells the heroic narrative that celebrates Euro American colonization of the West. ... This carnivalization and neutralization of the violence of colonization speaks to us ... [about] our understandings of Whiteness, Western colonization, and racialized violence in the twenty-first century.”²⁰ The connection between the West as a symbol in public memory and whiteness, even in a postcolonial place like Poland,²¹ makes Trump’s address deeply important to understand.

¹⁰ Allison M. Prasch, “Reagan At Pointe Du Hoc: Deictic Epideictic And The Persuasive Power of ‘Bringing Before The Eyes,’” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 18 (2015): 249.

¹¹ Prasch, 250.

¹² Edward W. Said, “Invention, Memory, and Place,” *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 176.

¹³ V. William Balthrop, Carole Blair, and Neil Michel, “The Presence of the Present: Hijacking ‘The Good War?’” *Western Journal of Communication* 74 (2010): 170-207.

¹⁴ Carole Blair and Neil Michel, “The AIDS Memorial Quilt and the Contemporary Culture of Public Commemoration,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10 (2007): 595–626.

¹⁵ Carole Blair, V. William Balthrop, and Neil Michel, “The Arguments of the Tombs of the Unknown: Relationality and National Legitimation,” *Argumentation* 25 (2011): 449–468.

¹⁶ Blair and Michel, 596.

¹⁷ Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki, “Memory and Myth at the Buffalo Bill Museum,” *Western Journal of Communication* 69 (2005) 85-108.

¹⁸ Donal Carbaugh and Lisa Rudnick, “Which Place, What Story?: Cultural Discourses at the Border of the Blackfeet Reservation and Glacier National Park,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 26 (2006): 167-184.

¹⁹ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, 89.

²⁰ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, 104.

²¹ Dobrota Pucherová and Róbert Gáfrik, eds., *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures* (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015).

Witnessing Victimage

Doing ethnographic work on contested memories of places, as Carbaugh and Rudnick observe, “to name a place, or to refer to a place, is to make a move in a cultural political game;” “any reference to a place is inevitably, in many scenes, partial.”²² As part of rhetorical studies “in situ,”²³ my analysis of this address answers calls for more studies “in/on locales around the globe,” which are “required if the field is to more fully claim ‘rhetoric in situ’ as its domain.”²⁴ My use of Burkeian rhetorical theory is informed by critical theories of place, and ethnographic observation. I focus on the speech as given in the local context and attend to the details of the place where the speech occurs and which is featured in the speech itself. Using interview data on nationalist discourse, reading Polish press about the speech, and observing social media concurrent with the speech allow for an unusual perspective on this event. In this way, the analysis can help to understand the consequences of the “victimage ritual” in Trump’s address in Warsaw. One of the reasons Burkeian concepts, particularly notions of order and sacrifice, are useful is because Trump’s address relies upon a victimized sense of Polish history. Burke’s writing on motivation spans several works. Both “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle,” and *The Rhetoric of Religion*, offer insight into how Poland’s right-wing government benefits from the invitation of Trump to speak in his first trip to Europe as President.

Jeremy Engels expanded the work of Burke and Ivie with the work of Nietzsche to show how the victimage ritual can encourage resentment.²⁵ Working as an extension of the victimage ritual (“If Order, then guilt; if guilt, then the need for redemption; but any such ‘payment’ is victimage.”),²⁶ resentment seeks to “cultivate, legitimate, and then prolong hostility, rage, and resentment at a purported cause of suffering—because ... a resentful soul is easily controlled by the artful leader.”²⁷ Engels’ analysis of Nixon’s rhetoric found that “Nixon’s leadership relished the look of spite on the faces of those gripped by resentment, because such people did not act so much as react.”²⁸ Actions require choices and decisions; reactions are akin to knee-jerk movements.

Additionally, resentment helps to understand what sociologist Mitch Berbrier calls the “victim ideology” that U.S. white supremacists and separatists use. Believing whites to be victims, five themes interlock in their ideology: “(1) discrimination, (2) rights abrogations, (3) stigmatization

²² Carbaugh and Rudnick, 187.

²³ Richard Wilkins and Karen Wolf, “The Role of Ethnography in Rhetorical Analysis: The New Rhetorical Turn,” *Empedocles: European Journal for the Philosophy of Communication* 3 (2012): 7-23. See also Heather Ashley Hayes, “Doing Rhetorical Studies In Situ: The Nomad Citizen in Jordan,” *Advances In The History of Rhetoric*, 20 (2017): 167-179; Kathleen S. Lamp, “Rhetoric In Situ,” *Advances in the History of Rhetoric*, 20 (2017): 118-120; Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook, “Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97 (2011): 257-282; Michael K. Middleton, Samantha Senda-Cook, Aaron Hell, and Danielle Endres, “Contemplating the Participatory Turn in Rhetorical Criticism,” *Critical Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 16 (2016): 571-580.

²⁴ Kundai Chirindo, “Rhetorical Places: From Classical Topologies to Prospects for Post-Westphalian Spatialities,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 39 (2016): 130. This is echoed by Joan Faber McAlister, “Ten Propositions for Communication Scholars Studying Space and Place,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 39 (2016): 113-121.

²⁵ Jeremy Engels, “The Politics of Resentment and the Tyranny of the Minority: Rethinking Victimage for Resentful Times,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 40 (2010): 321.

²⁶ Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: U. of California Press, 1984), 284-285.

²⁷ Engels, 322.

²⁸ Engels, 322.

and the denial of pride, (4) loss of self-esteem, and (5) racial elimination.”²⁹ The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism research brief on “violent White supremacy” explains that this supremacy “operates on the belief that Whites are intellectually and morally superior to all other races” and “is based on a mix of religious, socio-cultural and pseudo-scientific assertions that phenotype—including differences in skin tone and physiognomy, among other things—equate to differences in intellect, moral virtue, and social sophistication.”³⁰ Some of this is displayed in the discourse of whites as civilized people, and non-whites as non-civilized. Additionally, they believe that “open immigration policies allowing non-Whites from less developed nations to enter and settle into the United States and Europe” is tantamount to “White Genocide”³¹ Finally, the notion of “weak Whites” and “race traitors” are elements of this. Such kinds of white people fail to “respond to racial threats due to a lack of physical, emotional, or intellectual resources.”³² Interpretation of cosmopolitanism or humanitarian support for refugees fleeing Syrian’s civil war as a threat to a “White race” or to “Western civilization” are examples of white supremacist rhetoric built on a resentment of a perceived loss. Those who are “weak” or “traitors” may also interpret their actions as a threat to the preservation of heritage.

The victimage ritual inherent in white supremacy identifies whites (and often Christians) as victims. In 1939, Burke saw a parallel in Germany:

If a State is in economic collapse ...you cannot possibly derive dignity from economic stability. Dignity must come first. ...A people in collapse, suffering under economic frustration and the defeat of nationalistic aspirations, ...have little other than some ‘spiritual basis to which they could refer their nationalistic dignity. Hence, the categorical dignity of superior race was a perfect recipe for the situation. It was ‘spiritual’ in so far as it was ‘above’ crude economic ‘interests,’ but it was ‘materialized at the psychologically ‘right’ spot in that ‘the enemy’ was something you could see.”³³

Burke quoted Hitler asserting that “moral decay” in Germany “derived from ‘a sin against the blood and degradation of the race,’ so its innerness was an outerness after all” and “the Jew” got “saddled with a vast amalgamation of evils.”³⁴

Victimage through Scene and Agent

Being on the ground in Poland in summers of 2016 and 2017 allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the place. I draw from a previous study³⁵ of Polish views of Brexit and discourse Poles used about others to help me understand the place. The Burkeian notion of scene aligns well with

²⁹ Mitch Berbrier, “The Victim Ideology of White Supremacists and White Separatists in The United States,” *Sociological Focus* 33 (2000): 175.

³⁰ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, “Key Concepts to Understand Violent White Supremacy,” (April 2017), 1 https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_KeyConceptsToUnderstandViolentWhiteSupremacy_ResearchBrief_April2017.pdf

³¹ National Consortium, 2.

³² National Consortium, 2, quoting Travis Morris, “Networking Vehement Frames: Neo-Nazi and Violent Jihadi Demagoguery,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 6 (2014): 171.

³³ Kenneth Burke, “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s ‘Battle,’” in *Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, U. of California Press, 1973), 205.

³⁴ Burke, “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle,” 204-205.

³⁵ Rebecca M. Townsend, “‘Kick Everything Very Hard and See What Happens:’ Some Polish Perspectives on Brexit, Immigration, the Others, and Ourselves,” in *Intercultural Communication: Adapting to Emerging Global Realities: A Reader* (2nd Edition), ed. Wenshan Jia, (San Diego, CA: Cognella, forthcoming).

Hymesian sociolinguistics's notions of scene and setting. Although this is not an ethnography of communication study, the concepts of scene and setting add depth to critical interpretation of the speech.

This analysis and interpretation draw heavily on a systematic investigation of the setting and content of Trump's speech. For the last two summers, I lived in Łódź and Warsaw, teaching courses and taking notes on Polish culture and communication. Ethnographic note-taking, drawing from Hymesian observation of components of communication, allowed me to record my impressions and interpretations as they occurred while visiting the Warsaw Uprising memorial, the European Solidarity Centre and the World War II museum in Gdańsk, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Oświęcim, the Warsaw Ghetto, the Łódź Ghetto and Jewish Cemetery, and the Łódź-based Marek Edelman Dialogue Center. I have participated in the life of the cities in which I travel, beyond tourist-level observations. I began analysis of the speech by cataloguing terms by scene, act, agency, agent, or purpose and then described, analyzed, and interpreted how the victimage ritual is enacted via scenic elements transforming into identity and limiting a sense of Polish agency. Starting thus allows me to track how the setting, in becoming a scene, helps to enact the victimage ritual. Trump was speaking in Poland, with the selected primary audience of right-wing audience members (except Lech Wałęsa), Poles who were not physically present were a secondary audience. A third audience would be Americans, and all other nations. First, I share some contemporary context of Poland.

Setting: Context in Poland

Poland has faced a series of rapid changes since 1989, when the communist government fell. It entered the European Union in 2004. After becoming involved in the Iraq War, Poland's leadership shifted to the right with the election of Lech Kaczyński, who died in 2010 in a plane crash. The interim president, a moderate, lost a close race with right-wing Andrzej Duda in 2015. Since then, Poland's political leadership has taken a sharp right turn. While former president Lech Wałęsa is widely regarded as the face of Solidarity, a lesser-known member of that movement, Jarosław Kaczyński, is head of the ruling *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS), or Law and Justice political party. Jarosław is the twin brother of former president Lech. Kaczyński blames Russia for the crash without evidence. A nationalist, Kaczyński has "been waging his own relentless war against the liberal wing."³⁶ As the political leader, Kaczyński "vowed to wage a 'cultural counterrevolution' to radically change a post-Brexit European Union."³⁷

The government instituted a birth incentive in 2015 giving "families 500zł (€114) a month for every second and subsequent child"³⁸ to appeal to voters, purportedly to alleviate the low birthrate and emigration of Poles to the UK,³⁹ and build loyalty to PiS via financial incentives to procreate. Indeed, one year later, baby carriages abounded in Poland. Observations are borne out by government-run media statistics as well: 16,000 more babies were born compared with the previous

³⁶ Judy Dempsey, "Poland's Drift Away from Democracy," *Carnegie Europe*, July 18, 2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/71568>.

³⁷ Sylvie Kauffmann, "Stalin's Lengthening Shadow," *New York Times*, December 23, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/23/opinion/stalins-lengthening-shadow.html?mcubz=0&_r=0.

³⁸ Henry Foy and Zosia Wasik, "Cost of Poland's New Child Benefit Alarms Economists: Government Hopes To Boost Fertility Across Country," *Financial Times*, Feb. 21, 2016, <https://www.ft.com/content/c8837faa-d6fd-11e5-969e-9d801cf5e15b>.

³⁹ Poles are the largest foreign-born group in the UK. "Poland Overtakes India as Country of Origin, UK Migration Statistics Show," BBC, August 25, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-37183733>.

year.⁴⁰ Only massive protest (Black Monday) of women prevented enactment of a law to ban all abortions, which was likely to lead to the criminalization of miscarriages.⁴¹

The PiS targets free speech, history, the media, Wałęsa, the World War II museum, and textbooks.⁴² During Trump's speech, the PiS' bused in crowd only booed Trump once, when he mentioned Wałęsa's name.⁴³ The Nobel Prize winner is being labeled a communist informer,⁴⁴ attacks that scholar and journalist Anne Applebaum has compared to communist times in 1985.⁴⁵ PiS prioritizes Polish perspectives on world events, creating their own "history policy" to advance Polish perspectives and interests.⁴⁶ The new World War II museum is "not 'national enough'" for PiS members.⁴⁷ Independence in the public media has fallen, with hundreds of journalists fired or quitting in protest.⁴⁸ When he went to Warsaw, President Obama criticized Polish attacks on democracy, which state media cut out.⁴⁹ Public gatherings are under attack.⁵⁰

Polish commemoration of the Uprising has begun relatively recently. In 2016, I learned that it was unusual for Polish flags to be displayed. The Uprising Memorial was developed after the fall of communism, and open celebrations of the start of the Warsaw Uprising began more recently. In the last several years, people gather in city centers at 5:00 pm on August 1, observing a minute of silence and stillness, with smoke from lit flares held aloft in participants' hands, choking the air. A loud siren blares for another minute. People are silent; cars stop. People hold flags (and cameras), clapping after about three minutes. When I observed this in 2016, I noticed nationalist groups forming a parade from the center of Warsaw to the Old Town after about five minutes.

⁴⁰ "More births in Poland in 2016," Radio Poland, January 2, 2017, <http://www.the-news.pl/1/9/Artykul/291488,More-births-in-Poland-in-2016>.

⁴¹ Zofia Reyeh, "A Polish Abortion Ban Would Turn Women Back into Childbearing Instruments," *The Guardian*, April 8, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/08/polish-abortion-ban-law-poland>. Donald Snyder, "Poland Debates Proposal to Ban All Abortion," *The National Catholic Reporter*, July 13, 2016, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/world/poland-debates-proposal-ban-all-abortion>. Camila Domonoske, "Polish Women Hold 'Black Monday' Strike to Protest Proposed Abortion Ban," NPR, October 4, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/10/04/496526099/polish-women-hold-black-monday-strike-to-protest-proposed-abortion-ban>.

⁴² Seán Hanley and James Dawson, "Poland Was Never as Democratic as It Looked," *Foreign Policy*, January 3, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/03/poland-was-never-as-democratic-as-it-looked-law-and-justice-hungary-orban/>.

⁴³ Ola Cichowlas (@olacicho), "Wow: pro-PiS crowd boos Trump when he says he is 'pleased that former president Lech Walesa' is present," Twitter, July 6, 2017, <https://twitter.com/olacicho/status/882922872133611520>

⁴⁴ Joanna Berendt, "Lech Walesa Denounces Report Labeling Him a Communist Informer," *New York Times*, January 31, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/world/europe/poland-lech-walesa-communist-report.html?_r=0.

⁴⁵ Anne Applebaum (@anneapplebaum), "Amazing. Polish state TV in 1985 attacks Wałęsa, sounds just like Polish state TV attacking Wałęsa in 2017," Twitter, August 24, 2017, <https://twitter.com/anneapplebaum/status/900839227654590466>.

⁴⁶ Jo Harper, "What Was the Warsaw Uprising?" *DW*, July 30, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/what-was-the-warsaw-uprising/a-39889947>.

⁴⁷ Gerhard Gnauck, "Poland Debates Approach to New World War II Museum," *DW*, February 2, 2017, <http://www.dw.com/en/poland-debates-approach-to-new-world-war-ii-museum/a-37381170>.

⁴⁸ Peter Foster and Matthew Day, "Polish Journalists Lash Out at New 'Purge Culture' in State Media," *The Telegraph*, March 29, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/03/29/polish-journalists-lash-out-at-new-purge-culture-in-state-media/>.

⁴⁹ Michael Birnbaum, "Obama slammed Polish democracy on Friday. Here's how Polish TV proved him right," *Washington Post*, July 9, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/07/09/obama-slammed-polish-democracy-on-friday-heres-how-polish-tv-proved-him-right/?utm_term=.22b7b225b0f9.

⁵⁰ Rick Lyman and Joanna Berendt, "Protests Erupt in Poland Over New Law on Public Gatherings," *New York Times*, December 13, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/world/europe/poland-protests.html>.

Cultural counterrevolution can have lasting effects if a government changes the court system. Upon taking power, PiS targeted the judiciary by overturning the appointment of judges to the Constitutional Tribunal. This action led to condemnation by the European Union. The uneasy relationship Poland's right-wing government has with Europe is central to understanding Poland's varying receptions to Trump. Concerned about Trump's go-it-alone rhetoric, Kaczyński met with Rudolph Giuliani for reassurance.⁵¹ Kaczyński's skepticism was largely due to his anti-Russian sentiment. Complicating matters is that as part of the PiS framework, "the West," as a symbol, is the enemy. Podgórska and Wójcik explain, "For the PiS, the West is the most important reference point - as for all governments after 1989. But today it plays the role of a stranger. An enemy to help create a new Pole."⁵² Trump and Kaczyński share anti-immigrant and anti-European Union attitudes. Podgórska and Wójcik argue that "[a]ccording to the right-wing, the West adopts the refugees who destroy it from the inside because of ... political correctness."⁵³ Poland's government needed and received reassurance from Trump that the U.S. would still stand in defense of Poland as part of its NATO commitment. This political and cultural context supplied the backdrop for the Trump visit to Poland.

Setting and Scenes

Exploring how a president can perpetuate the victimage ritual abroad requires an examination of the setting and scene, two different concepts. Hymes writes that a setting includes "physical characteristics" where "scene implies always an analysis of cultural definitions." Additionally, "[s]peech acts frequently are used to define scenes, and also frequently judged as appropriate or inappropriate in relation to scenes."⁵⁴ Arguments depending on location can involve placing issues of "scope." Burke noted that "the choice of circumference of the scene in terms of which a given act is to be located will have a corresponding effect upon the interpretation of the act itself."⁵⁵ Local settings constrain the limits of the metaphysical scene. Sensitivity to scene involves description of the place and the symbolic definition of that place. Memorials, like museums, "are constitutive elements in a larger landscape, a landscape that, as Blair and Michael (1999) argue, offer 'rules for reading' the museum and offer specific subject positions for visitors."⁵⁶ Attending to how rhetors fit themselves (and their audiences) within a setting can make clear how they adapt to the local setting and then use the locale symbolically. Presidents speak in a way that uses the locale symbolically and then move beyond the local setting, entering or creating a metaphysical scene, a

⁵¹ Ali Vitali and Corki Siemaszko, "To Welcome Trump, Poland Taps Old Communist Party Playbook," NBC News, July 3, 2017, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/welcome-trump-poland-taps-old-communist-party-playbook-n776186_

⁵² Joanna Podgórska, Łukasz Wójcik, "Alien West? The West Was Rotten Again," *Polityka*, July 11, 2017, <http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/swiat/1711878,1,obcy-zachod.read>.

⁵³ Author, imprisoned Solidarity leader, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* editor-in-chief Adam Michnik said, "'Trump's election is a catastrophe for Poland. I hope for the democratic institutions in the U.S. to constrain him. How is it possible that the U.S. could elect a clown? The Trump administration just greenlighted authoritarian leaders in this part of the world.'" Quoted in Jo-Ann Mort, "The Puzzle of Poland," *Krytyka Polityczna* and *European Alternatives*, September 19, 2017, <http://politicalcritique.org/cee/poland/2017/the-puzzle-of-poland-michnik-pis/>.

⁵⁴ Dell Hymes, "Models of Interaction of Language and Social Life," in *Directions in Sociolinguistics: The Ethnography of Communication*, ed. John Gumperz, and Dell Hymes (New York: Holt, 1972), 60.

⁵⁵ Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, U. of California Press, 1969), 77.

⁵⁶ Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, 90.

predominantly symbolic realm about the future. If we see a “continua of difference between physical and metaphysical axes exist, arranged into hierarchies for political purposes,”⁵⁷ then we can see the meaningfulness of a president’s choice of what scenic, symbolic elements to bring forward.

The setting of Trump’s speech is truncated for television, and the scene is widened to wage battle in a clash of civilizations. Fig. 1 depicts the setting similarly to how media covered the speech. To stage right of where he spoke is a set of statues of men and women descending into the sewers, shown in Fig. 2. This was not part of Trump’s backdrop; staging equipment bracketed this larger setting and the scene it represented. Media reports capture only a cluster of Polish insurgent fighters, armed and looking as if they are running toward some action, to lend the speech the spirit of the clash Trump was bringing the world. Also part of the backdrop was Poland’s Justice Building, in which sits the Supreme Court, which descended into crisis starting in 2015. Part of a sprawling monument dedicated to the Warsaw Uprising, these settings, and the circumference of their symbolic scenic connotations, are integral to understanding the context in which Trump spoke, and the words he uttered. Rhetors can widen the circumference of the scene beyond the physical setting, to shape the meaning of the content. Trump’s framing of the global scene both winnows what we are invited to recall and widens what is considered the “West.” Though the circumference of the “West” is widened to include Central or Eastern Europe, it reduces the West to white, Christian people who must act in opposition to a violent, border-busting horde of darker-skinned terrorists, those who would destroy the West. Trump reduces Polish history to that which serves his interests.



Fig. 1: Warsaw Uprising Memorial in front of the *Sąd Najwyższy*, Poland’s Supreme Court, in Krasiński Square, Warsaw, Poland, taken July 22, 2016. This was the backdrop for Trump’s speech. Symbols on the building include Scales of Justice and the P and Anchor icon of the Warsaw Uprising.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Rebecca M. Townsend, “Widening the Circumference of Scene: Local Politics, Local Metaphysics,” *KB Journal* 2 (Spring 2006), <http://kbjournal.org/townsend>.

⁵⁸ The six photographs in this essay were taken by the author, Rebecca M. Townsend. They are reproduced with the author’s permission.



Fig. 2. Warsaw Uprising Memorial showing people descending into sewers, taken July 22, 2016. This view was not part of the visible backdrop for Trump's speech.

Viewers unfamiliar with the setting are unaware of statues descending into the sewers. The Battle for Warsaw⁵⁹ did involve Poles leading an effort to regain their capital city, but it ultimately resulted in a devastating defeat. To maneuver about the city, Poles in the Home Army used the underground sewer lines.⁶⁰ The interpretive text accompanying the Memorial labels this grouping "exodus." Poles endured the degradation of descending into the sewer system to be able to communicate with people in other parts of the city and obtain resources and relative safety, as part of an effort to rise in insurrection. The staging for Trump's speech blocks this depiction of the descent, seen in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3. As these photos show, women and children, along with soldiers, entered the sewers. The weeping birches along the background (Fig. 3) lend their sorrow and their hope. Birch trees are the first trees that grow after a forest has burned, not unlike the devastation Warsaw endured. As a tree that sheds its bark, renewal is perpetual. Birch branches are often used to make crosses for the Polish Home Army in the Powazki Military Cemetery in Warsaw.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Insurgents themselves referred to the event in this way. "Warsaw Uprising" as a term came later, as Norman Davies observes. Davies, *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London: Viking, 2003), vii.

⁶⁰ This effort is presented in the fictional movie *Kanal*, directed by Andrzej Wada in 1956.

⁶¹ "The rediscovery of locality in the fiction of the 1990s in Poland should be read in connection with its rapport with nature. By focusing on the local, mostly through revisiting mythic homelands through an unobtrusive subversion of the implacable working of history and memory in the foreground, this fiction both returns to the theme repressed under the communist regime for many reasons, and fosters a new way to thinking about place as conditional for developing a sense of identity and agency. Under communist rule nature in connection with place was a thwarted subject....The natural environment ceased to function as rooting for cohesive local community." (272) Dorota Kołodziejczyk, "The Organic (Re)Turn—Ecology of Place in Postcolonial and Central/Eastern European Novel of

Chirindo argues that “De Certeau and Heidegger ... are both concerned with the complexity of spatiality, but Heidegger alone uses spatial practice to rethink the meanings of being. One problematizes being(s) in place; the other relies on being in place to problematize Being.”⁶² In Fig. 3 especially, we see more clearly how Being is cut in half: a body of a soldier is half visible above ground, rendering the lower half invisible. A Catholic priest looks on in sorrow. Polish identity, Polish Being, was partitioned. Partitioned as well from Trump’s speech, this image and this story does not fit Trump’s developing frame of the West as a scene of fighters. They do not look like the fighters Trump prizes. Trump’s speech merges symbolic borders (“the West”) with geopolitical borders (“borders erased from the map”) in order to create a sense of identity.



Fig. 3 Warsaw Uprising Memorial showing people descending into sewers, taken July 22, 2016.

Post-Displacement,” in *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures*, eds. Dobrota Pucherová and Róbert Gáfrik (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), 261-282.

⁶² Chirindo, 129.

First, symbolically, it was a “strong alliance of free nations in the West that defied tyranny.” And the West faces “dire threats to our security and to our way of life.” Trump continues, “the defense of the West ultimately rests not only on means but also on the will of its people to prevail.” “The fundamental question of our time is whether the West has the will to survive.” Will the Poles be the *weak Whites*, as white supremacist ideology wonders? They do not have to be, Trump implies, as he reminds them of parts of their past, in which the scene, the symbolic space of “the West” was “saved with the blood of patriots.” In this view, only true Polish patriots, those who are willing to die, can save the West.

Secondly, Polish borders have moved or disappeared from geopolitical maps many times.⁶³ Before the speech, President Duda brought Trump to the Royal Castle to see a famous painting by Jan Matejko that showed the “first partition of Poland.”⁶⁴ In his speech, Trump states that “Protect[ed]” geopolitical borders create “respect for our citizens.” Although he does identify being in “Central Europe” (in contrast with Eastern) he places Poland in the “West” more throughout the bulk of the speech. He asserts, “Poland is the geographic heart of Europe, but more importantly, in the Polish people, we see the soul of Europe.” Polish scholar Emilia Kledzik, in explaining sociologist Tomasz Zarycki’s interest in the “relationship between regional identities and Warsaw’s national identity,” describes Warsaw as “‘a weak, Orientalizing centre’ in relation to Poznań, Kraków, and Wrocław.” She describes Zarycki’s research on what he calls “‘peripheral neuroses’, which could be extended to the whole of Central European region: in public discourse, ‘periphery’ is seen as a source of weakness, geopolitical incapacitation.”⁶⁵ Trump centralizes Poland in world history, aligning it geopolitically within the West.

This symbolic and geopolitical merger of Poland in the West is part of the victimage ritual. White supremacist beliefs in white genocide and other threats to their existence build resentment. If Poland is part of the West, and the West is under threat, the Poles are then right to guard their borders. Geopolitically and symbolically, it saves their oft-disappearing borders.

Further cultivating victim-status, Trump stokes fear and bewilderment to reduce people’s status as agents in charge of their own destiny. He recounts a history of Polish humiliation to Poles themselves: reminding them of their defeats, occupations, and sorrow. From the Katyn Massacre, in which Soviet forces shot thousands of Polish officers in the backs of their heads, to the Holocaust, Trump reminded the Poles of their suffering. He also strangely included the “Warsaw Ghetto and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising” among these “evils beyond description.” The Warsaw Uprising Memorial makes no mention of the Ghetto Uprising. Though the Ghetto Uprising was squelched, it was an organized attempt by Jews in Warsaw to reclaim their freedom, hardly an evil. Trump does not indicate knowledge that the Ghetto Uprising was brutally squashed, nor did he visit the memorial to the Ghetto Uprising, in a break with tradition. Since this is part of the prepared remarks, and not off-the-cuff, the inclusion of the Ghetto Uprising as an evil, without any kind of

⁶³ Norman Davies wrote “The Partitions of Poland-Lithuania can rightly be likened to a sustained campaign of bullying and assault which ended with the murder of a battered invalid.” “How States Die,” *New England Review* 32 (2011-12): 70.

⁶⁴ Ola Cichowlas (@olacicho), “Trump and Duda in front of Jan Matejko’s ‘Rejtan’ (depicting first partition of Poland) in Warsaw Royal Castle,” Twitter 6 July 2017, <https://twitter.com/olacicho/status/882871313848832005>.

⁶⁵ Emilia Kledzik, “Inventing Postcolonial Poland,” in *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures*, eds. Dobrota Pucherová and Róbert Gáfrik (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), 95.

modification is unusual.⁶⁶ Reminding people of their victimization stirs up old hatreds and deep sadness.⁶⁷

Orientalist Framing for Victimage

By conflating the geopolitical and symbolic west, Trump offers an orientalist framing of the clash of civilizations thesis. Trump reduces Polish agency to futile motion, departing from norms for purpose-based argument. Kennedy declared in Berlin that “Freedom has many difficulties and democracy is not perfect, but we have never had to put a wall up to keep our people in, to prevent them from leaving us. . . . Two thousand years ago the proudest boast was ‘civis Romanus sum.’ Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is ‘Ich bin ein Berliner.’”⁶⁸ Reagan, in Normandy, claimed that ““You all knew that some things are worth dying for. One’s country is worth dying for, and democracy is worth dying for, because it’s the most deeply honorable form of government ever devised by man.””⁶⁹ George W. Bush, in Warsaw in 2001, attempted to place Poland in the West yet simultaneously end the East/West dichotomy. Like Trump, Bush drew upon the bonds of connection between the U.S. and Poland, yet in an important difference, he shared aspects of Poland’s history without the recounting of the depths of Polish humiliation and degradation:

Americans . . . are linked to Poland by culture and heritage, kinship and common values. Polish glass makers built and operated the New World’s first factory in Jamestown, Virginia in 1608. Seeking the right to vote, those same Poles also staged the New World’s first labor strike. They succeeded. . . . Here, in 1943, the world saw the heroic effort and revolt of the Warsaw Ghetto; a year later, the 63 days of the Warsaw Uprising; and then the reduction of this city to rubble because it chose to resist evil. Here communism was humbled by the largest citizens’ movement in history, and by the iron purpose and moral vision of a single man: Pope John Paul II. Here Polish workers, led by an electrician from Gdansk, made the sparks that would electrify half a continent.⁷⁰

That speech focuses on the success of Polish efforts to overcome dramatically larger forces through energy and agency. Prior to Poland’s turn right in 2015, Obama highlighted the role of Poland’s then-independent judiciary and the press:

And in that age-old contest of ideas -- between freedom and authoritarianism, between liberty and oppression, between solidarity and intolerance -- Poland’s progress shows the enduring strength of the ideals that we cherish as a free people. Here we see the strength of democracy: Citizens raising their voices, free from fear. . . . Here we see an independent judiciary working to uphold the rule of law. Here

⁶⁶ That he did not go, but sent his daughter Ivanka, in his stead, is oddly in keeping with the “travel spectacle” that “substantiate[s]” his rhetorical trajectory. As Erickson states, “travel spectacles merely gratify affectively” (145). They serve to “mystify spectator’s political reality, a major tenet of mediated illusionism and the basis for dramatized leadership (Welsh 1990).” Keith V. Erickson, *Presidential Spectacles: Political Illusionism and the Rhetoric of Travel*, *Communication Monographs* 65 (1998): 145.

⁶⁷ Christopher J. Hewer and Malgorzata Kut find that “[s]hared representations of national history play a significant role in the construction of social memory and the development of a common cultural worldview. . . . [with] themes of injustice, abandonment, betrayal by the West, trauma and victimization, which continue to evoke strong emotions.” “Historical Legacy, Social Memory and Representations of the Past within a Polish Community,” *Memory Studies* 3 (2010): 18-32.

⁶⁸ John F. Kennedy, “Remarks of President John F. Kennedy at the Rudolph Wilde Platz, Berlin, June 26, 1963.” https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/Berlin-W-Germany-Rudolph-Wilde-Platz_19630626.aspx

⁶⁹ Prasch, 264.

⁷⁰ Bush.

in Poland we see a vibrant press and a growing civil society that holds leaders accountable -- because governments exist to lift up their people, not to hold them down.⁷¹

Trump's Warsaw address stands in stark contrast to prior presidents' explicit mention of these values and their roles in addresses. Neither freedom nor democracy act as primary motivators for Trump. Trump's vision calls for devastation, destruction, distrust, and fear of the enemy. He nevertheless tries to call upon what was considered successful in previous efforts. This effort did embolden some actors: authoritarian actors in the PiS, who advanced their program of court reform shortly after Trump left. This led to country-wide protests for over a week, leading the President to veto two of the three measures (See Fig. 4 and 5).



Fig. 4. Anti-government protesters with “PiS Pogrzebał Konstytucję” (PiS Buried Polish Constitution) in Warsaw July 16, 2017.

⁷¹ Barack H. Obama, “Remarks by President Obama at the 25th Anniversary of Freedom Day June 4, 2014,” <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/04/remarks-president-obama-25th-anniversary-free-dom-day>.



Fig. 5. Anti-government protesters waving Polish and European Union flags in Warsaw, July 16, 2017.

Drawing from an “occidental” view of the West, Polish writers Podgórska and Wójcik critique the version of the “West” held by members of PiS:

PiS’s “West” is so inventive, caricature, though like every caricature is made up of many real elements. He is bourgeois, cloaked, spiritually shallow and naive, because he does not understand the Russian threat and he is building Nord Stream II with Putin. ... Abortion and euthanasia are allowed. He turns churches into shops and discos, rejects God, loves mammon. ... The American, speaking a week ago in Warsaw about the ‘war of civilization’, said that Poland was ‘the heart and soul of Europe’, outlined a plan of conservative counterrevolution that dreamed of Polish power. Trump - like PiS - believes that Europe is brimming with the need for its real men.”⁷²

The perspective of white nationalist clash of civilizations has been brought to Warsaw. As of fall 2017, people are currently continuing protests against authoritarian efforts to restrain democratic ideals.

The West is where civilization itself lives. It is who WE are, not who THEY are: “But today we’re in the West, and we have to say there are dire threats to our security and to our way of life. You see what’s happening out there. They are threats. We will confront them. We will win. But they are threats.” Trump seeks to “summon the courage and the will to defend our civilization. (Applause.) The story of Poland is the story of a people who have never lost hope, who have never been broken, and who have never, ever forgotten who they are.” He identifies the U.S. with himself, with Poland, with the West: “That is who we are.” The West is both a place (“every foot of ground”) and a metaphysical scene (“every last inch of civilization”). This scene “is worth defending with your life.” The clash of civilizations “does not begin on the battlefield -- it begins with our minds, our wills, and our souls. . . . Our freedom, our civilization, and our survival depend on

⁷² Podgórska and Wójcik.

these bonds of history, culture, and memory.” He does not specify who “they” are. “They” exist nevertheless, as active enemies from without. At other points where he talks about the enemies, “they” come from the South and East: “forces, whether they come from inside or out, from the South or the East . . . threaten over time to undermine these values and to erase the bonds of culture, faith and tradition that make us who we are.” At another point he refers to Muslim nations as agents: “During a historic gathering in Saudi Arabia, I called on the leaders of more than 50 Muslim nations to join together to drive out this menace which threatens all of humanity.” Thus, a key enemy finds its origin outside the “West:” “We are fighting hard against radical Islamic terrorism, and we will prevail. We cannot accept those who reject our values and who use hatred to justify violence against the innocent.” Trump’s speech generates a faux war built around a clash of civilizations which enables white nationalist politics⁷³ through an orientalist⁷⁴ frame.

Polish scholar Emilia Kledzik says that we must “remember the strong subject’s mirror image—the weak victim, seen through the eyes of victimization ideology. In Central Europe this type of self-stereotyping is common, because we often see ourselves as excluded from Western civilization, and at the same time we consider ourselves exempt from reflecting about our own subalterns.”⁷⁵ Enemies also come from within. Trump asserts that “[t]his danger is invisible to some but familiar to the Poles: the steady creep of government bureaucracy that drains the vitality and wealth of the people. The West became great not because of paperwork and regulations but because people were allowed to chase their dreams and pursue their destinies.” He fuels the fear of the exotic Other to set up a need to control the internal Other. It justifies repressive actions and actions that remove regulations and legal protection as a means to create order. Fearing the enemy without leads one to fear internal opposition to his agenda. Emboldened by this rhetoric, Polish ruling party members took swift action to create major changes to the judicial branch following this speech, actions that led to massive protests for over a week (Fig. 4 and 5).⁷⁶

People who believe in this clash of civilizations heard Trump clearly.⁷⁷ In a reference to Kennedy’s “Let them come to Berlin” refrain, Trump spoke of the importance of “strong families and strong values:” “If anyone forgets the critical importance of these things, let them come to one country that never has. Let them come to Poland. . . . And let them come here, to Warsaw, and learn the story of the Warsaw Uprising.” Survival comes from strength. Like George W. Bush who spoke in Warsaw July 2001, Trump situated Poland in the “West,” but Bush instead sought to move past the reification of such cultural or political geography. Bush said, “Today, I have come

⁷³ Carlos Lozada, “Samuel Huntington, a Prophet for the Trump Era,” *Washington Post*, July 18, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/book-party/wp/2017/07/18/samuel-huntington-a-prophet-for-the-trump-era/?utm_term=.2dab00fb1c50_

⁷⁴ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) 9-10. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

⁷⁵ Emilia Kledzik, “Inventing Postcolonial Poland,” in *Postcolonial Europe? Essays on Post-Communist Literatures and Cultures*, eds., Dobrota Pucherová and Róbert Gáfrík (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015), 99.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Stearns, Ewa Krukowska, and Nikos Chrysoloras, “Poland’s Authoritarian Shift Spurs Warning of Economic Trouble,” *Bloomberg Politics*, September 17, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/amp/news/articles/2017-09-17/poland-s-authoritarian-shift-spurs-warning-of-economic-trouble>.

⁷⁷ “Trump’s speech in Warsaw is perhaps one of the clearest calls for the defense of Western Civilization and its fundamental roots in Christianity. . . . He . . . points to our Christian heritage as both a defense and worth defending, and highlights the long struggle against the Evil Empire as evidence that where the will exists, good can triumph over evil.” Jonathon van Maren, “Trump’s rousing Warsaw Speech Calls for Return to Christian roots,” *Life Site News*, July 6, 2017, https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/trumps-rousing-warsaw-speech-calls-for-return-to-christian-roots_

to the center of Europe to speak of the future of Europe. Some still call this ‘the East’ [...] it is time to put talk of East and West behind us.”⁷⁸

The orientalist clash is not the only perspective on how cultures co-exist. Killingsworth, Klatt, and Auer have discussed it as a problem to be “grappled” with: “Due in part to it being situated between West and East, in terms of geography and religious and cultural tradition, for much of the modern period, Poland has grappled with the idea of where it belongs.”⁷⁹ Another view, Davies’ perspective, seeks to move beyond the east-west dichotomy.⁸⁰ He observes that “Poland’s Westernism . . . differs both in kind and degree from the Westernizing trends which most other East European countries have experienced. . . . For the Poles, the West is a dream, a land beyond the rainbow, the lost paradise.”⁸¹ In contrast, he notes, “Poland’s much closer physical contact with the East has done little but to sharpen existing antagonisms.”⁸² Other metaphors emphasize the challenge many Poles, especially the youth Galbraith⁸³ focused on, have in perceiving what they believe is their rightful place in the world.

One last scene occupies a prominent place in Trump’s address, the narrative about Aleje Jerozolimskie, or Jerusalem Avenue, during the Warsaw Uprising.⁸⁴ Trump quotes “Greta,” who acted as a courier for the Home Army,⁸⁵ who said, “the mortally dangerous sector of the street was soaked in the blood. It was the blood of messengers, liaison girls, and couriers.” The story involves a futile struggle to keep the street open. The scene was bloodied by the dying or dead; the agents in the scene died trying to save Poland. The sandbags that insurgents would place and replace after German destruction served as a temporary measure to keep the border open. The street was named after a village of Jews in Warsaw. The street is now marked by a contemporary art installation by Joanna Rajkowska of a life-sized plastic palm tree in honor of the Jews that used to live there (Fig. 6). The tree, as Chmielewska-Szlajfer notes, “quickly became the object and symbol of much more contemporary Polish struggles: for gay rights, for nurses’ wages, for liberal values, and the right to think differently.”⁸⁶ These contemporary struggles represent the aims of human dignity. In Trump’s circumference of scene and clash of civilization, they represent losses, not gains.

⁷⁸ George W. Bush, “Building an Open Europe,” *Vital Speeches of the Day* 61 (1 July 2001): 548-552.

⁷⁹ Matt Killingsworth, Malgorzata Klatt, and Stefan Auer, “Where Does Poland Fit in Europe? How Political Memory Influences Polish MEPs’ Perceptions of Poland’s Place in Europe,” *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 11, no. 4, (2010): 359.

⁸⁰ Norman Davies, *Europe East and West* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006).

⁸¹ Davies, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland’s Present* (London: Oxford UP, 1984), 303.

⁸² Davies, *Heart of Europe*, 302.

⁸³ Marysia H. Galbraith, “Between East and West: Geographic Metaphors of Identity in Poland,” *Ethos* 32, no. 1 (2004): 51.

⁸⁴ Taken from Jan Nowak, *Courier from Warsaw* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1982), the story was reposted on “Warsaw Uprising, 1944” a website created by Project InPosterum, accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.projectinposterum.org/>.

⁸⁵ Greta, “Warsaw Uprising 1944” Project Imposterum, September 2017, <http://www.warsawuprising.com/witness.htm>.

⁸⁶ Helena Chmielewska-Szlajfer, “The Plastic Palm and Memories in the Making: Conceptual Art Work on Warsaw’s Jerusalem Avenue,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture & Society* 4 (2010): 201-211.



Fig. 6: Photo of Joanna Rajkowska's "Greetings from Jerusalem Avenue," on Aleje Jerozolimskie, Warsaw, July 22, 2016.

In some rhetoric, as Tonn, Endress, and Diamond observe, “scenic elements” can “seriously [constrain]” participants: “Immutable factors in the natural or social landscape limit their ability to act on their own volition: free will is supplanted largely by fate, thereby reducing action to motion.”⁸⁷ When the scene calls for certain actions and not others, actors have limited agency. If a speaker uses scenic terms to suggest the forces of history are leading in one direction, this means that contemporary actors will have little control over their own fate. White supremacist beliefs in “white genocide” is like this; in their view, forces are moving fast, and only people with the right will to live will be able to stop them.

Agents: Acting with Agency or Moving in Motion

People's agency to make changes in their world is reliant upon a view that humans act, rather than simply move. Action differs from motion, just as people differ from things.⁸⁸ Marie Hochmuth

⁸⁷ Mari Boor Tonn, Valerie Endress, and John Diamond, “Hunting and Heritage on Trial: A Dramatistic Debate over Tragedy, Tradition, and Territory,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79 (1993): 166.

⁸⁸ Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1970), 40.

Nichols observed that “Embedded in the concept of *act*, as differentiated from *motion*, lies an ethical concept—language is moral in its basis; it contains the choices, feelings, attitudes of originators. . . . language above all else is a weighted, socialized medium, serving to unite or separate.”⁸⁹ Some speakers can connect the physical setting and “the metaphysical *scene*,” making identification easier.⁹⁰

At the setting of the Warsaw Uprising Memorial, built upon the end of communist rule, Poles created a memorial that honors the spirit of resistance, the depths of despair, and the fortitude with which they persevered. Stephen Hartnett, drawing from Michel de Certeau, finds possibilities in the markings of the past: “‘To mark’ a past is to make a place for the dead, but also to redistribute the space of possibility, to determine negatively what must be done, and consequently to use the narrativity that buries the dead as a way of establishing a place for the living.”⁹¹ The Memorial’s scene creates a double uprising: Poles rose up against the Nazis and their communist oppressors. The place contains that double meaning in its location outside the Justice Building. The Poles themselves created a place for the living. This perspective, one that relies upon Polish agency, would not find voice in Trump’s rhetoric. To the contrary, his victimage ritual relied on reminding Poles of their victim status at every point.

There are few agents capable of action, and not merely motion, in Trump’s rhetoric. Migrants act. Some, like his wife, are held to high esteem (indeed, as “no better ambassador for our country”). However, even when they have helped the U.S. directly, like Pułaski and Kościuszko, Trump does not discuss them as active agents. Those migrants who are the enemies from beyond the borders act in ways to threaten the nation and the West in general. Poland’s enemies act. Trump said, “the Nazis ruthlessly destroyed the city, viciously murdering men, women, and children. They tried to destroy this nation forever by shattering its will to survive.” Of contemporary troubles, “We are fighting hard against radical Islamic terrorism, and we will prevail. We cannot accept those who reject our values and who use hatred to justify violence against the innocent.” Rather than accept that Islamic communities exist in Poland, or that it had been for centuries a cosmopolitan place,⁹² Trump prefers the interpretation built on fear of the stranger from outside.

In this speech, Poles act in very limited, almost futile ways, but they are mostly portrayed as engaging in futile acts:

Every night, the Poles put up sandbags amid machine gun fire -- and it was horrendous fire—to protect a narrow passage across Jerusalem Avenue. Every day, the enemy forces knocked them down again and again and again. Then the Poles dug a trench. Finally, they built a barricade. And the brave Polish fighters began to flow across Jerusalem Avenue. That narrow passageway, just a few feet wide, was the fragile link that kept the Uprising alive.⁹³

And indeed, the efforts were ultimately futile. This discourse feeds the victimage ritual. Warsaw was demolished. It was as if people were moving, not acting. Their efforts to keep a border crossing open were for naught. Insurgents were moving: a “constant stream of citizens and freedom fighters.” Davies described the Uprising fighters in different terms. He observed that

⁸⁹ Marie Hochmuth Nichols, “Burkeian Criticism,” in *Essays on Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Thomas R. Nilsen (New York, Random House, 1968), 83.

⁹⁰ Townsend, “Widening.”

⁹¹ Stephen Hartnett, “Michel de Certeau’s Critical Historiography and the Rhetoric of Maps,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 31 (1998): 297.

⁹² Davies, *Europe*.

⁹³ Trump, “Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland.”

The Class of '44 in Poland was exceptional in many respects . . . They were kids who had something very valuable to lose, something larger than themselves, something for which they did not hesitate to fight. They were rightly convinced that their fledgling republic, for all its faults, was infinitely preferable to the totalitarian regimes in Germany and Russia that threatened them from either side. . . . [T]hey were exceptionally motivated, exceptionally dedicated, exceptionally unselfish.⁹⁴

Davies writes about the insurgent's heroism as one born of agency, of choice and action, rather than of motion. At an early point in the speech, as part of an effort to show the bond between the U.S. and Poland, Trump observes, "Just steps from the White House, we've raised statues of men with names like Pułaski and Kościuszko." The use of the pronoun "we" presumably refers to the U.S. government; however, much of the motive for the Kościuszko statue was due to Polish immigrant advocacy in the early 1900s, to counteract anti-immigrant sentiment at the time.⁹⁵ The phrase "with names like" generalizes all Polish names rather than honor them for their actions on behalf of the American Revolution. They become merged into the mass of immigrants, remaining static, as "foundations." Rhetoric can "enrich democratic relations."⁹⁶ Pułaski and Kościuszko, remain silent statues, rather than sources of rhetorical invention. Rather than draw from Kościuszko's friendship and collaboration with African-Americans, support for Native Americans, or his insistence that social and religious minorities join in Polish insurrection in the 1790s,⁹⁷ Trump renders him a silent, stone figure. In his analysis of the Black Lives Matter movement, Ivie demonstrated that silence reduces agency, a situation which instead requires "insistent and humanizing discourse of racial regard, respect, and dignity."⁹⁸

Poles develop agency in limited ways in Trump's speech, when their identity is linked to place, and when they are promoting Christianity. He referred to actions previous Poles took—the millions in the crowds for the Pope in 1979. Crowds seem active in his speech, but he does not cite pro-democracy crowds, only those proclaiming their Christianity. In a local government in the U.S., participants "created a scene that allowed them to appear as if they were moving in response" to a sense of impending devastation of a forested area despite no such threat. As a result, "In widening the scene beyond the circumference of [the specific locale], they 'spiritualized' the scene."⁹⁹ Similarly, since "the West," seems to be in imminent danger, there must be a reaction. Trump discussed the Poles' agency as a mass when they appeared before the "Polish Pope" as "a million Polish men, women, and children" who "suddenly raised their voices in a single prayer. A million Polish people did not ask for wealth. They did not ask for privilege. Instead, one million Poles sang three simple words: 'We Want God.' ... In those words, the Polish people recalled the promise of a

⁹⁴ Davies, *Rise of '44*, 614. "It was high time that the rest of the world, which sets such rhetorical store on Freedom, should also pay its respects to a matchless generation of men and women, whose devotion to the cause of Freedom had few equals. . . . Like the Spartans of Leonidas at Thermopylae, magnificent in defeat, and like the Ghetto Fighters of 1943, they merit a similar, admiring epitaph: Go, passer-by and tell the world/ That we perished in the cause,/ Faithful to our orders." 615.

⁹⁵ Erick Trickey, "The Polish Patriot Who Helped Americans Beat the British," *Smithsonian*, March 8, 2017, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/polish-patriot-who-helped-americans-beat-british-180962430/>. For contrasting information on Pułaski, see Joseph A. Wytrwal, "Memorials to General Casimir Pułaski in the United States," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 44 (1960): 245-262.

⁹⁶ Robert L. Ivie, "Democratic Spaces of Interdependence," *China Media Research* 13 (4) (2017): 18.

⁹⁷ Mikołaj Gliški, "Tadeusz Kościuszko – Bringing Freedom to Both Sides of the Atlantic," *Culture.Pl*, Aug. 28, 2015, <http://culture.pl/en/article/tadeusz-kosciuszko-bringing-freedom-to-both-sides-of-the-atlantic>.

⁹⁸ Ivie, 25.

⁹⁹ Townsend, "Widening."

better future. They found new courage to face down their oppressors, and they found the words to declare that Poland would be Poland once again.” “Poland is for the Poles” is a refrain heard in interviews with Poles about the Brexit decision as they reflected on the developing nationalism in the U.K. and Poland.¹⁰⁰ Trump spiritualizes Polish nationalism and exclusion in his comparison to the Papal audience. The notion that a country is solely for its native-born and ethnic and religious majority is one way scene determines agency. Trump’s speech gives voice to this notion of agency, and in so doing, helps to create a new purpose; if the scene is to remain as is, one must have the “will” to defend it against enemies who would “subvert and destroy it.”

Poles as Victims

Trump assigns the Poles victim status and tries to instill a sense of order through exclusion. Poland has been guarding its borders in preventing refugees from entering. He shares Polish history for the Americans listening as a warning of what happens when borders are breached. Trump shares it with Poles to rekindle memory of the fear they endured. The humiliation needs redress via order. Should they fail to create that order, they risk the loss of civilization itself. The speech includes a notion that the knowledge of history will direct the future, but importantly, whose history is at stake. Trump asserts that “As long as we know our history, we will know how to build our future. Americans know that a strong alliance of free, sovereign and independent nations is the best defense for our freedoms and for our interests.” The discourse of white supremacy says that “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”¹⁰¹ The problem with the Trumpian perspective on Polish history is that it relies on victimhood, a white civilization in need of defense and security. Said’s thoughts on the “the art of memory for the modern world” was that it is “something to be used, misused, and exploited” and, because of our time’s rapid change and “competing nationalisms ... People now look to this refashioned memory, especially in its collective forms, to give themselves a coherent identity, a national narrative, a place in the world.”¹⁰² The white victimhood Trump touts creates the identity and narrative rhetorically based on a place in the world, the “West.” Engels explains that in the victimage ritual, the only agent is “the evil enemy who causes suffering; the victim is not an agent but a subject of resentment who exists to hate and fight imaginary battles.”¹⁰³ This is evident in Trump’s address.

Muslims and others perceived as enemies are agents and act with agency. Muslims somehow have the power to control all members of the religion. Trump asserts as much when he referred to his meeting in Saudi Arabia. The enemy is external and internal. The internal menace justifies authoritarianism. When Bush spoke about the common bonds of America and Europe, he said,

¹⁰⁰ Townsend, “Kick Everything.”

¹⁰¹ Anti-Defamation League, “14 Words,” <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/14-words>. This phrase is the “most popular white supremacist slogan in the world.” “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” The slogan was coined by David Lane, a member of the white supremacist terrorist group known as The Order (Lane died in prison in 2007). The term reflects the primary white supremacist worldview in the late 20th and early 21st centuries: that unless immediate action is taken, the white race is doomed to extinction by an alleged ‘rising tide of color’ purportedly controlled and manipulated by Jews.”

¹⁰² Said, “Invention,” 179.

¹⁰³ Engels, 311. Engels added “The problem with those who suffer as victims is that they often assign blame for their suffering on some scapegoat; victimhood slides into victimage as suffering leads to the desire for revenge. Resentment reorients the human condition: people are no longer heroic actors but victims of the enemy’s evil designs. Living in misery, the slave morality sees plots and temptation everywhere. It is obsessed with the enemy as the cause of suffering, and this obsession alters how humans relate to themselves.” (310).

"We share a civilization. Its values are universal, and they pervade our history and our partnership."¹⁰⁴ The civilization was a universal one. Trump's vision is far gloomier; his is a civilization that only exists in a clash with another. Trump's words in Poland speak to white nationalists who glorify that which they see as disappearing. Their ability to act to preserve what they feel is their birthright, supremacy, is a mark of their will. Trump asserted, "Today, the West is also confronted by the powers that seek to test our will, undermine our confidence, and challenge our interests." As one contemporary critic of Trump's Poland address, former Carter speechwriter, James Fallows, observed, Trump rejected rhetorical framing of American identity as based on an idea, rather than "a specific 'people' or ethnic group." This difference in framing is "a notable, even shocking departure. A president's role when traveling has, until now, been to speak for the American *idea*."¹⁰⁵ Trump's isolation of the West, his identification of the enemy as Islamist, and his insistence on engaging in victimage rituals has indeed marked his departure from rhetorical traditions.

Conclusion

The physical setting of Trump's Warsaw address, dependent upon a partial view of history and locale, accompanied Trump's scenic, and unconvincing, framing of the past somehow as both heroic and humiliating. His speech rests upon a victimized Poland, one perpetually stuck in a tragic and futile past. In enveloping Poland as part of "the West" symbolically and geopolitically he validates right-wing nationalist's perspective. He disregards memories of a multicultural past to inspire Polish citizens to create their contemporary identity. He grasps at traces of rhetorical history from presidents with reputations he seeks to absorb. He allows Polish leaders the rhetorical space to continue the victimage ritual in his stead.

Trump's rhetoric rests also upon a sense of an agent-less Poland, one incapable of encompassing the dramatic changes since 1989 into their national identity. Instead, white supremacist rhetoric, dependent on a victim ideology, marks the Polish being, partitioning it as part of a symbolic and geopolitical "West." This West has no agents except those willing to die for its existence.

How might an emboldened white supremacy in Poland and the US be replaced with a public memory of the pro-democracy impulses at the center of the strong historical connection of the two countries? We must honestly assess what we see and hear before us. In "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," Burke claims that "Our job..., our anti-Hitler Battle, is to find all available ways of making the Hitlerite distortions of religion apparent, in order that politicians of this kind in America be unable to perform a similar swindle. ...The desire for national unity ...is genuine and admirable. But this unity, if attained on a deceptive basis...is no unity at all."¹⁰⁶ How can white supremacist rhetoric, furthered in a foreign country, be stopped? Rejection of the answers offered to those who suffer resentments. For the Germans, "resentment of a lost war ... increase[d] their susceptibility to Hitler's rhetoric." We can offer alternative narratives to those who draw on resentments over economic despair. For as Burke warned, a

certain kind of industrial or financial monopolist, annoyed by the contrary voices of our parliament, wish for the momentary peace of one voice, amplified by social organizations, with all the others not merely quieted but given the quietus. So he might, under Nazi promptings, be tempted to back a group of gangsters who, upon becoming the ruling party of the state, would protect him against the necessary

¹⁰⁴ Bush.

¹⁰⁵ James Fallows, "How American Presidents Used to Speak Overseas," *The Atlantic*, July 6, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/07/trump-poland-speech/532839/>.

¹⁰⁶ Burke, "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle,'" 219-220.

demands of the workers. His gangsters, then, would be his insurance against his workers. But who would be his insurance against his gangsters?¹⁰⁷

Presidential rhetors have a choice for how they manage “division, antagonism, and exclusion,” which Ivie calls the “conditions that diminish democratic community and yet make it possible.”¹⁰⁸ Critics, honestly evaluating the rhetoric by standards set in national ideals and in rhetorical traditions. The choice Trump made in Warsaw follows the “undemocratic impulse” which seeks to “eradicate diversity and homogenize the people, which is a negative attitude of withdrawal that promotes separatism and violence.” As critics, we can point to the “democratic alternative” in which we “adjust to diversity in a way that invites tolerance and enriches polity.”¹⁰⁹

The perspective of the clash of civilizations is not the only one in the contest for people’s hearts and minds. Also present is a native view, one embedded in Polish culture itself, whose literature produced the capacity to see “[t]he tensions, the passion, the contrasts - the diaspora at once freely acknowledged and enforced” as “the true meaning of our human condition.” This view recognizes that “borders may be crossed, understanding and sympathy fostered, and animating, living contracts or correspondences created.”¹¹⁰ Empathy can address alienation, productive rhetoric can create new scenes for action that retain fidelity to the past without being bound by a tragic view of that past. Unless we can provide other modes of relating the past to ourselves, in ways that include rather than exclude, we will be relegated to a tragic future.

¹⁰⁷ Burke, “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s ‘Battle,’” 220.

¹⁰⁸ Ivie, 17.

¹⁰⁹ Ivie, 17-18.

¹¹⁰ Lars Gyllensten, “The Nobel Prize in Literature 1980 Czesław Miłosz Award Ceremony Speech,” The Nobel Foundation, 1980, https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1980/presentation-speech.html.