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The desire for fullness. The fantasmatic logic of modernization discourses at the turn of the 19th and 20th century in Łódź

The tension inherent in the desire to be modern appeared with all its strength in the discourses surrounding an alien, rapidly developing industrial center in the middle of the rural Kingdom of Poland – the city of Łódź. In this article, I attempt to reconstruct the logic of press and reportage discourses dealing with this new experience. The press, reportage, and literary discourses concerning the newly established locus of modernity – the city of Łódź – reveal the work of ideological fantasy, a logic of discourse in reportages, essays and novels describing an imaginary diagnosis of reality and a fantasy about its utopian version, as well as the obstacles which always prevent the fulfillment of utopia and even threaten it with a more horrific dystopian vision. Still, the clue lies in the obstacle itself, which is at one and the same time the foundation allowing any utopian project to appear at all, as well a vision of reality.

Keywords: modernization, industrial city, Łódź, discourse, fantasmatic logic, local press

Newcomers were greeted by the “characteristic, dirty fog on the horizon” (Gliszczyński 1905) and from the “gigantic cloud of smoke” surfaced “a forest of brick chimneys” with “proud hatred throwing to the sky smoke, fire and ashes”, creating “the impression that a legion of blazing volcanoes embraced the proletarian city.” (Timkowskij-Kostin 2001)¹. This is how the industrial city of Łódź was described in the turn of the 19th and 20th century by journalists visiting it with an “impression of curiosity if not shame, that one goes for the first time to the unknown city, to know the places about which only gossip or fairytales tell us what happens there.” (Gliszczyński and Mieszkowski 1894). Indeed, the new industrial center emerged rapidly in the Polish landscape and, for a long time, it remained on the margins of public concern, even though it was located only 120 km from Warsaw, connected to it by railway from the 1860s, and was populated by over 100,000 inhabitants by the 1870s. However, once it became a public issue, it turned out to be a strong catalyst for the problematization of development, capitalism, progress – all in all, modernity. The chimney-landscape described above was far removed from the usual Polish sights, and the same applied to the city’s social structure, customs, language, culture etc. Thus, the city’s discursive rendition can serve as an inspiring field of research for Polish discussions over modernity at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th. I propose to read those discourses in the context of a search for modernization projects, understood as an answer provoked by a rapidly changing world, embodied in the particular urban fabric and the plans to regain stability in the new social reality. The local daily Polish press, reportages and novels about Łódź expose a fascinating struggle both between those for and against utopian visions of modernization, and between different ideas about how the modern city should develop. I would like to ask about the structure of those ideas and visions presented in Polish materials and trace trails of logic which shape those discourses (Howarth 2000).

1 This paper is the result of the research project “Four discourses of modernity – modernism of periphery on the example of Lodz (19th–20th centuries)” granted by Polish National Science Center contracted as UMO-2011/03/B/HS6/01874. I would like to thank Wiktor Marzec and Kamil Śmiechowski with whom I was working on this topic – the paper is based on our common research and many discussions. I also thank two anonymous reviewers for all inspiring remarks.

Łódź – the place where the abyss opens

Congress Poland² at the beginning of the 19th century was an almost completely rural, undeveloped area, lacking in industrial centers. The formation of capitalism and modernity proceeded in a fairly specific way into the region. It was a fragmentary, initially state-licensed capitalism, implemented very quickly and top down by the government. In the 1820s, the semi-autonomous Polish government implemented a special program to stimulate industrial development, which contained a variety of privileges for future investors, and which proved to be effective enough to stimulate successive waves of immigration. Further increases in the population followed very rapidly (Puś 1987, 24; Janczak 1982). The phenomenon of Łódź was nothing less than the creation of a new city from scratch. All these factors led to the emergence of an unusual and unique industrial city, with its structure totally subordinated to the requirements of production and the market. Later, it turned into a particular form of Tsarist *laissez-faire* capitalism, as the prerogatives of the government were drastically reduced after the January uprising (1863). The primary goal of accumulating capital, the proletarianization of society, and the increase in contract labor, combined with the rapid development of cities and an internal migration from rural areas (Kołodziejczyk 1974; Kula and Leskiewiczowa 1979; Żarnowska 1974), created a setting fully exposing the vagaries of peripheral, early capitalism. From the early stages of the city's development, factory owners collaborated closely with Polish and Russian administration in control of the workers and later repressed the labor movements, creating an interesting imposition of power (Karwacki 1975). That was one of the very few areas where the administration was present – in the other aspects like health care, taxes, and urban planning, it was generally absent (Marzec and Zysiak 2011; 2014). Neither the Tsarist regime nor local administration was willing to take responsibility for urban policy or labor legislation. Areas usually fulfilled by the public sector were arranged by the private one (Fijałek 1962).

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Under the impact of the newly emerging capitalism in the Kingdom of Poland, all that was solid melted into the air... It was happening everywhere, but nowhere in Eastern Europe was it happening so fast and forcefully as in this alien city of chimneys, smoke and dirt, with the rushing masses of strange people, the noise of factories, and the dullness of dreary slums.

2 At that time Poland was in a personal constitutional union with the Russian Empire, created in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna. The Tsars soon reduced Polish autonomy, and eventually Russia *de facto* annexed the country.

and dirt, with the rushing masses of strange people, the noise of factories, and the dullness of dreary slums. The overall cityscape was totally unfitting to any Polish expectations, revealing how distant their feelings were from the ideal of modernity (Jedlicki 2000). Every bit of the urban structure demonstrated its saturation with something ‘other’ and hostile, from a lack of religion to the imperative of profit. Already one of the first “correspondences from Łódź” (even placed in a part of a newspaper under this revealing title), reported in 1857 that:

A town with a population of 30,000, but no church tower dominating the landscape will greet you from a distance, no rumble of living people will take your attention from low houses, built along the directions of a piece of string and a pair of compasses; only black and red chimneys ask the sky how fast the revenue will be back from the expenditures made for high walls, only murmur and drone present you a prayer, which the city repeats from dawn till dusk. Immediately you notice that it is not a Polish city which is in front of you, and if you enter its streets, more than a mile long, you are anxious, because everywhere it is numb, empty and silent, but extremely industrious (*Kronika Wiadomości Krajowych i Zagranicznych* 1857: Kizwalter 1991, 46–47).

Moreover, within the lifetime of just one generation, deep and rapid changes redefined the entire existence of the individual. Entering the new urban environment, the class status shifted, and subjectification in the new, modern forms of power was inseparably related. Łódź was probably the only city in Poland (apart from Warsaw) where one could really feel the experience of peripheral modernity with all its strength and brutality, a brutality of overloading of the senses, urban experience, speed and noise. (Singer 2001, chap. 3.; Marzec and Zysiak 2009). This marked a break from the former coherent traditional viewpoint about reality. Instead of former stability, modernity meant a lack of foundation (Heller 1999). As Agnes Heller puts it, the “dynamic of modernity consists of the constant and ongoing querying and testing of the dominating concepts of the true, the good, and the just, therefore it is also a space for hegemonic fights, strengthened by fear of chaos after the forever-lost-foundation” (Heller 2000, 3). The same assumptions about the unstable nature of social reality and its ontological nature are common in post-structuralist discourse theory. From this point of view, social reality is contingent and brings the community, identity or any political project a means to provide an unsteady closure of the meanings (Glynos and Howarth

2007).³ Discourses of modernity are purely ideological, as every closed set of meanings stabilizes reality (Laclau 1990). Ideology, rather than distorted reality, conceals the contingency: the very fact of instability and inconceivability of ultimate grounding – in Heller's words, the abyss. Thus ideology fulfils the desire for fullness by means of fantasy. The envisioned fullness may have different shapes: social order, sense of rationality, visions of modernization.

It is worth remembering that in moments of dislocation caused by crises, rapid changes or any outer interventions disturbing the proclaimed social order, the role of the work of fantasy intensifies, making it easier to trace. One of those revealing moments was at the turn of the 19th century, bringing about all the unsteadiness and rapidness of modernity. The discursive object I wish to examine intensified the sense of instability – lack of order was hard to conceal. The city of Łódź was a place where the feeling and fear of modernity was overwhelming. For many years it was almost absent in Polish public discourse, but from the 1880s it became an issue (Śmiechowski 2012; 2014) – it differed from what was imagined as urban and modern. In its inadequacy to find a place in Polish culture and its abject character, it became a place, where discursive struggles over modernity were clearly revealed.

Fantasy at work

Tracing the perception of Łódź and its modernization projects in the discourse, a repetitive pattern emerges. The argumentation structure of press materials was shaped in a similar manner. Starting with a statement describing reality, later pointing out its deficits and problems, as well as the reasons for the undesirable situation, then they concluded with recommendations or appeals for change. This manner was not only a text construction; it was rather a discursive logic, exposing simultaneously deeper structures of argumentation and perceptions of reality. The post-structuralist discourse theory offers coherent discourse-based ontology and helps to grasp the described phenomena on the level of empirical discursive utterances. Jason Glynos and David

3 Discourse theory assumes that the systems of meaning are contingent and never exhaust the whole possible quantum of meanings in a given social context. Therefore, discourse theory aims at studying patterned deployments of meanings and their temporary stabilization concerning identities, assessments of natural and social processes, etc. The general ontological framework for discourse theory is radicalized structuralism (Howarth 2000; Marzec 2012).

Howarth propose to take such regularity as a certain logic, a pattern for social-discursive practices, or a grammar which structures actions and behaviors. The authors understand logic as a set of rules according to which actions and utterances are made: “We could say that the logic of a practice comprises the rules or grammar of the practice, as well as the conditions which make the practice both possible and vulnerable” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 136).

A further step in their theoretical proposition consists of the division into three types of practices. First and foremost are social logics. Responsible for defining the relation between words and the world, they provide a framework, metaphorically speaking a discursive scaffolding of ordered social practices.⁴ Then, political logics serve for collective mobilization, and constitute identities and institutions of the social. I wish to focus here on the last one – fantasmatic logics, which provide:

the means to understand why specific practices and regimes ‘grip’ subjects. (...) fantasmatic logics contribute to our understanding of the resistance to change of social practices (the ‘inertia’ of social practices), but also the speed and direction of change when it does happen (the ‘vector’ of political practices) (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 145).

Thus, fantasmatic logics reveal the relation of practices and subjects and enable an understanding of how social order is constituted. They provide for both stability of practices as well as the potential path for their modification. The driving force is fantasy. To understand the work of fantasy, one must keep in mind the post-structuralist assumption of reality as a permanent dislocation and contingency (Marchart 2007). Fantasy is responsible for providing the vision of a forever-lost community and never-existing subject; it prevents the abyss from revealing its real face.

Fantasy works to close this contingency, promising a fullness – the “normal modernity” – by defining the obstacle, preventing “the true normality” from coming into being. It is a necessary condition, as its fullness is to forever remain an unfulfilled promise; the experience of reality always denies the illusion of its full realization. This creation of the fantasmatic obstacle is a paradoxical condition on which fantasmatic vision can be established – on which it is (im)possible to form.

⁴ Ernesto Laclau, being the protoplast of such an understanding of this term, defined it as “a rarefied system of statements, that is, a system of rules drawing a horizon within which some objects are representable while others are excluded” (Laclau 2005, 107).

A coherent vision of reality is impossible under conditions of radical contingency and only fantasy can provide it with a stable foundation. This is done by two dimensions of fantasy – utopian and dystopian, respectively “the beatific dimension of fantasy – or which foretells of disaster if the obstacle proves insurmountable, which might be termed the horrific dimension of fantasy” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 147). The utopia - an idealized scenario - is a promise of fullness and a promise of achieving that “normal modernity”, which is prevented by a fantasmatic enemy ultimately leading to the dystopia – a disaster scenario. The role of the obstacle might be played by Jews,⁵ inept administration, greedy capitalists or savage masses, all of them preventing the realization of fantasmatic desire. Łódź, as an urban objective space embodying capitalist modernity, threatened the fullness of Polish fantasmatic visions, allowing the emergence of fantasy to work. While the imaginary diagnosis, obstacles and visions were different for different political options, still the logics of the discourse remained the same.

The materials gathered reveal the work of ideological fantasy, which underpins the discursively expressed diagnosis of reality. The fantasy re-tells its utopian version and ushers in obstacles, which always prevent the fulfillment of utopia and simultaneously threaten it with an even more horrific dystopian vision. Still, the clue lies in the obstacle itself, which is, at the very same time, the foundation enabling the appearance of any utopian project at all. I hope to examine those processes by analyzing the main texts concerning Łódź from the 1850s to the 1920s.⁶ Obviously, the imaginary diagnosis of the situation and obstacles varied, for example, some were distinguished in terms of class, others in terms of nation. The political profiles of titles and individual authors varied greatly, especially after the rising influence of socialism and nationalism among the Polish intelligentsia, earlier more united under ideas of positivism (Śmiechowski 2014, 25; Micińska 2008). Still, the role of individual agents is of minor importance in comparison with discourse logics.

I propose three axes of the ideological work of fantasy, divided into thematic principles. These are neither comprehensive nor exclusive

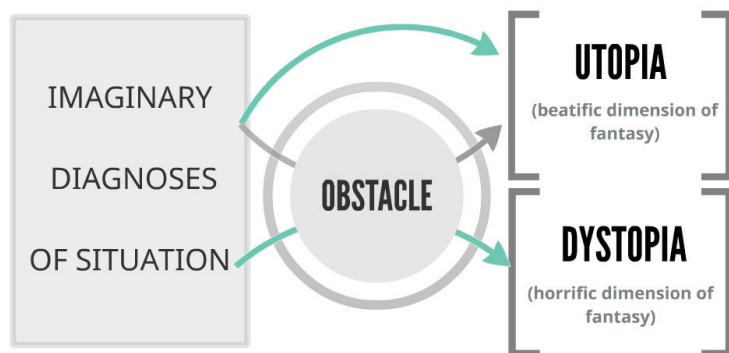
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5 A very strong figure in Poland (Michlic 2006).

6 This research is based on an intensive survey of the journals “Rozwój” (1897–1904 and 1905–1914), “Goniec” (1898–1906), “Kurier” (1906–1911) and “Nowy Kurier” (1911–1914), and additionally supplemented by reportages written by various journalists from their visits in Łódź, as well as a few novels published in Polish. I focus on the Polish perception and auto-discourses about the city, therefore German, Russian and Yiddish texts are not included, although they also circulated in the Polish discourse.

aspects of discourse and parallel divisions are easy to imagine, but still their aim is to order main plots, problems and argumentation revealing the fantasmatic logic about the city's modernity (Kmieciak 1976; Rybicka 2013 Śmiechowski 2012). The first is a construct of (A) the alien city – related to its social structure, that is, its distinctive features like its national (ethnic) and religious character; furthermore, to its class structure with its relatively small but influential group of factory-owners, smaller tradesmen and entrepreneurs and proletarian masses; and last but not least to its foreign customs and popular culture, which leads also to the second axis: (B) the immoral city – not only did the city-dwellers of Łódź live in a different way as a result of their national, social and cultural origins and rapid social and geographical mobility, but the urban rhythms of life were also directly connected to the market and economical conjunctures which had little precedence in Polish experience. Those components were strengthened by a lack of former social structures, institutions and traditions, all of which resulted in the perception of Łódź as a city with no rules and no traditions, sinking into moral depravity under the rule of the market. Furthermore, the rush of the developing city, its aggressive capitalism and lack of interest therein from the central and local governments resulted in perceiving it as a wild and barbaric city. The last axis, intersecting with previous two, would be: (C) the inappropriate city – Łódź's trajectory of development was rapid and uncontrolled; therefore, the effects were heterogeneous and chaotic. Its space consisted of urban and rural spaces, modern and backward elements, impressive wealth and extreme poverty, and additionally the rapid pace of living, noises and smells of growing industry, commercials and entertainment provided for a new quality of urban experience – quite difficult to accept for the Polish elites.

All those components are related to each other and intersect in their cultural, class, national, ethnic and gender dimensions. Stemming from these peculiarities of urban development and the undeniable predicaments associated with Łódź's early industrial capitalism, and further taking into consideration the particular reservations in the Polish mindset to urban development, a specific discursive, imaginary picture of the city emerged. As a discursive object, Łódź began to be rendered in a steady, characteristic manner, creating the foundation for countless depictions of it as the alien, savage, uncivilized city of poverty and greed, which were to remain the main components of Łódź in the public imagination for a long time (Zysiak 2010).



A. The foreign and alien city

Inhabited first by foreign craftsmen and subsequently by industrialists flowing in from the entire region, encouraged by the economic opportunities and governmental assistance, Łódź was to witness the growing fortunes of mostly Jewish and German entrepreneurs (Pytlas 1994). After a short period as the so-called 'Promised Land', from the late 1840s onward, one could observe the proletarianization of the craftsman and concentration of capital in the hands of a few of the biggest companies. The first cartels and monopolies appeared in the 1880s and workers, mainly unskilled from rural areas, become the majority of citizens (Janczak 1982; Rosin 1988). From the 1860s, a rising number of female workers was observed and this soon resulted in the feminization of the entire population. Women and children were simply cheaper and less problematic workers (Sikorska-Kowalska 2001, 39). Class differences were strengthened by national divisions and religious ones (Kanfer 2011). The most powerful companies, which hired over 500 workers, were mainly owned by Germans (only a few by Jews). The class conflict culminated in the Revolution of 1905 and further strikes during the inter-war period (Badziak and Samuś 1985; Kieszczyński 1962).

Up until WWII, Łódź was a multicultural melting pot consisting of Germans, Poles, Jews and Russians, but the main dimension of this difference was class. Hence, an important component of Łódź's representation in Polish culture was the assumed foreignness of the city. Because of the domination (both in number and especially in the economic dimension) of Germans in the first decades of Łódź's development, the whole city was recognized as alien, as a foreign colony of German culture,

a perception which resonated strongly with anti-German sentiments and fears of Germanization in the Age of Partitions (Śmiechowski 2012, 145).⁷ From the perspective of the Polish press, the lack of Poles among factory owners and key institutions was a main obstacle to Łódź's proper development. Moreover, as Łódź was the most vivid industrial center in Poland, its alien character raised doubts about the possibilities of a Polish version of capitalism:

All in all, it is a disturbing and significant fact, that Łódź is a product of someone else's energy and foreign capitalists. Its growing domination – to the detriment of Warsaw; is a glaring example of our economic and financial underdevelopment (*Rozwój* 1914).

Underscoring the differences and its foreignness, a typical citizen of Łódź was certainly not viewed as Polish, nor even German. In some articles, journalists claimed that there was no local patriotism and all city dwellers were rather “only newcomers, temporary residents, for whom a common thing is only a lust for money and gold rush at any price” (*Kurier Łódzki* 1908). This was assumed to be one of the reasons for all of the city's problems – the lack of patriotism and deeper relations towards the city: “Hasn't Łódź created any attachments? Is there any local patriotism? If not, that would be a black spot disgracing the second biggest – in terms of size, population, industry and trade – city of the Kingdom” (*Rozwój* 1911).

Even if local patriotism was not a trademark of Łódź, still its citizens could be singled out in a different manner. Just as Manchester has a special word depicting the way of life in the fast-developing industrial city – Manchesterthum (Briggs 1993, 106), so too in Poland there was a special word for new type of Łódź man: “... it is worth mentioning, that Łódź, even if it is neither a country nor a state, has its own nationality – these are so-called, in German style, Lodzermensches” (Berglund and Porter 2010, 39–40).⁸ This discursive construct was not entirely built on ethnic or national components; rather, it was founded on a special type of mentality and morality of this new group – often identified as Łódź's separate nationality.

7 In cartoons and drawings of a devil, he was always wearing the German-style short tailcoat (Karwacki 1975, 757).

8 See also the Andres Kossert papers about the industrial myth in Łódź and Manchester. In (Emden, Keen, and Midgley 2006) and Wilson Chu's analyze of Lodzermensh figure (Chu 2012, 117).

What is a Lodzermensch? This foreign word means, in a direct translation “a man from Łódź”, it has gained a citizenship as depicting a typical Łódź careerist (...) The main feature of a Lodzermensch is a lack of any ethical principles. The end justifies the means, and this end is the making the largest possible amount of money. Work from dawn till late at night, exploitation of men and women, ruthless indifference toward anything which is not a profit. That is all. When Victor Hugo died, one of the Lodzermensch asked: “How much did he leave to inherit?”⁹ Authentic (Mogilnicki 1902).

Even a different language was used on Lodz’s streets, re-enforcing the alien nature of the city’s experience. This fact also grabbed the attention of journalists: “During transactions a commercial language is spoken – German – and after making a deal Polish or Jewish... Every opportunity, according to circumstances has its own language, in which the Łódź-ites (*łodzianie*) communicate” (Gorski 1904). Furthermore, the urban experience itself was in great contrast to the sleepy towns of the Kingdom of Poland, which was pointedly encapsulated in the introduction of one Warsaw journalist: “In one word: everything moves. It rages, it pounds, it teems with life in Łódź’s colossus” (*Głos* 1893). The grid plan and urban structure of the city enforced the perception of those differences.

Accordingly, the imaginary diagnosis of the situation underlined the evil and alien forces, the foreign character of the city, its population, language and way of living. Depending on the political opinion of the journal and time of publication, the elements varied, although the pattern – the logic of the discourse – remained unchanged. The lack of involvement in Polish interests or even economic benefits on any other level but individual; the basic problem of communication in terms of language as well as values; the ‘other’ way of living reflected in exotic habits and different time structures – all of this threatened public opinion with a horrific vision of a dangerous parasite on Polish soil and culture. The solution would be, naturally, an increase of Polish citizens, establishment of a Polish administration and strengthening Polish culture, which would lead to a utopian vision of vivid Polish industrial centre. If only Poles managed the city, then “all Łódź’s defects, all its dark sides could be most efficiently removed” (*Rozwój*, 1911). As fantasmatic logic teaches us, this vision would be impossible to obtain without the obstacle itself.

9 This quotation is inspired by Władysław Reymont’s “Promised Land”, where we can read: <<Victor Hugo died yesterday>> he gave hesitatingly as his item of news, and set to read aloud some report or other. <<Left a large fortune?>>” (Reymont 1927, 372).

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In this manner, the Jewish tradesmen and innkeepers were responsible for the popularity of drugs (especially tobacco) among the Polish masses, and consequently even for conflagrations caused by smokers (*Rozwój* 1900)!¹⁰ The Germans, presented as the most influential group, were responsible for the aberrations in Łódź's development, the exploitation of illiterate Polish masses, and their inability (or disinclination) to influence the political scene and become modern citizens involved in public sphere, and not just material aggrandizement. Finally, even the Polish nobility and intelligentsia was to blame for their reluctance to become engaged in Łódź's politics. The dreamed-up solution was the Polonization of Łódź: "All in all, our first task is to get into institutions, get rid of the foreign elements and install Polish ones" (*Rozwój* 1898a). This kind of discourse was daily bread for the pro-national "Rozwój", although it also appeared in the more liberal "Kurier":

It is high time that Łódź, the capital of industry, changed into a truly Polish city. It would happen if Poles were factory-owners (...) To do so, our "bisons"¹¹ should be forced to show their patriotism in that way (running businesses in Łódź – AZ), instead of presenting it by horse-racing, card-playing, keeping mistresses and praising Polish...wastage (*Kurier Łódzki* 1907a).

Polonization also meant a wider mobilization and the creation of progressive political circles, i.e. the transformation of newcomers into real citizens. In one article, citizens of Łódź were compared to migrating birds, which fly from one country to another: "I hope that thousands of these bird-citizens approach citizenship duties honestly and seriously" (*Kurier Łódzki* 1906a). A wider coalition and the inclusion of workers – especially Polish workers, but other nationalities as well – was presented as the warranty of dreamed social order (although only in the liberal and socialistic press). For them, education was a key issue: "The most necessary need of the masses is education, our masses should learn! For this aim there is never too much money or too many efforts!" (*Kurier Łódzki* 1907b).

10 *Rozwój* was the most anti-Semitic and nationalistic title from all analysed newspaper (more about *Rozwój* in: Chańko 1982).

11 A sarcastic term for the Polish nobility, not commonly used.

Imaginary diagnosis of situation	Obstacle	
Different national structure – German threat		Utopia
The problem of communication in terms of language	Germans Jews	
Different religious structure – Jews, Catholics, and protestants	Workers Lack of patriotism	
Urban, immoral set of values (see B. immoral city)	The parasite on Polish lands – German city, further dangerous national divisions	
Different ways of time spending and lifestyle		Dystopia
Grid plan of the city		

B. The immoral city of no rules

The Lodzermensch was a figure representing the new social and economic order, new in the still “feudal” regime of Congress Poland. Łódź was a place where capitalism appeared in its uncontrolled peripheral version, with its naked cultural and political consequences. Two journalists noted in a joint assessment that:

...the streets are crowded with people in a hurry, rushing somewhere, chasing each other, waves of people busy and occupied, all of this is swarming, and if it stops at all, it is just to count and write down something, and rush further with a clear goal and in a hurry (Gliszczyński and Mieszkowski 1894, 8).

In this vein, a strong fear became commonplace that the new capitalistic order would change people’s mindsets and strengthen their animal instincts. The newborn bourgeois-entrepreneur did not fit well into the existing social structure and celebrated Polish moral values. This image was strengthened by the Revolution of 1905 and the great lockout.¹² Łódź was described as a place, where:

...upstarts don’t care about anything except their own pocket. No sentiments, but the opposite - the brutality of capital, let us not say a cultural one – has showed

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¹² These revolutionary events constituted a shock therapy for the Polish intelligentsia and proved that any coalition with the factory owners was going to be extremely difficult if not impossible (Micińska 2008).

its true soul. How much does some Gottlieb care about the Polish working masses or Polish nation, without power and authority. Factory-owners' policy is not complicated; it is cynically honest (*Rozwój* 1907a).

Capitalism itself was the cause of the moral decline. Spoiled and greedy foreign capitalists ("We have so many rich, r i c h people, and unfortunately so few citizens") without civic virtues were occupied with on the one hand with deliberate speculation and in deadly competition, and on the other in vain pleasures and ignoble debauchery. From this point of view, it was concluded that, "nowadays the capitalist class seems worthless for society" (*Goniec Łódzki* 1905).

Furthermore, these specific circumstances were bringing about a new set of values and customs, dangerous and an anathema to the previous social order. As an international textile centre, Łódź was a settlement reflecting another dangerous disease of modern times – cosmopolitanism, which then conveyed more internationalization of relationships, which "gives a job to everybody, takes away a wife and seduces a daughter, dissolves a family and demoralizes a child. It has the same smile for everybody and the same death sentence as well" (Gliszczyński and Mieszkowski 1894, 29). Inter-class mingling was thought to be another peril for a society with a still rigid social structure and a pre-determined distribution of proper places and roles (Pobłocki 2010). In Polish novels about Łódź (like *Bawelna* or *Wśród kąkolu*), the figure of a nobleman appears as a main positive protagonist, set against rotten and greedy German factory-owners. The Polish nobleman plays a crucial role in protecting good old values, moral rules and social order as such, for example, a gadabout helps an impoverished noble family regain its honor, and a well-educated doctor fights for justice for workers. Those figure were noble in a modern way – nor they were the 18th century property owners, nor alien bourgeois – they were rather the urban nobility pattern upon British gentlemen.¹³

Not only was Łódź a relatively young city, non-Polish and without nobility, but in addition it had no tradition, at least none based on values and legitimacy. Due to its specific social structure, for a long time no "higher" (especially Polish) culture developed in the proletarian city. It was almost devoid of intellectual groups. Paradoxically, despite this, Łódź became the epicenter of early mass culture, such as the mass entertainment attraction of the early, pre-fabular cinema (Biskupski 2013). However, such popular attractions concerned phenomena which were

13 I am grateful to Kamil Śmiechowski for this remark.

not viewed as a legitimate part of culture. Rather, they were considered as a regression and signified the collapse of traditional Polish values:

Not surprisingly, those who search not only for pleasures of the body, but a little food for the soul, turn away from this city in disaffection, even in disgust... (...) Every intelligent and thinking individual who was driven to Łódź gets out of here as soon as possible. From the irons of narrow-mindedness and life-fiddling, with brief interludes of passion or the dirty struggle for money, one runs to the poorest provincial hole, where a bag of gold hasn't divided people yet, turning men into wolves ... Łódź impresses one only by the amount of its inhabitants, but they live like scum and dregs of society (Starkman 1895, 40).

How could good taste develop in an environment like this: “What kind of music can we hear in Łódź? The crack of steam engines, the bang of hammers, the click of workplaces and creak of factory belts. This ceaseless, indeed hellish, concert can only deafen citizens from any aesthetic sounds” (Gliszczyński and Mieszkowski 1894).

As in many western writings, workers' culture became a target of moralizing discourses presenting the decay of civilization, the demise of work efficiency, and the downfall of mores (Kasinitz 1995, 232; Gunn and Morris 2001, 190; Dyos and Wolff 1998; Lees 1985). Here, an additional layer of 'otherness' sharpened the blade of critique – even the middle and upper classes were rotten! It is surprising that almost the same assessment applied to the upper classes of Łódź society. In this 'West', it was usually the workers and their shanty 'lumpenproletariat' districts that were the locus of the uncivilized barbarian. In Poland, even the upper classes of the industrial city of Łódź were pegged in this dishonorable role: “In Łódź, the ever-present lack of good manners and breeding is shocking; and the lack of culture – this is the biggest thing which an individual, accustomed at least a bit to civilized manners, has to face” (Starkman 1895, 11). At the same time it also became a public issue, leading journalists to refer to the imagined West as a cultural master even in the realm of personal hygiene and body habits, creating a particular, entangled and reverse tension between 'here' and 'there' in terms of civilization:

Generally, there is no charm and elegance on the streets... Lack of tact in walking through narrow streets without pushing, lack of habit, even among people dressed decently, to use the generally accepted assistance of a handkerchief in certain bodily functions... – and let us recall that in the West it is not even allowed to spit on the street! (Gorski 1904, 13).

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Furthermore, not only was Łódź relatively young, non-Polish and non-noble, but it was also lacking in tradition. It was easier to explain the immorality of the Lodzermensh or worker's poverty if they were not one of 'us'.

Newspapers complained about the citizens' degenerate morals, and among the many problems, public attention was focused on alcoholism, demoralization at summer picnics, sexual abuse of female workers, and illegitimate children. As some of those warned, the lack of education, and consequently of moral upbringing and civilized human beings, was the result of the devastating influence of capitalism. The bourgeois were greedy and short sighted, the masses unlettered and passive. The catastrophic vision was one of total moral decline, leaving a terrifying legacy for future generations:

What will we pass to the future? Wild customs, moral decline, defilement of the most valued human ideals, and degenerated progress. We have to provide order in our own home, recover our moral and material virtues. (...) Łódź especially needs this recovery (*Rozwój* 1907b).

As can be seen, the fears were based on the vision of a wild capitalism neglecting public order and moral rules. Not only was it uncontrollable and unpredictable, but above all immoral. Abstract capitalism as such is difficult to blame, thus the direct responsibility for the fear and discontent fell upon the greedy and spoiled Lodzermenschen: tradesmen, factory-owners, that is Germans and Jews. As moral and cultural rules were melting into the air, leading to Sodom and Gomorrah, the solution could be found only by regaining the sense of good and evil clearly provided for by universal humanitarian values and the noble code of honor. This was possible to re-establish only – in the positivist spirit – by education:

This difficult and arduous task can be achieved by constant, well-organized and intentional peaceful work aiming at raising the level of ethical culture in our city, at making customs more gentle, citizens more civilized, getting rid of illiteracy, making notions and terms rational, building wealth, developing a school system – in one word, propagating the ideals of work, justice and love for higher virtues (*Rozwój* 1907b).

Hence, the solution was to provide order and to educate masses, otherwise the escalation of the crisis meant near-apocalyptic visions: “Therefore never ever will the bandits be diminished, therefore always the knife and crook will rule the city. Because each year the bandits will be joined by all those for whom there was no place in school” (*Nowy Kurier Łódzki*

1912). This path of reform was characteristic for “civilized human beings” and allowed them to “stand on the upper stage of societal development” (*Rozwój* 1898a). Stable, unquestionable rules would cure the diseases of capitalism and develop its reformed version – the noble capitalism. However, this project was impossible to achieve while the articulated problems were a part of capitalism itself.

Imaginary diagnosis of situation	Obstacle	Utopia
the aggressive, wild capitalism debauchery and greed the rule of profit and money moral decline	<i>Lodzermensche</i> , factory-owners, illiterate masses	
		Dystopia

C. The inappropriate city

The last principle of fantasmatic logic is related to the specific experience of the city and its poor infrastructure (Dumała 1974; Puś 1987). Łódź was described as a place of contrasts, where “a palace of a millionaire stands just opposite to a worker’s shanty, in a neighborhood of modern houses inhabited by affluent families is a hovel where the poorest people live” (Gliszczyński and Mieszkowski 1894, 23). The development of the city was presented as abnormal and its appearance did not fit into any of the known patterns. As journalists reported with disgust: “In Łódź, there are businesses worth millions gaining good profit, but there are no schools” (*Rozwój* 1898b), or in a similar manner: “There is the power of millions, but there are no hospitals, there are many palaces – proudly protruding – but there are no hygienic flats for hard-working masses, there are trimmed gardens, but no public parks” (*Goniec Łódzki* 1898). It was difficult to imagine that in one place so much luxury could stand beside such extreme poverty: “And when one mentions also this sick air which is breathed in by the people who turn millions into billions, who can afford champagne, but lack clean water (...) one is astonished without restraint” (Gliszczyński and Mieszkowski 1894, 14).

The imaginary diagnosis of the situation focused mainly on symptoms, that is, the hygienic conditions and public health (lack of baths, sewage

system, hospitals, decent housing, clean butcheries, green areas, fresh air), poverty (lack of orphanages, shelters, feeding etc.) and illiteracy (once again, lack of schools, kindergartens, reading rooms). A separate narrative was delivered with respect to the deficiencies of culture, tradition and heritage (museums, libraries). Moreover, a subject of repeated harsh critique was the backward atmosphere and lack of a public sphere.

What is particularly interesting, considering the very grounds of this multi-layered rejection, is the fact that Łódź was denied urbanity: “Our Łódź, despite keeping appearances of a big city, is rather a big small-town considering its citizens’ culture. It is rather a set of many little towns...” (*Goniec Łódzki* 1899). Commentaries pointing out its disproportionate growth and village-like structure were not uncommon. Even the first academic book about Łódź explained it this way:

If Łódź’s appearance shocks one by its ugliness; if in the capital of Polish labor deprivation and neglect of public infrastructure is omnipresent; and finally if modern Łódź presents a caricature of proper city development, then the reason for this is to be found not in anything other than the abnormal conditions of Łódź’s growth (Rosset 1929).

Thus, even if it had urban par excellence, Łódź was simultaneously perceived as unfitting to the urban pattern, and compared to some imaginary, harmonious city, which it most definitely was not. Such a contradiction indicates as well the fantasmatic nature of the image of Łódź, where completely opposite components could interact freely.

The responsibility for this abnormal development was laid on inept local government, passive citizens and inefficient organization. Of course, one should keep in mind the influence of Tsarist censorship, preventing the proclaimed diagnoses from pointing out all the problems and obstacles freely (Szyndler 1993; Kostecki et al. 2013). The magistrate was seen as not only disorganized, but also uninterested in the city’s development: “In Łódź, nothing – literally nothing – is done, despite collecting taxes and spending them in an uncontrolled manner for aims not related to the city’s good” (*Kurier Łódzki* 1906b). In addition to capable administration, active citizens were needed. Some even tried to appeal, not to human values or common good, but to the logic of profit in order to encourage reforms, for example, arguing that public baths might be both lucrative and useful for society (*Goniec Łódzki* 1898). The lack of patriotism was easier to understand when one considered the abnormal character of this “Polish Manchester”. In one article the author wonders whether there is any:

...true, warm attachment to this big city, where air wheezes soot and dust often to form a dense fog, here and there poisoned with stinking fumes; where water is drunk with fear of its germs and disgust at its strange taste; where it's difficult to pass through the dreary streets in a grid-plan because of intensive traffic (...) where money is on people's tongues and in their hearts... – 'I hate Łódź!' We can hear this from the intelligentsia and surely it can be heard from many poor chaps (*Rozwój* 1911).

According to this imaginary diagnosis, not only was the government unable to act, but the same could be said about society as a whole, especially local elite and their renowned "failure to act": "Nowhere are so many plans born, and nowhere do so many die" (*Goniec Łódzki* 1898). The diagnosis was clear: the plans were not synchronized, the actions irregular, and additionally the only goal was profit, not the common good. Swipes were taken at "capricious philanthropy", seen as a rather useless hobby for factory-owners' wives (*Kurier Łódzki* 1907b; *Kurier Łódzki* 1907c). Still, the core of the problem was the entire system as such – the solution was to reform its organization and the existing stable municipal or national institutions in order to establish, regulate and control education, healthcare (especially preventing repeated epidemics), security, unemployment, cultural life and urban development. The first step was to reform the already-existing philanthropy and build modern public institutions, and the second was to establish capable local government cooperating with educated and active citizens, who themselves would become more patriotic and better organized. These plans varied in their details, and discussions and debates over private vs. public property, taxes, individual vs. collective actions etc. took place (see: Śmiechowski 2014, 85, 154).

Nevertheless, with better organization, planning and social responsibility, change was possible. If the city were governed by a Polish administration, things would change immediately:

Philanthropy became such a fancy thing, that philanthropists dress themselves and eat only to give people the possibility to earn money. But philanthropy exists only there, where poverty exists. A rich and well-organized country does not need philanthropy (*Goniec Łódzki* 1905).

If no such steps were taken, the problems would loom larger and larger and turn into dystopian chaos: "Hunger and plagues will spread, poverty will increase, people's misery will deepen, and on basis of poverty, famine and sorrow, immorality and crime will blossom like a luxuriant flower"

(*Kurier Łódzki* 1907d). Without schools, an entire generation would be lost and end up on the street (*Rozwój* 1898b); without proper healthcare, a pandemic of cholera would destroy whole city districts; without good organization and regular institutionalized action, the city and its society would retreat into savage barbarity. At the very same time, the lack of appropriate city infrastructure was caused by Łódź's rapid development, which was also the reason for such spectacular growth. The alternative was, rather, a return to the misery of other 19th-century towns of the Polish Kingdom and to a paternalistic version of anti-urban farm capitalism.

Imaginary diagnosis of situation	Obstacle	
Chaotic and obscure city structure the lack of public infrastructure	Selfish factory-owners, malevolent administration, rapid development and uncontrolled changes	An ordered city ruled by Poles, boasting an enlightened society led by Polish intelligentsia living in an ordered city space
extreme poverty alongside extreme richness, misery and splendid side by side ugliness and lack of aesthetic standards lack of monuments, museums etc.		Nightmare city – further chaos The wild city of barbarians and illiterates Semi-rural chaos

Utopia
Dystopia

Desire for fullness

The specific and complex situation of Łódź presented the opportunity to trace other examples of Polish modernity projects. The repulsion toward Łódź's aberrational modernity, peripheral capitalism and stunted cosmopolitanism worked as catalyst for fantasmatic logic to unfold. It activated itself not in programmatic manifests or direct political declarations, but rather on the margins of the local press discourse, in reports, and minor (apart from Reymont's "The Promised Land") literary works. Furthermore, the main bedrock assumptions of this construction were often blurred, and future visions were more implicit than revealed. The project as such was obviously and inevitably incoherent and full of tensions and contrasts.

The framing motive of fantasmatic logic was a desire for fullness and reestablishment of the social order, apparently disrupted by modernity. The foundations for fulfilling these aims were Polishness and moral values, closely related with the traditional ethic codes of nobility, reformed by the positivist program of the intelligentsia. The other important branch of desired virtues was enlightenment: creating a heritage of education and knowledge as a means for social development. The result would be good organization, and efficient management of government and public institution, as well as active citizens, all of which were elements of the envisioned harmonious modern city.

The fantasmatic logic and its dynamic functioned in parallel to reality itself. The diagnosis of the prevailing situation (imaginary diagnosis of reality) was negative, proclaiming its barbarian, alien, aggressive, pathological or immoral nature. The utopian dimension was present in the visions of a civilized, Polish and moral order, but impossible to achieve in reality because of the 'obstacles', like Germans, Jews, inefficient administration, greedy capitalists and savage masses. The obstacles actualized the always-haunting presence of contingent interruption, necessarily mediated by investment in discursively manageable empirical threats. Furthermore, the obstacles posed the instant danger of descending into dystopia. However, what was crucial for the fantasmatic logic was not cognizable: the obstacle was indeed the element enabling one to even think of the utopian vision, not to mention the utopia itself. This is a paradox and, at a very same time, an assumption of fantasmatic logic, bringing into mind the paradoxical structure of the Derridean condition of (im)possibility. Those who have built Łódź, the factors that created its character, the circumstances which were responsible for its shape and appearance were separated from all positive aspects of the change, and identified with only the negative components. The impossibility of this transformation was made possible by means of fantasy. The desire for fullness and dreams about noble capitalism, moral order, and a community of educated citizens were based on paradoxes and were impossible to accomplish, as they ran counter to the reality – that is how the work of fantasy goes.

The character of press titles, authors and historical circumstances varied strongly. Depicted themes, protagonists, problems and proposed solutions were heterogeneous. The relation of discursive constructs and reality itself was diverted. Although, what analyzed materials have in common is the logic of fantasy as a general rule. All those materials are a response to the open abyss of modernity, whose threatening power was so overwhelming on Łódź's streets.

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Imaginary diagnosis of situation	Obstacle		
Strangeness: national, ethnic, cultural	Germans/Jews	Order and management, Morality and tradition of	Utopia
No rules: immorality, instability, profit motive	Inefficient administration	Polishness	
Abnormal development, social imbalance		Chaos and moral decline	Dystopia
No tradition, no history: popular culture	Masses	Foreignness	
Rurality/pseudo-urbanity	Capitalism, rapid development	Barbarity	

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