

# The Interurban Matrix: Local News and International Sensations in Cracow's Popular Press, 1900-1915.

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In 1903 the Cracovian humor magazine *Liberum Veto* jokingly remarked that the Galician press maintained an April Fools' atmosphere throughout the year. "Monstrous" articles printed for April 1<sup>st</sup> gradually make their way, "from the English press to the French, from the French to the German, from the German to [Vienna's] *Neue Freie Presse*, and from thence on the northern train to Galicia; in the Cracovian and Lvovian press they appear more or less in June, July or August, while some even appear in December, January, and March."<sup>1</sup> If the joke poked fun of Cracow's backwardness and dependence on its western neighbors for its sensationalist news, it simultaneously underscored the city's connectedness to the news and views of other European metropolises. Even if it was usually a few days behind, it went without saying that Cracow's Polish-language press was simply part of a chain of appropriation that began, at least in this case, with April Fools' jokes in the Anglo-American press and worked its way south and east.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to the train, the telegraph, the telephone, and especially the modern newspaper (which benefited from all three inventions) Cracow, like other cities in Europe at the time, was part of an interurban matrix of words and images describing the modern world.

In this paper I investigate the popular, illustrated press in Cracow as both a local and interurban phenomenon. In doing so, I am most interested in the discourses of urban life, the daily depictions of the city that were often informed by more universal symbols of the "great city" from similar newspapers abroad. Like Peter Fritzsche, the author of a creative study of Berlin newspapers, I read the press as a "word city," a textual representation that reflects, interprets, and interacts with the city of mortar and stones.<sup>3</sup> Reworking Lennard Davis's term "the undifferentiated matrix", I explore here "the interurban matrix" in Cracow's

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<sup>1</sup> *Liberum Veto*, 20 April 1903, 21. In 1913, the popular illustrated daily *Nowiny* reported an instance of other Galician newspapers mistakenly repeating an April Fools' spoof from a Warsaw paper, as if it were true. *Nowiny* 77, 4 April 1913, 4-5. The lag, obviously, was only one or two days.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of American "new journalism" influences in Great Britain, France, Germany and Scandinavia, please see: Marion Marzoff, "American New Journalism takes root in Europe," *Journalism Quarterly* 61, 529-36, 691.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, (Cambridge, MA: 1996), 10.

popular press a century ago, the synergistic coupling of urban news from near and far that characterized the genre.<sup>4</sup> In their Introduction to *The City in Central Europe*, Malcolm Gee, Tim Kirk, and Jill Steward state that the “shared experience of urban life [in Central Europe] transcended the political and even to some extent the ethnic and linguistic boundaries which divided the region.”<sup>5</sup> I argue that thanks to its focus on Cracow and other cities, the popular press was a major factor in this process. It assisted in developing a modern, urban ethos among its readers while enabling them to see their commonalities with urbanites abroad.

In local stories and articles taken from other big-city newspapers, Cracow’s mass circulation illustrated press depicted the dizzying changes of the modern world. During the first decade of the twentieth century Cracovians witnessed the introduction of electric trams, running water, the popular illustrated press, their first cinema and sports teams, and the dramatic expansion of the global market, epitomised by the importation of Argentinean meat in 1910. From 1910 to 1915—like Paris, Vienna, Prague and other growing cities before—Cracow officially became “Greater Cracow” as fortifications were dismantled and surrounding districts were officially incorporated. Nowhere were these changes more evident than in the mass circulation illustrated press, which made its living dissecting the details of the city. (There were as many as two articles per day about the Argentinean meat shipments, for example, along with several front-page illustrations). Meanwhile, palimpsests of articles and illustrations from a variety of urban newspapers across Europe connected readers to other cities, providing a template through which they could interpret the processes of modernisation taking place about them. Potent symbols of the “great city” from abroad, such as filthiness and sexual danger, increasingly appeared in Cracow’s

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<sup>4</sup> Lennard Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: 1983). Davis’s “undifferentiated matrix” describes the commingling of fact and fiction he found in the seventeenth-century English popular press.

<sup>5</sup> *The City in Central Europe: Culture and Society from 1800 to the present*, Malcolm Gee, Tim Kirk, and Jill Steward, eds. (Brookfield, Vt., 1999), *The City in Central Europe: Culture and Society from 1800 to the present*, Malcolm Gee, Tim Kirk, and Jill Steward, eds. (Brookfield, Vt., 1999), 1-7, 3 especially. Katherine David-Fox’s recent article, “Prague-Vienna, Prague-Berlin: The Hidden Geography of Czech Modernism,” *Slavic Review* 59 (Winter 2000): 735-760, finely illustrates an axis of interurban connections in Central Europe, that of the Czech modernists and decadents of the 1890s with Vienna and Berlin (and to a lesser extent, Cracow). During this period, aspiring representatives of Czech high culture reworked their relationship to other European centres, deliberately reducing Prague’s role as the center of a microcosmic Czech world, while connecting the city to broader cultural movements in German-speaking metropolises.

popular press as the city grew.<sup>6</sup> Concurrently, more attractive images of foreign metropolises served as guideposts for Cracovians adjusting to the novelties big-city life.

At the time, because of Cracow's relative freedom and self-government in the Austrian Monarchy, the city was frequently posited as a national(ist) and cultural haven for a Polish nation without a state—the “Polish Athens.” Yet it was also a cosmopolitan center, cognizant of, albeit sometimes a few days late, the major developments of the day. Most histories of fin-de-siècle Cracow, particularly those in Polish, have emphasized the former role of the city, as a national repository of high culture.<sup>7</sup> My research emphasizes the latter storyline: how Cracow, a conservative, artistic, historic, and rather provincial metropolis, was nonetheless intimately part of the processes of rapid modernisation taking place in cities throughout Europe before the First World War. My project emphasizes the ways in which local Cracovian identities overlapped and coexisted with a transnational sense of urban identity. As Polish-speaking Cracovians began to see themselves as metropolitans, archetypical models of Polishness, whether from the gentry or folk traditions, often failed to apply. In the discourse of big-city life, Cracovian journalists consistently compared themselves to citizens and cities abroad.

### *Defining the Popular Press: The News for Everyone*

The newspapers considered in this study, *Kurierek Krakowski* (The Little Cracovian Courier, 1902-03), *Nowiny dla wszystkich* (The News for Everyone, 1903-14), and *Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny* (IKC, The Illustrated Daily Courier, 1910-39), represented a novel form of journalism in Cracow. Until the introduction of *Kurierek Krakowski* in 1902, all four previously available Cracovian dailies could be classified, as they were then, as examples of the

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<sup>6</sup> Nathaniel Wood, “Becoming a ‘Great City’: Metropolitan Imaginations and Apprehensions in Cracow’s Popular Press, 1900-1914” *Austrian History Yearbook* 33 (2002), 105-130.

<sup>7</sup> Kazimierz Wyka, “Kraków stolica Młodej Polski,” in *Kraków i Małopolska przez dzieje*, ed. Celina Bobinska (Cracow, 1970), 339-52; Czesław Miłosz, “Young Poland,” in *The History of Polish Literature* (1969; Berkeley, 1983), 322-79; Artur Hutnikiewicz, *Młoda Polska*, (Warszawa, 1994). See also Piotr Krakowski, “Cracow Artistic Milieu Around 1900,” in *Art Around 1900 in Central Europe: Art Centres and Provinces*, eds. Piotr Krakowski and Jacek Purchla (Cracow, 1999), 71-79; Harold Segel, “Cracow: Little Green Balloons” in *Turn-of-the-century Cabaret* (New York, 1987); and David Crowley, “Castles, Cabarets, and Cartoons: Claims on Polishness in Krakow around 1905,” in *The City in Central Europe*, 101-17.

“political” or “serious” press.<sup>8</sup> These publications narrowcast for an audience of like-minded readers, with an emphasis on political news, especially from Vienna. The newspapers in this study, by contrast, resolutely claimed to be for everyone, avowing an apolitical stance in an effort to garner as many readers as possible through subscriptions and quasi-legal street sales.<sup>9</sup> The first issue of *Kurierek Krakowski* proclaimed no political program, only a desire to create a lively source of information “about things that interest every Pole [...], regardless of standing in society or religion,” that even the most impoverished person could afford to read.<sup>10</sup> Recognising the success of imported newspapers of the sort from Lviv, Vienna, and Berlin with Cracow’s large middlebrow audience, enterprising journalists created these papers as a local version of a surefire success. Illustrations and lively, direct prose appealed to a range of previously overlooked readers in the city, where three quarters of the population was literate.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Kurierek Krakowski* 89, 25 November 1902, 2-3. In an article entitled “The Military and Local Industry” the paper made distinctions between itself and the “serious” or “great” newspapers. It claimed that the “serious” papers love to preach and are full of glowing phrases, but never when it is most pressing. “When local artisans are threatened,” it wrote, “they are silent.” The “big” papers, “so called because they print on big paper,” are “as quiet as a sleeping princess” when they need to speak up. The issue was that the army now wanted to import its meat from Vienna, rather than relying on local butchers, as it had in the past.

<sup>9</sup> Street sales were still nominally illegal in Austria, though the authorities generally turned a blind eye to the boys and, eventually, girls on the streets peddling the news. In fact, it was so unusual for the police to do anything about street sales that the popular papers decried any interference in outrage whenever it occurred. (See *Nowiny* 199, 31 August 1910, 2-3 or the Lvovian paper, *Wiek Nowy* 794, 20 February 1904, 17). Advertisements for newsboys and, by 1912, newsgirls regularly ran in the papers. Finally, the fact that printing runs were generally double or triple the number of subscriptions, testifies to the major significance of street sales for the mass circulation, illustrated press.

<sup>10</sup> *Kurierek Krakowski* 1, 9 August 1902, 1. The first issue of *Nowiny* contained a similar message from the publisher about the purpose and intended audience of the paper, asserting “we want a truly popular paper for every Pole...not just in the interest of a certain class.” *Nowiny dla wszystkich* 1, 16 May 1903, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Seventy-five percent of Cracovians (in the civilian population) were considered literate (able to read and write) according to the 1910 census. Not quite 3% could only read, and the remainder of the population was illiterate. The percentage of males who could read and write (78.83) was slightly higher than this figure; the percentage of women was slightly lower (72.95); in older neighborhoods, literacy figures were higher. Dr.

Kazimierz Władysław Kumaniecki, *Tymczasowe wyniki spisu ludności w Krakowie z 31grudnia 1910 roku*, City of Kraków, 1912, 36-37.

The popular illustrated press cut a wide swath through Polish-reading society in and around Cracow, missing only its conservative and radical edges. Articles and advertising pitched to the large petit bourgeois population of the city, generally taking their point of view on local issues. Working-class readers, especially journeymen and artisans, also read the popular press. *Nowiny* and its competitor after 1910, *IKC*, were the most popular dailies among joiners and furniture-makers, for example, according to a contemporary survey.<sup>12</sup> Unlike their counterparts in the political press, the publishers and editors of the popular press deliberately sought women readers with special interest stories, articles about women abroad (including woman suffrage movements), articles on housekeeping and child-rearing, fashion articles, sensationalist dramas, fiction, and advertisements for all sorts of cosmetic products including “bust cream,” corsets, and ready-to-wear dresses.<sup>13</sup> By 1912, *Nowiny*’s subscriptions hovered around 12,000 with printing runs of 35,000; the ascendant *IKC* was printing 40,000 issues a day at the time.<sup>14</sup> In a city of approximately 150,000 inhabitants, this was a large share of the market, even if some of the newspapers were shipped to subscribers outside of the city.<sup>15</sup>

#### Local Details, Foreign Spectacles

Key to the success of the popular illustrated press was its combination of local, detailed coverage of the city along with stories and images of international sensations. Covering the streets on which they were sold, boulevard newspapers focused their gaze on the daily spectacles of the city. As soon as the press began reporting metropolitan issues, its readership swelled.<sup>16</sup> In numerous ways, the papers helped their readers know how to behave in the urban environment. Examples of people defrauded in the big city could serve as cautionary tales, while articles about proper and improper behaviour on the streets or in the trams were primers in urban relations. The paper’s daily delivery of staccato notes and news captured the fleeting inconstancy of the cityscape. Popular papers could be read in the way one read the city, by browsing its tantalizing headlines and arresting advertisements as one would browse the storefronts downtown for new

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<sup>12</sup> Zofia Daszyska-Golinska, “Robotnicy Młodociani w rzemiosle i rekodzielach w Krakowie” *Czasopisma Prawnicza-Ekonomiczna* 14 1913, 28-139.

<sup>13</sup> *Nowiny* 115, 21 May 1911, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Czesław Lechicki, “Kartka z dziejów prasy krakowskiej XX wieku”, *Malopolskie Studia Historyczne*, VIII, 1/2 (28/29) 1965, 119-133, see pp. 125-126. Jerzy Mysliński, “Prasa Polska w Galicji w dobie autonomicznej (1867-1918)” in *Prasa Polska w latach 1864-1918*, Zenon Kmiecik, et al., eds., (Warsaw: PWN, 1976), 112-176, see 165.

<sup>15</sup> We can assume that all of the non-subscription readers lived in and around Cracow, where they could get the paper from a newsboy or colporteur.

<sup>16</sup> Fritzsche makes this argument in explaining the rapid increase of newspaper readers in fin-de-siècle Berlin, *Reading Berlin*, 18.

wares, or scan streets and parks for interesting people and other snippets of urban spectacle.<sup>17</sup>

In feuilletons and daily chronicle sections with fetching titles like “What’s the word in town?” and “What the day brings”, *Kurierek Krakowski*, *Nowiny*, and *IKC* reported the vagaries of Cracovian existence. Feuilletons “From the Cracovian Streets” described characteristic moments of urban life, such as the experience of seeking a new apartment, a woman’s frustration with social customs that required a man on her arm in public, or the seeming smirk of an electric streetcar aware of its control over the citizenry.<sup>18</sup> In the chronicles, arrest reports of pickpockets or prostitutes accompanied announcements of the newest plays at the Peoples’ Theatre or the meeting times of a variety of voluntary associations. Chronicles usually appeared on the second or third page of the paper and contained a hodgepodge of snippets for the day, ranging in length from three lines to two paragraphs. The narrative style was generally informal and conversational. In the first issue of *Kurierek Krakowski*, chronicle readers learned among other things that a boy fell from a second storey window on Golebia St., an actor was arrested for boisterous behaviour then released, and a silver vest and a woman’s watch were found downtown.<sup>19</sup> In earlier issues especially, the language and content of the chronicles made the city seem more a provincial community than a big city. People featured in the chronicles were introduced by name, occupation and often address. Subscribers could read about people like themselves, easily imagining the streets and shops in which their fellow citizens lived and worked.<sup>20</sup> Cracow was thus rendered small and knowable, comprehensible in terms of human relationships, whether real or imagined. [Illustration: Cracovians picnicking].

Such attention to local detail did not mean that these papers were merely insular neighborhood chronicles. To the contrary, the popular, illustrated press was an emphatically international, interurban medium, voraciously appropriating stories and images from abroad. Late-breaking news arrived directly via telegraph and telephone, while less time-specific international sensations were usually translated from the foreign press. The first issue of *Kurierek Krakowski* relayed the latest on the Dreyfus Affair from “*Debats*”, a French paper, a story of “a

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<sup>17</sup> For an illuminating commentary on “browsing,” see Fritzsche, “The City as Spectacle”, chap. 4 in *Reading Berlin*, 127-69, esp. 147-161.

<sup>18</sup> *Nowiny* 160, 15 June 1907, 2; *Nowiny* 154, 9 June 1907, 2; *Nowiny* 201, 27 July 1907, 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Kurierek Krakowski* 1, 9 August 1902, 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> Often the serialised fiction featured along the bottom of the first page, “based on actual crimes in Cracow,” depicted characters walking down the same streets and attending the same exhibits or theatrical performances mentioned in other parts of the paper. In this way, even the fictional installments seemed familiar and proximate.

terrible marital drama ...in Tungermünde” that must have been originally reported in a German paper, a report about the Romanian Minister of Health’s edict forbidding corsets at public schools, as well as an interview with a cannibal, originally conducted by an American journalist, that came to readers of *Kurierski Krakowski* via “*L’Illustration*”, a Parisian daily.<sup>21</sup> Often *IKC* and *Nowiny* carried variants of the same story from the international press, running the illustrations in different sizes or translations with slightly different points of emphasis. Other examples of pilfering the international press include stories by Marc, Marek, or Mark Twain, the spelling of which often depending on whether the story was translated from French, German, or the original English.

Each issue featured a dramatic illustration on the front page, usually taken from the foreign press, designed specifically to lure potential readers. Recycled illustrations of a subway catastrophe in Paris, a woman and child plucked from the Danube in Vienna, an automobile running over a military division in Berlin, and the London poor on eviction day, among countless other examples, contributed to the image readers had of life in big cities abroad.<sup>22</sup> New technologies like automobiles and aeroplanes were a staple of the popular press. Just as common were illustrations and stories about what must have been a fin-de-siècle fascination for wild animals out of place and out of control.<sup>23</sup> [Illustration: Lion in automobile]. In the first few months of 1914, as the tango seemed to catch on worldwide, *IKC* abounded with drawings of the sensual dance, including a picture of the German police studying two dancers so they

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<sup>21</sup> *Kurierski Krakowski* 1, 9 August 1902, 3-5.

<sup>22</sup> *Nowiny* 79, 21 August 1903, 1; *Nowiny* 280, 8 December 1909, 1; *IKC* 55, 3 March 1911, 1; *Nowiny* 133, 15 June 1912, 1. Of course pictures were not the only purveyors of international sensations from “great cities” abroad: readers of the world news section of *Nowiny* from August 18, 1910, saw reports on the transatlantic Crippen wife-murder affair, a sexual murder in Vienna, the gruesome removal of a living boy’s heart for “medicinal” purposes in “dark” Madrid, a discussion from the German press of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the state executioner of Breslau, who, incidentally, had cut off 87 heads since starting the job in 1890, and the cruel practice of branding sailors by an English shipping company. (Cracow’s more prosaic news for the day must have come as a relief after fare like that!)

<sup>23</sup> In June 1912, readers of *Nowiny* or *IKC* could have seen a lion on a piano, a lion in Cleveland that leapt off a stage, snatched a child from its mother’s arms, and carried it around alive in its jaws, a lion in a circus biting into a man’s chest, and a so-called “drawing from nature” of lions and tigers that sat on stools and leapt over each other as their brave trainer goaded them on with a whip. The penultimate example ran in both *Nowiny* and *IKC*: see *Nowiny* 138, 21 June 1912, 1 or *IKC* 139, 21 June 1912, 1. The last example ran the next day in *Nowiny*.

would know whom to arrest, and one of the pope watching another pair so he could make a decree on it—both taken from foreign papers.<sup>24</sup>

Images like these, along with fiction and sensational reports from the international press, were replicated in newspapers across Europe and increasingly, across the globe. However hyperbolic, superficial, or inaccurate some of the reports or images may have been, they were clearly part of a new interurban culture now available to many Cracovians, thanks to the popular press. Of course, as is always the case when one speaks of globalisation, the images and stories that made up this new common culture did not ensure identical interpretations in each incarnation. What matters here, however, is the mere likelihood that Cracovians and citizens of other European metropolises could have read the many of the same stories, while performing similar urban rituals like riding the tram or sitting in a favorite café.

Not surprisingly, popular newspapers often integrated foreign terms and ideas into the Cracovian context. Most of the time, local versions of international sensations proved to be rather pale imitations, but not always, as in one example below of a Cracovian Jack the Ripper. Like Sherlock Holmes, who appeared in translation and in original fictional stories about mysterious crimes in Cracow, Jack the Ripper was an adaptable international trope, regularly appearing in articles from abroad and at home.<sup>25</sup> The original Jack the Ripper had been one of the primary reasons for the success of the “New Journalism” in London in the 1880s—a lesson not lost on the publishers of the popular press thereafter.<sup>26</sup> Whenever a grisly sexual murder occurred in a large city, the term was trotted out, usually to head the article. *Nowiny* carried several stories on Rippers from New York City and Berlin, as well as a story about “Jack-the-Suffocator” from London.<sup>27</sup> The paper also reported Cracovian variants of the infamous criminal. At least twice, within a week of reporting a Jack-the-Ripper attack in Berlin, *Nowiny* followed up with a local version of the story. In one instance, “The bestiality of [Cracow’s Ripper] exceeded even that of the Berlin Ripper,” according to the report, which went on to describe a young woman found by the

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<sup>24</sup> *IKC*, 28, 4 February 1911, 4 was the first mention of the tango in the Cracovian press, to my knowledge. The following articles demonstrate the way Cracow’s popular press was connected to the tango trend in other cities and countries: *IKC* 1, 1 January 1914, 1; *IKC* 8, 10 January 1914, 1; *IKC* 24, 29 January 1914, 7; *IKC* 33, 10 February 1914, 1; *IKC* 38, 15 February 1914, 1, 4; *IKC* 43, 21 February 1914, 1.

<sup>25</sup> For a particularly bad Cracovian Sherlock Holmes story, in which the protagonist attempts to disguise himself as a Negro when entering the city’s most famous restaurant, see the Carnival Issue of *Nowiny* 27 February 1911, 2-3.

<sup>26</sup> Judy Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London* (Chicago, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> *Nowiny* 208, 3 August 1907, 3; *ibid.* 209, 4 August 1907, 2; *ibid.* 37, 16 February 1907, 1; 1909, *ibid.* 20 February 1909, 1; *ibid.* 293, 24 December 1911, 5.

turnpike, “sliced into strips” and “poked like a sieve,” but still breathing.<sup>28</sup> In the other instance, the “Cracovian Ripper” was nothing more than a petty thief, a young man who met an unknown young woman in the park, befriended her, and then told her she would remember their meeting for a long time—a prophecy that came true when she got home and realized he had “ripped off” her wallet. The girl claimed to have been frightened when he first approached her because she had read newspaper stories about a Ripper in Berlin, but after a pleasant walk with him she did not expect the fate that befell her.<sup>29</sup> When in other instances, local sexual predators sliced the “lower regions” of their young victims they were described as Rippers, too.<sup>30</sup> Readers, like the young woman who lost her wallet, recognised the trope from popular press stories translated from abroad. When Rippers appeared closer to home, Cracow seemed more like the other big cities they read about in their newspapers.

### *Comparisons to great cities abroad: Cracow as sibling city*

Indeed, one of the most common ways foreign cities appeared in the Cracovian press was as a point of comparison with Cracow. Journalists for the popular press were often aware of conditions in other European metropolises, whether from visits as correspondents or from their daily scouring of the foreign press. Not surprisingly, they regularly compared Cracovian peculiarities with those of other cities. An early article in *Kurierek Krakowski* pointed out that just as Venice has its pigeons at St. Marks and Vienna has its Madelen, Cracow has a claim to fame, or rather infamy: the brazen dogcatchers who trap their quarry in broad daylight, in front of strollers downtown.<sup>31</sup> In other instances, Cracow’s main boulevard was likened to Parisian boulevards and its meadow park to the Prater in Vienna.<sup>32</sup> On more than one occasion, strollers on the A-B side of the Main Square downtown said that they felt like they were in Paris. Journalists consistently compared Cracovian street criminals to their counterparts in London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Warsaw, and Lviv, commenting on the particular

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<sup>28</sup> *Nowiny* 213, 8 August 1907, 1-2. The story was reported in novelistic tones, with dramatic turns and developments, including the detail that the victim died before revealing the name of her assailant.

<sup>29</sup> *Nowiny* 47, 27 August 1909, 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Nowiny* 211, 17 September 1911, 1, 6; *ibid.* 252, 1 November 1913, 5.

<sup>31</sup> *Kurierek Krakowski* 98, 5 December 1902, 6. A piece from 1913 placed Cracow among the ranks of European art centres, asserting that in each of the bigger cities there seems to be a certain artistic specialty. “Vienna is known for its musicians,” the article contended, “Munich for its painters, Warsaw for its actors, and Cracow for its writers.” *IKC* 177, 2 August 1913, 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Nowiny* 237, 15 October 1908, 1; *Nowiny* 151, 6 July 1912, 4-5; *IKC* 115, 20 May 1911, 7.

characteristics of thugs in each city.<sup>33</sup> Statistics from other cities helped place Cracow in context, as in articles about working-class housing costs in a variety of European cities or the size of urban police forces, or a piece entitled “Cracow’s Stomach”, followed a week later by “London’s Stomach,” which detailed the amounts of food consumed per day in the respective cities.<sup>34</sup> A well-informed article about Cracow’s lack of suburban development made numerous references to Vienna, Prague, Dresden, Warsaw, and even Bielsko-Biala, as examples of cities with developed suburbs and garden districts.<sup>35</sup>

Often articles complained that Cracow lacked the full lustre of European civilization or was only a junior member of the family, as in a piece that likened Cracovians to children on the European scene because they had not yet mastered some basic skills of urban life, like walking in crowds.<sup>36</sup> Another article bemoaned unhygienic conditions in the shops and stores in the city, berating Cracow’s tendency to cling to tradition instead of embracing modern, civilized techniques. Complaining that “even in a first-rate store,” assistants wrap butter with filthy hands, people at the market still taste cream with their fingers, and patrons of the public library can be so “uncivilized” as to steal pages from the books, the author asserted, “A visitor from the civilized west must have a strange experience if for a moment he stops on Galician territory and gets to know ancient Cracow, [where] ...everything is still done according to the old accepted model.”<sup>37</sup> The journalist’s hope, of course, was that some of his thousands of readers would embrace more modern ways. Directly attacking the backwards-looking, conservative, historicist vision of the city, the journalist called for the creation of a genuinely modern Cracow.

In the discourse of comparison, Cracovians generally saw themselves as connected to the European, urban culture of the west, just a little behind in some aspects. They felt more advanced than the “Asiatic east,” including “dark,

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<sup>33</sup> *Nowiny* 32, 9 February 1911, 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Nowiny* 189, 13 July 1906, 4-5; *ibid.* 299, 30 December 1908, 1-2; *ibid.* 54, 6 March 1910, 2-3; *ibid.* 69, 21 March 1908, 2; *ibid.* 79, 3 April 1908, 2. Readers of the last article learned that Londoners consumed as much as all other English cities combined and as much as half of Galicia.

<sup>35</sup> *Nowiny* 174, 31 July 1910, 3.

<sup>36</sup> In an article in *IKC* (205, 8 September 1911, 4-5) the author likens Cracovians to children on the European scene, who are still learning to walk. He observes that as far as walking goes, they don’t know how to pass each other on the street, as their older European siblings do. They don’t know how to eat properly at restaurants, and they don’t know how to enjoy themselves in the city.

<sup>37</sup> *IKC* 32, 8 February 1913, 4-5. “Today, the world over, even in old medieval cities upheld by tradition [i.e. Cracow], new orderly ways are being introduced,” the author contended. “The gleam of culture and civilization does not disfigure old monuments; it does not injure the past.”

bloody Russia,” and even their Varsovian relatives—an attitude that remains about the same today!<sup>38</sup> Of course failure to live up to Cracow’s presumed position among European cities brought acerbic criticism from the popular press. One journalist played with the terms of this discourse in an article that was supposed to shame “European Cracow” by demonstrating that even in “wild” Warsaw, the fire department and rescue services were much better developed. A few lines from the introduction ably demonstrate the basic argument:

We like to set up examples of the “culture” of places like Berlin, London, [or] Paris. “Look how things are over there in the West!” “And here?” we say in a loud voice. And then follows an appeal to our “western” hearts that we should be more like them. Today, for a bit of variety [...] we’d like to reach in another direction, towards the northeast, to Warsaw. [...] We picture the Mermaid’s city as a nice enough place, where nonetheless in broad daylight and in the middle of town, one can see [a Cossack with a sabre, and] where Asiatic darkness holds sway. In a word, wildness reigns. It’s with this old city that we would like to compare our European Cracow.<sup>39</sup>

Of course Cracow’s comparison with Warsaw was unfavorable, lacking as it did, the better-developed urban services of the largest Polish-speaking city. When making a case for needed improvements, Cracovian journalists regularly compared themselves and their city to other cities. Comparisons at times could be nationalistic, but far more often they relied on civic, not national, pride, as in the case in bringing up Warsaw’s superiority in terms of municipal services. Local journalists deliberately aligned Cracow along an axis of European cities. When a newspaper article complained that Cracow’s cinema selection was on par with the entertainment industry in Bochnia and Wisnicz, two medium-sized Galician towns, readers could be sure that Cracow was not living up to its self-proclaimed status as a center of culture.<sup>40</sup> Here culture was not determined in terms of historic monuments and statues—the measure of Cracow’s greatness in the second half of the nineteenth century—but its level of modern, urban civilization. In the popular press, the connections implicit in the interurban matrix often edged out the national narrative.

### *Final Reflections on the Interurban Matrix*

Thanks to the popular press, thousands of Cracovians were aware of the currents of urban life in their city and familiar with spectacles from big cities abroad. Whenever local journalists sought improvements in their city, they relied on their readers’ sense that they belonged in the civilized (i.e. urban) culture of the west,

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<sup>38</sup> *Nowiny* 222, 30 September 1909, 1, “From Dark, Bloody Russia”.

<sup>39</sup> *IKC* 139, 21 June 1912, 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Nowiny* 116, 23 May 1912, 4.

whilst comparing their city to its larger European siblings. Even in an era of profound nationalism, the primary theme of these newspapers was the exploration and glorification of urban—not national—identities.<sup>41</sup> The nineteenth century definition of Cracow, as a centre national high culture and reliquary of the nation's glorious past, gave way to a new definition of the city in the press as one of many European metropolises, experiencing similar developments and dangers. In autumn 1914, when the archetypical cities of Paris and London became official enemies, *IKC* still ran sympathetic articles about life in London during the war.<sup>42</sup> Even during wartime, readers had a glimpse of the familiar world where curiosities transcended national borders and the interurban matrix linked their city with others. Like a bead on a necklace, Cracow was one of the cities dotting the strands of the interurban matrix in the popular press.

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<sup>41</sup> This is not to say that these newspapers did not indulge in nationalist rhetoric. They did, especially after 1911 when political stakes were higher vis -à-vis the Ukrainians and the socialists in Austrian elections. And a general anti-German attitude characterized the papers throughout their existence. All the same, national, political issues were not the primary focus of the popular press, which, as I argued above, focussed on the city and international sensations, not politics.

<sup>42</sup> *IKC* 274, 19 November 1914, 4.