

## Reports and reviews

**Camille PAGLIA, *Svobodné ženy, svobodní muži: eseje o pohlaví, genderu a feminizmu*, Praha, Argo 2019, 282 pp. ISBN 978–80–257–3071–3.**

Camille Anna Paglia is an American academic, social critic and critic of the arts, who is an Emeritus Professor at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. She is proud of her Italian roots. This book is a Czech translation of a collection of Paglia's articles, essays and lectures dating from the period between 1990 and 2016 (published in English in 2017). It covers the complete evolution of the thoughts of this distinctively individual author. In a series of loosely arranged chapters, Paglia reflects on and criticizes the development of feminism during the past three decades; in her view, this development has been adversely affected by the intellectual limitations of feminist ideologues, who – she claims – lack broad-based knowledge and awareness of wider contexts. The Czech translation of the collection opens with an excellent preface by Bianca Bellová, a Czech author whose thoughts are closely aligned with Paglia's (and who has had personal experience of being the target of attacks by militant Czech feminists).

The range of themes addressed by the collection have three common denominators: disagreement with the tenets of academic feminism as cultivated by “women's studies” departments at universities in the United States, opposition to radical feminism, and the rejection of an exclusively

gender-based approach (and the political correctness that arises from it).

Paglia agrees with the notion that the historical and mythological identification of women with nature is justified. Expressed in gender categories: biological sex is of primary importance; it determines us, even if this biological reality may be uncomfortable for us. According to Paglia, this biological predetermination affects women not only physically, but also intellectually. In the chapter entitled *Loose Canons* (a 1995 essay), she rejects the claim that literary history contains numerous unacknowledged female geniuses who are merely waiting for somebody to discover their work.

Paglia's rejection of militant feminism stems from her conviction that both its tenets and its activities reflect a dangerous desire for state intervention in the private lives of individuals. Her scores with feminists such as Catharine MacKinnon or Andrea Dworkin are never likely to be settled. Paglia also pours scorn on Susan Faludi, accusing Faludi of being an ideologue, strongly influenced by dilettante Marxism, who was given a *coup de grace* by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In Paglia's view, academics such as these are opposed to sexuality *per se* – and this is where their hatred for men stems from.

Another of Paglia's targets is the academic discipline of "women's studies". Programmes in women's studies sprang up in large numbers at American universities during the early 1970s; they began as political cells, and they have remained so. In Paglia's view, this has led to the emergence of a "political correctness police" that has had a devastating impact on the quality of the academic environment, especially in the humanities. Gender, she claims, has nowadays become a tendentious and prudish cover-name for social engineering. In this connection, it is worth noting that the collection does not mention the name of the widely respected feminist historian Joan W. Scott. This is a shame; perhaps considering Scott's contribution would have led Paglia to acknowledge the usefulness of the category of gender in historical analysis – to echo the title of a seminal article by this "first lady" of gender history. However, not even Scott claims that gender analysis is the only tenable method in historical research.

Despite all her criticism, Camille Paglia nevertheless identifies herself as a modern feminist – specifically as a liberal (or libertarian) feminist. In her view, feminism is one of the great progressive movements inspired by the revolutions in America and France. Liberal feminism, she claims, reached its peak in the inter-war years of the 20th century, when it formulated and institutionalized its opposition to everything that prevented women from achieving complete emancipation – yet it did not in any way attack men in general, mocking and

denigrating them as the second wave of feminism later went on to do. I would also add that this first wave of feminism culminated not only in Virginia Woolf's still-unsurpassed essay *A Room of One's Own* (likewise not mentioned in Paglia's collection), but also in the cultivated feminism of the Czechoslovak inter-war republic. It is thus evident that democratic capitalist societies were of crucial importance for the emergence of modern individualism – and thus also feminism.

Paglia traces the source of the second wave of feminism (which emerged in the 1960s) to two canonical texts: Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), and (inspired by de Beauvoir's book) Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963). Unlike the French existentialist intellectual who inspired her, Friedan's approach was rooted in the everyday lives of American wives and mothers. (In 1967 she co-founded the National Organization for Women, though her radicalized comrades later forced her out of the organization.) Friedan represented the older generation of feminists, whereas Camille Paglia's generation had its own distinctive mode of expression inspired by popular cultural icons such as Elvis Presley, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. In Paglia's view, it was this modern popular culture – and not the feminist movement – that played the decisive role in the transformation of gender roles.

Paglia traces the end of the second wave of feminism to Germaine Greer's seminal work *The Female Eunuch* (1970), which presents a searing analysis of the situation in which women found themselves in the

free world at the end of the 1960s, when their bodies had become literally objects (and the targets of increasingly aggressive commercial advertising). Paglia acknowledges the insightfulness of Greer's text, yet she considers it the last feminist text that is worth reading. After that point, Paglia claims, feminism became degraded into an ideology that drifted further and further from the lives of the vast majority of women. One of the root causes of this development, in Paglia's view, was feminism's denigration of the role of motherhood. This approach gained in strength during the third wave of feminism, when mothers' role began to be depicted as a reflection of the history of male oppression and female victimization. Paglia considers this to be a gross distortion of reality, pointing out that feminist discourse has entirely eliminated categories such as "husband" and "father".

It is hardly possible to agree unconditionally with all Paglia's views; in any case, that would be a reckless stance based on this very loose aggregation of essays and articles, in which certain statements and ideas are frequently repeated and which essentially lacks a synthetic and evaluative presentation of the author's conclusions. Some of the provocative statements voiced in the collection actually stand in direct opposition to the principle of individual freedom which Paglia so vehemently proclaims. Her acceptance of prostitution is

one such example; one of the world's largest industries today, prostitution is a phenomenon that is generally inimical not only to individual freedom, but above all to individual self-respect.

However, there can be no doubt that it was a good idea to present this collection to Czech readers. Indeed, it is a joy to read – not only due to its cogent argumentation and its provocative, fresh approach. Paglia's writing is also witty – and this is another way in which she is at odds with feminism, which is not frequently blessed with a sense of humour. At some points in the text, Czech readers may begin to lose their way and struggle to understand contexts; the book is a vehement attack on the culture of feminism in American universities, and this is an environment that is largely unfamiliar in Czech society. An insufficient knowledge of American cultural and historical contexts may act as a barrier to immediate understanding – yet nevertheless, the book is definitely worth reading.

Camille Paglia's feminism, though provocative and sometimes harsh, is rooted in the original ideals of the movement for the emancipation of women. Yet she is well aware that the world's inequalities cannot be entirely rectified without restricting that which is most important: human freedom.

Milena Lenderová

**Václav BŮŽEK, *Smrt a pohřby Ferdinanda I. a jeho synů. Repräsentace katolické víry, politické moci a dynastické paměti Habsburků*, Praha, Nakladatelství Lidové noviny 2020, 420 pp. ISBN 978–80–7422–693–9.**

**Václav BŮŽEK, *Tod und Begräbnisse Ferdinands I. und seiner Söhne. Repräsentation katholischen Glaubens, politischer Macht und dynastischen Gedächtnisses bei den Habsburgern*, Wien – Köln – Weimar 2021, 252 pp. ISBN 978–3–205–21294–2.**

The history of death and funeral rituals has been a popular topic in European historiography at least since the last third of the 20th century.<sup>1</sup> However, it is only during the last two decades that Czech historiographers have begun to take a significant interest in the topic, primarily thanks to the work of Pavel Král.<sup>2</sup> His studies of funeral rituals among the Bohemian nobility have become a valuable source for other Czech historians – including Václav Bůžek, the author of the publications reviewed here.

Václav Bůžek's route to this topic led through many years of research focusing on the social elites of the Central European Habsburg monarchy. In the 1990s, Bůžek was interested mainly in noble families from the Bohemian Crown Lands and everyday life at their residences, but his work later led him to focus on the representatives

of the Austrian branch of the Habsburg dynasty and their courts.<sup>3</sup> He correctly presumed that a potential way of gaining insights into the Habsburg rulers would be to study their funeral ceremonies – a topic that had previously remained somewhat neglected. Bůžek's first attempt to explore this dimension came in 2015; theoretically anchored in approaches from historical anthropology and concepts of symbolic communication, he co-published (with Pavel Marek) a monograph about the last moments in the life of Emperor Rudolf II. This account rested primarily on an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the deceased ruler's social body and the formation of an idealized image of this body in the collective social memory of the leading European royal and imperial courts.<sup>4</sup> Besides material and iconographic sources, Bůžek drew mainly on news reports written by papal nuncios (as well as by several foreign diplomats who were active at Rudolf's court), personal correspondence of the imperial family, official documents written by court

1 E.g. Juliusz A. CHROŚCICKI – Mark HENGERER – Gérard SABATIER (eds.), *Les Funérailles princières en Europe. XVIe–XVIIIe siècle*, vol. I–III, Versailles-Paris 2012–2015; Monique CHATENET – Murielle GAUDE-FERRAGU – Gérard SABATIER (eds.), *Princely Funerals in Europe, 1400–1700. Commemoration, Diplomacy, and Political Propaganda*, Turnhout 2021.

2 Pavel KRÁL, *Smrt a pohřby české šlechty na počátku novověku*, České Budějovice 2004 (= Monographia historica 4).

3 He supervised a monumental publication: Václav BŮŽEK – Rostislav SMÍŠEK (eds.), *Habsburkové 1526–1740. Země Koruny české ve středoevropské monarchii*, Praha 2017.

4 Václav BŮŽEK – Pavel MAREK, *Smrt Rudolfa II.*, Praha 2015.

functionaries, and the sermons delivered at Rudolf's funeral. The monograph reviewed here draws on a similarly diverse range of source material; it presents a detailed analysis of the illnesses, deaths and funerals of Emperor Ferdinand I and his sons Maximilian II, Archduke Charles (ruler of Inner Austria) and Archduke Ferdinand (ruler of Further Austria). The monograph was first published in 2020 by Lidové noviny in the Czech language. An abridged and modified German-language version was published this year by Böhlau Verlag.

In the monograph, Václav Bůžek has capitalized on his exceptional knowledge of documents held by Czech, Austrian and German archives. It is not common for Czech historians to carry out research at the Bavarian State Archives in Munich (Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv München). Nevertheless, the archive holds collections of news reports written by Bavarian correspondents at the imperial court, and these reports have revealed much previously unknown information. It is remarkable, for example, that the reports written by the imperial Vice-Chancellor Georg Siegmund Seld were previously not widely known among researchers; Seld was one of the best-informed figures at Ferdinand I's imperial court, and the information he gathered was frequently used not only by the Bavarian Wittelsbachs, but also by the Spanish King Philip II and Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle.<sup>5</sup>

Based on detailed reports written by Georg Siegmund Seld and other correspondents, Václav Bůžek was able to carry out a step-by-step reconstruction of how the worsening health of Ferdinand I and his sons impacted on how they carried out their daily official duties – and also how these circumstances directly or indirectly affected the course of high-level political history. This is very aptly reflected in a passage focusing on a session of the Bohemian Provincial Diet in 1575, where Maximilian II was confronted with the estates' demands for the Habsburg ruler to approve the so-called Bohemian Confession. Maximilian II engaged in these highly challenging negotiations despite suffering from fever and being immobilized due to pain caused by renal colic and gout. His long-term poor health, and his fear of imminent death, probably contributed to the radicalization of his opponents from the Bohemian estates, who were well aware that the circumstances were uniquely conducive to the successful achievement of their confessional demands, and knew that similar circumstances were unlikely to recur in the future.

As has been mentioned above, the structure of the Czech-language publication differs from that of its German-language counterpart. In the first chapter of the Czech version, Václav Bůžek presents a brief account of the Habsburg dynasty's rise to power in the late medieval and early modern era, emphasizing their activities in Central Europe (pp. 10–24). There is a chapter with similar content in the German version of the

5 See Friedrich EDELMAYER, *Söldner und Pensionäre. Das Netzwerk Philipps II. im Heiligen Römischen Reich*, Wien – München 2002, pp. 61–71.

publication, though it is somewhat longer, and it also informs readers of key Czech research into the history of the Habsburgs (pp. 15–31). The Czech version devotes an entire separate chapter to this topic (pp. 24–49). In it, Bůžek states that despite the growth of interest in the Habsburg dynasty, Czech historiography even today – a hundred years after the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy – has still not managed to rid itself of prejudices and take a critical approach to the reign of the first early modern Habsburgs on the Bohemian throne.

The third chapter of the Czech version (pp. 50–72), and the second chapter of the German version (pp. 32–49), present an introduction to the topic of Habsburg funerals in the early modern era. Thanks to the existence of numerous printed materials promoting these funerals, they not only became an important source of inspiration for Charles's Habsburg successors, but also had a substantial influence on the funeral practices of other early modern royal and imperial dynasties.

In the following chapters, Bůžek addresses the core topic of his monograph, describing the illnesses, deaths and funerals of Ferdinand I and his son Maximilian II (pp. 73–191 in the Czech version, pp. 51–155 in the German version). The author's detailed description of the final moments in the lives of both emperors was motivated by his attempt to establish the extent to which the ritualized behaviour of the Habsburgs (and the funeral ceremonies held after their

deaths) reflected the desire to represent their Catholic faith, territorial reign, political power, and dynastic memory. When interpreting the content and significance of the symbols used, Bůžek draws on theoretical concepts from symbolic communication – mainly Kantorowicz's notion of the two bodies of the king. His interpretation is based on the assumption that the construction of an image of the monarch's social body was facilitated not only by the funeral ceremonies themselves, but also by the reports about the Habsburg monarch's final moments that were disseminated via various written sources and in oral form.

In the chapters devoted to Ferdinand I and Maximilian II, the author has amassed a wealth of sources bearing witness to how the monarchs' state of health impacted on their everyday lives and their activities as rulers. However, in the parts of the monograph dealing with the deaths and funerals of Archdukes Charles and Ferdinand (pp. 192–247 in the Czech version, pp. 157–200 in the German version), such source material was not available, so these parts have a somewhat different structure: they are based on an interpretation of the symbolism used in the funeral processions and in the ornamentation of the tombs.

In the chapters dealing with the deaths of the Habsburg rulers, Václav Bůžek also briefly mentions the funerals of their wives (Anna Jagellonica, Maria of Austria, Maria Anna of Bavaria, Philippine Welser and Anna Caterina Gonzaga). In doing so, he has suggested a further possible avenue

for research focusing on Habsburg funeral ceremonies. Although gaps in the source material do not always make this possible, it would certainly be interesting to compare whether the constructed image of these women's social bodies reflects the same values as that of the male members of the dynasty. The potential offered by studying the funerals of female Habsburgs was pointed out several years ago by Antonio Bernat Vistarini, John T. Cull and Tamás Sajó in their modern edition of a book describing the Madrid funeral ceremonies organized by the Jesuits to honour Maria of Austria – which also contains illustrations of the emblems ornamenting the empress's catafalques.<sup>6</sup> It is a shame that Bůžek did not mention this work.

Besides the funerals of the female Habsburgs, another topic that certainly deserves attention is the role played by women in the funeral ceremonies of the Habsburg rulers. For example, it is remarkable that Empress Maria of Austria and her daughters were not personally present at the Prague funeral procession held on 22 March 1577 to honour Maximilian II, nor were they present at the evening mass in St. Vitus' Cathedral (p. 175). By contrast, the funeral procession for Archduke Ferdinand (held in July 1596 in Innsbruck) featured his widow and daughters

(p. 242). Václav Bůžek does mention these discrepancies in his books, but naturally he does not offer an explanation, as the focus of his research lies elsewhere. The reviewed books thus indirectly show that despite increased interest from historians, much still remains to be explored about imperial and royal funerals in the early modern age; one area that certainly deserves more detailed investigation involves the gender aspects of early modern funeral ceremonies.

The reviewed publications are thoroughly researched and written in a readable and comprehensible style, and they contain only a very few debatable or factually inaccurate statements. However, some minor issues have evaded the experienced eyes of the author and both reviewers. The beverage described as *Malvazi*, served to the dying Maximilian II, was most likely not a type of strong beer (p. 135 / p. 110), but rather the sweet wine of Malvasia, which had been used for medicinal purposes since medieval times. Indeed, the author himself points out that wine was served as a medicine to the dying emperor by his doctor Johann Crato (p. 132 / p. 107). The courtier who accompanied Archduke Ferdinand's widow in the funeral cortege and whose name is given by Bůžek as Fortunat Madrutsch (p. 242 / p. 196) was in fact Fortunato Madruzzo; he was the brother of the more famous Cardinal Giovanni Ludovico Madruzzo, the Bishop of Trent. On p. 184 of the Czech version (p. 150 in the German version), Castile and Catalonia are confused with each other. However, these minor slips do not detract

<sup>6</sup> Antonio BERNAT VISTARINI – John T. CULL – Tamás SAJÓ (eds.), *Book of Honors for Empress Maria of Austria: Composed by the College of the Society of Jesus of Madrid on the Occasion of Her Death (1603)*, Philadelphia 2011 (= Early Modern Catholicism and the Visual Arts Series, vol. V).

from the otherwise very positive impression given by both publications.

Václav Bůžek has made a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the deaths and funeral ceremonies of the Austrian Habsburgs, as well as indicating new avenues for research into the history of symbolic communication and the representation of rulers in the early modern age. His interpretation of Habsburg funerals draws on

a broad heuristic basis and sophisticated methodology, and it is well placed to attract interest from historians in the Czech Republic and other countries. For this reason I welcome the fact that the book was translated into German and issued by a renowned publisher (Böhlau Verlag) very soon after its publication in Czech.

Pavel Marek

**Jiří TRÁVNÍČEK, *Kulturní vetřelec. Dějiny čtení – kalendárium*, Brno, Host 2020, 272 pp. ISBN 978–80–275–0245–5.**

Jiří Trávniček has been systematically exploring the history of reading and readership for more than a decade, and he has authored several monographs on this topic. His 2007 book *Vyprávěj mi něco... [Tell me something...]* focused on storytelling for children. In the following year he published a book that took a broader perspective of Czech readers: *Čteme? Obyvatelé České republiky a jejich vztah ke knize [Do we read? The inhabitants of the Czech Republic and their attitude to books]*. The 2014 publication *Knihy kupovati... [Buying books...]* presented a detailed analysis of the Czech book market, and in 2017 Trávniček's *Česká čtenářská republika [The Czech Readers' Republic]* explored the culture of reading and readership habits. This year has seen the publication of a new addition to this series of works, entitled *Kulturní vetřelec [A cultural intruder]*. In this book, Trávniček gives an overview of all the topics covered by his previous titles, expanding his perspective on how we can

understand the development of book production, readership and books as such.

As part of the book's subtitle ("*a calendar*") suggests, this work stands somewhat outside the mainstream of academic book production. This is not only due to the graphic design of the publication (which is immediately striking), but also its entire conception. Following an introductory study, Trávniček devotes the majority of his attention to an almost encyclopedic summary of events that have affected the development of various facets of books – including their reception, censorship, and the formation of reading habits – from the very beginnings of book production up to the present day. This timeline starts at around 30 000 years B.C., when the first surviving cave paintings were created, and it ends in June 2020 with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on reading culture. Trávniček guides the reader through a detailed account of this historical development, in which books not



only benefited from worldwide attempts to raise literacy levels, but also frequently had to contend with censorship and efforts to dissuade people from reading. By ordering the key events along this timeline in a simple chronological succession, Trávníček gives readers an insight into the often schizophrenic attitudes to reading manifested by political elites, the Church, and society as a whole.

The selection of events is wide and varied; Trávníček does not limit his scope solely to events which had an immediate impact on his topic, but also incorporates numerous accounts of events whose impact was less direct. These naturally include not only social and cultural events, but also political, religious, and economic developments. This approach is complemented by the opening texts which precede the sections on each historical era. Each of these sections is prefaced by two brief accounts: in the first, Trávníček concisely summarizes the main characteristics of the era (this may be redundant for more historically erudite readers, but the book is conceived for a wider audience), and in the second text he presents the key features of the era which will form the central strands in the main part of the chapter – i.e. in the “calendar” of historical events. The events in this calendar are divided into three categories: events of global significance, of European significance, and of Czech significance. As Trávníček mentions in his introduction, he devotes more attention to the local-level (Czech) events than many of them would “deserve” in an overview of the European or

global context, but he is writing for a Czech readership, and due to this deliberate accentuation of local developments, his book not only offers a structured global account, but also contains valuable insights that may be of specific interest for Czech readers. This integration of the global and local levels will surely be appreciated by readers who seek a systematic overview of key historical milestones, with the causal relations among them made evident. It is primarily these readers at whom the book appears to be targeted, though it should also be viewed as a form of catalogue, serving as supplementary reading that can complement other publications focusing on narrower, more specific subtopics from the history of readership.

Trávníček offers a traditional division of historical eras: 1) The ancient world: from the emergence of writing to the codex; 2) The medieval world: from the codex to printing; 3) The early modern world: from printing to an expansion in readership; 4) The long 19th century: from the expansion of readership to the first electronic media; 5) The short 20th century: from the first electronic media to the computer; 6) The late 20th and 21st centuries: from the computer onwards. These descriptive titles give a good indication of the overall nature of this publication.

Trávníček concludes the book with a cogently selected set of excerpts from this main chronological overview. These excerpts make up a list of the ten most important historical events which have contributed to the development of readership; for each of these events, the author gives a brief explanation

of why he considers them to represent milestone moments.

An important aspect of Trávníček's book is the extensive collection of images that follow each of the chapters – ranging from photographs of clay plates with proto-forms of Sumerian cuneiform writing to reproductions of book illuminations, photographs of banned books being burned, and one of the present-day “book boxes” located in public places, where people can leave and borrow books – a very apt illustration of how a long and often difficult path of historical development has finally led to a situation in which books are widely available to practically everybody, whatever their situation and income.

Trávníček's book is a publication that will be appreciated not only by experts with an interest in its topic (who will finally have at their disposal a clearly structured summary of events in a practical and compact form), but also by students, and indeed a wider readership too; the author makes no secret of his attempt to reach out beyond the academic community. Having said that, Trávníček cannot be accused of having over-simplified or distorted complex realities in an attempt to make the material easier to digest for a mass readership.

Přemysl Krejčík

**Bjørn THOMASSEN, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between*, New York – London, Routledge 2016, 262 pp. ISBN 978-1-4094-6080-0.**

The book written by Danish anthropologist and professor at Roskilde University, Bjørn Thomassen (born 1968), is based upon a long-term research, which the author conducted during his postgraduate studies at the European University Institute in Florence, further developed it at The American University of Rome, and continued working on it after returning to Denmark as well. His text summarizes research on transition rituals and the concept of liminality, which the author broadly places in the context of past as well as present anthropological and historical investigation and supplements it with his own theoretical reflections.

The book is divided into two parts. The first one maps the birth and the development of theory of transition phases and liminality. The second outlines the possibilities of applying this concept to contemporary historical and social processes. The first part of the work is a brilliant introduction to the issue, as it provides exhaustive information not only on the author of the transition theory, Arnold van Gennep, but also on his opponents and followers. Van Gennep's life and work are outlined here against the background of the formation of French anthropology as an autonomous scientific field, and Thomassen successfully refutes a series

of inaccurate pieces of information which are still being spread about van Gennep. This applies particularly to van Gennep's relationship with the eldest major figure of French anthropology, Émile Durkheim, which is often interpreted as a teacher-pupil relationship. In fact, van Gennep's mentor was a student of É. Durkheim named Marcel Mauss who was van Gennep's consultant at the time when he was writing his first significant work *Tabou et Totémisme à Madagascar* (1904). The journeys of van Gennep, Durkheim and his pupils, which included not only M. Mauss, but also Henri Hubert, for example, began to diverge after van Gennep published his second book *Mythes et légendes d'Australie* (1906) in which he pointed out the weaknesses of Durkheim's analytical ethnocentrism. The final schism between the two scientists came after the publication of Durkheim's seminal work *Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912). The book, which is still considered a classical work in world anthropology, was subjected to harsh criticism by van Gennep who rejected Durkheim's social determinism. Thomassen expounds the correspondence between É. Durkheim and M. Mauss, from which it manifests that Gennep soon became persona non grata with the circle of anthropologists around Durkheim. This was also the reason why he was never accepted as a member of the French Academy of Sciences, and eventually resigned completely from his career as an anthropologist and became involved in folklore, of which he is still considered to be the founder in France.

Thomassen is as equally devoted to thoroughly reinventing van Gennep's theory from the 1960s when – thanks to a newly acquired English translation – British anthropologist named Victor Witter Turner was introduced to it. Turner could be considered van Gennep's successor. He began to study rituals in non-tribal and modern societies and enriched van Gennep's theory with a thesis which stated that traditional rituals had lost their meaning in modern societies and had been replaced by a wide range of experiences which were out of the ordinary. Turner called such experiences liminoid. Unlike liminality, liminoidity is characterized by it being voluntary. It is a withdrawal from normality, a game of make-believe which lacks the typical feature of liminality which is a transition – one returns from a liminoid experience to normal order and normality. Turner also emphasized the role of the *communitas*, which accompanied the ritualized person in the ritual process and prevented potential destruction of the social order, which was threatened by the ritualized person's state of mind – one of great intensity.

Following Turner's research, Thomassen, at the end of the first part of his work, outlines the direction taken by research into transition rituals and, in particular, the concept of liminality in contemporary historical and anthropological science. As early as in the mid-20th century, when traditional rituals began to diminish or even vanish in society, anthropologists and historians began to realize that what was primarily applicable from van Gennep's and Turner's concept of

rites of passage in modern societies was the theory of liminality. Thomassen presents the latest anthropological research on local and temporal dimensions of liminality. In addition to his own research, he mentions the work of Hungarian anthropologist Arpad Szakolczai, whose opinion is close to his. Both researchers coincidentally perceive that the liminal phase in modern societies not only manifests itself in the destruction or transformation of an individual's identity – as it did in archaic societies – but can also take on a form of destruction of identity of particular social groups or even the entire social order (Macro-Liminality, Liminality in Large-scale Settings). The liminality thus defined can then encompass varying stretches of time, whether it be a single moment (e.g., natural disasters) or entire periods (wars, periods of dictatorship). The term permanent liminality, coined by Szakolczai, is interesting for our historical context. It denotes a situation when the transition process stops in one of its sequences and its participants are forced to remain permanently in extraordinary – liminal conditions. Permanent liminality, according to Szakolczai, is for example the state of monkhood, which he perceives as a never-ending preparation for the separation from the secular environment, or Bolshevism, which can be understood as the stalling of society – a society stuck in the last phase of transition to communism.

Thomassen also draws attention to works of other researchers who have studied the issue of liminality in modern society, attempting to define the causes and manifestations of

liminal states – he mentions research by Lewis Hyde and Agnes Horvath, who have expressed the thesis that, in states of great intensity when the master of ceremony is not present, a self-appointed political leader (trickster) can take the lead in society, acting as the head of law and order, turning the social development in a dangerous direction. Anthropologists Gregory Bateson and René Girard added similarly interesting observations to the theory of liminality. Noting the role of imitating and imitation in society, Bateson defined the term schismogenesis to refer to the escalation of imitative behaviour that can lead up even to violence. Girard defined the term 'scapegoating', which he associated with a situation in which a culprit is sought out in a society where violence is escalating. The scapegoat is usually sacrificed in favour of social unity of mind and to restore the social order.

In the second part of his book, Thomassen focuses on the definition of liminal states in today's society. He finds the roots of the processes that precipitated the crisis of classical rituals in the early modern period, in this context mentioning the philosophical contemplation of Thomas Hobbes and René Descartes. According to Thomassen, it was in the early modern period that the bond by which liminality was bound to the ritual process was first broken. The reason for the implosion of liminality was a widespread presence of game and gambling during which people began to experience a phase of liminality which was determined by specific rules and allowed a return to normal life

after the end of the game. He ties his conclusions to the works of Johan Huizinga (*Homo Ludens*) and Norbert Elias (*The Civilizing Process*). As an example of the result of this process in modern society, the author cites extreme activities during which people seek their limits by overcoming their own fears. Modern man in consumerist societies is disconnected from the original goals of the rituals. These goals were a change in the social status and experience resulting from the dangers that accompanied this transition situation. Modern people are therefore looking for a 'retreat from the everyday', which is what the contemporary entertainment industry has adapted to, aiming at man's boredom with extreme experiences, producing entertainment portraying death, violence or sex. For this phenomenon, contemporary anthropology uses the term 'experiential void' or limivoid. This term refers to a state which is typically present during extreme sports, for example, which are characterised by a borderline near-death experience. However, this extreme experience is afterwards not utilised because the person is brought back to normality, their social status is not new, nor has it been threatened in any way. Extreme experiences thus become part of normality. Thomassen cites bungee jumping as an example of such an activity. He makes a reference to traditional rituals of similar character, and he attempts to compare them with contemporary bungee jumping.

In the last part of his book, Thomassen pays attention to the liminality in the context of political processes, especially revolutions.

He emphasizes the liminal nature of revolutions and, referring to the research of his predecessors, contemplates the role of revolutionary leaders and masses.

The conclusion of the book seems a bit unusual because instead of a summary – which one could expect – the author offers reflections on liminality in the postmodern world. He highlights an interesting recent trend which could be called 'home again'. Thomassen links it to the consumerist nature of post-modern society and the global economy's focus on performance. In the globalised environment, any major economic as well as political disruption is felt more strongly than ever, and spreads like an avalanche across the whole planet. As a result, people are increasingly looking to themselves, their homes and their loved ones for reassurance. It must be said that through the prism of the current covid crisis, this premise takes on a whole new dimension.

Although Thomassen's book was published by Routledge several years ago and offers a comprehensive overview of past research into transition rituals and liminality, it has so far gone unnoticed in the Czech anthropological and historical discourse, which is a great pity especially because it correctly outlines how permeable the boundaries of anthropological and historical research are, and that the theory of liminality is not a dead concept. On the contrary, due to current events in the globalised world, the theory has been changing shape and taking on new features.

**Jana KRTIČKOVÁ, *Proměna pohřebního rituálu na přelomu 19. a 20. století na příkladu západočeského města Chebu, České Budějovice, Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích 2019, 334 pp. ISBN 978–80–7394–747–7.***

The issue of death, dying and death rituals were long neglected in Czech historiography, and researchers started paying attention to this theme only at the turn of the millennium. In the last few years, however, there has been an increase in the number of works which examine this topic from various points of view and interpret the sources concerning death using various methodological approaches, most frequently historical demography, anthropology, art history and also the history of the everyday.

Jana Krtičková's research combines the first two aforementioned approaches and attempts to capture the changes which death rituals underwent within the environment of German nationals living in the Czech lands, specifically in the town of Cheb at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the title of the book, which declares its subject matter as the transformation of the death ritual, most attention is in fact paid to the rise of the cremation movement. The monograph is a summary of the research the author carried out during her work on her academic theses, to which she dedicated several years. The resulting text reflects this fact, as it confirms not only that the author is very well oriented within the domestic and foreign literature relating to the subject of death and cremation, but also evinces fair and thorough work with sources. Jana Krtičková bases her research on a broad platform of resources located

in Czech and German archives. Her main source of information is cremation registers, which have not been widely used in cremation research before. She also draws on the archive resources of the towns of Cheb, Karlovy Vary, Plauen and Selb, in which she examines documents relating to sanitary and funeral legislation. She also extracts information from the newspapers of the cremation societies dating from that period.

At the beginning of the work, the reader is informed in detail about the sources used, followed by a chapter about the historical development of Cheb and its population. The burial practices of the residents of Cheb are then described in chapter three, which is very beneficial. Information is provided in considerable detail about the development of urban cemeteries and the provided funeral services, many of which can be applied to the general context. Particularly innovative are the passages relating to the functioning of the funeral parlours in Cheb and the passages mapping the duties of the gravedigger, whose role in the process of death rituals has previously been completely neglected. The facts presented thus fill a gap in the history of the everyday which has hitherto remained academically unnoticed.

These sections are then followed by a chapter which describes the development of the European cremation movement, and is rather compilatory in nature. The inclusion

of this chapter in the middle of the work is somewhat debatable – it would perhaps have fulfilled its function better in the introduction of the book, though from the author's perspective its placement may seem justified, since to some extent it introduces another chapter about the options for cremation of the people of Cheb. This chapter traces the efforts to build a crematorium in Cheb, which despite high hopes ultimately failed to materialise. As a result, the bereaved from Cheb resorted to cremating the bodies of their family members in the crematoria that gradually developed in the German borderlands, especially in the German towns of Plauen and Selb. Jana Krtičková provides an account about the interest of the people of Cheb in the services of German crematoria, and later in the services of the crematorium in Karlovy Vary – Rybáře, which was built with a financial contribution from the town of Cheb. These facts are documented by the number of the cremated, in whose case the author makes note of indicators such as age, sex and profession, from which certain trends that influenced the spread of the cremation movement can be deduced. An interesting probe into the motivations or reasons for the choice of cremation are the micro-historical obituaries of notable personages from Cheb who were cremated in Plauen, Selb and Karlovy Vary – Rybáře. The reader can thus form an idea of who the 'cremation pioneers' of Cheb were. It has to be noted that they were a surprisingly diverse group of people, which serves as proof that the idea of cremation found

resonance in all strata of society. Attention is also paid to the architectural aspect of all three crematoria, and an outline of day-to-day operations of the crematorium in Karlovy Vary is also provided.

The outcomes of the research are summarised in the conclusion, in which the author does not neglect to emphasise the factors that significantly influenced the spread of cremation in areas where German nationals were the majority population. The spread of the cremation movement occurred above all thanks to its expansion from Germany, the active functioning of cremation societies (especially the *Flamme* society), and last but not least the economic and cultural specifics of the German borderland population.

In spite of the research's undoubtedly beneficial contribution, one cannot dismiss the impression that even more interesting (and less descriptive) data could have been gathered by comparing the circumstances found in Cheb with another region or district, one that might exhibit different input parameters, for instance the population's national or religious composition or a different geographical location. Such a comparison could provide the possibility of formulating more generally valid hypotheses in relation to the spread of the cremation movement in the Czech lands. By no means, however, does such a suggestion call into question the quality of Jana Krtičková's research, which presents interesting conclusions and provides a series of new findings that stimulate further research questions.

