

Lack of Self-Praise: A Search for *Laudes Urbium* in Medieval Czech Lands

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Plato, in his dialogue *Menexenos*, has Socrates note that there is nothing difficult and nothing interesting about praising Athens in front of the Athenians – it would be a greater challenge to praise her in front of Corinthians or Spartans.¹ There is also a German proverb “Eigenlob stinkt,” as well as a Czech proverb “Samochvála smrdí” with the same meaning: “Self-praise stinks.”² However, it is exactly praising oneself which seems to be the point of the *laudes urbium* – praises of the cities – a literary topos (sometimes even considered a separate genre) with a long tradition beginning in antiquity, when praising the city formed a part of panegyric rhetorical style (together with praise of a person, land, etc.), following specific rules.³

In the early Middle Ages, praises of a city appear almost exclusively in Italy (Milan, Verona, Florence, Rome). They are in verse and juxtapose ancient-pagan and contemporary-Christian times. From the twelfth century the *laudes* spread (especially to Germany, but also to England and elsewhere). They gradually became more and more detailed and varied; they seem to have been less influenced by rhetorics than by the transformation and development of cities and the civic consciousness of their inhabitants.⁴ They can be found in different types of sources, either independently, as part of praise of a person (for example, St. Thomas of Canterbury’s life including the *laudes* of London, where both Thomas and the author of the text were born),⁵ in travelogues, chronicles, city

¹ Plato, *Menexenos*, 235d.

² There is, to my knowledge, no English equivalent.

³ For a detailed discussion of the development and setting down of the rhetorical principles of *laudes urbium* until the high Middle Ages see Carl Joachim Classen, *Die Stadt im Spiegel der Descriptiones und Laudes urbium in der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur bis zum Ende des zwölften Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1980) (henceforth Classen, *Stadt*).

⁴ “The medieval descriptiones are a manifestation of the growth of the cities and the rising culture and self-confidence of the citizens.” [J. K. Hyde, “Medieval Descriptions of Cities,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 48, no.2 (1966): 310] (henceforth Hyde, “Medieval”).

⁵ “Descriptio nobilissimae civitatis Londoniae: Vita Sancti Thomae Cantuariensis archiepiscopi et martyris auctore Willelmo filio Stepani,” ed. J. C. Robertson, in *Materials for*

books, encyclopedias, and so on. In humanism, from the beginning of the fifteenth century, the *laudes* became very popular and more standardized based on ancient rhetorical principles and devices. The praise of the city like other humanistic praises seems to have been one of the results of the humanistic admiration for the ancients, and to fit in the context of the cultural complementary exchange among the intellectuals and their supporters.

Applying the notion of the *laudes urbium* to the Middle Ages is complicated, as the texts themselves rarely follow similar patterns or have similar objectives. Historians place the praise of cities in the same category with descriptions of cities⁶ and include there all types of sources: short notes in chronicles, negative experiences of travelers, church and festival descriptions, etc.⁷ Thus, for them the only constitutive element of the literary type is its topic: a city. Such an approach is meaningful in order to study the historical and social contexts of medieval cities.⁸ This, however, is not my aim here. Here I will explore the praise of cities separately, calling *laudes urbium* only texts in which the basic aim is to glorify and thus immortalize a city. They do not necessarily have to be independent and include the defined rhetorical devices, but they should not be simple descriptions or experiences from visiting a city. They should be conscious attempts to use writing in order to elevate a city or certain of its aspects.

In the case of Western Europe, we may study the reasons for the origin of the *laudes* at certain times and places. We may pose questions on the relationship between rhetorics and ‘reality’ – because, as even the formulized humanistic praises do reflect the real context, it is possible to ignore the embellishments

the History of Thomas Becket III (Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores 67) (London: Longman, 1877): 2-13.

⁶ Especially in German scholarship the term ‘Städtelob’ is invariably followed by the term ‘Stadtbeschreibung;’ cf., e.g., Klaus Arnold, “Städtelob und Stadtbeschreibung im späteren Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit,” in *Städtische Geschichtsschreibung im Spätmittelalter und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Peter Johanek (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2000): 247-68 (henceforth Arnold, “Städtelob”).

⁷ Cf. e.g. Gerhard Theuerkauf, “Accipe Germanam pingentia carmina terram: Stadt- und Landesbeschreibungen des Mittelalters und der Renaissance als Quellen der Sozialgeschichte,” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 65, 1 (1983): 89-116.

⁸ This approach is applied, e.g., by Karl Stackmann in his analysis of the growing significance of the city in North German chronicles from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century [Karl Stackmann, “Die Stadt in der norddeutschen Welt- und Landeschronistik des 13. bis 16. Jahrhunderts,” in *Über Bürger, Stadt und städtische Literatur im Spätmittelalter*, ed. Josef Fleckenstein and Karl Stackmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980): 289-310]. Philologists also apply this approach; e.g., Ulrich Mölk in his quest for the meaning of ‘city’ in medieval French literature [Ulrich Mölk, “Die literarische Entdeckung der Stadt im französischen Mittelalter,” *Über Bürger, Stadt und städtische Literatur im Spätmittelalter*, ed. Josef Fleckenstein and Karl Stackmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980): 203-215].

and exaggerations and retrieve information about the ‘real’ cities from them.⁹ We can define the principles of selecting the aspects to praise. The founding of the city reappears; its setting and surroundings; prominent citizens; the city walls, gates and towers (i.e. the ability of the city to defend itself), the churches, monasteries and the Christian atmosphere; streets, houses (from bricks or stone, with roof tiles, glass windows), markets and trade; the quality of water, etc.¹⁰ We can discuss the order of the objects praised, the difference between constructing the fame of the city from the inside and the outside,¹¹ through writing and through images,¹² and other individual aspects, e.g. the frequent Christian symbolism – the three city gates symbolizing the Trinity; comparisons to Jerusalem, everyday life details such as festivals, food, drink, etc.

Central Europe – namely the Czech lands, Poland and Hungary¹³ – represent a very different story. The *laudes urbium* proper appear only in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, due to the influence of Italian humanism. In agreement with the ancient and humanist tradition, they are frequently connected to the praise of a person (e.g. a laudatory poem on Augustin of Olomouc by Valentinus Eck contains a description of the Moravian city of Olomouc¹⁴); or *vice versa* – praise of a person is connected to them (e.g. Georgius Sibutus dedicates his praise of Olomouc to king Ferdinand of Habsburg and praises him as much as the city itself and its senate¹⁵). They can, however be inserted in various other texts, too (e.g. even Stephanus Taurinus in his *Stauromachia*, concerned primarily with political history, describes and praises Hungarian, Bo-

⁹ However, as they are so much alike, it is perhaps more meaningful to consider them all together and discuss the humanistic values and opinions on the city as such; cf. “Trotz ihrer starken literarischen Gebundenheit, oder richtiger: gerade in dieser Gebundenheit haben die *Laudes urbium* einen engen Bezug zur realen Stadtgeschichte; weniger in den Details der lokalen, mehr im Allgemeinen der überregionalen Entwicklungslinien.” Hartmut Kugler, “Stadt und Land im humanistischen Denken” in *Humanismus und Ökonomie*, ed. Heinrich Lutz (Weinheim: Acta humaniora, 1983), 177.

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. Arnold, “Städte lob,” 250-267.

¹¹ For an analysis of the praises of cities in travel reports see e.g. Helmut Hunds bichler, “Stadt begriff, Stadtbild und Stadtleben des 15. Jahrhunderts nach ausländischen Bericht-erstat-tern über Österreich,” in *Das Leben in der Stadt des Spätmittelalters. Internationaler Kongress Krems an der Donau 20. bis 23. September 1976* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1980): 111-133.

¹² Cf. e.g. Gerhard Jaritz, “Das Image der spätmittelalterlichen Stadt. Zur Konstruktion und Vermittlung ihres äußeren Erscheinungsbildes,” in *Die Stadt als Kommunikationsraum. Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis ins 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Karl Czok zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Helmut Bräuer and Elke Schlenkrich (Leipzig: Universitäts-Verlag, 2001), 471-485.

¹³ I do not include Austria with the frequently praised Vienna, which belongs culturally to the West.

¹⁴ Valentinus Eck, *Valentini Eckii Philyripolitani Panegyricus in laudem doctoris Augustini Moravi* (Cracow, 1512).

¹⁵ Georgius Sibutus, *Ad sapientissimum prudentissimumque Senatum Olomusensem...carmen* (Vienna: Singrenius, 1528) (hereafter Sibutus, *Ad sapientissimum*).

hemian, and Polish cities¹⁶). These *laudes* contain the usual topics – the quality of walls and houses, the beauty of streets and squares, and the origin. For example, the city of Olomouc was, according to Sibutus, founded by Julius Caesar and it took its name from his hill – Iulimons:

*Urbs vetus a divo fortita est nomen Iulo
Caesare, nam montem illius dixere priores
Iulimons, quamvis Romano discrepat ori
Attamen hanc voluit sic appellare vetustas.*¹⁷

The texts combine descriptions of ecclesiastical buildings, offices, and Christian morals with Classical gods and display the usual rhetorical *topoi*: Muses (or Camenes) are invoked in order to help,¹⁸ e.g. in Simon Ennius' praise of Olomouc:

*Vos date principium, calamoque favete Camoenæ
De cerebro summi numina nata Iovis.*¹⁹

The author is unable to describe the beauty of the city properly, e.g.,

*Non possem dignas urbis describere laudes,
Excedit vires nam labor iste meas.*²⁰

No less frequent is stress on the fact that the city will become immortal through the poetry and art of the author. A good example of this is actually Hungarian – Janus Pannonius' praise of Pannonia:

*Magna quidem nobis haec gloria; sed tibi maior,
Nobilis ingenio, patria facta, meo.*²¹

¹⁶ Stephanus Taurinus, *Stauromachia, id est Cruciatorum Servile Bellum, Quod anno ab orbe redempto post sesquimillesimum quarto decimo et Pannoniam, et Collimitaneas provincias valde miserabiliter depopulaverat* (Vienna: Singrenius, 1519).

¹⁷ Sibutus, *Ad sapientissimum*, lines 23-25.

¹⁸ This and other classical *topoi* were refused by Christian writers in Late Antiquity, when Classical culture was still felt as a threat of paganism. For them the only proclaimed inspiration was Jesus Christ, as e.g. in Paulinus of Nola:

*Non ego Castalidas, vatum phantasmata, Musas
nec surdum Aonia Phoebum de rupe ciebo -
carminis incentor Christus mihi, munere Christi
audeo peccator sanctum et caelestia fari.* (c. 15, 30-33)

Siegmar Döpp, however, shows that refusing the help of the Muses was also a frequent *topos* in Classical tradition, as e.g. by Propertius:

*non haec Calliope, non haec mihi cantat Apollo:
ingenium nobis ipsa puella facit.* (2,1,3-4)

Thus the early Christians, even though refusing the Classical tradition, still did not escape its influence; cf. Siegmar Döpp, "Die Blütezeit lateinischer Literatur in der Spätantike," *Philologus* 132 (1988): 36.

¹⁹ Simon Ennius, *Breve encomion Olomucii metropolis in Moraviae Marchionatu* (Prostějov, 1550), lines 1-2 (henceforth Simon Ennius, *Breve encomion*).

²⁰ Simon Ennius, *Breve encomion*, lines 23-24.

²¹ Epigram 362 in *Janus Pannonius összes munkái*, ed. Sándor Kovács (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1987), 191.

While there is an abundance of sources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Czech lands and Central Europe in general, in the Middle Ages we have to search for them.²² Places in literary works which seem suitable for inserting praise of a city in the West remain unused here. The chroniclers praise their kings, countries, and nations, but not cities.

As a good example of this lack of praise we can use the descriptions of Prague in 1333, when Charles IV returned there after eleven years in France and Lombardy. He found Prague in a desolate state, with all the royal properties in debt due to the carelessness of his father John of Luxembourg. Prague castle was in such an awful state that he had to stay in a burgher's house for the first months. Charles, however, repaired the castle, built several new churches, and bought back the royal properties – Prague flourished under his rule. He himself briefly describes this in his autobiography:

*Quod regnum invenimus ita desolatum, quod nec unum castrum invenimus liberum quod non esset obligatum cum omnibus bonis regalibus, ita quod non habebamus ubi manere, nisi in domibus civitatum sicut alter civis. Castrum vero Pragense ita desolatum, destructum, ac comminutum fuit, quod a tempore Ottocari regis totum prostratum fuit usque ad terram. Ubi de novo palacium magnum et pulchrum cum magnis sumptibus edificari procuravimus, prout hodierna die apparet intuitibus.*²³

The chroniclers of his time mention this event, but do not use the opportunity to praise the city more extensively or to praise the king through praising the city he renewed. Francis of Prague (František Pražský, lived ca. 1290-1353), in his chronicle from 1342, after a short description, promises to elaborate the topic further on:

*Incepit ibi mox ruinosa edificia regalia... construere et reedificare et omnia castro prefato, sicut de regibus quibusdam Israel legitur, ingenioso studio restauravit. Et in brevi domum regiam construxit admirabilem, nunquam prius in hoc regno talem visam, ad instar domus regis Francie cum maximis sumptibus edificavit, de qua in sequentibus plenius dicetur.*²⁴

The last clause is, however, missing from the later recension of the text. For a simple reason: František never fulfilled this promise.

²² The only search for sources on medieval Central European cities known to me is Marie Bláhová, "Stadt, Bürgertum und Städtewesen in Spiegel der Geschichtsschreibung: Wege zur städtischen Historiographie in den böhmischen Ländern im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit," in *Städtische Geschichtsschreibung im Spätmittelalter und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Peter Johanek (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2000), 233-46.

²³ *Autobiography of Emperor Charles IV and his Legend of St. Wenceslas*, ed. Balázs Nagy and Frank Schaer (Budapest: CEU Press, 2001), 68-70.

²⁴ *Chronicon Francisci Pragensis*, book 3, chapter 1 (Fontes rerum bohemicarum, Series nova, vol. 1), ed. Jana Zachová (Prague: Patriae, 1998).

Beneš Krabice z Weitmile (died 1375) is especially brief in his Chronicle of the Prague Church from around 1372:

*Ipse eciam extruxit palacium regale funditus et de novo in castro Pragensi de miro et magnifico opere, prout hactenus cernitur... Quod opitulante Deo permanet usque in hodiernum diem.*²⁵

The most remarkable example is perhaps the Chronicle of Petr Žitavský (Peter of Zittau, died 1339), as it includes a praise of Charles IV in verse and a few lines below a brief positive evaluation of his achievements in Prague, without connecting the two topics in any way.

Incepit mox inibi ruinosa edificia regalia, que prius ante annos triginta igne concremata fuerant et desolata iacuerant, reedificare et instruere et sarta tecta, prout de regibus Israel legitur, efficaciter et cum ingeniosos studio instaurare...

*Karolus ut carus sit cunctis menteque gnarus,
Ad bona quod crescat, quod cum virtute senescat,
Quod valeat regere bene regnum, iura fovere
Et pacem facere, cunctos hostes remove,
O Deus, hoc presta, fac sic, quod et eius honesta
Fama sit et vita magna virtute polita.*²⁶

These few examples make clear that there was already a tradition of writing – the authors are borrowing from one another, and there are recurring topics (such as the comparison of Charles IV to the kings of Israel). However, *laudes urbium* do not form part of this tradition. At this time, vivid contacts were established with the Western culture (in which the personality of the king Charles IV played, of course, a crucial role²⁷). Therefore, I do not consider it likely that the opportunities to insert the *laudes* were missed due to the ignorance of the authors about such possibilities, I think they were avoided. The authors consciously skipped them, as their writing conventions and principles of communication with their audience were different.

Omitted in the expected contexts, the praises of cities appear in the least expected ones. A textbook of rhetorics from the Moravian city of Jihlava (Iglau), written at the beginning of the fifteenth century (perhaps 1418), includes a text called *Laus Iglaviae*. Nothing similar survives from Western Europe, where the *laudes urbium* were being written without much care for the theoretical background, without defining (or rather redefining) the rhetorical principles they

²⁵ Beneš Krabice z Weitmile, *Cronicon Ecclesie Pragensis* (Fontes rerum bohemicarum 4) (Prague: Nadání Františka Palackého, 1884), 217.

²⁶ *Petra Žitavského kronika Zbraslavská. Chronicon Aulae regiae*, ed. Josef Emler (Fontes rerum Bohemicarum IV:1) (Prague: Nadání Františka Palackého, 1882), 124.

²⁷ Cf. e.g. Jiří Spěváček, “Vztahy Karla IV. k představitelům raného humanismu.” (The relationships of Charles IV to the early humanists), in *Husitství reformace renesance 3* (Praha: Historický ústav, 1994): 795-806.

should observe.²⁸ Thus it is surprising that it was in Central Europe, where no *laudes urbium* proper appeared at the time, that such rules were set and a long model provided in both prose and poetry.

The textbook is not an extraordinary achievement as far as its style and rhetorical quality are concerned; it is rather plain and contains numerous misspellings and grammatical mistakes. The prosaic part is stuffed with commonplaces of the *topos*. At the same time, almost every sentence is presented as an example of a rhetorical device, e.g.:

*Nocio. Circumquaque domorum et tot fossatorum micat splendor et in que aura disposita et sana, aer serenus, ventus lenis, tempus tranquillum totumque ab individualibus usque ad generalissima debite compositum et ornatum. Sermocinacio. In ipsa enim civium preeminens seriositas et consulum fulgenda sagacitas, Mechanicorum laboris subtilitas, Singulorumque solercia et essencia ibi est moralitas. Confirmacio. Quam leonis vox premonstravit dicens: Ego leo omnia queo vincere meo posse in deo. Brevitas. Quevis subtilisata indagine mei tantilli ingenioli nequit describi...*²⁹

The common features of *laudes urbium* appear in the poetic part, too, e.g. in strophe 6:

*Circumquaque aura recens,
Bonus aer, situs decens,
Scitur experientia.
O urbs felix laude dives,
tui fulgent mire cives
Magna providencia.*³⁰

New topics were introduced, too – in strophe 13, e. g., in which the author explains why he cannot provide a description of the beauty of women:

*Non describo feminarum
Neque statum puellarum
Urbis vestre; racio;
Fuit mihi nam cum illis*

²⁸ Cf. e.g. Paul Gerhard Schmidt, "Mittelalterliches und humanistisches Städtelob" in *Die Rezeption der Antike. zum Problem der Kontinuität zwischen Mittelalter und Renaissance*, ed. A. Buck (Hamburg: Hauswedell, 1981): 119; or Hyde, "The Greek rhetoricians, it is true, had not only written descriptions of cities but had also laid down the principles of epideictic literature of which they formed a part, but their work was apparently known in the Middle Ages only in a much attenuated form through the late Roman handbooks on rhetorics." (Hyde, "Medieval," 310); or elsewhere: "...the evolution of the city description was governed not so much by the development of the literary tradition, for this was at best weak and intermittent, but rather by the transformation of the cities themselves and the growth within them of a new class of writers and readers." (Hyde, "Medieval," 338).

²⁹ Wilhelm Wattenbach, "Candela rhetoricae. Eine Einleitung zum Briefstil aus Iglau," *Archiv für Kunde österreichischer Geschichts-Quellen* 30 (1864): 189 (henceforth Wattenbach, "Candela").

³⁰ Wattenbach, "Candela," 197.

*Aut ipsarum cum ancillis
Nulla conversacio.*³¹

This strophe alludes to the fact that, considering that it is an illustration of rhetorical devices suitable for praising a city, the text is surprisingly personal. The author mentions at the beginning of the whole textbook that he was formerly a teacher in Jihlava, but now he is writing from Čáslav; the *Laus Iglaviae* is full of his experiences. He lists and comments in detail on a great number of inhabitants of the city (mainly on their status and character), and narrates several everyday life stories. We can detect a nostalgia for the good old times – e. g. strophe 15:

*Donec vivens permanebo,
semper tui retinebo
celebrem memoriam
Jhesu Christe tu dignare
huius urbis dilatare
nomen, res et gloriam.*³²

Why did the author, unlike other authors of the Middle Ages, decide to provide a model exactly for *laus urbis*, and why did he make it cover more than half of his whole textbook? Is this really primarily a textbook on rhetorics, or is it a nostalgic glorification of the city he missed? If we approach it as a textbook (which it *is* in its layout) we have to admit that it failed – no one followed the set model. On the other hand, even though the textbook does not seem to be a suitable form for a personal confession, it is quite imaginable that a teacher who cannot come to his beloved city himself writes a textbook instead, which should be useful for his former, now badly missed, pupils. The framework of a textbook on the style of praise allows the author to make numerous personal nostalgic remarks.

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The rich literature originating from the Czech lands during the Hussite movement provides a very specific type of city praise. At that time, the situation in Prague changed radically – it became the main seat of the Hussites, Prague University became the Hussite university,³³ and the social life of the city was turned upside down. In an Old Czech text “Hádání Prahy s Kutnou Horou” (The

³¹ Wattenbach, “Candela,” 198.

³² Wattenbach, “Candela,” 198.

³³ The impact of the Hussite movement on Prague university is discussed in detail in František Šmahel and Miroslav Truc “Studie k dějinám University Karlovy v letech 1433-1622” (A Study on the History of Charles’ University, 1433-1622) in *Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis. Sborník příspěvků k dějinám University Karlovy IV:2* (Prague: Universita Karlova, 1963: 62-73).

Argument between Prague and Kutná Hora),³⁴ the two cities, Prague standing for the Hussites and Kutná Hora for the Catholics, have a dispute, with Jesus Christ judging them.³⁵ At the beginning, they are described – personified – as women (the names of these cities are feminine in Czech, so the personification did not seem strange to the audience):

*Prague standing on the right side, Hora in the corner on the left. Prague of a decent, virtuous stature, a beautiful woman without any flaw, with a spark in her eyes, of wise speech, golden hair and virtuous blush. Hora a dubious curvaceous woman, looking at the ground, winking, whispering in slippery speech, talking back, shaking her head, wearing, even at that moment, a hood on her head.*³⁶

The beautiful Prague, needless to say, wins. In this case, praising the city meant praising the Hussite movement, and so the woman Prague, standing for the city, actually stands for the people of the city; not for all the people, but only for those with certain religious beliefs. We could refuse to call this text a praise of the city. But we could also consider this a principle of choice: the city here does not equal the walls, houses, churches, etc., but the religious movement which changed the life of the city, a movement so influential that it came to *mean* the city.

The Catholics had, of course, an opposite perception of the situation. In 1421, a former teacher at Prague University, a Catholic who had to leave it because of the Hussites,³⁷ wrote a letter (surviving in 9 manuscripts) addressed to the city of Prague,³⁸ in which he complains and blames it for not respecting its history and its proper place, and for the violence done to the Catholics. At the same time, he includes an extensive description of the ‘good old times’ when Prague was a distinguished city admired by all, with a university which attracted students and masters from afar. He also praises Prague under the rule of Charles IV, much more than the chroniclers of Charles’ time.³⁹ The letter is full of

³⁴ *Výbor z české literatury doby husitské I* (Anthology of Czech literature from the time of the Hussite movement I) ed. Jiří Daňhelka, Bohuslav Havránek, and Josef Hrabák (Prague: Československá akademie věd, 1963), 289-92 (henceforth *Výbor*).

³⁵ Apart from the contest being an old literary type, this specific example is also reminiscent of juxtaposing and personifying the Ecclesia and Synagoga. Here, however, it is the Catholic church which plays the role of the synagogue.

³⁶ *Výbor*, 289 (the original is in verse.)

³⁷ Kadlec identifies him as Ondřej z Brodu (i.e. Andrew of Brod, Andreas von Brod); J. Kadlec “*Planctus super civitatem Pragensem a jeho autor*” (*Planctus super civitatem Pragensem* and its author), *Studie o rukopisech* 25 (1986): 47-48 (hereafter Kadlec, “*Planctus*”).

³⁸ Kadlec, “*Planctus*,” 49-73.

³⁹ E.g.: “Dic, o civitas, rogo dic, quid tibi tunc deerat, dum pace peroptima tenebaris, cum ubique terrarum tu celebris habebaris, tuam pulchritudinem vicine provincie longe lateque distantes mirabantur, filii earum scienciis ac moribus in te necnon virtutibus ornabantur? Magna laus tua magnaue fuit gloria, dum tuis venustissimis discipulis vicina territoria polirentur, fama tua velud suavissimus odor per orbem terrarum se diffunderat adeo quod ab extremis quasi mundi partibus te quatenus videant, adventarent. Dic adhuc, rogo te, quid

mentions of fame, the glory of the city, and its status, which is now being shaken.

Quis cogitavit hec super Pragam quondam inclitam et coronatam, cuius negociatores principes, institores eius incliti terre! O Praga, tibi Francia, tibi Anglia, tibi Ungaria, tibi Polonia, tibi Ianua, tibi Venecia, tibi quevis adiacens provincia sua mercimonia porrigebat. Ob quod non solum civitas aut urba inclita dici poterat, verum in terris nostris amenissima civitatum...

The author ends his letter by expressing his hopes that Prague will repent its deeds and will attain God's forgiveness. It is *laus Praga*, but a praise set in the past, contrasted to the negative present and threatened by it. Even more importantly, the fame of the city is placed in the negative contexts of excessive pride here. Prague became so proud that she wanted to equal Venice and Regensburg:

*Quo facto cogitasti consilium, quod non poteris stabilire. Dixisti: Congregabo militum et clientulorum exercitum, fractis calicibus et monstranciis dabo stipendium, multis pollicitis congregabo vulgarem populum, sic triumpho pociar contra renitenciam singulorum. Civitates, fortalicia tributis subiciam, barones et nobiles in foedum redigam et compellam, et sic utar velut Ratispona seu Venecia perpetua libertate. Regem habebo quemadmodum Veneti suum ducem...*⁴⁰

The unhappy author laments the destructive pride: "Oh city, which even in these bad times either bear being called glorious, or proudly listen to it!"

*O civitas, que temet ipsam hiis infaustis temporibus urbem inclitam aut blande pateris aut fastucose preciperis vocitare.*⁴¹

* * *

These examples show that there was fame and glory for the city of Prague, it existed without being constructed from the inside. And, in addition (as Prague is criticized for proudly comparing itself to celebrated cities like Venice), constructing fame from the inside is presented as harmful and negative. Self-praise is suspicious, it does not get any credit, it rather leads to improper pride.

In medieval Central Europe, the cities were not being praised as they were in the present time and present place. The praise was either directed to the past or to the future. The last text mentioned is an example of praise in the past, but so is the *Laus Iglaviae*, in which the author, from a temporal and spatial

tibi tunc defuit, cum alma tui nominis universitas in te florisset? Namquid consiliarius non erat tibi, numquid confessor, numquid verbi Dei mellifluus ac providus seminator? ... Karolus ipse, dive memorie Romanorum imperator semper augustus Bohemieque rex, te solam, quasi despiceret alias, pre omnibus regni civitatibus diligebat libertatesque nec non privilegia, que dumtaxat optare presumpseras, concedebat..." Kadlec, "*Planctus*," 52.

⁴⁰ Kadlec, "*Planctus*," 57.

⁴¹ Kadlec, "*Planctus*," 50.

distance, remembered that Jihlava used to be like and what it meant for him. A good example of praise directed to the future is the prophesy of the countess Libuše before the founding of Prague: “I see a great city the fame of which touches the stars.” This old Czech legend is retold in almost all Czech chronicles, beginning with the chronicle of Cosmas of Prague.⁴² If the praise was set in the present, it was not in a peaceful present, but at the moment when the glory of the city is threatened or even destroyed.⁴³ Then the praise is juxtaposed by a critique or offense of something else.

The laudatory rhetorical tradition is indeed very weak in the region, and the reasons for it are undoubtedly complex. It has been suggested, for example, that cities and civic consciousness were less developed in the area, that the cities were not so compact and independent as in Western Europe.⁴⁴ It could also be argued that the cities were a complex space without a simple graspable identity. (Thus, for example, the Czech inhabitants perhaps chose to identify themselves with their nation or the whole country rather than the city).⁴⁵ What I have tried to suggest here was that, apart from studying the historical and social contexts, we should consider the impact of the literary tradition, too. Then the lack of self-praise might seem to indicate not only a lower degree of urban development; perhaps it also points to the existence of an independent literary tradition. In this tradition it is not the custom to praise Athens to the Athenians; in this tradition the self-praise stinks. This is not to say that the people were more humble than people elsewhere and modestly let the others praise their cities, but that they chose to follow different rules of discourse.

⁴² It is tempting to argue at this point that the praises set in the past or future simply reflect the old feeling of the Czechs that ‘life (*real* life) is elsewhere,’ but this would be an exaggeration.

⁴³ There are some hints that the same might be the case in Italian late thirteenth century praises of cities; c.f. Hyde, who writes: “From the twelfth century Italy was studded with virtually sovereign city-states, yet the ideology of the period was overwhelmingly imperialist and monarchical; only when the communes were on the point of disappearance did they become conscious of themselves. Bonvesin della Riva, Giovanni da Nono and Opicino de Canistris all wrote at the moment when the communal form of government, which they supported, had just been superseded by a *signoria* vested in a single individual or family.” (Hyde, “Medieval,” 338). Similarly, Classen points out the importance of nostalgia as a reason for writing a *laus urbis* when discussing ancient Latin literature, e.g. Ovid’s description of Rome in *Tristia* III, 12. (Classen, *Stadt*, 13.) On the other hand, however, many medieval Western European (Italian, German, English, etc.) praises come from times of peaceful development. Thus, unlike in Central Europe, praise of the threatened or lost status of the city does not seem to be the rule but rather an exception.

⁴⁴ Katalin Szende, “Bild und Wahrnehmung der Stadt” in *Bild und Wahrnehmung der Stadt*, ed. Ferdinand Opll (Vienna, forthcoming in 2004).

⁴⁵ The question of nationalism in the Middle Ages is a complex one and I do not want to enter the issue here. An excellent study on the development of nationalism in Bohemia due to the Hussite movement is František Šmahel, *Idea národa v husitských Čechách* (The Idea of a Nation in Hussite Bohemia) (České Budějovice: Růže, 1971).

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HERAUSGEGEBEN
VON GERHARD JARITZ

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG DER KULTURABTEILUNG
DES AMTES DER NIEDERÖSTERREICHISCHEN LANDESREGIERUNG

niederösterreich kultur

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Papers from the Daily Life-Strand
at the International Medieval Congress (Leeds, July 2003)
Edited by Gerhard Jaritz and Judith Rasson

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Einleitung

Alltag ist mit ‚privatem‘ Raum bzw. den verschiedenen Ebenen und Graden von ‚Privatheit‘ in Verbindung zu setzen, genauso jedoch mit Öffentlichkeit und öffentlichem Raum. Dies ergibt sich vor allem auch dadurch, dass ‚privater‘ und öffentlicher Raum zwar einerseits als voneinander verschieden, andererseits jedoch immer als miteinander verbunden anzusehen sind¹. Vermeintliche Trennungen sind als relativ zu behandeln. Dies gilt für gegenwärtige Lebenswelten in gleicher Weise wie etwa für den Zeitraum des Spätmittelalters und jede andere historische Epoche. Verknüpfung, Überlappung, Interdependenz und Vernetzung sind als Regel anzuerkennen².

Das Interesse für die Zusammenhänge zwischen öffentlichem und ‚privatem‘ Raum hat sich in den letzten Jahren gerade für die Periode des Spätmittelalters deutlich gesteigert³. Dabei zeigte sich oft recht deutlich, wie auch besonders die verschiedenen Ebenen des Öffentlichen und der Öffentlichkeit in vielerlei Hinsicht alltagsbestimmend und alltagsbestimmt waren. Dies gilt wohl vor allem für solche Bereiche und Räume, die in starkem Maße durch umfangreiche Kommunikation größerer Gruppen der Bevölkerung gekennzeichnet waren. Vor allem der städtische Raum des Spätmittelalters ist derartig zu charakterisieren.

¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford und Cambridge, Mass. 1991, Nachdruck 2000), 167: „Private space is distinct from, but always connected with, public space. In the best of circumstances, the outside space of the community is dominated, while the indoor space of family life is appropriated..“

² Ibidem 153, mit Bezugnahme auf Japan: „The ‘public’ realm, the realm of temple or palace, has private and ‘mixed’ aspects, while the ‘private’ house or dwelling has public (e. g. reception rooms) and ‘mixed’ ones. Much the same may be said of the town as a whole.“

³ Vgl. z. B. Gert Melville and Peter von Moos (Hrsg.), *Das Öffentliche und Private in der Vormoderne*, Norm und Struktur. Studien zum sozialen Wandel in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit 10 (Köln, Weimar und Wien 1998); Michel Hebert, *Vie privée et ordre public à la fin du Moyen-Age* (Aix-en-Provence 1987); Bernard Vincent, „Espace public et espace privé dans les villes andalouses (XVe-XVIe siècles),“ in *D’une ville à l’autre: structures matérielles et organisation de l’espace dans les villes européennes (XIIIe-XVIe siècle)*, hrsg. von Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, Collection de l’École française de Rome 122 (Rom 1989) 711-724; David Austin, „Private and Public: An Archaeological Consideration of Things,“ in *Die Vielfalt der Dinge. Neue Wege zur Analyse mittelalterlicher Sachkultur*, hrsg. von Helmut Hundsichler et al., Forschungen des Instituts für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit – Diskussionen und Materialien 3 (Wien 1998) 163-206. Philippe Ariès und Georges Duby (Hrsg.), *Histoire de la vie privée II: De l’Europe féodale à la Renaissance* (Paris 1985) widmeten sich jener Verknüpfung von privatem und öffentlichem Leben nur in relativ geringem Maße.

Chroniken, Reisebeschreibungen, Normen, Bilder etc. verweisen regelmäßig auf die entscheidende, typische und allgemeine Relevanz des öffentlichen städtischen Raumes und die vielfältigen Diskussionen und Diskurse, die diesbezüglich geführt wurden⁴.

Dies war einer der Hauptgründe für die Organisation von fünf Sektionen des Sachbereiches ‚Alltag‘ beim *International Medieval Congress* 2003 in Leeds zum Themenkreis „The Public (in) Urban Space.“ Dieselben sollten die vielfältigen Varianten und Variationen aufzeigen, in welchen sich Öffentliches und Öffentlichkeit als bestimmend für und bestimmt durch das städtische Leben des Spätmittelalters herausstellten⁵. Zwei Bände von ‚Medium Aevum Quotidianum‘ vermitteln ausgewählte und für den Druck überarbeitete Beiträge aus den genannten Sektionen.

* * *

Eine wichtige Rolle innerhalb der städtischen Alltags spielten Ruf, Ruhm und Ehre von Einzelpersonen, Familien und Gruppen innerhalb der urbanen Gemeinschaften sowie natürlich auch der gesamten Kommunität. Viele unterschiedliche Versuche lassen sich nachweisen, dieselben zu kreieren, aufrecht zu erhalten und zu verstärken. Im vorliegenden ersten Teil der Veröffentlichung der Referate beschäftigt sich Rebecca Müller an Hand des spätmittelalterlichen Fallbeispiels Genua mit dem Ruhm von Familien innerhalb der Stadt und angewandten Varianten seiner öffentlichen Visualisierung. Lucie Doležalová widmet sich dem Problemkreis, inwieweit für Böhmen und Mähren das Phänomen des ‚Städtelobs‘ in bezug auf eigene Kommunitäten nachgewiesen werden kann und stellt dabei jedoch fest, dass dasselbe im Vergleich zu anderen Gebieten des

⁴ Vgl. z. B. Helmut Hundsbichler, „Stadtbeginn, Stadtbild und Stadtleben des 15. Jahrhunderts nach ausländischen Berichterstattungen über Österreich,“ in *Das Leben in der Stadt des Spätmittelalters*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für mittelalterliche Realienkunde Österreichs 2 = Sb. Ak. Wien, phil.-hist. Klasse 325, 3. Aufl. (Wien 1997), 111-133; Gerhard Jaritz, „Das Image der spätmittelalterlichen Stadt. Zur Konstruktion und Vermittlung ihres äußeren Erscheinungsbildes,“ in *Die Stadt als Kommunikationsraum. Beiträge zur Stadtgeschichte vom Mittelalter bis ins 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Karl Czok zum 75. Geburtstag*, hrsg. von Helmut Bräuer und Elke Schlenkrich (Leipzig 2001) 471-485; ders., „‚Straßenbilder‘ des Spätmittelalters,“ in *Die Straße. Zur Funktion und Perzeption öffentlichen Raums im späten Mittelalter*, Forschungen des Instituts für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit. Diskussionen und Materialien 6 (Wien 2001) 47-70; Charles Burroughs, „Spaces of Arbitration and the Organization of Space in Late Medieval Italian Cities,“ in *Medieval Practices of Space*, hrsg. von Barbara A. Hanawalt und Michal Kobińska (Minneapolis und London, 2000), 64: „In medieval Italy, city statutes typically included detailed provisions regarding the maintenance and, to a degree, improvement of public space.“

⁵ Vgl. Keith D. Lilley, *Urban Life in the Middle Ages 1000-1450* (Basingstoke 2002) 241: „The medieval townscape was, at one and the same time, both constituted and constitutive: that is, it was shaped by the actions of townspeople, while it also shaped the activities of townspeople.“

spätmittelalterlichen Europas nur wenig zu erkennen ist. Käthe Sonnleitner geht an Hand der Quellenüberlieferung des deutschsprachigen Raums der Frage nach, inwieweit Rolle geschlechtsspezifische Komponenten für den ‚guten Ruf‘ der Stadt bestimmend sein konnten. Thomas Kühtreiber und Anneli Randla verwenden die Beispiele der Stadtummauerung bzw. der Bettelordensarchitektur zur Vermittlung der entscheidenden Relevanz, welche die variantenreiche öffentliche Zeichensetzung im städtischen Raum mit Hilfe von Bauwerken erlangen konnte.

Im zweiten Teil der Veröffentlichung (‚Medium Aevum Quotidianum‘ 48) setzen sich Juhan Kreem und Judit Majorossy mit Fragen des notwendigen Öffentlichkeitscharakters verschiedener Bereiche und Handlungen der städtischen Verwaltung auseinander. Danach beschäftigt sich Ingrid Matschinegg mit der Rolle von Universitätsstudenten im öffentlichen urbanen Raum. Florence Fabianec untersucht für Dalmatien die bestimmenden Einflüsse, welche die öffentliche Hand auf das städtische Wirtschaftsleben ausübte. Gordan Ravančić zeigt für Dubrovnik das Maß auf, in dem das Phänomen ‚Alkohol‘ auf den öffentlichen Raum der Stadt und die darauf bezogene Diskussionskultur wirken konnte⁶. Thomas Pettitt verdeutlicht schließlich am Beispiel des Theaters im städtischen Raum die unabdingbare Wichtigkeit öffentlichkeitsbestimmter und - bestimmender Gestaltungsprinzipien.

Die Beiträge vermitteln damit eine Reihe aussagekräftiger Beispiele, welche die vielfältige Bedeutung des öffentlichen Raums und der Öffentlichkeit im städtischen Alltag widerspiegeln. Trotz ihrer mitunter deutlich hervortretenden Unterschiedlichkeit lassen sie sich dennoch häufig verallgemeinern und auf einen gemeinsamen Nenner bringen, durch welchen Kultur und Lebenswelt des Spätmittelalters entscheidend bestimmt wurden.

Gerhard Jaritz und Judith Rasson

⁶ Dieser Beitrag wurde nicht beim ‚International Medieval Congress‘ in Leeds präsentiert, aber dennoch hier aufgenommen, da er sich in starkem Maße mit der Rolle des öffentlichen städtischen Raums und seiner Beeinflussung sowohl auf als auch durch einen ausgewählten Aspekt der materiellen Kultur des Spätmittelalters auseinandersetzt.