

English edition

# The Forged Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora Manuscripts



Czech Academy  
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Challenges  
and questions

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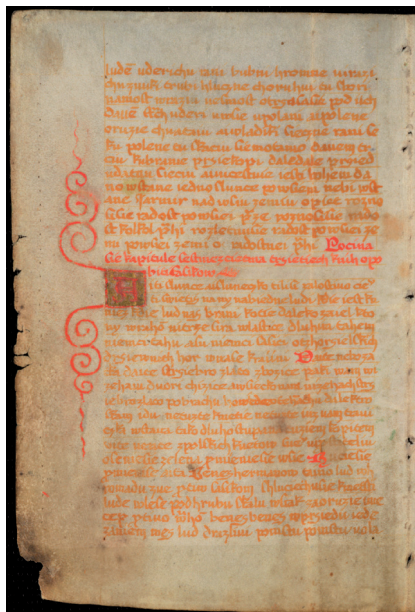
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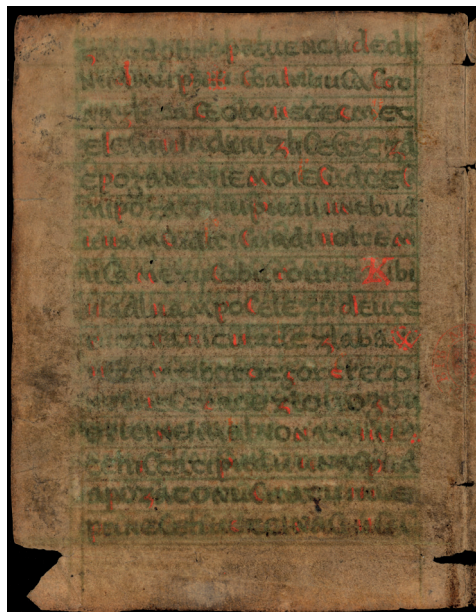
In 2005 Czech Television broadcasted an alternative version of the world-famous *Greatest Britons* poll show. To the surprise of the organizers, one of the favourites was Jára Cimrman, the chief protagonist in the popular hoax about a Czech whose jocular discoveries, inventions, witticisms and works of art in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century anticipated and overshadowed his many foreign counterparts, even though unlike them misfortune drove him into obscurity. Historically unsubstantiated heroes have actually been presented now and then in the original *Greatest Britons* contest and its variants, but Jára Cimrman's success astonished the organizers. However, before any discussion could get under way on this imaginary character and whether or not his nomination might not be of benefit to a contest of this kind, he was excluded from the voting. It would appear that issues which have been dogging the Czechs since at least the 19th century have again been sidelined.

So what is behind the reception of this playful hoax over "accomplishments" made at the time modern national culture was being formed, if we compare this fictional Czech pioneer with the contest winners in other countries, e.g. such scientific and artistic trailblazers as Leonardo da Vinci and Charles Darwin, and

*Dvůr Králové manuscript*, ff 3v with the beginning of the composition *Beneš Hermanův* (Old prints and manuscript fragments collection / department of manuscripts and old prints of the Library of National Museum, Bibliophila collection / department of literal culture of the Library of National Museum)



*Zelená Hora manuscript*, ff 4v with verse "We don't need to search for the German law" (Old prints and manuscript fragments collection / department of manuscripts and old prints of the Library of National Museum, Bibliophila collection / department of literal culture of the Library of National Museum)



particularly such dynamic national politicians as Charles de Gaulle and Ronald Reagan? And if we consider other Czech hoaxes, often likewise set at the time the modern nations were being established, such as Jan Švankmajer's *Otrantský zámek* (Castle of Otranto) and Vladimír Macura's fictional confrontation with the Czech "National Revival", then indeed does Jára Cimrman merely represent himself and his "discoverers", Zdeněk Svěrák and Ladislav Smoljak in the 1960s? Might his reception not also be enlightening outside the Czech Republic, where it was the popular historical figures who were clearly heading for first place?

## The *Dvůr Králové* and *Zelená Hora* manuscripts as a traumatic national initiation

Whether we refer to older class or religious identities in Central Europe and the hardships endured during the formation of the modern nations, or we refer to Josef Kroutvor, who somewhat self-importantly stressed the local resistance to "Big History" determined from outside, the key to the modern-day Czech interest in colouring in and enhancing the past is offered by the *Dvůr Králové* and *Zelená Hora manuscripts* (1817, 1818) and their subsequent fortunes. After all, younger authors including the creators of Jára Cimrman also refer to it as the best-laid and internationally discussed hoax. Throughout most of the 19th century the *Manuscripts* were the most published, discussed and translated (as well as parodied) Czech works, referred to with interest by J. W. Goethe, F. R. Chateaubriand and Adam Mickiewicz. And following the *Manuscripts'* fall from grace when some scholars in 1886 demonstrated their modern-day origin, while results of other disciplines were inconclusive to say the least, it was only with difficulty that the wounds were healed.

The *Manuscripts*, ostensibly fragments of medieval poems on old parchment bearing sophisticated information on the values of the times, i.e. the Czechs' legal and cultural independence from Germans, heroism and unity, were described for seven decades as a "palladium" supporting Czech national existence and "our greatest pride and joy". They decorated the Prague National Theatre and the public spaces of other cities, they influenced scholarship and contemporary art as archetypal models and popular images of the past, as well as ultimately the opinions of the latter luminaries and others about the Czechs. The Realists' critiques in 1886 designated them as mere forgeries which had supposedly "never been recognized as authentic by learned men", and the objects of "old jingoists" faith. The erstwhile influential status of the *Manuscripts* and the justifiability of their demotion attract great attention to this day – as demonstrated by the titles of the most popular Czech media during the bicentenary of their discovery.

Evidently, an ambivalent attitude towards the two fragments is also displayed in Cimrman-style hoaxes, lending them a certain grandeur of its own. This makes a particularly explicit appearance in the Cimrman play *České nebe* (Czech Paradise) by Zdeněk Svěrák and Ladislav Smoljak: "To a certain extent we can understand the good intentions of the [*Manuscript*] forgers, and we can even understand that they enjoyed this kind of work, even though thinking up events that never happened and characters who never existed, and then hoodwinking the entire na-

tion for years really does rub us up the wrong way.” On the one hand the authors credit the *Manuscripts* with positive society-forming features which they themselves follow, while on the other hand along with the scholars who debated these features they reveal the fictional nature not only of the *Manuscripts*, but also of their subject. However, is the irony they employ to deal with this situation an expression of remoteness, and so deserving of even broader recognition, or is it at least to some extent still an expression of trauma from a past that actually played out “differently”?

The latter possibility is supported by the fact that criticism of the authenticity of the *Manuscripts* has been associated with their relative tabooization as a way of overcoming the trauma of their fall from grace as an erstwhile “palladium”. The Realists in 1886 under the ideological leadership of the subsequent first Czechoslovak President T. G. Masaryk were naturally dismissive of the identity-forming functions of the *Manuscripts*, and only referred to them subsequently in negative and marginal terms, thus in the first place supporting arguments in favour of a modern origin for the fragments (whether involving the painterly method of writing letters and the functional differences with the Old Czech system of past tenses and the like) and in the second place evidence of the fact that they could have been created on the basis of known sources from the circle of “finders”

Staging of *Dvůr Králové Manuscript* by Eva Tálská at the Goose on a String Theatre (Divadlo Husa na provázku) in Brno

(Photo by Roman Franz, 2008; Center of Experimental Theatre Library and Archive)



(such as Hájek's *Czech Chronicle*). The defence of the fragments has also narrowed down to their dating. Not only the works of Václav Hanka and Josef Linda, but also those of other possible *Manuscript* co-authors are still awaiting complete appraisal, appreciation and indeed publication.

Moreover, a more substantial confrontation with the *Manuscripts* has been made more difficult by the hitherto widespread emphasis on the (positive) function of the “domestic” Realist criticism of both fragments. On the other hand the previous German Bohemian and other critics of the *Manuscripts* and their objectives are frequently sidelined, but the completed and mutually defining network of modern national cultures and their foundational literary works, whether likewise fabulated (*Carte di Arborea*, indicating the autochthony of Old Italian poetry) and often uncompromisingly rejected by later research, or merely completed and rounded off (such as the published collection of Serbian songs by V. S. Karadžić and expositions of a previously rather neglected medieval epic). However, do not the *Manuscripts* emerge from this network not so much as a loose thread from the traumatic Czech past, but rather as one of the complex European nodes? And as such do they not also open the way to their nowadays frequently rediscovered counterparts and/or their heroes?

## Between factuality and mystification

Thus how were the *Dvůr Králové* and *Zelená Hora manuscripts* reflected, and within which coordinates could they have been better reflected as such, together with their Czech and other counterparts? The network in which both fragments are nodes had in any case been forming in Western and then Central Europe since the mid-18th century. It refers back to the chronicles and other documents, whose Enlightenment-era study opened up the way for the articulation of modern-era identities, though they were also sometimes “forged” in line with the ideas of the period (e.g. V. P. Duchovský's inscription on the tomb of Old Father Czech). In contrast, both characteristic features of contemporary poetic work, i.e. the gradual departure from the Neoclassicist concept of literature as an imitation of reality guided by an established set of rules and models, and the growing role of literati as representatives of modern communities associated with a vernacular language, found one of the expressive devices characteristic of the period to be “mystifications”.

The concept of mystification itself reflects this developing phenomenon: in French, from which it expanded into other languages, it initially merely referred to a game, but then among later authors such as Denis Diderot and J. W. Goethe it had acquired a potentially positive meaning on the boundary between literature and social life, as a deliberate game of factuality and a playful imitation of factuality not only enabled them to get round censorship mechanisms, but it also highlighted the special role played by art and its capacity to inspire individualized dialogue. Hence the gradual growth of this “game” is demonstrated, for example, by Diderot's novel *La Religieuse* (The Nun): basing himself on a true story, the author first only hoaxed his friend in the guise of a desperate nun, but in doing so he created a convincing character and personality. Mystifications in the latter half of the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th century did not remain a mere entertainment, but acquired a serious, aesthetic and educational dimension.

In their confrontations with Neoclassicist rules and the role of art for society in general, the attention of the writers of the latter half of the 18th and the early 19th century was also very much drawn by unsophisticated national (popular) work. In social contexts this acted in an identity-creating manner and was judged to be a source of ancient, indeed autochthonous, expressive forms. Within this setting, authors working on the periphery of contemporary cultural Europe in particular could also seek support for their own efforts and ultimately for social recognition. In parallel, interest increased in the oldest foundational epic work in the national languages, which in contrast to earlier dismissive judgements was set at the level of antique epics so highly valued by Neoclassicists. Likewise this work appeared to be a source of knowledge that complemented original national history and culture, even though direct imitation in modern times, i.e. epic poetical work in traditional forms, was increasingly problematic from the communicative standpoint.

One such combination of these trends from the 1760s to the mid-18th century found an exceptional reception in Europe, namely songs of Ossian, a collection of old Gaelic compositions compiled, though in fact set to verse, by the Scottish writer James Macpherson, evoking the landscape of the old Celts, their natural feelings, conflicts with enemies and painful symbolic defeats. Songs of Ossian were of special importance, on the basis of views at that time of the European North



Johann Peter Krafft: *Ossian and Malvina* (1810; Wikimedia Commons, public domain)



Alfred Rethel: *How Iring was killed*, illustration for *Song of the Nibelungen*, 1840 (Wikimedia Commons, public domain)

presenting a local tradition commensurate with classical antiquity, with Ossian and his approach, as its representative and the prototype of the modern poet. The fact that they were considered from the start by some critics to be a forgery and hoax did not stop them from being translated into numerous languages due to their function, inspiring interest at the margins of contemporary Europe, and indeed deep into the 19th century they provided a model for numerous counterparts.

In the Habsburg Empire in general and the Czech lands in particular songs of Ossian inspired ongoing interest: the translation into German at the end of the 1760s by Viennese poet Michael Denis, who stylized himself in the role of a national bard, is the first ever in that language. In the foreword he referred to the periphery of his own state: “Would it not be possible to find (...) the remnants of a past poetic age among our own Slavonic nations? And could we not reveal sparks of genius in many of them, if some language expert devoted the same care and attention as Macpherson did?” However, the second half of the 1810s, when the *Manuscripts* were found, were more remote from this naïve interest. Although at first the Czech fragments were proudly placed beside Ossian, other editions, translations and expositions increasingly confronted the authors during the Coalition Wars crisis and thereafter with the serious question of national traditions measured as collective historical units.

In the Czech lands this specifically involved the Old German *Nibelungenlied* from the 13th century, already being described as the German Iliad. In the local bilingual environment it attracted attention, as well as romantic ideas of the

possibility of reading in the spirit of times gone by, thanks to the previous Bohemian interest in the German Minnesänger in journals from the end of the 18th century. On the other hand, in view of the past and present of the borderland between “Germanic” and “Slavonic” Europe, Czech and German-language Bohemian authors were some of the first to refer back to the Old Slavonic *Tale of Igor’s Campaign*, found in Russia at the end of the 18th century, and to contemporary Russian and Serbian collections. The reconstruction of a cultural tradition that reflected interest in the glorious past of the Czech lands, which was ultimately also evident in the *Manuscripts*, half playfully and half seriously brought together within its protagonists (and their successors) a scholarly, publishing and poetical dimension.

## The construction of the *Manuscripts* and their reception within the discourse of Romantic nationalism

The *Dvůr Králové* and *Zelená Hora manuscripts* followed directly on from the philologically and poetically adept small-scale attempts at hoaxes that immediately preceded them. These were on the one hand the *Song of Vyšehrad*, “found” in the young poets and Slavic scholars Václav Hanka and Josef Linda’s lodgings, singing the praises of the fabled princely seat Vyšehrad and combining patriotic and romantic feeling, and on the other hand Hanka’s completion of the *Legend of Saint Prokop* from the mid-14th century with missing verses on Slavic scholarship at the Sázava Monastery in his pioneering edition of Old Czech poems, which he compiled on the basis of German models. In this respect the *Manuscripts* also appear to be the outcome of European-wide publishing efforts and the articulation of their distinctiveness on the basis of national songs at the beginning of the 19th century, as well as the high standard of Czech Slavic studies, which went on to overshadow and influence poetry in subsequent decades.

Similar approaches were also projected more poetically into a fragment found in Dvůr Králové in eastern Bohemia, containing six heroic compositions on the warriors surrounding Zábój, Čestmír and Jaroslav and their defence of the land against internal and external foes, as well as eight smaller women’s songs. In its twelve hundred plus verses the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* presented the old Slavs’ victorious defence against their external enemies, the Franks, Saxons, Poles and Tatars, whilst bolstering notions of the standards and distinctiveness of the original community, as well as the culture and socially integrating role of the ancient bards. Of course its imagery was also of great appeal, with its unprecedented definition of the valiant and sensitive hero in his relations with nature, while offering unsophisticated but impressive verse and Slavonic-like language as an argument in the disputes at that time over autochthony and the wealth of forms in Czech literature and hence the special communication code.

The significantly shorter *Libuše’s Judgement* sent anonymously to the newly established Museum and only later associated with Zelená Hora in Western Bohemia (hence the name *Zelená Hora manuscript*), was treated less as a work of poetry than its Dvůr Králové counterpart, primarily because the portrait of old Czechs

## Záboj, Slavoj, and Luděk

From the forest blackness a rock juts forth,  
Out on the rock stepped strong Záboj,  
Looked out over the lands all around.  
They saddened him, all of them,  
And he wept with the tears of a dove.  
Long he sat and long he grieved,  
Then gathered himself and stood like a stag,  
Down through the forest, the desolate forest,  
He hurried quickly from man to man,  
From mighty to mighty, throughout the homeland.  
He secretly spoke a few words to each,  
Bowed to the gods, and rushed to the next.

One day passed, passed the second,  
And when on the third the moon marked the night,  
The men assembled in the black forest.  
Záboj came and led them to the vale,  
To the sunken vale of the deep forest.  
Záboj stepped to the lowest point  
And took up the melodious harp.

“Men of brotherly hearts  
And flashing eyes!  
I sing you a song from the utter depths.  
It comes from my heart,  
From a heart most deeply  
Engulfed in grief.  
Our father went to his fathers  
And left in the village his children  
And his beloved,  
And said to no one,  
‘Brother, speak to them

With fatherly words!’  
So came a foreign one  
By force to the village  
And ordered us in foreign words.  
And as is done in foreign lands,  
From morn to night,  
So children and women  
Had to do here.  
And we are to have but one companion  
For the whole path from Vesna to Morana.  
They drove the sparrowhawks from the groves,  
And the same gods as in foreign lands  
Were to be honored here  
And offered sacrifices.  
And it was not permitted to beat  
Foreheads before the gods  
Nor to feed them at dusk.  
There where our father gave food to the gods,  
Where he went to praise them,  
They felled all the trees,  
Overturned all the idols.”

“Hark you, Záboj, you sing heart to heart  
A song from the midst of sorrow like Lumír,  
Who moved with words and singing  
Vyšehrad and all the homeland;  
So you move me and all the brothers!  
A good singer is loved by the gods.  
Sing, you have it in your heart  
From them against the enemies.”  
(...)

was now set in the days of Libuše, the mythical founder of the Czech state, telling a well-known story in a new setting of her judgement over two feuding lords, so that the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* climaxed with images of the original law code and written culture of an advanced Czech community that was part of the unique Slav tribe, distinct from the Germans even in pre-Christian times. This conception of Libuše's story in the *Manuscript* as being representative is all the more outstanding considering that the material had only been used a few years earlier by Clemens Brentano in *Die Gründung Prags* (The founding of Prague), a German mythological drama with fantastical elements.

Josef Dobrovský, a pioneer in Enlightenment Slavonic studies and an authority on the contemporary patriotic movement placed the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* above all other known old poems and dated it to the turn of the 13th and the 14th centuries. In addition to this recognition, his acceptance was also determined to some extent by Hanka's publisher's foreword, which placed the "discovered" Ossianic fragments at the classical level while perceiving their original antiquity to be an aesthetic category. The discovery did indeed gain a response in Czech intellectual circles. Czech-speaking literati identified at the very least in their references with the *Manuscript* bard Lumír and his tradition, as they considered the development of a challenging new Czech literature and its linguistic devices, as well as their own special social role in his spirit. "Let us build a new stronghold out of the ruins of this ancient glory," the youthful Jan Kollár formally celebrated Hanka's discovery, for example – still in a Neoclassicist ode.

The significance of the recognition of the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* by the elderly Josef Dobrovský (who himself had mentioned lost songs of the epoch in old chronicles) with regard to its subsequent acceptance was obvious if we compare the impact of the Slavist's rejection of the *Zelená Hora manuscript*, which was evidently influenced by his firm stances on the old Slavonic culture that the discovery represented, involving, for example, the existence of Old Father Czech, who was the subject of Enlightenment disputes and the aforementioned forgeries. Until Dobrovský's death in 1829, the second manuscript only attracted the interest of a narrow circle of individuals surrounding poet and lexicographer Josef Jungmann, another prominent pioneer of autochthonous Czech literature straddling Enlightenment scholarship, and the discoverer Václav Hanka. However, even later the ideas behind the organization of ancient Czech society based on the *Zelená Hora manuscript* never really took hold.

Not only in the works where Hanka's one-time colleague Linda approached the fragments, but also in the case of F. L. Čelakovský, K. H. Mácha and others in the first half of the 19th century, a creative confrontation can be observed with the materials and various formal elements that made the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* distinctive. However, the main significance of Hanka's discovery did not consist (as in the case of Ossian) in individual formal elements, such as the five-foot trochée as the verse of the national epic. This manuscript offered Czech culture the generally appreciated constant of national antiquity and referred through its own authority to Slavonic and folk inspiration, which was of great importance for the promotion of Romanticism. At the same time it brought about an association between material from the remotest Czech past, previously dealt with in German and Czech, as in

the case of Clemens Brentano, and the Czech national movement. The appropriation and popularization playfully referred to by the Cimrman hoax mentioned in the introduction found it to be one of its mainstays.

As the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* became a part of literature, it was projected also into other fields of art, as Czech composers and artists influenced by Romanticism at the time of its discovery also endeavoured to express themselves in particular national terms and to enter into dialogue with the broader public. Their efforts were also supported by the idea that the *Manuscript* compositions were originally intended to be sung – as bards accompany themselves on the *varyto*, supposedly an old Czech lyre-like instrument – and by the search for a relationship between visual artists and the developing book culture. At the same time Hanka's discovery made it easier for these artists to be both creatively innovative and to self-identify amidst the public against the backdrop of the manuscript myth. Composer V. J. Tomášek, and painters such as Joseph Bergler and Joseph Führich were focusing on this valuable document soon after its discovery. At this time the *Manuscript* had such a resonance that even its admirers like the young historian František Palacký were trying to critically delimit its possible reception.

As Czech authors were thus coming to terms with the *Manuscripts*, while the national movement was crystallizing and gradually gaining broader recognition, the 1820s and 1830s were nevertheless one of the golden ages of forgeries, mystifications and cultural visions in general in the Czech lands. Within this context the question of the *Zelená Hora manuscript* also appeared important. Hanka's associate V. A. Svoboda reproached Josef Dobrovský shortly before the Slavist's death for his harsh and prejudiced opinions of the old Czechs, as in the spirit of the old polemics over Ossian he had hitherto stated that a true scholar would appreciate the connection to the past that distinguished the author. The fact that after Dobrovský's death the *Manuscripts* and other forgeries were finally brought together as a single unit provided this solicitude for the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* an important historical anchorage at a time when interest was already waning in the epic, and the wave of Ossianism was spent. Consequently, however, this opened up a dispute over the first fragment.

## The *Manuscripts* in Europe and Europe in the *Manuscripts*

The first two editions of the *Dvůr Králové manuscript*, drawn up by Václav Hanka and his friend V. A. Svoboda, published in 1818 and then (with the *Zelená Hora manuscript* attached) 1829, included a translation into German, which was intended to present the ancient Czech poetry to a broader public. Further editions by Hanka published in 1843 and in particular 1852 contained also translations into Polish, Russian, contemporary Croatian and Slovenian, Upper and Lower Lusatian, English, Serbian, Italian, Ukrainian, French and Bulgarian. During the 19th century Swedish, Flemish, Finnish, Hungarian and other translations appeared, which in most cases at that time preceded and numerically exceeded works providing non-Czech readers with access to such later iconic authors of 19th century Czech literature as Jan Kollár and K. H. Mácha.

What brought on this external attention to the *Manuscripts* with its defeats of the Czech's neighbouring foes? The ongoing fascination with Ossian and national antiquities in general and the proximity of the work to its own cultural endeavours evidently did not at first prevent recognition even in places where subsequently criticism of the *Manuscripts* held sway. Hence a *Manuscript* was praised, for example, by J. W. Goethe, who had himself long been an admirer of James Macpherson and the author of little hoaxes: "The discovery of the Hradec Králové (!) manuscript, which has familiarized us with quite invaluable vestiges of ancient times, gives us hope that more of this kind will be found, whose communication we find all the easier to request, as nothing has been preserved in folk song of such pre-Christian and proto-Christian output from a semi-barbarian nation, which were nevertheless accessible to the finest of sensibilities." Other intellectuals during the first half of the 19th century such as Jacob Grimm, Claude Fauriel and Giuseppe Mazzini also commented on this *Manuscript*.

This interest in the *Manuscripts* in Europe at that time, which Václav Hanka did not hesitate to highlight at every opportunity, was of fundamental importance for their reception both at home and abroad (as was the case with other European nations' foundational works). In the case of the *Zelená Hora manuscript* its Polish and Russian versions in the early 1820s actually preceded the Czech publication, and ultimately contributed to the temporary recognition of its authenticity. Although they were compared with other sources, the *Manuscripts* at this time were reflected not only in Czech, but also in Polish and Russian works on the old Slavs. Goethe's "translation" of *Kytička* (Bouquet) of the *Dvůr Králové manuscript*, in actual fact a rearrangement of the strophes, indicates the reception that Hanka's discovery received in European art, as well as subsequent work of Juliusz Słowacki, Adalbert Stifter and Ivan Franko, and in the music e.g. of N. A. Rimski-Korsakov.

As in the case of the Czechs' initial reception of the old epic, this did not for the most part involve an isolated relationship, and what is more, the values created should be seen against the broader background of the period: Czech *Manuscripts* attracted those interested in the aesthetics of Slavonic antiquity and folk songs, the origin of national tribes and individual nations, and so by extension their own specific cultural features. Hence the *Manuscripts* were as a rule dealt with, even critically, by the individuals who translated, explained and adapted Serbian songs, the Russian *Tale of Igor's Campaign*, Ukrainian *dumy* and other comparable works. Hence even the Finnish scholar August Ahlqvist was not only the interpreter of part of the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* into Finnish, but also one of the foremost experts on the Kalevala and one of the first translators of this foundational work into Swedish. The defence of the *Manuscripts* against their first detractors also often had a broader context, which in some cases was rather revealing.

Tensions between Czech and foreign *Manuscript* exponents led not only to disputes over the authenticity of the fragments, enflamed in particular by the *Zelená Hora manuscript*, and intensified as a result of subsequent developments in scholarship, in confrontations over Slavism and the identity of the Habsburg Empire during the 1840s, for as the importance of the *Manuscripts* increased, so an imbalance emerged in attitudes towards the highly valued *Manuscripts* on the part of the Czechs and the foreign supporters of authenticity. Hence in subsequent

## Libuše's Judgment

O Vltava, why do you cloud your waters,  
Why cloud your silver-foamed waters?  
Did the savage storm disturb you  
That strewed the wide heavens with clouds,  
That washed the green mountain peaks,  
That flushed out the golden-grained clay?

“How could I not cloud my waters  
When two full brothers have quarreled,  
Full brothers over their father's estate?  
They quarreled cruelly between themselves,  
Fierce Chrudoš on the crooked Otava,  
The Otava, crooked and gold-laden;  
Staglav the brave on the cold Radbuza.  
Both brothers, both sons of Klen,  
From the old house of Popel's Tetva  
Who came along with Čech's hosts  
Across three rivers to this fertile land.”  
(...)

When the full sister of both heard,  
Their full sister in Libuše's court,  
She asked the princess to undertake  
A trial proceeding at Vyšehrad  
And to summon both her brothers  
And judge them according to the law.

The princess ordered heralds sent  
For Svatoslav from white Lubice  
There where the oak groves are fair;  
For Lutobor from Dobroslav's fastness  
There where the Elbe drinks the Orlice;  
For Ratibor from the Krkonoše mountains  
Where Trut once killed the fierce worm;  
For Radovan from the stone-built bridge,

For Jarožir from Brdy, Vltava-washed,  
For Strezibor from lovely Sázava,  
For Samorod from the silver-laden Mže,  
For all the elders, chiefs, and lords,  
And for Chrudoš and Staglav, brothers  
At odds over their father's estate.

When the chiefs and lords had assembled  
At Vyšehrad (at Libuše's seat),  
Each took a place according to his birth.  
The princess in her pure white raiment took  
Her father's throne in the great assembly.

Two sage maidens (then entered)  
Trained in the prophecies of Vítěz.  
One holds the law-giving tablets,  
The second the sword that rebukes wrong.  
Opposite them the truth-speaking flame,  
Below, the holy-judging water.  
(...)

Libuše arose from her father's throne  
And quoth: “Elders, chiefs, and lords!  
You have heard how I'm defamed;  
Judge justice yourselves by the law.  
I will no longer judge your disputes.  
Select a man among your equals  
Who would rule you with [cruel] iron.  
A maiden's hand is weak to rule you.”

Ratibor from the Krkonoše mountains arose  
And began to speak these words:  
“It's unmeet to seek justice among the Germans;  
We have justice by the holy law  
That was brought here by our fathers  
Across (three rivers to this fertile land...)”

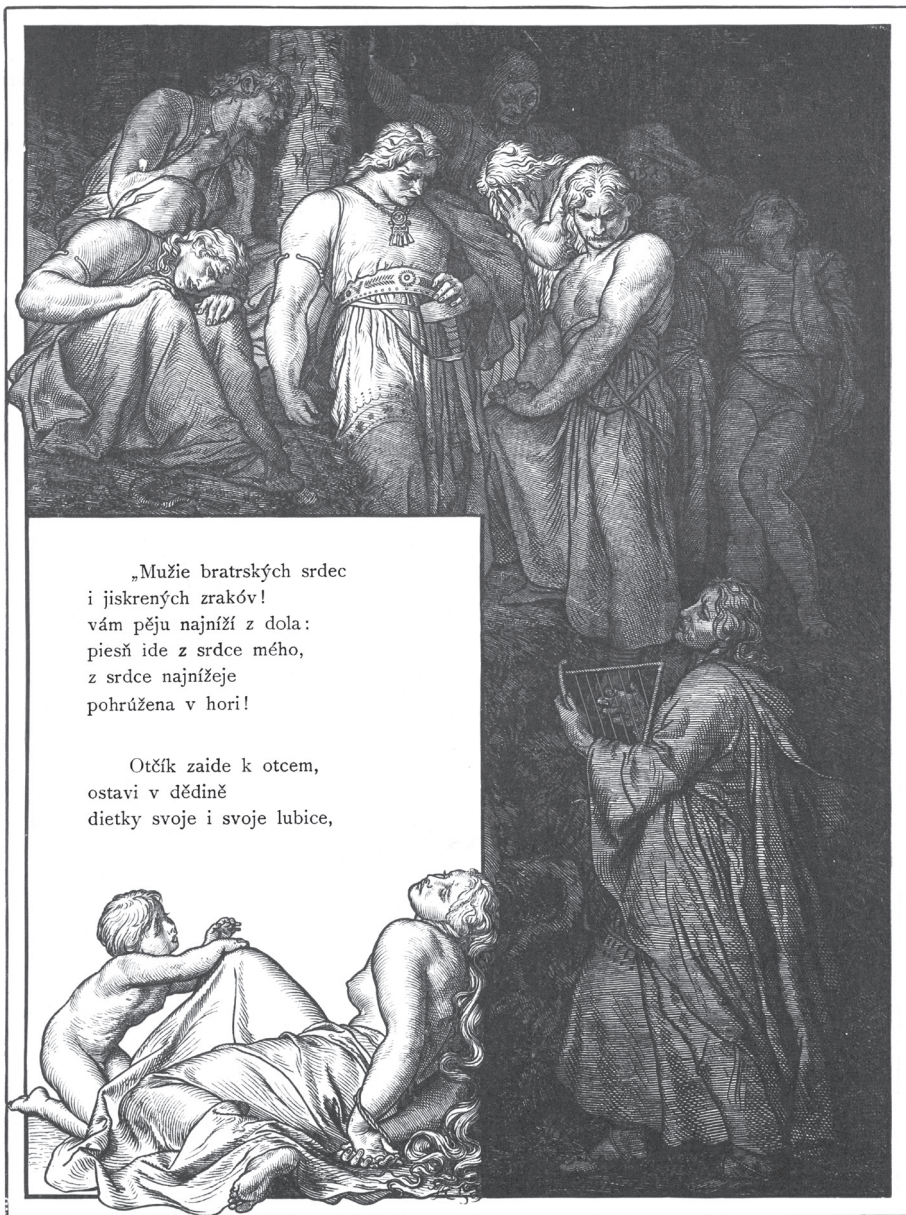
discussions, for example, Goethe's recognition of the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* was seen as proof of German acceptance of the fragments as significant assets from the past face to face with their more recent critics, but Goethe's translation rearrangement of *Bouquet*, which was meant to add a higher aesthetic value to the composition, was normally neglected. A number of Czech exponents of the venerated *Manuscripts* prioritized the new literal translations over the older poetic ones.

However, on the other hand the Czech fragments did help to exacerbate outsiders' views of the Czechs, bolstering ideas that they were a nation of the past, as seen in a review of F. L. Čelakovský's *Ohlas písní českých* (Echoes of Czech Songs) by German Bohemian aesthetician Anton Müller, or as Adam Mickiewicz articulated acrimoniously, and to a certain extent they overshadowed contemporary endeavours. From the 1850s, when both *Manuscripts* were subject to controversy over their authenticity, they led to confrontational claims, e.g. regarding the Czech nation's "genius for mendacity" according to Friedrich Hebbel. It should be added that this extreme utilization of a foundational epic and other evidence of tradition during the formation of modern-era identities did not only involve the Czech *Manuscripts*, but e.g. also the *Song of the Nibelungen* ranked on the one hand among the devices used by German self-identification, and on the other hand among the sources of stereotypes about Germans.

The reception of the *Manuscripts* during the 19th century, as is again evident, shows parallels with the European foundational epic, whether authentic, supplemented or forged. For example, as the Finnish *Kalevala* was collected on an ongoing basis, the day of its discovery did not become a symbolic date and subsequently a national holiday, as in the Czech case, but the date on which the foreword to the collection was written. Moreover, this work was originally only accessible to a small patriotic elite, and only with the passage of time and with the help of translations did it find its characteristic, comprehensible expression in modern art, a place in national history and ultimately its subsequent regional counterparts (e.g. the Estonian *Kalevipoeg*), as it underwent Realist criticism during the 1880s. The motifs of exclusion and mutual comparison appeared in individual compositions: thus the author of the late Latvian epic *Lāčplēsis* Andrejs Pumpurs made sure his heroes were victorious over the competing protagonists from Finnish and Estonian works.

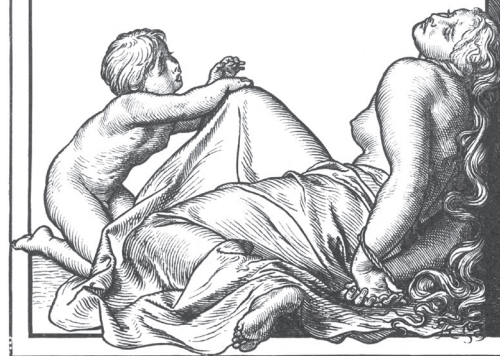
## **The *Manuscripts* as a national symbol and its defence**

The transformation in political conditions following the defeat of the revolution in 1848 curtailed public discussion in the Czech lands for a decade, but it is evident that the status of the *Dvůr Králové* and *Zelená Hora manuscripts* as a symbol was strengthened, and that at the same time their reading underwent a fundamental qualitative change. The following decade saw the successes of the older interpretation, particularly of the first of the *Manuscripts* as constants in national life despite the unfavourable conditions of modern times, as well as innovative historical and aesthetic comparisons with both prized fragments, which were able to utilize Realism and other emerging schools. While the extensive comparative study by Václav Nebeský contains elements of the former tendency, he deals critically with several compositions and characteristically avoids the issue of the *Zelená Hora manuscript*.



„Mužie bratrských srdec  
i jiskrených zrakův!  
vám pěju najníž z dola:  
piesň ide z srdce mého,  
z srdce najnížeje  
pohrůžena v hori!

Otčik zaide k otcem,  
ostavi v dědině  
dietky svoje i svoje lubice,



Josef Mánes: *Záboj in the Valley*, 1857

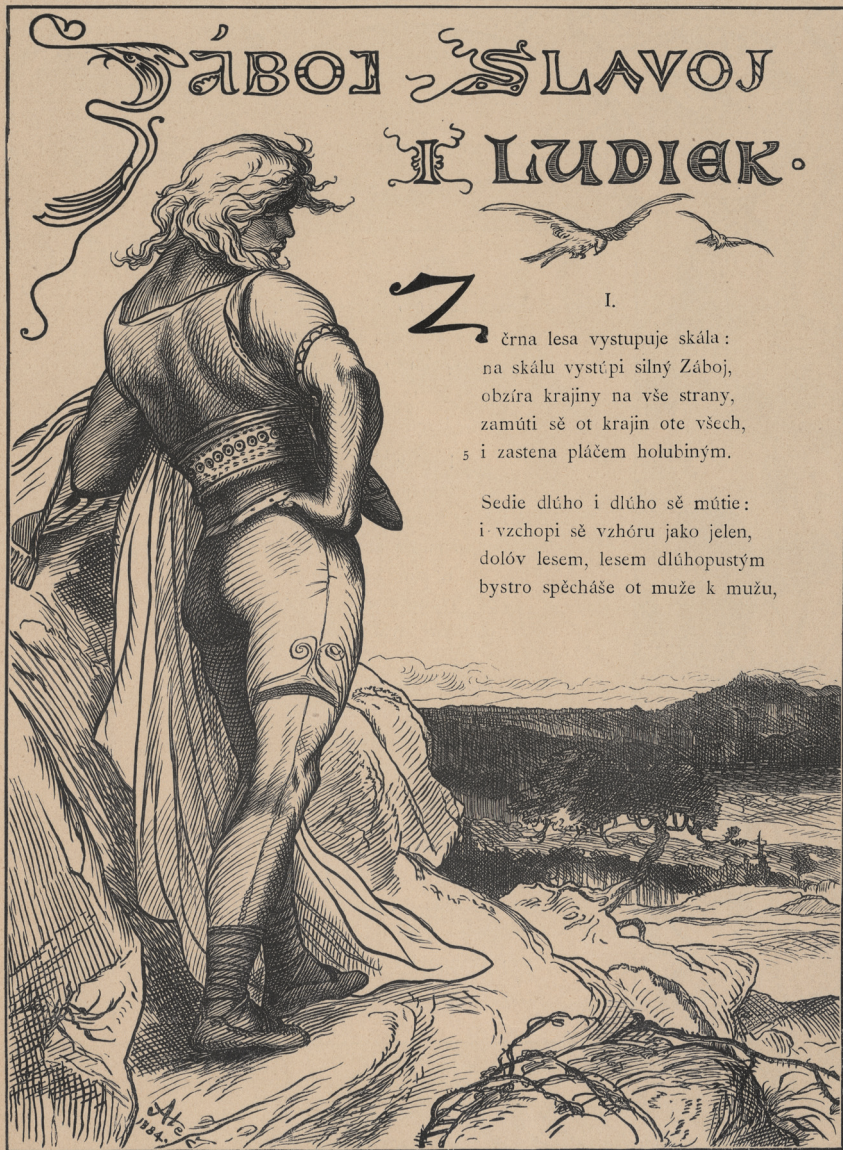
(The Institute of Czech Literature archive)



Mayor Bedřich Tinus during the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the *Manuscript* at Dvůr Králové in 1867 (The Institute of Czech Literature archive)

The first mentioned trend was in any case significant under the political conditions of the Neo-absolutism in the 1850s. As early as 1852, Hanka's multilanguage edition aimed to prove that the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* was generally recognized throughout Europe. Its inclusion in grammar school curricula gave rise to further editions and commentaries, while expanding awareness of the discoveries, which inter alia found their way into students' juvenilia and resulted in patriotic pilgrimages to the places where they were discovered and the settings involved. The status of the *Manuscript* as a national symbol was also bolstered by Josef Mánes's depiction, one of the key works of Czech pictorial identity, and by new attempts to set it to music, give it a literary treatment and deal with it in other arts. The name of the hero Lumír in the *Manuscript* was borne by the most important artistic journal of the 1850s, and as in the case of the other ones, used by newly established music and other associations. In the Dvůr Králové statue of Zábaj, a pioneering memorial of national identity from 1857, the *Manuscript* finally emerged into public civic space at the end of the decade.

This fossilized aspect of the *Manuscripts* as a symbol of national revival continued to be projected into artistic works: for example, the characters in both fragments appeared in Josef Wenzig's and Bedřich Smetana's opera *Libuše*, more as lavish background, and the composition texts were basically quoted without the previous adaptational liberties. The *Manuscripts* were interlarded with other



# ZÁBOJ SLAVOJ LUDĚK.

Z

I.

Črna lesa vystupuje skála :  
na skálu vystěpi silný Záboj,  
obzíra krajiny na vše strany,  
zamúti se ot krajín ote všech,  
5 i zastena pláčem holubínym.

Sedie dlúho i dlúho se mútie :  
i vzhopí se vzhóru jako jelen,  
dolów lesem, lesem dlúhopustým  
bystro spěcháše ot muže k muži,

symbols from the national past, such as Hussite materials, which the works of František Palacký and his contemporaries had popularized, thus promoting a new understanding. As Realism developed, direct references to them in literature became fewer, but they did continue to appear, for example, in subjects, character names and quotes, as well as in works from and just before that period (e.g. in Josef Svátek's novel *Tajnosti pražské* – Mysteries of Prague – in which the actual hero, merely renamed Zábaj, speaks out in the spirit of the times and the author in favour of democracy and legality).

Seen from the appropriate perspective, the *Manuscripts*, like other material from the Czech past, lost their inspiring power for authors outside the Czech (Slavic) national movement. In particular, German Bohemian poets like Moritz Hartmann discarded their *Manuscript* translations, including the compositions depicting the old Czechs' defence against the Germans, and the texts they had inspired from their work, while politicizing the older set of uncertainties: "It would be a dreadful satire on the human soul (...), if it were (...) found that the beginning and embryo of this entire Czech movement was nothing but a mere fiction, a joke and a Czech fraud." Others later raised the reproach in their memoirs that although tuition in the Empire avoided the politically more biased *Song of the Nibelungen*, paradoxically in Czech schools they had to learn by memory the "fake" "forgery", i. e. the *Manuscript*. These perspectives were recalled even after the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 by such authors as Paul Kisch and Robert Musil and occasionally later still.

Public doubts over the authenticity of Hanka's discovery at the intersection of worsening Czech-German relations in the Czech lands at the end of Neo-absolutism were raised by a "German" attack in the *Tagesbote aus Böhmen* in 1858 on the *Manuscript* as support for the national movement, which was secretly and clumsily initiated by the Prague police. Hanka's successful court defence was followed closely by Czech patriots. Thanks to the *Tagesbote* publisher, David Kuh, a German liberal of Jewish origin, the polemics had not only an anti-Czech and anti-German, but also an anti-Jewish character and concealed other less acrimonious displays at that time (e.g. by Julius Feifalik). Doubts over the fragments, which had increased among the well-informed, remained the subject of highly private debates in spite of hopes of a conciliatory resolution to the dispute over twenty years. Conversely, identification with the *Manuscripts* and their defence turned into a kind of "duty towards the nation".

This developing cult reached its final peak in the Prague National Theatre building, completed in 1881 and then in 1883. The *Manuscripts*, grandly symbolizing the homeland and national art in such statues as Zábaj and Lumír, figured among other cultural monuments to the Czech past by leading artists in its facade and lunettes. The building was ceremonially opened by Smetana's coronation opera *Libuše*. These works, like numerous other revisits to the *Manuscripts* at the time, e.g. Antonín Dvořák's reworking of the songs, *Vyšehrad* by Julius Zeyer, illustrations by Mikoláš Aleš and J. V. Myslbek's sculptural groups, reflected another change in attitudes towards the two fragments: i.e. although Neo-romanticism did not abandon the social functions of art, it newly liberated their compositions from being closely bound to factuality, while conversely seeing in them a proof of the timeless power of mythic interpretations and one's own creative efforts in general.

## Realist criticism, tabooization and the rediscovery of the *Manuscripts*

The criticism of the *Manuscripts* as modern-era forgeries by T. G. Masaryk and his colleagues in the *Athenaeum* journal for the younger generation of scholars in 1886 constituted an effort to modernize backwards-looking Czech social and political life in general. In contrast to the increasingly numerous foreign voices and the objectively similar Czech displays by A. V. Šembera and Antonín Vašek at the end of the 1870s, this brought about a watershed in the reception of the two fragments, as the young authors were supported not only by modern methodology, but also by their institutional status in the Czech section of the recently separated Charles-Ferdinand University, their own critical platform and animated communication with scholars abroad. As Masaryk's subsequent career proves, they managed to turn the old criticism of the national "palladium" into a symbol and an actual political programme.

Whereas Antonín Vašek only pointed out that the loss of the *Manuscripts* to the Czechs would be made up for by the wealth of the old Czech literature revealed in the 19th century, T. G. Masaryk also argued against the growing private doubts among eminent figures over the fragments and their public suppression, concluding that: "The state of the controversy does not square with the truth or our honour, and we are doing ourselves great harm both at home and abroad." In addition to the authenticity of the pieces he also attacked the historicizing aesthetic that the cult of the *Manuscripts* was based on – so that Zábaj struck him as alien "to all categories of epic poetry and particularly to old poems" full of "ignorance of actual past conditions" – and the tension between this aesthetic and Czech political life. He radically questioned the importance of "domestic forgeries" to Czech society. His criticism brought about a wave of further disputes over the meaning of Czech history in general, and carried on well into the 20th century.

The rampant cult of the *Manuscripts*, the importance of Masaryk's act and the subsequent relative tabooization of the fragments indicate that although emerging Modernism again perceived mystifications as a creative category, as a rule it now saw the *Manuscripts* as philological forgeries. Their earlier reception was now fading, and although they were still reflected to some extent, for example, in Alois Jirásek's popular *Staré pověsti české* (Old Czech Tales), in works by younger authors they were for the most part only marginally present. Already dealt with countless times in the past and now emphatically called into question, the *Manuscripts* were very much missing inter alia from Mucha's *Slovanská epopej* (Slav Epic), although even at that time a national epic was able to captivate Mucha's Finnish contemporary Akseli Gallen-Kallela, i.e. in his works on the *Kalevala*, the Swedish painter Carl Larsson in his *Midvinterblot* (Midwinter Sacrifice) and other European authors. Even in Jaroslav Hašek's *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války* (Fateful Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk) and E. E. Kisch's *Prager Pitaval* (Prague Pitaval), echoes and small fragments appear at the level of anecdotes.

As for broader social life, the quarter century following the Realist criticism was more a period of silence, a difficult confrontation with the *Manuscripts'* fall



T. G. Masaryk, and his defence of the rejected forgeries, which attempted to cast doubt on the seriousness of the critics' often isolated arguments, unsurprisingly ended up eventually in close proximity to Czech fascism.

After the status of the *Manuscripts* in Czech history was further diminished to that of a symptom of the Czech National Revival within its national and social confines, and after the post-1948 Communist cultural policy turned a blind eye on the role previously played by Masaryk, the 1960s saw the emergence of a new interest in the two fragments. Kamil Bednář's translation with illustrations by Miloslav Troup presented them again to the Czech public. The question of their origin was revived with new facts added by Miroslav Ivanov in the popular non-fiction genre. His chemical and microscopic research performed with the latest equipment at that time provided further important arguments for dating the collection of forged manuscripts to the time of their discovery (his results had not been so far published in their entirety in printed form). However, it was in particular the scientific works of Mojmír Otruba that not only reviewed the facts on the origin of the *Manuscripts*, but they were also the first to raise the question of the *Manuscripts'* functions as part of the formation of modern-day Czech culture, thus even after the still active mystification myth.

## **Narration as a means to overcome trauma**

While the following decades brought with them further analysis of the social functions of cultural creations, including such "fakes", in the formation of modern nations, again turning attention towards the songs of Ossian, they allowed for open discussion over the culture-creating dimension of the Czech "National Revival" in the Czech lands following older, rather sporadic pioneering works, until the fall of Communism in 1989. Symptoms of these new approaches include on the one hand the *Šmírbuch* dictionary of non-standard Czech by Patrik Ouředník, which turned back to the vocabulary marginalized in the period of the *Manuscripts* and like the author's other work was remarkable for its hoax elements, and on the other hand a new edition of Božena Němcová's classic prose work *Babička* (Grandmother), which was provocatively illustrated by Martin Velíšek with a postscript quoting Hanka's old foreword to the *Dvůr Králové manuscript* and a critical comment by philosopher Petr Rezek.

Hence even today the *Manuscripts* crop up in several different ways. As a rule they are recalled in connection with the once politically tainted issue of their origin (even Václav Havel characteristically compared the 1970s and 1980s dissidents to the persecuted Realist critics). Anybody who starts reading the original or its new translation by David L. Cooper will find them to be an impressive text. Nor is it possible to neglect, however, the perspective offered by studies and essays depicting the special "singing truth" of Josef Linda in *Česko: návod k použití* (Czechia: Instructions for use) by Jiří Gruša and works of art such as *Poslední tečka za Ru kopisy* (The Final mark on the Manuscripts) by Miloš Urban, which contrasted the origin issue on the basis of the female surnames of Václav Hanka and Josef Linda with a counterfactual history of the emancipation of Czech women. These show that together with the *Manuscripts*, the story of the society that stood up for their authenticity and then had to come to terms with the truth is also of importance, even as a possible mirror of their European counterparts and their symbolic roles.

## 19th Century Literary Research Department

This deals with literature of the Czech lands from the latter half of the 18th century to the early 20th century and the Central European context of Czech literature during that period. As part of the *Discourses in 19th century literature in the Czecho-Slovak context* project run by Dalibor Tureček and Petr Zajac, members of the Department were involved in a series of monographs on Czech literary Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Realism and Parnassianism (2012–2018). The output of the *Second life of the Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora manuscripts in 19th century Czech culture and literature* project, which examined the identity-forming function of literature in the 19th century under the supervision of Dalibor Dobíáš, are collective monographs entitled *The Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora manuscripts and Czech scholarship* (2014) and *The Dvůr Králové and Zelená Hora manuscripts in culture and art* (in the press). Department members also publish individual monographs and studies (e.g. Václav Petrbok: *Coexistence or conflict?* 2012; Martin Hrdina: *Between the ideal and the naked truth*, 2015). They are also involved in other CAS ICL projects on 19th century literature.

The Department is also involved in publishing 19th century literary works and sources popularizing Czech literature and culture and important hard-to-find or hitherto unavailable works from the history of the field. It arranges specialist lectures, interdisciplinary conferences and colloquia (in particular it takes part in preparations for Plzeň symposia on 19th century issues). It collaborates on CAS ICL *Literature for download* publications and other exhibitions. Department members regularly teach at higher education institutes in the Czech Republic and abroad.

In 2017 a special Germano-Bohemist team was established as part of the Department.

The forged *Dvůr Králové* and *Zelená Hora manuscripts* are not only an unresolved mystery of fabrication, but they were also the most published, promoted and translated Czech literary works in the period between their discovery in 1817 and their criticism by T. G. Masaryk and his colleagues in 1886 and one of the leading phenomena of Czech Romantic nationalism. Moreover, mystifications, including such historical-style hoaxes, are to this day one of the characteristic and currently noteworthy phenomena of modern Czech culture. How has Czech society come to terms with the *Manuscripts* over the last two hundred years and in what ways are they present in it to this day? Are they a purely Czech historical episode, or do they have their European counterparts? And if so, what were their fates?

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