

Review of Dalibor Dobiáš, ed. *Rukopisy královédvorský a zelenohorský*.

This new edition of the *Rukopisy královédvorský a zelenohorský* is the most outstanding edition of these well-studied literary monuments in many years. Dalibor Dobiáš has achieved the difficult task of providing both an inviting edition for casual readers and a major contribution to the scholarship on these texts. The volume welcomes readers with a new edition of the modern Czech translation by Kamil Bednař, first published in 1961, supported by a helpful glossary. This is followed, for more ambitious readers, by a new, quite readable, modern transcription of the manuscripts' text, including their fragmentary parts, faced by V. Hanka's translation, which thus continues to play the mediating role it always has. The volume concludes with Dobiáš's 120-page "Commentary," which includes a brief history of the manuscripts' publication, thorough analysis of their language and of the language of both Hanka's and Bednař's translations, a detailed discussion of editorial decisions for this volume, an extensive history of the two-hundred-year life and reception of the manuscripts, and detailed commentary on each poem.

Scholars will turn first to the "Commentary" and will be richly rewarded. This is as fundamental a reappraisal of the state of scholarship on the manuscripts as could be hoped for from a single individual. Dobiáš provides significant and well-balanced discussion on everything from paleography and old Czech phonology, morphology, and syntax to chemical testing, cultural and political contexts, and changing aesthetic paradigms. His history of the life of the manuscripts reexamines all the major polemics and carefully weighs the contribution of every major article and book on the manuscripts over the past 200 years, with particular attention to the relative value of their particular arguments as evidence. The result is a rich history of the growth of knowledge of the manuscripts, with old questions being answered and new questions being opened up at every stage. In its comprehensiveness, careful scholarly judgment, and narrative

dexterity it surpasses any other history of the manuscripts and should be the place to start for those new to the topic.

Dobiáš moves beyond outlining the sharp divisions between opposing sides in polemical exchanges to find moments of contact and mediation that signal points of agreement and shared perspective. In the very first polemical exchange, between V. A. Svoboda and J. Dobrovský, he observes that Svoboda's defense of mythopoesis is matched by a "jisté pochopení pro fabulaci" expressed by Dobrovský (229), who was able to appreciate the legendary aspect of the epics in the RK even as he rejected the false history of the RZ. Even in the sharply drawn lines of conflict between the Realists and the defenders of the manuscripts in the 1880s, Dobiáš observes that the defenders did acknowledge, as a distinct issue, reservations about some of the other manuscripts surrounding the RKZ (260). The historical background and context of polemics is quickly but effectively drawn. For example, in Dobiáš's narrative of the attack in 1858 on the manuscripts and Hanka in *Tagesbote aus Böhmen* instigated by the Prague police, he notes that it probably was motivated by overblown fears derived from the small patriotic celebration in Dvůr Králové of the 40th anniversary of the manuscripts, which culminated in the unveiling of a statue of Zábój (242).

The commentaries on particular poems are also comprehensive in scope and include discussion of sources, composition, poetic devices and meter, as well as imagery and symbolism. For the epic "Zábój a Slavoj," Dobiáš notes that the varying verse forms of the epic, including the syllabotonic hexameter so valued in the obrození, place it into the category of "pagan verse" along with "Čestmír a Vlaslav," but that the south Slavic deseterec plays a more important framing role in this poem. The relationship of this epic to "Oldřich a Boleslav" is manifested in the imagery of the "černý les," "skála," and the nighttime meeting of warriors. The shared

symbolism is drawn through the contrast of night and day, secret and open spaces, and in the oppositional categories of morning and evening, height and depth (293-94). These features thus typify the theme of the struggle to throw off foreign rule shared by these epics. Anyone planning a further analysis of any of the poems can begin here from a solid foundation. One minor correction is in order: the south Slavic deseterec epic verse form has a caesura following the fourth syllable, not the fifth as Dobiáš probably misreads from one of his sources (278). This puts poems like “Oldřich a Boleslav” and “Záboj a Slavoj” into an even closer formal relationship to those epic models.

Particularly worthy of note is Dobiáš’s attention to issues of translation. He examines the role played by the RKZ in contemporary discussions of the place of translation in the national literature, analyzes closely the language of Hanka’s translation, and notes the important mediating role played by the translation in the reception of the manuscripts. These are all topics that have not previously received sufficient attention. He also moves forward discussion of the still open question of the authorship of the manuscripts, briefly examining and differentiating the evidence and probable roles of Hanka, J. Linda, Svoboda, J. Jungmann, and F. Horčíčka (264-65). The return of Jungmann to this list may surprise some, but the time may be ripe for a reconsideration of his possible participation. It ought, in my opinion, to lead in the direction of the recognition of his further contribution to the development of Czech literature in this period, through influential original poetry and not only translation, and not to any diminishment of his reputation from the moral stigma of forgery. In the case of Hanka, Dobiáš evaluates the common objection of defenders that Hanka himself made errors in the transcription and interpretation of the manuscripts against the significant evidence of Hanka’s particular composition methods and linguistic practices in the manuscripts, his well-established penchant for filling in gaps in other

manuscripts, and his remarkably insightful interpretations at other moments in the text that perplexed his contemporaries. Hanka's errors are far less weighty and can be explained easily enough by what is known about Hanka's often carelessly rapid work, or alternatively by his sometimes demonstrably ingenious methods (the "errors" would deflect suspicion, should it arise, away from him).

Thankfully, Dobiáš's edition is not at all merely another salvo in an ongoing battle over the provenance of the manuscripts. The issue of the period of the manuscripts' origin is treated, as it must be, but is kept in proper historical perspective, allowing other, more current open questions to come to the fore. This is sure to displease the manuscripts' defenders, who, as Mojmir Otruba demonstrated in the late 1960s, have always endeavored to keep the ritual of the battle over the single question of provenance (long since over among experts) on the public stage. In particular the members of the *Česká společnost rukopisná* are sure to be dissatisfied by the brief treatment of their work. But in fact, Dobiáš has found a rare balance in his analysis, which acknowledges the contribution of the defenders to the discussion (they consistently challenge the weaker evidence and arguments of their opponents) even as it accurately assesses the evidentiary value of their own arguments (which overly simplify complex historical and linguistic questions and appeal to evidence that has no proof value) (268-69). In this important weighing of the evidentiary value of the arguments of both sides, Dobiáš's work resembles that of the Moscow linguist A. A. Zaliznjak for the debates surrounding *Slovo o pluku Igorově* ("*Slovo o polku Igoreve*": *Vzgljad lingvista*. Moskva, 2004). The results, though, are different. In the Russian case, the evidence is massively on the side of the twelfth-century origin of the work, while in the Czech case there can still be no question of medieval origins.

Dobiáš has accomplished a huge task in this volume. He does not merely touch on every major question the two-centuries-long discussion of the manuscripts has posed; he treats each issue critically, with careful and unbiased judgment and great erudition. This is a significant piece of scholarship disguised as a mere “Commentary.”

The poetry of the RKZ belongs among the most important works of its time, certainly deserving a place alongside J. Kollár’s *Slavy dcera*, Čelakovský’s *Ohlasy*, and Mácha’s “Máj” in the attention of both readers and scholars. This new edition should satisfy both audiences and awaken new interest in their intriguing history.

David L. Cooper

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign