

# Nationalism in the Second Redaction of the Verse Chronicle by the So-Called Dalimil

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**Abstract.** The paper examines literary aspects of the old Czech chronicle in verses by the so-called Dalimil. It inquires into various approaches to the chronicle by both medieval and (early) modern readers. The paper argues that medieval authors read and interpreted the chronicle from diverse perspectives and emphasized different dimensions of the narrative. The second redaction of the chronicle from the second third of the fifteenth century, known for stressing the chauvinistic nationalism of the text, was one possible way of reading the chronicle. Postmedieval editors and interpreters of the chronicle saw it, on the contrary, almost exclusively as a product of medieval anti-Germanism in Bohemia. While contemporary research considers the chronicle primarily as a political manifest, the paper develops the inquiry, approaching the chronicle and medieval historiography in general as multi-layered literature combining religious, identity-centred, political, and imaginative aspects of history writing.

**Keywords:** the chronicle by so-called Dalimil; medieval historiography; reading medieval historiography; nationalism; historical narratives

A poem retelling the history of the Czechs was created at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The verses were composed in Old Czech and were finished soon after John of Luxembourg took the Bohemian throne in 1310. In the chronicle, the poet claims he is assuming a task nobody had completed before: creating a conceptual history of his country and his people with the intent of explaining its meaning. The narrative covers the history of a language-based nation, beginning with the fall of the Tower of Babel through the Christianisation of Bohemia to current events following the end of the royal line in 1306. The poet's name is not known, but we are accustomed to calling him by the name invented by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century historians: the Old Czech Chronicle by the so-called Dalimil.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Bláhová, "Dalimil", 504–5.

The academic discourse about the chronicle has mainly stressed the author himself, the former's social and cultural affiliation, and the political contexts of the chronicle's reception.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the narrative is generally known as a fierce anti-German treatise that aims its animadversion above all at the burghers. Expressed hyperbolically, the text could easily be read as a defamatory article rather than a historical narrative. Although the chronicle is a literary text with many semantic layers, the sharpened patriotism and chauvinistic nationalism are considered the most peculiar elements of the entire work to this day. In this paper, I research a history of the reading of the chronicle by the so-called Dalimil in the Middle Ages with a focus on the contexts and situations when the nationalistic reading of the chronicle dominated, as well as those contrasting cases when different layers of the text prevailed. I will pay special attention to the second redaction of the chronicle that emerged in the second third of the fifteenth century since it is narrowly connected with the nationalistic reading.

The verses of the original chronicle are often hostile towards "foreigners", especially "Germans". Even though the motif is repeated, the struggle with the "enemy" is not the sole characteristic of the nation's identity in Dalimil's construction.<sup>3</sup> In his view, the nation consists of people sharing a single language, origin, and history, as well as responsibility for the common good of the country. Instead of nation, Dalimil uses the term language (*jazyk*), strengthening speech as the most important constituent sense of belonging. In Dalimil's vision of a nation, it is necessary to distinguish between origins and history. As he sees it, origins form only the primary conditions (the metaphor of the family is used), while history basically represents a collective fate (participating in events and sharing their impacts). Society shared a historical heritage in terms of experience, living space, happiness, difficulties, and in particular a collective care for the common good. Dalimil presents the nation as a bond between individuals sharing hardships while creating a homeland and its cultural landscape that led to a right to the country. The poet personifies this using the words of Forefather Čech, who brought his kinsmen to the unpopulated land:

"Oh, woe betide my deed  
bringing you into such poverty  
and into deep forests as your homes."<sup>4</sup>

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2 Adde-Vomáčka, *La Chronique*, 19–24.

3 Overview recently, Adde-Vomáčka, *La Chronique*, 77–132.

4 "Ach běda skutka mého, / že jste vy pro mě v tejto nůzi / a jsú pro mě váši domové hustí luzi"  
Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, 1, 105.

Similarly, they strived to cultivate the land together to be deserving of its fruits, with reference to the apostles sharing their daily bread (Acts 2, 43–45).<sup>5</sup> Conflicts with the Germans (*Němci*) came only under later local rulers.

Even the prologue of the chronicle, a statement about the entire narrative, is not primarily a verbal anti-German attack but rather a call for identarian historicism. Similarly, the prophet and later Duchess Libuše advocates the priority of ducal power being kept in a closed community from others and threatens Czechs with a foreigner's reign. Her speech before the leaders of the Czechs demanding a male duke is generally understood as a substantial manifestation of fundamental concepts promoted in the chronicle, and it is again invoked in the final verses of the narrative as an essential moral for the newly elected king of Bohemia. On the other hand, the chronicle's early chapters discuss the community's endeavour to overcome the troubles that came after the fall of the Tower of Babel and leaving Croatia, where Forefather Czech originally lived. Here, the chronicle portrays a group of people helping each other and together creating a fertile homeland with references to the apostles sharing their bread when in difficulty.

The rivalry between Czechs and Germans begins just before the first duke of Bohemia became Christian. However, there were conflicts within the community leading to the so-called Maiden's War and the War with Lucko, a supposed rival duchy in Bohemia.<sup>6</sup> The long conflict between Prague and the people of Lucko ended with the victory of the Praguers. The Duke of Lucko was killed in battle, and the victor entrusted his infant son to the care of a German man called Thuringian (*Durynk*). Thuringian murdered the child in an effort to be rewarded by the Prague Duke, but instead, he was decried as a traitor.<sup>7</sup> His story was remembered in the last part of the chronicle that describes the events after the death of Wenceslaus III, a contemporary from Dalimil's perspective. Wenceslaus III, an infant as well, was murdered by a Thuringian sent by the King of Rome, Albert:

“Oh, Thuringian, evil man!  
 What have you done, unfaithful!  
 What had the kind child done?  
 Did he give you too many gifts, maybe?  
 It made you kill him  
 and orphan the country?  
 Is it a fate of your nation  
 that another prince in Bohemia was killed by you?”<sup>8</sup>

5 “Ti lidé věrni biechu / a své sbožie obecno jmiechu” [Those people were loyal to each other / and all their goods were communal]: Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 1, 106.

6 Geary, *Women at the Beginning*, 34–42; Šorm, “Reading,” 165–69.

7 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol 1, 286–87.

8 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 2, 465–66.

The entire story is full of chauvinistic language, especially anti-German, and Dalimil praises those dukes of Bohemia who systematically acted against foreigners.<sup>9</sup>

The history of the community is basically a history of the nobility. Although non-noble members of the nation are present in the narrative, they are not actual historical players. It is the nobility that is constructed as a homogenous representation of the nation, and “the lower classes were part of the culture in so far as they were targeted by it.”<sup>10</sup> Since the nobility is the leading guarantor of national existence, Dalimil devoted extensive space to the status of the nobility and a theory of relations between the ruler and nobility. A community, or more precisely, its leaders, triggered the designation of the first duke when they expressed discontent with feminine rule by the aforementioned prophet Libuše. Besides the role of the nobility in the overall narrative history of the Czechs, Dalimil also tells the stories of individual noble families. Distinctively, he reproduces tales about the founders of noble families where he explains motifs on their coats of arms throughout the entire narrative. These tales are generally celebrations of young male warriors who are treated as heroes when the Czechs were able to defeat their enemies thanks to them.<sup>11</sup>

The narrative of the chronicle is conservatively standoffish towards the current courtly culture and considers the contemporary generation corrupt. The narrator marks it as the product of a trend toward laziness. The lazy and negligent nobility bore the responsibility for the chaos in the kingdom after the Přemyslid dynasty (1306) died out at the end of the narrative. The moral lesson is here learned from the story of the ravaging war caused by lazy nobility and terminated only by recovering care for the “homeland” and by installing a new king, John of Luxembourg, in 1310, whose coronation takes place in the last chapter of the chronicle. The chronicle advocates for the interests of the nobility and the community and argues against the political activities of rich burghers, primarily German speakers. The chronicle is not merely a political and ideological pamphlet: it is a poem, a fully developed literary work presenting the history of Czechs as a meaningful story.<sup>12</sup>

## The second redaction of the chronicle

In total, we have eight surviving manuscripts of the complete text of the chronicle as well as six fragment copies, including a section of the Latin adaptation. The

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9 First of all, Duke Soběslav II is praised as an example, see below.

10 The statement by Jan Assmann is valid not only in relation to ancient cultures, but medieval ones as well. Assmann, *Cultural Memory*, 129.

11 Bláhová, *Staročeská kronika*, 232–39.

12 Lehár, *Nejstarší česká epika*, 12–29; Bažant, “Urození lenoši,” 247–58.

*Lobkowicz* manuscript (known from here on as ‘Manuscript L’) from the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries represents a link between the first and second redaction of the text: It contains interventions distinctive to the second redaction of the chronicle, but only to a lesser extent; incomparable with the number of alterations in second redaction manuscripts. The *Franciscan* copy (‘Manuscript F’) from 1440 preserves the text of the first redaction, while marginal notes comment on the narrative in the spirit of the second redaction. Finally, three copies testify to the second redaction of the chronicle: *Pelcl’s* (‘Manuscript P’) and *Cerroni’s* (‘Manuscript Cr’) are both from the middle of the fifteenth century, while the *Fürstenberg* manuscript (‘Manuscript Fs’) is from the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>13</sup> By redaction, we mean there existed changes concerning not only individual linguistic modifications but rather ideological interventions within the text of the chronicle itself. At the same time, components of the second redaction are not a product of a single compact auctorial rewriting of the text but are outputs of a common approach to the chronicle by several unconnected scribes. There are, in total, one hundred and sixteen interventions and changes in the text of the chronicle that are viewed as products of the second redaction, but the number and composition of these alterations differ in individual manuscripts. The measure of variation is so large that we are unable to create any stemma between the second redaction manuscripts of the chronicle.<sup>14</sup>

The features of the chronicle’s second redaction, i.e., the additions and changes, primarily underline moralizing attitudes, exalting glorifications of the ‘language’, misogynous insults, and rousing appeals to defend the country. The chronicle was already strongly anti-German in the first redaction, but there is a conceptual shift from “foreigners” to “Germans” in many places during the second redaction. After all, it is the escalated nationalism that is most often designated as a peculiar aspect of this redaction. A story about Duke Soběslav (d. 1180) can serve as a clear example. Many studies of the nationalism in the chronicle quote chapter 68 as representative material regardless of the chronicle’s redaction.<sup>15</sup> In the first redaction of the chronicle, the Duke of Bohemia hates Germans to such a degree that he cuts their noses on sight. Also, he paid any man who brought him German noses. The poet shows Soběslav as a wise ruler:

13 Manuscripts descriptions in Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 1, 14–44.

14 Table of variations in the second redaction of the chronicle in Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 1, 56–61.

15 The entire chapter in Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 2, 179–83; Uhlíř, “Národnostní proměny 13. století a český nacionalismus,” 149–52; Nodl, *Tři studie*, 73; Pynsent, “Czech Nationalism,” 27–28.

“A wise man finds him good  
for he did not let foreigners into the country  
saying: »A good one multiplies his own language  
the unfaithful do not care for it.«<sup>16</sup>

Soběslav defended the country and won a battle where the emperor fell. In the narrative, Soběslav not only saved his kinsmen but also set an example for other rulers. Soběslav is juxtaposed with his father, Vratislav, who let himself be influenced by the emperor, forgoing Czech traditions. The exemplarity of Soběslav's deeds is strengthened in the fortune of his sons. In the chronicle, Soběslav is made to let the emperor raise his sons. They are given German names and are taught to speak German far from their homeland. Finally, after they return to Bohemia, Soběslav gives them a lecture about the destructive nature of losing one's natural national bonds. The entire chapter displays highly escalated and aggressive nationalism. Still, some authors thought there was space for improvement.

Those that modified the second redaction went even further. Generally, they deepened Czech-German antagonism by mocking Germans, glorifying the Duke of Bohemia, and moralizing about duties to the homeland. Germans are afraid to bring the emperor's message backed only by money.<sup>17</sup> Soběslav would rather die than run away from his country.<sup>18</sup> Germans cry in terror during battle and ask their wives to pray for them, but German women may only mourn the men killed in battle.<sup>19</sup> The emperor is unable to defeat the Duke of Bohemia, and therefore he resorts to tricks.<sup>20</sup> Ducal sons are under the influence of the emperor and ashamed of their Czech origin and customs.<sup>21</sup> And finally, the narrator encourages warriors to sacrifice their lives for the nation.<sup>22</sup>

The changes in the second redaction of the chronicle are overwhelmingly commentaries on historical events rather than transformations of the core story. Generally, the second redaction does not change the narrative but instead intensifies the above-mentioned features already present in the original redaction. Scholars often associate these escalated opinions distinctive to the second redaction with the sharpened attitudes taken by many authors writing during the Hussite wars. The argument is based on an anti-German stance present in the original chronicle and in

16 “Múdrý jemu za dobré jmieše, / že cizozemcě v zemi nepustieše / řka: “Dobrý svůj jazyk plodí, / nevěrný o svém jazyku nerodí” Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 2, 179.

17 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 2, 179, 190, addition after verse 32.

18 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 2, 180, 197, addition after verse 66.

19 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 2, 181, 200, addition after verse 78.

20 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 2, 182, 205, addition after verse 110.

21 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 2, 182, 209–10, addition after verses 132 and 134.

22 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 2, 182, 215, addition after verse 162.

the works of many Hussite intellectuals. Joseph Georg Meinert, a historian active at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, designated the original chronicle by Dalimil a “pack of lies” and “the bugle of the Hussite wars”.<sup>23</sup> He understood the medieval Hussite movement as one primarily motivated by nationalistic antagonism, and, similarly to many of his contemporaries, he saw nationalism as omnipresent and a continuous historical feature in their own lives. Therefore, he willingly connected some Hussite opinions with much older anti-German manifestations preserved in the work originating from Bohemia and Moravia. From this perspective, the chronicle by Dalimil would basically not be an authorial historical poem but rather the product of the ongoing phenomenon of Bohemian anti-Germanism. This essentially means the medieval poet’s opinions were reproduced by modern historians without proper reflection. We shall see in the second half of the paper more examples of attitudes of modern historians that are close to Meinert’s approach.

Besides the second redaction, there is other evidence of treating the old Czech chronicle as an instrument for promoting chauvinistic opinions in the fifteenth century. The political pamphlet *A Short Collection of the Czech Chronicles to Warn the Loyal Czechs* was most likely composed in the context of the 1458 royal election.<sup>24</sup> The pamphlet is preserved in a codex together with Manuscript Cr of the Old Czech Chronicle (i.e., an example of the second redaction). However, what is more important is that the majority of the *Short Collection* consists of quotations from the Old Czech Chronicle. These are basically excerpts from the chronicle by Dalimil supposedly proving Germans to be fierce enemies of Czechs: “The Czech chronicle says that because of their innate character, the German people cannot be loyal to the Czech language.”<sup>25</sup> Several verses reproduced here from the chronicle by Dalimil are introduced with similar statements. The pamphlet aims to warn royal electors against the German candidate. There is also a speech from the pre-Christian prophet and Duchess Libuše warning of foreign rule; the lesson of the three dukes of Bohemia murdered by German assassins; and the tragic rule of Stanimír, who was of German origin. There is also a reminder of Duke Oldřich, who appealed to Czechs to prefer the Czech language over German. Finally, the rule of Soběslav and his father Vladislav, who sought the emperor’s support against his own ‘nation’, is extensively re-told. The speech given by Libuše here is also slightly updated. In the original redaction, Libuše warns of rule by a foreigner, but in the *Short Collection*, Libuše warns of rule by a German.<sup>26</sup>

23 Meinert, “Die böhmischen Geschichtschreiber,” 38.

24 Bláhová, “Krátké sebranie,” 980.

25 “Dále kronika česká svědčí, kterak též pokolenie německé nikdy z přirození svého nemož býti věrno jazyku českému” Urbánek, ed., “Český anonymní spis,” 33.

26 Urbánek, ed., “Český anonymní spis”: the warning of Libuše on p. 33, about murdered dukes on p. 34, about Soběslav and Vratislav on pp. 35–36, on Oldřich p. 34, and on Stanimír on pp. 36–37.



The *Short Collection* not only utilizes examples from the chronicle by Dalimil, but it also changes the core story. The conflict between Czechs and Germans did not begin after the establishment of the community as conceptualized in the chronicle by Dalimil. In the *Short Collection*, it begins right after the fall of the Tower of Babel. The narrative, therefore, shifts its main focus from the history of a nation to the history of a conflict. For the unknown author of the pamphlet, the chronicle by Dalimil was a source of historical examples of how Czechs dealt with German aggression, and it is reduced to just this purpose. Besides the chronicle by Dalimil, two other texts were essential sources for the *Short Collection*. Some text was directly taken from *De Teutunicis bonum dictamen* (also known as *Curtasia contra Teutunicis* or *Diffamatio contra Teutunicos*). After the fall of the Tower of Babel, newly emerged nations (languages) divided the world into their own property. These nations were led by their own kings, dukes, counts, margraves, princes, or lords. Only Germans did not get their own land, and they had no German ruler. They were not settled and lived as servants to other nations, especially Slavs.<sup>27</sup> *De Teutunicis bonum dictamen* relies on *The Privilege of Alexandre the Great for the Slavs*, a product of fourteenth-century educational practice, claiming that Alexandre named the Slavs as the inheritors of Europe.<sup>28</sup> In addition, both the *Privilege of Alexandre the Great* and *De Teutunicis bonum dictamen* are preserved in a volume together with the *Short Collection* and with Manuscript Cr of the chronicle by Dalimil. The entire codex includes an aggressive chauvinism, with the chronicle by Dalimil an essential part. At the same time, the context of the royal election gives us a clear clue as to why the volume is the product of a particular political situation and not of an ahistorical phenomenon peculiar to a vaguely defined society, i.e., Bohemian anti-Germanism.

After all, there is a German prose translation of the chronicle by Dalimil that was created in the middle of the fifteenth century, and the text of the original chronicle had already been translated into German prior to that. A verse adaptation was composed before the middle of the fourteenth century, which I will return to below. Although the text of the prose adaptation has not been analysed in detail, scholars conclude it was written from a manuscript that underwent the second redaction.<sup>29</sup>

27 Wostry, "Ein deutschfeindliches Pamphlet", 193–236.

28 "...damus et conferimus vobis libere et in perpetuum totam plagam terre ab aquiline usque ad fines Ytalie meridionales, ut nullus sit ausus ibi manere, residere aut se locare nisi vestrates; et si quis alius ibi inventus fuerit manens, sit vester servus et posteris eis sint servi vestrorum posterorum" [...we freely give and confer upon you in perpetuity the entire tract of land from the north to the confines of southern Italy; let no one dare to reside there or locate there unless those of your nation, and if some other will be found remaining there, let him be your slave and afterward of your nation's posterity]: Vidmanová, "Ještě jednou," 180. See also Odložilík, "The Privilege," 239–51.

29 Daňhelka, "Úvod," 21; Brom, "The Rhymed German Translation," 257–80.



All three known surviving manuscripts of this prose adaptation are preserved in contemporary German libraries, and they were the property of local institutions as early as the Middle Ages. One manuscript from Saint Emmeram's Abbey in Regensburg is now stored in Munich, and another specimen is preserved in the University Library in Leipzig. The third copy was created by Christophor Hofmann, a Benedictine at Saint Emmeram's Abbey, at the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>30</sup> For the translator of the prose German version, the text of the second redaction testifies to anti-Germanism flourishing in Bohemia.

### Reading and adapting the chronicle in the fifteenth century

Several intellectuals indeed read the chronicle and more scribes modified its text during the fifteenth century, and they approached the chronicle with different interests. Except for the three (of five including the L and F manuscripts) that are examples of the second redaction, two manuscripts preserve the chronicle in a more literary way. The difference is mirrored in the composition of the codices that preserve the copies of the chronicle from the fifteenth century. While the surviving copies of the second redaction are bound together with moral, didactic, or political treatises,<sup>31</sup> other fifteenth-century copies are bound with historical or societal narratives—texts that explore moral and didactic issues without immediate political implications. The *Fragment of Strahov* of the Old Czech Chronicle survived in a codex with the vernacular adaptation of the *Historia Troiana* by Guido de Columna, the *Travels of John Mandeville*, and the Old Czech *Tristram*. The Chronicle by Dalimil is only partially copied here: The story ends at the beginning of chapter fifteen, “On Men's Tricks Against Maidens”. Based on a codicological analysis, however, the text seems not to be a fragment, strictly speaking, but rather an intentionally created copy of part of the chronicle.<sup>32</sup> The copied text narrates the story of founding a new homeland in Bohemia and establishing law and ducal dominion. It includes the prologue and chapters 1–14 on the Tower of Babel, founding a new homeland and cultivating its landscape; Libuše, a female soothsayer and her

30 Jireček, “Úvod,” 26.

31 The codices of Manuscripts P, C, Fr, F (belonging to the second redaction) were already bound in the fifteenth century and are of medieval origin. Composition of Pelcl's ms: Pseudo-Burley, *Kniha o mudrcích* (*De vita et moribus philosophorum*); John of Wales, *Kniha o čtyřech základních ctnostech* (*Breviloquium de virtutibus antiquorum principum*); The Chronicle by Dalimil; Treatise on Silence. Composition of Cerroni's ms: A Short Collection; The Privilege of Alexandre the Great; *De Teutunicis bonum dictamen*; the Chronicle by Dalimil. Composition of the Fürstenberg ms: The Chronicle by Dalimil, Pseudo-Burley, *Kniha o mudrcích* (*De vita et moribus philosophorum*), History of Alexandr the Great, *Elucidarium*. Composition of the Františkánský ms: the Old Testament, List of Rulers of Bohemia, The Chronicle by Dalimil.

32 Hádek, “Strahovský kodex,” 79–83; Hádek, “Explicit,” 69–74.

marriage to Přemysl, the first duke; and the Maiden's War after the death of Libuše. However, when Libuše chooses her future husband, she gives a long speech warning about the rule of a foreigner, but the narrative preserved in the *Fragment of Strahov* lacks the conflict with the Germans. It tells the story of an early society forming, constituting its rules, and dealing with conflicts and struggles within its community. Such a perspective contrasts with the one we saw in the *Short Collection*, where enmity with Germans begins right after the fall of the Tower of Babel. At the same time, the narrative about the pre-Christian past intensifies one feature of the original chronicle: a general lack of dating related to the intention of narrating a meaningful story rather than reconstructing past events. The *Fragment of Strahov*, therefore, goes well with the other texts in the codex, which are a historical novel about the Trojan War, an Arthurian verse romance, and a fantastic travelogue.

An idiosyncratic version of the chronicle, the Z manuscript, is preserved in the Codex of Jan Pinvička (a fifteenth-century scribe), also known as the Codex of Jan Zeberer (an eighteenth-century collector).<sup>33</sup> The text of the chronicle copied here was considered a third redaction of the chronicle by a few scholars. Although this opinion has lost popularity, it still brings our attention to the substantial number of interventions made in the verses of the chronicle. The update to the text was not performed by Jan Pinvička but most likely by someone beforehand, and Pinvička himself copied this version.<sup>34</sup> Generally, the verses in the Codex of Jan Pinvička are expanded in many places and not shortened. What is even more important is that the version in this codex does not interfere with the content of the narrative and does not change motifs important for the sense of the story. It seems the author of this version cared more for literary aesthetics than for the chronicle's political layers.

Cases such as the *Fragment of Strahov* and the copy of the chronicle preserved in the Codex of Jan Pinvička show us a variety of readings and adaptations of the original Old Czech Chronicle in the Middle Ages themselves. The chauvinistic approach to the text realized in the second redaction of the chronicle is thus only one potential approach. Moreover, the *Fragment of Strahov* and the copy preserved in the Codex of Jan Pinvička are not isolated cases. There are other versions of the chronicle that underline different layers of the text than those based on motifs attacking Germans. A German verse translation of the first redaction of the Old Czech Chronicle was created before the middle of the fourteenth century. The main feature of this adaptation, preserved in a single manuscript and known as *Tutsch kronik von Behem lant*, is an effort to moderate the aggressive nationalism. The German chronicle turns its attention to the distinction between German-speaking inhabitants of the Kingdom of Bohemia and foreigners. Chauvinistic assaults are also part of the narrative

33 KNM, sign. II F 8. For generally about the codex, see Šorm, "Reading," 164–65.

34 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 1, 41–43.

here, but they are reserved for foreigners, not Germans, as a vaguely defined social group. While German-speaking inhabitants of the Kingdom of Bohemia are called “tutschin”—that is, essentially Germans—, foreigners designated in the Old Czech Chronicle as Germans are systematically called “fromde” here—i.e., foreigners. This shift has a severe impact on the opinions promoted in the chronicle, and the image is no longer crystal clear. In the Old Czech Chronicle, the Czechs, sharing a single language and historical experience, and forming a metaphorical family, were supposed to care for the common good (i.e., a vague general idea of a prosperous society and its “homeland” combining religious and political criteria) and to defend their homeland against the greedy Germans who strove to seize power in the kingdom. In the German chronicle, on the other hand, a community of *regnicolae* (dwellers in the kingdom regardless of their affiliation of language or origin) is placed in opposition to foreigners.<sup>35</sup> Interventions into Dalimil’s identity constructions made in the *Tutsch kronik* are strengthened by shifting narrative perspectives from nation to ruler and kingdom. The author of the German adaptation of the Old Czech Chronicle accomplished this by creating an introduction where he summarised the reigns of Bohemian dukes and kings, including the reign of John of Luxembourg until 1342. After that, the *Tutsch kronik* begins with the story of the Tower of Babel. This introduction also replaces the chronicle’s original sharply identity-centred prologue.<sup>36</sup>

Two different approaches to the Old Czech Chronicle might expose the similarities and differences between the manuscript of the *Tutsch kronik* and Manuscript L mentioned above as a connecting link between the first and second redaction. Both these testimonies were evidently created based on the same version of the chronicle as they share several particular variations. At the same time, the two have contradictory goals: Manuscript L contains many additions particular to the second redaction, while the *Tutsch kronik* dilutes the ethnic foundations of identities constructed in the chronicle. In 2005, a fragment of a fourteenth-century Latin adaptation of the Old Czech Chronicle was found in Paris. The preserved text is not lengthy, covering only eleven non-subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, a few repetitive features were detected. Modifications in the Latin text have, as Anežka Vidmanová pointed out, a similar spirit to those in the German text. The connection between the two is not methodical, nor does it prove a direct textual relation, but it probably shows that both versions draw from the same version of the text. As we saw in the German text, the author of the Latin adaptation substituted the word “German” for “foreigner” in several places.<sup>37</sup> The approach to the chronicle in the Latin version is thus contrary to that in the second redaction or the *Short Collection*.

35 For the entire paragraph see Brom, “The Rhymed German Translation,” 257–80.

36 Zouhar, “Die Edition des so genannten Abrisses,” 57–83.

37 Vidmanová, “Nad pařížskými zlomky,” 25–67.

All these adaptations of the Old Czech Chronicle give us clues that there is no mainstream and alternative reading of the text but rather a wide range of medieval approaches. The manuscripts of the second redaction are particular for their linear reading of the original text, i.e., stressing its chauvinistic nature. Other adaptations cannot be defined that precisely. We see sharp ethnic nationalism repetitively moderated in some adaptations or even left aside, and the animosity towards ethnic Germans is shifted to foreigners, resulting in a more inclusive identity for the inhabitants of the kingdom. Besides that, the chronicle includes several layers of meaning closely related to the chauvinism presented therein, but these may stand out as essential features themselves, depending on the reader. One of them is the moral lessons drawn from historical events. The term advice (*rada*) is utilized very frequently in the narrative to stress the didactic meaning of the figure's speeches as well as the narrator's evaluation. Another is historical nostalgia seen throughout the chronicle. The narrative climaxes with Dalimil's proclamation of his disappointment in the present situation of society while the past reality is recalled as an ideal worthy of following, and past heroes are contrasted with contemporary figures. Still, the past is for Dalimil accessible through the narration as witnessed in the story about Duke Oldřich discovering an abandoned castle full of food and clothing. Oldřich himself never learned the story of the place, but Dalimil did, reading the story in "a German chronicle".<sup>38</sup> There are parallels between the fate of Oldřich and the one-time owner of the castle and the entire chronicle by the so-called Dalimil as well because the chronicle looked for parallels between the past and the present. The narrative by Dalimil is monumental and may arouse respect and awe, as well as astonishment and immersion.<sup>39</sup>

### Postmedieval adaptations of the chronicle

I have argued that there were several approaches to the Old Czech Chronicle by the so-called Dalimil in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One of them accentuated aggressive anti-German nationalism. Others rather emphasized different epic dimensions of a nostalgic historical narrative. The former chauvinistic interpretation is primarily represented by manuscript testimonies called the second redaction of the chronicle that appeared before the middle of the fifteenth century. The latter, in turn, were produced and disseminated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Also, the second redaction of the chronicle is usually associated with intellectuals close to the Hussite movement, while other adaptations were disseminated more by various social groups in the Czech Lands. The difference between a strong and

38 Daňhelka et al., eds, *Staročeská kronika*, Vol. 1, 464.

39 Both these features were stressed recently by Šorm, "Vnímání a reprezentace intimity," 266–74. For the usage of parallels in the narrative, see Bažant, "Urození lenoši," 247–58.

aggressive interpretation on the one hand and a diverse reading interested in particular historical images on the other is produced artificially, however, by putting the second redaction into opposition to all the other specific adaptations of the chronicle. Rather than the opposition itself, I intend to underline the plurality of attitudes towards the chronicle throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>40</sup>

Presenting such a scene as opposition still serves to show the change in the use of the chronicle from the sixteenth century on. Since the previous analysis was based almost exclusively on manuscript testimonies from the text of the chronicle by Dalimil, I now turn my attention to other copies of the chronicle. However, there is no manuscript record of the chronicle from the sixteenth century onward. The first significant adaptation of the chronicle was created by humanist intellectual and editor Pavel Ješín (also Gessinius or Geschinius), who prepared an edition for print in 1620. The humanist approach applied by Ješín has the character both of scholarly criticism and national apology. Ješín created the edition during the uprising of Bohemian estates against Habsburg rule caused both by disagreement about the roles of the ruler and the estates in the administration of the country, as well as by confessional discord between Protestants and Catholics. Ješín and others understood and interpreted the case as a continuation of the old enmity between Czechs and Germans, or more precisely, as a continuation of the age-long German hatred of Czechs.<sup>41</sup> Both the content of the conflict and its nationalistic reading of the situation found their expression in Ješín, who pays homage to the “Bohemian” Přemyslid dynasty that died out 200 years prior. The chronicle by Dalimil ends with the extinction of that dynasty, followed by social chaos and the installation of a new dynasty. According to Dalimil, the last Přemyslid was murdered in 1306 on the order of the “German” king of the Romans.

Ješín compiled the edition out of several manuscript copies, respecting the individual variants and stressing them in the margins. To accomplish his task, he had examples of the two redactions, but also other, later lost manuscripts at his disposal.<sup>42</sup> Ješín put significant effort into reconstructing the original wording of the chronicle and defending himself against potential objections, claiming that nobody should express astonishment at the fact that someone cares for his own language,<sup>43</sup>

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40 Similar conclusions were drawn by Adde, “Enviroment textuel,” 169–91.

41 Mikulec, “Pavel Stránský of Zápý,” 89–92.

42 As for the manuscripts, Ješín used Manuscript V (*Vienna* manuscript probably from the end of the fourteenth century, preserving text close to the original version), Manuscript C from 1448 with the second redaction, and Manuscript L from the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries where some features of the second redaction appear.

43 Daňhelka, ed., *Die alttschechische Reimchronik*, 50.

that no one should hold Ješín responsible for writings created 300 years ago;<sup>44</sup> nor should anybody should blame Ješín for defaming Germans as he claims this was not his intention.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, Ješín published the chronicle by Dalimil as a unique testimony about “the extermination” of the Přemyslids as other chroniclers, according to Ješín, remained silent about it.<sup>46</sup> Ješín also accused Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II of replacing Latin with German as the language of the Empire despite the Roman habit of installing Latin as the administrative language in the provinces. Therefore, Rudolf II lost part of his legitimacy in this respect. Moreover, using Latin was a supposedly fundamental constituent of being considered a Roman.<sup>47</sup> Ješín also warned his contemporaries about the fate of the Sorbs, who were barely surviving under harsh discrimination by the Germans.<sup>48</sup> After all, Ješín declares in the prologue:

“I have no other goal or intention than to serve to my nation (...) Czechs look into the chronicle as if into a mirror to fortify themselves for a current pious and heroic stance, and brace themselves in faith, patience, and stability using the examples of their ancestors”.<sup>49</sup>

Ješín’s edition was printed in June 1620 during the Bohemian Revolt but was most likely never distributed, and it was perhaps destroyed soon after the Battle of White Mountain that ended the revolt. Only a few copies of the print survived.<sup>50</sup>

Another edition of the Old Czech Chronicle by the so-called Dalimil was prepared by František Faustín Procházka in 1786. Procházka based his edition on the print by Ješín, but he also worked with other manuscripts that did not factor into the edition by Ješín (Ješín did not have Manuscripts F, P, Fr, and Z at his disposal). The strong influence of Ješín’s edition is mirrored in Procházka’s preface, where entire excerpts from Ješín’s preface are copied. The approach adopted by Procházka has something in common with the one embraced by Ješín: Procházka justified his edition for the censors both in the text of the chronicle by leaving some verses out and by clarifying the harmlessness of the chronicle in its preface. Procházka declared, just as Ješín did, that nobody should transfer the opinions of

44 Daňhelka, ed., *Die alttschechische Reimchronik*, 49.

45 Daňhelka, ed., *Die alttschechische Reimchronik*, 49.

46 Daňhelka, ed., *Die alttschechische Reimchronik*, 48.

47 Daňhelka, ed., *Die alttschechische Reimchronik*, 51.

48 Daňhelka, ed., *Die alttschechische Reimchronik*, 50–51. Sorbs are a West Slavic ethnic group living in Lusatia. The example of Sorbs is often given, supposedly proving the necessity of state independence for the survival of an ethnic group. Stone, *The Smallest Slavonic Nation*.

49 Daňhelka, ed., *Die alttschechische Reimchronik*, 47–48.

50 Daňhelka, “Úvod,” 21.

Dalimil to contemporary times and vice versa. At the same time, Procházka not only quotes similar statements by Ješín, but he also argues that the chronicle is inspiring reading, just as Ješín did. Although Procházka claimed his edition was primarily intended for linguists, he simultaneously revealed a vision of the chronicle as an educational mirror for the kings of Bohemia as well as an emotional national historical connection:

“I do not think anybody would not like to learn a language and the decaying customs of their old, bearded, and hairy forefathers, and to enjoy a moment with them.”<sup>51</sup>

Different attitudes towards the chronicle by the so-called Dalimil were heavily influenced by the opinions of Josef Dobrovský, a prominent philologist and proponent of the Czech national emancipation movement at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In *Geschichte der böhmischen Sprache und Literatur*, originally published in 1791, Dobrovský reservedly described the chronicle by the so-called Dalimil as an extremely hateful text towards Germans that never again occurred to such an extent in literature produced in Bohemia.<sup>52</sup> Every subsequent researcher who interpreted the chronicle was basically obliged to adopt Dobrovský's attitude. This effect is illustrated by the efforts of Václav Hanka to have another edition of the chronicle by the so-called Dalimil printed, the first attempt taking place in 1823. Hanka, like other figures of the national emancipation movement, adopted a particular wariness in dealing with the censors,<sup>53</sup> who appreciated the literary quality of the chronicle, but were also aware of the statements by Josef Dobrovský.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, advocates of Hanka's work strived to disprove the legitimacy of Dobrovský's evaluation as exaggerated. Hanka and his proponents claimed the chronicle to be a national apology, not offensive hate.<sup>55</sup> While disproving Dobrovský's statement, historians usually closely connected the ideas of Dobrovský and Meinert. With Meinert, who emotionally rejected Dalimil, a strong expressivity was added to the argumentation because Dobrovský himself wrote about Dalimil without explicit emotion. František Palacký, a historian, politician, and one of the most influential individuals of the Czech national emancipation

51 “Neminim, že by kdo by, genuž by nebylo milo, swých starých, bradatých a chlupatých tatiků, řeč, a gegi zwetsšelé způsoby poznati, a gako s nimi na chwili obcowati” Procházka, ed., *Kronika Boleslavská*, not paginated.

52 “Nie hatte der böhmische Nationalhass gegen die Deutschen einen so hohen Graden erreicht,” Dobrovský, *Geschichte*, 146.

53 Štaif, *Obezřetná elita*.

54 Gabriel, “Osudy,” 161–62.

55 Such is the case of the apology in another attempt by Hanka to have the edition published in 1835. See Volf, “Dobrozdání,” 453–59.



movement, was also involved in this case. In his *Würdigung der alten böhmischen Geschichtsschreiber* from 1830, Palacký defended Dalimil from Dobrovský and Meinert, asserting that Dalimil was not a hateful liar but rather a heartfelt patriot. Palacký, on the other hand, appreciated Hanka as a “wise man” contributing to knowledge about the chronicle. Moreover, Palacký refers to the edition by Hanka from 1823/1824, which in fact, had not been published yet.<sup>56</sup> Hanka failed to publish the chronicle until 1849. He did not introduce his own interpretation in the final version of his edition but instead used a commentary copied from Palacký’s *Würdigung*. At the same time, Hanka omitted Dobrovský’s opinions of Dalimil, and he only referred to Dobrovský as a critic of the sixteenth-century chronicle by Václav Hájek of Libočany, who was then believed to be a liar.<sup>57</sup>

Statements by Dobrovský and Meinert remained stepping stones in discussions about the Old Czech Chronicle. According to the mainstream evaluations by historians active in Bohemia during the nineteenth century, the chronicle by Dalimil should be read as a patriotic apology defending the nation against the German offences of the time. At the same time, they understood these offences as an ahistorical constant true in the Middle Ages as well as in their lifetimes. Historians attempted to disprove statements by Dobrovský and Meinert to reversely argue that Dalimil was rather a patriotic figure. Josef Jireček, who prepared the first modern critical edition of the chronicle in 1882, based his own argument on the explicit denial of the thesis by Dobrovský and Meinert, just like Palacký.<sup>58</sup> Particular attention was later paid to Meinert’s idea of the chronicle as a product of ongoing Czech aggressive nationalism in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, many scholars observed similarities in nationalistic ideas in the chronicle by Dalimil and in texts from some Hussite authors. Although plenty of scholars did not primarily claim that Bohemian anti-Germanism was an objective ahistorical phenomenon, they still often gave credit to Meinert’s statement as a fitting characteristic. These included philologists Roman Jakobsen and Jiří Daňhelka. Even though their research was consistently text-based, they appreciated Meinert’s approach as pertinent. Both quoted Meinert’s words about the chronicle as a “bugle of the Hussite wars”. Jakobsen claimed Meinert was not far from historical truth, and Daňhelka stated that Meinert expressed his views “mercilessly and aptly”.<sup>59</sup> Both supported the idea that Dalimil was a product of a homogeneous nationalistic society that had hardly changed throughout the Middle Ages, even though both Jakobsen and Daňhelka understood the constructiveness of the text and its ideological auctorial character well. Alfred Thomas, who

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56 Palacký, *Würdigung*, 108. See also Piša, “Cenzura,” 200–6.

57 Hanka, ed. *Dalimilova chronika*, IV.

58 Jireček, “Úvod,” XVIII.

59 Daňhelka, “Úvod,” 34; Toman, ed., *Angažovaná čítanka*, 201.

interpreted Meinert's idea of a description of political reality, went even further. While Meinert argued there was a universal national movement, Thomas wrote about the identity of Dalimil's political argumentation and the political environment at the beginning of the Hussite movement supposedly inspired by Dalimil.<sup>60</sup> The belief that the chronicle by Dalimil was indivisibly connected to an assumed national movement is defended to this day. For example, in 2011, Robert B. Pynsent formulated the opinion that Dalimil created an "ideological basis for Czech mass nationalism."<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, there is also the conviction that the chronicle by Dalimil is inspiring for modern readers. We may associate such an argument with nineteenth-century historians from Bohemia, but it was repeated even later. This is the case of a handbook on the history of Czech literature by the Institute of Czech Literature at the Academy of Sciences published in 1959, where the so-called Dalimil is glorified as a defender of the "highest values of the nation and of humanity", and his nationalistic and xenophobic ideas are presented as inspiring.<sup>62</sup> Miroslav Ivanov, one of the most popular non-academic authors of historical non-fiction, introduces Dalimil not only as a patriot but also as a democrat in 1971, and his book was republished as an e-book in 2015.<sup>63</sup> Radko Štastný, who systematically studied manuscripts of the chronicle, strangely defended Dalimil's medieval opinions against contemporary researchers in 1989:

"That what was and often still is labelled as a typical attribute of Hussitism, and what Dalimil was and still is blamed for, that is national hate and chauvinism, is a very inaccurate designation for the patriotism of defending the existence of a nation."<sup>64</sup>

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60 "In looking for the forces that could change this situation, the author of the chronicle, much in advance of his time, is inclined to see salvation in Bohemia in an independent state governed by the lower nobility allied with the peasants (sic!). This is precisely (sic!) what happened in the Hussite period in the fifteenth century, when the Czech king Sigismund was removed from the throne (sic!) by an uprising of noblemen and peasants. There is, therefore, much justification in the comment of the German historian Joseph George Meinert, who in 1821 called the chronicle »the bugle of the Hussite Wars«." Thomas, *Anne's Bohemia*, 52–53.

61 Pynsent, "Czech Nationalism," 9.

62 Hrabák, ed., *Dějiny*, 121.

63 Ivanov, "Labyrinth," 12.

64 "...to, co bylo a mnohdy dosud je označováno jako typický znak husitství a co bylo a je vyčítáno Dalimilovi, Totiž nacionální nenávisť a šovinismus, je velmi nepřesné označení pro vlastenectví, patriotismus, obhajující národní existenci" [...what was and sometimes still is described as a typical feature of Hussitism and what was and is blamed on Dalimil, namely national hatred and chauvinism, is a very inaccurate term for patriotism, patriotism, defending national existence]: Štastný, "Dalimilovy ideje," 390–91.

## Conclusion

The works of Jan Lehár represent an essential turn in the discourse about the Old Czech Chronicle by Dalimil. These were studies on the literary aspects of Dalimil's poem, but Lehár fully appreciated the complex literary interpretations of its history, including its placement in the context of other early Bohemian vernacular epic works from the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The literary criticism revealed narrative patterns employed by the author and demonstrated the utility of such structures.<sup>65</sup> Lehár read the chronicle not as an inevitable product of a society at the end of the thirteenth century but primarily as a poem written by an author with his beliefs and opinions based on his life and interpreting his experiences. From this perspective, the chronicle is not a simple mirror of the time when it was produced, and the context of the period has only an auxiliary function in its interpretation. Political, economic, and social contexts are always fragmentary and depend on actual interpretations. These contexts can help us understand the narrative only after we understand its literary features, poetic figures, argumentation, narrative mediation, and the role of the narrator.<sup>66</sup> Acknowledging such features helps us better understand the socio-cultural functions of the chronicle as well as its political impetus associated with an emotional effect.

In this paper, however, the focus was the varying approaches employed by medieval (and modern) readers and authors to the chronicle. Manuscript adaptations of the chronicle stressed various layers of the poem: as a history of a nation as well as of a kingdom; as an epic narrative; as historical nostalgia; and as an aggressive nationalist polemic. We saw that some of these adaptations went in opposite directions to the original chronicle in systematically moderating chauvinistic elements in the original chronicle. The reception of the chronicle should therefore be considered a result of different authors' interests in stressing individual features of the original chronicle rather than a product of a persistent omnipresent tradition: A supposed permanent anti-Germanism in Bohemia. Similar conclusions were drawn by Jiří Daňhelka. Pointing out there is no substantial evidence of using the chronicle during the sixteenth century, he recalled that it was often adapted in particular situations and should thus primarily be read as an authorial ideological text. The surviving examples of the second redaction of the chronicle should consequently not be seen as evidence of unchanging anti-Germanism in Bohemia. The connection between the nationalism at the beginning of the fourteenth century and the second third of the fifteenth

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65 Jakobson, "Old Czech Verse," 417–65; Hrabák, *Studie*, 51–60; Zdeňka Tichá, *Staročeské básně*, 12–17, 18–23; Lehár, *Nejstarší česká epika*, 12–29.

66 Following the research of Jan Lehár, I inquired about the digressions of the narrator, the usage of direct speech, and parallels between particular chapters as a part of historical conceptualisation in my Ph.D. thesis: Bažant, "Představy," 66–72, 115–25, 184–88.

century is not proven, but is a construction by the authors of the second redaction. František Šmahel correctly formulates the metaphor that the chronicle “*became* (italics by VB) a bugle only after the battle of Lipany.”<sup>67</sup> Authors of the second redaction of the chronicle updated the text to meet their own needs, opinions, and political goals.

We saw there was a change in the discourse related to reading the chronicle after the fifteenth century. While the adaptations created during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries show us heterogenous approaches, later editions from 1620, 1786, and the nineteenth century were virtually solely displays of national apology that impacted our understanding of the chronicle and overshadowed the literary layers of the text. The controversy over Dalimil’s patriotism and chauvinism is no longer relevant. There are many studies of the chronicle that I did not mention, but current research is focused on the opinions expressed in the chronicle, the relationship between statements advocated in the chronicle, and the politics and opinions in Bohemia at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These include analyses of specific literary and cultural motifs utilized in the text.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, there is a shared conviction in mainstream research that the chronicle is a natural product of thirteenth-century society rather than a literary expression of opinions held by a particular author. Moreover, such a view petrifies our approach to the chronicle in terms of a political and ideological creation. We most often read individual pieces of medieval historiography separately as either political treatise, theological exposition, memorial record, or celebratory writing. Alternatively, we evaluate individual textual layers as tools serving the ultimate goal of the entire text—e.g., the theoretical construction of a pagan history introduced to support and legitimize ducal power with poetic figures used as ornaments around the core message. Most often, a political argument is considered the most important layer of the chronicle. The text must be ideologically criticized, but it still should cover not only the designation of a direct political goal but also an understanding of relations between all the layers of the text: salvational history; the role of the narrator; or sacred teachings about the history of the world; as well as claims of religious and worldly power and social opinions on the functioning of communities.<sup>69</sup>

67 Šmahel, *Idea*, 273.

68 See also Mezník, “Němci a Češi,” 3–10; Bláhová, *Staročeská kronika*. Recently Adde-Vomáčka, *La Chronique*.

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