

Summary

Heretics, Barbarians, Enemies. Difference and Stereotypes in the Late Middle Ages

Studies gathered in this volume examines questions connected to the textual construction of otherness. Who was the other in the Late Middle Ages? How was he treated by contemporary authors? What were his socio-cultural meanings within the narrative? These broad questions are applied, above all, to the phenomenon of Hussitism, whose heterodox character is analyzed in a comparative perspective with other forms of difference (ethnic, cultural, political). The process of creation and persistence of heterostereotypes as well as various forms of enmity are also addressed.

Synthesizing different conceptual approaches, the introductory essay formulates three main determinants which participate in the process of othering: stereotypes, frontiers, and genre determinations. They are approached as frameworks through which the other is defined and medialized, being understood not only as producers of opinions, but also as perceptual tools. Three categories prevailing in studies present in this volume are identified where concrete images of the other acquire particular meanings: heretics, barbarians, and enemies. These categories, however, are not to be treated separately. Specific imagery and topoï of every one of them overlap and merge, so that the image of the other may result from religious, cultural, ethnic, and political aspects all at once.

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Sára Vybíralová's paper *Late Medieval West and Central Europe in the Mirror of Mutual Stereotypes* aims to elucidate the process by

which national stereotypes were coming into existence in Central and Western Europe in the Late Middle Ages, while important social and religious changes were taking place. Three peculiar types of sources which attempt categorical systematization of temperaments peculiar to different national or ethnic groups were studied: scholarly treatises in geography, short rhyming jingles or brief moralizing texts of the *proprietates gentium* type, and finally travel writings. In all three cases, the boundary of a relatively-closed space, of cultural “ecumene”, plays an important role in the formation of the image of the other. Indeed, the barbaric or dangerous was more often identified with groups and lands outside these bounds. At the same time, the textual other is not a simple imprint of a subjective perception: the construction of a narrative is very much conditioned by the issues of intertextuality and literary traditions. Sometimes the image was defined by the need for a contrastive accentuation of an autostereotype or by humorous literary games assigning the same characteristics to various nations (*proprietates gentium*), while the narrative incoherence of some categorical judgments may reflect other ethnic sources behind the travellers’ perspective. As regards the perception of Central European nations, Bohemia plays a rather singular role: it stands out in comparison with other nationalities (Poles, Hungarians), as all possible specificities are overlaid since the 1420s by the dominant Czech-as-a-heretic stereotype.

The study of **Jan Vojtíšek** *Cowardly Hungarians or Haughty French? The Defeat at Nicopolis (1396) in the Contemporary French Narrative Sources* discusses the explanations for the defeat of the crusader army at Nicopolis given by three French narrative sources contemporary to the battle: *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denis*, *Le livre des fais du bon messire Jehan le Maingre, dit Bouciquant*, and Jean Froissart’s *Chroniques*. The prevalent opinion of modern French historiography, based on the heroic story of Boucicaut, associates too easily the Hungarians with cowardice, blaming them for the

defeat. This study reviews the question of “Hungarians’ guilt” with regards to the narrative strategies employed by the authors as each of them represents a different trend in medieval historiography and a different literary aim.

Traditional medieval literary patterns of explanation of a defeat are detectable in the three texts (overwhelming superiority of enemy numbers, the so-called *peccatis exigentibus*, and betrayal or cowardice). While Michel Pintoin blames the whole army (both Hungarians and French) for imperfection and sinfulness, Froissart uses the motif of conflict between youth and experience in order to ascribe the responsibility for the loss to individual French knights. His mention of the Hungarian flight belongs to this moralizing logic and does not reflect a pure stereotype. Thus, it is only the third source, an encomiastic biography of Boucicaut, which fully faults the Hungarians while celebrating the prowess of the main protagonist and all Western chivalry.

The study shows that Nicopolis meant no shift in French perception of Hungarian soldiery. The purported “Hungarian cowardice” exhibited in those precipitous historical events eventually fell into oblivion in France, only to be revived by modern historiography based on uncritical readings of the apology of Marshal Boucicaut.

Věra Vejrychová’s paper *Heterodoxy, Ethnic Difference and Depicting the Enemy in French and Burgundian Sources of the 15th Century* reflects upon the various forms in which three categories of enmity – political, ethnic, and religious – are presented. The changing contexts of the Armagnac-Burgundian conflict, on the one hand, and the Hundred Years’ War, on the other, allow us to observe the mechanisms by which otherness is construed. Apart from attributes linked traditionally to barbaric comportment (cruelty, disregard of commonly held values), we also encounter treacherousness, lust for power, and godlessness. These characteristic views of the enemy are shared predominantly by anti-English polemical works

from ca. 1410–1450, where the English are presented as an alien ethnic group.

Texts belonging to the chronicle genre, on the contrary, maintain rather a neutral outlook and, albeit produced in mutually hostile milieux, do not relate to any of the three categories of enmity, either in their treatment of the English or of the political opponent. These findings contrast sharply with the commonly held view regarding chronicles from this period as politically engaged. The textual genre is indeed a fundamental condition for the manner in which otherness is construed, whereas the construct serves as a reflection of authorial self-identification with a specific group only in a limited number of cases.

The third category analyzed, religious alterity, becomes part of arguments relating to political and ethnic enmity in Franco-Burgundian space, but influences especially views of more remote regions. The kingdoms of Poland and Bohemia are thus perceived almost exclusively through the perspective of religious ortho/heterodoxy. The intensification of barbaric stereotypes in descriptions of Bohemian heresy can also in some cases be understood as evidence of a link made between religious enmity and ethnic and cultural difference.

Kateřina Lořákova's paper *Hussite Traces in 15th Century Flanders* examines religious connections between the Kingdom of Bohemia and Picardy. Despite persistent uncertainties in modern scholarship, contemporary authors, both Hussite and Catholic, supposed Flemish origins of the radical branches of Hussitism. As for Flanders, heretical groups and individuals implicitly or explicitly connected to Hussite teaching can be traced from the first two decades of the 15th century onwards, such as the group called *homines intelligentiae*, Nicolas Serusier or Gilles Mersault. All of these "heretics" were questioned by the inquisition and put on trial.

In spite of the great echo which Hussitism induced all over Europe, there appears only a limited notion of this movement in

Flemish chronicles, mostly in relation to military encounters. Authors belonging to the Burgundian court were better informed than their French counterparts, probably also thanks to duke Philip the Good's interest in Hussitism, resulting in plans for a Crusade against Bohemia in the late 1420s. Chronicles from two different milieux were chosen for the analysis of the way in which Hussitism was viewed. The lay chronicle of Enguerrand of Monstrelet does pay only limited attention to the Hussite movement and perceives it mostly as a disruption of highly idealized and organized world order. Among the religious historiography, the chronicle of the Cistercian abbey of Dunes stands out by quoting the Hussite ideological programme and by recognizing different branches within the movement. Both chronicles, nevertheless, stay almost silent on the subject of the Flemish supporters of Hussitism. The reasons for this silence are not sure, but it may be suggested that the chroniclers desired to separate the dangerous "heresy" from their own, mentally-defined Western world.

The study of **Ondřej Vodička** "*Every Czech is a heretic.*" *The Image of the Czechs in German Urban Chronicles in the Hussite Period* analyzes the perception of the Hussites in contemporary Catholic German historiography. Four chronicles were chosen as a sample: *Burkhard Zink's Chronicle* from Augsburg, *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*, and *Detmar Chronicle* and *Rufus Chronicle*, both from Lübeck. These texts show a stereotypical perception of Czechs as an ethnic group and its development as influenced by the events of the Hussite revolution.

All relevant instances from the sources are divided into four thematic groups. First, while *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* begins to equate Czechs with heretics as early as in its account of the burning of the Czech masters in Constance, the other three texts assume this viewpoint on the impulse of the outburst of Hussite violence in Prague. Second, the motif of Hussite cruelty is analyzed. The two Lübeck chronicles comment on military subjects with more reserve

than *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* with its fanciful anti-Bohemian thrust, or than Burkhard's narrative based on his personal experiences. Third, in all four chronicles Hussite insidiousness is purported to be the code of conduct of Czech nobility who declared loyalty to the king and simultaneously concocted a plot against him. Last, attention is drawn to descriptions of Bohemian and Moravian Catholics: despite being relatively well-informed, the authors mostly did not take the Catholic side into consideration – the stereotypical image of Czechs as heretics thus remains unshaken.

The studied authors constructed the image of the Czech heretic upon two fundamental characteristics: barbaric cruelty and heretical insidiousness. These traits were inspired particularly by the Czechs' defiance of their legitimate ruler and by their oppression of the German ethnic group. From the merging of all these planes of perception, a typical lexicon arose in which the words *Czech*, *Hussite* and *heretic* became synonyms.

Jiří Petrášek's paper "*Beware of heretics.*" *The Attitude of Nicolas Magni of Jauer to Hussites* analyzes the views put forward by several contemporary responses to the 1430 *Manifesto of Five Captains of Tabor*, focusing chiefly on the *Responde stulto*, a reaction by the Heidelberg University master Nicholas Magni of Jauer, with further reference to *Curandum summopere*, written by two unknown masters of the University of Vienna, and *Videte* by Matthias Döring and Johannes Bremer, two Franciscan theologians based at the University of Erfurt. These three propaganda texts were, like the Tabor *Manifesto*, addressed to laymen across the Holy Roman Empire, their purpose being to respond point by point to the latter document and refute it. Motifs of pride, obstinacy and sexual perversion were then attributed to the initiator of the *Manifesto*, Prokop the Great, and to Utraquists more generally.

The argumentation used by Catholic scholars was built upon Church tradition, dogmatic theology, and canon law. Nicholas Magni's central messages – "beware of heretics" and "learn to de-

fend against heretics” – are taken from the two greatest authorities, Thomas Aquinas and Petrus Lombardus. Nicholas Magni further justified the necessity of avoiding heretics with allegorical descriptions of Hussites borrowed from Scripture and from commentaries on it by Petrus Lombardus and Nicholas of Lyra. A common, oft-quoted motif in anti-heretical discourse is that of the little foxes who spoil the vineyard, while another, less current one, likens the distortion of Holy Scripture to the bending of a bow. In their representations of the Hussites, none of the three Catholic reactions deviate noticeably from the standard attitude towards heretics. This is corroborated by enumerations of their vices, which correspond with the traditional representation of the heretic as resembling the devil.

Martin Pjecha's article *The Changing Perception of the Hussites in the Thoughts and Works of Johannes Nider* presents a case study of the perception of heresy in the Late Medieval period by addressing Johannes Nider (d. 1438). Not only was Nider an important figure in the Dominican observant movement, but his efforts toward Church reform brought him to some of the most important ecclesiastic gatherings of his day – including the Councils of Constance and Basel – and his great work the *Formicarius* (1436–1438) is today considered as among the foundational texts attacking witchcraft, demonology, and magical speculation. A less-explored, and seemingly a more contentious issue are Nider's views on the the Hussites of Bohemia. With a view to contributing to the latter discussion, the article compares Nider's discourses on the Hussites in relevant parts of the *Formicarius* and in his *Contra heresim Hussitarum* (1430–1431), an earlier work dealing with the Hussite threat. With reference to events and developments – relating both to Christendom, and to Nider personally – taking place in the time between the two works, it is argued that Nider's view of the Hussites was modified as he learned more about them, and also as a peaceful compromise was becoming an increasingly appealing alternative to

continued warfare. After such a compromise was reached with the *Compactata* of 1436, Nider altered his view of the Hussites so as to make it fit the current reality, his understanding of sacred history, and the role of the wars in that history. At the same time, he carefully redefined his terminology. The conclusion argues that heresy was not always a static, ahistorical category, but rather one which sometimes needed to be adapted to contemporary contexts.

Vojtěch Bažant's study *Hussites, Turks and the True Faith After Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini* examines two works by Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini portraying religious and cultural difference. *Historia Bohemica* became one of the most profoundly influential Late Medieval texts to help shape the image both of the Hussites and the Czechs. The treatise *De Turcarum origine et moribus* completes Aeneas's historico-geographical writing *Asia* and incorporates his ideas and opinions regarding the Turks as known from his other texts. Analysis of both sources focuses on the similitudes in the construction of the other as a heretic on one hand, and as a prototype of paganism and barbarity on the other hand. In his treatment of both Hussites and Turks, however, the author integrated various forms of heterodoxy. While the Taborites, the worst of all Hussites, had been led on by heresy to adopt barbaric manners, barbarous Turks only began to threaten Christendom after they had converted to Islam, a religion often portrayed in the Middle Ages as an antinomical imitation of Christianity. Descriptions of both groups are thus interspersed with motifs from a common repertory of heretic, pagan and barbarian images.

The narrative function of otherness in these texts is a second focus point of the paper. Piccolomini's construction of the other, intended for his fellow Catholics, does not serve solely to describe difference but also to affirm one's own identity and to determine its boundaries. Both texts also function as appeals: *Historia Bohemica* uses the Taborites as an example to demonstrate the excesses that men can be driven to by heresy, while *De Turcarum origine et*

moribus emphasizes the extent of the losses incurred by the Turkish invasion upon Christendom in Asia, caused not only by Turkish belligerence, but also the idleness of Christians.

The paper of **Jan Biederman** *The Wagenburg and Military Ordinances: A Universal Model or a National Particularity in the Art of War?* explores the forms of adoption of the *Wagenburg* (wagon fort) tactics by which the Hussite armies achieved repeated successes against the crusaders, and its perception in contemporary narrative sources. The tactics represented a significant disruption to the common practices of European warfare in the Late Middle Ages, and its influence remained palpable for the major part of the 15th century, particularly in Central and partly in Eastern Europe. Indeed, the successes of Hussite troops led Catholic lords and professional warriors to inquire into these tactics and subsequently to adopt them against their creators. This practice is documented in narrative sources and corroborated also by the evidence of so-called military wagon ordinances, written both on Hussite and Catholic sides. Evidence of the adoption of the *Wagenburg* tactics in German areas in the vicinity of the Kingdom of Bohemia and its spread into Poland and Hungary since 1440s, nonetheless, shows that the transfer of this military savoir-faire was carried, most of all, by Czech warriors. Thus, despite its inspiring aspects, the *Wagenburg* tactics never achieved the status of a universal model, playing only a temporary and geographically limited role within European warfare.

In modern historiography, *Wagenburg* tactics became an emblem of Hussite military success. Czech narrative sources from the 15th century, nevertheless, did not reflect upon their use with particular attention. Travellers from Western countries, as shown by the example of French-written accounts, noted their existence. These mentions, however, even if they seem to establish a relation between the Kingdom of Bohemia and the *Wagenburg*, appear rather as a reflection of a certain curiosity.