PROLEGOMENA TO THE MEDIEVAL BOHEMIAN VERSION OF ACHMETÍS ONEIROCRITICON, ITS PRAGUE LATIN MODEL AND THE GREEK ORIGINAL

The Bohemian dreambook written at the turn of the fifteenth century by Laurentius de Březová (c. 1370–c. 1437) is an example of a medieval vernacular translation of one of the most important European oneiromantic manuals, the so-called Oneirocriticon of Achmet, originally written in Greek in the tenth century by an anonymous author and translated into Latin in the late twelfth century by Leo Tuscus.

Compared to other known vernacular renditions of the work, Laurentius’s version seems to follow its model relatively faithfully and the majority of the changes in the Czech text can be explained by the translator’s ambition to improve the original work rather than alter it. Apart from Leo Tuscus’s dedication of the translation to his brother Hugo Eterianus and a handful of chapters from the dream manual itself, the Czech version contains all the sections of the Latin text. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the Bohemian author is his own lengthy introduction to the work, advocating oneiromancy in the late-medieval moral-theological context.
The Czech translation, surviving in two fifteenth-century manuscripts (one deposited at the Moravian Library in Brno, call sig. MK 14, the other at the Moravian Archive in Brno, collection sig. G 10, MS no. 412), seems to be based on a fourteenth-century Latin manuscript deposited at the Library of St. Vitus Metropolitan Chapter House in Prague (call sig. L 61). A definite judgement concerning the relationship of the two works will, however, only be established after a minute comparison of the Latin and Czech texts. The quality of the execution of the Prague Latin MS, suggesting a rich patron, and the background of the Czech translator, who was affiliated with the Bohemian court of the time, might be of great significance for establishing the manner in which the Oneirocriticon was transmitted and received in medieval Europe and determining its original reading audience. A possibility remains open that the Czech translation was dedicated to the Bohemian and Roman King Wenceslaus IV (1378–1419, 1376–1400, respectively). The present study conducts a preliminary historical and textual analysis of the Czech translation, designed as a first step towards a critical edition of the text.

Keywords: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet; Laurentius de Březová; oneiromancy; dream interpretation; Middle Ages

FILIP KRAJNÍK, Department of English Studies, Durham University, Hallgarth House, 77 Hallgarth Street, Durham, DH1 3AY, United Kingdom, filip.krajnik@durham.ac.uk

JANA KOLÁŘOVÁ, Katedra bohemistiky, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého, Křižkovského 10, 771 80 Olomouc, jana.kolarova@upol.cz.