

King Rudolf I in Austrian Literature around 1820: Historical Reversion and Legitimization of Rule

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Abstract: Rudolf von Habsburg was a recurring motif in Austrian literature after the assumption of an Austrian imperial title by Emperor Francis II/I in 1804. These depictions were nourished by an enthusiasm for the Middle Ages circulating at the beginning of the nineteenth century and focused on the House of Habsburg and the establishment of Habsburg rule in Central Europe in the thirteenth century. As the ancestor of the ruling dynasty, Rudolf von Habsburg was idealized as the symbolic figure of identification for a collective state patriotism, a depiction that emphasized the historic mission of the dynasty and the legitimacy of its rule in the recently established empire. To this end, several complementary strategies—including divine providence, feudal approaches, classical genealogies, German-Austrian patriotism, and historical as well as contemporary references—were employed in texts to construct the Habsburg dynasty's claim to power in Central Europe. The past described in the texts, however, had little in common with historical reality but was rather an artificial design to justify Habsburg hegemony in the region.

Keywords: literature, Vormärz, Rudolf I of Habsburg, legitimization strategy, Habsburg monarchy, Austria, nineteenth century

Dynastic Ancestor Cult

WHEN LEADING EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS AND STATESMAN gathered for the Congress of Vienna in 1814, not only political negotiations stood on the agenda but also celebrations, parades, and visits to the sights in Vienna and its environs. These sights included the Franzensburg, a castle situated in the gardens of Laxenburg south of Vienna and built in the neo-Gothic style at the behest of Emperor Francis II. The Franzensburg was a Habsburg memorial conceived as a museum.¹ The memorial centers on

This article was written under the aegis of the project, subsidized by the Jubilee Fund of the Austrian National Bank, titled "From the 'Monarchic Union of Corporative States' to the Austrian Empire?—Reform Projects in the Habsburg Monarchy between 1800 and 1820" (P 16866). It was translated by Ian Mansfield and proofread by Johnathan Singerton. The author thanks Barbara Haider-Wilson and Daniel Unowsky for their support.

¹Géza Hajós, "Die 'Franzensburg' und die 'Habsburg' im Schlosspark von Laxenburg bei Wien um 1800. Versuch einer Legitimierung der Habsburg-Lothringischen Dynastie für das neue österreichische Kaisertum," in *Festschrift für Götz Pochat. Zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Johann Konrad Eberlein (Vienna, 2007), 185–202. Werner Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich. Die Habsburger und ihre Geschichte in der bildenden Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Vienna, 2006), 174–76. Anna Bürgler, *Die Franzensburg. Ein Führer durch Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Laxenburg, 1998). Anna Bürgler, Lieselotte Hanzel, Eva B. Ottlinger, and Herbert Winkler, "Die Franzensburg im Schloßpark

the history of the Habsburg dynasty after Rudolf I, who in 1273 was the first member of the Habsburg family elected to rule the Holy Roman Empire.² Rudolf I is given a correspondingly prominent position in Laxenburg. The Habsburg Hall in the castle, for instance, exhibited the marble statues of members of the Habsburg dynasty from Rudolf I to Maria Theresa, produced by Peter and Paul Strudel around 1700.³ Rudolf is also represented in the second hall of honor of the Franzensburg, the Lorraine Hall. In addition to other representations, in the atrium to these rooms there is a fresco by Johann Nepomuk Hoechle depicting Rudolf's legendary meeting with a priest in which the ruler offers the cleric his horse so that the latter can give a dying man the sacrament of the last rites.⁴

The program of the Habsburg and Lorraine Halls defines, therefore, the official ancestor cult of the Habsburgs around 1800 and the genealogical understanding of history associated with it. Both halls are "expressions of the dynastic awareness"⁵ of Emperor Francis (Francis II as Holy Roman Emperor from 1792 to 1806 and Francis I, emperor of Austria, from 1804 to 1835) legitimizing and embedding the origins of the imperial dynasty in the Middle Ages. The reference to the Middle Ages was further amplified by the so-called Knight's County (*Rittergau*), which Emperor Francis had set up in the adjacent gardens, consisting of a jousting arena, a knight's tomb, a knight's column, and other monuments. In addition, a replica of the original Habsburg castle in Switzerland was planned on the bank of the castle garden's lake. The project was never realized for lack of funds.⁶

The facility was not reserved for the imperial family but conceived for a broad public. Shortly after its completion in 1802, interested visitors could take guided tours and gain their own impression of the rooting of the Habsburg imperial family in the Middle Ages.⁷

But Rudolf von Habsburg was omnipresent not only in Laxenburg. The artistic treatment of his life in literature and art was given topical political force by political events at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The years 1804 and 1806 involved a radical break for the Habsburg imperial dynasty. In 1804, Emperor Francis adopted the hereditary title of Emperor of Austria for himself and his descendants, and in 1806 he declared the Holy Roman Empire to be dissolved under the pressure of Napoleon's endeavors to usurp the imperial crown.⁸ This

von Laxenburg," in *Kaisertum Österreich 1804-1848. Ausstellungskatalog*, ed. Gottfried Mraz (Bad Vöslau, 1996), 125-29. August Fournier, *Die Geheimpolizei auf dem Wiener Kongress. Eine Auswahl aus ihren Papieren* (Vienna, 1913), 169 (*Vortrag* dating from 10 Oct. 1814), 196 (*Vortrag* dating from 22 Oct. 1814). Ingrid Haslinger, "The Congress of Vienna, Day by Day," in *Danmark og Den Dansende Wienerkongres. Spillet om Danmark*, ed. Ole Krog Villumsen (Copenhagen, 2002), 288-326, 294, 296.

²For further information on his person, see Paula Sutter Fichtner, *The Habsburgs: Dynasty, Culture and Politics* (London, 2014), 21-32. Oswald Redlich, *Rudolf von Habsburg. Das Deutsche Reich nach dem Untergange des alten Kaisertums* (Innsbruck, 1903). Heinrich Appelt, "Rudolf I.," in *Die Habsburger. Ein biographisches Lexikon*, ed. Brigitte Hamann (Vienna, 2001), 402-6.

³Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 178-80. Werner Telesko, "Kaiser und Reich in der habsburgischen Denkmalkultur des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Was vom Alten Reiche blieb ... Deutungen, Institutionen und Bilder des frühneuzeitlichen Heiligen Römischen Reiches Deutscher Nation im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Matthias Asche, Thomas Nicklas, and Matthias Stickler (Munich, 2011), 373-98, 375-78.

⁴Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 181-86. Telesko, "Kaiser und Reich," 378-80.

⁵Rupert Feuchtmüller, "Architektur, Plastik, Malerei," in *Biedermeier in Österreich*, eds. Rupert Feuchtmüller and Wilhelm Mrazek (Vienna, 1963), 5-66, esp. 17.

⁶For further information see Géza Hajós and Edit Bódi, eds., *Der malerische Landschaftspark in Laxenburg bei Wien* (Vienna, 2006).

⁷Bürgler et al., "Die Franzensburg im Schloßpark von Laxenburg," 126, 128.

⁸For further information see Gottfried Mraz, *Österreich und das Reich 1804-1806. Ende und Vollendung* (Vienna, 1993); Heinrich von Srbik, "Das Österreichische Kaisertum und das Ende des Heiligen Römischen Reiches (1804-1806)," *Archiv für Geschichte und Politik* 8 (1927): 133-71, 301-35; Christine Roll, ed., *Epochenjahr 1806?*

step prevented Napoleon from taking the Holy Roman throne, but plunged the Habsburgs into a crisis of legitimacy. As a result, episodes from Rudolf's life were a popular subject of art and culture in the service of Habsburg self-legitimation at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁹ As the first Habsburg on the throne of the Holy Roman Empire, he had "an essential function in illustrating the identification-creating 'origins' of the Habsburg ruling dynasty."¹⁰ Art historian Werner Telesko has pointed to the temporal concurrence between the "updating of the Rudolf legend" in the visual arts and the legitimacy crisis after the adoption of the Austrian imperial title.¹¹ This assessment also applies to literature. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, as I shall show, many literary texts dealing with the monarch and implicitly or explicitly thematizing his role in the legitimization of Habsburg rule in Austria in times of radical political change were published.

Two motifs that legitimized the piety of the ruler and justified Habsburg rule were especially common in the literature and visual arts of the nineteenth century. Several artworks dealt with the previously mentioned legend in which Rudolf offered a priest his horse so that the latter could give a dying man the sacrament of the last rites. The deference shown by the ruler toward the church was transferred to other monarchs of the Habsburg dynasty and can be interpreted as a symbol of the so-called *Pietas Austriaca*—the Habsburg's piety and devotion to the Catholic Church.¹² The second prominently utilized event from Rudolf's biography concerns the conflict with the Bohemian King Ottokar II Přemysl, culminating in the Battle on the Marchfeld at the villages of Dürnkrut and Jedenspeigen in 1278. Following the victory over Ottokar, Rudolf enfeoffed his sons Albrecht I and Rudolf II with the core lands of the Habsburg monarchy, thus founding his dynasty's reign in later Austria. Both episodes had an identity-creating function for the Habsburg monarchy in the nineteenth century by legitimizing the Austrian Empire and the Habsburg imperial title through history, tradition, and religion.¹³

In the following text, I will focus on the latter motif to show its significance with regard to the legitimization of Habsburg rule. Several writers thematized this historical battle in literary form and addressed it from different perspectives, providing a multilayered narrative to explain Habsburg rule through historical, national, supernatural, and legal claims.

The authors of the texts dealt with here hailed from the growing bourgeois environment of the Habsburg monarchy in the first half of the nineteenth century, ultimately standing between the state and art. Whether they were civil servants, churchmen, or women patriots, all their texts had to be approved by the censor. As a result, they mirror the official stance of the state concerning the essence of the Habsburg monarchy and the legitimacy of dynastic rule.

Das Ende des Alten Reichs in zeitgenössischen Perspektiven und Deutungen (Mainz, 2008); Peter Claus Hartmann, ed., *Das Heilige Römische Reich und sein Ende 1806. Zäsur in der deutschen und europäischen Geschichte* (Regensburg, 2006); and Gottfried Mraz, ed., *Kaisertum Österreich 1804-1848. Ausstellungskatalog* (Bad Vöslau, 1996). The corresponding decree by Kaiser Francis II/I is published in Otto Posse, ed., *Die Siegel der deutschen Kaiser und Könige*, vol. 5 (Dresden, 1913), 249-50.

⁹Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 255. For the theme of Rudolf in the visual arts, see *ibid.*, 255-312. For the Habsburg dynasty as a *lieu de mémoire* above all in the twentieth century, see Laurence Cole, "Der Habsburger-Mythos," in *Memoria Austriae*, vol. 1, *Menschen - Mythen - Zeiten*, eds. Emil Blix, Ernst Bruckmüller, and Hannes Stekl (Vienna, 2004), 473-504.

¹⁰Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 264.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 256.

¹²*Ibid.*, 280-82. For Habsburg piety see primarily Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca. Österreichische Frömmigkeit im Barock* (Munich, 1982).

¹³Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 255-60. For the fundamentally problematic relationship between historiography and politics, see Paula Fichtner Sutter, "History, Religion, and Politics in the Austrian Vormärz," *History and Theory* 10, no. 1 (1971): 33-48.

The Theorist: Joseph von Hormayr

Important in this context are the influential programmatic works by Joseph von Hormayr. His fundamental studies on Austrian history served as reference books and sources of inspiration for many artists in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁴ Hormayr hailed from a family of Tyrolean civil servants, joining the Austrian public service after studying law. Among other things, as the Austrian intendant he was responsible for the administration of the county of Tyrol during the uprising under Andreas Hofer in 1809.¹⁵ However, he was simultaneously a prolific writer, who in programmatic texts advocated a literature dealing with topics from the history of the Habsburg monarchy.

Hormayr acted as the author of the *Österreichischer Plutarch, oder Leben und Bildnisse aller Regenten und der berühmtesten Feldherrn, Staatsmänner, Gelehrten und Künstler des österreichischen Kaiserstaates*. In these volumes, he portrayed not only members of the Habsburg dynasty, such as Rudolf I (the first biography in the first volume), Albrecht I, and Karl V, but also “Bohemian rulers” like Ottokar II Přemysl and Wenceslaus III, as well as monarchs from the Babenberg dynasty. *Plutarch* contains a total of seventy biographies, thirty-six of them covering statesmen, scholars, and generals. The first of the twenty volumes in all was published in 1807, and the series was continued until the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1814.¹⁶ Translations into various languages of the Habsburg monarchy were envisaged: an Italian version was published in Milan in 1820, but work on Czech and Hungarian ones was discontinued before completion. The work, however, received an enthusiastic reception within the Habsburg monarchy and further afield. The Geneva physician Johann Ritter de Carro translated part of the text into French, publishing it in 1810. The persistent interest in *Plutarch* in the second half of the nineteenth century led to a reprint of the entire text in the 1854 to 1857 editions of *Austria: Oesterreichischer Universal-Kalender*. Nevertheless, the editor of the *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, Constantin von Wurzbach, observed in 1863 that at sixteen guilders the price of the original edition of *Plutarch* was still very high, so that the market was not yet saturated.¹⁷

As of 1810, Hormayr edited *Archiv für Geographie, Historie, Staats- und Kriegskunst*. Under differing titles, the journal reached twenty volumes and represented, to borrow Constantin von Wurzbach’s words, “almost solely the scholarly direction in the Empire

¹⁴Waltraud Heindl, “Vom schwierigen Umgang mit (Helden-)Ahnen in der Zeit des Nationalismus. Bürgerliche Tugenden, christliche Frömmigkeit und Herrscheridole in der Repräsentanz des Hauses Habsburg,” in *Nation und Nationalismus in Europa. Kulturelle Konstruktion von Identitäten*, eds. Catherine Bosshart-Pfluger, Joseph Jung, and Franziska Metzger (Frauenfeld, 2002), 395-418, esp. 406. Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 255, 314-18. Wynfrid Kriegleder, *Eine kurze Geschichte der Literatur in Österreich. Menschen – Bücher – Institutionen* (Vienna, 2014), 176.

¹⁵Kurt Adel, ed., *Joseph Freiherr von Hormayr und die vaterländische Romantik in Österreich. Auswahl aus dem Werk* (Vienna, 1969), esp. 9-41. Hans Wagner, “Hormayr Freiherrn v., Josef,” in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 9 (Berlin, 1972), 625-26. Constantin von Wurzbach, “Hormayr zu Hortenburg, Joseph (II.) Freiherr von,” in *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, vol. 9 (Vienna, 1863), 277-81. For the uprising of 1809, see Martin Schennach, *Revolte in der Region. Zur Tiroler Erhebung von 1809* (Innsbruck, 2009) and Brigitte Mazohl and Bernhard Mertelseder, eds., *Abschied vom Freiheitskampf? Tirol und ‚1809‘ zwischen politischer Realität und Verklärung* (Innsbruck, 2009).

¹⁶Joseph von Hormayr, *Oesterreichischer Plutarch, oder Leben und Bildnisse aller Regenten und der berühmtesten Feldherrn, Staatsmänner, Gelehrten und Künstler des österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, 20 vols. (Vienna, 1807-14), here vols. 13-20. The monarchs mentioned in the preceding text are in vol. 14. Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 315-17.

¹⁷Wurzbach, “Hormayr zu Hortenburg, Joseph (II.) Freiherr von,” 281.

through a series of two decades.” Even in the 1860s, the journal was still “an inexhaustible repository of the history of Austria and its crown lands for the researcher.”¹⁸ Here, Hormayr also repeatedly published literary texts focusing on Rudolf von Habsburg and, as in Plutarch, these served to morally edify the public and to embed and legitimize the dynasty in the different crown lands.

In 1817, Hormayr posed the following question in *Archiv für Geographie, Historie, Staats- und Kriegskunst*: “Is the history of the Austrian Empire lacking edifying or tragic subjects for dramas, ballads, legends, novels and the visual arts when compared with Classical Antiquity or the alien [*fremden*] Middle Ages?” Hormayr examined the issue¹⁹ over several editions, finally arriving at the conclusion that this was not the case. Austrian history, too, offered many points of departure for artistic creativity. This conclusion is hardly surprising, as at that time Hormayr had been dealing with the dynastic history of the Habsburg monarchy for several years. In his texts, Hormayr did not primarily aim at historical precision but at conveying a moral message.²⁰ In his own words, “Faithfully telling what happened is *historical*; showing what *should* have happened is *patriotic* [emphasis in original].”²¹ In his eyes, historical science was an art form of patriotism, the goal of which was “to descend from the attic of memory to the Holy of Holies of the heart, simultaneously becoming popular and eternal!”²² Hormayr stressed the value of historical sources, but “it could not be expected of a citizen and servant of the state, whose rulers and grandeur he depicts, that he portray the detrimental side boldly and with fervor.”²³ Hormayr’s aim was rather “to set up sublime characters (beacons of the community), effective everywhere and blazing for all those concerned with the well-being and honor of the country. These characters are the wise men, the brave men who sacrificed themselves to support the community.”²⁴

Hormayr’s activity as a writer in the service of a dynastic and collective state patriotism came to an end at about the same time as his arrest in 1813, when he was imprisoned for thirteen months in Munkács for his membership in a secret resistance movement, the so-called Alpenbund. Together with other prominent “patriots”—Archduke Johann, for example—Hormayr took a leading part in preparing an uprising in Tyrol against Bavarian rule. However, the plan was discovered and Hormayr had to take the blame. Hence, his work as a writer in subsequent years was devoted to self-exoneration. In 1828, he entered Bavarian service and dealt with the personal grievances that he had suffered in 1813 in his works, in which he severely criticized Emperor Francis, Metternich, and the Austrian government.²⁵

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Joseph von Hormayr, “Ist denn des österreichischen Kaiserstaats Geschichte ärmer an herzerhebenden oder hochtragischen Stoffen für Dramaturgie, Ballade, Legende, Romane und bildende Kunst, als die des Alterthums oder eines fremden Mittelalters?,” *Archiv für Geographie, Historie, Staats- und Kriegskunst* no. 98/99 (15/18 Aug. 1817): 399–404; no. 105/106 (1/4 Sept. 1817): 426–32; no. 107/108 (5/8 Sept. 1817): 433–35.

²⁰See also Steffan Davies, *The Wallenstein Figure in German Literature and Historiography 1790–1920* (London, 2009), 115–16.

²¹Hormayr, *Plutarch*, vol. 12, XX.

²²Joseph von Hormayr, *Historisch-politische Schriften, Briefe und Akten*, eds. Helmut Reinalter and Dušan Uhlř (Frankfurt, 2003), 140. For the somewhat more critical view of the central authorities on historiography, see Fichtner Sutter, “History, Religion, and Politics in the Austrian Vormärz.”

²³Hormayr, *Plutarch*, vol. 12, XVII–XX.

²⁴Ibid., XII.

²⁵Wagner, “Hormayr.” Brigitte Mazohl, “Die Wiener Politik und Tirol in den Jahren 1790–1815,” in *Abschied vom Freiheitskampf? Tirol und ‚1809‘ zwischen politischer Realität und Verklärung*, eds. Brigitte Mazohl and Bernhard Mertelseder (Innsbruck, 2009), 27–62.

Rudolf von Habsburg's Reception in Literature around 1820

The history of the Habsburg monarchy was not first taken up by Hormayr in the nineteenth century but had been already repeatedly treated artistically since the Middle Ages. An especially popular subject was the life of Rudolf von Habsburg. Shortly after the ruler's death in 1291, many wondrous tales circulated, promoting the theory that Rudolf had been elected Holy Roman king in 1273 by the will of God. This view was no coincidence, for the election and his reign finally terminated the uncertain period of the interregnum after the Staufers had died out in the patrilineal succession (1254). These years were marked by a governmental crisis in the Holy Roman Empire, when four kings were elected but none of them could find enough political support to exercise governmental power. The consequences were armed conflicts and political uncertainty. Only the election of Rudolf in 1273 brought peace to the empire.²⁶

A "sustained poetic renaissance" of the Rudolf motif can be observed in the eighteenth century. This revival was linked to nascent enthusiasm for the Middle Ages in general and to the ghoulish knights' dramas coming into fashion in particular.²⁷ Following the publication of a number of stage plays about Rudolf characterized by dungeons, torture, and combat scenes,²⁸ Emperor Leopold II gave the Dresden-born Friedrich Christian Schlenkert a commission to write a biography of the first Habsburg on the throne of the Holy Roman Empire. Earlier, Schlenkert had already made a name for himself with a work on the life of Emperor Henry IV, as well as with treatments of other medieval topics.²⁹ The four volumes, which were published between 1792 and 1794, hardly took their bearings from historical events but were characterized by a dramatization shown in scenic arrangement and dialogic form.³⁰

After 1800, "endeavors on the part of Austrian government circles to raise patriotic sentiments through the influence of poetry" gave interest in the Rudolf motif fresh impetus.³¹ In view of the political upheavals occasioned by the Napoleonic Wars, a reversion to the roots of the Habsburg dynasty and the legitimization of their rule in later Austria seemed expedient. The men and women writers dealt with here hailed from bourgeois families and had at times close professional relationships to the Austrian state.³² Nevertheless, they did not write any commissioned works for the Austrian court but published autonomously and at their own risk. However, some of the texts were either expressly conceived as omissions to the ruling family, bore dedications, or were presented to the emperor. Moreover, all the texts were approved by the Austrian board of censors and are thus conformed to the state-dynastic view of the history of the Austrian monarchy.

²⁶Oswald Redlich, "Rudolf von Habsburg in der volkstümlichen Überlieferung," *Jahrbuch für Landeskunde von Niederösterreich*, NF 17/18 (1919): 1-11, esp. 3-4. Here, there are many more examples of legends concerning Rudolf von Habsburg.

²⁷Max Vancsa, "Rudolf von Habsburg in der Dichtung," *Österreichische Rundschau* 55 (1918): 114-20, esp. 116. Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 273-74.

²⁸For example, Anton Klein, *Kaiser Rudolf von Habsburg* (Mannheim, 1787). Friedrich August Clemens Werthe, *Rudolf von Habsburg* (Vienna, 1785).

²⁹Franz Brümmer, "Schlenker, Friedrich Christian," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 31 (Leipzig, 1890), 464.

³⁰Vancsa, "Rudolf von Habsburg in der Dichtung," 116-17.

³¹*Ibid.*, 117.

³²For the political significance of the growing bourgeois classes of the Habsburg monarchy in the first decades of the nineteenth century, see Brian E. Vick, "The Vienna Congress as an Event in Austrian History: Civil Society and Politics in the Habsburg Empire at the End of the War against Napoleon," *Austrian History Yearbook* 46 (2015): 109-33, esp. 109-10.

In particular, the censor had to ensure that neither the ruling dynasty nor foreign governments were attacked by writers. Moreover, the different nations living in the Habsburg monarchy were not allowed to be subjected to any pejorative characterization.³³

Hormayr's *Plutarch* and *Archiv*, with their references to Austrian history, had significant influence on literature around 1820. Yet, a fundamental problem was linked to the literary treatment of the Rudolf motif and the interpretation of the ruler as the apical ancestor of the dynasty, to which the successful early nineteenth-century writer Caroline Pichler drew attention in her memoirs. In her appreciation, the Habsburg ruler was inappropriate for dramatic treatment because "Rudolf's character and actions [were] too calm, too clever, too wise to allow that rapid movement and passionate development that truly characterize life in drama, [so] that in this conflict with the passionate, dashing and radical king of Bohemia [Ottokar II. Přemysl], Rudolf could only act as the second protagonist of the drama."³⁴

Nonetheless, many prominent personalities of the time in the German-speaking literary scene faced this challenge, such as August von Kotzebue, whose prominence today derives less from his many stage plays, which were successful at the beginning of the nineteenth century, than from the fact that he was murdered by the student Karl Sand in 1819. This act of violence was the reason for passing the Karlsbad decrees, which placed the press and the universities in the German Confederation under rigid state supervision.³⁵

In 1814, Kotzebue wrote the play *Rudolf von Habsburg und König Ottokar von Böhmen*, which, after being revised by the dramaturge of the Hofburg Theatre at the time, Joseph Schreyvogel, premiered under the title of *Ottokars Tod* at the Theater an der Wien on 15 August 1815.³⁶ This premiere took place only a few weeks after the final victory of the Allied Powers over Napoleon at Waterloo. The play was a veritable success: a month later, in September 1815, the play was again performed at the Theater an der Wien.³⁷ Moreover, the same year and also in Vienna, the work was published under the title of *Rudolph von Habsburg*. In the following years, at least two further editions followed in Prague and Leipzig.

Whereas Kotzebue is forgotten as an author today, Franz Grillparzer is still well known. His plays continue to be performed in theaters in German-speaking countries. One of his most famous plays, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, is about the belligerent conflict between Rudolf von Habsburg and Ottokar of Bohemia, the premiere of which took place in 1825. Grillparzer financed his career as a writer by working as an archivist at the State Court Chamber Archives and in 1832: became the director of this institution.³⁸

³³For censorship in the Habsburg monarchy, see Walter Obermaier, "Zensur im Vormärz," in *Bürgersinn und Aufbegehren. Biedermeier und Vormärz in Wien 1815-1848* (Vienna, 1988), 622-27; Julius Marx, *Die österreichische Zensur im Vormärz* (Vienna 1959); Alan Sked, *Metternich and Austria: An Evaluation* (Basingstoke, 2008), 139-64; Thomas Olechowski, "Die österreichische Zensur im Vormärz," in *Zensur im Vormärz. Pressefreiheit und Informationskontrolle in Europa*, ed. Gabriele B. Clemens (Ostfildern, 2013), 139-52; Carl Glossy, "Zur Geschichte der Wiener Theaterzensur," *Jahrbuch der Grillparzer-Gesellschaft* 7 (1897): 238-340. For the overestimation of the efficiency of censorship by later, liberal historiography, see Franz Leander Fillafer, "Die Aufklärung in der Habsburgermonarchie und ihr Erbe. Ein Forschungsüberblick," *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 40, no. 1 (2013): 35-97.

³⁴Caroline Pichler, *Denkwürdigkeiten aus meinem Leben 1769-1843*, ed. Karl-Maria Guth (Berlin, 2014), 259-60.

³⁵See Eberhard Büssem, *Die Karlsbader Beschlüsse von 1819. Die endgültige Stabilisierung der restaurativen Politik im Deutschen Bund nach dem Wiener Kongress von 1814/15* (Hildesheim, 1974). For the current state of research, see Wolfram Siemann, *Metternich. Strategie und Visionär. Eine Biographie* (Munich, 2016), 674-700.

³⁶*Wiener Theater-Zeitung*, 7 Sept. 1815, 1. *Wiener Zeitung*, 15 Aug. 1815, 900.

³⁷*Wiener Theater-Zeitung*, 7 Sept. 1815, 1.

³⁸The literature on Grillparzer is quite substantial. For his biography and significance, see for example "Grillparzer, Franz," in *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1959), 61-63.

Grillparzer occasionally moved in the social environment of Caroline Pichler. In the first decades of the nineteenth century she hosted a well-known salon frequented by distinguished writers such as Joseph von Hormayr, Franz Grillparzer, and other members of the anti-Napoleonic faction.³⁹ Pichler, also a member of the Viennese Women's Association, propagated a "national costume for German women" during the Congress of Vienna and published an essay on this subject in the *Journal des Luxus und der Moden*.⁴⁰ In 1814/15, religious matters were also discussed on her premises.⁴¹

Pichler's *Gesammelte Werke* is an extensive oeuvre that covers sixty volumes. These include many historical stage plays propagating dynastic patriotism and loyalty to the Habsburg family.⁴² Moreover, her memoirs provide insight into the Austrian literary scene around 1800, showing her perspective on the political and social events of the time. In her memoirs, Pichler describes how it came about that she wrote an opera libretto devoted to the topic of Rudolf. The musician and conductor Ignaz Franz von Mosel⁴³ commissioned her to write the text, which presumably offered her little pleasure: "I did my best, took my bearings (which any poet who has undertaken anything similar will recognize as a thankless task) from the abilities or wishes of the singers available for performance at the time, inserted an aria here and a duet there, as desired." But the commission did not come to a felicitous end: "After slaving away on the opera, it was taken away from me with a polite excuse, which I have forgotten."⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the libretto was published in 1818, together with two other texts, under the title of *Neue dramatische Dichtungen*.⁴⁵ Whereas criticism of the other two plays was positive, the review of the libretto was negative. It was basically thought that the material was not suitable for an opera.⁴⁶ The libretto was omitted from the second edition of the volume, published in 1822.⁴⁷ It owes its place in this analysis to the fact that it was written by one of the most famous women writers of the time, who also functioned as an opinion leader by virtue of the literary salon she held.

In addition to Pichler, Grillparzer had another patron: the influential churchman and successful writer Ladislaus Pyrker, who also dealt with the Rudolf topic.⁴⁸ In 1822, Pyrker wrote a widely received epic about Rudolf, which was published by the book printer Anton Strauß and the bookseller Carl Ferdinand Beck in Vienna in 1825. Like Grillparzer, writing

³⁹See, for example, Kriegleder, *Eine kurze Geschichte*, 181–82. Waltraud Heindl, "Caroline Pichler oder der bürgerliche Fortschritt. Lebensideale und Lebensrealität von österreichischen Beamtenfrauen," in *Von Bürgern und ihren Frauen*, eds. Margret Friedrich and Peter Urbanitsch (Vienna, 1996), 197–208.

⁴⁰Dirk Alexander Reder, *Frauenbewegung und Nation. Patriotische Frauenvereine in Deutschland im frühen 19. Jahrhundert (1813–1830)* (Vierow b. Greifswald, 1998), 430.

⁴¹Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna. Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, 2014), 146–47.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 135–36.

⁴³See Theophil Antonicek, *Ignaz von Mosel (1772–1844). Biographie und Beziehungen zu den Zeitgenossen*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1962); Constantin von Wurzbach, "Mosel, Ignaz Franz Edler von," in *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, vol. 19 (Vienna, 1868), 130–36.

⁴⁴Pichler, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 259–60.

⁴⁵Caroline Pichler, *Neue Dramatische Dichtungen* (Vienna, 1818).

⁴⁶See *Erneuerte vaterländische Blätter für den österreichischen Kaiserstaat*, 28 Aug. 1819 (appendix: Chronik der österreichischen Literatur), 273.

⁴⁷Caroline Pichler, *Dramatische Dichtungen. Dritter Teil* (Vienna, 1822).

⁴⁸See, for example, Pichler, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 321, 324, 331; Roland Dobersberger, *Johann Ladislaus Pyrker. Dichter und Kirchenfürst* (St. Pölten, 1997), 149–65. Recently Wynfrid Kriegleder has published an account on Pyrker's legitimizing strategy regarding the Habsburg Empire: Wynfrid Kriegleder, "Das Habsburger Imperium 1804–1825," in *Postimperiale Narrative im zentraleuropäischen Raum*, eds. Marijan Bobinac, Johanna Chovanec, Wolfgang Müller-Funk, and Jelena Spreicer (Tübingen 2018), 95–108.

was not Pyrker's main profession, rather he pursued an ecclesiastical career. In 1818 he became bishop of Zips/Spiš (Hungary), in 1820 patriarch of Venice, in 1821 primate of Dalmatia, and in 1827 archbishop of Erlau/Eger. Pyrker was also known for his cultural and social commitment.⁴⁹ He founded a teacher training institution in Zips and Erlau, a drawing school also in Erlau, and championed the expansion of the school for the blind in Vienna. During his tenure as the patriarch of Venice, he compiled a collection of 192 paintings, which works formed the core of the Hungarian National Museum after his death. On his initiative, Erlau Cathedral was rebuilt in the neoclassical style between 1831 and 1836. Not least, there should also be mention of Pyrker's scientific interests, which earned him memberships in many academic societies. Hence, he was an honorary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (established in 1825) and in 1847, shortly before his death, he was a founding member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

Pyrker's works are marked by his personal affinity to the Habsburg dynasty—Emperor Francis promoted his career in the church—and by the experience of the Napoleonic Wars. In his literary activities, Pyrker aimed to link “religion and patriotism”⁵⁰ in terms of anti-Napoleonic and pro-Habsburg agitation. His appointment as bishop of Zips, and later as archbishop of Erlau, can thus be interpreted as a political demonstration by Emperor Francis and as a token to the representatives of the emerging Hungarian nation. In this context, the so-called Pyrker Conflict has to be mentioned: although Pyrker was born in 1772 in Hungarian Nagyláng, he wrote in German. In 1830, parts of his works were translated into Hungarian. Thereupon, some young Hungarian authors blamed Pyrker for his German-Austrian patriotism.⁵¹

Nevertheless, Pyrker's epic *Rudolph von Habsburg* turned out to be a “best seller,” the second edition already being published in 1827. Apart from this work, the author also bequeathed an extensive oeuvre of sacred and secular writings, which, above all in the nineteenth century, was widely disseminated and translated into several languages.⁵² Between 1832 and 1834, the famous publisher Cotta published Pyrker's *Sämmtliche Werke* with a print run of one thousand copies.⁵³ In 1843, there was a new edition of the collected works, followed by further editions.

Pyrker was convinced of the quality of his works, as he assured a friend: “I commend my oeuvre to posterity and I know for sure that it will be accorded one of the first positions among the Germans.”⁵⁴ Indeed, Pyrker was considered the “German Homer,” and the

⁴⁹For Pyrker, see Kriegleder, “Das Habsburger Imperium 1804-1825”; Moritz Csáky, “Pyrker, Johann Ladislaus,” in *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950*, vol. 8 (Vienna, 1983), 350. Constantin von Wurzbach, “Pyrker von Felső-Ör, Johann Ladislaus,” in *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, vol. 24 (Vienna, 1872), 115-26. August Sauer, “Pyrker, Johann Ladislav,” in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 24 (Leipzig, 1888), 790-94. Norbert Spannenberger, “Für Oestreichs Ruhm zu wirken bemüht: Johann Ladislaus Pyrker OCist als Grenzgänger zwischen Zeiten, Kulturen und Systemen,” in *Katholische Aufklärung und Josephinismus. Rezeptionsformen in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*, eds. Rainer Bendel and Norbert Spannenberger (Cologne, 2015), 249-65, esp. 251-53.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 255.

⁵¹Ilona T. Erdélyi, “Deutschsprachige Dichtung in Ungarn und ihre Gegner um 1820-1830: der ‘Pyrker-Streit,’” *Jahrbuch der ungarischen Germanistik* (1997): 13-21. Pál S. Varga, “Deutschsprachige Schriftsteller in Ungarn am Scheideweg,” *Berliner Beiträge zur Hungarologie* 15 (2010): 11-33. Spannenberger, “Für Oestreichs Ruhm zu wirken bemüht,” 262-63.

⁵²See, for example, J. A. Moritz Brühl, *Geschichte der katholischen Literatur Deutschlands vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart. In kritisch-biographischen Umrissen* (Leipzig, 1854), 342-72.

⁵³Bernhard Fischer, *Der Verleger Johann Friedrich Cotta. Chronologische Verlagsbibliographie, 1787-1832*, vol. 2, 1815-1832 (Munich, 2003), 957. Dobersberger, *Johann Ladislaus Pyrker*, 360-68.

⁵⁴Pyrker to J. H. Jäck, quoted in Dobersberger, *Johann Ladislaus Pyrker*, 253.

Rudolf epic was cited by the influential journalist and writer Wilhelm Hebenstreit as a counterexample to Hegel's thesis that an epic was no longer an appropriate form for the nineteenth century.⁵⁵

Similarly unaffected by Hegel's thesis was the Hungarian writer Ádam Horváth, who wrote his epic *Rudolphias, az az a' Habsburgi I. Rudolf Csásár viselett dolgainak egy része* (Rudolphias, or Part of the Deeds of Emperor Rudolf I) in 1817. The content of this text strongly differs from the conventional treatments of the Rudolf topic, in which the episode with the priest and the conflict with Ottokar II Přemysl occupy an important position. Horváth's plot traces a broad arc, beginning with the crusade that cost Rudolf's father, Albrecht IV von Habsburg, his life. Rudolf had accompanied his father on the journey and now sets off on his return to Europe with some companions. On the journey, the men experience many adventures, until Rudolf finally enters the services of King Wenceslaus I of Bohemia, Ottokar's father. He becomes counselor to the Bohemian ruler, but following Wenceslaus's death his opinion is no longer wanted and Rudolf leaves Bohemia. It is only in the final part of the epic that the military conflict between Ottokar and Rudolf over the Habsburg core lands is thematized.

Around 1820, many other less prominent authors also dealt with the topic of Rudolf.⁵⁶ Due to literary shortcomings, many of them have never been published or performed, for example the tragedy *Rudolf von Habsburg* by the lieutenant of the so-called Arcierengarde, Anton Popper, which the author submitted to Emperor Francis in 1804.⁵⁷ Other adaptations remained fragmentary, such as an epic by the well-known writer, civil servant, and member of Caroline Pichler's⁵⁸ circle, Heinrich von Collin.⁵⁹ He commenced work around 1810, and until his death the following year completed eight episodes in hexameters,⁶⁰ which were published in 1813 in the edition of his collected works. Here, Rudolf is depicted as a peace-loving and benign ruler—some scenes end with an embrace.⁶¹ The episode with the priest to whom Rudolf offers his horse is performed by a singer.⁶² Franz Grillparzer also worked on an adaptation of the Rudolf motif in the form of a Spanish romance in 1819, but it was never finished, and he instead published the play *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*.⁶³

Literary Motifs to Legitimize Habsburg Rule

The texts on Rudolf von Habsburg take differing perspectives on Habsburg sovereignty over Central Europe. As in a kaleidoscope, religious, feudal, legal, supernatural, patriotic German, historiographical, and contemporary references alternate with one another. Common to all the works, however, is their aim to stabilize and legitimize Habsburg reign. In the following section, I delve further into an analysis of these motifs.

⁵⁵Kriegleder, *Eine kurze Geschichte*, 179.

⁵⁶See Karl Goedeke and Edmund Goetze, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Literatur aus den Quellen*, vol. 8/1, *Vom Weltfrieden bis zur französischen Revolution 1830* (Dresden, 1905), 418–20. Vancsa, “Rudolf von Habsburg in der Dichtung.”

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 117.

⁵⁸See Pichler, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 153.

⁵⁹Kurt Vancsa, “Collin, Heinrich Joseph von,” in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1957), 407–9.

⁶⁰Vancsa, “Rudolf von Habsburg in der Dichtung,” 118.

⁶¹Heinrich Joseph von Collin, *Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 4 (Vienna 1813), 225–64.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 241–44.

⁶³Vancsa, “Rudolf von Habsburg in der Dichtung,” 118.

The doctrine of the divine right of kings, used in the literary works discussed here, was still a recognized and effective strategy in the nineteenth century.⁶⁴ As early as in Hormayr's biography, Rudolf appears as the tool of God, acting not according to his own desires but in keeping with the will of the Almighty.⁶⁵ This reference is more pronounced in the epic by Ladislaus Pyrker, the incumbent of high ecclesiastical offices. The work is characterized by the constant inclusion of the realm of the supernatural in the plot. Thus, God personally decrees which of the two rivals—Ottokar or Rudolf—will emerge victorious from the Battle on the Marchfeld.⁶⁶ The decree by the Almighty is also underpinned by the prophecies of hermits, monks, and songsters predicting a long and glorious reign by the Habsburgs in elaborate verses.⁶⁷

Divine providence likewise plays a role in Caroline Pichler's opera libretto. In act 2, Rudolf explains that God made him emperor so as to bring peace to the empire.⁶⁸ Moreover, a clairvoyant old man prophesies that the Almighty's gratitude for the fact that the "Habsburg protects loyalty and justice" will extend far into the future.⁶⁹

The epic by Horváth also evinces a strong Christian and religious inclination, which, however, is primarily shown on the formal plane. The epic begins with an *Invocatio*, in which the author entreats God for the necessary energy and the passionate ardor needed to report on Rudolf von Habsburg's illustrious deeds.⁷⁰

Grillparzer's play demonstrates another way to legitimize the territorial sovereignty of the Habsburg dynasty over Austria. Here, in act 3, a feudal reference can be found, namely, the wish of the (aristocratic) vassals. In the well-known "Song about Austria," a representative of the nobility requests that Rudolf place the land under his special protection.⁷¹ Moreover, after Ottokar's death, in the final scene Rudolf rises to speak, enfeoffing his sons Albrecht and Rudolf with the territory of later Austria.⁷² He exhorts them to provide mutual assistance and display humbleness, calling upon the persons present to hail the House of Habsburg. Then the crowd rejoices: "Hail! Hail! Cheers for Austria! Habsburg forever!"⁷³ Here, the eternal sovereignty of the Habsburgs is founded and legitimized, yet without thematizing the issue of the ruler's title—emperor, king, or archduke.

Pyrker, too, dealt with the acceptance of territorial sovereignty, not only over the Austrian core lands but also over Bohemia and Hungary. In the final scene,⁷⁴ situated in the courtyard of the Hofburg, Rudolph, the Hungarian King Ladislaus, and the successor to the Bohemian throne, Wenceslaus, are present. Rudolph adopts both young men as his sons, also announcing his daughter Guta's betrothal to Wenceslaus. During a period of growing national tensions, Pyrker created a familial link unifying the dominions. In this way the dynastic and familial bonds are firmly wrapped around that body of territory that in later centuries was to form significant portions of the Habsburg monarchy: Bohemia, Hungary,

⁶⁴See, for example, Thomas Benner, *Die Strahlen der Krone. Die religiöse Dimension des Kaisertums unter Wilhelm II. vor dem Hintergrund der Orientreise 1898* (Marburg, 2001).

⁶⁵Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 264.

⁶⁶Johann Ladislaus Pyrker, *Rudolph von Habsburg. Ein Heldengedicht in zwölf Gesängen* (Vienna, 1825), 23–24.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 33–38, 264–65.

⁶⁸Pichler, *Neue Dramatische Dichtungen*, 288.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 297.

⁷⁰Ádám Horváth, *Rudolphias, az az a' Habsburgi I. Rudolf Csásár viselett dolgainak egy resze* [Rudolphias, or Part of the Deeds of Emperor Rudolf I] (Betsben, 1817), 1. Many thanks to Ms. Izabella Nyári, who competently assisted me in dealing with the Hungarian text.

⁷¹Franz Grillparzer, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende* (Wien, 1825), 112–13.

⁷²In fact, Rudolf enfeoffed his sons in 1282 at the Diet of Augsburg.

⁷³Grillparzer, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, 190.

⁷⁴Pyrker, *Rudolph*, 323.

and the hereditary lands. Pyrker appeals to the dynastic patriotism with which the state, the ruler, and the nation are made into one.⁷⁵ Similar motifs can be found at the end of Kotzebue's drama and Pichler's libretto.

While the epics by Horváth and Pyrker utilize the motif of classical antiquity, they pursued differing goals in doing so. In his epic, Horváth describes a scene wherein Rudolf and his companions encounter Abaris, a legendary sage, seer, and Apollo's priest in Greek mythology. In an address, the latter roots the House of Habsburg in history by tracing their origins back to the Etichonids⁷⁶ and certifying Rudolf's relationship to the Scythian Varangians, who were Scandinavians that had settled in Eastern Europe. But Abaris can also see into the future. He explains to Rudolf that he will become the ancestor of a widely ramified ruling dynasty, telling of the future genealogy of the Habsburgs up to Emperor Francis I.⁷⁷ Horváth, then, does not interpret the Habsburgs primarily as a Germanic but also as an Alsatian and Eastern European dynasty (with a Scandinavian connection).

Like Horváth, in his epic Pyrker also projects genealogical references into the past, which, however, turn the Habsburgs into a purely Germanic dynasty. Besides the two protagonists, Rudolf and Ottokar, the spirits of classical and early medieval rulers play a significant role. On the one hand, they legitimize the rule of the Habsburgs in Austria, as the famous ruler of the Germanic Marcomanni Maroboduus and the influential chieftain of the Germanic Cherusci Inguiomer⁷⁸ (both living in the early first century AD) recognize the dynasty as their descendants.⁷⁹ On the other, a dynastic family tree is constructed, going back into mythical and Germanic primordial times even more so than is the case with Horváth. Pyrker aimed to depict Rudolf not only as a patriotic and dynastic but also as a Germanic hero, confiding to a correspondence partner: "This [the Rudolf epic] is to be my greatest and most exquisite work, in reality a Germanic epic, whose hero was the most Germanic emperor."⁸⁰

Despite the censorship regulations in force, patriotic German allusions can also be found in other works discussed here. Grillparzer, for example, depicts Rudolf as a Germanic ruler, characterized by "typically" Germanic virtues and his bond to the people. Grillparzer focuses on Rudolf's modesty, his piety, and his simplicity. His similarly conceded military skill⁸¹ plays only a marginal role in his character. In the play, Rudolf appears dressed in a gray coat, as an emperor enfeoffed with a crucifix⁸² for want of a scepter, and receives the citizens

⁷⁵See Brigitte Mazohl, Thomas Wallnig, "(Kaiser)haus – Staat – Vaterland? Zur 'österreichischen' Historiographie vor der 'Nationalgeschichte,'" in *Nationalgeschichte als Artefakt: Zum Paradigma "Nationalstaat" in den Historiographien Deutschlands, Italiens und Österreichs*, eds. Hans Peter Hye, Brigitte Mazohl, and Jan Paul Niederkorn (Vienna, 2009), 45–72.

⁷⁶Michael Borgolte, "Etichonen," in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, accessed 31 Oct. 2016, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D20828.php>.

⁷⁷Horváth, *Rudolfias*, 106–10.

⁷⁸Around the turn of the era, the historical Suebian and Marcomannic ruler Maroboduus had established a kingdom on the territory of Bohemia. Around 18 AD, this territorial complex collapsed as a result of conflicts within the ruling class, Roman intrigues, and war failures. Maroboduus died in exile in Ravenna in 37 AD. Inguiomer was an uncle of Armin. See Peter Kehne, "Marbod," in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, vol. 19 (Berlin, 2001), 258–62.

⁷⁹Pyrker, *Rudolph*, 53, 173–75, 231–32.

⁸⁰Pyrker to J. H. Jäck, quoted after Johann Ladislaus Pyrker, *Mein Leben. 1772–1847*, ed. Aladar Paul Czigler (Vienna, 1966), 305.

⁸¹Grillparzer, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, 29.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 100. Here, Grillparzer takes up a legend that was popular in the art of the nineteenth century; see Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 267.

of Vienna while repairing his helmet himself.⁸³ Despite this restraint in material matters, Rudolf understands himself to be not only the German emperor but also the personification of the Holy Roman Empire: “In these veins flows Germany’s blood, / And Germany’s pulse beats in this heart,”⁸⁴ he explains to Ottokar. As a ruler, he appears to be upright and just, striving for the chivalrous ideal by endeavoring to protect Ottokar’s life immediately prior to the battle.⁸⁵ After the latter’s death, he ensures a befitting burial.⁸⁶

Moreover, censors of Bohemian origin complained about the negative depiction of Bohemians in the tragedy, whom Ottokar, who was aspiring to the German throne, described as being dull and indolent. According to Ottokar, the Bohemians are prisoners of immanence and appreciate the simple life and simple pleasures. As a positive counterexample, Ottokar mentions the “Germans,” who are to wake the Bohemians from their “torpor.”⁸⁷ The performance of the play without any grave revisions was ultimately due only to intervention by Emperor Francis. However, it is striking in this context that other plays about Rudolf von Habsburg, the play by August von Kotzebue, for example, caused no offence, despite the allusions to contemporary events and a discussion concerning Bohemia’s affiliation to the Old Empire.⁸⁸ Here, the figure of Friedrich von Hohenzollern questions the affiliation of Bohemia to the empire altogether, for “a German prince does not have the title of Bohemia.”⁸⁹ Hence, he denies Ottokar as a non-German prince the right to take part in the German imperial election and interprets Rudolf as a German ruler.

Apart from the conflict between Rudolf and Ottokar, the main motif in Caroline Pichler’s opera libretto is the love story between Rudolf’s son Hartmann and the Bohemian king’s daughter Kunigunde. This relationship takes up most of the space in the short text. However, the libretto also thematizes national identities that can be interpreted both in the contemporary context of the Napoleonic Wars and in that of the conflict between the German king Rudolf and the Bohemian king Ottokar. A choir chants a lament about the prevailing war, stating: “Only under German princes / Does true happiness blossom for German peoples, / Drawn by language and customs / Fleeing from the alien ruler / So is the shy love of the people.”⁹⁰ Ottokar is a foreigner “who is eternally remote from the German mentality,”⁹¹ whereas Rudolf wields the “German sword”⁹² to bring about peace and order in Germany.⁹³ With this, the Habsburg patriot Caroline Pichler countered the growing Bohemian national patriotism with a German-Austrian version.

Intending to provide the literary work with scholarly authenticity, Ladislaus Pyrker pursued a historiographic approach. His historical interest is mirrored in the appendix to the Rudolf epic. It bears the title “Supplement to the Epic Poem Rudolph von Habsburg”⁹⁴ and collects (alleged)

⁸³Grillparzer, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, 108.

⁸⁴Ibid., 117.

⁸⁵Ibid., 178.

⁸⁶Ibid., 189. Telesko, *Geschichtsraum Österreich*, 269.

⁸⁷Grillparzer, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, 31.

⁸⁸Annemarie Stauss, *Schauspiel und nationale Frage. Kostümstil und Aufführungspraxis im Burgtheater der Schreyvogel- und Laubezeit* (Tübingen, 2011), 174-79, esp. 174.

⁸⁹August von Kotzebue, “Rudolf von Habsburg und König Ottokar von Böhmen. Historisches Schauspiel in 6 Akten,” in *Neue Schauspiele von August von Kotzebue*, vol. 20 (Leipzig, 1815), 1-192, esp. 23 and 51. Further editions: Prague, 1822; Vienna, 1841.

⁹⁰Pichler, *Neue Dramatische Dichtungen*, 304.

⁹¹Ibid., 298.

⁹²Ibid., 268.

⁹³Ibid., 287-88.

⁹⁴Pyrker, *Rudolph*, 329-32.

historical sources on the events of 1278. First, it must be stated that the Battle of Dürnkrut and Jedenspeigen can only be reconstructed to a certain extent due to the paucity of source material. Written tradition shows contradictions, and contemporary reports have not survived. What seems reliable is only individual items of information passed down in documents.⁹⁵ Despite this circumstance, Pyrker describes the course of the battle in detail. A critical reading reveals that the poet took many liberties. He does not mention, for instance, the unchivalrous assault by the Habsburg cavalry on the Bohemian flank.⁹⁶ Instead, he attributes Rudolf's victory to his prayers and the vow to found a monastery "in honor of the Holy Cross," as, after this vow, "his hordes advanced, emboldened."⁹⁷

Moreover, Pyrker underpins the historical claim he makes in the epic with numerous footnotes.⁹⁸ Here, he refers to medieval and early modern texts like the works by the Bohemian chronicler Cosmas of Prague (ca. 1045–1125),⁹⁹ the Jesuit and historian Sigismund Calles (1696–1767),¹⁰⁰ and the meanwhile ill-reputed lawyer, historian, and history-falsifier (Francis Joseph) Ignaz Bodmann (1754–1820).¹⁰¹

Most of the works I deal with here evince more or less pronounced contemporary references. Often, they place a focus on the parallels between the personalities of Emperor Francis II/I and Rudolf, on the one hand, and Napoleon or Ottokar, on the other. Both pairs of rivals vied on the battlefield, and in both the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries the Habsburgs emerged from the confrontation victorious. Particularly popular were the (woodcut-like) comparisons between the characters of the rulers and the constellations of figures, which sometimes even brought the censor into the arena. This equation can already be found in Hormayr's *Archiv*, but here with a focus on the topographical proximity of the battlefields at Wagram (1809) and Dürnkrut and the circumstance of the defeat of an opponent who had previously been considered stronger.¹⁰²

The play by Kotzebue is an example of the close interconnection between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries. The salient strands of the plot are the fractured friendship between Ottokar and Rudolf, the betrayal by the Bohemian king under the influence of his domineering wife, and, finally, the love story between Albrecht von Habsburg and Ottokar's daughter (who here bears the name of Agnes), whose betrothal at the end of the play proclaims times of peace for Central Europe.

A critical reading reveals many contemporary allusions in the depictions of figures. The conflict between the two kings can also be interpreted as a parallel to the Napoleonic Wars. Kotzebue portrays Ottokar as a conqueror, unscrupulously pursuing only his own ends. Before he can accept Rudolf as the emperor "may the whole of Germany, may Europe burn, / The Empire perish in blood and fire."¹⁰³ As has already been explained, in 1806 the empire had indeed fallen prey to Napoleon's expansionist policy. Moreover, Ottokar gives

⁹⁵See Karl-Friedrich Krieger, *Rudolf von Habsburg* (Darmstadt, 2003), 148. Andreas Kusternig, *Studien zur Schlacht bei Dürnkrut und Jedenspeigen 1278. Quellenproblematik und Schlachtkonstruktion* (Vienna, 1981), 263–64.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 286–87. Andreas Kusternig, *Erzählende Quellen des Mittelalters: Die Problematik mittelalterlicher Historiographie am Beispiel der Schlacht bei Dürnkrut und Jedenspeigen 1278* (Vienna, 1982), 140.

⁹⁷Pyrker, *Rudolph*, 331.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 333–49. See also Pyrker, *Mein Leben*, 113.

⁹⁹See Peter Hilsch, "Cosmas von Prag," in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 4, eds. Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz and Traugott Bautz (Herzberg, 1992), 543–45. Cosmas of Prague is Pyrker's source for the Bohemian Princess Drahomira (ca. 890 [or 877] to ca. 935), who appears in the epic as an evil spirit.

¹⁰⁰See Franz von Krones, "Calles, Sigismund," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1876), 708.

¹⁰¹See Adalbert Erler, "Bodmann, Franz Joseph Ignaz," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1955), 360–61.

¹⁰²Joseph von Hormayr, *Archiv für Geographie, Historie, Staats- und Kriegskunst*, vol. 5 (Vienna, 1814), 2–5.

¹⁰³Kotzebue, "Rudolf von Habsburg," 36.

precedence to the law of conquest over feudal law. He had, he explains, “to my lands / The most valid right—conquest! / The fruits of victory, pledges purchased with blood / Are not fiefs determined by the Empire.”¹⁰⁴ After Ottokar’s death, Rudolf finally pays tribute to him in words also appositely describing Napoleon’s character: “Chain forged in imperiousness, / Consume him himself you swiftly-working poison; / And if Europe had paid him homage, / He would have sailed thirsty over the ocean. / His people were to owe him glory, not felicitousness. / He was a hero, a highly gifted man.”¹⁰⁵

Unlike the bellicose Ottokar, Rudolf is characterized by piety, temperance, and fatherliness, showing a similarity, particularly in the latter two traits, to Emperor Francis I.¹⁰⁶ The episode with the priest and the horse is thematized,¹⁰⁷ as is Rudolf’s simplicity and modesty. He does not want any “slaves” as vassals: “I desire children!” he declares to the bystanders.¹⁰⁸ He sees his mission in protecting their property, which is threatened with devastation by Ottokar.¹⁰⁹ His stance culminates in the final sentence of the play: “Only the happiness of peoples is the true glory of princes.”¹¹⁰

In Grillparzer’s *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, too, the contemporary allusions are marked, leading to a delay of the premiere.¹¹¹ The author had already submitted the play to the censor in 1823, who in this case objected to the parallels between Napoleon Bonaparte and Ottokar II Přemysl. The censor banned the play because of the comparability between the marriages of both rulers and the associated memory of Napoleon’s second marriage to Archduchess Marie Louise: in the play, Ottokar separates from his wife Margarethe, born a Babenberg, due to her advanced age that allowed no heirs to be expected, just as Napoleon had separated from Josephine, née Beauharnais, for the same reason.¹¹²

Beyond the analogy between the marriages of Napoleon and Ottokar, Grillparzer’s drama also displays many contemporary allusions. The writer was fascinated by Napoleon but realized that, due to the Corsican’s prolonged rise and decline, the material was unsuitable for dramatic treatment.¹¹³ He opted therefore for the material concerning Rudolf and Ottokar, for “both [(Napoleon and Ottokar) were] energetic men, conquerors, without any real malice, but only driven by circumstances to harshness, even tyranny, after many years of happiness the same doleful ending, and finally the fact that the turning point in the fortunes of both was the separation of the first marriage and the contraction of a second one.”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 58.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 192.

¹⁰⁶For Francis II/I see Walter Ziegler, “Franz II. (1792–1806),” in *Die Kaiser der Neuzeit 1519–1918: Heiliges Römisches Reich, Österreich, Deutschland*, eds. Anton Schindling and Walter Ziegler (Munich, 1990), 208–307. Walter Ziegler, “Franz I (1804–1835),” in *Die Kaiser der Neuzeit 1519–1918. Heiliges Römisches Reich, Österreich, Deutschland*, eds. Anton Schindling and Walter Ziegler (Munich, 1990), 309–28. Lorenz Mikoletzky, “Franz II (I),” in *Die Habsburger. Ein biographisches Lexikon*, ed. Brigitte Hamann (Vienna, 2001), 130–34.

¹⁰⁷Kotzebue, “Rudolf von Habsburg,” 82–83.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 81. See the ideas, already broadly circulated around 1820, of the political scientist and publicist Adam Müller, who interpreted the nation or the state as an ethnic family with the ruling couple as parents. Karen Hagemann, “Männlicher Muth und teutsche Ehre”: *Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der antinapoleonischen Kriege Preußens* (Paderborn, 2002), 350–54.

¹⁰⁹Kotzebue, “Rudolf von Habsburg,” 81.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 192.

¹¹¹These problems are dealt with in detail by Stauss, *Schauspiel*.

¹¹²Grillparzer, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, 34.

¹¹³Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. I.16, 165–66, quoted after Stauss, *Schauspiel*, 175.

¹¹⁴Grillparzer, *Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. I.16, 166, quoted after Stauss, *Schauspiel*, 176.

The similarities in character between Ottokar and Napoleon are thus much more clearly elaborated than in the case of Kotzebue. Ottokar seems to be gruff, unscrupulous, and pomp-loving, but he is also proactive. He interrupts the persons he is speaking to, degrading them to the status of extras on a set; he repeatedly makes offensive remarks and essentially barks in commands. Ottokar is confident of his power and his abilities: “I go my way, what stops me falls.”¹¹⁵ When the Austrian estates seek to pay homage to him—and especially to his then-wife Margarethe—after the victory over the Hungarians, Ottokar interrupts their spokesman, declaring that any further homage is unnecessary.¹¹⁶ He describes Margarethe as a baker’s wife offering herself to her journeyman when she warns him about the future loyalty of the Austrian estates.¹¹⁷ But even his new, younger wife, Kunigunde of Hungary, is treated by him coarsely and rudely.¹¹⁸ When he learns that his “uncle,” the duke of Carinthia, has died and bequeathed him his territories, he can hardly suppress his gratification: “May he grieve him who does not inherit his lands!”¹¹⁹ But he is an expert in military affairs. What he lacks in social graces, he compensates for with his military bearing and his expertise. Hence, he defeats the Hungarian troops and conquers Styria.¹²⁰ Ottokar reinforces his claim to power by demanding Charlemagne’s crown, for no empire like his has existed since the times of the first emperor,¹²¹ and when he (erroneously) believes he has been elected king of the Germans, he thinks he is at the zenith of his power: “Now, Earth, stand firm, / You have not borne anyone greater.”¹²² This imperiousness and this lack of self-control finally cost him the crown of the Holy Roman Empire.¹²³ Toward the end of the play, other traits of his personality come more to the fore. Ottokar becomes a ditherer, constantly deferring the military decision and allowing Rudolf sufficient time to gather troops.¹²⁴ In addition, faced by the death of his first spouse, Margarethe, and the imminent battle against Rudolf, he discovers religion, soliciting the deceased for her forgiveness for the poor treatment he has shown her.¹²⁵

Like Kotzebue and Grillparzer, Pyrker also elaborates the parallels between the conflicts between Rudolf and Ottokar, on the one hand, and Francis II/I and Napoleon, on the other. Linguistic analogies with the times of the Napoleonic Wars, such as the “Battle of Nations,”¹²⁶ bring the plot of the epic up to date. Both Francis and Rudolf had to fear for their crowns, fight for them, and ultimately remained victorious. Just as Rudolf began the reign of the Habsburgs over the Holy Roman Empire, the sovereignty over the Austrian Empire began with Francis II/I. However illustrious the medieval ancestor was, the rule of his descendant is just as splendid and noble. So, as Pyrker depicts him, Rudolf has many qualities also attributed to Francis II/I, such as clemency, domesticity, piety, and modesty.¹²⁷ In this context, it must also be stressed that Pyrker used personal experiences from the

¹¹⁵ Grillparzer, *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, 39.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 71–73.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26–27, see also 87.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 38, see also 79.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 43.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 84–86.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 161–63.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 170–72.

¹²⁶ Pyrker, *Rudolph*, 281.

¹²⁷ Ziegler, “Franz II.” Ziegler, “Franz I.” Mikoletzky, “Franz II (I).”

Napoleonic Wars in the epic poem. Emperor Francis's entry into Vienna after the conclusion of the first Peace of Paris served as a model for Rudolf's entry following the victorious Battle on the Marchfeld.¹²⁸

Whereas the contemporary allusions in the previously mentioned texts were thematized in analogies, Horváth made explicit reference to topical political events in his epic. Rudolf and his traveling companions reach the treasure chamber of Abaris. In the course of a vision, the latter speaks about the political events of 1815, including the alliance between Emperor Francis I, Tsar Alexander I of Russia, and King Wilhelm IV of Prussia to defeat the emperor of the French. Abaris also addresses the situation in Hungary when he speaks about Palatine Archduke Joseph and his predecessor as palatine, Archduke Alexander Joseph.¹²⁹

The analogies between the political events of the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, like the similarities between the two rivals, fascinated many of the writers mentioned here and probably the growing bourgeois public too.¹³⁰ In both cases, the House of Habsburg prevailed, defending its claim to hegemony over Central Europe. The dynastic legitimization proceeded from Rudolf to his *alter ego* Francis, who created a memorial to family history in Laxenburg.

Conclusion

As the preceding analyzed literary works have shown, Rudolf von Habsburg was a recurring motif in Austrian literature after the assumption of an Austrian imperial title by Emperor Francis II/I. As the ancestor of the ruling dynasty, he offered himself as the symbolic figure of identification for a collective state patriotism, stressing the historic mission of the dynasty and emphasizing the legitimacy of their rule in the recently established empire. Even though, as the examples show, national echoes featured in the works, the embeddedness of Habsburg rule in gray, primordial times prevailed. Consequently, in the visual arts, but in literature especially, "the historic mission of the Habsburg Monarchy was extolled and certified religiously along legitimist lines."¹³¹

The depictions, which were also nourished by the enthusiasm for the Middle Ages circulating at the beginning of the nineteenth century, focused on the House of Habsburg and the establishment of Habsburg rule in Central Europe in the thirteenth century. However, the past described in the texts, I maintain, had little in common with historical reality but was rather an artificial construction to justify Habsburg hegemony in Central Europe. To this end, different strategies were employed in the texts that did not exclude but rather complemented one another. On the supernatural plane, God personally sanctioned Rudolf's victory at the Battle on the Marchfeld, and the wishes of the aristocracy and feudal law confirmed Habsburg rule not only in Austria but also in Bohemia and Hungary. And not least was the claim to power supported by historiography and history. For, just as Ottokar had once been vanquished by Rudolf, Napoleon was forced to his knees by Francis II/I. The adherents of a German-Austrian patriotism, which had become manifest during the Napoleonic Wars, also viewed Rudolf as a true German, combining all the virtues attributed

¹²⁸Pyrker, *Mein Leben*, 58.

¹²⁹Horváth, *Rudolfias*, 106-10.

¹³⁰See Vick, "The Vienna Congress," esp. 110-26.

¹³¹Michael Kohlhäufel, "Pyrker, Johann Baptist Ladislaus von Oberwart (Felső-Eör)," in *Biographisch-bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 16, eds. Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz and Traugott Bautz (Herzberg, 1999), 1301-6, esp. 1304.

to this nation in his person. On the plane of content, God, dynasty, and feudal law—and not least the nation and history—constructed the claim to power of the Habsburg dynasty in Central Europe. On the formal plane, divine assistance was appealed to by at least one of the authors treated.

Ultimately, however, the insistence on a dynastic and collective state identity, shown here in the example of Rudolf, remained a passing episode. The Austrian government was fundamentally skeptical of patriotic outbursts. It was only during the reign of Francis Joseph I that the reception and glorification of Rudolf reached a new climax in schoolbooks, popular history books, and the successor to the throne's baptism as Rudolf.¹³²

Today, the dramas and epics surrounding Rudolf I von Habsburg, which were highly familiar about two hundred years ago, are largely forgotten. *König Ottokars Glück und Ende* by Franz Grillparzer is an exception. Due to the “Eulogy to Austria” it contains, the play still enjoyed identity-creating significance in the 1970s and was compulsory reading in German classes.¹³³ And when, after the reconstruction of the Burgtheater in 1955, a politically charged discussion broke out as to whether the premises were to be reopened with Goethe's *Egmont* or Grillparzer's *König Ottokars Glück und Ende*, the supporters of the Austrian author came out on top. In the Second Republic, too, resort was taken to King Rudolf I and his decisive victory at the Battle on the Marchfeld, although Habsburg rule in Austria had already come to an end in 1918.¹³⁴

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¹³²Laurence Laurence, “Il Sacro Romano Impero e la monarchia asburgica dopo il 1806: riflessioni su un'eredità contraddittoria” [The Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburg monarchy after 1806: Reflections on a contradictory heredity], in *Gli imperi dopo l'Impero nell'Europa del XIX secolo* [The empires after the empire in nineteenth-century Europe], eds. Bellabarba Marco, Mazohl Brigitte, Stauber Reinhard, and Marcello Verga (Bologna, 2008), 241–76, esp. 263–64.

¹³³See Hilde Haider-Pregler, “‘König Ottokars Glück und Ende’. Ein ‘Nationales Festspiel’ für Österreichs ‘Nationaltheater’?” in *Stichwort Grillparzer*, eds. Hilde Haider-Pregler and Evelyn Deutsch-Schreiner (Vienna, 1994), 195–222.

¹³⁴See Evelyn Deutsch-Schreiner, “Die Österreicher und ihr Grillparzer,” in *Stichwort Grillparzer*, eds. Hilde Haider-Pregler and Evelyn Deutsch-Schreiner (Vienna, 1994), 181–94.