

CULTURAL AFFILIATION AND LITERARY TOPOLOGY
IN "BOŽENA" BY MARIE VON EBNER-ESCHENBACH
AND "BABIČKA" BY BOŽENA NĚMCOVÁ

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In the works of Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach and Božena Němcová, two 19th-century female writers from Bohemia, the former with a German background and the latter Czech, there is a marked contrast between primary and secondary socio-cultural affiliation stemming from early experience. In both cases, Czech women of humble origin who filled in for the real mother had a decisive influence on early culture acquisition. This study examines how the "unfitting" elements of the respective biographies, the close relationship to the Czech nanny in the case of Ebner and being an illegitimate offspring of a noble family in the case of Němcová, are reflected, as far as topology, narrative perspective, axiology, and the treatment of the surrogate mother

are concerned, in two works with autobiographic relevancy, namely "Božena" by Ebner and "Babička" by Němcová. Ebner's strategy is that of inclusion of traits of Czech commoners in the world of the noble mansion. The lord-servant relationship is kind of glossed over by the inclusion in the noble family, but this results in national emancipation not taking place. Němcová, on the other hand, focuses on the sphere of the lower Czech strata, seeking isolation and national emancipation, with the aristocratic world, the castle, proportionally reduced in size, receding into the background, and with it the blemish of illegitimate lineage. But since it belongs to this secondary level, the national position of "Babička" cannot serve as a model for emulation. In their different ways, both writers offer specific, heterodox variants of the contrast between the castle and the village which, in the Central European environment, can be taken as an indicator of national and cultural affiliation.