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Czech Broadside Ballads in the International Context

This special issue of the journal *Bohemica litteraria* is devoted to the phenomenon of Czech broadside ballads (the number of surviving printings is estimated at 200,000, which is extraordinary even in a global context), with overlaps into other types of cheap prints. We have invited leading experts in this field from the Czech Republic and abroad to participate.

The volume follows up the previous results of the five-year project *Broadside Ballads in the Historical Collections in Brno* (<https://www.phil.muni.cz/kramarskepiske/en>). Although the journal *Bohemica litteraria* is focused on Czech literature studies, the phenomenon of Czech broadside ballads is by its nature so interdisciplinary that we apply the same principle to the studies included here (broadside ballads are examined, e.g., from the historical, ethnological, musicological and linguistic points of view).

Although some features of Czech broadside ballads are typically local (e.g. the predominantly small sextodecimo size format, around 9 by 11 centimetres, or the binding of printings into their own volumes, so-called “blocks”, in Czech *špalíčky*), they belong simultaneously to the global phenomenon of printed ballads and cheap street literature, with which they share many common features.

It is therefore a great honour for us to be able to publish papers by foreign scholars and show a broader geographical (e.g. a study on German songs published in Cologne in the 16th century) and religious context (a study on Yiddish songs printed in Prague or a paper analysing the tradition of Czech broadside ballads in Slovakian hymnographical sources of different confessions). The final study on the Brazilian cordel proves that the phenomenon of printed ballads is alive and well in the 21st century and, thanks to electronic media, can represent diverse social realities and the multiple voices of otherwise silenced actors in Brazilian society and history.

The issue also includes a review of the first English monograph on Czech broadside ballads and an interview with Patricia Fumerton, Director of the English Broadside Ballad Archive.



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