4. The Origins of Czech Broadside Ballads in Sixteenth-Century News Leaflets

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Abstract
Jan Malura deals with the origins of Czech secular broadside ballads. Malura argues that the earliest Czech broadside ballads display numerous links to other literary genres from urban society—so-called occasional poetry and especially news leaflets. Such seeds of Czech broadside ballads, he observes, did not originate from the lower classes (whether urban or rural) but were rather a product of the culture of both Czech- and German-speaking burghers (that is, the well-to-do bourgeoisie) during the early modern period. Only later were news and other topics of Czech broadside ballads targeted en masse to the poor, with a particular focus on the rural poor.

Keywords: Literary history, news leaflets, secular broadside ballads, occasional poetry, Humanism

Broadside ballads underwent dynamic development in the Bohemian Crown lands, especially during the Baroque period (ca. 1620–1775), but

1 The Bohemian Crown lands (or lands of the Bohemian Crown—Země koruny české, Böhmische Kronländer/Länder der böhmischen Krone) is a state entity made up of various historic Central European provinces ruled over by the king of Bohemia. From 1526 to 1918 the kings of Bohemia were members of the Habsburg dynasty. The number and extent of the provinces forming this state entity fluctuated between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries according to the military and diplomatic fortunes of the Bohemian kings. In the sixteenth century the Bohemian Crown lands consisted of what is now Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Lusatia. In the seventeenth century, Lusatia (now in eastern Germany) was lost to Saxony, and in the eighteenth century the majority of Silesia (now mainly in Poland, with small parts in the Czech Republic and Germany) was lost to Prussia. The population of the Bohemian Crown lands included Czechs (in Bohemia, Moravia, and a small part of Silesia), Germans, Poles (in Silesia), Lusatians, and Jews.

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they remained popular long into the nineteenth century. Most research to date has focused on this extended period (seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries). When scholars have traced the emergence of broadside ballads as a cultural phenomenon in the Bohemian lands, they have regularly mentioned several broadside ballads from the sixteenth century but only passingly and on a very random basis. My chapter focuses more concerted attention on these earliest printed broadside ballads; I seek to explore the broadside ballad’s roots and emergence in the Bohemian lands within a broad context of contemporary cultural life as well as interrelated texts and developments in other languages and countries, specifically with a focus on “news leaflets.” My initial thesis is that the earliest examples of the secular broadside ballad emerged during the late Humanist period, when the topics of news leaflets were adapted into the form of songs. These songs were published in various material forms, but most of them display the characteristics of broadside ballads as we know them from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries: they are song texts published on both sides of a single sheet of paper, later folded by the vendor or consumer into an octavo or sextodecimo size, containing a tune imprint and usually a simple (woodcut) illustration. Texts from this early phase of the broadside ballad (dating from around the end of the sixteenth century) are characterized by the instability of their format; they occur as broadsides (broadsheets) printed on either one or both sides, and they may be in quarto, octavo or sextodecimo size. Unlike later broadside ballads (from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries), some printings of these early examples contain musical notation and artistically sophisticated illustrations.

Leaflets

During the era of Late Humanism (1580–1620), Prague was a major European hub for information, particularly after Rudolf II’s imperial court had relocated to the city. Numerous examples of news literature were produced in Czech, German, and Latin. As is demonstrated by recently published statistics on the output of printing shops (publishing in Czech and other languages), news leaflets were among the most frequent types of literary product in Prague during the last quarter of the sixteenth century, with a roughly equal

2 The musicologist Jaroslav Pohanka has focused specifically on this topic; see Pohanka, “Historické kořeny.”
portion of these texts published in Czech and German. Such news print constitutes a relatively diverse group of printed texts, which in the German terminology fall into two distinct categories. The term *Flugblatt* refers to single-sheet leaflets printed on just one side, with texts reporting the news, and also regularly featuring illustrations. The term *Flugschrift* denotes news prints in a smaller format but consisting of more than one page; in many cases these news leaflets bear an illustration (a woodcut) on the title page. However, it should be noted that the usage of these terms is not entirely consistent. The term *fliegende Zeitungen* (literally “flying newspapers”) is also often applied to news leaflets. In this chapter I will not adopt such unstableGerman terminology; instead, given their similarities more than their differences, even accounting for audience, I will group all of these printed texts together under the umbrella term “news leaflets” (in Czech *letákové zpravodajství*, literally meaning “news reporting in leaflet form”).

Of course, printed news reports already appeared in the Bohemian Crown lands much earlier than the Late Humanist period. However, for a long time they remained a relatively marginal phenomenon, scarce in number and lacking stable genre characteristics. Reporting on current events took various forms, including public announcements, official texts (mostly proclamations), pamphlets, and descriptive reports. A noteworthy example of a Czech-language news leaflet from this older period is the text *O neštěstné příhodě* (About an unfortunate incident, 1541), written by the renowned Czech historiographer Václav Hájek z Libočan. The text gives an account of a fire that caused major damage to Prague Castle and the city’s Malá Strana and Hradčany districts; it was published not only in a Czech but also in a German version.

During the final third of the sixteenth century, a continuous tradition emerged involving the production of short prose texts printed as news reports specifically for a bourgeois readership. According to Jaroslav Kolár, this emergence culminated at the end of the sixteenth century with the stabilization of a suitable format for publication, usually a single quarto-format booklet, as well as the stabilization of the news genre; Kolár also notes that the emergence of a stable genre is reflected in the fact that these texts

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became a target for satire and parody. Kolár uses the historical term *novina* (meaning “news” in the sense of new information) to denote this entire genre aimed at the bourgeoisie, but in fact, I argue, it is more appropriate to use the above-mentioned umbrella term “news leaflets,” instead of merely “news,” in order to preserve the distinction between the reported events (the news) and the texts themselves (printed in leaflets). Kolár’s brief work focuses mainly on news leaflets in terms of their genre characteristics. It does not take into consideration several other important aspects, such as the fact that German-language texts had an influence over the formal stabilization of news leaflets in the Bohemian lands; these German texts mainly came to Bohemia from the Holy Roman Empire, and they were widely translated into Czech (see below).

From the second half of the 1580s, the production of news leaflets in the Bohemian Crown lands began to flourish. Publication was dominated by a number of Prague printers, including Burian Valda, Jiří Nigrin (Černý), Daniel Sedlčanský, and Jan Schumann (Šuman). The largest collection of quarto-format news leaflets from the Bohemian lands is a unique convolute (a collection of texts from different origins gathered by the owner) in the Lobkowicz Library at Roudnice (call no. III 1b 12, today held at Nelahozeves). The following paragraphs will discuss the main topics covered by these leaflets, the characteristic features of the texts and the printings, and the broader context of similar texts in other languages. A detailed examination of these issues is of key importance for understanding the emergence of broadside ballads during this early period.

Frequent topics of news leaflets included unusual, shocking events such as monstrous births—a popular topic in Western printed broadside ballads and other printed texts as well. The leaflet *Hrozný zázračný porod* (A terrible miraculous birth), with a wood engraving of a terrifying creature on its title page, describes how a woman “named Katruše, instead of a child, bore a live monster such as that depicted here, with great pain and sorrow”

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7 A prose text with a title (headline) intended to grab readers’ attention, giving a detailed account of an event and usually also including a moralistic commentary.
8 This chapter draws on a large sample of leaflets from the period under investigation (especially from the above-mentioned “convolute” at the Lobkowicz Library). Due to space constraints, the list of references only includes the printed texts that I quote directly or that are crucial for the content of the chapter. Some prints are identifiable solely by their title and year of publication; the titles are mainly given in their longer form in order to provide an idea of the topic and intended function of the leaflet. I take the same approach when discussing the broadside ballads in the second part of the chapter. In important cases, I also note the printed format in which the broadside ballads were produced.
Other unusual events included the discovery of bizarre animals. A broadside published by the Prague printer Jiří Nigrin in 1588 gives an account of the catching of a fish which bore inexplicable inscriptions on its sides; the news print—which was translated in its entirety from a German version—also features an illustration of the creature.

Other frequent topics of news leaflets, as in the West, included unusual celestial events (the discovery of a comet, a solar or lunar eclipse, a meteorite fall, etc.). Many of these are not merely cheap prints intended for mass consumption by a sensation-hungry public, but are ambitious artefacts of printing from the perspective of both their content and their form (typography). An example of such a leaflet is a report on a sighting of a comet in 1577, written by Petr Codicillus z Tulechova (a Humanist, mathematician, and the rector of Prague University); the leaflet features a hand-coloured woodcut probably from the workshop of Michael Peterle the Elder. The full title of the leaflet—About a terrible and most strange comet—shows that the appearance of this celestial body was interpreted as a warning from God and a portent of future punishments for human sins; the same event was also reported by leaflets printed in German.

Less frequent topics of news leaflets, again as in Western popular literature, included natural disasters such as floods, hailstorms, droughts, violent storms, earthquakes and so on. A broadside from Olomouc that has survived in fragmentary form is entitled The true and terrible news of a large flood which occurred in the Margraviate of Moravia; featuring a hand-coloured woodcut illustration, the leaflet gives an account of destructive floods that hit the Prostějov and Šumperk areas in 1591. Researchers today consider this a noteworthy (albeit not entirely credible) source on historical hydrology and meteorology.

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9 Hrozný zázračný porod, kterýž se stal [...] v městě Varadín [...] , 1599, Lobkowiczka knihovna, call no. III Ib 12/52.
10 For more details, see Stejskalová, Novinové zpravodajství, p. 19; the title page with the woodcut are reproduced in Kneidl, Česká lidová grafika, p. 87.
11 On leaflets as an underused source of insights into the history of the natural sciences, see Harms and Schilling, Das illustrierte Flugblatt, pp. 15–16.
12 For more details, see Kneidl, Česká lidová grafika, pp. 68–69; Storchová, Řád přírody, řád společnosti, p. 287.
The “convolute” at the Lobkowicz Library shows that topics related to demonology were also addressed by leaflets; most of these were adapted into Czech from German-language originals. An original German printed text from Frankfurt an der Oder became the Czech printing *Hrozné, strašlivé a neslýchané noviny* (Terrible, dreadful and unheard-of news), which recounts how in Pomerania “the devil and evil spirits […] possessed numerous people for our iniquity” (“ďábel a zlí duchové […] pro nepravosti naše množství lidí posedli”).

The scarce examples of original Czech leaflets on demonological topics include *Vyznání pravdivé Alžběty rodem z města Pardubic, dévečky služebné* (The true confession of Alžběta, a servant girl from the city of Pardubice, 1596); this tale, about a girl who finds herself in hell, is ultimately interpreted as a dream, and it incorporates a lengthy conclusion containing moral instructions aimed at various social groups. Strongly moralizing elements at the beginning and end of a text were a feature of numerous leaflets from the Late Humanist era. This confirms Jaroslav Kolár’s thesis that the news report sometimes performed the function of “an exemplum in a concise religious and moralistic deliberation”—just as they did in the West.

We should also mention leaflets reporting criminal acts, especially the deeds of mass murderers. A typical example is *Strašlivá a hrozná novina o jednom nešlechetném mordýři, jménem Krystman* (The dreadful and terrible news about one ignoble murderer named Krystman). A note on the title page indicates the origin and main purpose of this print: “kterážto novina byla prvé v německé řeči […] vytištěna. Nyní pak všechnem dobrým lidem k vejstraze a zlým k polepšení na česko jest přeložená” (“a report which was first printed in the German language. Now, it is presented in Czech to all good people for purposes of warning and to bad people for purposes of betterment”). However, the text of the leaflet actually eschews explicit moralizing; the ethical warning is implicitly contained within the story itself.

The most frequent topic of news leaflets during the sixteenth century appears to have been the Ottoman wars. The era of Late Humanism (1580–1620) in the Bohemian Crown lands largely coincided with the so-called Long Turkish War, and Prague—where the imperial court was based at the

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14 Hrozné, strašlivé a neslýchané noviny o velikém trestání […], 1590, Lobkowiczka knihovna, call no. III lb 12/25.
15 For more details, see Kneidl, Česká lidová grafika, p. 84.
16 Kolár, “Novina,” p. 63. For English broadside ballads, pamphlets, and chapbooks that were characterized by the same kind of “news,” see the chapter by Fumerton.
17 Strašlivá a hrozná novina o jednom nešlechetném mordýři, jménem Krystman […], 1582, Lobkowiczka knihovna, call no. III lb 12/3.
time—became an important centre of war reporting, which also involved the dissemination of anti-Turkish war propaganda.\(^\text{18}\) The position of Sigismund Báthory—the Prince of Transylvania, who ruled over lands at the border between the Holy Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire—is the subject of the leaflet *Krátká zpráva, co se s knížetem Zigmundem Bathory* (A short report on the situation of Prince Sigismund Báthory). The long title page informs us in detail of how the news about Báthory was disseminated: “Toto sepsání jest 24. dne měsíce dubna léta 1595 od sedmihradského kurýra v latinské řeči do Prahy přineseno” (“This account was brought to Prague in Latin by a Transylvanian messenger on the 24\(^\text{th}\) day of April in the year 1595”).\(^\text{19}\) In exceptional cases, the prose text of a leaflet is accompanied by a song; an example is “Potěšitedlná novina, kterak Pán Bůh […] vítězství dátí ráčil v Bělehradu” (“Welcome news of how the Lord […] has seen fit to bestow victory in Belgrade,” 1594), which describes the Habsburg army’s triumph over the Turks and includes an additional component entitled “Píseň o Turku” (“A song about the Turk” [meaning all Turks]). However, the printing is not a narrative song recounting the news; it is merely a short song of prayer.\(^\text{20}\)

Most prose leaflets about the ongoing military situation were produced in order to celebrate a victory and create a positive image of the Habsburg military commanders.\(^\text{21}\) Failures in the Habsburg’s war against the Turks—and especially the always entertaining topic of public executions for such failures—are represented in *Pravdivé a kratičké vypsání celého právního ortele, kterýž nad Ferdinandem hrabětem z Hardeku […] a nad Mikulášem Perlinem de Forli […] vypovědín byl* (A true and very brief account of the entire legal verdict that was pronounced over Ferdinand, Count of Hardegg […] and over Nicholas Perlin de Forli, 1595). The leaflet, printed in Litomyšl by Andreas Graudenc, is also known in a German version; it tells of the fate of two Austrian commanders who, it was alleged, had treacherously surrendered the fortress of Raab (Győr) to the Turks.\(^\text{22}\)

Another highly specific and sizeable group of leaflets concerns royal and imperial rituals and festivities—the election, *adventus regis* (ceremonial arrival), and coronation of a king or an emperor. The election of Frederick of the Palatinate to the Bohemian throne in 1619, for instance, was

\(^{18}\) On leaflets as an important medium in early modern politics, see Harms and Schilling, *Das illustrierte Flugblatt*, pp. 178–288.

\(^{19}\) *Krátká zpráva*, 1595, Lobkowiczská knihovna, call no. III Ib 12/20.

\(^{20}\) Novotný, *Špalíček písniček jarmarečních*, pp. 7–8.

\(^{21}\) Rataj, “Turecká hrozba,” p. 246.

\(^{22}\) For more details, see Hubková, “K podobám a rolím,” pp. 199–200.
accompanied by a major literary campaign. The Bohemian estates had to defend their choice to the whole of Europe, and one of the communication channels they used was the publication of printed leaflets and pamphlets; the same form of disseminating such news was also used by their Habsburg opponents (giving rise to what became known as the Pamphlet War). This issue has already been widely researched, so I will not deal with it further in this chapter.

There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating that news leaflets were widely read and followed during this period. It is particularly noteworthy how important they were as a source for contemporary chroniclers—both in manuscript notes (the collections of Marek Bydžovský z Florentina) and in officially printed works of historiography: for example, Bartoloměj Paprocký z Hlohova, in the most important part of Diadochos (dealing with
events in the Kingdom of Hungary), gives an account of the Turkish wars drawing on contemporary news leaflets.

In summary, news leaflets give a detailed account of events, localize those events, and present factual information, numerical data, and a large quantity of specific details. These printed texts usually bear titles such as Novina pravdivá a strašlivá (True and terrible news), Neue Zeitungen (New tidings), Wahrhaftige Neue Zeitungen (True new tidings), and similar; it was also standard practice for a single piece of news to be printed by several different printing houses. These printings almost always contain an introductory illustration, mostly in the form of a wood engraving. Occasionally they attempt a more sophisticated form of typographic design and aim for a more erudite presentation of the topic. Besides their function of reporting events, they furthermore typically attempt to grab the reader’s attention with attractive and sometimes sensational messages. For instance, they frequently interpret the events as warnings or punishments for the moral failures of contemporary society, or as harbingers of major political or religious changes, disasters, and catastrophes (wars, religious schisms, etc.). During the Late Humanist era, news leaflets of this kind were similar throughout Central Europe. Slovenian printed texts from Ljubljana, for example, cover a similar spectrum of topics, though they are less numerous, and they were not printed in the vernacular but in German or Latin, thus aiming at a more elite, educated audience.

**Broadside Ballads**

From the end of the sixteenth century onwards, there was an increasingly frequent tendency to publish printed songs, which narrated essentially the same events and performed similar functions as news leaflets. Although their material form had not yet become stabilized, they were usually printed in a form corresponding with that of broadside ballads. The printing format used for these songs was not entirely the same as the format used for news leaflets. Large single-page broadsides devoted to just one song were relatively

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24 For more particulars, see Kolár, “Novina,” p. 62.
25 Jelinková, “Erstlich gedruckt.”
27 I use the term “broadside ballad” to denote a song printed on both sides of a sheet of paper, folded and cut up by the producer or the consumer, issued in a relatively small format (octavo, duodecimo, sextodecimo). I use the word “song” in its usual meaning. A song denotes a verse text that is written to be sung; it is thus a superordinate category to the broadside ballad.
rare (though examples can be found, see below); more frequent formats were single printed sheets that were folded and cut by the seller (or, in some cases, the consumer), into quarto and octavo gatherings (and sometimes even tiny sextodecimos). These small formats promoted pocketing of them but limited the options for including detailed illustrations, such as engravings, so the printings of broadside ballads mostly contain relatively simple, schematic illustrations in the form of woodcuts. These printings began to be published in an attempt to reduce the cost of the printing process and to maximize the potential for dissemination.

As was also the case with news leaflets, broadside ballads, which appeared in the Late Humanist era, continued the previous song tradition. Both secular and religious songs were published as separate texts throughout the sixteenth century. Even in this early phase of development, with regard to their textual features these songs display many typical features of later broadside ballads. This tradition dates back to the publication of two small musical scores by the renowned Prague printer Mikuláš Konáč z Hodiškova. These broadside ballads relate the stories of two important political events—a religious revolt in Prague (“O pohnutí pražském” [“About the Prague revolt”], 1525, in octavo format) and the Battle of Mohács, which claimed the life of Louis II of Hungary (“O nešťastné bitvě a porážce” [“On an unfortunate battle and defeat”], 1526, also in quarto format).28

Broadside ballads from the sixteenth century were also published about the plague, such as those composed by Jan Táborský z Ahornperka—an illuminator, astronomer, occasional poet, and composer. These sung verses not only express the fear of this deadly disease but also attempt to provide spiritual comfort. They include “Písnička k času mornímu” (“A song for a time of plague”), published in 1562 by the Prague printer Jan Had in sextodecimo format, with an illustration on the title page showing the figure of Death portrayed as the Grim Reaper holding a scythe. A similar example is a somewhat longer octavo printing entitled “Písničky k času mornímu velmi potřebné” (“Songs greatly needed in a time of plague”), which contains several of Táborský’s plague songs accompanied by advice on how to behave when infected. The compilation of these sung verses was published during a bout of plague that hit the Bohemian Crown lands at some point after 1568; it was produced at the workshop of Jiří Jakubův Dačický.

Dačický was a Prague printer who specialized largely in broadside ballads. Dačický’s publications include verses for singing on demonological

28 For more on both printed texts (including their musical elements), see Pohanka, “Historické kořeny,” p. 91.
topics, though such were relatively rare in broadside ballads at the time.\textsuperscript{29} In contrast with prose leaflets, songs also dealt only rarely with natural disasters and celestial events. One of the few examples of such verses for singing was composed by Václav Zelotýn z Krásné Hory, a university professor and the author of astrological calendars. This song was published by the above-mentioned printer, Michael Peterle, as a broadside folio, printed on one side, with a hand-coloured woodcut (resembling very much broadside ballads typical of late-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England). It tells of a star in the constellation of Cassiopeia which suddenly became visible; the revelation is presented already in the title not only as an event to be reported but also as a warning: “Pobožné a potřebné napomenutí a uvažování” (“A devout and necessary admonition and contemplation,” 1572).\textsuperscript{30}

Unfortunate occurrences from everyday life were a more frequent topic of broadside ballad printed during this period. Jiří Jakubův Dačický printed a broadsheet folio, printed in both sides, with the song “Píseň o hromobitné bouři a zapálení makovice na věži kostelní města Velvar” (“Song about a hailstorm and a fire in the dome of a church in the town of Velvary,” 1581), whose author was the Utraquist priest Jan Ledecký. Compositions like Ledecký’s not only recounted stories from the Bohemian lands but also from neighbouring countries. One, about a wedding in the Thuringian city of Erfurt, was translated from a German original (as is mentioned in the text itself). This broadside ballad tells how a house collapsed during wedding celebrations, with tragic consequences. It has survived as a sextodecimo-size printing; although the broadside ballad has only been preserved in fragmentary form, it is nevertheless evident that moral exhortation formed an integral part of the text.\textsuperscript{31}

A noteworthy example of a broadside ballad narrating a disastrous event in the Bohemian Crown lands has survived in a quarto print entitled “O Jitčíně” (“About [the town of] Jitčín,” 1620). The song was written by the renowned Bohemian Late Humanist author Šimon Lomnický z Budče. The tune is presented as a musical score, with an incipit (the first two lines of the verse) phrased in a typical broadside ballad call to its audience: “Poslouchejte o novině, která se stala v Jitčíně” (“Hear about news that has

\textsuperscript{29} Kneidl, Česká lidová grafika, pp. 85, reproduces the title page of an undated song entitled “Žalostná i hrozná novina o jednom pacholátku, narozeném v městě Vrchlabí” (“Woeful and terrible news about a boy born in the town of Vrchlabí”); the boy was consumed with “hell fire” (“pekelným ohněm”) for the sins of his parents.


\textsuperscript{31} Píseň nová [... o smutné svatbě v městě Erfurtu, [1609–1613], Muzeum stříbra v Kutné Hoře (Museum of Silver in Kutná Hora), call no. KN 1331.
happened in Jitčín”). The text narrates the story of a destructive explosion at a chateau in the East Bohemian town of Jičín. The disaster was rooted in a dispute over property involving two wealthy noblewomen, the Smiřický sisters. The dispute was to be adjudicated by a royal commission featuring many important Bohemian lords. However, while the commission was present at the chateau, huge quantities of stored gunpowder caught fire (apparently an accident), causing an explosion which claimed 41 lives—including many members of the nobility. This lengthy broadside ballad represents a form of news reporting; it gives very detailed information on the events, focusing not only on the main figures at the heart of the tragedy but also on the various—often remarkable—circumstances surrounding the explosion:

Takový ten prudký oheň
nebyl všem zároveň škoden,
neb dví pacholat vyhodil
a hrubě jím neuškodil.

Jedno na rynku zůstalo
a druhý se pak dostalo
na jiný dům přes ulici,
o pomoc tam volající.

Také mládence jednoho
vyhodilo z domu toho,
on se na nohy postavil,
běžel pryč, se nezastavil.

This fierce fire
did not harm everybody,
for it flung up two boys
and did not harm them greatly.

One remained in the square
and the other found himself
on another house across the street,
calling for help from there.

Also one youth
was flung out of that house,
he stood up,
ran away without stopping.

The narrative takes the form of four-verse stanzas with rhyming couplets, frequently interrupted by passages of moralistic commentary. The song also seeks to evoke strong emotions in the audience:

máť pohnout lidi k líosti,
že vylíji slzy dosti32

it should move people to pity,
so they will shed many tears

A sign of the broadside ballad’s notoriety is the fact that the same event was also recounted in the German prose leaflet Kurtzer doch gründlicher

32 Lomnický, O Jitčíně, aneb o převelmi smutné a žalostivé příhodě […], 1620, B3r. NK, call no. 54 D 46,přív.
Bericht (A short but thorough report), which Lomnický may possibly have used as a source of information, though the two texts display somewhat different attitudes to the event.\(^{33}\)

As evident in the examples above, news leaflets played an influential role as the source material for works of contemporary historiography—and the same can be said about their influence on broadside ballads in the Late Humanist era. And at the same time, historical broadside ballads can serve as a source for works of historiography.

Lomnický’s song about the explosion in Jičín, for example, was used as a source by Pavel Skála ze Zhoře in his Historie církevní (History of the Church). When recounting the events of early 1620, the historian Skála quotes several stanzas from the song, which interpret this regional occurrence as a harbinger of greater catastrophes to come. Skála also adds his own commentary, shaped by his status as an exiled Protestant after the Battle of White Mountain: “ne jen jediný dům, ne jen jediné město, alebrž celé království do gruntu kleslo, stavové pak podobojí ne do povětří, ale mezi mnohé národy téměř všickni rozplašení a z vlasti své vyvržení jsou” (“not just one house, not just one town, but the entire kingdom sank to the bottom; the estates under both kings were not cast up into the air, but almost all of them were cast out of their homeland and scattered among many nations”).\(^{34}\)

Since royal and imperial festivities were among the most important events in this era—including coronations and adventus regis (the ceremonial arrival of a monarch in a city)—they also served as subject matter not only for news leaflets but also for many broadside ballads. Texts about royal and imperial festivities provide us with clear indications of the strong influence of news leaflets on broadside ballads, which were often composed using prose texts as the source material. Sixt Palma Močidlanský published the broadside ballad “Píseň o slavném příjezdu” (“Song about a glorious adventus”), which describes the ceremonial arrival of the Habsburg Emperor Matthias of Austria and his wife, Anna of Tyrol, in Prague (1611). The quarto-format text gives a factual description of the events featuring numerous details; the main part of the broadside ballad draws directly from a prose report on the adventus regis published by the emperor’s court

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\(^{33}\) Kurtzer doch gründlicher Bericht […], 1620, KVHU, call no. IIST B 6388. A different German leaflet on the same topic is printed together with Lomnický’s song in Tichá, “Příspěvek,” pp. 147–158.

\(^{34}\) Poličenský and Petrů, Historie, p. 251. On the Battle of White Mountain, see the chapter by Ivánek.
historiographer (and a Prague printer) Jiří Závěta ("Vypsání slavného Matyáše” ["An account of the glorious Matthias"], 1611). Palma’s broadside ballads often consist of a mere formal transformation of the prose text into octosyllabic verses in rhyming couplets. The broadside ballad is not the first verse composition of this type in the Czech language—there are several older songs (both in manuscript and print) narrating royal and imperial festivities—though it was not until the Late Humanist era that such songs crystallized into a coherent tradition of narrative songs influenced by prosaic leaflets on imperial festivities. Later examples include a broadside ballad by Kryštof Megander Postoloprtský giving an account of festivities featuring Frederick of the Palatinate ("Písněčka o šťastném a slavném příjezdu a korunování" [Song about the joyful and glorious adventus and coronation"], 1619, quarto print) and compositions by the already-mentioned Šimon Lomnický z Buďče.

The coronation of the new king, Frederick of the Palatinate, and the related festivities, form the subject matter for two broadside ballads by Lomnický, published separately in the quarto format that was so frequently used for his compositions. "Korunování aneb Píseň prostá slavného procesu" ("The coronation or a simple song about the famous process") is set to the melody of the Protestant Advent hymn “Přišel jest k nám obr silný” ("A strong giant has come to us"); even in its use of this melody, the text expresses the great sense of expectation that preceded the arrival of the new king. The verses give a detailed account of the coronation ritual held at the St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague. The song “Sedlské vítání” ("A peasant welcome") expresses the joy felt on the king’s arrival in Prague; the author styles himself as a spokesman for the common people and speaks directly to the king, acquainting him with the terrible state of the Bohemian lands (similar laments on the plight of the Kingdom of Bohemia were widespread in both Czech and Latin poetry at the time). It is evident that Lomnický intended his song to serve a political (propagandistic) function; furthering this goal, the song lists the reasons for removing the Habsburg monarch from the throne. In this regard, as in many others, the broadside ballad was undoubtedly influenced by contemporary news leaflets agitating in favour of Frederick. The text also cites the legendary Sibyl’s prophecy of the coming of a peace-making king:

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36 Hubková, Fridrich Falcký, pp. 118. Frederick of the Palatinate and his English wife were also supported in England by a strong literary campaign taking the form of songs and pamphlets; Miller, Falcký mýtus.
Sybila to předzvěděla, Sibyl prophesized this,  
a hvězdách předpověděla, foresaw it in the stars,  
Čechové jsouc mysli stálé, the Bohemians, of constant mind,  
budou mít Fridricha krále. will have Frederick as their king.

It is noteworthy that both the above-mentioned broadside ballads were immediately translated into German; the translations (which closely correspond with the Czech source texts) are found in the anonymous printed work “Zwey böhmische Lieder verdeutscht” (“Two Bohemian songs made into German, ” 1619).

War reporting was also a feature of broadside ballads in the Late Humanist era. However, there are very few broadside ballads on the Turkish wars; it appears that prose leaflets were sufficient to inform people about battles against the Ottoman Empire. One composition that became well-known, however, was “Píseň o dobývání pevnosti Kanýže” (“Song about the conquest of the fort of Kanizsa,” 1602), which was translated by the Sixt Palma Močidlanský from the German song “Ein neu Lied von Abzug Canischa” (“A new song about the retreat from Kanizsa,” 1601). The narrative recounts the story of the Turks’ conquest of the Hungarian fortress at Nagykanizsa and the unsuccessful attempt to recapture the bulwark by forces under Ferdinand of Styria (later Emperor Ferdinand II). The text represents a unique example of a Czech political song of its period. Indeed, it was viewed as a subversive caricature of Ferdinand, and it was the main reason for the author’s, Sixt Palma’s, arrest and investigation. This entire affair shows that news songs and news leaflets were capable of participating in and provoking vehement political conflicts, which can be further seen in the many cases of official censorship, self-censorship, and outright persecution by authorities of their makers.

Towards the end of the Late Humanist era, war reporting shifted its focus to other topics, though it continued to perform the function of propaganda. Texts were naturally no longer concerned with the war against the Turks, but instead focused on the so-called Bohemian War—the first phase of the Thirty Years’ War. Broadside ballads published in Czech and (even more frequently) German gave accounts of major milestones in Bohemian history—such as the Prague defenestration of 1618 or the Battle of White

37 Lomnický, Sedlské vítání, aneb Prostá a krátká písnička […], 1619, B2v, NK, call no. 54 J 20 557.
39 See also Pohanka, “Historické kořeny,” pp. 92, 96.
Mountain. Among these numerous compositions stands out “Die Prager Schlacht” (“The Battle of Prague,” 1620), which was printed in the sextodecimo format that became so typical of Baroque (ca. 1620–1775) broadside ballads. The text takes the form of a dialogue in which a soldier for the Bohemian estates, who could not take part in the Battle of White Mountain due to injury, converses with a Bavarian soldier fighting for the emperor.\footnote{For a reproduction of the title page and other information on the song, see Hubková, Fridrich Falcký, pp. 232, 525, 824.}

The Battle of White Mountain—and the Bohemian War as a whole—was also the subject of Lomnický’s broadside ballad “Píseň o žalostivé zkáze a zplundrování země České” (“A song about the deplorable destruction and plundering of the land of Bohemia,” 1620); here the devastation of the war is attributed to celestial events. The author takes a distanced view of these events: though the text is permeated with a somewhat subjective tone, it also functions as a warning—a typical feature of both broadside ballads and news leaflets.

\section*{Conclusion}

Broadside ballads produced during this early period address essentially the same topics as prose leaflets—some more frequently, others less frequently. However, the broadside ballads of the Late Humanist era also display numerous links to other literary genres from urban society—primarily so-called occasional poetry. This term denotes prints with simple typography (usually in broadsheet format) containing short poetic texts, which were particularly common in Central European Latin Humanist literature. These poems took as their subject specific situations from everyday life, such as weddings or funerals of well-known figures, but also events of war and natural disasters (floods, solar eclipses, etc.). Numerous examples of occasional poetry were written in the Czech language during the Late Humanist period. However, unlike their Latin counterparts, these Czech texts usually took the form of broadside ballads. The type of text represented by Lomnický’s “O Jitčině” (“About Jitčín”), for example, can in fact be categorized as occasional poetry in the form of a broadside ballad. Indeed, this type of text is a typical feature of Lomnický’s work.\footnote{Rudovský, “Příležitostné písň.”}

These occasional compositions about current affairs can be viewed as direct predecessors to the secular broadside ballads that emerged later.
During the Late Humanist era, the broadside ballad did not yet regularly exist in the small octavo or sextodecimo formats that became typical in the Baroque era (ca. 1620–1775); in fact, in some cases they were quite elaborate works of printing, with high-quality illustrations. They also frequently contained full musical scores, not merely references to the melody to which the words were to be sung (a practice which became the norm in Baroque broadside ballads). However, in terms of textual features, the songs of Lomnický, Sixt Palma, and other occasional poets of the Late Humanist era essentially represent a type of text that is identical to Baroque broadside ballads. They feature simple verse forms and a plain-speaking style; they are also quite lengthy, incorporating numerous narrative details as well as many moralistic passages.42

It is evident from this chapter that broadside ballads emerged gradually during the course of the century, but only crystallized into a stable type of publication and genre during the Late Humanist era, in close conjunction with contemporary news leaflets. Compared with other parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Bohemian lands saw a relatively early emergence of a strong and coherent tradition of broadside ballads. A similar process can be traced in other parts of the Monarchy, such as Hungary or Slovenia, though the phenomenon there occurred much later, during the eighteenth century.43 The emergence of the Bohemian broadside ballad phenomenon was a direct consequence of the variegated literary life of the bourgeoisie during the Late Humanist era; especially in Prague, a sizeable audience emerged among this social class, who can be termed the “broader public” (a social group whose members possessed a certain level of education and took an interest in current affairs, somewhat akin to the bourgeois “public sphere” described by Jürgen Habermas as occurring in eighteenth-century London).44 The broadside ballad thus did not originate from the lower (urban or rural)
classes; it was a product of the culture of both Czech- and German-speaking burghers during the early modern period. It was not until the Baroque era that the broadside ballad became a phenomenon on a mass scale, with wide popularity and anonymous authorship.

**Works Cited**

**Primary Sources**

*Hrozné, strašlivé a neslýchané noviny o velikém trestání a dopuštění Božském, kteréž se blíž Pomorské země v městě Fridberku [...] přihodilo a co se posavad tam děje [...]*. Praha: Mikuláš Pštros, 1590. LKN, III lb 12/25.

*Hrozný zázračný porod, kterýž se stal v Horních Uhřích v městě Varadínů, léta pominulého 1598*. Praha: Burian Valda, 1599. LKN, III lb 12/52.

*Krátká zpráva, co se s knížetem Zigmundem Bathory v sedmihradské zemi zběhlo, kterak jat a tureckému císáři dodán býti měl [...]*. Praha: Burian Valda, 1595. LKN, III lb 12/20.


*Lomnický z Budče, Šimon. Sedlské vítání, aneb Prostá a krátká písnička o osvíceném [...] panu Fridrichovi voleném králi českém, s lamentem o křivdách, které se v Čechách mnohým chudým lidem daly, s vinšem novému králi [...]. First lines: Vítej náš králi Fridriše. Tunes imprint: V moci v moudrosti dobrého; Já jsem hříšný k tomu se znám; Obecní notou. Praha: Daniel Karolides, 1619. NK 54 J 20 557.*

*Novina pravdivá, co se jest při jedné svatbě strašlivého příhodilo v Prusích pod správou vůdce v sedlském dvoře [...]. Praha: Mikuláš Pštros, 1590. LKN, III lb 12/4.*


*Strašlivá a hrozná novina o jednom nešlechetném mordýři, jménem Krystman, kterýž ve třinácti letech devět set a šedesátcity mordy učinil [...]. Praha: Burian Valda, 1582. LKN, III lb 12/3.*
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Novotný, Miloslav, ed. Špalíček písniček jarmarečních. Praha: Evropský literární klub, 1940.


Abbreviations

KVHU—Knihovna Vojenského historického ústavu (Military History Institute Prague Library)

LKN—Lobkowiczská knihovna Nelahozeves (Lobkowicz Library in Nelahozeves)

MSKH—Muzeum stříbra v Kutné Hoře (Museum of Silver in Kutná Hora)

MZK—Moravská zemská knihovna (Moravian Library)

NK—Národní knihovna České republiky (National Library of the Czech Republic)
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