Dmitry Timofeyev

Handwritten Copies of Czech Broadside Ballads: Early Modern Intermediality

Early Modern broadside ballads were printed on a cheap paper. In a way, it was an almost perfect material for the typographers: it allowed them to reduce the expenses on publishing of a highly popular and demanded genre. Pressrun of broadside ballads was of much more than average. However, they were pure entertainment. The ballads were not expected to be read repeatedly; they were neither a source of knowledge, nor a centre-piece of a library. Hence, the issue of their preservation was not a matter of importance for the printers. Many Early Modern broadside ballads are extant in badly damaged state, or even in the form of scrap paper. Nevertheless, for some Czech readers broadside ballads were of such value that they wanted the texts to endure. And the only medium affordable for them was a manuscript. Catalogues of Czech manuscripts contain notes on several handwritten copies of Czech broadside ballads emerged throughout the 18th century: they are mostly single and double pages, some ballads are also included into František Jan Vavák’s handwritten book Collection of Songs. Since the Czech database of broadside ballads allows to identify original prints copied by the 18th century scribes, we would like to present the results of comparison between printed and handwritten versions of the chosen broaside ballads pointing out the graphical, language and informational changes made in the manuscripts.