

**Stereotypes Associated
with the Position of the Woman
in Broadside Ballads**

The Woman and the Broadside Ballad

- The popularity of broadsheets as a specific and printed medium in the Czech lands in the 17th and 19th centuries consisted in accumulation of three components– the word, the picture, and the melody
 - The image of the woman is reflected in all three components in this printed medium:
 - Music – e.g. Marian pilgrimage songs,
 - Picture– e.g. iconography of printing blocks of worshipped Marian pilgrimage cults
 - Word – religious and profane themes
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- For time reasons, we will sideline the picture and the music components and we will focus on the analysis of thematic stereotypes associated with the position of the woman in broadside ballads

The Woman and Love

- One of the most popular women's topics in broadside ballads (lyric, lyric-epic, epic songs)
- They presented descriptions of various forms of love
- In love broadside ballads, considerable attention was paid to extolling love and dating, meaning the initial stage of a romantic relationship – meeting of a boy and a girl - courtship
- Love themes with unlucky ends prevailed for a variety of reasons – infidelity, leaving of the loved one for war, death of one of the partners
- Parents' approval of the marriage was conditioned by children's economic dependence on their parents
- Numerous stories about unfulfilled love of two young people due to their dissimilar social status (a poor boy x a wealthy girl – a wealthy boy x a poor girl)
- The large number of stories gives rise to a presumption that suicides of pairs of lovers became a fashionable matter in the 19th century. A kind of ritual developed that preceded that act. The pairs of lovers were aware of committing a mortal sin, and therefore they went to church, even to communion, they wrote a farewell letter, in which they addressed their parents, or sometimes their friends, asking them for absolution. They asked all those people to pray for them, and, in several cases, to bury them in the same grave.
- Later periods brought a case when a pair of lovers had their common photo taken on the day of suicide in order to leave a memorial of themselves.
- The ways of suicide differed. In Prague, the unlucky pairs of lovers jumped from the Charles Bridge; a boy often shot or poisoned his girlfriend and then himself; they often threw themselves under the train.
- Pairs of lovers from the countryside used to go to the town to execute their decision in a hired guest room.

The Woman and Love

- Single virgins were a specific type of women depicted in broadside ballads.
- These ballads were parodies which made the women keen to be married an object of ridicule
- In term of social status, single virgins were among the lowest-ranking persons who faced adversity, and their life was very hard.

The Woman and the Marriage

- Because the broadside ballads were a kind of gutter press of that time, some themes were suppressed, or they did not appear at all, for example the wedding – it is usually parodied, or the theme includes pre-printed wedding speeches
- On the other hand, broadside ballads provide us with an image about the period ideal of the woman – the spouse: she was expected to have 5P, meaning she was to be poor, hardworking, virtuous, pious, and faithful beyond the grave
- Most documents come from the 19th century, and they were composed as a humorous and satiric consideration or advice, or a complaint about unsuccessful married life
- We register men's humourist and satiric monologs about evil women and ugly women; as reciprocity also women's monologs exist which are composed as laments, moaning of young women who had to marry old men
- Only exceptionally we notice suyzhets about a relationship between a young man and an old woman
- Many songs featured a form of husband-wife quarrels with earthy offensive language, the most common reason for which was partner's jealousy, and alcoholism, gambling, and squandered money as further reasons
- The man (husband) was considered to be most often at fault for the broken family (many times, the men spent all the farm on drinking and deprived the family of property)

The Woman and the Marriage

- It can be said that broadside ballads described the wife as a subordinate person who was forced to endure her destiny
- Special attention was paid to widows with children, who lost the family breadwinner after the death of their partner, and who were left helpless, in poverty, and almost on the bottom of society
- In contrast to widowers who did not manage the care for their family and who resolved the new situation by killing their own children and the subsequent suicide, the widows endured their life fate patiently and they suffered
- It was solely supernatural beings who helped the widows – the Virgin Mary, and the saints St. Anna and St. John of Nepomuk as patron-saints of widows and orphans

The Woman and Petrifying Stories

- They best reflect relations among individual family members:
- **Daughter** – lazy, full of grudge, keen on property, who is able to kill her parents
- **Foster daughter** – a young girl up-brought in the married couple's family from her childhood; she often becomes the cause why the husband, after several years of married life, kills (or why they kill together) his wife in order to marry the foster daughter
- **Sister** – 1) a poor lover of their sister is killed by her brothers to protect her - 2) a poor sister, a widow with many children, addressed her wealthy relatives (most often her brother) to ask them for help; the brother rejects her and he is ready to kill or torture her and her children for money and in order to maintain the property
- **Stepmother** – evil, non-loving, punishing, who has an urge to get rid of her stepchildren
- **Wife** – a young woman, she has an urge to get rid of her old husband because of her young lover, she is most often presented as a female poisoner

Women's Indulgences

- Cantankerousness, enviousness,
- Profligacy, especially in relation to the introduction of lottery
- Gossiping
- Fastidiousness, fondness of drinking coffee and liquors – spirits
- Passion for dressing up

The Woman and Occupation

- **Housewife**: they were reproached for untidiness, unfamiliarness with cooking, and laziness
- **Maidservants**: there was great malice between town housemaids and rural maidservants, who usually got used very quickly to the life in Prague, and they became competitors for others. At the same time, authors of broadside ballads rebuked them for doing that to the detriment of their honesty and virginity.
- The ethnic conflict between the German and the Czech maidservants is often reflected there
- **Female worker**: from the second half of the 19th century, reflections of women-workers appeared
They were most often reproached for their passion for dressing up and playing a “little madam“ from a higher stratum, as well as for being ashamed of their work