

Marie Hanzelková: Talking with Christ: Czech Broadside Ballads as Dialogues

The paper examines dialogic forms in Czech Christological broadside ballads, drawing on Jan Mukařovský's concept of dialogue—its I/you polarity, anchoring in a real situation, and alternation of distinct semantic contexts—as well as Jiří Veltruský's notion of “gappiness” and shifting subjects that produce dramatic tension.

Based on a corpus of Early Modern broadside ballads, three main dialogic types are distinguished:

- (1) a biblical figure conversing with Jesus (usually Mary or Mary Magdalene),
- (2) a dialogue between Christ and the loving soul, and
- (3) a pilgrim's conversation with the Savior.

Because some of these songs circulated on the periphery of media space (broadside ballads and manuscript hymnals), they occasionally display heterodox or emotionally subversive features—for instance, songs in which Mary pleads with Christ not to be crucified. The study argues that such dialogue functions not merely as a rhetorical or dramatic device, but as a Christological structure of relationship, where alternating voices and expressive gaps create a space of „theological drama”—a moment where prayer, revelation, and performative faith converge.