

**Give the devil his due:  
demons and demonic presence in the worldview of Czech market-fair songs**

Czech market-fair songs (*kramářské písně*) are usually classified as 'half-folk literature' (*pololidová literatura*), as they existed on the border between culture of the upper classes and traditional rural folklore (Bogatyrev 1971). As such they borrowed concepts from different sources, ranging from the Catholic teachings of the counter-reformation era to Slavic folk beliefs. The world described in such popular prints was filled with miracles and supernatural interventions. In my presentation, I will focus on the visions of the devil and different roles assigned to this figure in market-fair songs.

Using an ethnolinguistic approach (Bartmiński 2016) I will present the results of an analysis of about 200 songs (both secular and religious) selected from over 2800 individual prints available at the Komenský Museum in Přerov. The texts will be briefly analysed on a linguistic level (with focus on how the demons are described and presented), but the main part of the study will provide a broader description of the themes present in the source material. The songs describe both generic devils (*čert, ďábel*) and individual named demons (*Lucifer, Satanaš/Šatan*, among others) shown in different contexts and fulfilling different narrative functions. Some of those are listed below and will be presented in the conference speech: 1) the devil shown as an immaterial tempter enticing humans into sin (usually used as an explanation in the stories about murderers); 2) the motif of a deal with the devil, offering material reward for the human soul (often the demon is later defeated with the help of a saint); 3) the devil acting as an enforcer of God's order, justly punishing people for their sins (usually blasphemers acting against the Catholic religion).

Basing on the described material I will try to compare the 'market-fair song' vision of the devil with more official Church teachings and the figure of *čert* from Czech folk fairytales (Röhrich 1966). I will present the idea of summoning the devil (who has to be invited into the material world by human actions – aware or unaware), and the ways of protecting oneself against the demonic influences. Mechanisms governing the metaphysical order of the world described in *kramářské písně* give us an interesting insight into Czech folk theodicy. Despite the firm belief in the existence of an active personal evil in the world, most of the misfortunes happening to people are interpreted as God's will. The devil himself is often presented as an instrument of God's punishment or a weak entity that poses no danger to faithful Christians.

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