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Encapsulating Working-Class Worldviews: The Finnish Broadside Ballads of the Revolutionary Year 1917

In this paper, I examine broadside ballads (arkkiveisut, skillingtryck) as working-class cultural products in Finland during the revolutionary year 1917. First, I pay attention to the long history of Finnish broadside ballads as the first form of printed material, the production and distribution of which was concentrated on the hands of lower-class people. Second, I discuss how the significance of broadsides gradually diminished at the beginning of the twentieth century due to the rise of the Finnish-language newspapers, cheap popular literature, and the recording industry. I argue, however, that broadside ballads still had relevance as cultural products in the 1910s, as they effectively encapsulated lower-class perceptions of world events and Finnish political developments into comprehensible, singable and entertaining stories. This becomes evident by analysing the topics of the ballads published in 1917: among these, the World War and its impact on everyday life, the Russian regime and its collapse, and the political tensions in Finland were strongly represented. In the final part of the paper, I discuss the linkage between the broadside ballads of 1917 and class politics. I examine, whether or not the ballads predominantly illustrated the political attitudes and worldviews of the *organised* labour and represented an instrument of political agitation.