

## REPORTS AND BOOK REVIEWS

### *Encyclopaedia of Folk Culture in Slovakia*

After completing work on the large cartographic publication concerning the folk culture of Slovakia, the *Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia*, the Ethnographic Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences began an encyclopaedic project intended to make the most important data on Slovak ethnography, folklore and kindred sociological disciplines relating to folk culture in Slovakia, accessible to the public at large through generalized entries. The initial suggestion of such an encyclopaedia was proposed back in 1983 by Dr. Adam Pranda. Since work was then already in progress on the *Ethnographic Atlas of Slovakia* as well as on further scientific-research tasks, both personnel and financial reasons did not permit the Institute to implement this idea. It was only in 1986 that a self-standing organizational unit could be set up with responsibility for the professional and organizational realization of the *Encyclopaedia of Folk Culture in Slovakia*.

The fundamental conceptual demand in the encyclopaedic project was its complexity. Through a broad range of co-operating authors, we strove to provide the reader with information on folk culture in Slovakia: its diversified developmental forms, the most essential concepts and categories, and the history and methods of ethnographic investigations. The determining criterion for their selection and processing came to be their connection with the territory of Slovakia and the Slovak ethnic community. Thus the encyclopaedia also includes Slovaks abroad, as well as other nationalities and ethnic groups living in the Slovak Republic.

From the aspect of the genesis of cultural phenomena and their temporal comparison with other phenomena or definite conditions of their existence, it was necessary to define the historical range of the *Encyclopaedia*. We tried to give the reader access to the periods which can be covered by ethnographic

research methods. We did this by separating things according to time period and the cultural phenomena which were a part of everyday life, or at least part of the community's collective memory. The period we consider to be the culmination of the continuous development of folk culture in Slovakia is the end of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. We followed earlier timelines with the aid of results from related scientific disciplines when it was necessary to elucidate the development of the phenomena processed or other essential aspects.

Another basic methodological premise was an effort to systemize. We divided the list of entries into 5 thematic areas with 30 subgroupings. The authors and the responsible editors processed the various entries to correlate the entries with entries of the other thematic areas, through cross-references. The diversity of the way of life and culture of the general public certainly brought a broader scale of objects and phenomena than the 2,800 entries. Many of the folk culture phenomena were used as only a part of more broadly conceived entries and the reader will find them in the index. We believe that their meaning and place in history will be clear to the reader from the context. The list of entries and the index of the encyclopaedia enable the reader to place a given phenomenon into its broader cultural connections.

As valuable as the textual part is the illustrated section of the *Encyclopaedia of Folk Culture in Slovakia*. Supplementation of the entries with illustrations contributes not only to its instructive, but also its documentary value.

The significance of this *Encyclopaedia* lies in two areas, viz. the scientific and the socio-cultural plane. Its scientific significance is to be seen primarily in the enrichment of our ethnographic literature as a new product introducing the existing results of research into Slovakia's folk culture in an encyclopaedic form. As regards further advance of ethnography and

folklore in Slovakia, another important fact is that the *Encyclopaedia* maps past contributions of knowledge and points to inadequately processed sections. In this way it shows where there is a necessity for future research. The preparation of the *Encyclopaedia of Folk Culture in Slovakia* also proved an appropriate occasion for reassessing the categorical and conceptual-terminological instruments utilized in contemporary ethnography and folklore. A fact not to be ignored is that the mass of materials assembled during this preparation will go to extend the documentary-information system of ethnographic research at the Department of Scientific Documentation.

On the socio-cultural plane, the significance of the *Encyclopaedia of Folk Culture in Slovakia* lies primarily in the information it provides on folk culture. It is a contribution from ethnography and folklore to complete the image of our national cultural inheritance. In a popular scientific form it makes the way of life and the culture of our forefathers, and their mode of humanizing the environment in which they lived accessible to a wide-ranging circuit of readers.

The material and spiritual expressions of culture of our ancestors, their relation to nature, their organization of society and value orientation were strikingly influenced by the agricultural base of their culture. Work on the land which was carried out in fixed cycles, was an active struggle of "man-creator" not only for necessary biological values, but also for satisfying his cultural identity. The *Encyclopaedia of Folk Culture in Slovakia* intends to contribute to the knowledge of the positive values of this culture, to the maintenance of its continuity and its incorporation into the way of life of contemporary society. Perhaps it will give some of our contemporaries an answer to some questions which they have asked and yet have had no reply. It is an attempt to clarify the place of our ancestors' culture in the process we call the development of European civilization.

One final bit of important information: The *Encyclopaedia of Folk Culture in Slovakia* is ready to go to press and will appear in the VEDA Publishing House by the end of 1992.

Peter Slavkovský

Števček, Ján: *Dejiny slovenského románu* (History of the Slovak Novel). Bratislava, Tatran 1989. 621 pp.

Ján Števček has pursued the problem of the Slovak novel for over two decades. It is the second focal topic of his research - the first one involved the phenomenon of the so-called lyricized prose. He has moved the "averted face" (according to official evaluation) of Slovak literature into the centre of research interests for a relatively long-lasting period of time. He himself has contributed to an elucidation of specific issues of "lyricization" and precise characteristics of its various representatives (*Lyrical Face of Slovak Prose*, 1969; *Lyricized Prose*, 1979). In France he decided on this second focal circuit, as he mentions in the introduction to *The History of the Slovak Novel* (he was active there for several years as lecturer on Slovak literature), being inspired by the more developed forms of French criticism and literary reflection. The novel genre most conclusively represents every national literature and most evidently demonstrates the bond between literary and social development. Therefore, an attempt to write a history of the novel exceeds that of genre and

becomes an important contribution to the history of literature and the relationship between literature and society.

When conceiving *The History of the Slovak Novel*, Ján Števček could not rely much on previous research of genre. True, a partial study of the Slovak novel exists (Andrej Mráz: *Povojnový slovenský román* - The Post-war Slovak Novel, 1938), but there is no attempt to master this topic on the scale of a complete literary history; evidently, there were no suitable conditions for this. A project of this type presupposes not only a certain degree of maturity, but especially a differentiatedness of the literary science itself, which is no longer satisfied with the 'general', but proceeds to research of the 'partial' and processes it on the plane of the universal.

The writing of *The History of the Slovak Novel* was preceded by Števček's research of the various periods of the "novel" (realism, inter-war literature and post-1945 literature), this time was also filled by publications (*An Essay on the Slovak Novel*, 1979;