

MARTINA BOCÁNOVÁ, KATARÍNA ŽEŇUCHOVÁ
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ZAKLIATA HORA PAVLA DOBŠINSKÉHO
[THE ENCHANTED FOREST OF PAVOL DOBŠINSKÝ]

BRATISLAVA: NÁRODOPISNÁ SPOLOČNOSŤ SLOVENSKA,
154 p.

The name of Pavol Dobšinský is inextricably linked with the collection and publication of Slovak folk tales. Although the name of the monograph “The Enchanted Forest of Pavol Dobšinský” might suggest, under the influence of the fairy-tale of the same name (“The Enchanted Forest”), that this is a collection of fairy-tales for children, in reality the book is a compact specialist publication devoted to the collecting and recording of Slovak fairy-tales. The authors of the monograph are Martina Bocánová and Katarína Žeňuchová, whose academic research has long been devoted to folk literature.

In the introduction to the book, the authors define their objective of explaining to readers Pavol Dobšinský’s collecting and publishing activity, and his theoretical description of the fairy-tale, while also taking into account the wider context of research on folk literature. The authors do not focus only on the personality of P. Dobšinský – his life, collection activity and theoretical ideas about fairy-tales – but also explain the wider context relating to other collectors and researchers of Slovak fairy-tales, from the period of Romanticism to the contemporary research of literary theorists and folklorists. A large part of the publication also deals with the problems at that time (and also today) related to recording the oral expression of the narrator, the stylisation of the text and the publication of folk prose.

The monograph consists of eleven logically arranged chapters which can

be thematically divided into two main groups. The first part of the book deals with the history of the collection and publication of Slovak fairy-tales. The chronological progression enables us to look at the methods used by collectors, beginning with the period of Romanticism, going through organised collections, the creation of almanacs and codices, up until the subsequent professionalisation and institutionalisation of the scientific fields of ethnography and folk studies. This includes figures such as J. Kollár, J. Francisci, S. Reuss, and A. H. Škultéty. In the next chapter, which in terms of its content we can still thematically include in the first group, the authors focus directly on the biography of P. Dobšinský.

Another section of the book consists in the question of recording the folk source and its subsequent editing into a readable form. Collectors of fairy-tales might have defended the importance of the authenticity of the text in their deliberations, but on the other hand, by comparing manuscript documents with published editions, it was found that they themselves were guilty of stylisations, and even censure. We must add, however, that even the collectors of fairy-tales themselves had an uneasy approach to recording fairy-tales. The authors here mention, for example, P. Dobšinský's doubts as to whether it is at all possible to write down fairy-tales. The publication also mentions polemics among academics on the suitability of giving such fairy-tales the attribute of "folk", or whether as a result of the stylistic interventions in the text they gave at all a real picture of the state of the story-telling tradition in Slovakia.

The monograph also points to the absence at the time of a method for writing down and recording, but the authors also mention various complications which remain applicable even today. These are caused, for example, by the very limitations of writing down oral expression and its subsequent transformation into a fixed, textual form. The authors, following the concepts of Walter J. Ong, respond also to the difference between oral and so-called chirographic (written) culture. In their work, they also emphasise the significance of the narrator, while dealing with the importance of the informant's attitude of trust towards the researcher, thus pointing to the need to take notes in a natural situation of narration.

The final chapter in the book is the conclusion, which provides a summary of the information above. The authors do not forget throughout the book to follow the primary objective given in the introduction, which is bringing together everything connected to the person of P. Dobšinský. The work thus summarises both the knowledge and thoughts of the writers of the Romantic period on the question of recording, editing and publishing fairy-tales, but takes into account the opinions of current studies devoted to this topic, to which the authors refer directly in the publication.

The authors also added some attractive visual material to the publication. One example is the colour photographs of places which are associated with the life and

work of P. Dobšinský (his birth house in Slavošovce, the parsonage in Sirk and in Drienčany, the Hain House in Levoča, his grave and tombstone) together with photographs of memorials and commemorative plaques. There are also portraits of P. Dobšinský and his second wife Adela Dobšinská. The monograph also contains lithographs of fairy-tale motifs (*Cesta k slncu*, *Zlatá priadka*, *Kráľ času* [Journey to the sun, The Spinner of Gold, The King of Time]), taken from the literary archives of the Slovak National Library (LASNK), as well as copies of pages of manuscripts which feature, for example, samples of textual changes to fairy-tales or personal correspondence. The description and source are given below the visual document. Although in the case of photographs of places where P. Dobšinský worked, there is no note about the source, I assume these are photographs taken by the authors.

I see it as a positive feature that, despite being a publication with two authors, the structure of the book and the text appear consistent and understandable. Many opinions of early researchers (for example J. Francisci) are suitably explained in the text, and based on quotes from selected passages of period documents such as biographies and personal correspondence. The notes contain both the bibliographic references used as well as references to further recommended literature and comments by the authors, and additional information and explanations of specialist terminology (for example the ecology of folklore). At the end of the monograph, there is also a complete list of bibliographies and sources used.

At this point I should mention that the notes and commentaries by the authors are in parts more extensive, which might in a way interrupt the flow and reading of the primary text. However, I see this diversion as deliberate and proof of the authors' attempts not to interrupt and break up with additional explanations the main idea of the primary text. For this reason in particular I do not consider the longer notes as a defect in their work, since the explanations and notes enable even readers who are less familiar with the topic in question to understand it. I would have welcomed a subtitle to the title of the monograph "The Enchanted Forest of P. Dobšinský" specifying that it is not a collection of fairy-tales. Combined with a "more fairy-tale like" (without meaning to imply that this is a defect) appearance of the title page with a lithograph entitled "The King of Time", the publication's genre and focus might not be clear to the potential reader. However, these are details which do not adversely affect the specialist relevance and quality of the publication.

I see the benefit of the work mainly in the analysis and high-quality summarising of older and more recent knowledge on the collection and publication of fairy-tales, resulting in the reader having access to the latest information enabling him or her to evaluate or review their attitude to the fairy-tales of P. Dobšinský. The publication will surely be appreciated by specialists dealing with oral folklore, as well as by the wider (lay) public. I consider the monograph under review as

a suitable publication for students of ethnography and related academic disciplines, since it can serve as an excellent methodological aid, mainly in terms of the chapters dealing with the issue of noting down text, working with an informant (in this case the narrator) and pointing to issues arising during field work itself and during the subsequent analysis of the data collected. The work thus sets out for the reader the scope of field research, while also providing a summary of information relating to the beginnings of ethnography in Slovakia.

Diana Hurbanová