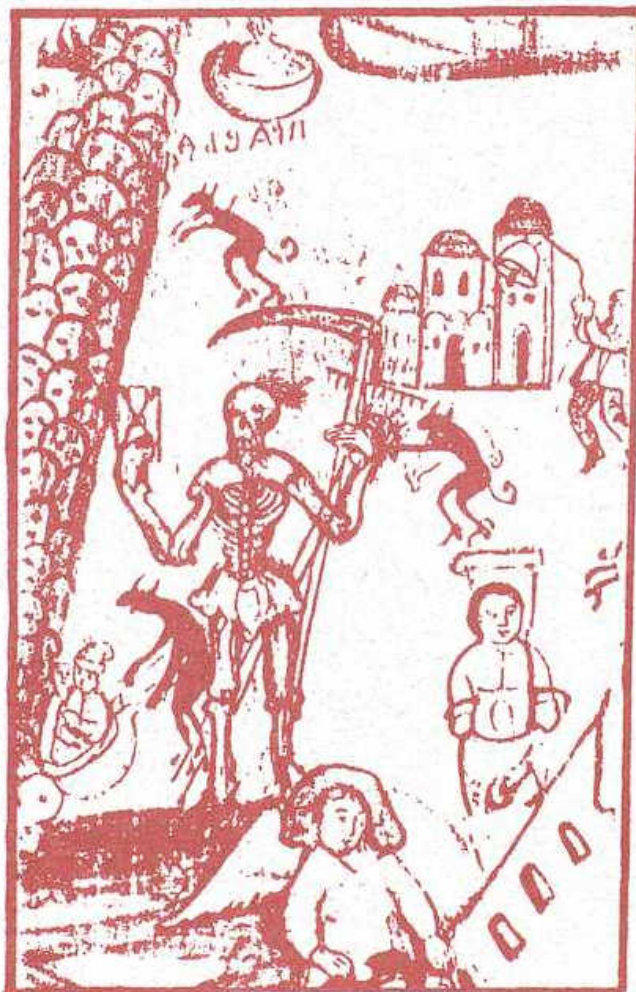


SLOVENSKÝ NÁRODOPIŠ



- Z OBSAHU: BEŇUŠKOVÁ, Z.: Vzťah profánneho a sakrálneho v obradoch a sviatkovaní.
MANNOVÁ, E.: Sebaprezentácia nemeckých stredných vrstiev v Bratislave v 19. storočí.
LÁBADYOVÁ, N.: Ludová hra o sv. Dorote na Slovensku.
KILIÁNOVÁ, G.: An Old Theme in the Present Time: Narratives about Death in Modern Society.

Na obálke:

Predstava smrti ako kostry s dlhými končatinami, veľkými zubami a s kosou v ruke. Detail maľby z kostola v Novej Sedlici, okr. Humenné, 1754. K článku G. Kiliánovej: An Old Theme in the Present Time: Narratives about Death in Modern Society.

Dear Reader,

Slovenský národopis (Slovak Ethnology) is a quarterly with a long tradition, edited in the Slovak language by the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava, Slovakia. This review publishes papers from all spheres of Slovak folk culture, past and present, including minorities and Slovaks abroad. The journal's articles range from research on the folk culture of every region of Slovakia (folk architecture, arts and crafts, costumes and clothing, folktales, songs, customs, traditions, etc.) through information on activities of ethnological research centres and museums, archival materials, book reviews to theoretical and comparative analyses of topical issues. The most interesting studies are published in English, and all the articles in Slovak have extended English summaries.

As the only periodical specifically devoted to the comparative study of Slovak folk, *Slovenský národopis* deepens the understanding of folk cultures throughout the world.

By becoming a regular subscriber of *Slovenský národopis* you will help to support an authoritative review for everyone interested in Slovak folk culture.

Distributed by: Slovak Academic Press, Ltd.,
P. O. Box 57, Nám. Slobody 6
810 05 Bratislava
Slovakia

Electronic version accessible via Internet
URL://www.savba.sk/logos/journals/ap/narhome.html

HLAVNÝ REDAKTOR
Milan Leščák

VÝKONNÁ REDAKTORKA
Zora Vanovičová

REDAKČNÁ RADA

Stanislav Brouček, Lubica Droppová, Božena Filová, Emília Horváthová, Václav Hrníčko, Josef Jančár, Milan Kiripolský, Soňa Kovačevičová, Eva Krekovičová, Martin Mešša, Ján Mjartan, Ján Podolák, Zora Rusnáková, Peter Salner, Miroslav Válka

V prezentovanom čísle Slovenského národopisu sú online sprístupnené iba publikácie pracovníkov Ústavu etnológie SAV (v obsahu farebne odlišené).

Ostatné práce, na ktoré ÚEt SAV nemá licenčné zmluvy, sú vynechané.

Slovenský národopis je evidovaný v nasledujúcich databázach

www.ebsco.com
www.cejsh.icm.edu.pl
www.cceol.de
www.mla.org
www.ulrichsweb.com
www.willingspress.com

Impaktovaná databáza European Science Foundation (ESF)
European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH): www.esf.org

OBSAH

ŠTÚDIE

- B e ň u š k o v á, Zuzana: Vzťah profánneho a sakrálného v obradoch a sviatkovaní.....** 159
- M a n n o v á, Elena: Seba prezentácia nemeckých stredných vrstiev v Bratislave v 19. storočí.....** 167
- L á b a d y o v á, Nora: Ludová hra o sv. Dorote na Slovensku.....** 177
- K i l i á n o v á, Gabriela: An Old Theme in the Present Time: Narratives about Death in Modern Society.....** 197

DISKUSIA

- Rozhovor s Prof. Dr. Michaelom Mitterauerom (Zuzana B e ň u š k o v á)..... 205
- Etnofilm a súčasné filmové a vedecké kontexty (Milan L e š č á k)..... 210
- Poznámky k etnografickému filmu (Václav M a c e k)..... 216
- (Pred) časom syntéz? (Viliam J a b l o n i c k ý)..... 220

MATERIÁL Y

- S t o l i č n á, Rastislava: Základná potravina - chlieb u Slovákov v Maďarsku 224
- C h u r ý, Slavko: Národopisné materiály v súdnych písomnostiach Liptovskej stolice z 18. storočia 230
- P a s t i e r i k o v á, Marta: Dispozícia domu a využívanie obytných priestorov v turčianskej Blatnici v 80. rokoch 20. storočia..... 238

ROZHLADY-SPRÁVY-GLOS Y

- Jubileum Dr. Emy Drábikovej (Peter S l a v k o v s k ý)..... 253
- K jubileu Doc. Dr. Lubice Droppovej (Milan L e š č á k) 253
- Prof. Dr. Béla Gunda (1911-1994) (Ján P o d o l á k)..... 256

- Prijatie u prezidenta Slovenskej republiky (-slav-).....258
- Naivné umenie včera a dnes. Insita 1994 (Olga D a n g l o v á).....259
- Pracovný seminár „Ekotypy a rodina na Slovensku“ (Zuzana B e ň u š k o v á).....262
- X. Medzinárodná konferencia o etnologickom výskume stravy (Sylvia D i l l i n b e r g e r o v á).....263
- Keď múzeum oslavuje (Jarmila P a l i č k o v á).....264
- Záverečný protokol Etnofilmu Čadca 1994266

RECENZIE-ANOTÁCIE

- Samuel Augustini ab Hortis: Cigáni v Uhorsku (Arne B. M a n n)267
- Tibor Nečas: Českoslovenští Romové v letech 1938 – 1945 (Arne B. M a n n)268
- Elena Marušiaková – Veselin Popov: Ciganite v Bulgaria (Eva K r e k o v i č o v á).....269
- Romano džaniben (Zuzana K u m a n o v á)270
- Anatolij Ponomariov: Ukrajinska etnografia (Mikuláš M u š i n k a)271
- Smolińska, T.: Tradycyjne zwyczaje i obrzędy śląskie (Hana H l ô š k o v á).....273
- Tátra! Zsuzsanna: Leányélet (Zita Š k o v i e r o v á).....274
- Cantauw-Groschek, Ch. – Tenschert, U.: Kinderalltag in Stadt und Land 1800-1945 (Sylvia D i l l i n b e r g e r o v á)275
- Preserving the Anthropological Record (Jarmila P a l i č k o v á).....276
- Národopisné kresby J. V. Scheybala (Jarmila P a l i č k o v á).....277
- J. Beňko: Stropkov (Ján P o d o l á k).....278
- Cavendish, R.: Dějiny magie (Juraj Z a j o n c).....279
- Pramene k tradičnej duchovnej kultúre Slovenska (Daniel L u t h e r).....281
- Anotácie282

CONTENTS

STUDIES

- B e ň u š k o v á, Zuzana: The relationship between the secular and the sacred in ceremonies and festivals..... 159**
- M a n n o v á, Elena: The self-presentation of the German Society middle classes in Bratislava in the 19th century 167**
- L á b a d y o v á, Nora: The folk play about St. Dorothy in Slovakia..... 177**
- K i l i á n o v á, Gabriela: An Old Theme in the Present Time: Narratives about Death in Modern Society 197**

DISCUSSION

- An Interview with Prof. Dr. Michael Mitterauer (Zuzana B e ň u š k o v á)..... 205
- Ethnofilm in Contemporary and Scientific Contexts (Milan L e š č á k) 210
- Some Remarks on the Ethnographic Film Situation (Václav M a c e k) 216
- (Before) The Time of Synthesis (Viliam J a b l o n i c k ý)..... 220

MATERIALS

- S t o l i č n á, Rastislava: The Basic Food – Bread among Slovaks in Hungary..... 224**

- Ch u r ý, Slavko: Ethnographic Materials in 18th Century Trial Papers from the Liptov District of Northern Slovakia230**
- P a s t i e r i k o v á, Marta: The Disposition and the Use of the Dwelling House in Blatnica, Turiec District of Central Slovakia.....238**

HORIZONS-NEWS-GLOSSARY

- The Anniversary of Dr. Ema Drábiková (Peter S l a v k o v s k ý).....253
- The Anniversary of Doc. Dr. Lubica Droppová (Milan L e š č á k)253
- Prof. Dr. Béla Gunda (1911-1994) (Ján P o d o l á k).....256
- An Audience with the President of the Slovak Republic258
- Naive Art Yesterday and Today. INSITA 1994 (Olga D a n g l o v á).....259
- Seminar „Ecotypes and the Family in Slovakia“ (Zuzana B e ň u š k o v á).....262
- The Tenth International Conference on Ethnological Food Research (Sylvia D i l l n b e r g e r o v á)263
- When the Trnava Museum has an Anniversary (Jarmila P a l i č k o v á).....264
- The Final Report of Ethnofilm in Čadca 1994266

BOOKREVIEWS-ANNOTATIONS

AN OLD THEME IN THE PRESENT TIME NARRATIVES ABOUT DEATH IN MODERN SOCIETY

GABRIELA KILIÁNOVÁ

*PhDr. Gabriela Kiliánová, CSc., Institute of Ethnology, Slovak Academy of Sciences,
Jakubovo nám. 12, 813 64 Bratislava, Slovakia*

Death, as the define conclusion of the life of the individual, plays a key role in the human society. The author deals with death as a general anthropological constant narrative theme. She analyses the old personification of Death as a female being, clothed in white. The assertion is supported by the material which the author has been collecting in the fieldwork throughout Slovakia, as well as from public and archival sources.

It is probably a basic quality of being human, that a person is forced to understand the world around his or herself: wanting to obtain a conception about oneself alone, about other people or the surrounding world. The human being creates what we, in the widest meaning of the word, would call worldview. B. Malinowski convinced us of this, that in each known human group, we are able to investigate three basic components of human thinking (although only in the simplest form): religion, magic and science.¹ These fundamental components create a basis upon which the construction of worldview concepts is built. That is, the fundamental postulates which determine the behaviour and activity of the individual, explain and justify his or her place in society, in the immediate environment and in the cosmos. All cultural phenomena are attached to this construction of worldview concepts and, at the same time, they reflect it. Folk narration, in the way that it is a concentration of experience, knowledge, emotions and ideas of the individual and the human group, also mirrors these same worldview concepts. At the same time, however, we know very well, that the whole construction of worldview ideas is a very weak building, which succumbs to the unceasing changes in time and space, but not equally in all of its parts. In some corners, this building often preserves the phenomena, pictures and symbols, the substance of which has its foundations in another time and the sense of which, has long ago escaped to its contemporary bearers.

In the majority of human cultures and civilizations, the life cycle forms the basic framework by creating the worldview. The basic phases of human life have always determined biological laws, as well as the cultural rules. The culminating moments - birth, marriage and death - have been accompanied by different cultural phenomena, which have emphasized the importance and the exceptional nature of these disruptions, these *rites de passage*, for

the individual and for society. Death, as the definitive conclusion of the life of the individual, plays a key role in the human culture. B. Malinowski has observed: "From all starting points of religion the last basic event of life has the greatest importance - death."² The attitude towards death, as Malinowski further writes, is very complex; complex, yet with more similarities existing between different nations and groups than we might at first assume. Emotions, which are evoked by death, are very contradictory: on the one hand, there is the love for the dead person, while on the other, there is the aversion to the dead body and the fear in the face of something terrible. The whole complex of emotions finds its reflection in the spontaneous behaviour and in the ritual actions surrounding death.³

In the culture of European nations, an open and balanced attitude towards death had more or less prevailed from Middle Ages up to the end of the 19th century. Death was the daily companion of the human being and was simply seen as the unavoidable end to life.⁴

I do not think that the person in the past more willingly thought about death than the person in the present, but he or she came in touch with death much more often. Frequent wars, epidemics, the high mortality of children, as well as of adults, forced the individual to face up to the fact of death many times during a lifetime. The person in the past often lived in only one location for their entire life, where he or she knew the majority of the inhabitants and where the death of a person had to be "shared" with a wider audience, a death was necessarily a public event. Death was always present: there was the obligation to participate in the leavetaking and in burial rituals of the dying and there was the very close contact of eschatological concepts in the daily life of a person (the general belief in the afterlife amongst Europe's pagan and Christian ethnic groups).⁵

By the turn of the 19th and 20th century, the attitude towards death had begun to change. Many researchers have found it very significant that, in the everyday culture of European civilization, the idea of death is suppressed, avoided, and neglected. In turn, the preparation for death began to disappear from people's daily life and consciousness as well. As more and more people's faith in the Christian religion diminished and dissipated, in which the eschatology had created an important part, many people lost the occasions to reflect and their very ability to reflect upon their own death, upon mortality; these considerations have been pushed to the background. Psychologists and sociologists, as well as ethnologists, have expressed their concerns about this attitude towards death.⁶

In Slovak folk culture, as it had in former epochs of European culture, the open, balanced attitude towards death still prevailed even in the first half of the 20th century. The death of a person and the cult of death occupied the minds of the people, to the point that some researchers⁷ spoke about it being the most expressive phenomenon of folk philosophy. Death was connected with a number of beliefs and demonological concepts. In the course of the year, people in the framework of their calendar and working customs met with various portences, predictions, superstitions about life and death. The problem of death was therefore solidly anchored in daily life and deeply rooted in the consciousness of the people.

From about the mid-20th century (though earlier, in some regions, for example, in southwestern Slovakia, around the manufacturing centers in northern and central Slovakia), under the influence of industrialization, urbanization and higher level of education, the rural-pastoral traditional folk culture began to disintegrate. In connection with this erosion, the worldview conceptions of a very wide strata of inhabitants began to change and, therefore attitudes towards death were also altered. The same civilizational development took place as it had in the rest of Europe. In Slovakia, however, some factors, provoked by changes in the state system, further influenced it.

In the early 1950's, after the communist government had seized power, the state cultural and educational institutions began systematically to fight against what they considered to be anachronistic cultural holdovers: beliefs, customs, old rituals, etc. With equal intent, the state tried to undermine the strong position of the various churches of Slovakia⁸ and to prevent their influence on the daily, as well as the festive, life of the people. Despite the general development of civilization, investigations have shown that the narratives about death and the dead, even today, comprise an important part of the oral repertoire in Slovakia. I suppose that this can be explained by several facts:

1. In villages and country towns, despite strong pressure from the state, some phenomena of traditional culture connected with death have been saved (for instance, the folk burial ritual, the wider participation of relatives and friends in the events around the funeral, many beliefs and demonological concepts). This cultural development, connected with the older phase, has made it possible to transmit the older narratives about death (tales, legends, memorates, oral personal narratives etc.)
2. The state power, despite its vehement efforts, was not completely successful in eliminating the church's influence in the lives of people. Especially with regards to death, the greater part of the Slovak population has considered there to be no substitute for the role of church in funeral rituals.⁹ This has been typical of most people regardless of their social status, profession or age in both rural and urban areas.
3. Death is a general anthropological constant narrative theme. It is a subject that all human civilizations and all human generations must square with. This narrative theme therefore can not entirely disappear from any repertoire.

Narratives about death and the dead, as mysteries and ghost stories (memorates, legends, oral personal narratives) appear in the oral repertoire especially in the middle and older generation the year round. We can note them, for instance, by talks in small intimate groups in the villages and towns. The occurrence of these narratives is more common at the actual events, such as, the death of relative or friend at a funeral in the immediate locale, on a Holy Day dedicated to the memory of dead people (2nd November), on the anniversary of the death of a close relative when people visit the cemetery, meet together in common family lunch or dinner, etc.

Folk narratives fulfill various functions. They can amuse, inform or educate the audience. Narration is also social communication. It brings people together, it consolidates a social group. I think that narratives about death fulfill more tasks than the folk narration in general. They make possible the expression of a theme, which is suppressed in daily life. These narratives provide for the psycho-hygienic function of the individual: to unburden the mind of a cruel event or the fear of death. At the same time, the narrator can profit from the possibilities that are given to him or her by the older, pre-existing folk plots and models. Even today we can observe, that narratives and talks about this theme are connected with old beliefs, sometimes to such an extent, that the researcher may find the data surprising. A nice example of the overlap of older and newer ideas is given to us in the material about the death figure in the folk narrative.¹⁰

Slovak personification finds its roots in the general Slavic extended image of death as a female being, clothed in white.¹¹ In Slovak, as well as in the other Slavic languages, the word "death" is in the female gender grammatically. Death is called *Smrt'* or *Smrtka* in Slovak.

New images have gradually been layered atop the original image of a woman in white. These new images spread during the Middle Ages in our territory thanks to Christian iconography. These personifications saw their origins in the Bible. Death was characteri-

zed as a reaper, apocalyptic rider or hunter.¹² In European iconography from the Middle Ages up to the present, the most common picture of death has been that of a skeleton, clothed or unclothed, although initially without the now well-known scythe.¹³ In Slovakia, this widespread European image, became established for the most part in the Baroque period. Among the widest strata of the population, this came about thanks to the advent of the popular press and folk literature. A change in the colour symbolism occurred at this time as well. White, as the original colour of sorrow was changed to black by the nobility and the middle classes as late as the end of 18th. From cities, this change in colours spread to the countryside.

Despite all of the changes in symbolism and pictures, the old image of death as a woman in white has been preserved till today especially in narratives and songs.

The observations of Anna Kowalska-Lewicka are very interesting: she finds a parallel functioning in the two images of death - death as a woman in white and death as a skeleton - in the folk ideas of Poland in 19th and the first half of 20th century and, in some regions, up to the present.¹⁴ According to author, the majority of the informants said that death looks like a skeleton wielding a scythe when asked a direct question about it. This image is the same as the figure of death in folk theatre and in folk art. Parallel to this, in folk beliefs and in folk narrations, death appears as a female being in white clothes or as an unknown common woman.

In Slovakia, the material has not shown such a clear duality in the images of death. We may better speak about the continuity of the older and newer image in the minds of people and about the succession of the new idea under the influence of the development of civilization, from its older and from its syncretic elements.

In the rural environment, the older image of the woman in white still prevails (especially with informants from middle and older generations.) This picture is only partially influenced by newer symbols. (Death or Smrtka, carries a scythe sometimes as well). Only in villages of west and southwest Slovakia, the memory of the older image is fading, where Death is envisioned by people as a woman in black (a change of colour) or as a skeleton. Similarly, in the larger towns the personification and symbol of the death is a skeleton.

The gathering of folkloristic data of Slovakia resulted in a rather rich body of texts that can be divided into 10 thematic groups:¹⁵

1. the meeting with personified Death in the form of a skeleton. (very rare),
2. the meeting with personified Death in the image of a woman image - Smrtka,
3. the meeting with Death as a zoomorphic image,
4. Death giving a warning,
5. Death as a companion,
6. Death brings about death,
7. the ferrying of Death,
8. Death asks to be transported to at a certain place,
9. Death as some other demonological person (in Slovakia, this is most often Lucia)
10. the successful resistance to Death.

Of all the thematic groups in Slovakia, the most widespread are the second and the eight.

In the narratives, the personified Death appears as a large woman in white carrying a lantern or she appears as a young woman in an old-fashion clothes. She is able to grow to a larger-than-life size and walk in giant steps, overcome or hurdle high hindrances. In some legends, Death is represented by an old ugly woman, who is sitting on a stone or she walks and draws a sheet behind her. Death also habitually sits in the tree. People even imagine

Death as a small girl, who grows physically larger all the time that she is in view. Finally, Death can be a common old woman with a scythe in her hand.

Text No.1

Well, I saw Smrtka like this. Well, it was her I saw, Death. I was bringing water real late in the evening, and I was already knowing that my neighbour was going to die. At that time we still used to bring water from the river. And I had small children, you know, and cattle, so I went so late to bring water so I wouldn't have to run and do it early in the morning. That's why I went so late. A car was passing by so I waited on this side of the road to let it pass. And suddenly I saw this women up inback of the willow, a large nice dressed woman. But I didn't care, I didn't know what it was, anyway. So I came to this willow, and when the car had passed, the women wasn't there at all anymore. But I brought this water even to my door-step anyway, there we had our old house in that time and I was feeling afraid there and stumbled into the room. And the children asked me:

“What happened, Mum?”

“ Well, nothing, I sorta tripped up.”

Because I was worried that they'd be frighten. Well, then my neighbour, the poor thing, she died in a short time, but I don't know when. This, this I saw, but any another things, no.

(The author's field research, 1982, northern Slovakia, the informant was a farmer-woman, 70 years old).

Death appears in a zoomorphic form as a small black or white dog, cat or white rabbit. The person sees or meets Death if they are or somebody from their family or from friends will die.

Text No.2

Our neighbour narrated this to us. Here in the past, there was a castle and there up the hill, there where those buildings are now, well, there was a cow-shed. And there the landlord had his cows, there on the side was a dairy, where the cheese was made. And this neighbour was friend of those making the cheese so she used to come and sit around with them. Well and when she was coming from there, so she said, a white rabbit was in front of her. It went around her, sat down and she made a move to this rabbit to catch it and all at once she saw nothing - the rabbit didn't run or anything. Later a man died there, where the dairy was.

(The author's field research, 1990, eastern Slovakia, the informant was a worker-woman, 74-years old).

Smrtka can be met as a demonological person on her way through the world. Very often there are narratives about carrying, transporting or driving death. Death in the form of an old woman stops a boy and asks him to carry her to a certain house in the village. There the transporter sees how she kills an old man. Also Smrtka let herself be carried to a wedding and kills the groomsman. The man, who has carried her, is the only person who sees it. In another case, Death jumps on the back of man and has herself carried aimlessly around the village. She gets off the down only after threats and vulgar importunities. As punishment she breaks the man's leg. Sometimes, Death has been to known jump on the back of a girl, who is going home from a wedding late at night. Smrtka has herself carried across the river. The girl dies in the morning of fear.

A cartman drives an unknown women, which has stopped him in the night along the road. She gets off the cart by a house in the village. The woman gave him advice how to do good business. The cartman hears in the morning that a man has died in that very house.

Text No.3

Smrtka once come to a man and told him:

“Carry me!”

“Ah, but you’re heavy! Why should I carry you?”

“Oh, don’t worry! Just carry me!”

So she sat on his shoulders and then she was light as a feather. And then he carried her somewhere beyond the River Vah. And then:

“Here, put me down under this window!”

And when he put her down under the window, she told him:

“Do you know what? You must look inside through the window to what I’ll do. You’ll see what I’ll do.”

And he looked through the window and she struck the groomsman on his head with a wand. And the groomsman sunk to knees, fell down and was dead. And then she came back and told him:

“Did you see, what I’ve done?”

He said he had. And once again she got on his back and once again he had to carry her back from where he’d taken her.

(The author’s field research, 1972, western Slovakia, a farmer-women, 64-years old).

The narratives about Death giving a warning are relatively extensive. An old women is calling out to Death. When Smrtka appears, the old women is afraid and asks her to help her with her burden. Death warns her not to call her without a reason, because she doesn’t help people carry things, but she carries the people away. (AaTh 845). In another text, a man meets an unknown women on the road. He greets her politely. It is Death. For his politeness she reveals to him when he will die or she sends him home to prepare himself for his death. In another, three Smrtka are singing in the cemetery. A hunch-backed man meets them and makes their song better. In their joy, the three Smrtka take him his hunch-back away. Another hunch-backed man also wants to be cured. He goes to the cemetery but he spoils the song of the Smrtka. For punishment they give him another hunch in his back (AaTh 503). In another narrative, Death meets a boy in the night, a boy who is coming back from a christening party. She gives him a slap in the face for the fact that he doesn’t sing when he is coming from a such joyous event. Black marks remain on the boy’s face from the slap.

Death as a companion is the narrative group about Smrtka haunting and accompanying people on the roads. She crosses the road to a boy and beats him. A man going from the pub rudely tries to fondle an unknown woman, who is walking parallel with him. She punishes him. It was Death.

Text No.4

Well, my grandmother once told me about Smrtka. That neighbour over there, he was such a joking fellow, always using bad language, a really bad man, and always crudely making fun of something. He was fearless fellow, our hero was. And he told my grandmother once:

“Ah, you know what? Yesterday I was coming from the pub and somebody gave me a slap but I don’t know who it was. A big woman had come by and I’d grabbed her arse. Yes, I grabbed her good. And you know what? She gave me such a slap, that I couldn’t remember where I was, ‘cept I was on earth. And who it was, I don’t know, such a big women.”

(Field research of the author in 1981, North Slovakia, informant, a schoolgirl, 10-years old).

The group, Death brings death, contains narratives, in which, for instance, a sick person sees Smrtka and she pulls the person by the leg and the person never would be able to stand upright again and would die in a short time. Up to the present, the legends relate that, before great epidemics, not one, but three Smrtka would come. These can be three white women or two white fays and Death. In the case of the later, Smrtka has a crooked leg she is not able to follow the another two women. Threatening and cursing them, she inadvertently helps the afflicted people, shouting the cure for the epidemic.

In the group, the Ferrying of Death, the oarsmen ferry three old women across the river. These are the Smrtka and the next day a great illness breaks out in the village beyond the river.

Finally, in Slovakia narratives about the successful resistance to Death also occur. Most often these are in relation to a mother, who pleads that Death not yet take her away. She is a widow and she must raise her children or her children are too small and need her. Death gives her a year. Then, a year to the day, the woman dies in the same place where she met Death for the first time. The second possibility is that Death takes away a replacement victim in place of the woman. It is usually an easy mark: an old or ill person, a small weak baby or child. The woman lives with awareness, that she has her life at the expense of another person.

The ambivalent attitude towards the death, which Malinowski had observed, can be seen clearly reflected in these narratives. Obviously, in this way, it is possible to explain every different understanding of death. Death runs the gamut of personifications. On the one hand, death can be a positive person - the helper, the good companion of the man, the adviser, while on the other hand, this personification does harm to people and is the cruel harbinger of the death.

In this way, the old image appears to this day in the oral repertoire throughout Slovakia. This image exists in the narration of various social and age groups, in legends, memorates, as well as in urban legends or even in parodies and jokes. As for instance in an absurd joke, which was recently circulating among the youth in Bratislava.

Text No.5

A Stroke is sitting on a tree. (An old image of the Death sitting on the tree.) A policeman comes to her.

“Well, my dear lady, get down from that tree!”

He shakes the tree once - nothing. Twice - nothing. Third one - nothing.

“Good heavens, let me be, above, I am a cerebral stroke.”

(Field research of Zora Vanovičová in 1990.)¹⁶

The old personification of Death exists today very naturally amongst other images, and their bearers are not aware of the heterogeneity of these ideas. This material shows us, once again, the generally known fact, that all death-connected cultural phenomena have been built into every cultural system in its archaic layers. It only changes over time with considerable difficulty, with more difficulty than any other element in the cultural system- because it is down this last road a person will surely go.

- 1 MALINOWSKI, B: Magic, Science and Religion and other Essays. Quotation according the German translation *Magie, Wissenschaft und Religion und andere Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main 1973, 3 ff.
- 2 MALINOWSKI, B.: op.cit., 32.
- 3 MALINOWSKI, B.: op.cit., 33.
- 4 ARIES, P.: *L'homme devant la mort*. Quotation according to the German translation *Geschichte des Todes*. Münster-Wien 1980, 13-34.
- 5 ARIES, P.: op.cit., 30.
- 6 MOŽNÝ, I.: *Moderní rodina. Mýty a skutečnosti*. (The Modern Family. Myth and Reality). Brno 1990, 50 ff.
GEBERT, K.: *Skonacz przed śmiercią*. (To Die before Death). In: *Polska sztuka ludowa* 49 (1986), 17-20.
- 7 CHORVÁTHOVÁ, L.: *Pohrebné zvykoslovie v Bošáckej doline*. (Burial Customs in Bošáca Valley). Diploma thesis. Bratislava 1974, 17.
HORVÁTHOVÁ, E.: *Zvyky a povery*. (Customs and Superstitions). In: *Slovensko (Slovakia) II, Lud (Folk) 2*. Bratislava 1975, 100 ff.
- 8 In Slovakia there are 14 churches: 9,7% of Slovak population is without denomination, 17,5% unknown, 60,3% Roman Catholic, 6,2% Protestant Evangelic, 3,4% Greek Catholic, 1,6% other reformed Christian churches, 1,3% other churches. The first result of the 1990 census in Czecho-Slovakia. In: *Československý Profil Special. Supplement. No51/52 (1991)*, 1.
- 9 LEŠČÁK, M. - BEŇUŠKOVÁ, Z.: *Inštitucionálne formy obradovej kultúry a sviatkovania v súčasnom dedinskom prostredí*. (The Institutional Forms of Ritual Culture and Festivity in the Contemporary Rural Environment). In: *Slovenský národopis* 35 (1987), 191-225.
- 10 This assertion is supported by the material which I have been collecting since 1970 in my fieldwork throughout Slovakia, as well as from public and archival sources. I have analyzed the bodies of narratives in a study "Die Gestalt des Todes in den Volkserzählungen. Slowakisches Material im mitteleuropäischen Kontext." (The Figure of the Death in the Folk Narrative. Slovak Material in Central-European Context). In: *Ethnologia Slavica* 26 (prepared for press). The study also contains a catalogue of narratives about death in Slovakia and index of all sources.
- 11 MÁCHAL, H.: *Nákres slovanského bájesloví*. (A Draft of Slavic Mythology). Praha 1891, 85-88.
MOSZYŃSKI, K.: *Kultura ludowa Slowian*. (Folk Culture of Slavs). II. Warszawa 1967, 107-108 and 701.
HORVÁTHOVÁ, E.: op.cit., 1002.
- 12 Job 5:26, Revelation 6, Psalms 7.
- 13 *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*. (The Lexicon of Christian Iconography). IV. Roma-Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1972, 328-332.
MOHR, G.H.: *Lexikon der Symbole. Bilder und Zeichen der christlichen Kunst*. (The Lexicon of Symbols. Pictures and Signs of Christian Art). Düsseldorf -Köln 1971, 267-268.
- 14 KOWALSKA-LEWICKA, A.: *Ludowe wyobrazenia śmierci*. (Folk Images of Death). In: *Polska sztuka ludowa* 49 (1986), 21-30.
- 15 This division relies on the Catalogue of German legends about Death and the Dead. Müller, I. - Röhrich, L.: X. *Der Tod und die Toten*. (Death and the Dead). In: *Deutsches Jahrbuch f. Volkskunde* 13 (1967), 346-397.
- 16 If this "joke" does not make sense in its English translation, it should be understood that it makes also little sense in Slovak. It is only used here to illustrate syncretic elements.

SLOVENSKÝ NÁRODOPIŠ

Vydáva Ústav etnológie Slovenskej akadémie vied v Slovak Academic Press, spol. s r.o.

Ročník 43, 1995, číslo 2

Vychádza štvrtročne

Hlavný redaktor:

PhDr. Milan Leščák, CSc.

Výkonná redaktorka:

PhDr. Zora Vanovičová

Redakčná rada: PhDr. Stanislav Brouček, CSc., Doc. Ľubica Droppová, CSc., PhDr. Božena Filová, CSc., Doc. Emília Horváthová, DrSc., PhDr. Václav Hrníčko, PhDr. Josef Jančář, CSc., PhDr. Milan Kiripolský, PhDr. Soňa Kovačevičová, DrSc., PhDr. Eva Krekovičová, CSc., PhDr. Martin Mešša, PhDr. Ján Mjartan, DrSc., Prof. Ján Podolák, DrSc., PhDr. Zora Rusnáková, CSc., PhDr. Peter Salner, CSc., PhDr. Miroslav Válka.

Adresa redakcie: Jakubovo nám. 12, 813 64 Bratislava

Registr. č. 7091

Cena 39,- Sk (jednotlivé číslo), celoročné predplatné 156,- Sk

Rozširuje, objednávky a predplatné (aj do zahraničia) prijíma Slovak Academic Press, spol. s r. o. P.O. BOX 57, Nám. Slobody 6, 810 05 Bratislava

SLOVAK ETHNOLOGY

Quarterly Review of the Institute of Ethnology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences

Vol. 43, 1995, Number 2

Editors: Milan Leščák, Zora Vanovičová

Address of Editor: Jakubovo nám. 12, 813 64 Bratislava, Slovakia

Distributed by Slovak Academic Press, Ltd., P.O. BOX 57, Nám. Slobody 6, 810 05 Bratislava, Slovakia and Slovart, A.C., odd. časopisov, Jakubovo nám. 12, 811 09 Bratislava

L'ETHNOLOGIE SLOVAQUE

Revue de l'Institut d'ethnologie de l'Académie slovaque des sciences

Année 43, 1995, No 2

Rédacteurs: Milan Leščák, Zora Vanovičová

Adresse de la rédaction: Jakubovo nám. 12, 813 64 Bratislava, Slovaquie

SLOWAKISCHE ETHNOLOGIE

Zeitschrift des Ethnologischen Institutes der Slowakischen Akademie der Wissenschaften

Jahrgang 43, 1995, Nr. 2

Redakteure: Milan Leščák, Zora Vanovičová

Redaktion: Jakubovo nám. 12, 813 64 Bratislava, Slowakei

Podávanie novinových zásielok povolené RPP Bratislava, Pošta 12, 8. 8. 1994, č. j. 346-RPP/94

SLOVENSKÝ NÁRODOPIIS

ISSN 1335-1303

MIČ 49 616