

for Creative Anachronism, a historical/fantasy/recreation organization. Sparkis' analysis of role terms and the members' ranking of roles indicates that to those who participate in this type of play, fun and responsibility are both connected to prestige. The most important feature attracting participants to this history-based play are the creation of historical roles and the enactment of these roles.

The book review in this issue is Dina and Joel Sherzer's edited book *Humor and Comedy in Puppety: Celebration in Popular Culture* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1987, reviewed by Regina Bendix).

The publication of *Play and Culture* by The Association for the Study of Play and the acceptance of selected papers presented at the association's annual meeting and other submitted articles testify to the fact that the association is forging ahead with vigor in its role as an international and multi-disciplinary forum for play scholars. Professional membership to the association (includes subscription to *Play and Culture*) is \$35.00 per year. Student/Retiree membership (includes subscription) is \$25.00 per year.

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- BENNETT, GILLIAN, PAUL S. SMITH and J[OHN] D. A. WIDDOWSON, editors. *Perspectives on Contemporary Legend*. Volume II. CECTAL Conference Papers Series No. 5. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987. 207 pages. Paper £9.95; US\$16.50. ISBN 1-85075-118-8.
- BENNETT, GILLIAN and PAUL S. SMITH, editors. *Monsters with Iron Teeth*. Perspectives on Contemporary Legend. Volume III. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988. 243 pages. Paper £9.95; US\$16.50. ISBN 1-85075-119-6.
- BENNETT, GILLIAN and PAUL S. SMITH, editors. *The Questing Beast*. Perspectives on Contemporary Legend. Volume IV. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989. 252 pages. Paper £9.95; US\$16.50. ISBN 1-85075-120-X.

These three yearbooks follow a first volume (see review in *Asian Folklore Studies* 45: 306-308); a fifth volume is in preparation. All of them publish papers read at the "Contemporary Legend" annual meetings (Sheffield, England, 1982 ff.). Although dated 1987, 1988, and 1989, the three volumes just recently left the press; they appear to be so much alike in their content and general scholarly level, that, upon reading them, I decided they merit a joint review.

Together, the three volumes contain 38 papers, of which 17 could be termed "mini-monographs," each describing a tale-type and quoting one or more versions of it, with a little interpretation. The rest of the papers try to tackle this or that theoretical or quasi-theoretical question. From volume to volume, the grappling with the question of what is a "contemporary legend" or even a legend in general, and "does 'contemporary legend' exist at all?" (Vol. IV, p. 100) grows more prominent. Is this a writing on the wall, signaling a crisis? Is it a crisis that seems to stem from the shallow scholarly basis on which most of the papers in all four volumes rest?

As an exercise in the sociology of scholarship, this reviewer did some counting.

The four volumes list between them 70 participants in the annual meetings. Of them, 40 attended once only, while 14 constitute the "hard core" of people who took part in three or more meetings. By countries, we have:

England, Scotland, Ireland: 35 participants

USA and Canada: 25 participants

West, North, and Central Europe: 9 participants

All the rest of the world: 1(!) participant (from Japan).

Read: "contemporary legend" is a British and Anglo-North American subject of interest. That does not seem to be a healthy state of affairs for the field of inquiry. This reviewer is strongly reminded of the British folklorists of a hundred years ago, with their primeval, amateurish writing, which was fine for their time and very valuable in pioneering a new field of inquiry. But—that was a whole century ago! And even then, in a short time British folklore scholarship was left behind by continental scholarship.

Very widespread in English-speaking folkloristics—and an omen auguring a poor future for it—is its almost exclusive reliance on scholarship written in English (or translated into English). What is more, a work has to be published in an English-speaking country in order to attract attention. Whatever is done and written in the rest of the world is *very* far away. The four volumes in this series are a good example of this practice. Let me add that, for various socio-political reasons and reasons of academic tradition, scholars in English-speaking countries have in the past not been among the first-ranking folklorists. Taken together, all these conditions explain why and how such a narrow scholarly foundation makes for poor results. This reviewer hopes that English-speaking scholarship will soon overcome these problems.

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DAVIDSON, HILDA ELLIS, editor. *The Seer in Celtic and Other Traditions*.

Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989. x+146 pages. Illustrations. Hardcover £20.00; ISBN 0-85976-259-9.

The Gaelic word for poet, *fili*, comes from the verb "to see."

People who see in the ordinary way (Hebrew *Rā'āh*) speak prose. Prophets, who see with the Second Sight (*Hāzāh*), speak in verse.

Welsh prophecy, too, in its heyday, was "largely a native poetic tradition."

So say three different contributors to this engrossing and suggestive book. But how is it that poets prophesy, and prophets poetize? Is it that prose follows the laws of logic and of time unfolding in a sequentially measured way, whereas the poet grasps past, present, and future all at once, in a single vivid continuum, and tells his tales in a form more appropriate to his vision? The world he sees is not the world we see (not now, at any rate). And so he speaks from another world, another time, another context; his language is therefore naturally vibrant and more than slightly elliptical. His is a fairy tongue. It is not our everyday tongue.

So there are two kinds of seeing: plain seeing (of what is there), and envisioning (of what is beyond, and not yet there). But for every Amos, calling out his powerful stanzas on the temple steps, there must be a hundred humble practitioners of vision inside the temple . . . or inside the hovel or the storefront.