

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.

Carmen Blacker, in her fine contribution on Japan, tells the story of a Buddhist priest whose clients, a young couple, ask his help in putting to rest two infant souls lost through abortion. He feels a tap on his shoulder, and turns to see two other embryo ghosts, who say (in chorus), "Don't forget us!" The wife confesses to her husband that there were two more that she never told him about. All four are given names and memorial tablets and placed in the care of Kannon.

Another example. A Pakistani woman in London writes to the agony column of *West Indian World* that her husband, since his last visit to Pakistan, has become abusive. The resident healer replies: "First thing in the morning make a cup of tea for your husband and recite part of the Koran. Then blow in the cup before giving it to your husband."

Crude stuff; but this too is a healing tradition that goes back to the poet-saints and healer-poets of the Punjab.

In this book, the record of a scholarly symposium, the Punjabi tales are told by a social scientist (Venetia Newall) using content analysis; the case for Israel is presented by a Biblical scholar (J. R. Porter); Carmen Blacker (Lecturer in Japanese at Cambridge) writes most engagingly of healers who, looking at the patient, actually see the fox (or vengeful ghost or *kami*) who is causing the mischief; a Sinologist (Michael Loewe) outlines the classical Chinese cosmology, and shows how the *daoshi* or the diviner gets his client into proper harmony with a cosmos that turns on its regular course, without interventions. No foxes here; no anguished souls floating in limbo. So there is the usual discontinuity in this anthology; the papers connect, but only loosely. The reader is left to bring the book to completion.

In the overview, Asian second sight is rich in its variety; the Celtic/British form focuses mainly on anticipations of death. As a seer from the Isle of Skye comments, the Second Sight is a "spasmodic and involuntary ability to see events in the womb of time, generally those of a melancholy nature." Thus, for example, an Englishman, on St. Mark's Eve, is apt to see ghostly forms marching into church. They are the souls of those who are to die in the coming year. But why does a Welshman, on the same occasion, hear but not see the ghostly procession? Paul Tillich used to say that religion comes down to seeing and hearing. Where the pulpit is central, we hear; where the altar is central, we see. But the folk tradition has a richness that the great religions will not allow for. Second sight (and second hearing, and second scent) can come to anyone. It can be a welcome gift or a terrifying burden. It can lead the seer to a life of service, or to a precipitous death. The Asian pattern inclines toward service.

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LINDAHL, CARL. *Earnest Games: Folkloric Patterns in the Canterbury Tales*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989. ix+197 pages. Figures, index. Paper US\$10.95; ISBN 0-253-20550-6. Cloth (1987) US\$29.95; ISBN 0-253-32503-X.

The number of books now being published on Chaucer reaches well over two hundred a year, each one offering a different interpretation of the poet's intent and purpose for writing. Carl Lindahl's book is a welcome addition to these studies.