

REVIEWS

Brand, John and Sir Henry Ellis. Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain; 3 vols., index, illustrations. London, George Bell and Sons, 1849; reissued Detroit, Singing Tree Press, 1969. \$38.75.

The concern with, indeed perhaps the obsession for, "survivals" of various sorts has permeated the folkloristics of many scholars in the past. The Grimm brothers saw Märchen as remnants of myth, and ballad scholars have wanted to prove that ballads are surviving bits of greater epics. Even today some scholars and the general public continue to find the explanation for certain kinds of customs within the facile framework of a ready-made theory: survival of an ancient fertility rite. But if this particular concern especially influenced the thinking of any one "school" of folklorists, it was surely the English group of the late nineteenth century. The epitome was perhaps Lang, who could write of folklore as studying the "immaterial relics of old races" (Custom and Myth, 1893, p. 11); and the here and now scholarship of a broadside ballad collector like Charles Hindley was something of an anomaly. The extent to which Lang and the others were committed to "survivals" theory, and indeed whether such a theory has been completely discredited, as some have declared, is debatable. But that does not concern us here. The point is that although the Victorians consistently developed aspects of this theory, they were merely at the tail end of an older tradition of antiquarian and proto-anthropological research, a tradition which equated physical historical remains with customs and oral art. Sir Walter Scott could enthuse over a ruined abbey in very much the same way he would react to a newly recorded ballad. There were material and immaterial antiquities and Lang could later write that archaeology studied the former, folklore the latter (Ibid.). It is partly in the perspective, then, of nearly three centuries of such thinking that we must evaluate Brand and Ellis' Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain.

This book is obviously a major scholarly compilation and indeed Dorson considers it a foundation stone of British folkloristics, dating the beginning of the great period of the development of the discipline in England from its first publication in 1813 (JAF, 74, 307). But actually we are not dealing with a single work but with a succession of editions put together by editors building on the work of predecessors, adding materials and structuring the earlier materials in new ways. The original basis for the later editions was a work put together by the Rev. Henry Bourne in 1725, Antiquates Vulgares. John Brand, who, as bibliophile and the apparently inept secretary to the Society of Antiquaries of London, was in a position to acquire a large corpus of references to matters folkloric, republished an expanded edition in 1777. This was, in effect, a republication of Bourne's work with additional commentaries by Brand appended to each chapter, as well as a new general appendix. Later in his life, however, Brand was able to secure considerably more data and had assembled a large body of collectanea by the time of his death in 1806. This was acquired by a publishing company, which put it in the hands of Sir Henry Ellis, who was at that time a librarian at the British Museum. His editorial results were published in two quarto volumes in 1813, although a reissue of the 1777 edition

had been brought out in 1810. Ellis expanded the work into three volumes in 1841; a second edition of this, published by George Bell, appeared in 1849, and it is from this edition of 1849 that the facsimile reprint under review was made. George Bell and Sons later reprinted the 1841-1849 edition in 1877 and 1882; so far as I am aware, this standard edition of Brand-Ellis was never again republished between 1882 and the present Singing Tree reissue. In 1870 William Carew Hazlitt, a grandson of the great essayist, edited an edition for the publisher John Russell Smith. Then in 1905 Hazlitt published yet a new edition, this time under a new title, Dictionary of Faiths and Folklore of the British Isles, and so extensively rearranged and revised that Hazlitt's name appeared as the sole editor. In the early 1960s the New York publishing firm of Benjamin Blom decided to reissue Hazlitt's edition and gave to Decherd Turner, a librarian at Southern Methodist University, the job of annotating and introducing it in order to make it up-to-date. In a letter to this firm dated January 11, 1965, Turner advised that, in his opinion, the work should be reprinted without any further editing. Turner had at first believed that revision would be essential to make the book useful for the modern reader, but months of research convinced him that the book was already "bursting with sound information." A facsimile edition appeared later in 1965 (Turner's letter is printed as an introduction). In 1900 a one volume condensation had been published (reprinted 1913) and in 1910 William Sharper Knowlson had edited The Origins of Popular Superstitions and Customs, a work which purported to use Brand and Ellis' materials to illuminate only those customs still extant at the beginning of the twentieth century. This work went into a third edition in 1934.

Which of the various editions is the most valuable is perhaps open to debate. Turner clearly opts for Hazlitt's 1905 Dictionary, but I definitely feel Leslie Shepard was correct in selecting the edition of 1849 for reprinting at this time. I disagree with Shepard when, in his introduction to the new edition, he says a folklorist is more apt to consult a calendar arrangement than a dictionary, but Hazlitt's headings are somewhat arbitrary and Brand-Ellis is much more readable in the original format. For those of us interested in the history of the discipline, or who suffer from the antiquarian fancy to own at least facsimiles of monumental editions, the present reprint is clearly preferable. Singing Tree Press is really to be congratulated for its courage in bringing out a work currently in print if in a rather different and somewhat inferior format.

We have said that the notion of "popular antiquities" implied a relationship between physical historical remains and traditional customs, beliefs and the like. Brand himself, in an introduction which he apparently wrote in 1795 (it is closely patterned on his introduction of 1776 published in the 1777 edition) and never lived to see printed, makes an equation between ancient Greek statuary and modern customs. Both are the battered and chipped but still recognizable left-overs of earlier epochs (I, vii). Ellis informs us that Brand had published "a Poem 'written among the ruins of Godstow Nunnery.'" (I, vi). Although I have never seen the poem, I confess that I cannot refrain from interpreting Ellis' description of it as further suggestive of this identification and suggestive also of the prevailing Romantic fascination with ruined abbeys and manors, in short with the medieval.

In this respect also Brand seems to have been much a man of his times and he persists in finding the origins of many customs not merely in medieval times but often in the very ecclesiastical power structure associated so intimately with the Middle Ages. Brand is selfconsciously a good Protestant who rails against the Popery of those times, which of course kept the free spirits of Englishmen in check. Hence many customs and beliefs prevalent in Brand's England were "heathen" antiquities taken over by "Christian, or rather Papal, Rome"; and these have survived, despite the wonders of the Reformation, because

though our own sensible and spirited forefathers were, upon conviction, easily induced to forego religious tenets which had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, yet were the bulk of the people by no means inclined to annihilate the seemingly innocent ceremonies of their former superstitious faith. (I, x-xi)

Brand continues that the Romish errors may have been expunged from the written word, but their vestiges continued in oral tradition. Yet good Anglican though he is, Brand is obviously fascinated, like his contemporaries, perhaps like the Gothic novelists, fascinated by the "perversities" of the darker ages. Yet his attitude, despite his fulminations against Popism, is not one which really sees anything perverse in popular customs and he could also write that "even wisdom may be extracted from the follies and superstitions of our forefathers" (I, xvi).

Although the Romantics might make relatively arduous trips into the countryside to gawk energetically at the skeletal remains of Tintern Abbey, the tradition of antiquarian research was largely bookish. True, the ballad collectors were taking a few verses down "from recitatin," but in England, we must remember, interest in ballads and interest in "popular antiquities" were not quite the same thing, although the interest in "ancient" custom and in the reliques of "ancient" poetry were obviously inter-related and seemed to appeal to kindred spirits. As Dorson points out, there were later to be created separate societies for these two branches of study (JAF, 74, 302). Naturally the basic data on customs and beliefs was gathered from observation of the people, if not from field collecting in the modern sense, but the antiquarian culled much of this data out of a wide variety of older books, histories, travel accounts, and literary works, and developed his collection or study out of these other, often much older sources. The later antiquarian was in large measure a library scholar. Brand was no exception and he cites a vast number of sources, including relevant poetical works.

Obviously his work, which spans three volumes and reaches nearly 1600 pages in length is too large to survey adequately here. The first volume covers calendar customs, a subject which later came to be one of the major areas of concentration for the English folklorists; the second volume contains information chiefly on other types of customs, especially those associated with marriage and burial, although there is quite a miscellany of other information as well, on tavern signs, children's games, adult sport and market fairs, and beliefs about the fairies and the devil; the greater bulk of the data connected with the

supernatural is, however, reserved for Volume III, where witchcraft, sorcery, charms and amulets and the like are treated; in the final volume the authors also set about correcting "vulgar errors," commonly held beliefs about mythical animals and such.

Despite the fact that there is a vague thesis underlying the work, that current customs are survivals of Romish and pagan customs, we cannot consider Brand and Ellis' work a unified study in any sense of the term. At most we might view it as a whole series of very short studies. But ultimately it is really a "collection," a laborious bibliographical survey which pulls together references from years of research; its greatest value is as a reference tool. Brand did not feel the need to argue any theory throughout the work and hence it is unburdened by any elaborate speculations on the part of the editors. His thesis seemed self-evident and he could devote his attentions to compiling historical data on the various customs and beliefs, with information drawn from every conceivable source.

Thus far we have considered Brand and Ellis' work chiefly as an important book in the history of folklore studies, and as a reflection of certain intellectual currents. But it is clearly much more than an historically interesting but dated piece of scholarship, such as Joseph Jacobs' early attempt at folktale classification might be considered today. It is difficult to level "criticism" at the work, however, without surveying all of the many, many original sources to see if the editors have misinterpreted, taken out of context, or failed to understand the nature of any of the material with which they were dealing. Really the only overall weaknesses of the book are those pointed out in 1913 by the Brand Committee of the Folk-Lore Society (F-L, 24, 111-119), which was at that time considering a new and greatly expanded edition; namely, that no one had bothered to prepare a comprehensive bibliography of all the works cited, and that the work ought to be significantly enlarged to include subsequently reported information on the various customs and ideas contained in the work. The committee also recommended that guesses in regard to origins might be deleted in some cases. The first two of these three considerations are not very telling objections. Certainly a bibliography, like the index added to later editions, would be useful. But if we are dealing with isolated sections of the work, the editors' bibliographical citations are manageable. And of course major works can be updated, but that is not to say that all the subsequent findings in some area of investigation ought to be incorporated into one basic work as it goes through successive publications. Such encyclopedism is impractical and a work like the Popular Antiquities should serve only as the outstanding survey of early materials, not as an ever expanding, definitive work under which all new findings should be structured. The Folk-Lore Society ultimately decided, of course, not to update the work per se, but to bring out more or less supplemental volumes on British Calendar Customs.

The final criticism, that Brand and Ellis have the propensity for making somewhat wild suppositions as to the ultimate origins of current "survivals," is a more potent one, despite what we have already said about the absence of general, all pervading theory. There can be no question but that in many cases they include theories of origin based on scanty evidence or upon inadequate seventeenth, eighteenth and early

nineteenth century understandings of classical and medieval culture and practices. For example, to suggest that the practice of Christmas giving to tradesmen (the "Christmas box") grows out of the scandalous Popish practice of offering Christmas masses for the protection of seamen, the money collected for this purpose having been kept in a box until the ship safely returned, is to make a simplistic and indeed tenuous historical connection (I, 496). To connect May Day fires with Baal worship (I, 228, 304) on the basis of vague linguistic suppositions is equally shaky reasoning. Yet in almost no case can it be seen that Brand and Ellis are necessarily adhering to these views or arranging evidence in such a manner as to build up a strong case for any particular theorizing. In both the cases cited here the editors are merely quoting, verbatim, the works of others. Brand seems to have been a scrupulous compiler, inclined to be all-inclusive, to include every bit of data, every opinion on a given subject which he came across. Hence the work is full of various suppositions, some of them of historical interest only, some probably quite valid, along with the mass of factual data. But it seems absurd to criticize the book on this account. Its value lies in the very mass of data brought together in one work; the descriptive and factual material, pulled together by years of labor, is its most useful aspect, but sometimes this material is inextricably bound up with the outdated reasoning and it would be a difficult job of editing to separate the two. And then to the historian of the discipline even the baseless speculations have their value. The book should present no problems to the serious worker aware of its limitations, although it is true that such a later writer as Knowlson could take much of the material at face value and even expand on certain absurdities of interpretation.

It is impossible to here give more than a bare indication of the great value of the information in Brand and Ellis. Perhaps we could cite just one or two cases in which the work contains useful information on British antecedents of American folk materials. I was, for example, working not long ago on annotations for archived Indiana legends, one of which dealt with butter witching. Information on this aspect of witchcraft is relatively meagre. Nevertheless, the Popular Antiquities contains a useful charm unreported elsewhere (III, 312-313). Likewise there is an early reference to white witches' finding lost and stolen articles (III, 4), another motif in several archived texts of legends from Indiana and elsewhere. These are, of course, only two small areas of interest and there is much more rich "documentation." I personally find it curious that Baughman did not make use of the Popular Antiquities in compiling his motif index. There is surely a certain amount of interesting narrative material.

The Popular Antiquities is, then, a still very valuable source book. One could perhaps compare it to Thompson's Motif-Index, although it is not of course nearly so systematic. Like the Index it draws together and arranges a vast corpus of material from other published sources, in many cases otherwise virtually inaccessible to us today. One has to know how to use the Motif-Index for it to be useful; likewise one must be aware of the limitations of Brand and Ellis, but when these are known, the book can be extremely useful for the purposes of the modern folklorist. And, like Thompson's great opus, there is no other work quite like it, no other key to unlock the particular material concerned.

F. A. de Caro
Louisiana State University

[Additional information indicating that my above account of the printing history of Brand-Ellis is not entirely accurate has come to my attention since the completion of my review. Gale Research, the parent company of Singing Tree Press apparently published two editions of the work previously. In 1968 Gale published an edition as part of its Social History Reference Series; in 1967 the firm had published a reprint of a "ca 1890" edition, for which Books in Print lists one Henry as additional editor. In 1968 the title was also published as part of Bohn's Antiquarian Library Series; Henry is also an editor of this edition. The Bohn's volumes are slightly cheaper than any of the Gale volumes. I have not, however, been able to examine any of these. ---F. de C.]

Landes, Ruth. The Mystic Lake Sioux: Sociology of the Mdewankantonwan Santee. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968. 229 -x pp. \$7.50.

Dr. Landes' work, based on a 1935 study directed by Ruth Benedict, is a refreshingly casual ethnography of a small group of Santee Dakota living along the Minnesota-Wisconsin border. The eastern Sioux, like their Plains brethren (who were, of course, responsible for Custer's demise), were passionately addicted to warring with their traditional enemies, the Ojibwa (apparently both groups, ignorant of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's declaration of peace between them, continue their disregard of each other even today), sought mystical experiences and even became intensely involved in love affairs. Alas, the fair maiden, mourning her unrequited love who plunges to her death over a waterfall (thereafter named for her) may not be a romantic fabrication after all.

The major contribution of Dr. Landes' book, however, is in her careful use of multiple anecdotes from her informants both to describe the old way of life (which she realizes is an idealized account), and to subtly compare it to the somewhat acculturated group with whom she was dealing. The "joking relationship" of near kin, for example, so colorlessly described by most ethnographers is brought sharply into focus with numerous personal tales of "jokes" -- most of them cruel and/or crude -- that such a relationship fosters.

The book is most effective in its examination of the culture on the informants' own terms. Dr. Landes makes no attempt to analyze the culture by extracting dry facts and stacking them upon the pages, but rather allows the reader himself to become the fieldworker faced with a society quickly being strangled between its own values and those of the encroaching outside world.

Yvonne J. Milspaw
Folklore Institute

Ullom, Judith C. Folklore of the North American Indians: An Annotated Bibliography, illus. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1969. 124 pages.

Too often, scholarly materials are prepared for the exclusive uses and interests of scholarly audiences, and popular materials, prepared for popular audiences, are rarely seen and appreciated by the scornful professors. In certain quarters, the public schools for example, both kinds