

degli yoruba, è alquanto diversa, perché ogni drammaticità manca nelle vicende di Yemoja e di altre dee, almeno nelle versioni riportate da Witte. Comunque, che la « colpa » di queste entità femminili sia associata anche qui con una particolare angoscia esistenziale sembra dimostrato dal fatto che Yemoja è padrona delle streghe, presenze tutt'altro che benefiche all'interno della società yoruba. In fondo, essa è *prototipo* della strega proprio perché le sue vicende esulano dal modello di comportamento sociale ammesso nella società yoruba.

Un secondo esempio di asocialità appare nelle vicende della dea Osun, una specie di Venere yoruba, protagonista di una serie di divorzi e scandali. Ad essa si attribuisce l'apparizione delle arti magiche (p. 102) e una stretta relazione con il sodalizio delle streghe (di cui v. pp. 184 ss.).

Certamente, tutto ciò non rappresenta che una piccola parte della paziente e limpida analisi di Witte. L'unica cosa che ad essa si potrebbe rimproverare, è di non avere approfondito il legame fra le divinità femminili in vicenda e le streghe, un legame che pure l'A. aveva preannunciato nel suo capitolo concernente le prime (cfr., in particolare, p. 83).

Auspichiamo che una traduzione in lingua inglese possa rapidamente rendere accessibile questo libro al lettore che non riesce a leggere l'olandese. Perché si tratta di un contributo importante allo studio dell'affascinante religione degli yoruba, un contributo che non si limita a ripetere i dati delle ricerche « classiche » in questo campo (quelle di W. Bascom, per esempio), ma le arricchisce di osservazioni personali e di un quadro interpretativo in cui tutti i particolari ricevono la sottile attenzione dell'A.

(I. P. CULIANU)

R. M. DORSON (ed.), *Handbook of American Folklore*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana 1983. Un vol. di pp. XIX-584.

For literary scholars, linguists, historians, anthropologists, folklorists, and all other persons concerned with or interested in American folklore itself and its relations to world folklore, *Handbook of American Folklore* is a mine of solid information. It has already become the standard source of information on the entire field of folklore in the United States. Folklore is a relatively new academic discipline in the United States: this volume brings it of age.

The publication of seventy-two essays by sixty scholars brings the whole field of American folklore into clear focus for the first time. The late dean of American folklore, Distinguished Professor of History and Folklore and Director of the Folklore Institute at Indiana University, Richard Dorson organized this handbook and wrote introductions for each of its sections in addition to writing specific essays on « Folktale Performers », « A Histo-

rical Theory for American Folklore », « Teaching Folklore to Graduate Students; The Introductory Proseminar », and « The Publication of Research ».

Such a vast topic (vast geographically, historically, theoretically, and practically) needs a system of organization, a focus. Professor Dorson chose research as his focus and organized the seventy-two essays under four research oriented headings: Part I: Topics of Research; Part II: Interpretation of Research; Part III: Methods of Research; and Part IV: Presentation of Research. (The volume is concluded with a most helpful annotated bibliography of 306 items, a list of contributors with brief biographies, and a detailed index of fifteen pages).

Part I, Topics of Research, is further divided into five subsections; American Experiences (dealing with colonizing, North American Indians, Afro-Americans, the westward movement, and immigrant and ethnic folklore), American Cultural Myths (treating the noble and ignoble savage, rags to riches, innocence, and the American Adam), American Settings (treating in nineteen essays a wide variety of rural and urban locations), American Entertainments (examining festivals, the theatre, and sports), and American Forms and Performers (studying personal experience stories, conversational genres, singers, tale performers, craftsmen, healers, and children).

Part II, Interpretation of Research, is approached via four essays, two historical, one ethnographical and sociological, and one ideological. Part III, Methods of Research, is presented in thirteen essays with such approaches as field study, archiving, printed source study, literary study, and the use of bibliographies and indexes. Part IV, Presentation of Research, consists of eleven essays with such topics as teaching, publication, indexing, archiving, filming, and establishing state programs.

The entire volume has an informative Introduction by Professor of English, Comparative Literature, and Folklore W. Edson Richmond (Indiana University) which reviews the history of folklore studies in the United States from the beginnings in certain medieval literary studies, through a fusion with some anthropological studies, to the independent studies by folklorists today of « lore » and of the « folk ».

At the end of his own Preface, Professor Dorson aptly states the scholarly function of folklore and of his book; « Through folklore we learn much that is otherwise concealed about the human condition. The *Handbook of American Folklore* sets forth the present state of knowledge of this burgeoning subject and points the way to further advances (p. X) ».

This is the book that should be in the hands of everyone interested in the subject of folklore in the United States. Richard Dorson has left us in this book and in his other excellent books a rich inheritance indeed.

(D. J. McMILLAN)