

determines three main functions of preacher anecdotes: exempla, humor, and group identity. All of the anecdotes that serve as exempla are found in written form or oral versions derived from the written anecdotes. Those which have a humorous function that is therapeutic or revelatory of some fault are found mostly in oral anecdotes, while those which have a humorous function that is aggressive or reconciling are found in both written and oral anecdotes. Those anecdotes which serve to foster group identity are found more so in oral presentations. Medium determines message.

Gary Holloway's analysis of oral and written Church of Christ preacher anecdotes is systematic, thorough, and remarkably lucid. His argument is clearly delineated and substantiated. His treatment of these preacher anecdotes is both perceptive and sensitive. *Saints, Demons, and Asses* is, indeed, a significant contribution to what Ong describes as the "largely unfinished business" of exploring the discrepancy between orality and literacy. But Holloway's work does more. By examining the style and function of the preacher anecdotes collected, he gives us insight into the sensibilities of the Churches of Christ folk group. Further, that examination suggests how folklorists and cultural anthropologists alike might discern and understand certain aspects of the ethos of a particular folk group or culture based on a comparison of its oral and written anecdotes. Holloway's study will also prove useful to scholars of religion (his insights into the use of humor in religion are illuminating), and scholars and critics of oral literature, written literature which has a folklore base, and that literature in between which some critics have come to call "intermediate literature." And because Gary Holloway's study is as amusing as it is informative, anyone who picks it up should enjoy it. As he suggests in his preface, the book does contain "some of the funniest stories" you'll ever read. And who doesn't enjoy a good story?

Patricia Jones-Jackson. **When Roots Die: Endangered Traditions on the Sea Islands.** Foreword by Charles Joyner. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987. Pp. xxv + 189, appendices, selected bibliography, index. \$12.95 paper.

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When Roots Die by Patricia Jones-Jackson is a compelling account of oral-literary traditions and culture among the Gullah-speaking Sea Islanders of Georgia and South Carolina. Jones-Jackson conducted research among the Gullah throughout a period of more than nine years. Tragically, her life and a very promising career were cut short by an automobile accident in 1986.

Jones-Jackson brought to her study of Gullah language and culture a linguist's ear and research tools as well as a sensitivity to the whole of Gullah life. The result is a more complete portrait of oral traditions as they occur in contemporary Gullah society than has previously been published. Chapter Two,

"The Folk Literature," includes sections on the oral presentation, setting, audience, and the storytellers themselves. Her discussions place the texts within the context of their performance. Samples of texts—the prayers, sermons, and stories—are given in Chapter Three, and in the appendices. The first chapter places these oral traditions within their socio-cultural context.

The first chapter, "The Social History and Organization," is divided into four sections: Topography, Demography, Economy, and Social Structure. Because of the Sea Islands' relative isolation due to topography and other geographical characteristics, Gullah-speaking communities developed and maintained their distinct speech and expressive traditions over the years. In her discussion of the economy of the area, Jones-Jackson points out the importance of rice agriculture and cotton production on the islands and mainland to the importation of slaves to coastal South Carolina and Georgia. In this section, Jones-Jackson also mentions Gullah basketry and its role in the present-day Sea Island economy. Included in her discussion of social structure is an account of burial practices. Here and elsewhere in the book, Jones-Jackson compares Gullah practices to particular West African traditional practices and beliefs. However, her discussion is brief and meant only to serve as an introduction, and she does not go on to further document or support her comparison of Gullah traditions to some cultures (in particular, Igbo and Ibibio) to the exclusion of other West African cultures. In fact, it is not until the middle of the third chapter (pp.110-11) that we get an explanation for her choice of the Igbo culture as the primary point of comparison between Gullah and West African traditions: her choice is based on an analysis of linguistic features observed on Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina, which she sees as traceable to the Igbo language. I cannot help but think that, had Jones-Jackson had the opportunity to travel to Sierra Leone in addition to the three months she spent in Nigeria conducting research, she would also have made numerous cultural and linguistic comparisons with the Mende and Gallinas (Vai) cultures and found striking similarities between Gullah and the Krio spoken in Freetown. (Lorenzo D. Turner [1974], for example, recorded song and story texts among the Gullah during the 1930's and 1940's which contained numerous words from various West African languages, including entire texts of what he determined were Mende words.)

Jones-Jackson approached this topic as a linguist and, in some senses, treated aspects of cultural expression in much the same way as she would a particular bit of linguistic evidence. Others, such as Joseph A. Opala (1986a, 1986b), have relied on the evidence that specific slave traders conducted a traffic between certain West African locations and U.S. ports along the southeastern seaboard, most notably between Bunce Island on the Sierra Leone River and Charleston, South Carolina. Both approaches have their strengths, but neither one can give us a complete picture by itself. Much research remains to be done on the African-Gullah connections and the various Gullah continuances of African traditions. Patricia Jones-Jackson has made a significant contribution to our understanding of Gullah speakers and their traditions, and more generally of an African-American community in transition. It is a basis from which future research can extend.

Works Cited

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- Turner, Lorenzo D. 1974[1949]. *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Terry G. Jordan and Matti Kaups. **The American Backwoods Frontier: An Ethnic and Ecological Interpretation**. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989. Pp. xiii + 340, photographs, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$36.00 cloth.

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Terry G. Jordan, a cultural geographer and prolific author of works documenting Euro-American settlement and architectural patterns, and Matti Kaups, a well-known specialist on Finnic culture, have collaborated to produce an ambitious, daring, and provocative book, one that surely will be widely cited for years to come. While the book will, no doubt, receive a fair amount of criticism for many of its broad generalizations, it will also receive considerable and well-deserved praise for undertaking the formidable task of explaining nothing less than the ethnic and ecological origins of American backwoods culture.

Through the close examination of the North American cultural landscape, the authors have striven to document "the diffusionary events that shaped cultural regions," and thereby locate the true cultural hearth and domains of colonial America. For these two cultural geographers, previous diffusionist theses and models lacked explanatory power, i.e., they might accurately describe a procession, but they failed to explain process with some causal mechanism. "Why," the authors ask (p.22), "were so few Old World items successfully transferred to the colonial areas? What mechanism governed success or failure?" The answers lie, the authors assert, within the explanatory framework offered by cultural ecology, where culture is seen as an adaptive system, a method of meeting environmental challenges. Pioneering, then, "is the process by which a cultural system's niche is expanded" (p.29). Viewed on the societal level, certain modes of subsistence are adaptive strategies to deal with specific environments, and when migration occurs—for whatever reason—success in a new environment will depend on how well a particular society is already *preadapted* for the new ecological setting.