

Readers with an interest in the folklife of America's southland will find a wealth of stories, ethnographic descriptions, and material from over forty interviews with residents of the area. The book should also appeal to anyone interested in relationships between culture and environment, and McGregory develops solid arguments that demonstrate how studies of folklife can contribute to environmental studies and the management of ecosystems. McGregory meets her goal of surveying and describing the folklife of this region. Her conclusions are appropriate and should interest readers new to folklife studies, and her analysis of the folklife that she documents will provide an introduction for researchers interested in completing more in-depth studies of the genres and items found in the region.

Roy Judge. **The Jack-in-the-Green: A May Day Custom.** 2d ed. London: FLS Books, (1979) 2000. Pp. x + 212, halftones, drawings, photos, map, index of locations, index. \$12.95 paper.

Elizabeth Matson
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Originally published in 1979 as a thesis, this second edition of *The Jack-in-the-Green* includes some additional material and discussion of the rise and fall and rise of this particular folklore phenomenon up until 1995, but the bulk of the material appears to be a reprint from the original edition.

The book's chief value lies in the revelation and demarcation of this unusual custom, particularly for those who have never before encountered a Jack-in-the-Green. To summarize, a Jack-in-the-Green is a conical framework covered with greenery and flowers. It is worn by a man so that only his legs and his face are visible. Traditionally in England, Jack-in-the-Green dances through the streets on May Day, generally in the company of other figures such as milkmaids, chimney sweeps, and clowns.

Though Roy Judge does not spend any time speculating as to why this May Day tradition began, he meticulously locates its origins in the mid-1600s with the milkmaids who borrowed plates and silver

as “garlands” to parade through the towns and cities on May Day. In time the tradition was co-opted by the chimney sweeps who began to make use of the May Day holiday—parading through town dancing, drinking, and making music with the everyday tools of their trade—to beg some money and trinkets to tide them through the slow season. At some point, men dressed as false ladies and lords, clowns, and Jack-in-the-Green joined the parade. All became associated with the chimney sweeps, but Jack-in-the-Green has lived the longest in the folk imagination.

The May Day tradition of Jack-in-the-Green died out in the mid-1800s due to public outcry about the working conditions of the chimney sweeps’ climbing boys and the simultaneous rise in Arcadian nostalgia for quaint traditional customs that did not involve drunkenness and the lower echelons of society. Jack-in-the-Green and his cohorts were replaced by the deliberate reconstruction of a largely imagined purely pastoral May Day celebration with a Maypole, May Queen, and dancing appropriate for children.

Of particular interest are Judge’s few comments and observations on the ease with which things become “traditional” and historical meaning and ceremony become revised by contemporary sensibilities. The changing status of Jack-in-the-Green proves to be an excellent illustration of these issues and could merit even more discussion.

Jack-in-the-Green has been enjoying a renaissance in the recent upsurge in May Day traditions over the past several decades in England. Perhaps not surprisingly, Jack-in-the-Green has come to be associated with the Green Man and, by default, with environmental concerns in the present and a closer relationship to nature in the past. This association has revised the history of Jack-in-the-Green in the public imagination, where it is perceived as an ancient pagan pastoral tradition despite the lack of historical evidence beyond that traced by Judge.

Fully half of the book consists of an in-depth Index of Locations that is unlikely to be more than casually perused by most readers, though it does demonstrate the extensive research and fieldwork upon which Judge rests his more general observations in the first half of the book. The remainder of this volume provides information and insight on a little known (at least on this side of the Atlantic) and evolving folk tradition. Though it might garner more interest with

additional in-depth discussion of the material presented, it is a worthy overview and introduction to the Jack-in-the-Green.

John H. McDowell. **Poetry and Violence: The Ballad Tradition of Mexico's Costa Chica.** Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000. Pp. xi + 251, index, map, photographs, bibliography, compact disc. \$39.95 cloth.

John Fenn
Indiana University, Bloomington

Taking the relationship between poetry and violence as his object of study, John McDowell delves into the corrido tradition of Mexico's Costa Chica in his latest book.

He bases his multifaceted analysis of corridos and their performance on several years of extensive ethnographic fieldwork in the region surrounding Acapulco on the Pacific coast. Over the course of the book, McDowell offers a vibrant telling of general corrido history, as well as detailed vignettes of particular ballads, performances, and social contexts.

An underlying question in *Poetry and Violence* concerns the functions of corridos in the social realm of the Costa Chica. McDowell argues from the outset that corridos potentially serve more than one function in any given performance, and that the tradition in general helps communities navigate scenarios of physical violence in multiple ways. Specifically, McDowell draws together three approaches that he has noticed in academic research on the corrido tradition. The first approach or thesis focuses on the celebratory nature of corridos, the ways in which ballads written about particular violent interactions promote such events and inspire other individuals (usually younger males) to follow the paths of the protagonists. McDowell refers to the second approach as the regulatory thesis, and he anchors it in the idea that corridos present a moralizing counterforce in the wake of violent scenes. The final analytic approach to corridos that McDowell offers is the therapeutic thesis. This thesis maintains that corridos serve the public, the relatives of participants, and the participants themselves as a way to deal with violence and its aftermath; while not a cure or a