

institutions: athletic games and drama. The spring *dromenon*, conceived of dramatically as a conflict between living beings, was represented either as a death-and-rebirth or as a contest in which one being emerged victorious. In Athens a unique union took place between this ritual and the epic legends, resulting in the creation of Greek tragedy, but the ritual itself lives on in Europe in the springtime mummers plays and carnival festivals.

The Cambridge Ritualists, who together with Frazer have had so much influence on the scholarship in the twentieth century, especially on literary scholarship (for example, Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*), are enjoying a revival of interest at the present time. In addition to the present book by Robert Ackerman, we also have *The Cambridge Ritualists Reconsidered* (Illinois Classical Studies, Supplement 2, 1991), edited by another intellectual historian, William Calder, a volume to which Ackerman contributes an essay. Shelley Arlen has published a bibliography of the school, *The Cambridge Ritualists: An Annotated Bibliography* (1990), and among other relevant books Ackerman has published a biography of Frazer, *J. C. Frazer: His Life and Work* (1987).

Readers should be warned that in two chapters the numbering of the footnotes becomes confused when the notes gathered at the end of the chapters cease corresponding to the numbers in the text. In Chapter Three things go wrong beginning with superscript 20 in the text, which really corresponds to note 21, superscript 21 to note 22, etc.; similarly, in Chapter Six, superscript 31 corresponds to note 32, and so on.

Hal Rammel. *Nowhere in America: The Big Rock Candy Mountain and Other Comic Utopias*. Folklore and Society Series. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990. Pp. xii + 165, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$25.95 cloth.

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Hal Rammel explores the "history and geography of Nowhere" in this readable and enjoyable excursus into the nature and function of the comic utopian impulse in popular and folk culture. His initial interest was spurred by his purchase a few years previously of Red Ingle's 1947 recording "Nowhere," a nonsense song that describes and valorizes a land of plenty and liberation, a place where no taxes or mothers-in-law exist but where money and food and sex abound. His attempts to find parallels to the themes of this song serve to form the historical, comparative, and theoretical orientations of this book.

Rammel's primary purpose is to explore how the themes of the comic "nowhere" became part of American folklore. He considers Harry "Haywire Mac" MacClintock's Big Rock Candy Mountain (ca. 1900) the piece that fixed the conception of the comic nowhere in the popular American imaginative landscape, but he quite explicitly recognizes its deep (2,500 years, as he states once) historical roots and its widespread circulation in non-United States culture. The historical explanation of the themes and motifs found in the various comic utopian manifestations and how they "found their way to America and took root" are a foundational premise for his book.

The comic utopias Rammel identifies, traces, and maps tend to be utopias of excess; they also are utopias based on a "poor man's paradise." Food and sex are plentiful and accessible, all forms of authority fail to exist, and no work whatsoever is required. Food, whether flying roasted birds or Al Capp's ever-accommodating Schmoos, pops into people's mouths without their stirring a muscle. Rammel identifies several pre-United States antecedents to the Big Rock Candy Mountain: 4th century B.C. Greek drama, Münchhausen tales, Irish tales, the Land of Cockaigne, Schlaraffenland, Lubberland, the Scandinavian Oleana, Ditty Wah Ditty, *Bauernhimmel*, the Feast of Fools, British mumming, West Indian mumming, traditional carnivals, and Saturnalia as well as several American versions, which can be classified most easily according to genres, such as popular songs (country, vaudeville, blues, play-party, hobo, labor, jug band, and big band), films, cartoons (both animated and comic strip), television shows, folktales, tall tales, and children's folklore. Rammel presents a dazzling array of variations and connections of this image of a utopian land where no one works, the land is bountiful, all desires are met, and harmony reigns.

The folklorist should read this work for its identification of a common theme in Western culture that seems to have transcended the commonly obliterating influences of time and of the self-validating appropriations of national, ethnic, regional, and other identities. The folklorist should not read this work for any theoretical or analytical illumination. Rammel's approach could be characterized as a mix of Joseph Campbell's universalist approach to folkloric forms and themes and the historic-geographic school's focus on the relationship of tale types and folk motifs. He does cite contemporary folklore theory, most notably Victor Turner and Roger Abrahams, as well as some other cultural theorists, such as Peter Burke, Robert Elliot, Sandra Billington, and the surrealists (e.g., André Breton), but most of these he cites only tangentially and does not incorporate analytically into his work. He does make an honest attempt to use Abrahams's works on West Indies carnival and Turner's work on liminality, especially his focus on "the world turned upside down," but his usage of both scholars' theory is uncritical and

non-analytical. For instance, he frames his chapter on British mumming according to Turnerian liminality but never offers a critical presentation of Turnerian concepts within the chapter. To present a test case is fine, but Rammel's other presentations of other academic theoretical or methodological positions tend to be oversimplified (such as saying that "folklorists identify. . . variations as 'corruptions'. . ." [69] and then going on to imply that folklorists as a group are insensitive to or simply not cognizant of subtle or blatant nuances inherent in variations). Rammel's predilection for such tenuous observations makes the reader tentative to accept the author's uncomplicated usages of Turner, Abrahams, and others, no matter how likely they appear.

Rammel intended this work to be a survey of the historical development of the theme of the comic utopia and of its development in America. His intent is accomplished within the book. The material itself is engaging and is enhanced further by Rammel's appealing writing style. He provides a good bibliography, both for each chapter and for the book as a whole, which could serve as a springboard for further, more critical explorations into this literature.

Margaret Thompson Drewel. **Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency.** Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992. Pp. xxii + 241, bibliography, notes. \$35.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper. *Yoruba Ritual: A Companion Video*, 30-minute VHS cassette. \$29.95.

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In this book, Margaret Drewel, Associate Professor of Performance Studies at Northwestern University and a performance theorist specializing in cultural studies, confronts the "dominant notion in scholarly discourse that ritual repetition is rigid, stereotypic, conventional, conservative, invariant, uniform, redundant, predictable, and structurally static." She writes, "In this study, I have examined instead the power of human agents to transform ritual through performance. . . . Rather than privileging ritual structure as if it were some *a priori* 'thing,' I stress the power of participants to transform ritual itself." She does this "by applying a performance paradigm" that views ritual as an active, transformative process, not a static structure. Drewel attempts to explicate the Yoruba rituals she observed and participated in, and the "African system of thought" underlying them, from the viewpoint of their "practitioners' theories and embodied practices." She describes her writing as being in a "dialectical relationship with the literature on ritual by anthropologists and