

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

historians of religion" and further defines her perspective by saying, "my study of Yoruba ritual practice resonates most strongly with poststructuralist theories of performance, social process, and literature"(xiv). She wants to communicate clearly what the subjects of her study actually do and what they say about what they do, realizing herself also as an agent who is mediating the content and meaning of Yoruba ritual experience to the reader.

Drewel allows that her mission is complicated by the core problem of ethnography: translation. In addition to the fact that often there are not words in English that "really fit" Yoruba words and the concepts they embody, difficulties arise with readers' preconceptions of words such as *ritual* and *play*. Drewel tries to deal with these problems in the second chapter by "translating and qualifying some key Yoruba terms, at the same time working against what they normally signify in English." She describes her own writing practices as "rhetorical play" that imitates the way in which the rituals themselves work (xvii).

Drewel gains insight into the way the Yoruba view ritual as "a journey with a synecdochic relationship to the ontology of the human spirit journeying through birth, death, and reincarnation" through her primary informant, Kolawole Ositola, "a scholar of oral tradition, a ritual practitioner and healer, a master performer, and an intellectual . . . the equivalent of a Western trained scholar" (xvii). In Chapter Three she presents portions of taped conversations with Ositola that demonstrate the Yoruba view of life as a series of journeys always involving change and transformation and proceeds throughout the book to show how the various rituals she examines have the central metaphor of journey embedded in them.

In Chapters Four through Nine, Drewel explores a series of ritual performances ranging from sacred to secular with *isinku* (funeral [38-47]); *ikose w'aye* and *imori* ("Stepping into the World" and "Knowing the Head," divination [52-62]); *Agemo* masked performance (spectacle [113-153]); *'Id al-Kabir orlleya* Festival (135-153); and the *Imewuro* Annual Rally (160-171). In Chapter Ten, Drewel provides a very interesting and thorough analysis of issues of sex and gender inherent in all of the rituals she presents. Her analysis gives the reader a much clearer picture of Yoruba world view, the respective power of men and women within it, and how it is reflected in the rituals. Throughout she describes participants' options as improvisational, as opposed to rigid or fixed. She says, "much Yoruba ritual involved a great amassing of participants, layers upon layers of highly charged visual sensory stimuli, an aggrandizing ethos, intense competition, and multiple and simultaneous channels of interaction so that the word dialogic cannot even begin to convey the dynamics of what went on. . . .

Yoruba rituals combined genres such as spectacle, festival, play, sacrifice, and so on, as well as integrated diverse media—music, dance, poetry, theater, sculpture" (197-98).

The reader is given the opportunity to view segments of each of the rituals in the 30-minute video tape that accompanies this book. The video contains no commentary other than subtitles identifying each segment as to which ritual one is viewing. It is a most welcome format, giving the reader a chance to visually experience at least a bit of each ritual and thus obtain a more complete understanding than verbal description and analysis alone can provide. Drewel has given us a very coherent, provocative study of the dynamics of Yoruba ritual, which is further enhanced by the accompanying video tape.

Alan Dundes and Carl R. Pagter. **Never Try to Teach a Pig to Sing: Still More Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire.** Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991. Pp.435, 231 illustrations. \$39.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

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*When You're Up to Your Ass in Alligators* and *Urban Folklore From The Paperwork Empire* (later reissued as *Work Hard and You Shall Be Rewarded*) were the predecessors to this newest prolific collection of photocopier/office/urban folklore.

The reader is immediately enticed by the book's mischievous witticisms—an abundance of cartoons, caricatures, jokes, and short narratives. The items are intended for more than just recreational reading, however, as Dundes and Pagter examine the collection analytically, briefly contextualizing and explaining each joke. They also date and locate each item, reference other germane research, and frequently survey various related folk practices. For example, the depiction of a man urinating into a fan which repels the urine is introduced by noting the folk medical practices of using urine to cure such maladies as sore eyes and freckles (the cures are referenced in *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*); related to their analysis, Dundes and Pagter also call attention to the commercially available soothing eye drops: Murine (257).

The authors posit that humor reflects important themes of modern society—themes which range from anxiety about aging, sex, bosses, job stress, dieting, and feminism, to ethnic and racial slurs. An example of office lore for the liberated woman depicts a succession of foot prints