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Ishmael Reed. *Mumbo Jumbo*. Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday. 1972. 223 pages, ill. \$6.95.

In 1971 Ishmael Reed published the "Neo-hoodoo Manifesto" in *Confrontation*, a journal of third world literature. This statement serves as the esthetic foundation for Reed's last two novels, *Yellow Back Radio Broke-Down* (1969), a "neo-hoodoo western," and most recently, *Mumbo Jumbo*, a "neo-hoodoo detective novel." In his manifesto Reed suggests that neo-hoodoo is the rebirth of a spiritual-mythic quality that has been distorted and suppressed by Judeo-Christian influences. In *Mumbo Jumbo* Reed untangles the black mythic past from the negative symbology of Western religions and relocates the integrity of black magic and hoodoo in the artistic function of the Afro-American artist—the neo-hoodoo priest. In a turn-of-the-century American society that outlaws dance, Reed posits the thriving underground existence of a neo-hoodoo culture which seeks identity and a medium of expression through the resurrection of hoodoo forms, *loa* and rites.

Within this broad historical framework the novel develops a social-political struggle between two antagonistic forces. The Atonists dedicate themselves to the preservation of sacred Western civilization and enforce their tyranny through the militant Wallflower Order. Opposed to them is "Jes Grew," the anti-plague of new racial consciousness which bumps and grinds to life in New Orleans, the "Home of Mystery," and sweeps across the country enjoining everyone it infects to "shake that thing." The plague is a "psychic epidemic" which threatens the established order of Atonism.

This confrontation allows Reed both to satirize America and Christianity and to develop the complex exigencies of neo-hoodooism. Reed's satire is uneven. Feckless caricatures, bitter attacks and gratuitous special effects (e.g., juxtaposing US bombing tonnage statistics and the myth of Osiris) often destroy the fine satirical edge achieved in earlier novels. However, the important feature of *Mumbo Jumbo* is Reed's establishment of a black esthetic. He restores a mutilated religious heritage, reveals the creative possibilities of magic, Satan, witchcraft, evil and the unknown, and initiates a new priesthood of Afro-American artists into the mysteries of their own past.

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