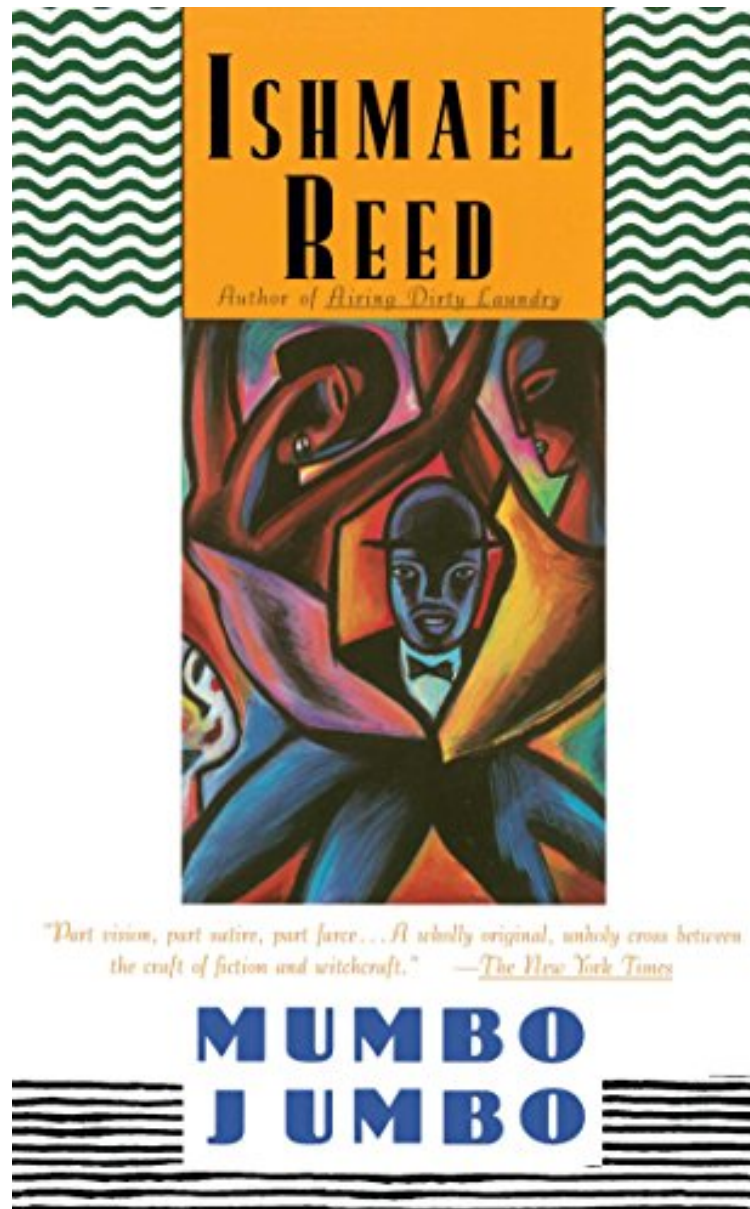


(Free read ebook) Mumbo Jumbo

## Mumbo Jumbo

*Ishmael Reed*

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*"Part vision, part satire, part farce... A wholly original, unholy cross between the craft of fiction and witchcraft." —The New York Times*

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#153571 in Books Ishmael Reed 1996-06-11 1996-06-11 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .70 x 5.251, #File Name: 0684824779224 pages Mumbo Jumbo | File size: 66.Mb

**Ishmael Reed : Mumbo Jumbo** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mumbo Jumbo:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. jazz novel at its best. Undergirded by syncretism--collage--and synchronicity--"at the end of the ...By Pierre-Damien Mvuyekure This is the novel that changed my life and academic

career in the Lockwood Library at University at Buffalo (SUNY). Until I write my academic memoir, what I say about this novel can be found in my book *The "Dark Heathenism" of the American Novelist Ishmael Reed: African Voodoo as American Literary Hoodoo* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2007). *Mumbo Jumbo* is the novel that inspired Prof. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. to write his seminal work *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. *Mumbo Jumbo* is a multi-vocal, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, jazz novel at its best. Undergirded by syncretism--collage--and synchronicity--"at the end of the novel, we are told that "Time is a pendulum"; Aristotle would have difficulties finding the unity of space and time. These are characteristics that Ishmael Reed borrows from African Voodoo and postmodernism, just to name these two--*Mumbo Jumbo* challenges one's knowledge of history, culture, literature, philosophy,...It is a must-have novel. I love *Mumbo Jumbo* so much that I now have it a Kindle edition. Grab albums by Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Charlie "Bird" Parker, Fats Waller, Scott Joplin....--yes, the music of these icons of blues and jazz music encodes the stories of Jes Grew (from *Topsy* in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*)--and start reading *Mumbo Jumbo*. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. *Mumbo Jumbo* was a pioneer when it was first published ...By Werner Sollors *Mumbo Jumbo* was a pioneer when it was first published, It's not a novel that Jes Grew but one that was carefully made. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customer *Insightful and meaningful book*

The classic freewheeling look at race relations through the ages. *Mumbo Jumbo* is Ishmael Reed's brilliantly satiric deconstruction of Western civilization, a racy and uproarious commentary on our society. In it, Reed, one of our preeminent African-American authors, mixes portraits of historical figures and fictional characters with sound bites on subjects ranging from ragtime to Greek philosophy. Cited by literary critic Harold Bloom as one of the five hundred most significant books in the Western canon, *Mumbo Jumbo* is a trenchant and often biting look at black-white relations throughout history, from a keen observer of our culture.

From the Back Cover *Mumbo Jumbo* is Ishmael Reed's brilliantly satiric deconstruction of Western civilization, a racy and uproarious commentary on our society. About the Author Ishmael Reed grew up in working-class neighborhoods in Buffalo, New York. He attended Buffalo public schools and the University of Buffalo. As well as being a novelist, poet, and essayist, he is a songwriter, television producer, publisher, magazine editor, playwright, and founder of the Before Columbus Foundation and There City Cinema, both located in Northern California. He lives in Oakland, California. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. *Mumbo Jumbo* 2 With the astonishing rapidity of Booker T. Washington's Grapevine Telegraph Jes Grew spreads through America following a strange course. Pine Bluff and Magnolia Arkansas are hit; Natchez, Meridian and Greenwood Mississippi report cases. Sporadic outbreaks occur in Nashville and Knoxville Tennessee as well as St. Louis where the bumping and grinding cause the Gov to call up the Guard. A mighty influence, Jes Grew infects all that it touches. 3 Europe has once more attempted to recover the Holy Grail and the Teutonic Knights, Gibbon's "troops of careless temper," have again fumbled the Cup. Instead of raiding the Temples of Heathens they enact their blood; in the pagan myth of the Valkyrie they fight continually; are mortally wounded, but revived only to fight again, taking time out to gorge themselves on swine and mead. But the Wallflower Order had no choice. The only other Knight order had been disgraced years before. Sometimes the Wallflower Order was urged to summon them. Only they could defend the cherished traditions of the West against Jes Grew. They would be able to man the Jes Grew Observation Stations. But the trial which banished their order from the West's service and the Atonist Path had been conclusive. They were condemned as "devouring wolves and polluters of the mind." The Jes Grew crisis was becoming acute. Compounding it, Black Yellow and Red Mu'tafikah were looting the museums shipping the plunder back to where it came from. America, Europe's last hope, the protector of the archives of "mankind's" achievements had come down with a bad case of Jes Grew and Mu'tafikah too. Europe can no longer guard the "fetishes" of civilizations which were placed in the various Centers of Art Detention, located in New York City. Bootlegging Houses financed by Robber Barons, Copper Kings, Oil Magnets, Tycoons and Gentlemen Planters. Dungeons for the treasures from Africa, South America and Asia. The army devoted to guarding this booty is larger than those of most countries. Justifiably so, because if these treasures got into the "wrong hands" (the countries from which they were stolen) there would be renewed enthusiasms for the Ikons of the aesthetically victimized civilizations. 4 1920. Charlie Parker, the houngan (a word derived from n'gana gana) for whom there was no master adept enough to award him the Asson, is born. 1920-1930. That 1 decade which doesn't seem so much a part of American history as the hidden After-Hours of America struggling to jam. To get through. Jes Grew carriers came to America because of cotton. Why cotton? American Indians often supplied all of their needs from one animal: the buffalo. Food, shelter, clothing, even fuel. Eskimos, the whale. Ancient Egyptians were able to nourish themselves from the olive tree and use it as a source of light; but Americans wanted to grow cotton. They could have raised soybeans, cattle, hogs or the feed for these animals. There was no excuse. Cotton. Was it some unusual thrill at seeing the black hands come in contact with the white crop? According to the astrologer Evangeline Adams, America is born at 3:03 on the 4th of July, Gemini Rising. It is to be mercurial, restless, violent. It looks to the Philippines and calls gluttony the New Frontier. It looks to South America and intervenes in the internal affairs of its nations; piracy is

termed "bringing about stability." If the British prose style is Churchillian, America is the tobacco auctioneer, the barker; Runyon, Lardner, W.W., the traveling salesman who can sell the world the Brooklyn Bridge every day, can put anything over on you and convince you that tomatoes grow at the South Pole. If in the 1920s the British say "The Sun Never Sets on the British Empire," the American motto is "There's a Sucker Born Every Minute." America is the smart-aleck adolescent who's "been around" and has his own hot rod. They attend, these upstarts, a disarmament conference in Washington and play diplomatic chicken with the British, advising them to scrap 4 hoods including the pride of the British Navy: H.M.S. King George the 5th. Bulldog-faced British Admiral Beatty leaves the room in a huff.<sup>5</sup> The Wallflower order attempts to meet the psychic plague by installing an anti-Jes Grew President, Warren Harding. He wins on the platform "Let's be done with Wiggle and Wobble," indicating that he will not tolerate this spreading infection. All sympathizers will be dealt with; all carriers isolated and disinfected, Immuno-Therapy will begin once he takes office. Unbeknown to him he is being watched by a spy from the Wallflower Order. A man who is to become his Attorney General. (He is also surrounded by the curious circle known by historians as "The Ohio Gang.") The 2nd Stage of the plan is to groom a Talking Android who will work within the Negro, who seems to be its classical host; to drive it out, categorize it analyze it expell it slay it, blot Jes Grew. A speaking scull they can use any way they want, a rapping antibiotic who will abort it from the American womb to which it clings like a stubborn fetus. In other words this Talking Android will be engaged to cut-it-up, break down this Germ, keep it from behind the counter. To begin the campaign, No DANCING posters are ordered by the 100s. All agree something must be done. "Jes Grew is the boll weevil eating away at the fabric of our forms our technique our aesthetic integrity," says a Southern congressman. "I must ponder the effect of Jew Grew upon 2,000 years of civilization," Calvinist editorial writers wonder aloud.<sup>6</sup> New Orleans is a mess. People sweep the clutter from the streets. The city's head is once more calm. Normal. It sleeps after the night of howling, speaking-in-tongues, dancing to drums; watching strange lights streak across the sky. The streets are littered with bodies where its victims lie until the next burgeoning. I doesn't know when it will hit again. The next 5 minutes? 3 days from now? 20 years? But if the Jes Grew which shot up a trial balloon in the 1890s was then endemic, it is now epidemic, crossing state lines and heading for Chicago. Men who resemble the shadows sleuths threw against the walls of 1930s detective films have somehow managed to slip into the Mayor's private hospital room. They have set up a table before his bed. A man wearing a mask that reveals only his eyes and mouth calls the meeting to order. This is an inquiry, it seems, and the man officiating wants to get to the bottom of why the Mayor, a Mason, allowed his Vital Resistance to wear down before Jes Grew's Communicability. This augurs badly, for if Jes Grew is immune to the old remedies, the saving Virus in the blood of Europe, mankind is lost. No word of this must get out. The Mayor even volunteers to accept the short bronze dagger and "get it over with." All for the Atonist Path. The visitors await his final groan, and when the limp hand falls to the side of the bed and begins to swing, they leave as quickly as they came. This was no ordinary commission. When an extraordinary antipathy challenges the Wallflower Order, their usual front men, politicians, scholars and businessmen, step aside. Someone once said that beneath or behind all political and cultural warfare lies a struggle between secret societies. Another author suggested that the Nursery Rhyme and the book of Science Fiction might be more revolutionary than any number of tracts, pamphlets, manifestoes of the political realm.<sup>7</sup> New York is accustomed to gang warfare. White gangs: the Plug Uglies, the Blood Tubs of Baltimore, the Schuylkill Rangers from Philadelphia, the Dead Rabbits from the Bowery, the Roaches Guard and the Cow Bay Gangs terrorize the city, loot, raid and regularly fight the bulls to a standoff. A gang war has broken out over Buddy Jackson, noted for his snappy florid-designed multicolored shoes and his grand way of living. There are legends about him. He went into the police station and knocked the captain cold when he didn't come forward with policy protection. Later, while orators and those affected with "tongues and lungs" were rapping as usual, he sent a convoy into Peekskill and rescued "Paul from the Crackers." Schlitz, "the Sarge of Yorktown," a Beer Baron, has a lucrative numbers and Speak operation in Harlem. His stores are identified by the box of Dutch Masters in the window. 1 day, collection day, 3 Packards roll up to a store, 1 of the fronts belonging to the Sarge. The street, located in Harlem, is unusually quiet. The only sounds heard are the Sarge's patent-leather shoes coming in contact with the pavement. Where are the salesmen, the New Negroes, the "ham heavers," "pot rasslers" and "kitchen mechanics" on their way to work? Where are the sugar daddies and their hookers, the peddlers, the traffic cops, the reefer salesmen who usually stand on the corners openly peddling their merchandise? (Legal then.) There are no revelers and no chippies. The streets are deserted... Schlitz looks into the window of his 1st store. What? No Rembrandt Dutch Masters but the picture of Prince Hall founder of African Lodge #1 of the Black Masons stares out at Schlitz, "the Sarge of Yorktown." The mobster moves on, the 3 Packards following his course. The next store, the same story. The portrait of Prince Hall dressed in the formal Colonial outfit of his day, the frilled white blouse and collar showing beneath the frock coat and vest. The short white wig. The painting is so realistic that you can see his auras. In his right hand he holds the charter the Black Freemasons have received from England. Schlitz shrugs his shoulders, puts a cigar in his mouth and walks over to the curb to speak to the driver of 1 of the Packards. He feels something cold at the back of his neck. He turns to see Buddy Jackson standing behind him, aiming a Thompson Automatic at him. The gun which has acquired the name of "The Bootlegger's Special." Packing their heat, the hoods begin to open the car doors to assist their Boss. But they are pinned in. Up on the roofs, firing, are Buddy Jackson's

Gardens. Exaggerated lapels. Bell-bottoms. Hats at rakish angles. The Sarge's men sit tight. The bullet pellets zing across the front of the automobiles and graze the top and trunk. Buddy Jacksons exhorts the Sarge to leave Harlem and "Never darken the portals of our abode again." He marches the Sarge down to the subway, followed by many people coming from the hallways and apartments and alleys, bars, professional offices, beauty parlors, from where they've watched the whole scene. Most people read the newspaper to tell them what're the coming attractions. In the 1920s folks in Harlem used the Grapevine Telegraph. Booker T. Washington observed its technology. Booker T. Washington the man who "bewitched" 1000s at the Cotton States Exposition, Atlanta, September 18, 1895.<sup>8</sup> Picture the 1920s as a drag race whose entries are ages vying for the Champion gros-ben-age of the times, that aura that remains after the flesh of the age has dropped away. The shimmering Etheric Double of the 1920s. The thing that gives it its summary. Candidates line up like chimeras. The Age of Harding pulls up, the strict upper-lip chrome. The somber, swallow-tailed body, the formal top-hatted hood, the overall stay-put exterior but inside the tell-tale poker cards, the expensive bootlegged bottle of liquor, and in the back seat the whiff of scandal. The Age of Prohibition: Speaks, cabarets, a hearse with the rear-window curtains drawn over its illegal contents destined perhaps for a funeral at sea. Now imagine this Age Race occurring before a crowd of society idlers you would find at 1 of those blue-ribbon dog shows. The owners inspecting their pekinese, collies, bulldogs, german shepherds, and then observe these indignant spectators as a hound mongrel of a struggle-buggy pulls up and with no prior warning outdistances its opponents with its blare of the trumpet, its crooning saxophone, its wild inelegant Grizzly Bear steps. For if the Jazz Age is year for year the Essences and Symptoms of the times, then Jes Grew is the germ making it rise yeast-like across the American plain. An entry in the table of contents of a Delta205 book tells the story. Copyright © 1972 by Ishmael Reed