Chapter-IX
CONCLUSION

One of the leading satirists in contemporary African-American literature, Ishmael Reed is the most original, innovative and controversial writer. In his novels, he assails the repressive aspects of Western religion, politics, culture, rationalism and technology. He exposes the vices, excesses and follies of contemporary American Society, the hypocrisy of democratic ideals, American history and the tyrannical myths that shape the American mind. He is an artist with clear and consistent world view and vision of life. His world view is based upon a wide reading in American history, Egyptian mythology and religion and African and Caribbean religions and magic. As a Black writer he presents the cultural heritage of African-Americans as a rich combination of traditions and influences which contribute more towards the enrichment of American culture.

Reed depicts modern White or Black as a victim of Western rationalism which has overthrown early man's practice of magic and worship of mystery and consolidated its victory by associating the instinctual and spontaneous with everything that is evil. Through the Christian
church and other organisations, it has killed off what is most vital in the healthy being - laughter, joy, singing and dance and suppressed individualism and freedom. It has produced a dubious technology and created institutionalized creatures to serve it. Reed visualizes that historically oppressed American groups will ultimately overthrow the perverted system and replace it with a new social order in which there will be genuine freedom.

Though Reed largely works by negation, he has an unmistakable preference to life over death. He avoids the negative attitudes and philosophical despair of most of the contemporary black writers. What is heard in black literature is the voice not of suffering alone but of the celebration of survival also. Unlike the contemporary American absurdist writers and practitioners of 'nouveau roman' (New Novel), Reed never projects the gloomy side of life. He surpasses all the contemporary absurdists such as Ionesco, Albee and Beckett or contemporary comic novelists such as Mailer, Salinger and Heller in accepting the absurdity of human experience, especially American experience but not allowing it to darken his vision of life in any case. On the contrary, he uses it for amusement and entertainment.
Reed's vision of life is coherent and organic with more of solutions to the problems unlike his contemporaries. His works suggest a way of conceiving life and society that would reroute the headlong Western or American rush towards apocalypse and entropy. His vision of universal unity is based on the deepest upwelling of positive virtues of life such as affection, sympathy and joy expressed through the metaphors Jes Grew and Gumbo. His strategy is not merely negation of Western civilization and demystifying of Christianity but building a positive structure based on a revival of traditional African cultural forces.

Reed's works suggest the ways and means with which the suffocation of Western rationalism can be countered. The vehicle for the liberation from the Western suffocation is the Third World and the coloured people that make it up with their ties to prerationalist history, their alleged belief in the hidden powers of Nature and their respect for the mystery of the individual. The black person, in particular, is a special carrier of the ancient sensibility, the impulse to laugh and to sing and admit the forces that support his life. Reed believes that the African-American artist is the most powerful liberator for he is similar to the necromancer. Reed
believes that by reclaiming the primordial rituals, black Americans and the Third World's people will purge themselves of Western conditioning and will ultimately regain their freedom and mythic vision. He projects the blackman, though a victim of western rationalism, as a natural man with innate spirituality and in practical harmony with his environment.

Reed rejects the tragic way of life or the Atonist way of life which has been engendered by the oppressive monotheist Judeo-Christian culture and civilization. His vision is essentially comic, effectively projected through the recurring Yoruba Trickster figure Esu who makes fun even in serious moments and indulges in funny parodic play. His view of life is essentially Osirian with Osirian polytheism which gives rise to joyous creation and self-expression, and further a recognition of the physical and the spiritual.

Reed attributes the conflicts and problems of the black community to the lack of literacy and historical understanding and perspective. He assumes that solutions to contemporary racial problems lie in their racial past. When the blacks appropriate these solutions they will be able to advance the quest for literacy and freedom. The
appropriation is accomplished metaphysically by the characters in Reed's narrative through a positive association with Jes Grew or Gumbo Solid Works or St. Nicholas or Black Peter. Reed upholds the positive virtues of Jes Grew or Gumbo which insist on creativity, freedom, spontaneity, improvisation, mystery and power of intuition. Reed's positive models to counter the suppressive western culture projected through Harry Sam, Drag Gibson, Atonists, Louisiana Red Corporation, Arthur Swille, Colorado Gang of Four are Loop Garoo Kid, Papa La Bas, Herman, Jes Grew, Ed Yellings, Gumbo, Raven Quickskill, Uncle Robin, St. Nicholas and Black Peter.

Reed suggests a combination of practicality (literacy) and spirituality (freedom) as the solution for the ills and problems of the blacks in America. He asserts that the optional place for individual and racial development is at the intersection of the seen forces of current events and the unseen forces of history. Esu who is also called Legba, the recurring Trickster-figure in Reed's works, mediates between the human and the divine, the seen and the unseen, the physical and the spiritual. Reed views the world as the conjunction of spiritual forces and this leads him to examine even the most mundane aspects of life in search of their spiritual content. For
him, the unification of psychic and mundane realities is accomplished in the activist symbol of the Cross Roads Legba which in America is called Papa La Bas. Reed in his works makes visible the spiritual reality hidden in the everyday realities.

Reed feels that Emancipation has not brought any fundamental transformation in the way in which the blacks are treated in the white-dominated American Society. He believes that though the blacks in America are politically liberated, they are still rolling in mental and cultural slavery under the guise of monoculture's institutionalized continual marginalization of all minority cultures. Reed rejects the monotheism and monoculturalism of the Western civilization. He equates the persisting American monotheism and monoculture with slavery and multiculturalism and polytheism as the true liberation. His writings support the multiculturalism, an amalgamation of perspectives, art forms and life styles from different cultures past and present. Reed is endowed with syncretic ability or insight into the similar forces emanating from disparate entities and the capacity to see the universals in the specific though his view is hardly Platonic.
Reed views multiculturalism not as a trend or external reality, but as a process of changing ourselves from within and of incorporating into our lives other ways and views. He is of the view that only through individual initiative as exemplified in the careers of Loop Gayoo Kid, Ed Yellings and Uncle Robin and not through institutional initiative that real emancipation can be achieved. Reed envisions an anti-hierarchial, polytheistic/multiethnic and multicultural anti-materialistic society as a sort of collective consciousness created through cultural exchanges between individuals and groups. Whereas Baraka advocates revolutionary socialism for all the ills of the American society, Reed advocates a multicultural society as an antidote to the ills of the monocultural society.

American society demands rejection of ethnicity and assimilation into the mainstream culture as the prerequisite for success of the minorities. But Reed rejects such a demand for he is against shedding ethnic identity, heritage and culture and total identification with the mainstream American culture. He strongly believes that the rich ethnic cultures and heritage would enrich the multiculturism of America. He maintains that it is the preservation of ethnic identity and contact with
group experience that empowers the individual writer to transform experience into writing.

Though Reed's works are dualistic in their representation of the egalitarian versus the hierachal, oppression versus freedom and the HooDoo religion versus "the cop religion", they aim at dissolving or transcending the dilemma of the double consciousness of the African-American writer as an African and American by returning to the ontological status of African diasporic culture. This eternal return constitutes a mythic sense which frees the blacks of the western conditioning. Contrary to the conventional representation of the black as evil and absence, Reed's mythic view of life projects the centrality of the black consciousness and experience and marginalization of white experience and consciousness by inverting the traditional symbols and notions. His futuristic vision involves the revival of the Dionysian spirit which will dominate the human spirit. He sees the African functioning in the Dionysian mode whereas the whites are a part of the Appolonian spirit. He does not believe in Fate or the ineluctible will of Gods. He believes that evil is created by human beings such as Harry Sam, Drag Gibson, Atonists, Arthur Swille, Rooster, Street and Rev. Jones and so it must be corrected by human
beings such as Loop Garoo Kid, Papa La Bas, Uncle Robin, Sk. Nicholas and Black Peter. Reed's works aim at rescuing blacks from sociological determinism and defeatism and release energy for an individualistic march to freedom. The old virtues of self-reliance, individual initiative, enterprenuership and power of intuition are upheld.

Reed's works project blackman as the quintessential victim of American disciminatory and exploitative politics. The Whitemen conspire with Blackwomen to keep the Blackmen under control. Reed believes that blackmanhood is the manifestation of life force. He views feminism as a part of racism to suppress the blackman. He is hostile to the ideology of feminism which creates victims, distorts history and denies individual enterprise and aspiration. He assumes that the real vitality of black culture is male, and black feminists, who under the influence of the Western culture challenge the male, invite destruction of their culture. He rejects the myth perpetuated by the West that women are victims of history. African culture never subordinates women to men for in VooDoo Legba, god of crossroads, is balanced by maitress Erzulie, the female energy of Legba, thereby insisting that masculine and feminine principles
are complementary to each other. Reed envisions a patriarchal/society.

To this extent, in order to externalize his world view which is distinct from the 'mainstream' American world view, Reed finds conventional Western literary forms which are built on Western epistemological assumptions and metaphysical systems and the imitative African-American literary forms derived from Anglo-American literary tradition inappropriate to expose the apocalyptic and entropic tendencies of the western culture and to project an African view of life. The experiences of the black people in the New World into which there have been forcibly thrust against their will and the pain of the results of three centuries of oppression is too great to be presented in conventional realistic or naturalistic mode. Reed questions the social reality presented in African-American literature. He asserts his freedom from anger and protest and a narrowly defined social responsibility and social realism by rejecting the conventional literary forms.

As part of his rejection of conventional mimetic fiction, he avoids photographic reproduction of reality, verisimilitude, social realism, conventional categories of
time and space, single perspectives, logical plot construction, believable characters and credible psychological or sociological motivations and experiments with a highly imaginative, narrative form employing some of the conventional techniques such as myth, parody satire and burlesque and innovative techniques such as fantasy, surrealism, fabulation, collage, montage, pastiche, metafiction, deconstruction and intertextuality to create an absurdist neo-surreal novel of fantasy. Reed prefers surrealistic juxtaposition, type characterization, dissolving considerations of time and space, multiple perspectives, mingling fact and fiction, reality and fantasy and myth and history. He goes beyond realism and nationalism to reclaim the power of imagination. He explores social reality through fantasy, surrealism and parody.

Reed is in favour of an expressionistic technique emphasizing performance, distance from reality, anti-realism, play of language and use of language as a tool to generate fiction. His emphasis is on the surreal and fantastic. His aim is to loosen the stronghold of the Judeo-Christian Western tradition on the cultural patterns of the Blacks by establishing the virtue of fiction as performance on the part of the artist wresting it from the
domination of the West which to his mind has emphasized contemplation and tranquility over performance and activity. He presents literature as an artifice and gives priority to artist’s free play of imagination.

Reed liberates the creative potential of language to generate fiction where fact and fancy become the unified sensibility of the writer. Fiction is generated primarily through the act of language. As a fabulator Reed exhibits the spirit of playfulness, care for form and transforms materials of satire and protest into comedy. Fiction is presented as a narration of tales which repudiates the claims of verisimilitude. He deconstructs the literary genres such as the Western and the detective story to undermine the ideological and epistemological assumptions on which they are built, thereby achieving a thematic effect through technique.

Racism forms one of the major themes of Reed’s satire. But in Reed the response to racism is not unidimensional protest in any case as it has universal urgency. The black-white conflict is placed in an historical context which suggests new ways of solving contemporary problems. Generally the central theme concerns some ancient struggle between competing world
views. It is given a mythic dimension and is usually explored through surrealism and fantasy. By giving a mythic dimension to the black-white dichotomy, Reed universalizes the black experience. He directs his ire not at his contemporaries but at his ancestors. He not only attacks the white ways but equally lampoons the black community for their shortcomings and failures. He aims his satire at Neo-slavery—a much more dangerous and destructive form of slavery in which blacks exploit and betray fellow-blacks, effectively conveyed through the metaphor Louisiana Red in *The Last Days of Louisiana Red*.

Reed found satirical comedy the most appropriate form to expose the repressive tendencies of the western culture. The grim realities of the African-American situation is so grave that only black humour seems to be the suitable mode to dramatize the predicament of the blacks in America. Reed views the satiric mode as traditionally African and he aims at reviving its lost humour under the dominant tragic cosmology of the Judeo-Christian world. Reed's high spiritedness, his sense of humour, his combination of fabulation and satire and surrealism and caricature keeps his satire close to comedy and effectively presents his black art from sinking into the futility of literary rage.
Instead of concentrating on the gruesome realities, horror and pain the blacks have been experiencing at the hands of the whites, Reed makes his novels broadly comical satires. For instance, in The Free-Lance Pallbearers, the predicament of a young, naive, enthusiastic black youth, victimised by the authority and mesmerised by the spell of religion, is presented through satirical, grotesque distortion of American reality. Flight to Canada is a comic exploration of slavery. It presents a grotesque picture of slavery and Emancipation. Through parody, exaggeration and anachronism, Reed transforms the gruesome experiences of slavery into a comedy.

Reed explores life through myth. He invokes classical myths of Osis-Isis, Antigone and King Arthur to interpret contemporary social experience. He juxtaposes myth and reality. By giving a mythic dimension to the conventional black-white conflict, he frees himself from the 'protest' tradition and naturalism. The mythic structure also enables him to transcend the local setting and limited time frame and move freely in history to show the universality of the issues involved.

By combining history and myth, Reed develops a vision of life which Harry Slochower calls mythopoeic.
strength lies in his mythopoeic approach to the classical myths. He plays with the myths he chooses/recreates and reinterprets them. He exploits mythopoesis to encompass his broad vision of history of mankind with black experience at the centre of it. Reed's strength as a writer lies not only in his reconstruction and reinterpretation of the ancient myths but more importantly in his transformation of the ancient in terms of contemporary history. By juxtaposing myth and reality he envisions "a cosmic satire".

Reed uses parody as a critique of earlier literary conventions especially realism and naturalism. As a parodist, he adopts the literary conventions of the genre he parodies and then violates them. He uses 'signification', the use of repetition and renewal as a rhetorical strategy. He signifies upon Ellison's modernism and Wright's naturalism. He criticises through signifying the conventional Western and African-American literary and popular genres for he believes that these forms are inadequate to express African-American predicament. Reed's The Free-Lance Pallbearers is a parody of self confessional autobiography in general and Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man in particular, Yellow Back Radio Broke Down is a parody of the Western, Numbo Jumbo.
and *The Last Days of Louisiana Red* are parodies of the detective story. *Flight to Canada* is a parody of the slave narrative in general, and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom Cabin* in particular and *The Terrible Twos* and *The Terrible Threes* is a parody of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*.

Reed plays with familiar motives and fictional patterns to make the reader comprehend the unfamiliar Neohoodoo. Reed’s carnivalization of Western literary modes enables him to move away from logocentricism of the Western modes to phonocentricism of African literary modes. In Reed parody, which is usually restricted to the imitation and distortion of literary texts, becomes a medium for social and literary satire. For instance, in *Mumbo Jumbo* he violates the conventions of the detective story, essentially a Western mode reflecting Western epistemology, rationalism and logical analysis and thereby undermines the Western culture and achieves a thematic effect through technique. By parodying the genres he has chosen, he renews the genres by replacing the European American generic imperatives with the Post-modernist African-American construction. In *Yellow Back Radio Broke Down* the very genre he parodies with its fantasy and surrealism and myth serves as a critique of both modernism
and naturalism. He inverts the norms of the genre of the western thereby exposing the conventional beliefs and assumptions of the Western civilization. In Reckless Eyeballing Reed parodies the double-consciousness propounded by W.E.B. Du Bois, a conventional African-American trope mainly built on Western logos, and replaces it with double-headedness, an indigenous African-American trope.

Parody and myth lead to intertextuality. Reed's narrative technique transverses a complicated reportoric of several references from diverse sources and contexts and thereby establishes a complicated network of intertextuality.

It is the inappropriateness of Anglo-American literary forms and derivative African-American narrative modes that led Reed to burlesque and parody them and evolve an alternative aesthetic which he calls Neo-HooDooism. He endeavours to fashion an art form which aims at dissolving or transcending the dilemma of double-consciousness of the African-American writer as an African and an American by returning to the ontological status of African diasporic culture. This eternal return
constitutes a mythic sense which frees Reed of the Anglo-American literary conventions.

Reed wants to expunge the presumptive superiority of canonized cultural icons of the self-designated master class. He undermines the oppressive monotheistic Judeo-Christian Western culture by the radical inversion of Western systems of belief and order and by the drastic demystification of ideological signs that have been turned into false universals. He debunks the myth of American Dream, the myth of Eldorado, the myth of Wild West, the myth of Antigone and the myth of Santa Claus.

Inspired by William Blake and W.B.Yeats, who created their own systems out of their indigenous cultures, Reed, too, formulated his own aesthetic to project an Osirian view of life. Reed's Neo-HooDoo aesthetic is largely constructed from residual elements of syncretic African religions such as Voudoun, Haitian HooDoo, Carribbean magic and Egyptology.

Reed's Neo-HooDoo is flexible and can absorb and accommodate itself to heterogenous cultures and ideas. The syncretism of Neo-HooDoo enables him to draw freely materials from diverse sources and cultures - Western and
non-Western, ancient and modern. He draws materials from visual arts such as painting and sculpture, oral tradition, music, vaudeville stage, radio, film, television, cartoons, popular culture and folklore. It is the syncreticism and synchronism of Neo-HooDoo that enables Reed to project a multicultural multiethnic polytheistic view of life. As a privileged discourse, it imparts him with a mystical insight to penetrate the opacity of a racist, materialistic and acquisitive American culture and society. As an appropriate discourse of the marginals and ex-centrics it facilitates Reed to interpret Western culture, to adopt and modify ancient myths and transform conventional literary modes. The syncreticism of Neo-HooDoo operates at the level of language, structure and tone and space to project a cyclic pattern of life.

The syncreticism of Neo-HooDoo acts as a shaping force in making Yellow Back Radio Broke Down a modern HooDoo Western combing Negro conjuration with an American cowboy tale, Mumbo Jumbo and The Last Days of Louisiana Red into a HooDoo thriller with features of conventional thriller and HooDoo powers and Flight to Canada a HooDoo slave narrative with elements of conventional slave narrative and power of HooDoo. Loop Goroo Kid, a HooDoo cowboy modelled on a HooDoo fetish, is a creature of
diverse elements. He is at once a HooDoo hougan, an apocryphal twin of Christ and American cowboy. Papa La Bas is a HooDoo detective combining African conjuration and features of a conventional detective.

Neo-HooDoo aesthetic is formulated essentially as a reaction to Western literary conventions and its main purpose is to humble the oppressive Judeo Christian Western culture. It enables Reed to adopt the Euro-American literary models and subliterary genres such as the Gothic novel, the Western and the thriller and the conventional African-American slave narrative and modify them according to his fictional requirements.

Neo-HooDoo aesthetic is essentially a return to the magical possibilities of word and object like-wise. It serves to reclaim the power of language to transform, reshape and reinvent and by doing so restore the political function of literature. It revitalizes the independence of the sign and revives the conjuring power of the word. Reed invests the meaning to the sign itself. Atonement of sign and signified is contrary to Neo-HooDoo aesthetic. Reed’s Neo-HooDoo stresses on the arbitrary nature of the relationship between sign and signified. Words have conjuring power and it is the power of the word that
conjures the spirit in VooDoo. The story, the gris-gris and the self become one. Words themselves become instruments of power and control over language becomes control over identity on the whole. Language becomes a tool to establish a presence, calling that presence into being. By adopting Neo-HooDoo, Reed moves away from logocentric Euro-American conventions to phonocentric African culture thought and literary conventions.

Neo-HooDoo as a creative impulse continually intrudes itself upon the externally controlling pattern. HooDoo is essentially a religion of subversion. It is this subversive nature of HooDoo that enables Reed to formulate an aesthetic of subversion. Reed takes the conventional western popular cultural models such as the western and the thriller and the conventional indigenous popular culture mode African-American slave narrative and transforms their meaning and function to serve his narrative purpose.

Reed acknowledges that he uses automatic writing and receives voices and visions brought to him from the psychic world. Reed's automatic writing enables him to project not only the physical realities of the everyday world experience but probe into metaphysical and spiritual realities and mystery of life. He relies on HooDoo
reality which includes phenomenon from the real and psychic world, the seen and unseen forces of life. As a HooDoo artist, he bends reality to suit his fictional purposes. He believes that art not only reflects reality but creates a reality of its own. It is his Neo-HooDoo aesthetic that makes it possible to transcend and transform reality into art. HooDoo is always open to the possibility of the physical world and the psychic world intersecting. Reed’s unification of mundane and psychic realities is effectively conveyed through the recurring figure Legba, the god of cross roads, who manifests himself in the characters of Loop Garo’Kid, Papa La Bas and Black Peter.

As an African-American writer, Reed conceives his writings as spells or conjures which can cast/charm on the enemies and can affect the world by manipulating symbols of it and thereby bring about actual changes in the world. He considers himself a jujuman incanting powerful pyrotechnic amulets called words to raise the people from cultural decadence. He views his fiction as a form of VooDoo ritual, a literary gris-gris doll that focuses a psychic fix on anyone he perceives to be the enemy of his race. Reed takes the materials available to him and fashions them into a fetish which provides access to loas.
He acknowledges that his writings are dictated by loas. He believes that the loas speak through the artist as he improvises.

Reed's aesthetic is pure electicism guided by the spirits of VooDoo. Reed, who specializes in verbal attacks, is an embodiment of Guede, a powerful loa in VooDoo and performs various functions of the loas. As Guede he defies authority and takes over the forms of popular literature such as the Horatio Alger Story, the Western, the Detective story and the slave narrative and speaks through them in his own voice. As Loop Garoo Kid, he invades various literary genres and modifies them to suit his fictional requirements. As Esu, the Trickster figure in Yoruba mythology, he signifies upon the Western notions and literary forms and inverts the conventional sign systems by associating black with life, energy, creativity and spontaneity and active presence and the white with death, suppression and absence. As Legba, he mediates between the seen and the unseen world. Reed in his fiction serves the functions of not only a Guede by attacking and exposing the authority but as a hougoun, a priest in Africa, whose litany opens the ways of alternative world by suggesting an alternative vision of life. Neo-HooDoo with its power of conjuration and
creativity enables Reed to conjure up political figures such as Lincoln, Eisenhower, Rockefeller, religious figures such as Pope, Satan, Moses, St. Nicholas and Black Peter, mythical figures such as Osiris, Isis and Antigone and cultural figures such as Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Reed exploits HooDoo beliefs in his delineation of characters, manipulation of time and space, history and language. Reed's characters, though they are stereotypes created for the purpose of satirical comedy, fall solidly within voudoun tradition. They illustrate the results of adhering to one set or another of loas. All the characters having constructive ideas such as Loop Garoo Kid, La Bas, Herman, Ed. Yelling and Raven Quickskill are associated with Petro loa and all the characters having destructive ideas such as Harry Sam, Drag Gibson, Atonists, Minnie, Street, Arthur Swille, and Rev. Jones are associated with Rada loa. They embody or enact the universal impulses personified by loas. They are symbolic emanations of HooDoo fetishes. Papa La Bas is modelled on Legba, Earline is modelled on Eruzile and Blue Coal on Ogun. He sees his characters as cartoons, boiling down a person to the essential elements. They are like VooDoo dolls constructed on the basis of generic qualities and dominant impressions. This delivers the soul of the character.
Reed's Neo-HooDooism enables him to manipulate historical time. In VooDoo time is synchronic. In Reed's narrative the historical sense of time is not linear. He views time as a circle of revolving and evolving events and treats past and present as "simultaneous" and he readily grasps time as an intuitive aspect of his imagination. For him, Time in its alogical, intuitive temporal autonomy is significant. To this extent, language, or its very deconstruction, is merely symbolic of this temporal autonomy of his creative self. In fact, as language is deconstructed, Time is "de-faced" and "liberated" from its chronology. He mimics the African oral culture's sense of cyclic time. Reed's type of synchronicity enables him to take several simultaneous events seemingly unrelated and arrange them so that they later coalesce to further the ends of the plot. It helps him to take the narrative out of routine and dull linear movements. It facilitates him to construct historical causes and parallels for the present day events. The synchronity of Reed's narrative roots his works in a contemporary reality. Time travel and travel to unseen worlds in Reed's narrative is based on HooDoo notion of communication of the human beings with the spirit world. Events do not follow a logical time sequence. They are presented in juxtapositions in the form of collage or montage.
Reed's concept of history is based on his HooDoo beliefs. He redefines the whole world through his HooDoo theory of history. Reed believes that history has often been appropriated by the racist dominant culture and so it becomes suspect. He rewrites history and at times substitutes myth for history. In *Mumbo Jumbo* in order to explain the origin of the conflict between Jes Grew carriers and Atonists, instead of giving a historical explanation, he substitutes the Egyptian myth of Osiris-Isis. Reed believes that the vision of history propagated by the classical texts formulated by the masters of dominant culture simply ignores the reality of the black people in the world except as adjuncts to the dominant white society. His vision of history is derived from his mythic view of the centrality of blackness and the marginality of white consciousness. He views history as a cyclic pattern in which dominant issues are the same.

Reed propounds a paranoid theory of history. To Reed all history is a conspiracy of the dominant culture against minority cultures and an eternal struggle between Christianity and HooDoo. For him history is neither a linear progression nor a static state but is periodic recurrences of essentially identical impulses through superficially dissimilar people and events. It is Reed's
Neo-HooDoo aesthetic that enables him to rewrite history through a process known as necromancy in which the events of the race's past are used to comment on the present and prophecy the future. Through necromancy Reed offers alternate view of the Harlem Renaissance in Mumbo Jumbo, of the old wild west in Yellow Back Radio Broke Down and of slavery and emancipation in Flight to Canada. Reed’s view of history as a recurrent pattern makes him move a character from one point of time or space to another.

Reed extends the notion of HooDoo syncreticism into the level and texture of the language he uses. He creates a kind of contemporary bathetic language whose principal rules of discourse are derived from various sources such as popular culture, television, cartoons and music. He subverts the official language of the dominant white culture with his free use of vocabularies of HooDoo and Jazz improvisation.

Apart from an aesthetic concept, Neo-HooDoo in Reed’s narrative acts as a survival mechanism in the face of oppressive tendencies of the white establishments. It is primarily used as a kind of unseen metaphysical force which gives the black victim the strength, courage and confidence to face oppression and calamity and survive in
an hostile world. Reed’s protagonists Loop, La Bas, Ed Yellings, Raven Quickskill and Uncle Robin and to some extent St. Nicholas and Black Peter use the power of HooDoo as a counterforce to overcome the oppressive mechanizations of the white establishment. It becomes a kind of faith which sustains and uplifts the black victim from calamity. It is the power of HooDoo that enables Loop Garro Kid in Yellow Back Radio Broke Down to overcome the powerful white rancher Drag Gibson and La Bas and Herman in Mumbo Jumbo to expose the conspiracy of the Atonists. It is the HooDoo principle that is applied in making Gumbo as an antidote to the destructive Louisiana Red in The Last Days of Louisiana Red. It is the same HooDoo power that prompts Uncle Robin to meddle with his master’s will and bequeath all his wealth. Under the influence of HooDoo powers St. Nicholas and Black Peter expose the conspiracy against the American President and save his life. Reed feels that a combination of self-reliance and the power of HooDoo is an ideal antidote to counter the oppressive Western culture and reassert black identity, culture and heritage.

In Reed’s narrative Neo-HooDoo aesthetic serves dual purposes. It is used not only to free himself from the stranglehold of the oppressive Judeo-Christian
monotheistic Western culture and literary conventions and derivative African-American literary modes, but also to preserve his distinct black identity for projecting an African vision of life, instead of being assimilated into the mainstream American culture and thus enabling him to transcend from the dilemma of the double consciousness.

Neo-HooDooism which insists on creativity, artistic freedom, improvisation, experimentation, mystery and power of intuition is not merely a theory and practice of religion. It not merely serves as a literary consciousness and narrative technique but it becomes an approach to life, an attitude and ultimately a way of life. Thus the narrative technique in Reed becomes the vision of life. As a way of life Neo-HooDoo will purge African-American of Western conditioning which will ultimately help him to regain his freedom and mythic vision.

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