

21A.460
April 28, 2005

Essays:

- focus on grappling with the content
- critique the methodology of the authors

Exercise: Map out what embodiment looks like in Haiti. What does social environment look like in Jeanty? What kinds of social groupings are there? Are they nuclear? Extended?

- Spatial geography and identity as forms of kinship alliances
 - *lakou*: basic family structure
 - kinship diagram (similar to Janzen's):
 - bilateral system of inheritance: person can inherit from both male and female lines
 - this is a blending of social structures in Caribbean countries, not purely African
 - father is considered patriarch of family, but women are important and have social significance within the family
 - ancestor spirits are venerated

Shifts in family structuring:

- In the 1950s-60s under Duvalier, there was a mass exodus from countryside to the cities (mostly in search of jobs)
- Duvaliers promoted industrial growth
- many mulatto elite felt persecuted and hence left for the United States or Canada.

Important question:

- What is the sense of person and identity in this family structure?

- How to describe anatomy in this context?
 - division between good/bad spirits controlling a person
 - *ti bon anj* (good angel)
 - *gwo bon anj* (bad angel)
 - the two are good/bad aspects of a person that controls particular forms of behavior
 - *Ti bon anj*:
 - self-conscious awareness of self; can leave is dispossession - people claim that *ti bon anj* can leave the body; akin to ego in Freudian language (as described by those who are biomedically inclined); resides in head (*tèt*); rather like distinction between soul and spirit – hard to determine
 - *Gwo bon anj*:
 - animating aspect of body ('soul') that some attribute to negative actions. Extends out, can travel, which allows it to move through space.

- Main point of describing these: there are different components of self that are non-corporeal. There are different ways to think about a person.
- How to describe body and delineate important components of the self?
 - Concept of 'blood'
 - What happens when a person gets angry? Blood can 'rise', which makes people angry.
 - Teas, baths, can regulate temperature, which can then regulate emotions
 - physiological conditions affect emotions, and vice versa
 - What are other things that affect emotions?
 - Conceptions of illness and afflictions
 - Similarity between African and Caribbean notion of 'sent' emotional or physical afflictions.
 - Root cause: jealousy
 - Sickness can be a result of other people's bad intentions
 - What else can cause affliction? Who else (beyond biomedical causes)? Angry ancestors can send sickness.
 - Critique: could have spoken more about political economy, but maybe not relevant to context.
 - What does illness express for Brodwin?
 - biomedical or not, illness reflects on moral status
 - Distinction made between 'satanic' illness and illnesses 'sent by God'
 - The distinction is often diagnosed after the fact, which is what reflects on the moral status of the person rather than physiological state of being
 - Medicalization within society
 - biomedical terms expanding into more and more realms of human life
 - sickness is seen as resistance, diagnosis of something wrong socially

Case study: Janine Dutoit

- What is eclampsia (*eclampsi*), other than formal medical definition?
- Janine (19) is pregnant, living with her mother and brother, 2 male relatives, part of a poor family dispersed geographically
- when she got ill during labor and delivery, richer relations had obligation to house and take care of her, since she was established as member of the lakou group
- What were the reasons why she was diagnosed with eclampsia?
 - Roots of *eclampsi* were anger, demonstrated physiologically by seizures, loss of consciousness,

- weakness, dizziness, and dissociation. In a state of *indisposition* and *kriz*
- association of disorder to anger links to ideas of hot versus cold and regulation of emotions
 - Brodwin discusses her case using Janzen's notion of the therapy managing group
 - Boundaries between caregiver and patient blurs
 - Sickness is related to social status/situation when discussing concerns about cost of treatment when in hospital
 - Critique: could have done a better job in showing how people related her illness with her social status
- Crisis and its effects on body, social relations
 - *kriz*: extremely emotional, angry state of being, akin to behavior when possessed, but without the intervention of a spirit.
 - example: people would get *kriz* towards the end of their year-long subsidized healthcare plans offered by human rights groups. Part of the cause is anger that help offered by human rights group would soon be withdrawn. NGOs often take the place of kinship groups that relatives held in former times
 - *kriz* is an unintentional occurrence not intentional 'performance,' like attempted suicide as a call for help.
 - crises that erupt along social order are often signs of social problems, social disruptions.
 - there is a repetition of *lakou* family structure even in urban settings. maintaining links between family across disperse geographical locations (Geurts – could have explained how travel maintained links)
 - Case study: Dieusaveur (20)
 - State agronomist, came from poor family
 - Had certain status in society due to education and job
 - Protestant family, denied any involvement with the *lwa*, or spirits
 - Was victim of an accident, left paralyzed
 - Who was in therapy management group? What was his diagnosis? Biomedical community could not find what was wrong and fix it. Extent to which family emphasized their use of biomedicine demonstrated extent to which biomedical treatments were considered the solution
 - family and community organized prayer groups for him, did not serve the spirits at all. This is significant because they did not make attempts to placate the spirits at all for any perceived anger they might have had towards him.
 - Dieusaveur's condition perceived by some to be a 'sent' sickness. Was seen as curable if proper measures were taken. Someone was jealous and perhaps 'sent' the cause for his accident and illness.

- People perceived that since he did not take steps to cure the sent sickness, he died.
- *Kriz*: how did people react at his funeral? They were having fits, losing control emotionally, but in patterned ways. Shock and grief primary emotions. *To what extent was this a performance of grief, perhaps as a means of demonstrating innocence from having 'sent' the illness?* How people represent themselves can demonstrate moral status. *Who were the most demonstrative? The most innocent, or the most guilty?*
- Significant that although Protestant, the family carried out steps to prevent spirit from being used by an *oungan*. Notions of *zombi*, *bokor* still very real, considered to have very real power and common in everyday discourse
- Issues in somatization
 - Social situations influence and are manifested in medical terms, but can get tricky in psychiatric terms. Illness can be a symptom of something wrong socially.
 - Was presentation of healers convincing?
 - Hard to buy totally. Author obviously is sympathetic
 - Issues in the concept of performance. Brodwin considers this to be something experientially different, but how much is conscious behavior versus “real” phenomena?
 - There are modeled rituals, archetypal behavioral patterns present. Is it acting out a persona, or actively embodying it?
- Magic, morals, and spirits
 - Emphasis on rejection of *lwa* by Catholics, careful delineation of role of *lwa* and the *anj* in career decisions (i.e. Mme. Beaumont) and emphasis on the nature of inherited spirits rather than purchased
 - Inherited spirits do not need to be worshipped actively, and are part of the person – has no moral implications for individual, especially if s/he practices another religion that rejects the spirits
 - Purchased spirits imply that person actively serves the *lwa*
 - Guidance provided by *lwa* in decision making is seen as morally dangerous, but not by the *anj*
 - Pragmatically speaking, magic is a way of solving everyday problems
 - There is no moral system to decide if magic is good or bad, it is ‘just there.’
 - Spells have to get released. Going to a *oungan* to send spell not a good/evil thing, it just happens naturally.
 - further issues to consider: division between inner and outer frame. significance of ritual materials and staging of rituals.
- Methodological Issues
 - Political situation in Jeanty: author is a white American man, presumably carried certain social significance for the people he worked with.
 - Politics of morality in Jeanty: author acknowledges that many considered him to be Catholic by default, hence probably were especially vehement against use of *vodou*, more than in actuality.

- Hard to believe that he was able to get a completely fair account of religious practices and beliefs on account of his own racial and cultural heritage (also the stereotypes and perceptions the citizens of Jeanty had about him, Americans, and Catholics in general)
- What does it mean when interviewer is from a situation of greater power than people s/he is working with? Implicates local politics, local group structures
- This aspect inherently politicized the actions of human rights groups, since aid was being given by people of greater power to people with less
- Asymmetries in power relations produces situations where people provide inconsistent representations of themselves (symbol of social politics)