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Boundaries of Self and Other in Ghanaian Popular Culture. Joseph Adjaye. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004. 195 pp.

With *Boundaries of Self and Other in Ghanaian Popular Culture* (2004), Joseph Adjaye offers us an inspiring ethnography of several rituals among the Akan, Krobo, and Bono in Ghana. The book offers a vivid impression of the (post)colonial transformations of libations, funerals, naming ceremonies, female initiation practices and two festivals (Bakatue and Apoo), which the author tries to explain by using and refining different theoretical approaches. The strength of this book is situated in the author's personal experiences. As the eldest son in an Akan family, he has to take up specific rules during rituals. The theoretical strand, which underpins all his analyses, is based on the postmodernist conception of contextually-realized plural identities and meanings. Adjaye intends "to contribute to theoretical formulations about performance studies in African contexts, thereby bringing fresh and novel interpretations to our understanding of the role of ritual actions in the social construction and experience of African realities" (3). A difficult task given the heterogeneity of approaches and the conceptual problems in the field of performance studies.

The first chapter following the theoretical introduction tackles libations as *ethnopoetic constructions of reality*. The author stresses that this genre, probably the most common ritual in Ghana, is ever-changing, adaptable to every circumstance. Drawing on discourse analysis, Adjaye illustrates how libators as mediators between the profane and the sacred shape new realities, both for themselves and the audience. These realities are very individual, as they are colored by distinct life trajectories and actual emotions of the participants.

The third chapter, devoted to naming ceremonies within Akan culture, opens with a curious question: "Is there a universal view of culture, or, more specifically..., of naming systems?" (41) The author does not succeed in answering this question, but he nevertheless successfully describes how a baby transforms from non-person into a person through this ritual. Here, Adjaye rejects structuralism for being static and not considering reality as multileveled, multifaceted, and multivocal (49). In his view, symbols are socially objectified loci of meaning (51), and a structural analysis of rituals does not adhere to a flexible conception of 'meaning'.

In "Dangerous Crossroads: Liminality and Contested Meaning in Krobo Dipo Girls' Initiation" (Chapter 4), the author uses van Gennep's (1909) and Turner's (1969, 1995) writings for a structural investigation of the initiation ritual. The innovation of this chapter lies in its focus on the personal experiences of rituals and emotions toward symbols. While criticizing Jean La Fontaine's study of Gisu initiation (1985) for not taking into account the differences between official and informal versions of initiation rituals, Adjaye tries to prove the heterogeneity in the experience of one and the same ritual. Here, the author analyzes one ritual which he did not experience himself. Therefore, the ethnographic data (based on minimal verbal responses, powerful facial and emotional expressions) and conclusions are rather vague (78).

Chapter 5 and 6, which are both dealing with less documented Ghanaian festivals (Bakatue festival and Takyiman festival) are by far the best chapters of the book. Following and explaining Turner (1969, 1995) and Bakhtin (1973, 1984), but without mentioning James Scott, Adjaye tackles power relations and the temporary accepted reversal of the hegemonic-subordinate roles. The first festival is open to the whole community, while the Takyiman festival allows youth to mock the dominating groups. Here, Adjaye moves to an analysis of intergenerational relations. In the author's view Ghanaian youth does not possess a subculture of its own, nor does it offer a counterculture. Rather these youngsters realize a carnivalesque reversal of power relations in the annual festival, by means of song and dramatic behavior.

In chapter 7, inspired by symbolic interactionism, Adjaye describes the transformation of Akan funeral rituals since colonialism. The 'other' in mourning rituals has shifted from 'the otherworld' to societal others who need to be impressed by mainly financial efforts.

The last chapter of the book offers a recapitulation of the author's theoretical assumptions organized around themes as space, time, power, the body, morality, the solemn and the nonsolenn, ritualization, agency, societal integration and renewal, the individual and society, knowledge, and meaning. But here Adjaye touches too hastily on too many topics.

The variety of the discussed performances is both the strength and the weakness of this book. Adjaye tries to comment upon diverse practices, which stops him from elaborating his ideas more thoroughly. While the main theme of this book is the multiplicity and heterogeneity in collective and personal experiences, the author sometimes only hints at the plural strategies for the construction of meaning in the performances. Another shortcoming of this text is its conceptual vagueness. What, for example, is meant by "social and cultural arrangements" (3)? In the sixth chapter, while describing the performances of young men, a cultural definition of 'youth' is missing. What are "youthful ages" (15)? And lastly, Adjaye twice utters remarks on the role of women during funerals - the primordial role of women as mourners (154) and the subordination of women as key speakers (24) – but he does not use this opportunity to give a more detailed analysis of female identities and experiences.

To conclude, Adjaye has given the reader an inspiring book, which combines multiple theoretical lines within anthropology and other disciplines in the field of ritual studies. It raises many questions of interest to performance-oriented scholars and indicates possible routes for future research.

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