

ANTH 2630 Class Notes 02.25.14

Critical Reading: Prof suggested questions to ask as you read:

What is missing? Why? How is text scripted? Does conclusion work? What are future directions, possibilities?

-we'll be looking at critical reading in a workshop with Sandy

Practice theory – ELSA p.4

Why focus on everyday lives?

- production and transformation of culture
- Khan's 'becoming' ← practice theory (PT)

P T is a paradigm (lens, model) for understanding personhood and culture as a manifestation of everyday life & experience

-dialectic between structure & human action

\ interrelationship, mutually constructive relationship; structure and action moving back & forth in a dynamic relationship

-individual participates in & creates social life, but is never outside of culture or structure

-individual is not simply an automaton, not automatically reacting to or following structure; he/she participates & shapes culture/structure

-social norms → ways of being & acting in a structure

e.g. walking into a mosque

→ but these rely on human participation & constant cultivation

Key Theorists for practice theory

Pierre Bourdieu – habitus → attempted to capture permanent internalization of social order in human body

-dynamic & mobile idea (we are not outside) but highly interactive through the human body

e.g. production of your body as a student is a

-particularly in ritual moments, rites of passage

Michel Foucault- also interested in body → schools, prisons, institutions

-interested in relationship between power & knowledge

-how institutions ask us to behave; ways we pony up to authority

e.g. Kiev – bodies in revolution together to challenge authority

-consuming and acting out ← we enact, support or challenge

Anthony Giddens – structuration

-analysis of relationship between human agency & social structure in which primacy is granted to neither but rather “ how principles of order could be produced & reproduced at the level of practice itself & not through some non-

agentive 'ordering' society” that impinges on individual actions from 'above’

→repetition of acts of individuals produces structures

Sherry Ortner – 1st to use term “practice theory”

- made connections between above theorists
- in anthro, a significant break in 70' & 80's with symbolic anthro
 - idea that society could be read like a map

Authors of ELSA influenced by Louis Dumont 40's & 50's and were students of McKim Marriott ← >post-structuralist perspective

Khan → people do not simply practise religions by following imam or text, but they read, live and animate religion through behaviour, scepticism, debate

Why read Khan critically in a workshop?

- most difficult text together
- good prep for other assignments, future courses
- opportunity to develop skill in collaboration with others

Workshop with Sandy

- read Paul Edward's online or print out - useful
- start generally at first
- we'll concentrate on introduction

Part 1: Class discussion

What do you do when you begin to look at a text?

(this is a mix of student & Sandy's strategies; add your own, I have)

Class -read back cover of text

- research writer
- read Table of Contents
- read intro & try to understand it
- read Acknowledgements
- look over chapter before beginning to read: length, images
- read chap summary if one, or in this case, final section on organization first
- turn each chap sub-heading into question & read for answer

Sandy – spends time thinking about title (which is or should be nutshell of key idea)

- thinks about cover art, in this case:
 - a kaleidoscope: mirrors & lens
 - every time you turn it, something different
 - hard to separate elements
- looks at index
- looks at reference section to see who is cited

S. asked: What did you think? Is this an easy book?

(fair to say that most of class found it difficult)

- complex vocabulary
- dense style
- lack of knowledge of Islam

S. asked: How does Khan begin?

- narrative, story (often ethnographies begin with story)

Why does she begin with this story? (some class discussion, I missed here)

What do you think benefits are of having chosen to start with story?

- gives her perspective
- reinforces that it is an ethnography
- illustrates, provides a basis for her argument

What are the risks she takes?

- one opinion
- limits you to her cultural lens
- risk of generalization

S: These are the sorts of things to ask yourself.

- S. starts out by writing something that has caught her eye; a vignette
- pointed out a sentence on p.1 → introducing movement, not static

Part 2: Using questions to locate Khan's purpose & arguments in Chap 1
(Sandy will post these questions on CU Learn)

- N. B. important to read them as they guide you to locate: Khan's purpose, arguments & explanation of how she plans to provide evidence for her argument

Useful tip: Sandy always finds arguments, lists them & consults them as she drafts

Part 3: Groups were asked to summarize Khan's argument in 1 or 2 sentences as the start to a paragraph.

- two students read their opening sentences out to the class

N. B. Sandy wrote her entire paragraph on the board & will post it on CU Learn

Prof Bright wrote the following points related to class discussion in Part 1 on board

1. Narrative doesn't always fit into existing repertoire
We cannot always accommodate what we see, hear, experience in expected categories, this gets at the improvisational quality of meaning-making
2. Debate, interpretation is fundamental to Islam
3. Moments, exchange etc. are also foundational to nation
4. Suggestion also of theory of personhood as well as analysis of theory & nation
There is no absolutism – doing and redoing leads to reevaluation of self

Khan's argument (as we understood it in big group)

1. Writing style is open – like the points she's trying to make - written in a form that illustrates arguments she is trying to make
2. Fluidity of Islam in Pakistan – how it's upheld through striving – lack of structure in all this

3. Experimentation – spirit of striving; as means of doing & undoing; ‘no fixed entity’ or absolutes; constant process of self-evaluating & questioning; use & reuse of familiar forms, repertoires
4. Existing framework & repertoires at the same time that help to shape, influence, & inform people’s reading & practice in any given situation.
5. Where does experimentation, striving take place then? Words, conversations, debates, interpretation of religious texts
 - space e.g. mosques, streets, households
6. Scepticism – serves to block but also opens people to participation & opportunity (religious life/practice as opportunity & constraint)
7. Multidimensionality & intersectionality - quality of nation & its identity/meaning. “Who is Pakistan” - relies on multiple & competing stories and narratives about the past, present & future
8. The fluidity of Islam in Pakistan is best understood through the striving of individuals to create meaning from their religion & in the process contribute to its becoming the present onward
9. Khan aims to give an enriched knowledge concerning the relation Pakistan has with Islam & to deconstruct a preconceived notion & overreaching claim as well as pulling from historical records to show the fluidity of the religion & culture.

A classmate noted that there are 74 sects in Pakistan today

Prof Bright’s reminder:

Introduction & Readings in ELSA part 4 pp 219-290

- some of the readings show debate about religion
- Marsden reading illustrates creative ways to negotiate differences
- religions are not closed containers or blocks
- people find ways to live in same apt building etc. together
- readings provide challenges to hegemonic representations in w. media

Essay due March 7 only 4-5 pages

- do something specific – body/space/texts
- look for ideas of ‘becoming’

Reading for next week: Chaps 2, 3 & 4 of Muslim Becoming

- all easier than chap 1, usually the most difficult in ethnography
- Chap 4 is almost identical to Khan’s reading in ELSA pp. 274-289