D-Day 4/22

***Madumo: A Man Bewitched*, by Adam Ashforth**

Chapters 1-3

1. Madumo details, as a personal account, the story of a young man dealing with intense poverty and hard luck in South Africa. In what ways are his experiences similar to or different from Western experience, specifically in the fields of education and religion? Is this experience uniquely South African or simply a universal experience of youth?
2. What were some of the most surprising differences in attitudes you found between our American view of things such as education and ancestry compared with the Soweto reality that Adam Ashforth encounters?
3. How prevalent and influential is witchcraft within African culture and to what extremes does it affect everyday life in Soweto?

Chapters 4-7
4. How does Madumo’s belief in African traditional healing lead him to Mr. Zondi? How do those who are related to and those who know Madumo react? What does this suggest about the underlying shared cultural belief in the traditional spiritualism?
5. Based on the context of Adam Ashforth’s book, *Madumo: A Man Bewitched*, discuss the magic and the witchcraft that is so central to Maduma’s story and whether or not you believe in its power and existence.
6. Is witchcraft simply an excuse or justification for Madumo to use for the ‘bad luck’ that he has experienced? One could argue that the negative things that have happened in Madumo’s life are result of his actions and the viewpoints of his family. Does he use witchcraft to excuse himself of all responsibility? How can he readily adopt these ideas if he has seemingly no past connection with witchcraft?
7. Do you think that a double standard exists between women and men in South Africa particularly in relation to witchcraft? If yes, how and why do you think that this occurs?
8. Do you think that witchcraft is a social construct used to oppress women?

Chapters 8-13

1. is there a resurgence of witchcraft beliefs and activities in South Africa at this particular period in time?
Chapters 14-17
2. Does Madumo’s psychological state have an affect on his physical state? Could it be that his nervous and paranoid disposition as a result of his mother’s death causes his physical distress or worsens a pre-existing condition? In what ways are healing rituals in the Christian religion and the ancestral practices parallel and in what ways can they add to his illness?
3. When looking at the religious procedure at the ZCC, how justified is Madumo’s reaction to the involvement of Ashforth in their practices?
4. What does witchcraft as a concept mean? What purpose does this concept serve? Does it exist?

Chapters 18-end

1. If you were in Adam’s position, would you have snapped and told your friend that it was all “bullshit,” that the healer was only making excuses? If so, when would you have snapped and told your friend how you really felt?
2. Why is witchcraft so widely accepted and believed in South Africa? How does this compare to witchcraft in the West? How can this disparity be explained?
3. What happens when the elder(s) of a family are not obeyed?
4. What is the connection between modernity in Africa and rising recognition of witchcraft? How does this play out in Madumo?
5. Ashforth’s frustration and eventual anger with Madumo and the superstitious belief in witcraft as seen in chapter 18 has helped give the reader some insight as to how outsiders must feel upon being bombarded with unknown. In what ways has Ashforth proven himself to be a true outsider or westerner through his experiences with Madumo? In what way does Ashforth discourage his friend?
6. Throughout the course of the book Adam Ashforth spent a lot of time and money on helping Madumo find a cure to for his alleged bewitchment. Do you believe that Ashforth was ethically correct in investing so much into Madumo’s case?

“Buying a Better Witchdoctor: Witch-finding, Neoliberalism, and the Development Imagination in the Taita Hills, Kenya,” by James H. Smith

1. James H. Smith discusses the Tanazanian witch-finder Maji Marefu’s crusade against evil witchcraft in his article “Buying a better witch doctor”. Discuss why at first Maji Marefu’s presence was so popular in the Taita Hills and the relationships between an economic and political crisis and the violation human rights.
2. Is witchcraft used as a smokescreen to divert attention away from social and professional problems?
3. Do you think that Maji Marefu’s witch hunt was a good solution for the problems in Taita?
4. The effects of globalization vary from one community to another, and so are the ways in which it is dealt with. In this article, Smith looks at the ways a Kenyan community in Taita Hills tries to understand and deal with the changes associated with globaliqation, which is clearly different from how other non-African communities would deal with it. How do the Taita people deal with the challenges they faced and how did it end up helping them?
5. Smith and Ashforth both come up with theories why witchcraft trends have re-emerged in two different counties in Africa recently. In what ways do these theories connect and overlap? In what ways are they different and distinct from one another? Whose argument is more convincing?