

Fadiman – The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down – Ch. 13-15, pp. 171-224

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- Ch 13: Code X, pp. 171-180
 - Lia in vegetative but “angry” state, back at MCMC
 - Another cultural disconnect: Nao Kao understands someone to say that Lia will die in two hours
 - Hmong believe that that is a terrible insult, and dangerous, since it attracts a *da* to take the soul
 - Another version: since no one can predict a natural death, a specific time prediction implies a plan to kill the person
 - Nao Kao reacts as any sensible Hmong would: by fleeing with Lia
- Chapter 14: The Melting Pot p. 180-209
 - Assimilation, integration, or neither?
 - Hmong intend to remain Hmong
 - Their goal of emigration: to remain Hmong, not to seek something better
 - Involuntary immigrants are different from voluntary ones
 - “tend not to melt” in the melting pot
 - Spread out to 53 cities in 25 states
 - Intentionally to make them disappear into US society
 - Was this a good idea? Would it be for other groups? Why?
 - Clans broken up
 - Or only members of a single clan sent to a given city, so young people meet no one they can marry
 - Is there a lesson to be learned here?
 - Culture shock
 - Confusing plane trip to US
 - Lots to learn as Lees stay with relatives in US
 - Never seen or learned to use a toilet
 - [UCHA Coop case]
 - from tropical mountains, most were sent to snow-covered flatlands
 - Minneapolis, Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Hartford, Providence
 - VOLAGS: Voluntary resettlement agencies
 - Often religious
 - “dim view of shamanistic animism”
 - **animism**: belief in souls; usually that many things in the environment have souls
 - not only people, but animals, plants, rocks, rivers, etc.
 - examples: Japanese Shinto religion; traditional Andean religion
 - List of US cultural rules to follow, p 186-7
 - “To send mail, you must use stamps”
 - “Ask before picking your neighbors flowers, fruit, or vegetables”

- “Never urinate in the street. This creates a smell that is offensive to Americans. They also believe that it causes disease.”
- “Use a handkerchief or Kleenex to blow your nose in public”
- etc.
- Parallels the list of do’s and don’ts for Americans visiting Hmong on p. 65 (discussed in previous notes)
 - Don’t maintain eye contact; Hmong find it disrespectful
 - Don’t beckon a person with a crooked finger; Hmong reserve that for animals
 - Never complement a baby, or a *dab* might be tempted to snatch its soul
- US rules are equally arbitrary, or would probably seem so until you learned the overall system and reasons
- Samples of Hmong cultural transgressions, p. 187-8
 - Washed rice in toilets
 - Ate cat food
 - Planted crops in public parks
 - Hunted pigeons with crossbows on streets of Philadelphia
 - Don’t these seem to be pretty reasonable, even responsible, things to do?
 - Why aren’t they?
- Hmong selectively adopted traits that are useful to them: driving cars, telephones
 - But not learning English
 - why not?
- Hmong were targeted for abuse due to rumors of preferential welfare treatment, dog eating, etc.
 - And because they were not used to locking houses and guarding possessions
 - “In war, you know who your enemies are. Here, you don’t know if the person walking up to you will hurt you.” p. 192
 - beatings, robberies, vandalism, etc.
- Hmong did not fight back
 - Hmong fight rarely
 - Value an attitude of stoic patience
 - Too proud to lower themselves to level of petty criminals and fight back
 - Would be ashamed to fight
 - if they do fight,
 - use fists and feet
 - Take it very seriously, may remain enemies forever
 - Feared that they would be imprisoned forever if they tried to hurt someone
 - that is, they were trying to following the rules of their host country
- Preferred to just leave, go to relatives
 - “secondary migration” of Hmong clustering back together
 - leaving their local sponsors without giving advance notice
- moved to states with better welfare terms, agricultural land (California), etc.
- as concentrations get larger, the benefits of support, group rituals, etc. increase
- Hmong sewing quilts for Amish “locally made”

- Catch-22: can't get better jobs without learning English, can't learn English while working at their current jobs
 - should remind you of Chavez readings
- Welfare pays according to number of children. Hmong have large families, so working for less than high wages brings in less than being on welfare
- Hmong were promised aid if they fought for the US and the US lost
 - Expected a hero's welcome
 - First betrayal: left behind when US left
 - Second betrayal: not all admitted from Thai camps to US
 - Third betrayal: ineligible for veteran's benefits in US
 - Fourth betrayal: condemnation for taking welfare
 - Fifth betrayal: cutting off welfare
- Hmong suffering from "global despair" p 202-3
 - Loss of "home"
 - **"role loss"** p 206
 - Grandfather now the most helpless; daughter the successful student
 - Feeling of complete incompetence
 - Military leader takes five years to get a job as a part-time church liason
 - [Carla: Upper-class Peruvian lawyer in US who had to babysit...]
- Chapter 15: Gold and Dross p 210-224
 - 2 years after her last seizure, Lia still alive and growing
 - "persistent vegetative state"
 - quadriplegic, spastic, incontinent
 - no consciousness
 - no soul
 - doctors expected her to go home to die
 - When Lia was returned to clinic for a checkup, Neil was on duty
 - He cries
 - He is amazed that Foua does not blame him
 - She is now a model patient, Lees model parents, well treated
 - Lees feel that they are treating her the same as ever.
 - Martin Kilgore visits for medical check
 - Smart, educated, pro-Hmong
 - Unable to communicate with Lees
 - They shut down in the face of his authority position
 - Lees seem impenetrable and stupid
 - Martin seems like a bumbler
 - Why?
 - How could this be better?