

Anthropology 2240, Fall 2006
Readings for *Writing Women's Worlds* by Lila Abu-Lughod

Preface (September 11)

1. How does Abu-Lughod set you up for her position in the Awlad 'Ali Bedouin? (What is her position?)
2. What themes in the lives of the Awlad 'Ali does she imply she will discuss in the book?
3. How is the book set up?

Introduction (September 20)

1. What is feminism for Abu-Lughod?
2. What is *culture* for Abu-Lughod?
3. How does she intend to 'write against culture'?
4. What are the problems with ethnography in anthropology, according to Abu-Lughod?
5. What stylistic choices does Abu-Lughod make? (ie what conventions does she use to put the book together?)
6. Who is Abu-Lughod writing the book for?

Chapter 1: Patrilineality (September 27)

1. What is the role of older women like Migdim in this community?
2. How does Abu-Lughod put herself into the book? Do you like that?
3. Summarize the role of men and the role of women among the Awlad 'Ali.
4. How does patrilineality impact the lives of men and women?
5. How does Migdim define kinship?
6. What is the place of land in the lives of the Awlad 'Ali? How does that impact women?

Chapter 2: Polygyny (October 16)

1. How do men and women view polygyny differently?
2. What are the benefits of marrying relatives (cousins)?
3. What is the basis of the fight between Azza and Gateefa?
4. How is Migdim a matriarch? Does she actually have power? In what arenas of life?
5. How does Abu-Lughod's constant presence in the book affect her efforts to write against culture?

Chapter 3: Reproduction (October 23)

1. Are the births of boys or girls preferred in this community?
2. What is the place (role) of children in the lives of women?
3. Which women play roles in childbirth?
4. What is 'shock'?
5. What kinds of stories are recounted in this book? Are they effective parts of Abu-Lughod's ethnography?

Chapter 4: Patrilateral Parallel Cousin Marriage (October 30)

1. Why is marriage so important to Sabra?
2. What kinds of questions do anthropologists ask about marriage? How do the Awlad 'Ali girls talk about marriage?
3. Why patrilateral parallel cousin marriage? Where do love marriages fit in to the story?
4. Pay attention to the discussion about virginity between Abu-Lughod and the women of the camp. What are the women getting at? Are they trying to change Abu-Lughod's mind about her culture? Is Abu-Lughod effective in conveying the oddity of 'western' behaviors on the wedding night?

Chapter 5: Honor and Shame (November 20)

1. This chapter is built around an essay by Kamla. What are the themes of the essay? What does she say about change?
2. Do women have power among the Awlad 'Ali?
3. Does Abu-Lughod succeed at writing against culture?