

Living in a Pluralistic World: Class 6  
**Fernea - Guests of the Sheik - Ch. 5-8**  
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- Quiz
- Chapter 5, Gypsies
  - BJ and Bob driving with Jabbar and his dense sister Khadija
    - they perform juggling and acrobatics, women as background
    - abayahs used provocatively - BJ is shocked
      - why? What is happening to her that she should respond this way?
    - leader asks Jabbar if they would like one of the girls to dance
      - Khadija says yes, Jabbar says "that's enough"; Khadija sulks
        - why these reactions?
  - later, Abdul Razzak (engineer friend of Jabbar) invites them to come visit the camp
    - he is to deliver gifts to his mistress Fatima (!)
    - Khadija does not go, reasons not explained...?
    - Abdul brings Fatima hashish, among other gifts
    - dismal scene; everyone tired, dirty, some sick...
    - sick, fat, malnourished child
- Chapter 6, Housekeeping in El Nahra
  - daily ethnographer's routine
    - BBC
    - Arabic drill, newly learned phrases
    - Bob goes off for interviews
    - BJ does housekeeping
    - both do visits in afternoons
      - evenings together, reviewing, writing in journals, reading, playing chess
  - heavy laundry done in Diwaniya, El Nahra people won't do Christians' laundry
  - only very low-status women go to the market
  - description of the food... general interest and ethnographic duty!
    - "local bread...healthful and good when hot, but usually it was dry and often tasteless."  
(they will think similarly of hers!)
  - water buffalo do better than cows; herders prosperous, but low status
    - a cow confers status, a water buffalo does not
    - arbitrary cultural construction of meaning...
  - BJ getting nowhere with the women after two months
    - thinks they are talking about her, giggling at her, but can't be sure, so can't respond
      - classic paranoia of culture shock
      - even if it was true
      - why isn't she making any friends?
    - "I felt very strongly that we must have some common humanity between us, although we were from such different worlds. But how to find it?" [sounds like Middleton!] p. 71
  - Bob to be gone two days; Sheik Hamid sends servant Amina to stay overnight

- neither looking forward to it
- finally, at bedtime, she asks "Is your husband kind to you?", cries, launches into life story
  - at 15, married to a 65 year old man (she was one of 12 children, poor)
  - almost died with stillbirth
  - husband dies, leaving nothing
  - husband's family mostly dead, remainder don't want her
  - Hamid buys her, gives her to Selma
  - now gets all the food she wants, Selma gives her cigarettes, Hamid is wonderful...
  - hasn't seen family in seven years
  - Amina: get a lot of gold jewelry from your husband while you are young!
- next day, the Sheik's women visit
  - they ignore her, refuse her tea
  - BJ points this out sharply: shocked silence.
  - Selma makes excuses and takes some tea
  - all then accept cigarettes
  - why doesn't she do laundry with them at the canal?
  - we never see much laundry hanging... BJ must be lazy...
  - she cooks - brings out Western bread to try
    - Sheddar spits it out
    - claims she can't cook rice, so Bob eats at the mudhif
  - BJ admits that she can't cook this rice; it is different from American rice
    - "Rice? Rice is the same everywhere" ... "I was obviously slow-witted as well as lazy"
    - notice any naïve realism here?
    - Fine for the anthropologist to be a cultural relativist, but what if no one else is?
  - start to tease about sleeping with Bob
  - BJ sees them out and cries
    - "I would not have believed that I could be so upset at being accused of laziness and incompetence by a group of illiterate tribal ladies...it was a real and very terrible snub now..."
  - BJ feels indignant, "they are nothing but a group of curiosity seekers"
    - Of course, what are BJ and Bob?
    - self-righteous, hurt... next day, unreasonably depressed
- next morning, Laila and two others come teach her how to cook rice
  - "We don't want your husband to beat you...After all, you are here alone without your mother."
    - What are the assumptions here?
    - Would BJ have thought of herself this way?
- that afternoon, visits Sheik's family, accidentally unannounced (Mohammed forgot)
  - sees Selma in daily clothes, making Sheik Hamid's bed
  - Samira (Kulthum's daughter) asks if she embroiders, suggests she embroider Bob some pillowcases
  - Laila to lend patterns
  - BJ has been sitting on the floor - not a chair

- Selma too busy to think about entertaining her
- Selma: the Sheik wants to meet you; here or your place?
  - "I must ask my husband" - the right answer!
- Purdah = Seclusion of women
- Chapter 7, Problems of Purdah [Sheik Hamza]
  - Sheik Hamza arrives in car with driver to visit when Bob is gone
    - BJ does not open the gate; "my husband would be glad to see you"
    - anger, gate rattling, leave
    - Bob describes him as a wastrel, absent, spending "sharecropper's" money
  - embroidery working
    - Laila traced pattern
    - BJ brings it everywhere
      - "the women all remarked on it" [apparently not quite typical behavior] but then forget her strangeness and talk freely
      - BJ doesn't have to talk constantly
      - could pick things up by listening
  - Hamza had invited Bob to visit him through Jabbar; repeats, inviting BJ to his harem
    - Hamza's 3-story "palace" (p. 85)
    - Hamza takes a large share from his fellahin, so they are poorest in the area
    - Jabbar: he has to go when the revolution comes, as expected in the countryside - but not by diplomats in Baghdad
      - Ethnography is actually a good way to learn what is going on
      - Lynn Maners, grad student studying traditional dance in Yugoslavia: predicted the war in Bosnia based on changes he saw in the dancing
      - US consulate staff in Lima not allowed to leave a few neighborhoods of the capital, clueless about the country
    - Hamza has sent his women away to Karbala, they have no choice but to go in with BJ
    - "Trying to be as dignified as possible with two menservants, Hamza and his teenage son standing by goggling, I took off my abayah..." p. 87
      - [BJ has really internalized the modesty rules in just a few months]
    - BJ refuses liquor, asks for tea
    - excruciating decor... "vulgar"
      - petrified pastries, canned cookies, weak tea with condensed milk
      - plaster cake!
    - beautiful gardens and view; Hamza unmoved, says he is bored and will leave soon
    - "Mambo Italiano" and Elvis Presley
    - gives them four armed guards as they drive two hours to next tiny town - Hamza is not too popular...
      - is anyone being ethnocentric here?
      - What standards is BJ applying to Hamza? Is this fair?
- Chapter 8, I Meet the Sheik
  - Bob invites the Sheik the day after visiting Hamza
  - Hamid plus brother Abdulla and oldest son Nour

- elaborate menu
- BJ wants to prove that she can cook... p. 96
- Mohammed reassures or distracts Bob when he is harassing BJ (p. 96, 97) - BJ finds him an ally as well as a servant!
- BJ declines a cigarette, Abdullah says "It is better for a woman if she does not smoke" (just like Kulthum, who said Hamid prefers women not to smoke...)
- Sheik Hamid impressed by her industry, having cooked all that food "by herself"
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