

Reading Questions: *For Bread Alone* (p. 5-76) by Mohamed Choukri

1) Take a look at the listserv discussion on the controversy surrounding the assignment of Choukri's *For Bread Alone* in a literature course at the American University in Cairo (<https://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/mehr.htm>). What are the basic positions staked out *vis à vis* the novel by the participants of the discussion (especially al-Tonsi and Siddiq!) and what justifications are provided by each? How is *For Bread Alone* positioned by its advocates and detractors with respect to the Arabic literary canon and the broader themes of Arab identity and political and social confrontation with the "West"? Which of these positions seems most reasonable to you? (Mariam, Emily)

2) In terms of narrative perspective, tone, content, and idiom, how is *For Bread Alone* a departure from previous literary works we've encountered? With recourse to the literary descriptive vocabulary we've developed in this course, to which "school" or tendency does this novel belong? In other words, which theoretical "disposition" (see Culler's *Literary Theory*, p. 64 and Appendix) do you think would yield the richest analysis of *For Bread Alone*? (Meredith, Alex)

3) In speaking of the American beatnik writers who made Tangiers their base of operations in the 60's (and with whom he had more than passing acquaintance), Mohamed Choukri had the following to say:

They all came to Tangier to make their exotic dreams come true. They did not want to have anything to do with Morocco, but only used it as a colorful backdrop, and the Moroccans were only the objects of their mostly sexual desires.

(quoted in Özkan Ezli, "Transgressions, or the Logic of the Body" in *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives* [2010]: p. 464)

How does Choukri's critique of "the Western perception of the 'Orient' as a world dominated by the physical and sensual" (Ezli, 2010, p. 464) play out in *For Bread Alone*? How does Choukri's literary confrontation with western stereotypes of "the Oriental" mirror or diverge from Tayeb Salih's confrontation with the same? (Katie, Claire)