

MULOSIGE Modules: The Poetics of the Orphan in Postcolonial Writing

Reading List Description

Abdelkébir Khatibi (1938-2009), the Moroccan intellectual and French-language writer, developed in the 1970s an implicit poetics of the orphan. This poetics was a postcolonial theory of identity, both at the level of the individual, society, and their interaction. In an era of decolonization in North Africa, Khatibi theorized through his creative-critical output a way of reconceiving of the self in the encounter of difference, eschewing colonial paradigms for a vision of the identity that could adopt into itself all sorts of difference through meeting with cultural others. The orphan, as a poetics, then, exceeds a colonizer/colonized paradigm. His poetics of the orphan also rejects the basic modernist, Bildungsroman template in capitalism tears apart families to create the stark figure of the individual as a bare capitalist unit of work value.

Taking the insight gleaned from my reading of Khatibi's poetics of the orphan, I approach another postcolonial setting, that of South Asia. There, I read the Urdu short story writer Naiyer Masud (1936-2017) as initializing his own poetics of the orphan. Masud turns his back on the dominant modern Urdu topos of nostalgia for a premodern "India" in which social, linguistic, and political divisions had not yet sundered communities in two. Instead, Masud uses the central postcolonial problem of cultural continuity to imagine how cultures or communities are turned into orphans— orphaned, in effect—not by political processes but by modern forms of knowledge, specifically history and anthropology. Masud's poetics of the orphan also includes a readerly effect, namely, the feeling of being cast adrift in a world without anchor.

In this comparative approach, I use the word "poetics" to indicate a constitutive, individual rubric for literary creation, something that motivates the author's selection of tropes and that guides the creative spirit through to the end of attempting to illustrate a particular worldview and aesthetic and moral inclination. Moreover, this approach of reading one author from the postcolonial Global South alongside another allows the comparison of similar literary strategies that while attendant upon common postcolonial circumstances and problems nevertheless resolve in their local cultural, social, literary, and intellectual circumstances in specific ways.

This reading list developed out of a talk given at SOAS "[The Poetics of the Orphan in Postcolonial Writing](#)" (SOAS, 5 March 2019) organised by Professor Francesca Orsini.

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Week 1 - [Khatibi](#)

Readings

- Khatibi, Abdelkébir. *Class Warrior—Taoist Style*, trans. Matt Reeck, *Le lutteur de classe à la manière taoïste*, 1976 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2017).
- . "For a Lasting Double Critique," interview Zakya Doud, "Il faut s'essayer à une double critique permanente," *Lamalif* (1 Feb 1973), trans. Matt Reeck, in *Lamalif: A Critical Anthology of Societal Debates in Morocco During the Years of Lead (1966-1988)*, ed. Ali Alalou and Brahim el Guabli (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2020), n/p.
- . *Plural Maghreb*, trans. P. Burcu Yalim, *Maghreb pluriel*, 1986 (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).
- . *Tattooed Memory*, trans. Peter Thompson, *La mémoire tatouée*, 1971 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016).
- . Excerpts from *The Wound of the Name*, trans. Matt Reeck, *La blessure du nom propre*, 1974, in *Abdelkébir Khatibi: Postcolonialism, Transnationalism and Culture in the Maghreb and Beyond*, ed. Jane Hiddleston and Khalid Lyamlaḥy (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2019), n/p.

Week 2 - [Khatibi Scholarship](#)

Readings

- Jebari, Idriss. "Rethinking the Maghreb and the post-colonial intellectual in Khatibi's *Les temps modernes* issue in 1977," *Journal of North African Studies* 23. 1-2 (2018): 53-70.
- Lionnet, Françoise, "Counterpoint and Double Critique in Edward Said and Abdelkebir Khatibi: A Transcolonial Perspective," in *A Companion to Comparative Literature*, ed. Ali Behdad and Dominic Thomas (London: Blackwell, 2011): 387-407.
- Reeck, Matt. "The Poetics of the Orphan in the Early Work of Abdelkébir Khatibi," *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* XXV.1 (2017): 1-19
- . "Translation and the Poetics of the Orphan: Abdelkébir Khatibi, Discourse, and Difference," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 20.1 (April 2017): 123-133.

Week 3 - [Other Relevant Scholarship](#)

Readings

- Harrison, Olivia C. "Cross-Colonial Poetics: Souffles-Anfas and the Figure of Palestine," *PMLA* 128.2 (2013): 353-369.

Mignolo, Walter, "Border Thinking and the Colonial Difference," *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000), 49-90.

Week 4 - [Masud](#)

Readings

Masud, Naiyer. *Collected Stories*, trans. Muhammad Umar Memon (New Delhi: Penguin India, 2015).

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Week - [Masud Scholarship](#)

Readings

Asaduddin, M. "Review of Snake Catcher by Naiyer Masud, translated by MU Memon" *Indian Literature* (51.4), 196-9.

Memon, Muhammad Umar. "Naiyer Masud: A Prefatory Note," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 12 (1997), 1-8.

Rajaram, Prem Kumar. "Disruptive Writing and a Critique of Territoriality," *Review of International Studies* (30.2), 201-228.

Sengupta, Sagaree. "Evocations, Obsessions, and Objects in the Fiction of Naiyer Masud," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 13 (1998), 81-9.

Week 6 - Week 1 - [Histories of gender I: Gender in multilingual literary histories](#)

Readings

Le postcolonial comparé : anglophonie, francophonie, ed. and intro. Claire Joubert, 9-42 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2014).

Forsdick, Charles. "Beyond Francophone postcolonial studies: exploring the ends of comparison." *Modern Language Open* (2015). doi.org/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.56.

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