TECHNIQUE OF NARRATION AND ITS ROLE IN THE COMMUNICATION OF MEANING IN THREE NOVELS OF NURUDDIN FARAH

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as University supervisor.

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This study is an examination of various modes of narration and their impact on meaning as employed in Nuruddin Farah's three selected novels namely: *Sardines* (1981), *Maps* (1986) and *Gifts* (1992).

It argues that the three novels represent phases of Farah's novelistic career in which certain social and political perspectives have influenced narrative technique in his novels. The study assumes that an analysis of the relationship between these perspectives and their corresponding forms of narrative technique would reveal Farah's progress towards maturity in matching vision and narration. The critical analyses of the three novels reveal how Farah's concern with linking patriarchy and political oppression calls for a narrative in which even the positive protagonists are probed by the author working through a narrator who frequently takes the narrative from the dominant character and reveals various ironies against them.

The analysis shows that the author uses a combination of many narrative voices and narrators to present themes and ideas, to reveal a particular social vision and to shape a certain understanding of characters. In the three novels, omniscience in narration has been put to a test and found wanting. For instance *Maps* stands out distinctly as using three narrative voices that take turns to tell the story. The narrative voices seem to interrogate one another persistently as they grapple with the theme of identity in the novel. *Maps* shows similar social and political concerns with the other novels but the author's interest in exposing the ideological basis of the Somali nation necessitates the narrative forms different from those of *Sardines* and *Gifts*.

In *Sardines* it is shown how the story opens up to incorporate many
characters' points of view. This challenge to a dominant perspective is done so as to present the various sides of family patriarchy and state oppression. The position is such that all sides are important if oppression is to be understood and defeated.

Dealing with the issue of gift giving and receiving at the domestic and international levels, *Gifts* presents a love affair of the protagonists as a gift and in a way as paralleling the gifts at the international level. In the juxtaposition, extraneous modes of narration such as chapter summaries and newspaper excerpts have been employed in order to communicate themes.

This thesis is a statement on the use of narrative rhetorical mechanisms in the art of fiction. Such mechanisms include interior monologue and the use of the pronoun "You" to invoke some audience within the text thus giving the narrative a conversational element. By adopting a theory of the narrative we have shown that Nuruddin Farah is a rhetorician who, through his narrators, employs persuasive tools to communicate theme and vision in each of the three novels studied. This study is a new contribution to the use of the theory of narratology and to the analytical understanding of narration in Farah's fictional works.
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CHAPTER FIVE

SOMALI ORAL ARTFORMS AND THE PRESENCE OF AN AUDIENCE WITHIN THE TEXT

CONCLUSION

BIBLIOGRAPHY.
The art of narration is the backbone of any story or novel. For narration is more than just the means of telling and conveying; it embodies the whole process of communication between the narrator and the reader in a work of fiction, and is the medium through which a writer influences or persuades a reader about certain viewpoints and perceptions. The interaction between reader, narrator, means of narration and the entire narrative fabric can be a most complex and subtle interaction within which several of a work’s meanings can be grasped. It is this interaction that we have investigated in our study.

The novel form itself provides the novelist with several avenues for an exploration of modes of narration. In the process of working out the many possibilities of the central idea(s) conceived, decisions have to be made on various elements of communication. The novelist has to decide what kind of narrator is to be used, when and how a narrator is to maintain the narration, at what point he has to divulge certain information, when he would claim overall knowledge and when that knowledge would be curtailed. Thus, through the interactions between the various modes of narration and positions of narration, the novel conveys its meaning and ideas.

In Nuruddin Farah’s three studied novels, this interaction opens various avenues for countless thematic explorations. His concern with oppression and freedom and his themes of individual and national self-determination enable him to explore various forms of narrative techniques which when studied within the context
of specific texts reveal the immense possibilities of narrative technique especially in creating meaning and bringing out ideological positions.

An analysis and evaluation of the technique of narration in the three selected novels by Nuruddin Farah raises a number of questions that are important for understanding the correlation between mode of narration and thematic meaning in his works. How, for instance, does the interaction of narrative modes in the three novels determine each novel's thematic thrust? What statements can be derived from the uses of certain narrative techniques in each of the selected novels?

This study is on the technique of narration in three selected novels by Nuruddin Farah because Farah is one of the most technically self-conscious of contemporary African writers. In all his books, he appears extremely conscious of the relationship between the material that makes up the content of the work of art and the mode of its presentation. The mode of representation is almost always coloured by Farah's purpose and by certain social and ideological positions he takes.

At this juncture it would be appropriate to give a brief biography of Nuruddin Farah. He is arguably Somalia's greatest novelist writing in English, born in 1945 at Baidoa in the South of the Somalia Republic.

Like his traditional Somali people who wander from place to place in search of water and other favourable conditions for their livestock and by implication for themselves Farah has been a nomad all his life. He spent his childhood with relatives at Kallafo (in the Ogaden) the village where most of Maps (1986) is set. He did his secondary school at Shashamanne in Ethiopia, then worked briefly with the Ministry of Education in Somalia before going abroad in 1966. He studied at the University of Chandigarh, Punjab, India, from where he obtained a B.A. degree
in literature and philosophy in 1970. Upon his return to Somalia, he taught at secondary schools in Mogadiscio, Somalia's capital city, then at the National University of Somalia.

In 1974 he left Somalia for the University of Essex where he studied for a Master of Arts degree but did not complete it. In 1976 he moved to Rome, Italy. He has virtually roamed the world living in Nigeria, the Gambia, Germany, Canada, Uganda, U.S.A, Zimbabwe - fleeing the despotic regime of dictator Siad Barre who ruled Somalia from October 1969 to January 1991. After Barre there has come inter-clan wrangles and civil strife and Somalia has not known peace but destitution. The result is that Farah remains in exile. Presently (1997) he has returned to Nigeria at the University of Kano.


From the foregoing it is quite evident that Farah is a prolific writer. His works have not been given the attention they deserve.

The central concern that permeates Farah's work is the castigation of oppression and the cry for freedom. It is probably this search for freedom that has made him move from place to place in search of an accommodating environment. This fleeing motif is also very prevalent in Farah's writings. Farah's thematic concerns and patterns of writing necessitate that he keeps employing a wide range
of narrative modes. In some novels, for example *Maps* (1986), he is a master at stretching the narrative to cater for many possibilities.

Our study will only focus on three of his novels, namely: *Sardines* (1981), *Maps* (1986) and *Gifts* (1992). These three novels present a wide range of narrative structures and afford us with the basis and background for correlating purpose, vision and narrative technique. Each book presents us with a particular narrative technique determined by the nature of Farah's social vision and his political and ideological perspective thus giving us a wide cross-section of the impact of perspective and vision on narrative technique. In *Sardines* for instance, the correlation of domestic and state cruelty as different forms of oppression means that the narrative technique must probe even the positive characters to expose how oppression can take several forms in the day to day interactions between people.

In *Maps* the use of three related voices to present the story of Askar's betrayal of his foster mother enables the novelist to create narrative techniques that help to question nationalism, patriarchy and the notion of a homogenous Somalia. What stands out as markedly distinct in this novel is the way the three voices present different perspectives on Somali nationalism and liberational politics to undermine the protagonist's homogenous perspective. It is in this criss-crossing of different narrative voices in this novel that Farah questions common assumptions about the nation and explores the meaning of community and ethnic identity within the complexity of the Somali context. Using aspects such as the dream motif and authenticity in chronological presentation of happenings, Farah questions the hero's (Askar's) perception of himself as the true Somali nationalist.

In another experimentation, *Gifts* which is Farah's latest novel explores the
meaning of gifts and donations through the developing love affair of the protagonists - Duniya and Bosaaso. Dreams are juxtaposed with Duniya-Bosaaso love affair and newspaper excerpts and radio bulletins on donations to the third world are used to parallel the love affair. There is a striking parallelism between gifts at individual level and at international level, and the narrative is deliberately constructed to bring out subtle differences that contrast the art of giving and receiving gifts in the context of the novel’s love story and in the context of international politics.

In the three novels studied, the written medium has been moulded to suit the oral (Somali) society whose people dominate the novels as characters. The works exemplify how the written medium can be used to present the wisdom of an oral people and still keep the people’s riches in the verbal arts.

A detailed evaluative study is better exercised on a limited number of texts. The critic is able to do many readings which enables him reach the minutest elements of the work. These close readings facilitates a close analysis. As has been shown in this study, the three novels exhibit various methods of narration. Some aspects of narration run across the novels but have been used differently in each novel to fit the purpose and vision of the particular novel. This has enabled us to make comparisons on narration in the three novels. In addition the three novels studied represent phases in Farah’s career and will enable us to make statements on aspects of narrative technique(s) that have engaged him from 1980 to the present and which demonstrate his gradual maturity in experimentation with techniques. It is easy to see that Farah’s progress from From a Crooked Rib to Gifts has been a process of growth in exploring and using various ways of narration. From a Crooked Rib is a simple novel. The following two novels: A Naked Needle and
*Sweet and Sour Milk* are much more complex. In these two later novels, Farah emerges as a master of the flashback and of juxtaposition. For instance, *A Naked Needle* is set within a span of one day but uses flashback to juxtapose various interracial marital relationships.

In studying *Sardines, Maps and Gifts*, we have explored how the various points of view interweave to communicate meaning in the works; how the different techniques of narration operate with other aspects of the texts such as language, structure, characterisation and themes; how the traditional Somali oral artforms function towards a development of a technique of narration in the selected novels; and how an examination of the mode of narration in the selected novels can help in formulating a theory of narrative in the context where a written tradition operates within the oral tradition.

The exploration of technique of narration in Farah’s three novels has been based on various assumptions: that the mode of narration in the three novels is determined by the particular content and idea(s) in each novel, that the author chooses a particular way of telling the story which enables him to expound on certain ideas and themes, and that it is from this assumption we determine the particular thematic implications of each narrative technique. It is also the assumption of this thesis that the interaction between narration and discourse determines what structure, characterisation and style a particular novel will follow. Farah uses certain techniques in portraying characters so as to evoke certain responses from the reader. The reader interacts with the text according to the manner of narration adopted by the narrator. The study has also supposed that the interplay of Somali oral artforms and the narrative text in Farah’s novels have moral
implications. The three novels have employed certain verbal artforms (such as songs, folktales, and poetry) to present character, certain themes and propagate certain values.

In analysing the three novels, we have adopted the theory of the narrative as understood within the larger stylistic approach to literature.

A stylistic approach to literature assumes that a work of art creates meaning between the various elements that structure the work and that the purpose of criticism is to describe and evaluate how such elements work to create meaning. Using a stylistic approach in the analysis of the novel, Lodge (1966) argues that the medium of communication in a literary work of art is language. Style then is the means by which information is passed from writer to reader; the writer making sure that the right message is decoded and that the reader shares the writer’s attitude towards it.

Ngara (1982) has extended the medium of communication to other strategies and stretched stylistics to include point of view and the narrative structure of the work of art. He argues that a stylistic theory of criticism is chiefly concerned with communication in an entire work of art:

> We are not merely concerned with what is idiosyncratic about a writer, but equally with the effect (sic) of his manner of presentation, and with the relationship between language and content. Our discussion on such variables as readability and point of view will compel us to include the narrative structure in our analysis of fiction,...(Ngara 1982:35).

Therefore, within the broad implications of the stylistic theory, a theory of narratology becomes useful as a description of the process through which meaning is created from the various positions in which a story is told. Narratology which is
"a branch of literary study devoted to the analysis of narratives, and more specifically of forms of narration and varieties of narrator" (Baldick 1980:46), looks at a novel as a story with a story teller who can take several positions. Accordingly, the novelist is seen as engaging in a narrative process of communication and employing various mechanisms in this regard. Central to this is the point of view, "the standpoint from which a story is narrated or from which an event is perceived by a character in a narrative" (Stanzel 1984:9). The person whose point of view is represented is known as a reflector - Leech and Short (1981) and Stanzel (1984).

On the other hand, the narrator plays an equally significant role in the narration as recognised by scholars such as Booth (1961), Genette (1980), Leech and Short (1981) and Stanzel (1984). This has been aptly put by Stanzel (1984:47):

The first constitutive element is contained in the question, "who is narrating?" The answer may be: a narrator who appears before the reader as an independent personality or one who withdraws so far behind the narrated events that he becomes practically invisible to the reader. The distinction between these two basic forms of narration is generally accepted in narrative theory.

Our study has concerned itself with the process of narration in the three novels whose analysis and evaluation within a theory of narratology has revealed the stylistic significance of point of view and narration.

We have benefitted from the theoretical framework already provided by literary critics in the field of stylistics: Wayne Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) and Franz Stanzel’s *A Theory of Narrative* (1984) have provided a theoretical direction for our analysis.
Booth’s work concentrates on that aspect of the writer’s work that is involved in the rhetoric of communication in the novel. In the preface to *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961), he sees the novelist as majorly involved in an act of communication:

In writing about the rhetoric of fiction...my subject is the technique of non-didactic fiction viewed as the art of communicating with readers - the rhetorical resources available to the writer of epic, novel or short story as he tries, consciously or unconsciously, to impose his fictional world upon the reader.

This communicative value is embedded in the view that in any reading experience there is a conversation among the author, the characters and the reader. Booth argues for a place in stylistic criticism for each of these players and the mechanisms they use in reaching one another. In looking at narration as discourse, therefore, our study has borrowed from Booth’s view of fiction as communication.

Stanzel (1984) drawing examples from a wide range of novels and short stories, analyses the most essential elements of narration and their structural interrelations. In his study, the narrative elements of person, mode and perspective are analysed with illustrations from western writers such as Henry James, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Charles Dickens. At the end of the study, he comes up with a typological circle which in a way sums up his whole thesis. In this circle, he underlines the key characteristics of each narrative type, namely: first-person narrative, authorial narrative situation and figural narrative situation. First-person narrative is where the narrator is a character in the story. In the authorial narrative, the narrator is outside the world of characters and is some form of a biographer recording the events. In figural narrative "the mediating narrator is replaced by a reflector: a character in the novel who thinks, feels and perceives but does not
speak to the reader like a narrator" (Stanzel 1984:5). With examples from each situation, he argues for the different characteristics that govern the interplay between mode, perspective and person in each narrative situation and across the different narrative situations.

Stanzel’s work has provided us with a framework that has helped in the formulation of a particular theory in the context of Farah’s works in which an oral form of narration exists side by side with a written narrative text.

It is within the understanding of narrative (story) as being the most significant element in a novel that we use the theory of narratology to study the three novels by Nuruddin Farah.

_Zell et al._(1983: 386) decry the poor response to Farah’s work. However, as will be seen in our literature review his work has began to attract substantial critical attention, and since the above cry was sounded a lot has taken place and there has been critical material on this author especially in the late 1980s and in the 1990s.

_Zell et al._(1983) provide an overview on Farah’s works to the time of their writing. The book is nothing more than a guide to persons interested in further studies on the African writers mentioned. On Farah, the authors give a biography and the thematic concerns that have preoccupied this Somali author. The nature of the book does not allow for detailed study of any aspect of Farah’s works. Nevertheless, this introductory work is significant since the authors challenge critics and scholars by lamenting the neglect that Farah’s creative work has suffered. The work of Zell _et al._ ought not be dismissed lightly for it is a vital pointer to areas for further research and helps in identifying areas that need to be studied. Our work
owes a lot to this book - it has informed us a lot on the author’s biography and his literary concerns.

D.R. Ewen in Killam (1984) in another overview summary on Farah and his works. The author touches on various aspects such as Farah’s life; themes and styles of his early works - *From a Crooked Rib* (1970), *A Naked Needle* (1976), *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979) and *Sardines* (1981). The essay is mostly a summary of the events in the four novels and most of its statements are made without elaboration. Nonetheless, it is a springboard to other more elaborate researches.

Ntalindwa (1988) studies how symbols and images help Farah in conveying particular ideas. The work is a great contribution in showing how these aspects of style are used to contribute towards the understanding of other components of a work of art such as characters, themes and setting. In Ntalindwa’s words, "... the study demonstrates the crucial role of how images and symbols bring out the totality of a work of art" (viii). The study is based upon five novels: *From a Crooked Rib, A Naked Needle, Sweet and Sour Milk, Sardines* and *Close Sesame*. In each of the novels, the scholar picks one predominant image or symbol and explores its meaning in the context of the whole work. In the case of *Sardines*, for instance, the image of the guest is thoroughly explored and every character appears to be a guest everywhere, even in his (her) own house. Our study has focused on narration as a technique and shown how the various ideas and themes of Farah’s later novels inspire particular modes of narration.

Wendoh (1988) has explored themes, characters and modes of narration in Farah’s novels up to *Maps* (1986). Her work highlights key themes, main characters and major modes of narration in each novel. One aspect - modes of narration is of
central concern to our study. In this aspect, Wendoh's work touches on only the main narrative techniques and even here, they are mentioned without detailed explication to show their interaction with other aspects of the novels. For example, on Sardines the thesis mentions only the shifting viewpoint technique, internal monologue and the use of omniscient narrator. However there is much more to Farah's narrative technique than these, and in this connection our study has concentrated on the connections between ideas and themes and the various forms of narration in Farah's novels to uncover more meaning and purpose in the various techniques of narration employed.

Nevertheless, our study has benefitted from Wendoh's in the sense that the latter has provided a context within which to explore the relationship between method of narration and the creation of meaning and determine what role it plays in the art of producing a novel. As our thesis shows, there are many more aspects of narration. We have chosen just one aspect of style: narration, and only three novels, Sardines (1981), Maps (1986) and Gifts (1992) and carried out an analysis of forms of narration and shown their interrelatedness in furthering the vision and understanding of other aspects of the texts. Wendoh's study restricted itself to E.M. Forster's view of the novel. While consulting Forster's Aspects of the Novel (1927) from time to time, our study has mainly utilised ideas and theories of the narrative in the works of more recent theorists like Wayne Booth and Franz Stanzel.

Dipio (1990) uses a socialist-critical approach in comparing the styles of prose fiction in selected texts by Ghanaian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah and Nuruddin Farah. For Armah, the novels studied are The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born (1968), Two Thousand Seasons (1973) and The Healers (1978). For Farah, she has
looked at *From a Crooked Rib*, *Sweet and Sour Milk* and *Sardines*. Her discussion is broad and based on characterisation, narrative technique, language and style and how these show the authors' ideological positions. She concludes that, "...Armah seems to be consciously developing a kind of ideological stance with a tendency towards progressiveness, or even revolutionarism in his later novels, such a commitment is not easily identifiable in Farah" (Dipio 1990:35).

Dipio's analysis of narrative technique, point of view and style has enriched our study. She identifies aspects such as inner monologue, dreams and inner voices and the use of letters and notes in Farah's method of narration. Our study has looked at different novels except for *Sardines* which is present in both studies. *Sardines* is such a rich text and it is no wonder that Dipio's work would not exhaust all present narrative techniques. For instance, the thesis discusses the use of inner monologue in only *From a Crooked Rib* and yet, this aspect is conspicuously present in *Sardines*. No mention is made of the use of letters as a method of narration used in *Sardines*; this aspect being discussed only in *Sweet and Sour Milk*.

As we have pointed out above, Dipio did not touch on some narrative aspects probably because of limitations of her scope. We have covered many more aspects. Whereas Dipio used the socialist approach, our study has used the narratology theory. It is such a gap that our study has attempted to fill by aiming to be narrow and pointed towards one aspect: narration.

Wright (1990) in an essay in *Research in African Literatures* that examines Farah's concern for freedom in his novels up to *Maps*. This forms some critical insight into how the Somali people have tried to overcome and survive oppressive systems as portrayed in Farah's fictional works. This essay has a thematic bias
showing how Farah has persistently questioned the domination that the Somali people are subjected to both at family and state levels. In an attempt to cover a wide scope, an essay such as this does not delve deeply into the issues it raises, even though it hints at aspects that point to further investigation. For instance, it describes *Sardines* as "the most formidably planned and argumentative of Farah's novels" (Farah 1981:29). Such a statement, though general and un-elaborated, nevertheless, points to areas that may be fruitfully investigated.

Cobham (1991) is an illuminating essay that tackles the problem of identity in *Maps*. The essay looks into the difficulties which the characters encounter in trying to map and place their identities amid the mistrust, suspicion and uncertainty created by the Ogaden Civil War against whose background the novel is set. It is remarkable to note that Cobham does make a mention of the three narrators in the novel. The identity of narrators is such an intriguing issue in *Maps* and the essay attempts an explication of the function of the different narrators, and their inter-relationships though she does so in only three short paragraphs. In the study that follows we have analysed the different angles of narration and the interrelations between them and the thematic imperatives that dictate their use in the selected novels.

Our study is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, we have laid an introduction by showing the boundaries of our research. We have also stated the objectives and the assumptions of the study. Finally, there is a review of the theoretical approach adopted and also a literature review on the studies done on Farah's novels.

Chapter Two is an examination of the use of omniscient narration in
Sardines. We have shown and accounted for the various points of view. We have shown how the novel opens up to use flashback, interior monologue and juxtaposition through various points of view.

The next chapter focuses on Gifts and examines the use of juxtaposition to present the theme of gifts. Individual gifts are juxtaposed against international grants and donations through dream, interior monologue and flashback. The use of extraneous methods of narration such as chapter outlines and newspaper snippets have been examined to show how they contribute to theme and vision.

The Chapter Four has looked at the interaction among the different narrators in Maps and on how the particular ideas and themes occasion such a mode of narration.

Chapter Five is on the Somali oral artforms that inform the three novels. Here, the focus is on the oral art of story-telling and the role of the audience in the interaction between story and story-teller. An examination has been carried out to show how the oral artforms function in the written form as part of Farah's communication of ideas. This chapter also explores the uses of second-person pronoun "you" and the collective consciousness "we" voices to invoke the communion and response of the listener (reader).

The Conclusion highlights the author's overall achievement with the modes of narrative communication that he has used in the three fictional works studied. Points of similarity and difference have been noted and deductions made. We have also made suggestions of areas that afford possibilities for further research.
OMNISCIENT NARRATION AS SOURCE OF MEANING IN *SARDINES*

In *Sardines* (1981) the dominant mode of narration is that in which an implied narrator becomes the empirical author, assuming all knowledge over events, situations and characters and arranging the chronology of incidents and descriptions in the text. Such a mode of narration assumes that the implied narrator is the source of the novel’s values as well as the moral meaning; that somewhere within this omniscient narrator’s organisation of narration is located the various meanings of the text. Yet the source of meaning even in this omniscient narration is more complicated and is dependent on the intersection between the omniscient narrator and other subordinate points of view which it incorporates into narration. From this interaction exercise the reader can construct several meanings within a text. This chapter sets out to show how the omniscient narrator’s organisation of points of view communicates subtle points of meaning in theme, characterisation and style.

In *Sardines* it is the omniscient narrator who decides on the time-span of the novel, on the chronology of events and their arrangement in the text. The novel is set within a span of seven days within which events evolve to a climactic end. The events told are not just the happenings of these seven days. The narrator consistently expands the latitude by weaving in events of the past as a way of explaining the present or presenting analogies and contrasts. It is in this process of expansion and analogy that the interactions between the omniscient narrator and other narrators contribute most to the communication of meaning. Thus the
narration in *Sardines* moves deliberately from the subjective reconstructions of Medina (the principal character) to a wider presentation in which the omniscient narrator spreads out the canvas to include other narrators, other perspectives, other stories and other events of the past. The interaction of all these aspects within the wider omniscient framework is crucial to meaning and theme in the novel.

The narration begins with a focus on Medina, suggesting that she is a key player, the source perhaps, of moral meaning and values and the one entrusted with the reconstruction of the Movement, the resistance against political oppression and domination. From the beginning the narrator appears to justify Medina's role as the dominant perspective. Medina is presented as an intelligent woman who thinks deeply before she takes a decision. She is also presented as independent since at the beginning of the novel she leaves her matrimonial home to move into a room of her own so that she can be able to determine her own destiny. She has a university degree in literature and reads widely. She is a writer and a journalist who believes in the separate private space which a writer needs to be creative. She is also central enough to be connected with all the principal players of the resistance against oppression. Because she encompasses all these, the presentation of issues and happenings from her perspective may be justified.

But the irony is that within the individual narration of Medina the empirical omniscient author suggests several things that make us question the sufficiency of her perspective. She is reconstructing the story of the underground Movement from the point of view of her own individual destiny. So the process of reconstruction is subjective. It is Medina who decides what is relevant, what is to be included in the story. She imposes "a tapestry of patterns she herself had developed, none of
which, to the best of her knowledge, had known precedents" (Farah 1981:2). So quite early in the narrative, the narrator questions this kind of subjective reconstruction by intruding into Medina's point of view with rhetorical questions that challenge her perspective: "but did she have enough rooms, did she have space? Would she allow anybody to shift the furniture about, change say, the position of a chair or a table?" (Farah 1981:2). With these rhetorical questions the narrator enters the narrative, shifts the furniture in Medina's room and introduces other characters' points of view which are equally important in illustrating the condition of oppression and the fight against it. The rhetorical questions suggest that Medina's reconstruction is not the whole story and that other stories and reconstructions are relevant to the story of oppression. The narrator's intervention also presents an objective account of Medina to wean the reader a little away from the tapestry she is weaving and to offer a comment and a judgement. This is to show the reader that the novel has a wider preoccupation in terms of point of view, presentation of character and theme. The narrator's intervention is a way of demonstrating that Medina's fight against the General's system has analogies in other areas of interaction in the community.

Thus although the first chapter concentrates on the relationship between Medina and her daughter (Ubax) as part of the world Medina is creating for herself, the novel soon opens out into the patterns of other relationships. Chapter two widens the story by presenting the relationship between Ebla and her daughter Sagal. *Sardines* is largely a novel about women's resistance on the political and domestic levels. The various stories are juxtaposed to show how they relate to the wider theme of oppression. In the relationship between Ebla and her daughter the text
parallels and examines two modes of resistance to patriarchy which have thematic implications for the Sagal’s and Medina’s resistance. Among the elder women in the novel, Ebla is the most progressive. As a young woman she rebelled against society’s chains. She is the Ebla of Farah’s first novel *From a crooked Rib* (1970) who at eighteen rejects her grandfather’s demand that she gets married to forty-eight year old Giumaleh. Ebla flees home, receives a curse from the grandfather and although the life she goes through until she arrives in Mogadiscio is not without tribulations, she remains a symbol of resistance to rigid Somali-Islamic customs. It is this spirit that she carries to *Sardines* although there is little to show that she is the Ebla of the first novel.

Ebla’s point of view comes in to show another side of opposition to oppression. Ebla seems to understand the repercussions of confronting the General’s dictatorship. She can resist tyranny up to some point. She can resist domestic tyranny in the home but fears to antagonise the General’s Government. She warns her daughter Sagal against confrontation with the General’s Government. Ebla gives the daughter every domestic freedom she needs but will not allow her to paint the walls of dawn with anti-government slogans. Ebla is against patriarchal and matriarchal domination at home and Sagal is against patriarchal domination at state level. Ebla’s point of view is presented through dialogue, flashback and the narrator’s comments and these help the author advocate for change of attitude beginning with the family. By allowing domestic freedom at home she is laying a firm foundation for a successful fight against oppression at the state level. The Ebla-Sagal relationship is a far cry from the traditional Somali society where the parent lords it on the child. The relationship makes Ebla stand apart from other
women of her generation such as Fatima binti Thabit and Idil.

Although the story of Ebla is paralleled to that of Sagal especially in their relation to the General’s dictatorship, in many ways they converge. Both share the characteristic of rebellion. Ebla does not admonish Sagal for the latter’s decision to sleep with a stranger - the West Indian journalist Wentworth George. That Ebla treats Sagal well even as the daughter does not want to disclose who is responsible for the pregnancy shows utmost tolerance from the mother. Ebla does not mind so much about the identity of the father of Sagal’s child because she herself cannot precisely tell who Sagal’s father is - here again they converge. As we shall keep seeing, the stories of mothers and their children are paralleled with one another to show the various levels of the struggle against oppression.

The manner in which the novel opens up to introduce Sagal in chapter two is superb. The chapter opens with the omniscient narrator’s presentation of her. Then the narrator hands the narration over to Ebla (Sagal’s mother). From there Medina gives her view, then Amina gives hers. The omniscient narrator sets the ball rolling and then systematically opens up to include other people’s points of view. This shows how a multiplicity of narrators work to present characters and situations in *Sardines*. For a good and well balanced presentation of Sagal, the omniscient narrator recognises the importance of other narrators. It is notable that the various characters do not say anything different about Sagal. Through flashing back to what they have said in the past, the other characters all agree that Sagal is quite unpredictable; this unpredictability arising from the fact that she never holds to one trend of thought for long. Their failing to see Sagal differently may be explained by what Wright (1994:71) has said, that "the reader is given not a
collection of individuals but a composite portrait of Somali womanhood in which character is interdependent and interpenetrative." The women consistently need one another for their continued survival. In their different ways the women are fighters of a system that oppresses them - in this fight they find their interrelationship. For instance there is a lot of Medina in Sagal, a lot of Sagal in Ubax and a lot of Idil in Fatima binti Thabit. The women are always together as Sardines in a tin. As much as they are in a tin that is the larger Somalia of the General, at another level, the tin provides the atmosphere for coming together to share their views and experiences. This enables them to discuss common issues that affect them as women and as citizens. The discussions prevent them from suffocating in the otherwise stuffy Somalia. By being together to discuss they keep sane.

At best Sagal’s words and actions appear romanticist. She says that she will defect to Rome then London after the swimming competition in Budapest. She also says that she will write anti-government slogans on the walls of Mogadiscio. We do not really take her seriously since her ideas do not come from this real world but mostly come from the books Medina gives her to read. Furthermore her mother says that Sagal’s "Plans are as confused as they are unripe." So we really doubt that she will write the slogans. Upon learning that her swimming rivals Cadar and Hindiya are responsible for authoring the slogans, Sagal is justifiably disturbed and at a point of utter despair. Her disappointment may not necessarily arise from the fact that she is not the one who has painted the walls but it arises from the fact that it is her rivals that have done so. Her rivals will now become heroines in the anti-the General struggle. Sagal’s pathetic position is enhanced by the use of interior monologue by which she talks to herself and to the reader. This method of address
brings the reader closer to her plight. By talking to herself she releases her anger and shares her desperation with the reader.

Sagal’s decision to sleep with Wentworth George is even more romantic and confounds many. Sagal says that because the Government had frustrated George by denying him a permit to do journalism duties in Somalia her sleeping with him was to show him comfort and be in solidarity with him against the General’s regime. We might condemn her for sleeping with a stranger and subsequently getting pregnant, but because she presents her confession through interior monologue a sympathetic understanding of her motive is brought forward. Through her presentation we understand her better:

The more the reader learns about the innermost motives for the behaviour of a character, the more inclined he tends to feel understanding, forbearance, tolerance and so on in respect to the conduct of this character (Stanzel 1984:128).

Sagal’s act may be welcome by some characters and some readers as long as it is a symbolic act. The act symbolises her defiance against the General. The child to be born of the act is a symbolic child - a product of defiance, understanding and sympathy. This is the type of child that should practice impartiality and justice to save Somalia from the quagmire that it now finds itself. On the other hand the act of sleeping with a stranger is indecent and immoral. We might even say that Sagal might have been guided by her emotions and not intellect. The brief moment that Sagal meets Wentworth George would not have been enough to know him sufficiently well. Wentworth George later becomes a sell out - he is finally given a permit to operate in Somalia. George compromises on his principles and one
wonders whether Sagal has actually won.

It is significant that it is on the New Year Day that Sagal confesses to the reader about her sleeping with Wentworth George. She is cleansing herself of the "sins" of the past year so as to wear a new image of the new year. Chapters six, seven, eight and nine which happen on the New Year Day present various faces of the beginning of the year. The chapters are placed consecutively to present the experiences of various characters on the New Year Day. The image of fire burning waste and garbage dominates the New Year Day. Fire is a form of purification which is cleaning the New Year of the past year's impurities. In the chapters named above Sardines reaches its climax. It is on the New Year Day that anti-government slogans are painted on the walls of Mogadiscio, and it is the day that Samater resigns as minister. This is when the government forces come into direct confrontation with opponents. The Government sweeps across the city arresting the purported writers of the slogans. From the Government's point of view the purge is meant to clean the city of the bad elements. This purge continues to the following day when Nasser and Dulman are picked. One element that pervades the New Year chapters is that the New Year fire is a fire of purification and that the characters should leave behind all the previous year's impurities.

Systematically then, the narration opens up to admit other points of view apart from Medina's which opens the novel. By the end of the novel every key character has taken the stage thereby suggesting that each character's life is intertwined and related to others and that no life can be constructed in seclusion like Medina appears to be doing in the early pages of Sardines. Thus the interactions with other points of view and stories widen the theme of oppression to include
several other forms of oppression apart from the domination and dictatorship of the General.

The General's political dictatorship at the national level is seen as an extension of the family patriarchal dictatorship. The Somali family led by men is such that the women are subjected to men's wishes. The system has conditioned some people to accept it as it is. A case in point is Medina's mother Fatima bint Thabit. She is an Arab Muslim who gets married to a Somali man, Barkhadle, thereby joining the Somali family system. She was "weighed down with the contradictions of tradition: She was chained ankle and wrist and foot to the permanence of her homestead" (Farah 1981:7). The narrator introduces Fatima by comparing her to Idil and saying Fatima's life was more in keeping with tradition than Idil's. The fact that Fatima stays in a house which has been owned by her family for nearly a century attests to her willingness to conserve mores as they are - it shows her readiness to follow the dictates of patriarchy as they are. In this sense, then, she is seen in the narration as the opposite of Ebla. Thus here the narrator and indeed the author are implying that even in their attitudes toward their domination and oppression women themselves differ greatly.

We come to know of Fatima more when Medina visits her on the New Year Day in Chapter Seven. Fatima rarely sets foot outside the precincts of the family household since the tradition of her people encages her "in a four-walled prison and makes me the exclusive property of a man" (Farah 1981:136), she says. She has the potential to advance but tradition has shrunk and diminished her potential. She gives the impression of a potent figure standing over the many women who come to see and greet her on New Year Day. The women kneel before her as they greet
her and she asserts that because Samater kisses her hand (as a sign of humility) as he greets her, he is not a bad person after all. Fatima, of course, views society from a different angle from a person like Medina. To Medina the kissing of the hand is a humiliating act which she deeply abhors. She sees it as the acceptance of the kisser to be subservient to whoever is being kissed. Medina prefers the kissing of cheeks because in this way both people are at the same level whereas in the case of kissing of a hand one is forced to bend thus implying subordination.

The Purdah (veil) which Fatima and her likes cover themselves with to prevent them from being seen by men or strangers is a symbol of their imprisonment by the Islamic religion. The women can only unveil themselves when they have reached home, when they have reached the imprisonment of home. Fatima acknowledges this fact of imprisonment when she tells Medina: "I am a prisoner of tradition" (Farah 1981:144). The parallels imply then that Fatima is as much a prisoner of tradition as all the people are prisoners of the General’s domination and political oppression. Thus the two themes are kept in relation with each other through the principal character’s relation with other players in the story.

Still in widening the canvas to take care of other narrators, the story of Amina is introduced in the novel. Medina is reflecting on her daughter Ubax and she expresses a feeling that she is contented with having her for a daughter. This is when she says that she is better off than others like Amina "who was raped and became pregnant with children of shame" (Farah 1981:16). In Medina’s mind the General’s repression is linked to men’s repression of women. Later on in chapter six, while reminiscing, Amina gives the details of her defilement. Amina (who belongs to Medina’s fighting group) is presented as a determined fighter who
demands that her rapists be punished since they are well known. Amina’s father (who is in the General’s political dictatorship as a Major and a Minister) does not pursue the matter to see that the culprits are punished. After consultations with the General (he must always be consulted), the father decides that the matter cannot be pursued because of its political implications - the rapists claimed that they were raping Amina because the father is a member of the General’s incestuous circle. Wright (1994:74) says:

> The choice of rape as a political weapon against the General by the three young rebels is significant partly because it indicates that they share his sexual politics, but principally in that Farah depicts the original circumcisional violation of womanhood which is an instrument of tribal patriarchal power over women.

It is ironic that the rapists use rape as a political weapon. The rapists claim to be fighting against the political dictatorship of the General, but in the same vein they are denying Amina her freedom. The rapists have a narrow view of politics and freedom which does not include the freedom or the rights of women.

Amina’s father even argues that rape is not punishable in Somalia, "the characteristic compromise arrived at is usually that the rapist marries the victim... in the presence of the elders of his and her clan" (Farah 1981:121). Male patriarchy, domination and discrimination against women which Farah has persistently written against is starkly portrayed above. A girl is forced into sex by men, her father (a man) does not see it as serious and clan elders (men) should sit and decide that the girl gets married to one of the men who initially raped her. Making the raped girl marry her violator is a further trampling on the rights and freedom of the victim. This shows the loopholes involved in the relations between men and women in the
Somali society.

The narrator hands over the narration to Amina so that Amina can communicate directly to the reader. Rape is a shameful and disgraceful thing that cannot be openly spoken about. By using Amina the omniscient narrator is detaching himself from the matter so that Amina can present the happenings as a way of draining herself of her sorrows and cleansing herself. It is on the New Year Day that she reminisces over the rape, the Day that people are being cleaned of the dirt of the previous year.

As Amina reminisces over the rape, Sagal is thinking about her pregnancy as a result of sleeping with a stranger. The two incidents (the rape of Amina and Sagal’s sleeping with Wentworth George) result into pregnancies. The author is juxtaposing them and drawing the reader’s attention to the fact that both result into unwanted pregnancies.

In its presentation of the struggle against domination Sardines does not limit itself to political and patriarchal oppression alone. The narrative presents other forms of domination and resistance to domination in all manner of situations in which women are involved. Here the analogies are complicated because the ironies against patriarchy and the parallels between patriarchal domination and political oppression have been demonstrated in situations where it is the men who are the domineering and oppressive group.

A complex variation in the theme of domination and oppression resides in the analogical drama of Idil’s relationship with Samater, her son. The mother figure is here presented as an aspect of irony and criticism. Idil has always wanted her son to grow as a Somali man should. She underwent great pains to bring up Samater -
bringing him up under poverty and squalor. She is therefore understandably
disturbed that the son she so much struggled to bring up has not lived up to how a
man should live in the Somali tradition. He has married only one wife, and has
only one child who has not been circumcised as other Somali girls. He has no
property that would give him status in society. He has no bank account of his own,
has no house (his family lives in the wife’s house) and no land. When he is
appointed minister the mother urges him to be like others in the same position and
acquire wealth for himself. She ridicules him for owning only books and whisky
which are no social markers of status and property. Idil lords it over Samater - she
decrees that no one should drink whisky since it is against the Islamic religion.

In descriptions and in dialogue Idil is presented as a no-nonsense matriarch.
The author uses Idil’s own point of view to show how arrogant and proud she is.
Since her husband was a weak personality she had to take over as the powerful
figure of the home. She tells Samater: "You are like your father. Medina has
larger testicles than you. Just as I had bigger ones than your father" (Farah
1981:78). Most of Idil’s character comes out through what she herself says and by
this the omniscient narrator is detaching himself from Idil so that the reader can
judge her from her words.

Idil is not a man but her attitudes have been imbibed from the social
conditioning that surrounds patriarchal institutions. Indeed the analogies drawn in
the parallel themes of patriarchy and political oppression make very little
differentiation between the patriarchal and political institutions. The patriarchal
society invests power in the old and this is what the General’s Government also
does. For instance Idil and members of the clan are used to persuade Samater to
accept the ministerial position that would compromise his principles and his fight against oppression. It is also Idil who is used to bring Samater down. She asserts her matriarchal position by bringing a wife for Samater, a wife that will obey her wishes. Samater disobeys the mother and throws her out of the house. As a result he loses his cabinet post and is thrown to the cells. Idil is the state representative at the family level and her being ejected from the house is a challenge to the General and his government. Idil asserts her place very loudly. On the other hand other matriarchs, as Fatima bint Thabit, assert their place silently. The narration presents these various levels of assertion. However, both are asserting the same thing - matriarchal power and the preservation of tradition.

Samater seems a marooned man with all odds against him. In the first three chapters of the novel the omniscient narrator and other points of view (particularly that of Medina) present Samater. He is in fact contrasted to Medina (his wife) and appears a direct opposite. While Medina is strong-minded, Samater is "weak in the head as he was in the knees" (Farah 1981:5). Through flashback we are told that even as a young boy he was excluded from sports activities, his responsibility being to guard the clothes of other boys as they played football. As a university student, during demonstrations he always took the rear. When given an appointment to the General’s Cabinet he is not at first decided on whether to accept it. He takes it largely due to pressure from his clan members. The clan beseeches him to take the appointment to save them imprisonment.

When Samater takes the stage in Chapter Four the reader already has an impression of him as a feeble personality who will easily be defeated. Samater takes over the narration to try and counteract the opinions that have been presented
about him. Medina has left the house and upon Samater’s arrival from a ministerial trip to Algiers there are indications of other peoples’ presences. Systematically he notes that the positions of items in the house have been altered and that the maid and orderly are not present. Through interior monologue he starts puzzling over the meaning of all the goings-on. Samater recalls that his mother has never approved of his marriage to Medina. It is so well presented that Samater has to arrive in the house and meet nobody so that he can ponder over the meaning of the changes he is seeing. His uneasiness and tension is presented systematically building up to a climactic end. The narration has widened to include Samater and since he allows the reader into his mind, the character becomes a narrator. As Booth (1961:164) has said "any sustained inside view of whatever depth temporarily turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator."

Idil has contributed to Medina’s departure from the house and has brought for Samater a wife of her choice. The reader pities Samater and as the monologues build up the tension in him the reader opens every page awaiting to see what decision the weak Samater will take this time round. In previous chapters the man is portrayed as quite indecisive. By taking the reader directly into his mind a sympathetic understanding is cultivated for the besieged man and when he throws out his "new wife" and Idil we fully support him. Edel (1972:53) has said that "interior monologue ... expresses the most intimate thoughts, those closest to the subconscious" and it is through this intimacy that we come to truly understand Samater. The interior monologues prepare the reader to start admiring part of Samater; this admiration being further enhanced when he quits his post and emerges from a torture chamber a somewhat better person in his understanding of what
sacrifices are demanded of one who wishes to oppose tyranny.

Samater is contrasted to diehard opponents (e.g., Medina and Sagal) of the regime. Somalia needs both the strong-willed (Medina) and the not too decisive minds (Samater). It will be a leap forward in the liberation struggle when the indecisive ones reach a realisation as the one Samater reaches upon resigning and being locked up in a torture dungeon. Above all the message for the future is that understanding has to begin from the family: here shown by Medina and Ubax returning to the house they had deserted at the beginning of the novel so that when Samater leaves jail it is a happy reunion for the family. It is by tolerance at the family level that the entire state will realise better meaning in life. Samater could arguably be regarded as the most important character in terms of opposition to the General is concerned. He can be seen in this light if we consider how he has been transformed from the lukewarm to the active; undergoing some form of baptism of fire.

In further analogies between the political oppression and the wider society even Medina is a matriarch of a kind. The narration tells us that she is unbending in her decisions - she always wants to keep to her own wishes and is not ready to accommodate other people's views. How much for instance, does the Idil-Samater relationship differ from Medina-Ubax relationship? These two relationships are juxtaposed just as many other relationships in the novel are juxtaposed. Medina may not, for instance, be overtly aware that in her relations with her daughter she sometimes exhibits the same dominance and oppressive control that she and her Movement are fighting the General for. Medina's manipulation of Ubax is presented subtly. Medina lavishes too much attention and love on Ubax to a point
of making her not live her true life as a child. Medina wants her child to behave a grown-up and yet she is only eight years old. She refuses that Ubax cannot attend school like other children because the schools only teach how to recite praise names of the General. She would rather use the opportunity to read to the child translations of the classics. This is indoctrination because she imposes her own tastes on the child. She makes no attempt at sifting the material to make it adaptable to the child "as she gave them to her like maize cakes from the oven" (Farah 1981:3). She claims that she wants Ubax "to grow up healthy and independent. I want you to do what you please" (Farah 1981:12), but this is absolutely contrary to what she does. Medina does not want Ubax to play with other children so that when she draws a picture she can draw her images from a child's play. The mother wants her to live her life like a dream and politicises her drawings so that when Ubax asks her what colour to do in the aeroplane she has drawn, the mother says "dye it socialist red" (Farah 1981:21). Medina's own relationship with Ubax, then, presents another version of filial impositions which are further unearthed in the story of Samater and Idil as we have seen. It is ironic that Medina does not fully see that her over-possession of Ubax is domestic tyranny analogous to the tyranny Idil (her mother-in-law) has imposed in their house. The novel in fact presents a network of situations and reactions that are all related to one another. In their fight against all forms of oppression, even the fighters (e.g Medina and Sagal) reveal their contradictions, and compromises, and the narrator constantly intervenes by putting all the stories together and making sure that no character's story remains unrelated to the others. In one case of the narrator's interventions he says "Medina was as strong-minded as she was unbending in her decisions... She
was in a manner like her father Barkhadle. She was as confident as a patriarch in
the rightness of all her decisions" (Farah 1981:4-5). The likening of Medina to a
patriarch is revealing. Medina might be opposed to all forms of patriarchal
domination, but she herself practices such domination, even if unconsciously. As
Fatima bint Thabit tells her "you are a prisoner of your principles and your secret
dreams... I am a prisoner of tradition... One is always a prisoner of one thing or
another" (Farah 1981:144). The mode of narration presents prisonhood as a way of
life in Somali society.

The narrator presents Ubax as yearning to free herself from the shackles of
Medina, to personal freedom. The child wishes to be let loose to leave the prison
of the room to play with other children outside. In the numerous conversations she
has with Medina she is trying to fight for her independence:

"Aren't you getting up then?"
"What will I do if I get up?"
"I'll read you a translation of a story
or we can go out together, you and I."

Was that a proposition Ubax liked? She opened
her eyes and smiled a little.
"Where shall we go?"

There was a pause. Ubax made it known that
she was fully aware. Then she said:
"I want my toys here."

Both fell quiet. The words remained suspended
in the air like a hover-fly undecided whether to alight
or not.
"I thought you wanted me to read you a story,
the one I've been working on. Do you remember?
You said you wanted me to read it to you as soon as
I finished translating it."
"No stories today. I want my
toys" (Farah 1981:11).

Here dialogue is used to present the dramatic element in prose thus well representing
Ubax's restlessness which is similar to Medina's own restlessness under the
General’s control. The text uses dialogue to express Ubax’s position and to assert her position and her need to be a subject and an individual in her own right. The dialogue quoted above represents well the type of verbal exchanges that occur between Medina and Ubax. Ubax uses dialogue to state her demands although the mother has a way of brushing her aside. At times the two talk in parallel ways as Medina attempts to direct her daughter away from what she is demanding. Ubax’s toys have more meaning to her than the stories that Medina is trying to drill into her youthful mind. In using dialogue the omniscient narrator detaches himself from the matters being presented and lets the reader interact with the characters first hand without any intermediary.

We have said that in the representation of the struggle against oppression the novel shows the complexities of this struggle by exposing the compromises, confusions, and contradictions that beset all the chief characters. For some characters the compromises are latent, for some they are manifest. A case of manifest compromise is that of the Italian Sandra who is a character we hear so much of in the course of the novel but who comes on stage in chapter ten which is toward the novel’s end. Through other characters’ points of view (particularly that of Medina), Sandra is presented as a detestable character. Through flashback the narrator traces the life of Sandra and the conclusion we reach is that she is a hypocrite and an opportunist. Sandra, Medina, Samater and Nasser attended university in Italy together. In a conversation which the four had in Italy, the Italian Sandra was vehement that Medina did not understand Italy and should therefore not discuss matters concerning that country (Farah 1981:203-204). Coming to Somalia some years later Sandra makes herself an authority on Somalia affairs. It is a fact
that she does not understand Somalia but because she has accepted to be used by the General’s Government (for some temporary gains) to distort the information going to the outside world she can claim knowledge of the country. Sandra’s presentation in the novel advances the motif of the guest in the novel, "In this century, the African is a guest whether in Africa or elsewhere" (Farah 1981:206). By flashing back to the radical banner-carrier Sandra of the student days and comparing her to the now compromised Sandra, different faces and phases of her life are brought out.

She is a hypocrite and an opportunist who enjoys to use opportunities to her blissful advantage. We may even doubt the sincerity of her radicalism of the student days. As a student she may have been taking part just for the romantic side of it, the love of acting a role in the activities. At another level Sandra’s present "acting" shows the hypocrisy, the pretence, the acting that is Somalia especially at the Government level. For instance, the General professes to practice socialism while in the real sense he is a capitalist. Sandra may act her role now but she should bear in mind that Somalia has also good actors. The Somalis are acting together with her; when she completes the acting they will throw her out of the country and accuse her of all manner of misdeeds. It is in the same acting manner that Somali audiences shower actors with presents while the latter are on stage and demand back the presents when the play is over (Farah 1981:166-167).

Medina hates Sandra with a passion. She regards her as a harbinger of bad news. She is the one who came to inform Medina of her appointment as editor of Xiddigta Oktoober, Somalia’s sole newspaper. She too came to report that Samater would be appointed Minister of constructions. A very negative image of her has been built all along and her appearance in Chapter ten simply serves to enhance this
image. Her physical appearance seen through Medina’s point of view is not likeable:

She looked upwards and watched Sandra’s bulky weight pace up and down... With her skin tanned, she wasn’t as pale, like the sand of the Sahara, as when she came to Mogadiscio, pale and sick-looking. She was big-boned,... (Farah 1981:215).

Such a presentation draws sneers from the reader. Sandra has been accorded overwhelming privileges to work as a journalist in Somalia. She is to be found in the company of Government leaders such as the ideologue and others of the incestuous circle that rules Somalia as if it were their property. In the eyes of the radical anti-government journalist Medina, Sandra is a despicable portrait. She represents well those without a strong spirit to stand up to their principles. By presenting Sandra in the manner shown in the novel, the author is showing how some foreigners (and indeed locals too) under blissful conditions work to advance the General’s evil ways. Sandra well represents the themes of hypocrisy and dehumanisation. The General’s regime has misused people to a point of making them lose their humanity. Sandra has debased herself with momentary blissfulness and she is being used to report falsehoods regarding Somalia. This amounts to intellectual dishonesty. By misinforming the world Sandra is emasculating the people’s knowledge on the General’s autocratic regime.

We may even go further to say that it is not only Sandra that is an actor in the novel. Most characters in the novel are "pretending to be what they are not in real life" (Farah 1981:166), to use the words of Dulman. Dulman herself apart from being singer and thespian, is an actor on the Liberation Movement stage. She is a
member of the underground Movement and yet has sang praises to the General on several occasions. Also in Chapter ten (Farah 1981:235) when the characters gather to hear what has happened to Samater they take turns on the floor as if they are acting on stage. Characters that we have only heard being talked of and have not been seen now appear. The image of Sardines in a tin is created as they walk up and down within the room. Indeed the image of the room has a central place in the novel. Most of the action in the novel takes place inside houses. The confinement into a room (for example Medina trying to imagine at the beginning of the novel that she has a room of her own) shows how restricted the Somalis are under the leadership of the General.

Thus far, in opening the narration to allow the points of view of other characters other than that of Medina, the author has successfully shown that one can only try to understand the multi-faceted dictatorship of Somalia’s Sardines if many characters are given a chance to present their own perspectives. In these various presentations, we are able to understand characters better when they directly address the reader. Narrative strategy is here used for character understanding. Through the various points of view the author has been able to illuminate themes such as patriarchal and matriarchal domination, compromise and reconciliation. The author has also used the technique of narration to map out a vision for the society in his novel. The vision brought out is that understanding, reconciliation and emancipation should begin from the family because it is the family that the General uses as the smallest unit of domination and subjugation.

In the shifting point of view technique Sardines emerges as a fairly complex novel. The novel always calls for the reader’s extra attention if he has to follow and
decipher the changing patterns of narration. The novel is good material for the creative reader and the literary critic.
CHAPTER THREE

COMPOSITE NARRATIONS AS PATTERNS OF ANALOGY IN GIFTS

Omniscient narration in Gifts (1992) works in a slightly different way from Sardines, and this inconformity is related to the disparity in the themes explored in both novels.

In Gifts, the omniscient narrator’s interaction with other points of view is enlarged to include other extraneous narrations such as the use of chapter outlines and newspaper snippets. In Sardines, we have seen how the empirical narrator decentres Medina’s narration by intervening to widen the canvas of players making various analogies of situations. On the other hand in Gifts, the dominant point of view (that of Duniya) undergoes the process of growth. Duniya is the recorder of her story (Farah 1992a:242) and it is her point of view that is prevalent in the novel. The second dominant point of view is that of Bosaaso. The love affair between Duniya and Bosaaso forms the centre of the novel and all the other relationships are seen in relation to it. Over a span of nine days, the novel traces the birth and growth of a love affair that culminates into marriage at the end of the book.

The technique of narration is such that aspects such as the use of dream, interior monologue, flashbacks, chapter outlines and newspaper snippets are used to enhance the theme of love and the obligations of giving and receiving. Above all, then, juxtaposition stands out as the dominant technique that wraps together all the rest.

After the chapter one summary (an aspect we shall discuss later) the reader is presented with the first dream in the novel in which Duniya dreams:
That this opening dream is quite important to the novel there can be no doubt. It keeps returning to Duniya’s mind throughout the book; for instance Bosaaso’s taxi seems to her "to be a butterfly with colourful wings revolving like spinning-tops" (Farah 1992a:2-3). At other instances, "Bosaaso had come into her life disguised like a butterfly in a dream" (Farah 1992a:87).

In the dream quoted above, the butterfly is restless; at the hospital Duniya is "compared by one of the junior nurses to an agitated butterfly hopping from one pollinated flower to another" (Farah 1992a:16). At one level, Duniya is the restless butterfly in the dream: she severally knocks things over at the hospital and even forgets to change into working uniform. At another level, Bosaaso might be regarded as the restless butterfly: he keeps returning to Duniya’s house in the pretext of coming to find out about the foundling one’s welfare, but in essence, it is to see his love (Duniya).

Throughout chapter one, we see a "cat waiting attentively for the fretful insect’s shadow to stay still for an instant so as to pounce on it". In this case, the cat is Bosaaso. Furthermore, as Duniya walks to the bus station, she notices a cat resembling the one in her dream, a cat waiting to be picked up and cuddled (Farah 1992a:2). Duniya is all the while suspicious that Bosaaso’s offering her a lift to work is a trap of a kind. Duniya’s suspicion arises first out of a feeling that the
man is camouflaging himself and secondly, because she is wary of gifts and sees the lift as a gift. According to Duniya, to accept gifts is to accept to be demeaned.

From the beginning of the novel, there are subtle hints that the two have a liking for each other. Their conversations are coloured with love overtones and their points of view begin to emphasise the positive qualities of the other: "Duniya noticed how his smile emphasised the handsomeness of his features" (Farah 1992a:5). It is evident then that the love affair is couched in the dream motif in the novel. Duniya thinks that she had seen signs of the love affair "in a dream, fuzzy in shape as a butterfly in zig-zag motion" (Farah 1992a:75). The lovers express their intimate feelings for each other by dreaming. The reader is allowed into the sub-conscious minds of characters to see how they express their feelings by clothing their dreams with various images of each other. In most cases, people dream about their real life desires, likings, aspirations and fears. Bosaaso's dreams of "a butterfly-coloured eagle" (Farah 1992a:40) might be Duniya. In this dream, Bosaaso waits for the bird to descend so that he can aim and shoot it. Instead, the eagle descends and goes for the brain of a child passing by. The child falls down but is resuscitated by women who emerge at the scene. This dream centres on the theme of gift-giving and receiving. As Taariq writes in one of his articles, there are no free gifts. One gives today hoping to receive tomorrow. The eagle which Bosaaso sees as edible turns out to be a feeder on human beings in the end. This dream should warn Bosaaso (and indeed the reader) of the dangers of giving and accepting gifts. In another dream (Farah 1992a:85) a bird threateningly descends as if to do harm to Bosaaso's child, but the bird flies away clutching in its beak a flower.

One may wonder about the recurrence of birds in the dreams of Bosaaso.
Birds would be seen as messengers as in many African folktales, and in the above cases, they bring messages to Bosaaso who if he discerns their meaning, will heed the message and avert disaster.

In *Gifts*, the foundling one (a child abandoned and then picked by Nasiiba) occupies a near-mythical status. In the first place, there is a lot of discussion as to who its mother is, although to the reader, there is little doubt that Nasiiba knows the mother of the child right from the beginning. There is even a premonition that Duniya is aware of the parents of the child.

The safety of the foundling one becomes Duniya's number one preoccupation. This could partly be because of the psychological probing she receives through dreams. In one dream, Duniya sees "a baby clutching a lone flower tightly in its long-nailed fingers. The baby had been born without an anus and, there being no experienced surgeon in the city to perforate one for it, it had died with no one mourning it" (Farah 1992a:52). Sometimes, dreams are predictions of things to happen. That the baby in Duniya's dream might be a replica of the foundling one really disturbs her because if this is the case, the foundling one will die like the child in the dream. This prediction as brought out in the dream keeps the reader's anticipation high, as he hopes that the foundling one might survive. But at the back of the reader's mind rings Duniya's dreams that paint a gloomy situation. At one point, she dreams that the foundling one has not stirred for long and might be dead. The dream's predictions come true - the child dies - likely killed by Qaasim who it is believed fathered it.

The foundling one is a gift and since gifts bestow certain responsibilities and obligations upon the receiver, the foundling one is no exception. There is no free
When the obligations are not met, the gift disappears. Attention is here drawn to the theme of reciprocity that is crucial in the novel. For a relationship to succeed, it should thrive on reciprocity.

The way the various characters receive the news and presence of the foundling one is presented in the novel such that the reader forms definite opinions about characters. Characters are also appropriately painted (either positively or negatively) depending on how they perceive the Duniya - Bosaaso love affair and how they relate to the foundling one. Through a particular point of view, a description of a character is presented in a way that immensely influences the reader's assessment of character. For example, Shiriye, Duniya's half-brother is:

Fat-bellied... Shiriye's body was incapable of being still. He was like a huge animal whose tail was swishingly busy chasing away flies; or the wide nostril of a hippopotamus twitching of its own accord... or a German shepherd dog airing its oversized tongue.... His belly spilled over his tucked-in shirt.... (Farah 1992a:76-77).

The above picture draws sneers from the reader and leads to contempt of Shiriye. Descriptions of various other characters as Muraayo (Duniya's sister-in-law), Qaasim (Muraayo's husband) and Waaberi (sister to Yussur, Bosaaso's late wife) are directed at the reader so as to elicit a similar response. Muraayo's "bare arms were of enormous size that filled the sex-starved fantasies of some Somali men" (Farah 1992a:104), shows her low morals. Further illustration of this is given on how she "had the habit of entertaining male visitors in the wing of the house further from the entrance and in which their bedrooms were, when her husband was not at home" (Farah 1992a:105). The way she talks endlessly is unlikely to win the favour of the reader, "would she be able to keep pace with Muraayo's accelerated jabber?" (Farah
1992a:106), and "she is a river of words breaking at the banks regardless of the seasons" (Farah 1992a:119).

By making statements that will greatly influence the reader's judgement of a character, the narrator is setting certain standards on norms and values expected of characters in the text. The point of view used is that of Duniya who carries the vision in Gifts. Duniya is a symbol of the determination and resilience of a woman to weather many a storm in a society that looks down upon her gender. She has brought up her children almost single-handedly and she does not shy away from welcoming the foundling one to the family. Duniya has cared for many people in her life beginning with her first husband, the blind man, Zubair.

The presentation of Qaasim, through Duniya's point of view, in many respects resembles that of Shiriye:

...admitting the pot-bellied perspiring figure of Qaasim. Like Shiriye, Qaasim had the eyes of a man who wanted to be somewhere else. He was very fat, like Shiriye, his body round like the lower part of a baobab tree, with stubby, short-nailed fingers. Qaasim's eyes were small, his teeth tobacco-stained (Farah 1992a:124).

Duniya does not like Qaasim and the way he storms into the house demanding to see "the little jinn that has created all this discord" (Farah 1992a:124) further adds to the abhorrence of the man. The physical appearance presented is such that it channels distaste for Qaasim. And Waaberi's "large-mouthed and large-hipped...a zip in front and showing enough of her enormous breasts" (Farah 1992a:218) appearance is almost repugnant. In presenting her, like in the case of other characters above, the narrator is particularly astute in qualifying every presentation with appropriate similes. Similes help the reader in forming a better picture of
matters presented and facilitating comparison. The manner of presentation of characters in *Gifts* is such that there is a clear line between good and bad characters. Good and bad characters are juxtaposed to reveal their relationship with the dominant character, Duniya. Characters (such as Muraayo) who are not in favour of the Bosaaso-Duniya love relationship are presented in a bad light and as seen above, characters that do not support the idea of the foundling’s presence in Duniya’s house are portrayed in disfavour. The foundling is a gift. The Bosaaso-Duniya love affair is a gift; indeed, the highest form of giving. The attention that Bosaaso and Duniya give to the foundling makes their love grow and although the child dies, they marry.

Every affair that goes on in the novel, every undertaking, ought to be seen in terms of it being a gift. Duniya’s father gave Duniya to Zubair in marriage as a gift of appreciation for their long-term friendship. Through flashback, Duniya recalls how she got married to the blind man Zubair aged sixty. Duniya was probably still young (twenty-one) to see the implications of the matrimony. The arrangement had been contracted much earlier when as a girl of four years, Duniya had ridden on Zubair’s horse. The riding of the horse was a gift and Zubair even asked Duniya what she would give him in return. There are no free gifts.

Duniya claims that she accepted the marriage because "one cannot argue with the wishes of the dead and the elderly" (Farah 1992a:36). The Somali society that is led by male elders forced Duniya into the union. Because Duniya was given as a form of gift, she went almost whole-heartedly to the union and the feeling we get is that she enjoyed the brief marriage with Zubair, a marriage that brought forth the twins - Nasiiba and Mataan. The reader gets the impression that she got married to
Zubair and lived with him initially out of a feeling of sympathy, and later a willingness to care for the unfortunate blind man.

The first marriage is put side by side with the second one in which Duniya got married to Taariq who was then her landlord. Duniya and Taariq did not agree to get married but they just found themselves in the union due to circumstances. Taariq had only rented out part of his house while he kept one room to himself. One day, Duniya and Taariq were forced to share Duniya’s bed because Mataan had urinated on Taariq’s. They made love and from that day on, they decided to become husband and wife. The information about the Duniya-Taariq marriage is relayed to the reader through dialogue between Nasiiba and Duniya. The conversation reveals a friendly relationship between mother and daughter. The conversation is meant to develop the theme of love between daughter and mother on one hand, and between Duniya and Taariq on another. We hear of Taariq, the drunkard and we see him later as a changed man - working hard as a journalist. Nasiiba actually knows most of the things that the mother is telling her, since when these things were happening, she had already become of age. The conversation is then meant to inform the reader.

The first two marriage unions which Duniya had are put in such a way as to be contrasted with the affair that is now growing between her and Bosaaso. We see Duniya grow from that naive girl married to Zubair to the now decisive woman developing a relationship with Bosaaso. Through the reminiscences, we learn that her early life did not accord her an opportunity for experiencing a love affair - she simply entered into marriages. Her real first experience of falling in love is with Bosaaso, when she is thirty-five (a relatively late age to fall in love for the first
time). It becomes a real experience of falling in love as Duniya behaves strangely where she works, making things fall over now and again. Although we have hinted that she is likely to have enjoyed the first marriage, there is more weight to the feeling that she married Zubair out of sympathy and out of her naivety of feeling that an old man’s (her father’s) words cannot be defied. The second marriage resulted out of circumstances of a feeling of guilt and embarrassment because Mataan had urinated on Taariq’s bed. On the other hand, the third marriage to Bosaaso has come into existence out of a mutual love which we have seen develop through the novel. The Somali male-dominated society of the first two marriages is contrasted with the society of the third marriage and the third is seen as more meaningful and enriching. Society must create environments upon which women are allowed to develop their self-esteem. It is likely this type of environment that Duniya has created for her daughter, Nasiiba.

In trying to win the favour of the reader about her relationship with other characters, Duniya employs interior monologue. As we indicated while talking about Sardines, interior monologue is more or less a rhetorical tool, a tool of persuasion that authors use to evoke an intimate understanding of certain characters’ behaviour. In Gifts, it is only Duniya who is allowed the privilege to use interior monologue to address the reader. The reader may be uneasy and even disturbed by the Bosaaso-Duniya relationship especially when one considers that Duniya has grown-up children in their teens. What implications does it have to see their mother falling in love and bringing a man into her life as husband and into their life as father? Such may look shameful in the eyes of some readers. The author plays it subtly by showing the children happy with the relationship as they (Nasiiba and
Mataan) also carry on with their various love affairs. In her heart of hearts, even Duniya at times feels disturbed:

Duniya was telling herself: People will say wicked things about my motives, probably accuse me of being after the man’s wealth. But what do they know about the motives of a woman like me? (Farah 1992a:75).

In the above quotation, Duniya presents her fears to the reader. People will accuse her of all sorts of things but one still wonders whether she is really sure about her motives of getting married for the third time, this time, at thirty-five. She invokes our understanding and although she might not be personally aware, she calls upon us to scrutinise her. But all the same, the reader feels that he understands better the "motives for the behaviour of a character, the more inclined he tends to feel understanding forbearance... of the character" (Stanzel 1984:128), when the character employs interior monologue.

Interior monologue allows for reflection for both character and the reader. It is an expression of intimate thoughts; thoughts that cannot possibly be conveyed by any other method even in real life:

Somali men are said to be turned on by the mound of flesh round a woman’s navel. But what kind of women did Bosaaso like?... Duniya knew her body was still in good shape. Surely, she thought it wasn’t a body to turn one’s nose at. It had served her faithfully.... In the two years she had been Zubair’s wife, they could not have made love more than thrice a month. Yet she had not felt sexually dissatisfied; ... (Farah 1992a:102).

In this vein, Duniya pleads for the reader’s understanding. She is seeking the reader’s admiration of her and support for her relationship with Bosaaso. Duniya
is also calling upon the reader to understand that despite marrying someone forty
years her senior, she enjoyed the marriage with Zubair because it was not primarily
sexual urges that she sought to quench in the union. Even if she may say that her
body is still in shape, all the same it is not sex that she principally seeks in getting
married to Bosaaso. Furthermore, they get to having sex towards the end of the
novel when they are sure that they need each other's companionship. Love is a
form of giving and receiving and, therefore, a gift. This is why Duniya is very wary
of her relationship with Bosaaso and treads carefully.

But one wonders why Duniya does not tread carefully when receiving gifts
from other people. Abshir, Duniya's elder brother, whom she has not met for
fifteen years has been sending money and other gifts to her. How is it that she
receives his gifts without qualms? It would probably be because Duniya does not
hold Abshir's giving with suspicion. Maybe it would be a way of keeping in touch
for fifteen years. The two loved each other since they were young, and the giving
and receiving is meant to keep their love aflame while one is away. Abshir's
presentation is such that we are likely to forget about the ills of gift-giving talked
of in the novel and judge him as a man of good intentions. The narrator makes a
systematic and steady build-up of his character so that by the time the reader
actually meets him (upon his visit from Rome where he lives) at the end of the
novel, an admirable image of him is already imprinted in the reader's mind. The
novel culminatively ends with his arrival and a dinner at which Bosaaso and Duniya
get married.

When the gifts come camouflaged, Duniya does not easily notice. Aw-
Cumar the shopkeeper can hide certain items from other customers but not from
Duniya. He "hoards" the items to give them to his favoured customers. A mutual trust has developed with these customers such as Duniya. Aw-Cumar does not show any arrogance or feeling of importance because of the favours he does Duniya. It is probably because of the arrogance that some givers display that Duniya is forced to tell them off. When Yarey (Duniya’s daughter of her marriage with Taariq) insists that she will not go back to stay with Muraayo as has been the case, Muraayo takes it as an opportunity to remind Duniya that she has pampered the girl with items that her own mother (Duniya) can hardly provide. Muraayo talks with absolute disdain of Duniya to a point that Duniya’s pride as a mother is wounded. Duniya cannot bear to hear that her own daughter would be more comfortable elsewhere because of gifts (eg clothes, watching video and T.V.) that she presumably cannot provide. At another level, Yarey could be seen as the gift that was given to Muraayo and her husband (Qaasim), "It was as if Duniya and Muraayo were two little girls quarrelling over the ownership of a doll, which they would tear apart... until it was no longer a doll... but something placed on a symbolic level" (Farah 1992a:111). Indeed, the two almost fight it out when Duniya cannot condone Muraayo’s insults. Duniya tells her to get out of the house and Muraayo reminds her that the house belongs to Qaasim (Muraayo’s husband). Further, Muraayo cautions the other to swallow her pride and remember she is staying in the house free-of-rent. In this fit of anger, Duniya decides that she will move out of the house. One could argue here that Yarey was given in exchange for the house and now that Yarey has left, Duniya has to relinquish the house to the owner. It is either Yarey or the house and not both. Then, it is such that the quarrel that Muraayo and Duniya are having is not over Yarey, but over ownership of materials
(eg clothes, televisions, houses, e.t.c). This is the symbolic level which the quotation above is referring to.

The haughtiness that Muraayo displays is the same one that Ingrid presents when she is discussing the issue of gifts with Yussur (Farah 1992a:45-47). Ingrid was about to return to Copenhagen after a three-year stint with a Scandinavian voluntary aid organisation working in Somalia. She was selling her kitchenware. Yussur had paid ten US dollars for some china plates and cups and Ingrid insists that this is a gift because to her, these are very special items (which need to go to caring hands) which ought to be given out at a higher cost.

The above analogical placing of aspects of gifts and the interpretation of various persons boils to one great question that *Gifts* persistently asks: *What is a gift?* The general understanding is that a gift is something that is given voluntarily and freely. But the argument that comes out from *Gifts* is that no gift is voluntary or free. In an article entitled "Giving and Receiving: The Notion of Donations", Taariq argues about donations that African countries receive from countries of the first world such as Japan, the U.S. and Western European countries. He says that these donations that come in form of relief food, money and technical assistance are not really gifts as such. Africa pays for them in one way or another. The donations have strings attached to them. According to Taariq, for instance, the west can tell quite long before a famine, that it will occur. But the donors do nothing to avert the famine and so it strikes warranting relief food to the starving in Africa. The donors use donations as a weapon of subjugation. "Every gift has a personality - that of its giver. On every sack of rice donated by a foreign government to a starving people in Africa, the characteristics and mentality of the donor, name and country, are
stamped on its ribs" (Farah 1992a:195). The donors would not want to avert a famine in Africa because this will mean the African will not go to beg from them. The famine has to be left to take place so that the donor's personality can be stamped on the African continent. Sometimes, the donors give in order to feel superior and consequently make the African feel inferior. In the same way, the givers of gifts at the domestic level wish their personalities implanted on the recipient of the gifts. We have seen how when Duniya tries to create an independent personality of Qaasim and Muraayo (who have given her a house free-of-rent) she loses the gift. And as much as Duniya may not wish to admit it, the gifts she receives from Abshir have had influence on her. Abshir's personality is stamped on the gifts, the personality is stamped on Duniya. No wonder Abshir's shadow looms large throughout the novel. Abshir only appears toward the end of the novel. So, Farah has well analogised international donations to inter-personal donations and the conclusion is that the two place the same demands on the recipient.

The vulnerability of individual gift-receivers is the subject of the larger body of chapters, while the vulnerability of the Third-World countries is the subject of the newspaper snippets that appear at the end of most chapters. Of all these excerpts, it is only the one in Chapter One that flows from the story in the novel: Duniya "unearthed an old newspaper in which she discovered an item of interest" (Farah 1992a:7). In this first snippet, there is impending disaster and famine for Somalia. It shows how helpless Somalia is: to avert the locust invasion that will cause the famine she needs assistance from other countries. This snippet has a great deal of relationship to what has happened in chapter one. Due to scarcity of fuel, there are
problems in getting transport to work for the residents of Mogadiscio. Amid these
difficulties, Duniya is offered a lift by Bosaaso, a lift that turns out to be a gift of
love. Duniya almost ends up being helpless - the way Somalia has to depend on
other countries. Duniya is again given a lift by Bosaaso when she completes the
day's duties. All the newspaper excerpts are a reference to international donations
(donations given from nation to nation). Most of the articles are on foreign aid and
therefore help in enhancing the theme and meaning of gifts. For example, the
extract at the end of Chapter Four is on relief supplies to war-torn drought-stricken
North Somalia (Farah 1992a:39). As we have mentioned earlier, there are no free
gifts. Gifts are accompanied by obligations and reciprocity of some sort is always
required, "we give hoping to receive something corresponding to what we've
offered", writes Taariq. Somalia may receive aid from the Italian Government for
health, farming and language study (Farah 1992a:96-97), she may receive assistance
from aid agencies and friendly nations to help curb deforestation (Farah 1992a:84),
but she will always pay it back in some way. As we have seen, even the characters
that receive gifts in Gifts pay back, sometimes rather bitterly. The so-called free
things have a risk in them. At times, the donations given are harmful. At one
point, some Third-World countries refuse "to accept dairy products from the
European Community... because they are suspected of being contaminated by radio-
activity from the nuclear plant accident at Chernobyl (Farah 1992a:21).

When the reader reads four successive chapters and at the end of each there
is an extracted news item from a newspaper, he starts asking himself questions. He
is even tempted to open ahead and see whether it is the same case for the chapters
that follow. He comes back and looks at the extracts in the chapters he has read and
finds that the excerpts are just imposed wherever they are without logically emerging from the text. Then, of course, he is forced to look for meaning as he reads on. The meaning is to be sought between a newspaper excerpt and the chapter in which it appears, and also within the larger context of the entire novel. There seems to be no particular correlation between the snippets and the chapters in which they appear. But generally the snippets as a whole present the international gifts and parallel these with domestic gifts that are given wider coverage in the novel.

The use of newspaper snippets is an extraneous method - this is the use of material not emerging directly from the text. In other extraneous uses in *Gifts*, the novelist has divided the novel into four parts with a heading for each part and also given each chapter an outline which summarises the events in that chapter. Part 1 is titled "A story is Born", part 2 has "A Baby in a Rubbish-Bin" as its heading, Part 3's heading is "Duniya Loves", and part 4 "Duniya Gives". Each heading summarises what happens in each part. Most of the story in *Gifts* is what happens over nine days, chronologically told. By reading the titles given above, one forms a view of what the novel is about. As it ought to be of headings, the headings of the parts in *Gifts* well represent what takes place in each part. For example, "A Baby in a Rubbish-Bin" centres on the foundling one and how the baby's presence strains and strengthens (as the case may be) Duniya's relationship with other people.

Further to the titles that summarise what is to happen in each part, every chapter has a summary at its beginning. Every summary is in the present tense, and half of the summaries are made up of a single sentence. Most of the summaries begin, "In which Duniya..." This is then followed by what Duniya does as the case may be. For example, Chapter nine is summarised thus, "in which Duniya in a
dress borrowed at Nasiiba's insistence goes with Bosaaso to Mire's home for dinner" (Farah 1992a:85). In nearly all chapter outlines the focus is on Duniya who is the chief character in the novel.

Chapter summaries was a practice of the 18th Century. The novel was still young as a literary form and writers such as Samuel Richardson, Daniel Defoe, Lawrence Sterne and Henry Fielding saw themselves as bequeathed with the responsibility of using their novels to give moral guidance to society. It was the task of the novel to commend virtue and condemn vice, the novelists believed. The writers above wrote biographical novels in which they traced the lives of their heroes as they overcame vicious temptations and tribulations, and upheld the virtuous path of life. In the novels of Henry Fielding, for example, the narrators use certain portions to talk to the reader about characters' behaviour and what is expected of the characters. The narrators invoke the reader by addressing him as such, and call upon him to condemn bad conduct. At other points, the narrators divert from the novel events themselves and talk about the art of writing and what is expected of writers, readers and critics. Although the narrator in Gifts does not address the reader directly by calling him "Dear Reader", "my reader", "the reader" e.t.c, as is the case in Fielding's novels, we have seen that the omniscient narrator in Gifts guides the reader to hate characters of low morals such as Qaasim, Muraayyo and Waaberri. We would not be wrong in arguing that Farah most likely read the 18th century writers mentioned above. It is not clear to what extent these writers influenced him beyond the use of chapter summaries. All the same the impact of these writers on Farah is beyond the scope of our work.

The chapter summaries foreshadow what is to happen in the novel. This
somehow makes the reader prepared for what he is to read. While some may call the summaries a bad method which pre-empts the story, it should be stressed that a one-sentence summary cannot be equivalent to a fifteen-page chapter. The material given in one or two sentences as a summary of a chapter is insufficient to make the reader not to go ahead to find out what is in the whole chapter. The summary is a mere skeleton which urges the reader to read on and get the flesh. The summary is a method of controlled narration where the narrator decides what the summary should actually contain. The summary may at certain instances shape the reader's judgement because depending on what is included in the summary the writer has chosen to highlight certain aspects of a chapter.

In *Joseph Andrews* (1987), Fielding argues that the summaries are meant to "inform the reader what entertainment he is to expect, which if he likes not, he may travel on to the next" (Fielding 1987:94). With the type of novels (biographies) that Fielding wrote, the above advice would serve well because a biography does not necessarily record all of a person's life. A biography only picks some happenings - it picks those it considers useful for its thematic purpose. Furthermore, some parts of *Joseph Andrews* are tales within the tale and would very comfortably be skipped without inflicting great harm to the flow of the plot of the novel. An example is the history of Leonora in Book (ii) Chapters (iv) and (vi). This tells of how Leonora falls in love with a man by the name Horatio but she deserts him for Bellarmine who is of a higher social status. Later, Bellarmine jilts her and she remains disappointed.

*Gifts* differs from *Joseph Andrews* in many ways and to apply the criterion (of skipping certain portions) as Fielding advised in the quotation above would be
harmful to Farah’s story and plot. *Gifts*, with only a few flashbacks, covers the lives of individuals over a period of nine days. *Joseph Andrews* on the other hand tells the story of Joseph Andrews from his childhood to middle age. Every chapter in Farah’s novel is significant because it has direct relation to its predecessor and its successor. Indeed, every chapter has relation to other chapters in the entire novel.

Fielding gives another advantage of the art of summarising:

> It prevents spoiling the beauty of a book by turning down its leaves, a method otherwise necessary to those readers who... are apt, when they return to their study, to forget where they left (Fielding 1987:94).

The summaries are, therefore, good for revision because by going back to them, the reader is reminded of what he may have forgotten. The chapter summaries offer a more detailed synopsis of the story than the headlines at the beginning of each part.

By way of conclusion, we have seen how the omniscient narrator organises material in *Gifts* to present theme and character. Through a few flashbacks, dreams, description of characters and the use of newspaper excerpts, the narrator is able to present situations analogically so that the theme of giving and receiving is presented to show its implications on the characters affected.

Most of *Gifts* is presented through the points of view of the two dominant characters making the novel fairly simple. The events are easy to follow since they are chronologically revealed through a time-span of ten days.

The intricacy of the novel probably lies in the moral question of gift-giving and gift-receiving. This appears even more complicated when the novelist uses newspaper excerpts to analogue international grants with domestic gifts. However, at times the newspaper excerpts hinder the smooth progress of the story because
most of them are not interwoven in the story of Duniya and Bosaaso. This weakens the novel’s storyline. Further, the chapter outlines at the beginning of each chapter are meant to make reading (and revision) easier, thus making the reading process a less involving task. *Gifts* is thus less intellectually involving than *Sardines.*
CHAPTER FOUR

MULTIPLE NARRATORS AND THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY IN MAPS

It is perhaps more in Maps than the other two novels that the relationship between mode of narration and thematic meaning is absolutely crucial. Maps is an interrogative text that examines the crisis of individual and national identity in a post-colonial African situation. The novel is presented as interrogating (questioning) the protagonist on various issues. The novel is presented as an inquiry that deeply probes the issues it raises. Throughout the novel, the protagonist’s (Askar’s) search for self is continually paralleled and linked with the nation’s (Somalia’s) own search for unification and integrity. It is the assumptions underlying the connection between individual and national identity that are exposed and rigorously questioned.

The relationship between individuals, and their relationship to the nation are also questioned in the story of Askar and his foster mother, Misra. Askar’s conflicting allegiance towards her and the Somali nationalist cause, exposes all the contradictions and confusions in his own understanding of the nation state and the individual’s relationship with it. Because most of what he has imbibed from Somali epics and mythologies about individual identity and the nation state is questioned in the novel, Farah is extremely careful about the manner of narration. The use of multiple narrators in Maps is thus evidence of the inadequacies of either the first-or third-person narrations to reveal the interrogative thrust of the novelist’s theme.

The novel’s story is told by Askar after the event of Misra’s murder and after several narrations. It begins from the plain unembellished story that Askar tells the policeman after the former’s arrest. The story then progresses into several other
narrations until Askar finally tells it to himself "allowing for his different personae to act as judge, as audience and as witness" (Farah 1986:246).

On the face of it the story that leads to Askar's arrest and trial may appear to be centred mostly on Misra's alleged betrayal of the Somali Liberation army and her subsequent abduction and murder by soldiers of the Liberation Movement. The major questions here may appear to be questions relating to Misra's guilt (did she leak secrets of the Western Somalia Liberation Front to the Ethiopians?) or whether or not Askar was involved in her abduction and murder. Yet the constant retelling of the story from various points of view, the continuous movement forwards and backwards in time, the juxtaposition of conscious and unconscious thought by way of dreams all combine to suggest that the story of Misra is also the story of Askar's life and that Askar's conflicts of allegiance to Misra and the Somali Liberation Movement signify a major questioning of ideas and assumptions about national identity and its relation to individual identity. They suggest that the story of Misra and Askar is the nucleus of a major thematic investigation involving rigorous questioning and evaluation of existing beliefs and assumptions.

In the context of the interrogation called for in the story the first-person narration would be grossly inadequate. First-person narratives have fallen under criticism because their presentation of matters impartially is more often than not doubted. It is at times argued that the "I" is most likely to talk only in his own favour; the "I" is likely to conceal what he may consider as uncommendable traits of his person. This is what has led Stanzel (1984:162) to argue that "generally all first-person narrators are biased by definition and are thus unsuitable as narrators."

From the above statements one may then doubt Askar's credibility as a
narrator in *Maps*. As we shall see while discussing dreams the protagonist has immense problems regarding his own identity: "Who am I?" (Farah 1986:44), he asks at one point. Other narrative voices also mention this doubt - for example the "You" voice tells Askar that "you are a question to yourself" (Farah 1986:3). In the letter that Uncle Hilaal writes to Askar the former talks of Askar's intention to go back to Kallafo to trace his roots and specifically facts regarding his birth. Some of the issues that Askar would want to know about are, of course, extremely difficult to unravel. Here lies the very interrogative nature of the novel. For instance, it is highly doubtful whether there is anybody who can for sure tell him whether his mother breastfed him before she died. Because Askar is troubled by his inner conflicts, he cannot easily establish his personality. Even establishing the personalities of others gives him a lot of difficulties.

At certain points the "I" (Askar) candidly confesses that he is not certain about certain things, "but there are many things of which I am not sure. For instance, I'm not sure who said this: "Your look was smooth-like pebbles in a stream" (Farah 1986:41). There are even moments when Askar admits that he cannot remember the chronology of events, "then two things happened, more or less simultaneously. I cannot remember which took place first"(Farah 1986:161).

The above confessions of Askar lower his credibility as a reliable narrator. Further, the author is putting to question Askar's epic-like status. An epic-like figure (which Askar claims he is) should be able to decipher everything. The author seems to be asking: What sort of epic hero are you, Askar, if you cannot recall the chronology of certain events? Throughout the novel Askar tries to convince his listeners that he is an epic hero taking after Africa's heroes such as Sundiata and
Mwindo. He uses what he calls peculiarities surrounding his birth to argue his position. Such "peculiarities" include his stare at birth "I overheard her,... say to Aw-Adan that when she came upon me and encountered my stare, she thought that it appeared as though I had made myself, as though I was my own creation" (Farah 1986:23), and his father dying a day before he was born and the mother’s death after she had given birth to him. But in what is probably the most subtle attack on Askar, Uncle Hilaal probes the issue of Askar’s epic heroism and dismisses it. Uncle Hilaal’s letter (Farah 1986:19-21) is an assertion that Askar is like any other human. Hilaal even tells him that unlike epic children he (Askar) completed the usual nine months between conception and birth.

A lot of doubt is focused toward the hero and this boils once again to the theme of identity - the identity of Askar, the identity of events in the novel and the identity of the Somali nation. In Maps Askar and Somali nationalism are on trial. Does Askar present a true Somali nationalist? Is the true nationalist the one who goes to the battlefront or the one who remains to do research to write informed papers so as to inform the world on the war situation?

The nature of circumstances and issues is such that the "I" cannot be trusted. In any case he is a suspect in the murder trial. His words have to be complemented by the "You" and "He" voices. For the truth to be established in the criminal case many voices must be called upon to testify. Askar is a witness (indeed even the accused) in the court case that is the novel, and he has therefore to consistently defend himself to prove his innocence. He has at times to take a defensive-like stance which leads Cobham (1991:89) to say that "the ‘I’ narrator is sympathetic toward Askar." Indeed at times Askar pleadingly presents his position and wishes
to draw sympathy from the reader (the listener). Such a narrator who wishes to appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect of the listeners cannot be expected to present matters objectively. His presentation is therefore held in suspicion and must be collaborated.

Askar has been implicated in Misra’s death and it lies upon him to prove to the court that he is not guilty of Misra’s murder. When one is suspect of a certain misdeed those accusing him already believe that he has some percentage of guilt (probably fifty per cent). It cannot be outrightly assumed that such a person will be truthful in his utterances - the more reason why the reader is given due warning that Askar’s role as a reliable narrator of his history and those associated with him should not be taken for granted. In chapter one the "You" voice urges the reader to be sceptical about Askar, "You are a question to yourself... You’ve become a question to all those who meet you, those who know you, those who have any dealings with you" (Farah 1986:3).

When "I" (Askar) takes up the narrative in Chapter two the reader feels some form of reply to "You’s" Chapter one. At certain moments "I" outrightly refutes what "You" has stated. For instance, "You" says, "To Misra, you existed first and foremost in the weird stare" (Farah 1986:3). To this "I" replies, "Misra never said to me that I existed for her only in my look. What she said was that she could see in my stare an itch of intelligence - that’s all." (Farah 1986:23). Because "I" refutes some of what "You" says the reader should also be sceptical of "You’s" presentation. In essence none of the three voices can be regarded as the ultimate. The use of multiple voices in narration supports the view that:

the linear narrative which has become the standard form of the realistic novel in Africa
seems no longer able to express the hidden depths, complexities, duplicities, and personal histories (Tagoe 1995:11).

One may regard "I" as more believable than "You" because the former could be speaking from first-hand experience while the latter although at times claiming omniscience, is speaking from materials he has gathered through research. These materials may have been collected by talking to persons who lived with Askar and Misra such as the villagers of Kallafo and Hilaal and Salaado. However, as we have stated there are moments when we cannot rely on "I" even with his first-hand experience. One such moment is when Askar was a child. We cannot bank upon "I" to vividly recollect all his childhood happenings. This failure to vividly recollect events might be what leads Askar to give an adult's interpretation to things that happened when he was a child:

She thought Aw-Adan might have become one healthy alternative - if I had liked him. But I didn't. Looking back now, I think the reasons why I disliked Aw-Adan were different - different in that Misra and he had a world of their own, a language of their own..., I felt totally excluded (Farah 1986:29).

The order in which the various narrative voices appear in the novel forestalls the unreliability of the first-person narrator. The "I" narrator is continually questioned and probed through the interrogations of the "You" narrator who forces Askar to face the real issues regarding his split allegiance to his foster mother Misra and to the Somali Liberation Movement. "You" opens the novel with a sort of accusation in which he debunks Askar's strong belief that he is a mythical being. The "You" actually suggests that it is Askar himself who is the problem; he is the
one who suffers from conflicts between ideas he has imbibed and the reality as it exists:

It appears as though you were a creature given birth to by notions formulated in heads, a creature brought into being by ideas; as though you were not a child born with fortune or misfortunes of the stars...(Farah 1986:3).

Askar thinks himself an epic hero but the reality is, as we have said earlier, that he is human like any other being. The "You" puts a lot of doubts on Askar at the beginning of the novel so that right from the outset the hero’s identity is suspect. The "You" further asserts "I’s" humanness by arguing that there existed a close emotional and cultural bond between Askar and Misra.

The "You" voice may be regarded as one of judge. The voice addresses Askar expecting answers. "I" confirms or refutes what "You" may have claimed in the previous chapter. In chapter one "You" presents portraits of key characters and contrasts them by saying whether Askar liked or disliked them. For instance, Askar didn’t like Uncle Qorrax and Aw-Adan and liked Uncle Hilaal and Salaado. When "I" picks up the story in chapter two he agrees with "You" that he didn’t like Uncle Qorrax (Farah 1986:27). The "I" voice also supports the emotional attachment between Askar and Misra, an attachment that "You" talked of in chapter one.

A further probing of the first-person narrator is carried out through the connection made between his conscious and subconscious thoughts in the recounting of his numerous dreams.

Dream has been a widely studied area in many disciplines. In disciplines such as medicine, philosophy, anthropology, psychology and religion, it has held
prominence as an area of investigation for a long time. In studying dreams in literature we borrow a lot from what scholars in the above disciplines have said.

In ancient times, man was very concerned with dreams and the interpretation of their meaning. Dreams were seen as either foretelling of the future, or a rehearsal of elements of the past, or evidence of witchcraft or messages from one or more gods or devils. For instance, the Babylonians and Assyrians believed that devils and spirits of the dead caused bad influences in dreams. To defeat these evil demons various magical practices were carried out by special temple priests to secure the help of Mamu, the Babylonian goddess of dreams.

The earliest Greek view of dreams was that a visit was paid to a sleeping person by a dream figure in the form of a god or a ghost. Hippocrates placed great emphasis upon astrological features in dreams and their relationship to the physical condition of the body. On the other hand, Aristotle argued against an astrological interpretation of dreams and rejected the notion of their divine origin since animals were also observed to dream. Plato was more interested in the emotional implications of dreams and proposed a very dynamic formulation of dreaming. He pointed out that reasoning ability becomes suspended during sleep, thereby allowing the passions of desire and anger to reveal themselves with full force. According to him incest, murder and sacrilege may thus become the activities pursued in dreams although the dreamer is capable of experiencing morally superior dreams if reason has been stimulated to heightened activity.

Anthropologists generally agree that primitive groups have two types of dreams. The first is an ordinary or personal dream in which the dreamer's everyday life and activities as well as his particular personality conflicts are reflected. The
other class of dreams includes those that could be considered as prescribed by
tradition and are called "official" dreams by Malinowski and "culture pattern"
dreams by Lincoln. These latter dreams are of a special tribal significance and are
eagerly sought or induced through special means such as fasting.

Modern psychologists such as Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung have made a
great contribution to the study and understanding of dreams. E. Jones in Lee and
Mayes (1973) has discussed Freud's theory of dreams. Jones says that Freud
contends that dream processes like all other mental processes, have their psychical
history and that in spite of their peculiar attributes they have a legitimate and
comprehensible place in the sequence of mental life, and that their origins are to be
traced psychologically with as much certainty as those of any other mental
processes.

From one point of view, dreams may be grouped into three categories. First
may be distinguished those that are throughout both sensible and intelligible; such
especially are the dreams of children. Second are dreams which are connected and
have an evident meaning, but whose content is curious and surprising so that we
cannot fit them into the rest of our waking life. The third is the most frequent type
of dream where the mental processes seem disconnected, confused and senseless.
In the two latter types it is as though the subject has lived through a different range
of experience in another place or in another world which apparently has no
connection with the one to which he is accustomed. Freud holds that this sense of
foreignness is an illusion due to very definite causes and that the mental processes
which go to form dreams are really in direct continuity with those of waking life.

Freud further argues that a dream is not a confused and haphazard congeries
of mental phenomena, but a distorted and disguised expression of very important psychical processes that have a very definite meaning. Further in order to appreciate this meaning it is first necessary to translate the manifest content of a dream into its latent content.

It is against this background of the significance of dreams that the dreams in *Maps* must be seen. Dreams delve into the dreamer’s subconscious and bring out his most secret thoughts and feelings. Most of the dreams in *Maps* penetrate into the psyche of Askar and reveal what disturbs him throughout the novel. At the centre of every dream is his search for his own identity. At other instances parts of his dreams are preoccupied with an attempt to find more about his people (especially his suffering Somalis in the Ogaden) and Misra, his foster mother:

He heard a noise and he turned - a woman who was thin and dark was standing in front of him, a woman who resembled Misra and yet who wasn’t Misra for she introduced herself when he approached her not as Misra but Ummat; and he made as if to speak, he started by saying ‘I am ...,’ but left the sentence unfinished.... Most people they met along the way had their bodies tattooed with their identities: that is name, nationality and address. Some had engraved on their skins the reason why they had become who they were when living and others had printed on their foreheads or backs their national flags or insignia. There was a man on whose chest was tattooed the Somali flag with three points of the star missing and Misra explained to Askar why. They also met a man carrying a placard on which was written the words "a martyr from the Ogaden." Askar thought he had seen the man before. Then he turned to face her so he could ask if she too had known him. Alas! She was not there any more, not only was she not there but she wasn’t in his memory either. She had disappeared completely and he now asked himself, was it possible that his ‘I am...’ addressed to Misra
In the above dream doubt about Misra’s identity comes in when Askar is not even sure whether the person he meets is Misra. In the dream she suddenly disappears - both physically and from the memory of Askar. This is a probable pointer to Askar wanting to sever relations with her upon learning that she betrayed the Liberation Movement. This "betrayal" causes the profoundest disturbance to Askar. This disturbance and the destabilisation it brings to Askar is well presented in dreams.

There is no surety regarding Askar’s own life. His supposed mythical-like personality is best presented through dream and the uncertainty about his life is the uncertainty contained in the dreams. Further on (a continuation of the dream quoted above) "he was saddest that there was no one else to whom he could put questions about his own identity; there was no one to answer his nagging ‘who am I?’ or ‘where am I?’"(Farah 1986:44). Askar seems not to know who he is - from the long passage quoted above his hesitancy in telling who he is shows that he is not sure of his own person.

In the long quotation above, the issue of the Greater Somalia rears its head. The struggle to emancipate the people of the Ogaden and get them back to their proper identity (the Somali Republic) is a central element in Maps. In the dream Askar meets some people that have tattooed themselves as a way of giving themselves identity. However, there are still missing links. The Somali flag that one man carries has three points of the star missing. The missing points are the Ogaden (in Ethiopia), part of North Eastern Province (in Kenya) and Djibouti. These are areas occupied by the Somali people but governed by governments other
than the Somali Republic. The fact that the three points are missing means that their identities will still remain missing for a long time within the Somali Republic. Even under their present governments they will continue to be regarded as though they were missing - as if they are not present. The subjugation of the Somalis in the Ogaden and the neglect of their region in North Eastern Kenya clearly attests to this. When Askar turns to ask Misra whether she too knew the man from the Ogaden carrying a placard, he finds that she is no longer there implying that attempts to find exactness concerning the Ogaden will remain elusive for long. The interrogation in Maps will go on for long.

Where, precisely, the Ogaden belongs (Somalia or Ethiopia) will remain a matter shrouded in uncertainty and even mystery. Both sides continue to claim right of ownership and the world continues to be under-informed or misinformed on the status of the region. All the same in Maps the author urges that everyone give his contribution toward better informing the world. Others may go to the battlefront, and others still will remain as thinkers to do researches and write papers on the true position of the Ogaden and its people. In this double-sided effort lies the vision of the novel.

The theme of identity is also explored in another dream where Askar sees two horses (black and white). A young girl emerges from behind the horses and Askar switches concentration from looking at the horses to the girl. Then:

I asked her what her name was. She said she had no name, that I could give her one if I wanted. I asked her where she came from. She said she had no country she could call her own, that she was a refugee although she didn’t know from where, and from whom she was fleeing and to what safe shelter. I asked her if she had any parents. In short she was a young
The girl that Askar meets in his dream represents many Somalis in many ways. She even represents Askar himself. She is a refugee and although the cause of her status is not mentioned, it is not difficult to guess. The Horn of Africa region has been replete with war and famine for many years and this has led to a large refugee population in the area and the surrounding regions. Due to the situations of war and famine many people have died. The young girl’s parents may have died due to these circumstances. Can we say that the girl has no nation since she confesses that she has no country? This countrylessness is the wish of Askar’s psyche. Misra has also suffered the fate of crossing many lands. She is born of an Amhara father and an Oromo mother. Even after staying with the Somalis and learning their language and practising their culture, they cannot accept her as one of them. Isn’t Askar nationless like Misra and the young girl in the dream? It all depends from which point of view one looks at it. Here is a boy who has left a war region (which is a boiling-pot of cultures) and gone to town which is also full of people from many different backgrounds. His identity is bound to become a problem. How are the people of town to be sure that he is innocent of the atrocities being committed in the war-zone? How is it to be known that he is authentically a Somali of the Ogaden? Isn’t there a possibility that some Somalis of the Somali Republic look at those of the Ogaden as belonging to a different country (Ethiopia), as foreigners? From this Askar seems guilty of some of the wrongs he accuses others of. No wonder the young girl in the dream tells him:
It appears you never bother yourself about looking into the inside of things - and neither did he ever; and you never bother about studying, in detail, the inside of the statements others make - and neither did he ever; you're almost always satisfied with the surface of things - a smooth surface being, to you, a mirror in which your features, your looks, may be reflected, and so you see nothing in mirrors save surfaces (Farah 1986:129).

The dreams then probe Askar's identity. Does it mean that because he was born of Somali parents, then he is the hundred per cent Somali?

As we have said earlier the "You" voice plays the very crucial role of questioning Askar. The "You" narrator prompts Askar to elaborate, or confirm, or clarify or refute altogether what has been said. At times "You" even blames "I" of forgetfulness: "You don't remember any of this exchange either? No? What do you remember then? (Farah 1986:153). "I" is even accused of confusing dates.

On quite a number of matters, the "You" and "I" voices concur. Such matters include: that Askar never completed writing the letters that he intended to send to Misra. He never sent them either (Farah 1986:18,155), that Askar did not play with the children of Uncle Qorrax and those of the neighbourhood because they spent most of their time making toys and dolls and quarrelling over them (Farah 1986:13,19), and that Askar did not like Uncle Qorrax and Aw-Adan.

It is noteworthy that the details of the above incidents are given by the "I" narrator. But it is "You" who first mentions the issues, then "I" comes in in a form of reply. Aw-Adan and Uncle Qorrax were scared by Askar's stare. It is "You" who first mentions this: Aw-Adan "... commented on the look in your eyes: a look he described as 'wicked and satanic'"(Farah 1986:11). Uncle Qorrax "didn't want
the stare focused on him, his two wives or his children" (Farah 1986:12). The two men might not have been that scared of Askar but were jealous of his possessing Misra, Misra whom they wanted to own for themselves and make love to. It is this envy of Misra’s love for Askar that made Aw-Adan mercilessly beat Askar on his first day at the Koranic school where Aw-Adan was the master:

Scarcely had I taken my bearings than I was caned by Aw-Adan. You might want to know what I did to deserve such a sound beating. ‘That satanic stare of yours,’ he said, when I asked why he was caning me, ‘dim it.’ Could I? Even if I wanted to? (Farah 1986:82).

The stare of Askar scares many people. People are afraid of him and others hate him for that. The "You" voice actually accuses Askar of owning such a stare and sees it as his undoing. Even Misra when she first encounters Askar has something unpalatable to say about the stare. The "You" voice accuses Askar:

Alone with you, Misra noticed that your eyes were full of mistrust. They focused on her, they stared at her hands suspiciously! ... in short your stare made her feel inadequate (Farah 1986:4-5).

As we have seen, the look on his face creates enemies for him and causes him beatings. On the other hand Askar’s stare is a weapon for him as he uses it to scare off his enemies. Indeed he sees it as a positive quality:

What she said was that she could see in my stare an itch of intelligence - that’s all. She said she had found it commendable that I could meet death face to face and that I could outstare the Archangel of death. For in my stare, there was my survival (Farah 1986:23).

So it can actually be argued here that the interpretation of the stare depends on
whose point of view we are looking at it. According to Askar it advances his view that he is an epic-mythic figure as he claims to be. It sets him apart from other beings; it is his survival. But since the "You" voice castigates him for the look and sees nothing good in it; Askar's epic stature is put to doubt. Uncle Hilaal's letter which is presented by "You" dismisses Askar's claim that he stared at birth, "Sight...is a door that does not open instantly to the newly born.... It takes longer than a few minutes for a baby just born to develop the knack to look, let alone 'stare' (Farah 1986:21).

These varied presentations on the stare are aimed at establishing the true identity of Askar.

At another point in the novel, the "You" voice narrates a dream by Askar (Farah 1986:205-207). In this dream there occurred a flood and Askar floated toward the sea. People lost their lives and property to the flood but they agreed that this did not matter so much since it was the beginning of the end of the world. Askar prophesied a heavy downpour of successive floods. According to this dream Askar was spat by the flood as though he were an uprooted weed on the bank of a river. He met an old man who gave him a knife. He was surrounded by water and he swam. Upon getting tired he sat by the sea where he saw a young boy of ten washing clean a skull; a skull that was tattooed M. The skull belonged to a man who had raped his daughter. The man had died in a flood.

As the "You" tells this dream, he severally asks Askar whether he remembers it. "Now, do you remember, or have you chosen, as usual to remember only good things, deciding to forget the bad?" (Farah 1986:206). "You" accuses "I" of having a selective memory.
In the following chapter when "I" picks the narrative he denies ever remembering such a dream. "I" narrates what is his version of the dream and concludes:

No I do not remember anything else! I remember no flood! I recall nothing else either! (Farah 1986:215).

In the dream that "I" narrates he is in a hall eating a slice of the sky with a star already partly eaten. "I" is unhappy that he couldn’t determine how many points the star had had in the first place and how many it had now. There were many people in the hall whose conversations centred on material acquisitions. Further, there was no common language with which to communicate:

I discovered that, although there were hundreds of thousands of men and women partaking of the meal in which slices of heavens were being served as the first course and the clouds as dessert, we had no common language in which to exchange views, or even communicate our suspicions, or fears of this new reality (Farah 1986:214).

In the dream he realises that Misra is missing. He thinks that he is talking to Misra only to realise that he is talking to her dress. He moves out of the hall and walks toward the Ocean. At the shallows fishes come to Misra who is busy feeding the fishes with her blood. She confesses that she has not betrayed the fighters.

Askar rejects the dream presented by "You" probably because it portends evil and shows him powerless. Askar is spat by the flood. It would probably mean that the skull tattooed M, even if the boy cleaning it says it is a man’s, could be Misra’s. Misra might have betrayed the fighters but Askar fears any misfortune befalling her.

Askar’s dream falls within his wishful thinking. The eating of a slice of the
sky goes well with his epic heroism. The fact that the various people cannot communicate with one another reminds Askar of the Somalis in the Ogaden who are forced to be in a country (Ethiopia) that has many ethnic languages. He also bemoans the plight of other Somalis in diaspora - those in Kenya and Djibouti. He is intent on knowing the number of points the star had so that he can correlate it with the Somali national flag which is a star with three points missing.

In these two dreams we have seen how the two voices present competing views. "I" confesses to remembering no flood at all. It being a dream we can forgive him because it is not always that a person remembers the dreams dreamt. But this acceptance that he does not recall the dream of the flood lowers his mark as an epic figure which he claims to be. "You" scores here because all through the novel, the voice is dismissing Askar as an epic hero.

Most of the dreams are presented by the "He" narrative voice. The "You" voice begins the novel with many accusations against Askar, the "I" voice comes up in the second chapter by a sort of defence against the accusations by "You" and finally the "He" voice closes the pattern in chapter three. We could then suggest that the voice that uses the pronoun "He" is the audience in the courtroom. Wendoh (1988) has noted that the voice that uses the third-person singular "He" is an observer. Cobham (1991:90) supports this:

The narrative voice that makes use of the third-person singular "he" in describing Askar seems to correspond to the perspective of an elusive audience. It provides the political events of Somalia and the Ogaden.

It is commonly taken in literature that omniscience is the prerogative of the
"He" voice. The "He" voice is supposed to be that God-like all seeing, omnipresent figure that records everything. But in Maps even the "You" voice claims a great deal of omniscience. "You" even goes into the mind of Askar to tell us what Askar thought at certain moments. Even "I" sometimes claims absolute knowledge of certain issues. All the same, the complementarity of the three narrators does not fully narrate the story of the mythical-epic figure that Askar claims to be. The "You" voice confesses that "the question nobody is in a privileged enough position to answer, is whether or not your mother suckled you just before she died" (Farah 1986:8). One could expect that an omniscient narrator would be in a privileged position to answer any question and provide every information.

However, most of the pertinent and intricate issues in the novel are left to the "He" voice. It is this voice that recounts most dreams, it is the voice that provides the political events of Somalia and the Ogaden, it is the voice that recounts Askar's disturbance at the thought that Misra may have betrayed fighters of the Western Somalia Liberation Front, and it tells of Misra's abduction and murder.

Misra's betrayal (if she actually ever did) of the Western Somalia Liberation Front is a matter that persistently bothers Askar. Most of the time this is handled by debates in Askar's mind. Misra is a woman who for seven years was like his mother. Askar supports the Liberation Front (he is contemplating joining it and heading to the battlefront) which is fighting to free Western Somalia (the Ogaden) from Ethiopian oppression. It is immensely disturbing to Askar that Misra could have betrayed the fighters. Misra insists that she never betrayed the army. One is not really sure whether she actually did. Askar asks himself:

But how did she fare in war? Why did she become a traitor? For there was a certain
consistency in one story - that she had sold her soul in order to save her body - but was this true? Was it true that she had betrayed a trust and set a trap in which a hundred Kallafo warriors lost their lives? Or did she surrender her body in order to save her soul? (Farah 1986:48).

It is painful to Askar that one who was his mother should conspire against his other mother - Somalia. He is in a delicate position to choose:

He called her ‘Mother’ years ago. Could he undo all ties which held them together? Could he, like time, sever all their links? Oh how he wished he could hang ‘time’ on a peg like a wet cloth, and how he wished it wouldn’t stop raining so that cloth would not dry; yes how he wished he could suspend ‘time’ so he would not grow up to be a man (Farah 1986:56).

In the two passages above the "He" voice goes into Askar's mind by interior monologue and brings to us what really disturbs him. As Wendoh (1988: 137-8) has said "the mistrust, suspicion and constant sense of fear is best heightened by interior monologue." The sheer desperation which Askar is in calls for the reader's sympathy, "Presentation of consciousness and inside view are effective means of controlling the reader's sympathy because they can influence the reader subliminally in favour of a character in a story" (Stanzel 1984:127-128).

It is also significant that it is the "He" voice that gives Misra's side of the "betrayal" story. The truth according to her is that she talked to the Ethiopian soldiers who wanted to buy milk from the Somali civilians. The Ethiopians wanted milk, the Somalis wanted money and it was only rational that she seals the deal, she argues. A true nationalist is one who can take care of the material needs of her people. Because of this nationalism she is taken as selling secrets to the enemy.
She is seen as a traitor simply because she is not a Somali; she is an Ethiopian having been born of an Amhara father and an Oromo mother. She has lived among the Somali for so long; been married to a Somali and has even helped bring up one of their children (Askar) and because of these she feels that she is a Somali. Culturally, Misra is a Somali but biologically she is not. The issue of identifying a Somali becomes intricate here. Any moment Misra’s national identity is brought to the fore, then the nationhood of the Somali country is put to question. Askar tells Hilaal:

You remember I asked you once if a people can be said to be terribly mistaken? We were talking in reference to whether or not Somalis everywhere can be described as "terribly wrong" in view of their nationalist stand (Farah 1986:187).

It could be true that the Somali are wrong about their nationalism especially owing to their age old clan rivalries.

In this chapter we have seen the role of the three narrative voices in Maps and the significance of their presentation. The "You" and "I" voices are competing to narrate the true story. The "He" voice is brought in as a go-between; some neutral mediator. It is the "He" narrator that reports on the vital issues and "He" comes at the end of the novel to tell us that Misra has been kidnapped from her hospital bed and killed. Such an important happening cannot be left to the "You" or "I" owing to their cut-throat competition to outdo each other. However, our argument is that the success of the manner of narration employed in Maps lies in the fact that no one voice (even the "He") is adequate to tell the intricate story of Askar and Misra. Through a challenging mode of narration, Farah has shown that mapping
an identity for Somalia and her people (Such as Askar and Misra) calls for a corporate effort.
CHAPTER FIVE

SOMALI ORAL ARTFORMS AND THE PRESENCE OF AN AUDIENCE WITHIN THE TEXT

*Sardines, Maps and Gifts* are written with elements of an oral literary approach more than the literary style of the western novel. The Somali society is basically an oral society, "...news... was circulated primarily by word of mouth in this essentially oral society" (Farah 1992a:170). Among the oral forms of art that thrive in the Somali community are narratives, songs and poetry. Of poetry, Medina says: "In the country’s ancient tradition of nomadism, one met one’s peers and talked and listened to poetry or to gossip in the shade of a tree: that has been replaced with bars when abroad" (Farah 1981:168). Poetry is so well established that even Wentworth George, the West Indian journalist confesses to Sagal that he "cannot think of a people as poetic as the bards in your country" (Farah 1981:230). Whether he understands the Somali language to adequately judge the poetic competence of the bards, is another matter.

The art of poetry composition and recitation is regarded very highly among the Somalis - they look at it as a potent tool in developing one’s oracy in public persuasion and mobilisation. Great leaders are often great poets; for instance, Sayyid Mohammed Abdille Hassan who fought against British colonialism between 1900 and 1920 was an outstanding poet who produced heroic poems designed to garner public support for his cause. Poetry recitation and exchanges also provide fora for coming together and interacting:
The pastoral poet... presents his composition orally before an audience, chanting or reciting it slowly, repeating important lines now and then, so that they can be absorbed by the audience. The audience may be a formal assemblage of a lineage or of numerous lineages that congregate from time to time... to hear poetic contests, diatribes, satires, parodies, and other forms of artistic exchange among rival poets. Alternately, the forum may consist of an informal get-together of literarily inclined individuals wishing to enjoy poetic performance (Samatar 1980:457).

Almost every Somali is a poet in the sense that he uses language artistically. Every talk is spiced with poetry, "and the idea produced poetry in another man who said,..." (Farah 1986:124). With the people constantly moving as a result of their nomadic pastoralist way of life, a poem spreads over a long distance within a short time. Even oral narratives spread and are moulded in the same manner. In some cases, certain stories and poems are common knowledge but as in olden times, the oral artist brings in his personal mark to fulfil certain intentions. When Askar tells of the proverbial coward who went to the forest and returned burdened with so many clubs to prove that if he could carry such a load of clubs, then he would floor any number of contestants, Hilaal recognises that it is Cigaal Shiidaad’s story but confesses that he has never heard it told so elegantly (Farah 1986:196). This means that Askar has given his individual touch to the story. From time to time, an artist’s presentation is influenced by aspects such as the composition of his audience and the moral teaching aimed at.

It is against the above background such as that of the composition of the audience and the moral teaching intended that the oral artistic forms in Farah’s three novels must be studied, so as to see the messages that they communicate and how
they enhance the various aspects of the novels to help shape a vision for the works.

The style that dominates the three novels is poetic prose full of proverbs, lyrics and imagery. The English language in the novels has been enriched by a large corpus of images mostly drawn from the local environment, and from the people's way of life:

Medina remembered something Sagal had once said to her: that the world is a swimming-pool; you either drown in its overwhelming tide or you swim through and become a victor wearing a watery grin, squinting slightly but nevertheless triumphant. "Life is lived in the parenthesis of diving and surfacing" (Farah 1981:44).

It is only proper that the above words should come from Sagal who being a swimmer draws her metaphors from the swimming sport to refer to life. One is also reminded that Mogadiscio, where the novel is set, is a seaport along the Indian Ocean. The risks of the swimming sport are hinted at, and by extension, those of the ocean. On the other hand, water itself has a lot of significance for the survival of the Somali pastoral nomads - its availability means their animals' survival, and by extension, their own survival. Water may also mean death because one can drown. The metaphor of diving and surfacing in the above quotation can guide one on the way he ought to conduct himself in the General's Somalia which is full of unpredictabilities. "The world is a swimming-pool", Somalia is a swimming-pool; you dive into the water; if you do not drown, you surface a better man like happens to Samater at the end of *Sardines*. Such manner of talking as Sagal's above (abundant with extended metaphors and symbolism), which is characteristic of
almost every Somali character in *Sardines* justifies our earlier claim that almost every Somali is a poet. The characters converse in poetic language and they understand one another. Sagal and her mother comfortably colour their conversation with imagery (Farah 1981:40-41), and Sagal’s and Medina’s dialogue is full of similes as the former tries to guess why the latter has left her husband (Farah 1981:59-63). Even the young ones exhibit a poetic talent since they are being nurtured to take over from the adults. Ubax, (aged 8) remembers a saying by her mother (Medina), "and as you always say, the petals of your daughter's love will wither if it comes into contact with smoke" (Farah 1981:150). Whether she can actually interpret this, is neither here nor there. The point is that at that early age, she is already learning to use proverbial language so as to cope with the rest of the society.

The Somalis rarely ask for the interpretation of proverbial language. Non-Somali characters do, and this sets them apart as outsiders. Sandra is conversing with Medina:

Medina reflected for a second or so, then said, "at the day's end, a shadow is longer than the object which has cast it".

"What do you mean?" (Farah 1981:209).

Sandra is sincere in seeking an explanation. Here, the reader is also reminded to be sagacious in giving interpretation and meaning to all the imagery and proverbs used. Proverbs are thought-provoking and demand of the reader that he provide the unwritten part of a literary work of art. By giving the reader an active role, it makes the reading process "something of an arena in which reader and author participate in the game of the imagination" (Iser 1974:275). It is the same case in
Somali oral performance where the poet provokes the audience by injecting proverbs in the day to day talk and leaving the audience to place them in context. At times, the speaker explains the meanings of certain proverbs that he uses in speeches. Then proverbs are seen as playing a didactic role of educating and instructing the reader on certain intricacies in verbal art and interpretation, and even on the morals of society.

Sandra's response in the above extract helps in determining the primary audience that Farah had in mind when writing his novels. One would then agree that "Farah's primary audience is the Somali people; and the larger audience is the rest of the world outside Somalia, particularly in Africa" (Dipio 1990:159). Those that ask questions like Sandra's are not the intended primary readers of *Sardines*. The use of poetic discourse delineates characters and curves out a particular audience for the novels. Those that are at ease with the poetic discourse are the ones that carry the vision of the novels and they are the ones who understand that to "swim through and become a victor" even if "wearing a watery grin" in the Somalia of the General, one must be a master at the use of veiled language.

As indicated earlier, most proverbs used in the three novels are drawn from the immediate surrounding which further shows a strong attachment to a certain audience. Duniya remembers this proverb quoted by Taariq in reference to the foundling one's death: "Death saddens you less if it strikes a homestead far away from your own, or a camel herdsman whom you do not know" (Farah 1992a:125). The camel is the Somali's chief domesticated animal and the mention of it gives the saying a local feel and a mark of authenticity. The Somali also keep cattle (particularly in the South of the country) and the saying, "he is the egret, and
Salaado the cattle" (Farah 1986:145) attests to this.

In the three novels, metaphors and similes have been used to capture vividly the picture presented. About Ubax, Medina says: "You are the sunflower of my life...you nod your turbaned head in the direction of the path-tearing wind" (Farah 1981:13). "Ebla’s smile was light like the water of childbirth, her teeth white like diluted milk" (Farah 1981:25). Barbara writing to Sagal says: "You are the pillar which shoots out of my life’s wreck, ... a pillar shaky but solid" (Farah 1981:27).

The omniscient narrator informs us:

Sagal wore her youth as the season wears the weather.... Medina’s and her own life histories would travel a small distance together, would go parallel with one another without ever meeting like two rivers... Medina was heavy like a word of wisdom; Sagal, light like a barzelletta. Sagal’s life was full of anti-climaxes and missed appointments and one would encounter Ebla, or Barbara, Amina or Medina or any of her friends in every blind alley as a lone champion cyclist meets an enthusiastic fan urging him on; in most cases, there was Ebla hiding in the silvered side of the mirror; and Sagal, blind like a cave-fish, would swim in the pools of an unplanned future (Farah 1981:57).

*Sardines* is full of language of a similar kind as the one quoted above. The use of similes for comparison implants a lasting picture in the mind of the reader. It shows the points at which the two characters (Medina and Sagal) strike a similarity and where they part. Medina is more decisive than Sagal. For instance, this is seen when Sagal cannot take a quick decision on whether or not to take part in the swimming competition. The unpredictable life of Sagal brings to the fore the themes of fear and uncertainty.
The extract above underscores the lyrical element in Farah's works - the lyrical element reminding one of traditional songs and the musical aspect in the novels. The comparisons are fitted with images drawn from familiar environment.

Besides poetry, the oral artform of story-telling is immensely conspicuous in Farah's three novels. This presence at times gives the reader the impression of listening to evening fire-side folktales. In fact, the "I" voice refers to Maps as a tale "so please keep this in mind if, during the course of this narrative, I make no overt or indirect references to my mother's journal or related topics" (Farah 1986:163). This reminds one of a narrator alerting his audience during a story-telling session.

Every community that practices story-telling has procedures regarding the presentation of a folktale. The "You" narrator in Maps tells us how Hilaal told Askar the story of their (Hilaal's and Salaado's) life (Farah 1986:143-144), after Askar had narrated his. There are a lot of preliminaries as Hilaal prepares to tell the story. Hilaal's almost meaningless "for example" and his talking about liking cooking and not driving are really meant to prepare the audience (Askar and the reader) for the story. These preambles create impatience and anxiety on both Askar and the reader. Hilaal's warming up for the story is reminiscent of what happens in some traditional communities where a session of story-telling is preceded by presentation of short forms of oral literature such as riddles, tongue-twisters and proverbs. This is very likely the Somali traditional practice. In employing the traditional methods in the written form (the novel), the author is advocating for the use of traditional forms of narration alongside the modern written forms. This ensures a product that is enriched by the two forms.

Hilaal's hesitancy in beginning the story sends some signal to the reader that
the tale might not be a pleasant one. The hesitancy shows Hilaal at pains to begin to tell of a painful operation by which Salaado’s ovaries were removed. He refused to take another wife as demanded by his relatives and instead, opted for a vasectomy by which he was rendered sterile. The moral message is clear - love and a willingness to share in the other’s suffering ought to be the guiding principle in marriage. Hilaal’s "we love each other the way we are" (Farah 1986:143) is the voice of the oral narrator who at times comments and gives the central message of his narrative. The story shows Hilaal and Salaado as understanding and the couple is presented as different from the traditional Somali couple. Their family relationship is the one that the author envisages for a new Somalia - a Somalia in which male and female are willing to interchange roles - the man to try on what are traditionally woman’s chores, and the woman to try on man’s duties. The essential guiding factor should be that such interchange be for the fulfilment of both and for the flourishing of the family. As we have said earlier, Farah sees the family as the beginning of positive change for the larger Somalia.

The above story is significant for Askar since it should help him in his relationship with Misra when he hears that she has betrayed Somali fighters. Also, the story of a man, his wife, a dog and a stranger (Farah 1986:179-180), told by Hilaal is meant to caution Askar against disowning his foster-mother Misra. The narratives bear a lot of meaning for the entire novel. No one is sure for certain whether Misra betrayed the fighters because she herself vehemently denies it. What ought to be done in this whole issue of Somali nationalism is to tread with a great deal of care, the author seems to warn. The fact that Misra was of Amhara-Oromo parentage does not mean that she was less committed to the emancipation of the
Somalis than Askar who was of Somali parentage. That Misra and Askar were tied together by a relationship close to that of mother and child is more meaningful than the relationship of Somalis simply because they are Somalis.

The difficulty in determining genuine Somali nationalism is also presented in the story of a girl abducted in war, who later kills her adopted father-husband at Jigijiga and joins a caravan going South to Kallafo, (Farah 1986:68-70). This is partly Misra’s true story which she tells to Askar. In this narrative, the issue is: Is it birth and blood that rates one as a committed nationalist, or is it one’s cultural upbringing and sincere attachment to a cause? With all the displacements and migrations resulting from wars, famines and so on, and hence, the mingling of people from various backgrounds within the Horn of Africa, it may be the case that the environment (not necessarily ties of birth and blood) can nurture people to one cause. The oral narrative is here used to present theme in the novel and to question the belief that nationalism lies in ties of birth and blood.

Every narrative has a purpose and is told aiming at a particular meaning. At the foundling one’s wake Mire and Taariq, among others, tell anecdotes about death and creation myths (Farah 1992a:126-127); anecdotes that are meant to help console the bereaved and make them understand that death is a reality that humanity has to live with.

As in traditional Somali society, some of the narratives in the novels are told as a form of relief after an unpleasant happening. Mataan tells the story of the dik-dik which was thrown into elephant dung and it decided to call an assembly of the dik-diks who decided to shit at the same spot to create a mountain of dung for an elephant to get stuck (Farah 1992a:81). This story is told to deviate the people’s
minds from the unpalatable confrontation that has just taken place between Duniya and her step-brother, Shiriye, prompting the latter to storm out of the house unceremoniously. The story can be well fitted to the Duniya-Shiriye confrontation. Shiriye who is described earlier in the novel as a huge man is the elephant and Duniya is the dik-dik. In the Mataan tale and in the novel, Duniya is the victor. Another folktale that well parallels the events in Gifts is the Juxtaa story (Farah 1992a:113), told once again by Mataan. This is presented after Muraayo’s angry departure from Duniya’s house. Muraayo has behaved arrogantly and abused all past good deeds (gifts) done to her by Duniya. The narrative is admonishing on excessive generosity.

All narratives should be seen in the context of the immediate events and also in the context of the events in the novel a particular narrative appears. Narratives subtly comment on individuals and shape the readers understanding of character. The various analogies that are given by the narratives to the characters in the novels influence our judgement of the characters - we hate some characters and admire others.

The influence of the oral narrative is evident in the writings of Taariq who is a journalist. "The story of a cow" (Farah 1992a:54-57) by Taariq appearing in the newspaper has been influenced by the oral art of the narrative. The cow behaving like a human being (asking that it be milked) reminds one of the talking animals in traditional oral narratives, a stylistic technique known as personification. Animals had to behave like humans because it was intended that they convey a moral teaching without particularly offending anyone in the audience; some of whose vices the narratives condemned. In the same vein, in Farah’s novels, the
talking animals morally caution society. The story of a cow is given further orality by the writer adopting a spoken mode of discourse and writing as though he were speaking to an audience right in front of him:

To quicken the pace of the story, let us concentrate on two representative household heads, who in accordance with the ethos of the day we shall assume to be men. Let’s call one Musa and the other one Harun. We’ll skip unnecessary details... (Farah 1992a:55).

This type of writing creates great impact and immediacy for the written mode; the type of immediacy created between the story-teller and the audience during a live performance. The use of the first-person plural "we" calls for a feeling of oneness between the writer and the reader and creates a greater feeling of being one with the story and helps the reader to feel more attached into the material being presented. This use of language is a form of persuasion employed by the writer.

The orality of the novels is also seen in the lyrical leaning in the novels with words and sentences having a strong musical aspect. For want of another word, the novels sing. For instance, Maps opens with the following words:

You sit, in contemplative posture, your features agonized and your expressions pained; you sit for hours and hours and hours, sleepless, looking into darkness, hearing a small snore coming from the room next to yours. And you conjure a past; a past in which you see a horse drop its rider; a past in which you discern a bird breaking out of its shell; so it will fly into the heavens of freedom (Farah 1986:3).

Later on:

That her voice had lost its 'weight' whereas his had broken into a man’s; that she had grown smaller, thinner and been reduced to half her original size, whereas he had grown taller, bigger and handsomer; that he had prepared to leave uncle Hilaal and Salaado’s solidly built home in order that he might fight for the
liberation of the Ogaden, whereas she had left the Ogaden disguised as another, and come to Mogadiscio with whose coastal winds she wasn't at all familiar, a Mogadiscio in which she was a refugee but feared to declare herself as one, 'because I am sure' she explained to Hilaal and Salaado when Askar wasn't even there, 'somebody from Kallafo is bound to recognise me...'(Farah 1986:184).

The coming in of the Somali language and the oral art of poetry recitation, song and dance and story-telling are not in doubt in the above extracts. Words are repeated for emphasis and lasting effect, commas are appropriately positioned for pauses and semi-colons for longer pauses. The just one sentence in the second extract creates the musical impact desired and is reminiscent of a long lyric poem, a song or an epic tale each of which Maps is in many respects. For instance, the three narrators in the novel may well be regarded as epic poets taking turns in recounting the epic tale of Askar.

Any page of Maps (as in the extracts above) will provide one with repetitions. The three voices in the novels are trying to establish the exact background of Askar's life and the circumstances leading to Misra's death. One narrator may repeat a statement to clarify his own or another narrator's statement. Issues are also raised and repeated again and again when a narrator wants to refute or counteract what another has said. Maps is like proceedings in a court session and repetitions are common in litigation matters. It is also understandable that a narrator may repeat himself since there is no set chronology that the novel follows, and what the narrators are telling the court at times appear like near-random recollections from their memories.

When words or sentences or incidents are repeated or repeatedly talked of,
they call for extra attention from the reader. This exploit by language draws focus to itself. In his novels, Farah uses repetition to call for pondering and absorption of issues in line with the Somali pastoral poet who repeated "important lines now and then so that they can be absorbed by the audience" (Samatar 1980:457). Issues and incidents repeatedly mentioned form the cornerstone of a novel. For example, a disturbing (almost puzzling) question pervades *Sardines*: Why has Medina left Samater? It is the repeated attempt by various characters (and even the omniscient narrator) to solve this puzzle that makes Medina an interesting and intriguing person. The novel's plot builds from the incident and finds strength from the repetitions. The theme of freedom and a craving for one's own identity and vision which Medina espouses almost to a point of fanaticism, lie in the event of the temporal separation.

Repetition enhances the singability of the novels. Singing is an oral artform practised among the Somalis. Bosaaso's mother was a great singer with "an impressive rich voice and a gift for improvisation" (Farah 1992a:41), who entertained people at weddings and other ceremonies. The General has used Dulman to sing praises to him to rally the people to his regime (Farah 1981:154). Upon arrival at Feer-Feer, a town which has been re-possessed by the Somalis, Askar and other passengers are joined by the inhabitants of the town and together they sing nationalist songs (Farah 1986:124). Great tools of mobilisation, songs involve the audience more than does the folktale or the poem. Songs evoke the audience's inner feelings and can arouse deep emotions both in the singer and the listeners. In writing so that the material reads like a song, the artist is targeting both the emotional and intellectual involvement of the reader. The audience within the
Several references that we have made to the folktales in the novels reveal the presence of an audience (listeners) within the texts. The position in this thesis is that the narrator tells a story which is received by listeners (an intended audience) for "the original process of telling a tale and the ordinary social function of all story-telling involve an act of direct communication. It presupposes an audience..." (Weimann 1977:245).

As said earlier, Maps at times creates the impression of a court proceeding; the novel itself saying so:

And that was how it began - the story of (Misra/Misrat/Masarat and) Askar. First, he told it plainly and without embellishment answering the police officer's questions; then he told it to men in gowns, men resembling ravens with white skulls.... In the process, he became the defendant. He was, at one and the same time, the plaintiff and the juror. Finally, allowing for his different personae to act as judge, as audience and as witness, Askar told it to himself (Farah 1986:246).

That is how the novel ends. Three personal pronouns ("You", "I", and "He") are used to narrate Askar's life's story. The three could fairly be regarded as the voices of judge ("You"), witness or accused ("I") and audience ("He"). The "I" (Askar) is on trial, "and here I stand at the crossroads" (Farah 1986:172-173) he says. The narrator that uses the pronoun "you" in reference to Askar is at times accusatory and judgemental, "you! you who had lain in wait, unwashed, you who had lain unattended to at birth. Yes, you lay in wait as though in ambush..." (Farah 1986:4). The pronoun "you" is used in reference to Askar and Askar is therefore "You's" listener in the novel. "You" addresses Askar expecting responses:
Did anyone ever tell you what you looked like when the woman discovered you that dusk some eighteen years or so ago? No? (Farah 1986:4).

Do you remember any of that? You don't? How very weird! (Farah 1986:207).

The above extracts show a likelihood that Askar has replied in the negative - probably by shaking his head.

Apart from referring to Askar the pronoun "you" is a reference to the audience in the court, to the judge, and to the reader. It all depends on who is speaking and on whom is being addressed. Askar adopts the pronoun in appealing for sympathy from the judge, the audience in the courtroom and from the readers:


The "You" in the above extract is likely to be referring to those who are accusing Askar. It could even be narrowed to refer to the narrator who uses "you" in reference to Askar - "you who sit in judgement over me?" The persuasive use of language (for example rhetorical questions) is targeted at the listener in the courtroom and at the reader who it is expected should understand Askar's predicament. The "somebody" towards the end of the quotation is the "He" narrator. So, when Askar ("I") pleads "will somebody?" and then says "yes?" it is assumed that the "somebody" ("He") responds and actually picks up the story in the next chapter.

At other times, narrators use the second-person pronoun as if they are addressing some live audience in the texts. In Maps, the "I" voice says:
It is hard to accept or reject when you are told things about yourself as a child. You haven’t the authority to refute them, nor are you easily convinced. Besides, no two persons would agree as to what you looked like or what you did (Farah 1986:24).

In the above passage, the pronoun "you" refers to anybody in the court. By extension, the speaker could also be addressing the reader. The "He" and "You" voices also use the pronoun in the above manner.

In Gifts, the narrator says that Bosaaso:

Was like a man condescending to cook for you while his maid and wife were both away: not wanting to be remembered for the ill-prepared result but for the humility with which he served you, the effort put into the task, (Farah 1992a:3).

Presented through Duniya’s point of view, the passage above is a reference to some unseen listener being addressed within the text. Such a form of address brings the reader closer to the experiences in the text. The reader is being invoked and being called upon to experience the issues more intimately. The character (Duniya) whose point of view is represented, is appealing to the reader for a feeling of togetherness in the above discourse. Thus, "the second person pronoun (you) is used to forge an intimate link between author, character and reader" (Raban 1968:31). The author and characters employ this mode of narration so as to implore the readers to see sincerity in what they are saying.

In Sardines, the use of "you" calls upon the reader to make certain guesses on what is to happen. Samater has just returned from a ministerial trip to Algiers and he is thinking and probing himself: "If I leave, what do you think will happen? Who do you think he will replace me with?" (Farah 1981:71). Samater is fed up
with being on the General's cabinet and his family is falling apart. He is in a real
quagmire and he has to take a decision quickly. He calls for the reader's
understanding, support and guidance on what he is to do. At times then, the reader
is talked to directly (as if he were one of the characters in the novel) when there is
a wish to seek his approval for a course that a character is about to take. The form
of address above draws the reader closer to the plight of Samater. We understand
his predicament. By talking to the reader, Samater wishes him to place himself in
his situation and think of a way out of the muddle. It is such a difficult situation
that the reader should understand it from the initial stages, so that whatever course
Samater might take, the reader should not condemn him. And, indeed, from this
point in the novel, the weak Samater begins to show a determined character - he
opposes tradition by throwing his mother out of the house, refuses to marry the girl
chosen for him by the mother and resigns his cabinet post ending up in the
General's dungeons. In appealing to the reader, Samater begins to favourably build
his character.

Idil also appeals to the reader so that for once, she can be judged favourably:

Small and helpless they wake you up, tire you,
age you faster, force you to change your
sleeping and eating habits, make you subject
yourself to all sorts of humiliations. When
children cry at the oddest hours, when they
break down with their shrill screams, they ask
for you, the mother.... Then as soon as they
feel the muscle of independence roll in their
arms, as soon as they are adults and their noses
are dry, their clothes clean as laundered money
and they don't make water in their beds... the
words they use to pin you in your place, what
words - words of ingratitude! There is nothing
like the ingratitude of the young. How they
forget the pain of love, the pain of delivery, the
pain of being opened up to let them come out,
head first, then the rest of their body; how they forget the pain of being a mother, a parent! To the one to whom you are a parent, Somalis say, remember he or she is not your parent, (Farah 1981:75-76).

That is Idil fervently beseeching the reader. At one level, Idil’s plea in the above passage may be dismissed as generalities which every mother undergoes while she delivers and takes care of her child. What she says cannot tell the reader what special (or even unique) agonies she underwent while bringing up her son. In this regard, she lowers her mark. At another level, the above passage is probably the only one (in the whole novel) that is able to evoke some sympathy for Idil, that domineering character, purported protector of Somali-Islamic ideals. She is not likeable but her use of the pronoun "you" to talk to the reader helps her get some support that since she did undergo struggles for Samater’s sake, she deserves better treatment from him. A collective feeling for the pains of motherhood is imparted by the above passage hence, "the second person (you) is the communal element entering into the situation, the unseen witness who understands everything, records everything, the communal centre of balance" (Larson 1978:125). The "you" that Idil is talking to ought to be understanding; he should be the centre of balance and judge her fairly. And indeed, by the use of this technique, the reader for once is persuaded to decide the case in favour of Idil. She wins because by employing "you" she gets the reader more involved by channelling him to the heart of the matter.

At an earlier point, the narrator says of Idil:

And by the time you were ready to ask her a question, you would discover that she had already moved on, taking refuge in unscientific
generalizations; you would find that she had changed residence and had nomaded away,... (Farah 1981:7). 

In this passage, the narrator (via Medina's point of view) addresses the reader and calls upon him to get more involved in this description about Idil. The narrator wishes the reader to side with him about Medina's views on Idil. By invoking the reader ("you") Medina, through the narrator, wishes to show that what she is expressing is the truth; it is as if Medina is saying: you the reader, listen and watch Idil and you will doubtless agree with me. The calling for interaction among the narrator, character (Medina) and the reader wishes to underline the communal nature of the observation about Idil. This interaction implies that everyone who met and talked to Idil was bound to be in agreement with what is expressed in the quoted extract. If everyone would agree with Medina's point of view about Idil, then the former can be relied upon as a good presenter and judge of other characters' conduct. In this case then, the technique of narration builds a positive image of Medina and a negative one of Idil.

In Farah's latest novel Gifts, the use of "you" is to garner companionship and goodwill for the characters: "And you would meet the Chinese doctors who came as part of the gift, as they did their rounds, soft of voice, short of breath when they spoke Somali, humble of gesture" (Farah 1992a:18). Anyone who went to the Benadir Maternity Hospital would certainly see and appreciate these doctors' efforts.

Apart from the direct address to the reader, Farah's writing has a bias toward the spoken medium:

Her body (or should I speak of her bodies: one of knowledge, another of immortality; one I knew and touched and felt, the other for others such as Aw-Adan and Uncle Qorrax..., (Farah
1986:76).

Also:

His wife washed him once daily - no, washed is not the right word. What she did was to wet a cloth a little bigger..., (Farah 1986:73).

One could endlessly quote other examples of the above nature in Maps. In the first example when Askar says: "...or should I speak of..." it shows that he is aware of himself as speaking and not as writing. There is also an awareness of someone listening - that is why he asks whether he should speak of Misra’s bodies and not the body. In the second passage when the speaker says: "...no, washed is not the right word..." it shows a leaning toward spoken discourse other than written discourse. Written discourse allows one time for thought, reflection and rephrasing of words before he actually puts them on paper. If the statement being referred to above had been consciously presented of itself as written discourse, then "washed" could not have appeared anywhere. If the narrator was conscious of the medium as writing, it could have accorded him an opportunity to look for another word to replace "washed" without telling the reader that it is not the right word. Spoken discourse does not allow for the same reflection as written discourse hence the reason for repeating words now and again while speaking. In using the above form of narration, the words are given authenticity as the actual ones that were first thought of and spoken. This makes creative writing a performance and supports our earlier view that Farah’s novels remind one of evening story-telling sessions. Farah is probably advocating the use of the spoken element in the written medium to keep within the written medium the local day to day conversations of an oral people - the Somali.

Certain parts of Gifts too have a bias toward the spoken discourse. We have
already made references to Taariq's "the story of a cow". Taariq's other article: "Giving and Receiving: The Notion of Donations" has elements of a spoken communication. Taariq writes as though he is talking to listeners right in front of him. At times he refers to his own person and requests certain things from the audience. He writes, "forgive my cynicism, but I believe this to be the truth" (Farah 1992a:193), "forgive me for dishing out to you cliches..." (Farah 1992a:194), "Guess what: she has a non-speaking role" (Farah 1992a:197). This form of discourse calls for the reader's involvement.

In the same vein, the narrator in Sardines appeals for the reader's companionship and participation:

(He blamed herself for not knowing half of her nephews or their names: they were so many she lately ceased to bother remembering their faces or their names or their birthdays. Imagine: a cousin of hers, two years younger than she, had nine children) (Farah 1981:133).

The reader's active participation in responding to the story is invoked by the use of the word "imagine" by which the reader ought to put himself in Medina's shoes. This calls for the reader's creative and active participation in producing a literary work of art. In the above passage, the narrator wishes that Medina receives a judgement that supports her behaviour. The reader is called upon not to blame Medina for not knowing all her relatives - they are far too many anyway. The bearing of too many children is here finely questioned. This is seen as of a disadvantage to the woman who besides using a lot of energy to bring the children up, spends her entire lifetime on them to the detriment of her own development. She cannot, for instance, have a career and develop it. Here again, the author's concern with the plight of the woman in the Somali society comes to the
foreground. The woman in that society should aspire to be like Medina although she has her slight shortcomings.

To create an even closer bond among the narrative, narrator, characters and the readers, the author has employed the first-person plural "we" and the possessive plural "our":

I have never seen him looking so sad, nor have I seen him appear so dejected, save on the occasion, when there was an eclipse of the sun, but we'll come to that later (Farah 1986:162).

It came to pass that there were three other boys who bore the same first, second and third names as our friend, Mohamoud,... (Farah 1992a:44).

In the above extract from *Maps*, the speaker assumes that the audience and himself have been journeying together and should continue doing so. Here, there is a communal endeavour in furthering the story. The narration is such that the issues being presented are a collective responsibility. In the second passage, the narrator is telling the story of Bosaaso and towards the end, fully aware that the listener (reader) has been with him all along, refers to Bosaaso as "our friend". "Our" is an inclusive pronoun which places the reader in the same circle of friendship and understanding as the narrator and the reflector (Bosaaso).

In his newspaper articles, Taariq uses the pronouns "us" and "we" a lot:

The only difference between us and Russia, although we eat the same American wheat, is that we pay for it with our begging, (Farah 1992a:197).

The pronouns in the above extract set boundaries thus closing the others out. The "us" and "we" are an entity having a lot in common. "We" are the developing
countries that continually require grants, aid and donations for survival. The U.S.A. and other developed countries provide the developing world with assistance which appears as gifts but since Farah’s argument in Gifts is that there are no free gifts, the developing world has to reciprocate in some form or other. "We" is a collective voice that underscores communal experience and awareness of the issues being communicated. It is assumed that the point of view being represented is that of the entire community within the text. This community is the community of author, narrator, characters and the intended readers. To form a well-knit group, this community should be from the developing countries; countries that suffer at the hands of exploitation from the West.

That "we" sets others aside is well demonstrated in Bosaaso’s thoughts. Bosaaso thinks of himself and Duniya as "we and the rest of the world as they" (Farah 1992a:148). "We" creates a sense of belonging and brotherhood to those who are incorporated into it.

In this chapter we have seen how the novelist uses the oral artforms from his Somali community to create meaning in the written texts. The author successfully shows how characters in Sardines use proverbial language as a weapon of survival against the General’s constellation of spies. The use of proverbial language also helps carve out a certain audience for Farah’s novels. Further, in the three novels there is an apparent conversation that goes on among narrator(s), character(s) and reader(s). The reader is addressed and incorporated into the mechanism of producing the texts by the use of the pronouns "you", "us" and "we". The author successfully uses these forms of address as a tool of persuasion which evokes sympathy for certain characters, causes and themes. The novelist has succeeded in
making the novels come out as complete acts of performance with storyteller, story and audience.
CONCLUSION

We have argued in this thesis that the author employs certain agents and mechanisms to take up certain jobs of narration. The author then sits back and lets the agents do the work. He is like a coach who has led the players to the field and he sits out keenly monitoring their doings. The coach is not in the field but the spectators can tell of his presence by the techniques that the players employ. In the same way the author may be absent in his novel but his very philosophy and ideas emerge from the way he assigns the various roles to the various agents. Extreme narratologists such as Roland Barthes (1968) claim that the author is dead in his work. Our study has not argued from a point of such extremism. We have taken a mild stance by arguing that the author may not be present in the text in the sense of physically taking a role or acting a character but his philosophy, his ideas, his vision of society emerges out of his works.

In exploring some of the assumptions it began with, this study has mapped three complementary phases of Farah's writing career and shown how each phase tackles certain social and political issues which give rise to particular strategies of narration. In Sardines, a much earlier book than the other selected novels, Farah's concern was with the similar nature of the social and political nature of the Somali society. His concern with what may be oppressive about political despotism and the patriarchal family means that both institutions must be delineated with great irony. The positive characters (e.g. Medina) who fight political oppression and the fighters at both levels are themselves alienated and flayed for showing oppressive tendencies in their own day to day interactions.
In the context of such multiple ironical representations narrative strategies have to be varied and subtle. The omniscient narration in which the author knows everything may not be enough. For the people who fight oppression must be paralleled in some way to the oppressors. Their points of view must be contrasted with those of the despotic regime they fight against. At the same time they are themselves subjects of irony when they reveal similar oppressive tendencies in their interactions with others in society. This is why points of view in the narrative structure of *Sardines* shift; why Medina’s point of view which seems to be favoured at the beginning is taken over by the narrator and then handed over to other characters. Because of the immense probing of point of view, and inadequacies placed upon each point of view, a character like Medina’s husband who appears to be a weak character in the beginning is shown in a sympathetic light when he picks up the narrative and things are seen and felt through him. The shifts in point of view and narrative structure reveal the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the fight against oppression.

It is therefore the complex way in which he perceives oppression and how it works at various levels of society that enables Farah to devise a technique that would present not a one-sided story of oppression but a multiple story which will cover all the hidden forms of oppression in the social fabric.

Although in *Maps* Farah is still concerned with social and political issues the change in emphasis and perspective necessitates new strategies of narration. It is as if in order to understand the nature of present Somali society he must re-examine the whole notion of the *nation*, and *nationalism*, *patriotism* and *ethnicity* and see them in relation to patriarchy and oppression. In this context *Maps* becomes an
interrogative novel in which Askar's story of liberation is questioned from all kinds of angles. The need for three narrative voices arises because the story of nationalism, patriotism and liberation which Askar tells must be subjected to a great deal of questioning.

Through various tools of rhetoric the three voices argue and attempt to present the true story of Askar and Somali nationalism. The voices alternately take on the telling of the narrative using tools of persuasion such as repetition, rhetorical questions, use of the pronoun "You" to invoke the audience in the text directly to seek their support and sympathy, and the use of interior monologue to seek support from the reader. The authenticity of the presentation of the voice that uses pronoun "I" is consistently probed by use of dreams. We can confidently say that there is no dominant point of view in Maps. At the end of the novel issues remain unresolved. It is shown that narrative can be stretched to take various dimensions and used to question what are held as common truths.

In Gifts the author's concern is largely social and here he has enlarged the canvass to include extraneous narrative modes. The author has juxtaposed characters, situations and even modes of narration to present them and shape out a vision that he intends for the society in his novel. Gift giving and receiving at the domestic level is contrasted with giving of aid, grants and donations at the international level. Because of this contrast to include the international dimension, the extraneous method of newspaper excerpts has been employed reminding one of the 18th century English novel.

In Gifts we see Duniya go through a process of development over a span of nine days. The probing for her is not as intense as for Medina in Sardines and
Askar in Maps. This is probably because the issues dealt with in Gifts are not as intricate to the characters as the issues of the earlier novels. We can state without doubt that Duniya’s point of view is the favoured one in Gifts as we have seen her take the stage and even present other characters very negatively with little reprimand from the author. However, once in a while she is reprimanded through dream and interior monologue.

In the three novels, through the manner of narration employed the novelist postulates a certain vision for society. In Sardines the author envisages a society which has a determined spirit to struggle against oppression and there is hope of overcoming the evil forces. But essentially a meaningful front must first be sought at the family level. At the end of Sardines the Samater family emerges as a stronger one than it was at the beginning of the novel. This is brought about by Samater’s awakening - which leads to his arrest and confinement making him aware that there is need for him to come back to his family and begin building his life from there. Maps also provides the ideal situation of what a modern Somali family ought to be in the name of Hilaal and Salaado. The family of Hilaal and Salaado, and later the inclusion of Askar, provides what the author thinks is an alternative family set-up to the large traditional Somali family of many wives and children. In cases where children are not forthcoming adoption is encouraged. In a way the orphaned child Askar is adopted by Hilaal and Salaado. Love and understanding (not necessarily the presence of children) between the spouses ought to be the guiding principles in the family. In Gifts we also see how Duniya has tried to keep the institution of the family alive by keeping to marital relationships and even contracting one when (now) she is thirty-five.
In this study we have explored the assumption that there is a relationship between Somali oral artforms and the written texts. We have seen how the forms are used as tools of rhetoric and how they are used to delineate a particular audience for the works. There is a particular audience (readers) that the author is addressing both within and outside the texts. In what is probably the best form of rhetoric, Farah’s novels sometimes give one the impression that a conversation is going on between narrators and an audience. The author writes with performance in mind - the novels are artistic pieces that call for performance. The use of traditional oral artforms (e.g. the art of story-telling) enhances the performance element in the novels. There is the performer (narrator) and audience who interact consistently. The use of the pronoun "You" has been identified with some audience that the narrator addresses within the text. This whole interaction between story, storyteller and audience is the central preoccupation of narratology and it reduces the distance between author and reader.

By concentrating on narration this study has made a new contribution to the criticism available on Nuruddin Farah’s fictional works. In this new contribution the theory of narratology has been effectively used to show how the novelist has used rhetorical tools to communicate ideas. In expounding on the theory of the narrative the study shows Farah’s literary artistic borrowing of African traditional oral forms to enrich the written form. In this way we have shown how this novelist reminds one of African performing oral artists of old. Narratology is performance.

But even with this new contribution there is more to be done regarding Farah’s fictional works. The scope of this study enabled us to undertake a thorough examination of three novels. A similar study could be undertaken on From a
Crooked Rib, A Naked Needle, Sweet and Sour Milk and Close Sesame.

One can also carry out an elaborate research on the place of women in Farah’s novels. Farah is one male author who gives a lot of prominence to women and women’s issues in his works. The use of symbolism could be looked at in Maps and Gifts, works which Ntalindwa (1988) did not tackle. What, for instance, does the foundling one symbolise in Gifts? The foundling one would be seen as a symbol of both cohesion and disintegration among characters.

Other areas of further study include: What is the role of history in Farah’s works? For instance the Ogaden civil war (1977) takes centre stage in Maps, the 1969 Somali revolution is always looming somewhere in the events of the trilogy (Sweet and Sour Milk, Sardines and Close Sesame) novels, and the Somali drought of the mid 1980’s features in Gifts. What is the place of nation and nationalism in the novels? What is the place of the theme of identity and self-assertion? What is the importance of the journeying motif in Farah’s works? One would also study the elements of religion and myth in his works.

There is no doubt then that Nuruddin Farah’s works are rich and ought to be studied more than has been done so far.
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