

LANGUAGE AND STYLE AS FEMINIST EXTENSION IN NURUDDIN FARAH'S *FROM A CROOKED RIB*

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Abstract

This research explores language and style as feminist extension in Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*. In other words, the study examines how plot, narrative technique and setting have influenced Farah's stylistic pattern. This is achieved through a semantic analysis and interpretation of some lexical items and patriarchal descriptions of hemmed-in Somalia gender prejudice and female inferiority in Farah's novel. The lexical items visible in the title "from a crooked Rib" have acquired cultural meanings that contend with feminist tenets of female assertiveness and emancipation. Within the feminist circles, symbolic patterns of fictional exposition delineate Farah's motifs—journey and slavery.

Keywords: language, style, semantics, feminist extension

Introduction

One does not overlook the fact that language has a universal value dealing with human thoughts and creativity. As a tool of literary communication, linguistic resources are explored to create an aura of verisimilitude—an evidence that captures the semiotic mould within a given cultural context. The argument presented above is an implicit endorsement that a literary artist chooses the semiotic elements or features within a well-known geographical setting to interpret a trend. There is either an acceptance of this trend or an implicit rejection leading to satirical jabs. Basically, there is a symbolic affinity between reality and thematic preoccupation inherent in the artist's text. In terms of originality, the novelist's artistic truths and efforts become a technique that aids the narration. Certainly, the artist's linguistic usage remains a device in evaluating the significant features or qualities of the literary creation.

In describing social or cultural situation, literary elements visible in the forms of plot, diction, theme, setting, character, narrative technique and point of view are necessary for a coherent evaluation. A good knowledge of these elements is very paramount in interpreting experiences within an imaginative genre. All these are articulated using words, phrases or sentence patterns that capture a unique historical point in time and physical regions with a peculiar emotion. If one should indulge in any form of analogy about language and style, then it is important to understand that no writer's pattern of writing is incidental or supplementary—all manner of imaginative documentations are ideas represented as style. A concatenation of narrative events is meant to achieve a desired effect—to communicate the complexity of human experiences in a variety of meanings which may be structural, lexical, semantic and general. We can also conceptualize body language, facial expression and gesture as part of the inherent language with nuances of interpretations and meanings. So effective are the above forms in interpreting the artist's philosophical idea within a given literary text. Since every social background calls for humanistic and moral attention which is inexhaustible, this paper explicates language and style as unconstrained index of asserting gender ideologies and space in Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*.

Feminist Patterns: Stylistic and Semantic Analyses of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*

An objective approach to Nuruddin Farah's novel sees a technique of conscious feminist undertone—impressive expressions that are not culture-bound. A clear view as suggested by Odinye (2019)

stresses the obvious fact that “the social positions of girls and women in most African societies are closely related to the roles they play in society” (116). No doubt, the novel has revealed instances of patriarchal impressionistic purposes in addressing gender identity. The title of Farah’s novel, *From a Crooked Rib* draws semantic interpretation—an ideal approach to ameliorate female condition. The above phrasal expression which forms the title of Farah’s text conveys a symbolic interpretation that binds users’ utterances to cultural concepts in order to understand gender ideologies—patriarchal and feminist as dialog components. The social prestige ascribed to the expression is very symbolic because it speaks to its content in many ways. Farah’s title cues the readers into the central idea of the novel—the enduring tradition of drained female essence. To stress clearly, there is an intensification of the critical language understanding, an urge to overhaul Farah’s thematic foundation on which the patriarchal cultural outlook of gender identity is erected. This critical semantic interpretation solely hinges on feminist mentality. The central motif of the novel is built around the interpretative meanings of the title *From a Crooked Rib* which acquires a cultural meaning in the context of the novel. Semantically, there are two levels of meaning in the novel; the lexical usage of the expression and the contextual meaning which is intricately interpreted within a feminist idiolect—the language of the superior ‘Oedipal figure heads’ to the perpetually fixed dependent inferior females. Using the *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, the lexical items in the title are defined below with the use of English as a First language:

- a) ‘From’—is a preposition indicating an origin, starting point or the initial reference connected to the subject of discussion (599).
- b) ‘a’—is one or any indefinite example of something making reference to a singular item of a group (1).
- c) ‘Crooked’—means straight, having one or more bends or angles (349).
- d) ‘Rib’—any of a series of curved bones occurring in 12 pairs in humans and other animals and extending from the spine to or toward the sternum (1256).

The above lexical items are represented in this paper, first as words used within the L1 circumstances and secondly as words with contextual meanings under a custom or established practice within a given cultural milieu in L2 context (The use of English as a Second language). In the context of the novel, the denotation, connotation or idea connected with the individual word that forms part of the title acquires certain culture-bound interpretations.

In reading *From a Crooked Rib*, we know that there is a subtle semantic discussion which draws meaning from the text. The title helps the readers to understand and interpret characters’ utterances, by analyzing the grammatical structure of their expressions, and identifying relationships between characters’ words within the context of Somalia culture and Islamic religion. From a close reading of the novel, we know that Ebla owes allegiance to a patriarchal figure, probably her legally married husband, Awill despite his unending infidelity. This realization is undoubtedly aligned to Somalia’s Islamic patriarchal ego—a religious cultural context that gives undue power of superiority to males over the inferior females. No wonder, when Awill addresses his wife Ebla, we perceive a mixture of ego and male superiority:

‘You know how you were created? Awill asked smiling.
 ‘Yes, I know.’
 ‘let me tell you that you were created from the crooked rib of Adam...’
 And if anyone tries to straighten it, he will have to break it’. (*From a Crooked Rib*, 170)

Certainly, Awill proudly announces to his wife a clear stance of Somali religious ideology that “a woman’s prophet and second-to-God is her husband” (*From a Crooked Rib*, 151). Awill’s confession gives a structured illumination on female position—a being formed from a single curved rib of a man. Thus the composition of a woman’s body is solely dependent on a man’s physical and spiritual essence symbolized by ‘a bended or curved rib’. The words ‘crooked, bended or curved’ perform an adjectival function, often originally adjectives but used as nouns within the context of expression. The technicalities relating to the adjectival syntax elicit female total submission, humility and overall acceptance of male superiority or dominance. The interpretation of the expression, *From a Crooked Rib* centers on the subordinating position of females as second-class citizens simply fashioned for

men's use or manipulation—a total ownership of body and soul. It is observed that the extract 'from a crooked rib' in the title aligns in thought with the extract '...from a crooked rib of Adam' captured in Awill's utterances in the quotation above. The two occurrences of the expression are adherently and ideologically connected through the act of conscious reiteration obviously having the same referent—man. Structurally, the name "Adam" is a male given name, the progenitor of *Homo sapiens* in the purview of Abrahamic religious practices—interpretatively, Eve (Ebla) is created from one of the curved ribs of Adam (Awill). Awill and Ebla through the recognized traditional marriage rites belong in the same chain of identity. The logical assumption within the text places Awill in the position of Adam as a model.

Notably, the extract, "and if anyone tries to straighten it, he will have to break it" (*From a Crooked Rib*, 170) is challenging the feminist construction of female consciousness which inscribes Ebla with both psychic and physical mobility strewn with huge negative consequences. The use of the modal auxiliary verb 'will' in English customarily attaches compulsion of destruction on an action that attempts to straighten the curved or crooked rib. Ebla's daring psychic and physical deviation from the Somali-Islamic value of female docility and voicelessness imposes a protest against male hegemony culminating into series of insensitivity and troubles in her patriarchal clime.

The focus of the extract "From a Crooked Rib" is a figurative expression that makes reference to the thematic preoccupation of the novel. Farah draws on a memorable line spoken by a character (Awill) as the title of his novel. Therefore, the title functions to emphasize the parallel themes of female oppression and national consciousness. There are several levels on which we can interpret Farah's title. First is the actual implied statement made by Awill concerning the subordinate role of the female gender. The second is the interpretation of Ebla's quest for freedom and subsequent strategies employed to resist male subjugation which only ends in negotiation and complementarity. Despite Ebla's continuous quest to escape patriarchal oppression, we see her at the end of the story, literally reconciling with her first husband Awill, the man who has raped and cheated on her several times. Ebla's statement foreshadows this reunion "... Awill was the only husband I married willingly..." (*From a Crooked Rib* 158). We can move on to the symbolic meaning of the title. The narrator (Awill) makes a point in telling the readers that Ebla as his wife is part of his crooked rib. In a wider context, Farah depicts Ebla's experiences as a symbolic representation of the condition of the female gender in Somalia and their overall dependence on men for survival. Through the relation of substitution, Farah presupposes symbolic images to adequately capture female subjugation and her inability to pass beyond the limits of patriarchal bizarre challenges.

One implication of the discussion is that Farah explored the journey motif as a stylistic device towards female emancipation. Farah begins his novel with physical and psychological mobility. The narrator observes that, "Ebla desired, more than anything to fly away; like a cock which has unknotted itself from the string tying its leg to the wall.... She wanted to fly away from dependence on the seasons, the seasons which determine the life or death of the nomads..." (*From a Crooked Rib* 13). Note that the narrator's utterances do not contradict Ebla's situation—a coercive attempt by Ebla's grandfather to marry her off without due consultation to "Giumaleh, an old man of forty-eight: fit to be her father" (*From a Crooked Rib*, 9). Ebla's indifference to a man who has given her hand in marriage to an old man in a mere exchange for camel sets the pattern of her assertiveness (*From a Crooked Rib*, 15).

In the quotation above, it is necessary to do a lexical study in order to see the purported negative cultural pattern that propels Ebla's ignominious choice of escape. For instance, the words 'fly away' is semantically interpreted in the text to mean 'unrestrained, light and free'. Ebla's flighty quest is likened to the imagined swift movement of a bird in situations that betray its search for tranquility. In the extract, the semantic interpretation one can give is that Ebla symbolizes the 'cock' that has unknotted itself from the string of patriarchal webs—a situation that presents man as the predator. Farah's use of the semiotic element 'camel' signifies a hierarchy of importance placed on the animal culturally over the girl, Ebla. The patriarchal betrayal and its collocation with Ebla's flight is an obvious journey for mobility—a quest for freedom (emotional and physical). In fact, Farah inscribes "mobility (physical and psychological) as the starting point of female consciousness in Somalia

Muslim culture that imposes immobility on the female” (Okereke “The Journey as Trope...” 91). Indeed, this journey is a journey of growth into consciousness raising for the protagonist.

Stylistically, *From a Crooked Rib* is held together and organized around certain journey rhythms and journey motifs (movements) that act as centripetal forces, making for cohesion in the various elements of the novel. First, there is the rhythm of resistance and physical motion on Ebla’s part, a rhythm that provides an important thematic concern revealing the escape routes which Ebla takes to negotiate a space with men (Tiffo and Awill). Farah’s artistic arrangement of these rhythms and movements is a credit both on his artistic insight and on his novelistic technique. Farah arranges each movement so that it appears more complicated and grievous than the preceding one, assuming a deeper dimension in Ebla’s pitiful march towards negotiation with men. ‘Movement’ in *From a Crooked Rib* has many semantic implications and Farah’s exploration of these implications is a laudable achievement of his artistic intuition. The term, ‘movement’, in one sense, means ‘physical motion between points in space’ and in another sense; it means ‘motion of the mind or feelings (emotion)’. In essence, Ebla literally tries to escape from patriarchal oppression each time there is a movement. When Ebla first escapes from her nomadic environment, her scornful embittered grandfather could not understand why she should abandon and disregard the Somali tradition of being married off to a man based on his choice. This first escape is indeed a movement that shows Ebla’s consciousness about her plight as a girl. Ebla’s movement as a motion of the ‘mind or emotions’ describes her psychological disposition or feelings towards societal, cultural and individual maltreatment or oppression of the girl-child as a result of her gender. To Ebla, “... the allotment of assignments denoted the status of a woman, that she was lower in status than a man, and that she was weak.... (*From a Crooked Rib* 13).

The journey in Farah’s *From a Crooked Rib* unfolds in three movements—first, second and third movements. Each movement depicts an escape from patriarchal oppression and subjugation which equips Ebla with a new experience as well as some assertive traits that enable her to explore her physical, emotional and psychological growth. The first movement of Ebla’s journey is an escape from the imposing limitations of a traditional society to empowerment through space and time. Ebla chooses to revolt against patriarchal subjugation by escaping from her nomad rural setting to Belet Wene to avoid an arranged marriage with an old man (Giumaleh). This journey is a movement away from the traditional Somalia Muslim culture that subjects girls to forced marriage through bartering. The second movement depicts a physical journey from the urban setting of Belet Wene to the city of Mogadiscio. Ebla flees Belet Wene with the widow’s nephew (Awill) without the consent of her cousin, (Gheddi). Ebla escapes because Gheddi like her grandfather wants to marry her off to a broker as a wife. In the third movement, Ebla makes a revolutionary movement to obstruct patriarchal marital law by marrying Tiffo as her second husband. This third movement is a physical movement from Awill’s house to Tiffo’s house as a new bride. The third movement shows Ebla’s revolutionary stance and assertiveness to seek for equality and freedom of choice and expression. The third movement also captures the climax of the story, Ebla’s marriage with Tiffo drives her to self-examination and deep reflection. Through Ebla’s speech, the reader x-rays the false consciousness which has blinded her mode of reasoning towards male chauvinism. Ebla reflects on her experiences and comes to the conclusion that she is still trapped in the web of men. She escapes from the old man, Giumaleh, only to end up with another old man, Tiffo. She becomes aware of her position and thus confesses her dealings with men: “Giumaleh, I never saw him. It was only verbally done between him and my grandfather. Diris made an arrangement with my cousin.... Awill was the only husband I married willingly...” (*From a Crooked Rib*158).

Indeed, Ebla learns through her experiences and assertive journey for emancipation. She learns the ethics and subordinating position of Somalia culture that leaves the female gender without a choice. In fact, Ebla’s bitter experiences as a bartered girl and a social misfit who marries a second husband for revenge teaches her great lessons. These experiences are vital in raising her consciousness. Okereke observes that “experience is thus a vital weapon in woman’s survival and achievement of growth. The journey becomes a journey of growth from innocence to knowledge, from naivety to experience” (“The Journey As Trope...” 95). By escaping from two planned marriages, eloping with Awill and marrying Tiffo, Ebla has gained experience through her journey.

The motif of slavery is also a recurring element in Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*. Significantly, Farah attacks the Somali cultural milieu for treating girls like slaves. In the novel, Ebla's individual right to freedom of choice is abused and denied. In fact, through the experiences of Ebla, Farah seems to suggest that Ebla lives in a patriarchal society that places constraints on the girl child's concept of life. Ebla is bartered like animals for marriage proposals by her grandfather and cousin, Gheddi, without her consent. She serves as a slave girl to Gheddi's wife, performing menial roles of milking cows, feeding other animals and nursing Gheddi's baby. In essence, Farah stresses that the Somali society exploits girls through a system of assigned and devalued roles. Ebla's status as a slave girl is further seen when Gheddi uses her as a smuggling channel for his illegal business. Farah's representation of the girl child as a slave in Somalia is further seen in Awill's inhuman act of rape that violates Ebla's right. This act of violence is an abuse of human rights which exposes male chauvinism and men's perception of girls as mere property to be owned and used. To liberate Ebla from male chauvinism, Farah imbues her with assertive traits to revolt against patriarchal oppression and subjugation. Unfortunately, Ebla succumbs to the same fate she wishes to escape— this shows a cyclical structure because she ends where she started from, though with more experience, knowledge and power in gender issues.

Setting is an essential element in examining the style of a text. The "setting of a narrative work is the general locale and historical time in which its action occurs; the setting of an episode or scene within a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place" (Abrams 157). The setting as an element of fiction is very important in understanding the concept of foregrounding and backgrounding. Poynton suggests that "ideological meanings come into view as a result of power configurations where ideology not only reflects the society that produced it, but remains bound together to reinforce its own identity" (18). The setting of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* is situated in Somalia. The general setting of the novel conveys the picture of an Islamic religious traditional setting that offers no space for female emancipation and exploration of basic human rights based on western ideology. This depiction gears Farah's fictional creation towards reconstructing Somalia to give meaning to female existence. In view of the above, Meriem observes that in Farah's fiction, "women's struggle for freedom and for the right to voice themselves becomes an allegory for a nation in search of its voice. New womanhood becomes interchangeable with a new Somalia..." (84).

The physical settings such as Ebla's nomad setting, Belet Wene and Mogadiscio provide an atmosphere that oppresses and subjugates the protagonist to different forms of violence. These acts of violence are evidently linked to the patriarchal mentality and structures inherent in the above settings. In Ebla's rural nomadic encampment and Belet Wene, she is exposed to bartering and forced marriage. Also, in the city of Mogadiscio, Ebla is raped by Awill. Notably, all these settings are synonymous with girl child oppression and subjugation.

The plot forms a stylistic pattern in Farah's *From a Crooked Rib*. Farah's plot is presented in a chronological order. In essence, the story adopts a linear plot structure which employs a narrative memory to depict the experiences of Ebla. Structurally, *From a Crooked Rib* is divided into four parts (4) namely: Part One, Part Two, Part Three and Part Four. Part One comprises chapters 1-3, Part Two contains chapters 4-15, Part Three has chapters 16-20 and Part Four contains chapters 20-30. The structure of the novel consists of four basic parts: exposition, complication of conflict or rising action, climax, denouement or resolution. Farah uses prologue to expose the events that would lead to conflicts in the main plot. The prologue performs the basic function of exposition by introducing a character, an old man whose actions would create conflicts in the story. The omniscient narrator introduces the temperament of a character (Ebla's grandfather) who is unhappy about a given situation that deviates from the normal family and traditional modes of living. The angry mood of the old man (Ebla's grandfather) indicates a serious conflict which forces him to rain curses on his subject of discussion (Ebla). The narrator comments: "He could curse. That was all he could do. Other than that, he could give advice, but now he cursed" (*From a Crooked Rib* 3).

The plot of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* is designed to achieve the effect of satire. Satire in a literary work is designed to achieve the effect of ridiculing and evoking contempt, indignation, or scorn.

Farah adopts satire as a variety of plot patterns in order to ridicule and expose varying religious, traditional and cultural elements that subjugate the girl-child. He develops the plot of *From a Crooked Rib* to clearly show the gradual movement of Ebla's struggles from rebellion to self-assertion and finally to negotiation. Farah's plot relies heavily on suspense to heighten the protagonist's purpose for emancipation which keeps the reader's sense alive till the resolution of the story or conflict. The plot of the novel develops into conflicts as Ebla escapes from her family's rural setting to a city (Belet Wene). The plot further takes a feminist dimension as Ebla becomes more determined and assertive in her struggle for liberation against patriarchy. In fact, the plot offers surprises to the readers when Ebla represses her assertive quest for emancipation and reconciles with her oppressor, Awill. This creates an emotional pull that keeps the readers pathetic towards the condition of the female protagonist. In essence, the resolution of Ebla's conflict through reconciliation with the Oedipal figurehead that sexually abused her, is one way Farah tries to expose the fact that human rights violation constitutes a huge problem in Somalia.

The plot of Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* is appropriate for exposing violence on the female gender because it clearly exposes the abuse of female bodies through forced marriage, bartering and sexual exploitation. Farah's plot through the journey and slavery motifs exposes various views on female oppression and how Ebla surmounts her oppression. Farah's plot is symbolically cyclic in nature because we see Ebla returning to the oppressive condition she once rejected. Significantly, Farah's portrayal appeals to the readers' emotions and draws their concern to the helpless condition of females in Somalia.

Narrative technique is one of the stylistic devices visible in Farah's novel. Obviously, the value attached to his novel does not merely center "on its impact but on how the story is told" (Onyekwere 124). Therefore, narrative technique becomes a good literary tool that enhances a writer's style of writing. The stream of consciousness technique is extensively employed in the novels of Farah. This technique uses monologue to capture free expression of inner feelings and thoughts of Ebla as a female protagonist. It also helps her to comment on her bizarre conditions as well as evaluate them. Farah in writing *From a Crooked Rib* adopts the omniscient point of view which is a common term for:

The assumption in a work of fiction that the narrator knows everything that needs to be known about the agents and events; that he is entirely free to move as he will in time and place, and to shift from character to character, reporting (or concealing) what he chooses of their speech and actions; and also that he has privileged access to a character's thoughts and feelings and motives, as well as to his overt speech actions. (Abrams 134)

The narrative features of Farah's novel are also very interesting, especially the use of the third-person omniscient narrator to capture the inner dialogue and thoughts of all the characters. By allowing Ebla to express her feelings and condition, Farah's ultimate goal is to show more than tell. This is evident in situations where he allows the individual characters to express their thoughts using monologue. Farah uses monologue to x-ray the emotions and psychological disposition of his protagonist, Ebla. One must not fail to draw attention to Farah's use of point of view to empower his protagonist. Farah is an intrusive narrator who not only reports but freely comments on his characters, evaluating their actions and motives and expressing his views about human life in general. The omniscient narrator introduces Ebla as a girl who wants to escape from patriarchal holds and thus engages in an emotional quest to liberate herself. According to the narrator, "Ebla had been toying with the idea of leaving home for quite some time. However, she did not know whether this would be temporary change of air — in a tow — or a permanent departure..." (*From a Crooked Rib* 8). The above quotation foreshadows Ebla's movements for self-assertion and empowerment in the novel. The omniscient narrator who knows the thoughts of every character gives the readers a clue to understanding the thoughts and feelings of Ebla as the protagonist. From the narrator, we can see where the sympathy and interest of Farah lies. In the beginning of the novel, Ebla is physically described by the narrator to also attract our sympathy towards her plight: "she was very tall, but this was not exceptional here. She stood six feet high. She would have been very beautiful, had it not been for the disproportion of her body. She thought about things and people in her own way, but always respected the old and the

dead...” (*From a Crooked Rib* 8). The above description is in contrast with the way Farah describes Ebla’s grandfather as an ‘old man’ who rains curses on a vulnerable granddaughter (*From a Crooked Rib* 6).

Farah employs point of view to disapprove patriarchal superstructures that oppress and limit the female gender. The omniscient narrative perspective helps readers to understand the way a given character perceives her oppression and relates with other characters. The way the omniscient narrator goes into the minds of different characters helps readers to understand what motivates their actions in the plot. These motivations are also perceived as the processes of characterization where a given character is defined by his or her attitudes and experiences.

Farah’s use of the third person omniscient narrator allows the readers to get the story from the characters themselves. This is deduced from the characters’ speech, thoughts and action—that is questioning of self through inner dialogue. In essence, Farah objectively presents his story without imposing himself on the narration. In the novel, Farah allows Ebla to question the demeaning gender inequality instituted by patriarchy. From Ebla’s rhetorical questions, we can decipher that she is physically and psychologically tortured by Somalia’s savage culture. She therefore interrogates herself by questioning the reality of women’s existence:

But why is a woman, a woman? To give companionship to man? To beget him children? To do a woman’s duty? But that is only in the house. What else? She asked herself. Surely a woman is indispensable to man, but do men realize it? (*From a Crooked Rib* 12)

Farah’s narrative style is unique as a result of the density of his sentence structure and the unbroken flow of thought and awareness in the waking mind of the protagonist. In narrating Ebla’s assertive nature for freedom from Asha’s advice and manipulation, Farah employs the stream of consciousness to “capture the full spectrum and flow of his heroine’s mental process in which sense of perceptions mingle with conscious and half-conscious thoughts, memories, feelings, and random associations” (Abrams 165).

Ebla thought over the question many a time, and finally she made up her mind. ‘Asha doesn’t have to tell me what to do and what not to do.... It is me who marries or is divorced, so she doesn’t have to put her nose into my private business. I will tell her to keep out of it. In future I am responsible for whatever I do. Tomorrow, I will tell her. Tomorrow. In future I will be myself and belong to myself, and my actions will belong to me. And I will, in turn, belong to them’. (*From a Crooked Rib* 142)

Monologue is also a special technique used by Farah to capture Ebla’s inner dialogue and thoughts about the culture of valuing boys more than girls in Somali society. This is what Ebla perceives as gender inequality or discrimination that confers an inferior position on girls, while boys are highly valued. Ebla comments:

Why is it only the sons in the family who are counted? For sure this world is a man’s – it is his dominion and is going to be his as long as women are oppressed as long as this remains the system of life. Nature is against women. If a woman wants to argue about her fundamental rights not being fulfilled by her husband, it is always a man that she must see — at government office and every other place. Before she has opened her mouth, she is condemned to the grave. Aren’t men the law? (*From a Crooked Rib* 84)

Farah allows Ebla to express herself in monologue so as to portray the pitiful condition of girls and women in Somalia. Ebla’s monologue is very symbolic, because it shows her frantic efforts to escape from patriarchal subjugation. The monologue below summarizes her efforts:

Woman? ‘She asked in a grunting male voice, ‘Are you a cheat?’
‘Sometimes.’
‘But why?’
‘Because men cheat me.’

'I take revenge upon them.'

'Yes, but why?'

'I don't know, I am innocent. I don't know what to do. I don't know what I do sometimes. I do things; just do them without really getting myself involved. I put my faith in my man, but once I lose it, then it is hard to regain it. It is jealousy and insecurity that causes most misunderstanding.' (*From a Crooked Rib* 166)

Ebla interrogates herself in order to express her repressed emotions and make a stance that – men and women are equal irrespective of their biological differences. Also in the above quotation, Ebla is able to foreground the image of the female gender in Somalia society, as people whose bodies are constantly haunted by men's crooked sexual drive and chauvinistic behaviour. Through Ebla's voice, the readers are able to understand her pain and emotional torture in a male dominated society. From the above quotation, it is also clear that the *superego* is an important factor in illustrating the fate of the protagonist in her act of rebellion and revenge against Oedipal figureheads. Her monologue suggests that she is disillusioned and wants to conquer Oedipal forces of domination, depression and oppression. Indeed, the unconscious sense of guilt, with the corresponding need for rebellion, satisfied through manipulating men like Tiffo, plays a decisive part in Ebla's willingness to revenge or challenge Awill's infidelity and oppression. Significantly, Farah's narrative techniques help to explore the theme of violence, self-assertion and self-actualization. Also, Farah's adoption of different narrative techniques helps to create an impact that provokes sympathy from the readers.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that plot, narrative technique, setting and semantic interpretation based on contextual meanings attached to some lexical items contributed to Farah's creative style. The semantic extension culminates into a contextualization of facts that has captured the semiotic mould within the Somalia cultural context—a trend of bartering that imposes inferiority and savagery on the female gender. More importantly, the lexical items of Farah's title have acquired additional cultural meanings in order to account for the unique Somali Socio-cultural experience hinged on female subjugation and oppression.

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