

THE FEMALE BILDUNGSROMAN IN SOMALIA: PRESENTATION OF CHARACTER AND POSTCOLONIAL ARGUMENTS IN SAFI ABDI'S OFFSPRING OF PARADISE (2003)

By

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Abstract

The fictional works of Safi Abdi provide a veritable example of how the 1991 fall of Said Barre's dictatorship has shaped the production of literary texts in Somalia. Like contemporary writings by Somalis in exile, notably Nuruddin Farah and Ali Jimale Ahmed, Abdi's fiction grapple with questions of identity negotiations, violence, social justice and memory among other common postcolonial concerns. In keeping with the trend of works in English emerging out of East African countries since the fin de siècle, her novel, *Offspring of Paradise*, is a product of self-publication. Abdi achieved this in 2003 via AuthorHouse who are the book's printers based in the UK. The novel takes the form of a poignant bildungsroman, a mode of literary presentation that enables the articulation of postcolonial issues using specific character types and points of view as well as narrative design. The plots oscillate between locations and dislocations, adolescence and adulthood, female devaluation and female agency, as the story flows through spatio-temporal dimensions. Focusing on questions of character presentation and narrative design by way of an eclectic interpretive framework couched on postcolonial criticism and narratology, this paper highlights the emerging form and content aspects of the female bildungsroman from Somalia. Somalia's well-known postcolonial disillusionment and dystopic narratives publicized by its better-known writers form a veritable justification for an engagement with Abdi and her new fiction.

Key Words: Feminism, Femininity, Point of View, Social Vision, Postcolonial Criticism

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