ENGLISH, COSMOPOLITANISM AND THE MYTH OF NATIONAL LINGUISTIC HOMOGENEITY IN NURUDDIN FARAH'S FICTION

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Abstract

This paper analyses the intricacies of using English in a traditionally non-English context such as Somalia through the work of its foremost anglophone writer, Nuruddin Farah. Farah uses English to re-imagine the nation and promote intra-, pan- and transnational discourses within and outside Africa. The analysis of Farah has been informed by the articulations of Ernest Renan, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, within the view of Somalia's now-contested exceptionalism. In Farah's hands, English becomes a vehicle for bringing together diverse linguistic, literary, cultural and religious expressions into a genre that facilitates transnational discourse. The paper argues that the anglophone African literary tradition that Farah embraces gains the capacity to transcend national boundaries and broadens – rather than limits – the scope and coverage of national and transnational literatures.

Key words
Nuruddin Farah, Anglophonism, Language and literature, National imagining, Cosmopolitanism, Somali exceptionalism, African literature