

Mnthali Replies:

The temptation in a discussion of this nature is to descend into semantics and attempt to obliterate important observations by a cloud of words. If Kelly meant class in her use of the word "ordinary" she should have said so. My objection to her distinction between ordinary people and Farah's main characters is based on her own emphasis: "In all of Nuruddin's books, his main characters are never in any sense ordinary Somalis." Strong stuff, perhaps, too strong even with a grain of salt. To those who do not have to deal with the bane of ethnocentrism in their daily lives, the legacy of colonial anthropology is a cliché, but not to those whose achievements and failures are measured in terms of tribe. I make no apologies in resenting classifications of a colonial nature. A legacy can creep into anyone's discourse, and pointing it out is not the same thing as saying that whoever uses it has studied its predecessor. Our disagreements are best left to other scholars and critics. Whether Askar fetishises menstruation or not is a point on which I would not care to spend sleepless nights. After all, it is only an aspect of his search for identity which was the burden of my study.