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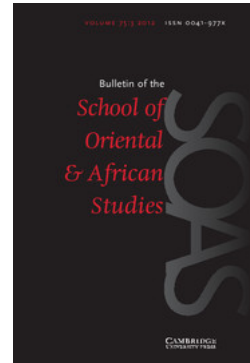
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# A literary stylistic analysis of a poem by the Somali poet Axmed Ismaciil Diiriye ‘Qaasim’<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

This article presents a stylistic analysis of a poem which we shall call *Macaan iyo Qadhaadh*, ‘Sweet and bitter’<sup>2</sup> by the Somali poet Axmed Ismaciil Diiriye ‘Qaasim’. It will show ways in which the language has been crafted syntactically, metrically, alliteratively and in other ways so as to contribute to the power and meaning of the poem as a whole. A stylistics-based approach has been followed looking at the actual language structures and stylistic devices used in the poem and ideas are proposed on their contribution to the meaning and power of the poem. Cureton (1992) has been influential in the way grouping of lines has been dealt with and in how prolongation in the poem has been presented and discussed.

The study of the structure of Somali poetry has come a long way in the last two decades or so. Alliteration, a prominent feature of the poetry, has been commented on by scholars for some time (see, for example, Kirk, 1905: 171). Knowledge of the system of metrical patterning, on the other hand, only developed after the two Somali scholars and poets, Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac ‘Gaariye’ and Cabdullaahi Diiriye Guuleed, published a series of seminal articles in the Somali national newspaper *Xiddigta Oktoobar* (The October Star) outlining the fundamentals of Somali metrics.<sup>3</sup> Since the publication of these original articles, knowledge of the metrical patterning of Somali poetry has progressed and the details of certain genres are well established. Two of the latest major contributions in this field are Johnson (1996) and Banti and Giannattasio (1996), to which the interested reader is directed for further details of recent thinking and further references to earlier works concerned with Somali metrics. This most recent work has also included discussion on the relations between the linguistic metrical patterning of the words themselves and the rhythmic structure of the musical performance to which poetry is traditionally recited.

Syntactic parallelism in Somali poetry has been commented on by Antinucci (1980), and in an article devoted to another aspect of structure by Andrzejewski (n.d. a) in which he discusses what he refers to as ‘sudden breaks’ in Somali poetry.

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Cabdulqaadir Xaaji Cali, Maxmuud Sheekh Axmed Dalmar and Aaden Nuux Dhuule for their help during the preparation of this article. I thank the two anonymous referees of the article for their helpful comments and the Research Committee of SOAS who provided a small grant which was used towards its preparation. Note that in this article Somali names will be spelt using the Somali orthography except when reference is made to a published author, in which case the name will be spelt as it is in the publication. In the bibliography the convention of writing Somali names as personal name followed by father and grandfather has been used, reflecting Somali use. The Somali orthography is used throughout for Somali words. For those unfamiliar with this long vowels are written with digraphs, short vowels with single letters (*aa*=long, *a*=short). *c* is the letter for the voiced pharyngeal fricative (the ‘ayn of Arabic), *x* is the voiceless pharyngeal fricative, *kh* is the voiceless uvular fricative, *q* the voiced uvular plosive, *dh* is the voiced retroflex plosive, other consonants are more or less pronounced as in English.

<sup>2</sup> Note this name is the one used in the original source for the text (Xafiiska Horumarinta Manaahijta, n.d.: 39–40). A free rendition of this poem in English is to be found in Andrzejewski and Andrzejewski, 1993: 88 where it is called ‘Bitter and sweet’.

<sup>3</sup> See Johnson (1979) for a full list of references to these articles.

Despite these important contributions, there has been little publication of work discussing, in detail, ways in which these structural features and other aspects of language are manipulated and crafted stylistically in individual poems to contribute to their meaning and power. There is some discussion of style in the literature in general; Said (1982), for example, mentions some aspects of style (see, for instance, p. 85). The two works, however, which have been published more specifically along these lines are Ahmed Adan Ahmed's (1984) analysis of the poem *Dardaaran* by Sayyid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan and Mohamed-Abdi Mohamed's (1996) discussion of the ways in which poetry is valued by Somalis, and the contribution structural features make to this. Mohamed-Abdi makes more general comments, with example poems, on the major features of Somali poetry which are appreciated by a listener. Ahmed on the other hand undertakes a more detailed analysis of a particular poem which he says displays various poetic characteristics:

For instance, we can find an expansion of the *qaafiyaad* [sic.], 'alliteration', requirements, adherence to the *hal-beeg* rules of structure with a sparsity of variants, complicated rhythmic patterns, a line of argument with a powerful didactic message, the use of repetition—rhythmically, syntactically and thematically—to enhance [sic.] meaning, and an extremely rich display of *humaag*, 'imagery', including the use of 'parallel-imagery' (Ahmed, 1984: 345 and 349).

## 2. Obligatory style in Somali poetry

There are two aspects of style which are obligatory in Somali poetry: metre and alliteration. Metre is quantitative, a line is regarded as being metrical if the vowels in the line are correct in terms of the number of vowel units<sup>4</sup> and the pattern of long and short vowels. As the present state of knowledge stands, it is only vowels which are counted, which contrasts with the quantitative metrical systems of languages such as Latin or Classical Arabic in which syllable final consonants also count in the metre.<sup>5</sup>

In Somali, diphthongs in closed syllables count as long vowels, whereas in open syllables they may count as long or short.<sup>6</sup> There are also certain morphemes which comprise phonologically long vowels but which may count as either long or short with respect to poetic metre, these are the following: the verbal subject pronouns *aan* (1st sg. and sometimes pl.), *aad* (2nd sg. and sometimes pl.), *uu* (3rd m. sg.),<sup>7</sup> the focus marker *baa*, the mood classifier *waa*, the anaphoric/past tense definite article suffix *-kii* (m.)/*-tii* (f.) and the

<sup>4</sup> The term *mora* is also used in the literature to refer to this unit. One short vowel comprises one vowel unit whereas a long vowel comprises two vowel units.

<sup>5</sup> Note, however, that there is a possibility that consonants may play some role in the metrical patterning of Somali (see Maxamed Xaaji, 1976, and Orwin, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> Note that this applies only to open syllable diphthongs at the end of multisyllabic words for the purpose of the assignment of tonal accent in the phonology of the language, and may also be the case for the metrical system, further research is required to ascertain this latter point. The interested reader is referred to Orwin, 1994: 206–16 and 1996 for a phonological account relating to these metrical characteristics.

<sup>7</sup> In main clauses these pronouns are always used in conjunction with a focus marker, a mood classifier or a negative particle, whereas in subordinate clauses they may occur on their own. Note the full 1st and 2nd person pl. pronouns are bisyllabic in form and are not variable in terms of quantity, the 3rd person pl. form, *-ay*, is an open diphthong anyway and so may count as long or short given its inherent phonological shape. These three pronouns *-aan*, *-aad* and *-uu* interestingly have short variants which are used in certain circumstances, for example, in a negative subordinate clause construction:

*Wuxuu ii sheegay inaanad tegin* 'He told me that you did not go'; where *inaanad* is made up of the subordinating head word *in*, roughly meaning 'that', the negative subordinate particle *aan*, and *-ad* which is the short version of the pronoun *aad*.

conjunctions *ee* and *oo* (see Banti and Giannattasio, 1996: 86–7 for some further details which it is not necessary to mention here). The other variation which may be used in certain genres is optional anacrusis. All genres of poetry have their own metrical patterns.<sup>8</sup>

Alliteration is a feature of all Somali poetry.<sup>9</sup> The same alliterative sound must be used in each line or half-line, depending on the genre, and it must be a word with lexical substance, a noun, verb, adjective or adverb, and not a word such as a focus marker or a pronoun. As far as we know, no particular point in the line or half-line is preferred for the position of the alliterative word.

### 2.1 *The metrical and alliterative structure of the gabay*

*Macaan iyo Qadhaadh* is an example of the genre of poetry known as *gabay* in Somali, a genre which is traditionally regarded as being the major one for dealing with serious matters in poetry, although in more recent times the picture has been changing. The *gabay* line is one of the longest to be found in Somali poetry and for any line to be metrical it must conform to the following template:

The *gabay* metrical template:

(U) UU UU U UU UU U UU || UU U UU UU U

The symbol U represents a position in the line which must be filled by a short vowel syllable, the symbol UU represents a position in the line which must be filled either by two short vowel syllables or one long vowel syllable. The double vertical bar represents the position of the caesura which divides the *gabay* line into two half-lines, the first is known in Somali as the *gabay-hojis* and the second as the *gabay-hooris*. The line comprises 20 vowel units (or 21 with the optional anacrusis at the beginning of the line). Four of these are fixed single vowel positions, the rest are positions which may be realized as two short vowel syllables or as one long vowel syllable.<sup>10</sup> A further metrical constraint requires the *gabay-hooris*, the second half-line, to include at least two long vowels. The rules of alliteration of the *gabay* line require that each half-line include an alliterative word. These points of obligatory style are shown in the following line (line 6 of the poem to be discussed).

UU—U UU—U— ||— U—U UU

## 6 Masalooyin talantaalliyaan, maandhow leeyahaye

Brother, I have alternating characteristics

The metrical symbols given above the words and the caesura is marked by a comma in the line of text. The reader can see that there is a word in each half-line beginning with the alliterative sound ‘m’ and that there are two long

<sup>8</sup> See references mentioned above and Orwin and Maxamed (1997) for an outline of the patterns of a selection of metres and for further references to details of specific metres.

<sup>9</sup> Note that although it is obligatory in poetry in general, in certain types of *buraambur* poetry, a genre which is almost exclusively the preserve of women poets, alliteration may change from one section of a poem to another. Zainab (forthcoming) discusses this issue further. Banti (1996: 186–7) also presents the interesting idea that this may be a conservative element with consistent alliteration being the innovation. In a performance of work songs, alliteration may also be perceived as changing, although from what I can ascertain, this is a matter of the change from one short song to another in a single performance, each individual song alliterating with a different sound.

<sup>10</sup> Note that it is difficult to say whether this variation is a case of resolution (two short syllables replacing one long syllable) or substitution (also known as contraction, one long replacing two short syllables). There has not been sufficient work yet undertaken on the variations within the *gabay* line, or indeed any other type of line, to ascertain which may be more fundamental in any position, a long vowel or two short vowels.

vowels in the second half-line: the syllables *maan-* and *lee-*. Note also the presence of an open syllable diphthong at the end of the word *maandhow* which counts as a single vowel unit.

### 3. The poem '*Macaan iyo Qadhaadh*'

The poem we shall discuss here was composed in the mid-1960s by Axmed Ismaciil Diiriye 'Qaasim'. The poet was a civil servant and, according to Xafiiska Horumarinta Manaahijta (n.d: 38) he composed the poem to give the people some idea of his character when he was moved to the town of Oodweyne, the capital of the district of that name in the region of Togdheer in northern Somalia (in the present day self-declared Republic of Somaliland).<sup>11</sup> In an interview with the poet on a cassette I acquired in Djibouti in 1995 the poet points out further that the poem was composed following his mediation of a lineage dispute at a place called Laanmullaax (8°37'N 45°9'E) on the border with Ethiopia. Despite this original context, in order for the poem to be appreciated it needs less background knowledge of the context than do others composed by Qaasim<sup>12</sup> and has since become very popular as a treatise on human nature, without reference to the original context.<sup>13</sup> With regard to the actual process of composition, it may be the case that writing was used in some way, although details are impossible to ascertain without enquiring of the poet himself which has not been possible as yet. Those I have asked with regard to whether or not writing might have been used have given mixed answers, pointing out that the language was not officially written at that time (although some people could read and write Arabic, English and/or Italian or indeed Somali in some way or another). Whether or not writing was used, the poem is, like all Somali poetry, primarily a 'heard' poem appreciated via cassettes and radio, as well as oral recitation.

This poem has been chosen for discussion here for a number of reasons. Firstly, as we have said, it is popular, many people are familiar with it and this fact in itself points to the idea that it is a poem well respected by Somalis; that it is therefore a 'good' poem. Those with whom I have discussed it all respect Qaasim as being one of the great Somali poets and regard this example as being a particularly exemplary work. Given this it seems safe to assume that the structural characteristics which may be found in the poem are ones which are appreciated by Somalis, whether consciously or subconsciously, and that they are part of what makes the poem a good one. These thoughts are further supported by the ideas presented in the two articles referred to above (Mohamed-Abdi, 1996 and Ahmed, 1984) in which these stylistic requirements are recognized as criteria contributing to the perceived value of a poem, and as they are written by Somalis are regarded as support for the approach taken in this article.

<sup>11</sup> No details of where or when the interview took place are available from listening to the cassette, which I acquired in Djibouti in Summer 1995 from Cali Dibirro who has a famous cassette shop there which contains many hundreds of recordings of Somali literary and performance culture.

<sup>12</sup> He composed quite a number of poems which addressed specific political situations of the time.

<sup>13</sup> Said S. Samatar discusses the way in which a poem may have two senses 'the immediate and the transcendental' (Said, 1982: 58). By this he refers to the way in which 'A good poem, once its immediate point is appreciated, passes into a secondary phase whereby it acquires a new lease on life.' (Said, 1982: 58).

*Text of the poem Macaan iyo Qadhaadh by Axmed Ismaciil Diiriye 'Qaasim'*<sup>14</sup>

- 1 *Dacartuba mar bay malab dhashaa, aad muudsataa dhabaqe*  
The aloe sometimes produces honey which you suck as sweet
- 2 *Waxaan ahay macaan iyo qadhaadh, meel ku wada yaalle*  
I am sweet and bitter together in one place
- 3 *Midigtayda iyo bidixdu waa, laba mataanoode*  
My right and left hand sides are two twins
- 4 *Midi waa martida soora iyo, maato daadihise*  
One entertaining guests and looking after dependents
- 5 *Midina waa mindiyo xiirayiyo, mur iyo deebaaqe*  
And one being sharp knives, myrrh and aloe
- 6 *Masalooyin talantaalliyaan, maandhow leeyahaye*  
Brother, I have alternating characteristics
- 7 *Nin majiir keliyuun qabsaday, hay malaynnina e*  
Do not think of me as a man following one path only
- 8 *Mar baan ahay muddeec camalsan oon, maagista agoone*  
Sometimes I am an even-tempered, obliging person, unprovocative
- 9 *Marna macangag laayaan aho, miiggaan baan ahaye*  
And sometimes I am an obstinate, dangerous, single-minded person
- 10 *Mar baan ahay muftiga saahidnimo, mawlaca u galaye*  
Sometimes I am a *mufti* who enters a sanctuary as an ascetic
- 11 *Marna makhaawi waashoo khamriga, miista baan ahaye*  
And sometimes I am a mad, irresponsible person measuring out wine
- 12 *Mar baan ahay murtiyo baanisaba, madaxda reeraaye*  
Sometimes I am wisdom and oratory which the heads of my lineage
- 13 *Ay weliba muuniyo dulqaad, igu majeertaane*  
Appreciate in me, along with honour and patience
- 14 *Marna reer magaal loofaroon, muuqan baan ahaye*  
And sometimes I am a town layabout who is not noticed
- 15 *Mar baan ahay nin xaaraan maqdaca, marin jidiinkiiye*  
Sometimes I am a man who does not let prohibited things pass his throat
- 16 *Marna tuug mu'diya baan ahoon, maal Rasuul bixinne*  
And sometimes I am a pernicious thief who would take even the possessions of the Prophet
- 17 *Mar baan ahay maqaan awliyada, maqaddinkoodiye*  
Sometimes I am the place of the leader of the saints

<sup>14</sup> The poem is presented here with a line-by-line translation by myself which aims to reflect the Somali as accurately as possible rather than to be a polished translation in poetic English. The comma in each line of the Somali text indicates the caesura. For a free polished translation of the poem, see Andrzejewski with Andrzejewski (1993: 88–9). Note there are a couple of minor differences in the text they used; details are given below.

- 18 *Marna mudanta shaydaanka iyo, maal jin baan ahaye*  
And sometimes I am honoured of the devil, the possession of jinns
- 19 *Miisaanna i ma saari karo, nin i maleeyaaye*  
A man who would weigh me cannot put me on a set of scales
- 20 *Waxaan ahay nin midabbaynayoo, maalinba is roga e*  
I am a man who changes colour and turns around each day
- 21 *Muuqaygu gelinkiiba waa, muunad gooniyahe*  
Each half day my appearance has a different quality
- 22 *Muslinka iyo gaalada dirkaba, waan macne aqaane*  
I know the meaning of the ancestors of both the Muslims and the infidels
- 23 *Malaa'iigta naartiyo jannadu, waygu murantaaye*  
The angels of hell and heaven argue over me
- 24 *Nin intaasoo mahadhooyin loo, mooggan baan ahaye*  
I am a man whose stirring deeds cannot be forgotten
- 25 *Ninkii maalmo badan soo jiree, madaxu boosaystay*  
The man who has passed many days and whose hair has faded
- 26 *Ama ina rag miisaami jirey, wuu i maan garanne*  
Or who was able to assess sons of men understands me
- 27 *Nin kastow halkii kuu macaan, oo ay muhato laabtaadu*  
Every man! the place which is sweet to you and where your heart desires
- 28 *Ama aadan madaddaaladayda, igala maarmaynin*  
Or where you cannot do without my entertainment
- 29 *Iska soo mar waa kuu bannaan, marinkaad doontaaye.*  
Just pass along it, it is open to you, the path you wish.

The source for this text is Xafiiska Horumarinta Manaahijta (n.d: 39–40) along with the emendations made by Andrzejewski (n.d. b),<sup>15</sup> who uses the Xafiiska Horumarinta Manaahijta text for the translation in Andrzejewski with Andrzejewski (1993). Taking account of Andrzejewski's emendations for this study, it was found, during the course of researching the article, that a number of further emendations needed to be made on the advice of Cabdulqaadir Xaaji Cali, himself a knowledgeable poet, who helped me to make better sense of certain phrases in the poem. Another source for emendations, made in consultation with Cabdulqaadir, are two recordings of the poem, one performed by Maxamed Mooge, a famous singer and reciter and

<sup>15</sup> At the end of his text Andrzejewski mentions the emendations which he makes as follows (where < means 'changed from'):

qabsaday < gabsaday  
makhaawi < makhawi  
macangag < macango  
ninkiise < ninkii  
kastaan < kastow [sic]  
madaddaaladeeda < madadaaladeed

The change 'kastaan < kastow' he gives the wrong way round and should read 'kastow < kastaan'. In addition to these there are a number of emendations which Andrzejewski makes but does not list; these are all very minor spelling points.

the other by the poet himself. The version performed by Maxamed Mooge<sup>16</sup> includes some minor differences which have been taken into account in emendations in the text as presented here. The lines which have been changed in this way are 11, 25, 26 and 28. The lines as they stand in Andrzejewski (n.d. b) are given below (for the text used in the present article, see above):

line 11: *Marna makhaawi waashoo xumaa, miista baan ahaye*  
 line 25: *Ninkiise maalmo badan soo jiree, madaxu boosaystay*  
 line 26: *Ama inuun rag miisaami jirey, wuu i maan garanne*  
 line 28: *Ama aadan madaddaaladeeda, igala maarmaynin*

The other version which is available to me is an untitled recorded interview with the poet, Qaasim, which includes a recitation of this poem by the poet himself. There are a number of differences in the version the poet recites, differences which, when compared with the Xafiiska Horumarinta Manaahijta text, are greater than those found in the performance of Maxamed Mooge to that same text. These differences do have some bearing on specific points relating to the discussion of the poem as presented here, but in general the major points made here still stand.<sup>17</sup> The major difference in the poet's performed version to the text presented here is the fact that the section given here as lines 8–18 is shorter and omits some of the couplets included in the poet's performance, furthermore, some of the lines are in a different order in the second half of the 'theme section'. What is interesting, however, is that the lines beginning the poem and what we shall be calling the 'imperative section' are more or less the same with only some minor differences which have no significant bearing on the meaning, and it is these lines which may be considered the most important in the discussion to follow. It is not the intention of this article to provide a comparison of these versions of the poem nor to undertake a textual critical study of the poem, further research would need to be undertaken before this were possible.

#### 4. *Analysis of the poem*

Let us now turn to the analysis of the poem itself. Stylistic aspects are manifest at a number of different levels in the poem, each of which may be considered individually but also in relation to the others. We shall begin with a presentation of how the poem may be divided into groups of lines. Such an approach is justified here in that it is considered to be motivated by the poem itself, as there are obvious ways in which certain lines group together (motivated by syntax, parallelism etc.).

##### 4.1 *Grouping of lines in 'Macaan iyo Qadhaadh'*<sup>18</sup>

It is suggested here that the poem be divided into two major parts comprising lines 1–26, which we shall call the 'theme section', and lines 27–29, which we

<sup>16</sup> This was a recording acquired through the Somali Section of the BBC World Service. No information is available as to where or when the recording was made.

<sup>17</sup> It might be felt by some readers that the version which is recited by the poet should be given greater prominence than other versions. It is felt here that this is not necessarily the case. Not knowing when the interview took place and to what extent the poet committed his own work to memory it is not possible to make any statement regarding how authoritative the poet's own recited text is. Furthermore there is a well established convention which does not allow someone to alter the text of a poem in any performance, given that this poem is so well known the version in the school text book must be regarded as having some authority, as it seems highly unlikely that such a prominent version would be anything other than conforming to such a well established convention and thus be authoritative.

<sup>18</sup> As mentioned above the approach to grouping as presented in Cureton (1992) has been influential here, although the detail of the type of analysis Cureton follows has not been pursued. It may, however, prove a fruitful exercise in the future.



shall call the 'imperative section'. A major motivation for this bipartite division is that the first of these two sections is a presentation of the good and bad characteristics of human nature, and the second a direct address to the listeners of the poem to follow whichever path they choose in life. A specific hint to this division into two major line groupings is the use of two vocatives, one in each section: *maandhow* in line 6 and *Nin kastow* in line 27. These may be seen as indications of the introduction of distinct parts of the poem as no other vocative forms are used.<sup>19</sup> Although divided into these two parts there is a definite link between them which is manifest in a number of ways and which will become apparent in the discussion to follow. Within these two major sections lower level groupings of lines may be discerned.

#### 4.1.1. Line grouping 1–7

As mentioned above the first of the two major sections of the poem presents comment on the human condition and line 1 achieves this succinctly through the metaphor of the *dacar* plant, a species of aloe. This is described in the line as producing *malab* 'honey' (actually nectar secreted from the flower of the plant) whilst at the same time the listener is aware that the plant is bitter if eaten. The tenor of the metaphor is immediately clarified in line 2 in which the poet says explicitly of himself that he is both 'the sweet and the bitter in one place'. The next sub-group, lines 3–5, elaborates the theme, now established, with the poet mentioning his right and left sides as two twins. These are again references to good and bad characteristics with the left (referring more specifically to left-handedness) being something more 'sinister' and the right being symbolic of the good side of human nature. This is developed further in lines 4 and 5 in which the good and bad sides are represented, each in a separate line: the good character entertaining guests and looking after those less fortunate, while the other is characterized by bad things: sharp knives, myrrh (a bitter substance) and *deebaaq*, referring to another aloe species which is bitter.<sup>20</sup> The use of this word at the end of line 5 is another argument in favour of seeing lines 1–5 as a coherent grouping, since it begins and ends with the names of aloe species, further emphasizing the metaphor.<sup>21</sup>

Returning to the internal coherence of lines 3–5, a further argument for this is that the 'right' and 'left' allusions, both present in line 3, are elaborated individually in lines 4 and 5 respectively. This is also supported by the sound parallelism at the beginning of each of these lines in the syllables *midi-*, although in line 3 these syllables introduce the word *midigtayda* 'my right', whereas in lines 4 and 5 they constitute the word *midi*, 'one'.<sup>22</sup> This sound parallelism relates lines 4 and 5 to line 3 and, at a lower level, the word parallelism suggests a sub-grouping of lines 4 and 5 together. This latter point is also motivated as lines 4 and 5 display metrical parallelism in that the first syllable of the

<sup>19</sup> The use of a vocative at the beginning of a poem is quite widespread in Somali poetry, memorizers may be addressed, as may animals and inanimate objects. The wind or a bird, for example, may be addressed at the beginning of a poem to 'carry' it for the poet to someone or somewhere. A particularly dramatic example of this is the famous poem *Koofil* by Sayyid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan. The poem was composed after the battle of Dhul Madoobe (1913) during which Corfield, the commander of the British-led detachment, was killed. The Sayyid addresses the poem directly to Corfield (rendered as *Koofil* in Somali) telling him to take the poetic message to the Sayyid's dead followers in Paradise as he, Corfield, passes on his way to Hell.

<sup>20</sup> This plant is one from which a black dye is produced which is used to colour dried grasses and plant fibres for the making of decorative household utensils by women. I am grateful to Maxmuud Sheekh Axmed Dalmar for this information.

<sup>21</sup> One might speculate also on the final two syllables of lines 1 and 5 each beginning with 'b' and 'q' as a sound parallelism reflecting this coherence.

<sup>22</sup> This is a pronominal form of the number one with the *-i* subject suffix attached. The enclitic *-na*, which is suffixed to *midi* in line 5, is a phrasal co-ordinating particle meaning 'and'.

alliterative word of the first half-line in each (*martida* 'the guests' in line 4, *mindiyō* 'knives' in line 5) begins in the first compulsory short vowel position.<sup>23</sup> We shall see below how this metrical position plays a prominent role in the wider domain of the poem as a whole.

In the next two lines, 6 and 7, reference is found in each one individually to both sides of human nature. Line 6 talks of the poet's shifting nature and line 7 tells the listener not to think of him as someone who follows a single path, whether good or bad. The deictic reference in these lines is another important factor. In line 6 the second half-line begins with the vocative *maandhow*<sup>24</sup> with which the poet is directly addressing his listeners. This exophoric deixis is then echoed in line 7 in the use of the negative imperative *hay malaynnina* 'don't think of me', again directly addressing the listeners. Such explicit deictic reference is lacking in lines 1–5 and so may be regarded as linking lines 6 and 7. It is also important as a pointer to the illocutionary intent of the 'imperative section'. The use of the vocative in line 6 followed by the use of the imperative in line 7 prefigures the use of the vocative in line 27 and the subsequent use of the imperative in line 29 (further discussion on this point is given below).

In this brief section, then, we have divided lines 1–7 into three sub-groups: 1–2, 3–5, 6–7, the grouping 3–5 has further been divided into line 3 and lines 4–5. We shall see below how this grouping is assumed to play a meaningful role in the poem. At a higher level it has also been suggested that lines 1–5 form a coherent grouping, when contrasted with the deictic reference of lines 6 and 7. This bipartite grouping of lines 1–7 might be regarded as reflecting the division of the whole poem into the theme and imperative sections.

#### 4.1.2. Line grouping 8–18

This grouping is divided clearly into a sequence of two couplets, a triplet and two couplets.<sup>25</sup> This balanced structure is obvious both in the syntactic parallelism of the lines and in their meaning. The first line in each of the couplets and in the triplet begins with *Mar baan ...*<sup>26</sup> 'Sometimes I am ...'; then the second line of the couplets and the third line of the triplet all begin with *Marna ...* 'And sometimes ...'. At the end of these latter lines we always find the words *baan ahaye* 'I am' + *-e* (on which see below), apart from line 16 in which the words *baan ahay* are present within the words *baan ahoon*.<sup>27</sup> The semantic parallelism in this grouping is clear from the translation in that the first lines of the couplets and the first two lines of the triplet present good characteristics whereas the second lines of the couplets and third line of the triplet present bad characteristics. It is interesting to note in light of the original context of the poem that the centre of this balanced structure of lines, the triplet, is the point the poet chooses to present the characteristics of wisdom, honour and

<sup>23</sup> The words *midi* and *midina* are not the main alliterative words for these lines given their pronominal usage, as well as the repetition, which would not be satisfactory for the alliterative words. Note also that in line 5 there are two possible interpretations for the metrical analysis. On the one hand the first syllable may be regarded as anacrusis and the mood classifier *waa* counted as a long vowel or, on the other hand, the word *waa* may count as a single vowel unit in which case there is no anacrusis. Either analysis is possible and each leads to the same conclusion regarding the metrical position of the alliterative word.

<sup>24</sup> This comprises the noun *maandhe* 'son' and the vocative ending *-ow*. Although note Agostini *et al.* (1985: 398) has *maandhow* as a variant of *maandhe*.

<sup>25</sup> The terms couplet and triplet are used here merely for convenience.

<sup>26</sup> In the original text in Xafiska Horumarinta Manaahijta (n.d.), these words were written as one in lines 8, 10, 12, 15 but were changed to two words in Andrzejewski (n.d. b), this matter is very minor and has no bearing on the arguments presented here.

<sup>27</sup> This is made up of *baan ahay* 'I am' + *oo aan*: *oo* introducing the second relative clause on the head noun *tuug* 'thief' and *aan* being the negative particle used in subordinate clauses.

patience and to mention that they are appreciated by his kinsfolk. It is these characteristics which we can assume would have been the most valued by those to whom he was first presenting the poem. Thus their presence specifically at this central point may be a way of highlighting them.

A further interesting point of this grouping of lines is the way in which the imagery develops. In the first two lines of the group (8 and 9) we see general human characteristics mentioned, in the next two lines more specific matters are introduced: on the good side piety and asceticism, and on the bad side drinking wine and madness. Lines 12–14 reflect good secular attributes mentioned above and a corresponding bad side in the ‘town layabout’. After this, however, both of the remaining pairs of lines express the good and bad characteristics through religious references to the Prophet, saints, the devil and jinns.

#### 4.1.3. *Line grouping 19–26*

Moving on in the poem the next grouping of lines suggested is 19–26. There are hints within these lines themselves and hints when we consider parallelisms with the beginning of the poem which lead us to group these lines further into the following sub-groups: 19–20, 21–23 and 24–26. Considering lines 19 and 20 we find 19 presenting the image of a person not able to weigh the poet up as the vehicle for the underlying tenor of fickle human nature: ‘A man who would weigh me up cannot put me on a set of scales’. This is then elaborated in line 20 with the clarifying statement ‘I am a man who changes colour and turns around each day’. Comparing these lines with 1 and 2 we find a parallelism in terms of the meaning—metaphoric reference in the first followed by clarification in the second. Furthermore there is a syntactic parallelism between lines 2 and 20 in that they both begin with *Waxaan ahay* . . . . This similarity with the beginning of the poem may be regarded as an indication of these lines beginning another grouping of lines, this is reinforced by what is to be said immediately below.

Turning to lines 21–23 we find parallelisms both within the sub-grouping and in relation to the group of lines 3–5. Line 21 has the same basic sentence structure as line 3, that is to say they are both verbless equational sentences using the particle *waa*. Furthermore, *waa* is found in the same metrical position in both lines, just before the caesura. Considering lines 22 and 23 we see that they show parallel syntactic structure with each other, both being positive declarative sentences using the mood classifier *waa*,<sup>28</sup> which is found in the metrical position immediately following the caesura in both lines. This reflects the fact that lines 4 and 5 are also syntactically parallel, albeit in a different way, both being verbless equational sentences using *waa*, again in the same metrical position, just before the first compulsory short vowel position in that case. Despite the fact that the parallelism in each of the pairs of lines 4–5 and 22–23 is different, the fact that each pair of lines in itself displays a parallel syntactic structure shows a higher level structural parallelism. We have therefore two groups of three lines: 3–5 and 21–23. The first lines in each group display parallel syntactic structure with each other. The second and third lines in each group then display parallel syntactic structure within each group (i.e. 4 and 5 are parallelistic and 22 and 23 are parallelistic) and are thus similar in that each pair is parallel. Similarity is also shown in the two line groupings in that all the lines use the particle *waa*, in lines 4 and 5 as the equational

<sup>28</sup> The mood classifier *waa* is part of the words *waan* (*waa* + *aan* 1st person singular verbal subject pronoun) and *waygu*, which comprises *waa* + *i* + *ku* mood classifier + 1st sg. object pronoun + preverbal preposition *ku*.

sentence particle, and in lines 22 and 23 as the positive declarative mood classifier. The syntactic parallelism within each of these pairs of lines is further strengthened by the metrical position of *waa* as mentioned above. It is felt here that these parallelisms argue well for the grouping structure presented. Further motivation for this grouping and its proposed function in the dynamics of the poem is given below.

Let us now consider lines 24–26. Given the discussion immediately above, the reader may seek to compare these lines with the sub-group of lines 6–7. The first thing that strikes one when doing this, however, is that the group 24–26 is made up of three lines rather than two as in 6–7. What is interesting, however, is that this number of lines does not reflect the number of sentences. Lines 6 and 7 comprise two sentences; each line is a full sentence in its own right. Lines 25–27 on the other hand also comprise two sentences, since there is an instance of enjambement across lines 25–26. We shall discuss this further in section 4.2.1 below and see how this syntactic arrangement makes these lines cohere as a sub-group and how they relate to lines 6 and 7.

#### 4.1.4. *Line grouping 27–29*

This grouping of lines, the ‘imperative section’, has already been mentioned above. Further details regarding its structure and how it relates to the other line groupings are given in later sections.

This concludes our initial look at the grouping of lines. We have presented the grouping and sub-grouping of lines with some arguments to support them. In the following sections we shall look at how these groupings form part of the dynamics of the poem, that is to say how considering them as groups is of interest in terms of the meaning and power of the poem as a whole.

## 4.2. *Prolongation in ‘Macaan iyo Qadhaadh’*

With the line grouping structure in mind we shall now turn to a discussion of the ways in which the different aspects of style and language work together in foregrounding what is regarded here as the most prominent part of this poem, the imperative verb in the final line, *mar*. We shall see that syntax, metre, alliteration, line grouping and the use of the word *mar* all work together and are crafted in such a way as to anticipate this structural goal and foreground it in a powerful way. We shall look at these different anticipations individually with the aim of presenting a clear picture of a complex prolongational structure.

Cureton (1992) discusses prolongation in depth as it is one of the three rhythmic components in his theory of rhythmic phrasing in English verse. He points out that ‘A description of prolongation depends most crucially on the notion of *structural goal*’ (Cureton, 1992: 146, his emphasis) and that movement towards that structural goal is ‘*essentially* hermeneutical’ (Cureton, 1992: 146, emphasis again his). These structural goals he labels *arrivals*, parts of a text which move towards these are labelled *anticipations* and parts of a text which move away from an arrival are called *extensions*. We shall use Cureton’s terminology here without going into further details of his theory which is not necessary for the discussion in hand, although later work on this may prove to be an interesting comparative study.

Let us now look at line grouping and syntax together and see how these function as anticipations within the poem as a whole.

### 4.2.1. *Syntax and line grouping as anticipations*

It was recognized by Antinucci (1980) that syntactic parallelism is a feature of Somali poetry. Antinucci’s work clearly reveals the syntactic parallelism in the

two *gabay* poems he discusses, and states that the syntactic arrangement divides the poem into sections, something which serves a stylistic function. For example, in the first poem he analyses, the first eight lines consist of four pairs of lines, the first and second lines of each pair display parallel syntactic structure. The pattern in the first lines he labels 'a' and the pattern in the second lines 'b'. In the next two lines, after the first eight, 9–10 of his example, he shows the syntactic structure to be 'a+a' (i.e. twice the structure of the initial lines in the previous pairs) and in the final line the structure returns to the expected 'b' pattern. He suggests that 'the structural stretching [in his lines 9 and 10] represented by the patters [sic] a-(a-a-a)-b creates the effect of suspension by delaying the expected *b*-conclusion'. (Antinucci, 1980: 150). Further specific details as to how the syntactic parallelisms contribute to the dynamics of the poems are not given. Taking into consideration what Antinucci says, particularly on 'the effect of suspension' we can look at the way syntax is used in the poem under consideration here in some detail.

Beginning with a consideration of the relations between sentences and lines, we see that every line is itself a full sentence<sup>29</sup> except for lines 12–13, 25–26 and 27–29. We have commented above on the way in which lines 11 to 13 form the pivot of the balanced set of lines 8–18, a feature enhanced by the enjambement. On listening to the poem, the grammar of line 12 leads the listener to expect more, as it is an unfinished sentence and cannot stand meaningfully on its own. Thus line 13 is anticipated and, indeed, resolves the syntactic tension present at the end of line 12. This is an instance of prolongation itself. Given the pattern of lines up to that point, the listener expects a line to coincide with a full sentence and, when that is not the case, tension is created at the end of line 12 which is resolved in the next line. Moving on to lines 25–26, reading through line 25, we see that this too does not stand on its own but comprises the noun *ninkii* 'the man' to which are appended two relative clauses.<sup>30</sup> The situation is the same as it was in line 12, in that tension is created at the end of the line since it cannot meaningfully stand on its own. This tension is then resolved in line 26 with the completion of the sentence.

Considering the final three lines (27–29) we find a further example of the development of tension through enjambement, but with three lines involved. This is enhanced in that line 27 has a similar syntactic structure to line 25. In that line (25), as mentioned above, the noun *ninkii* 'the man' is followed by two relative clauses. In line 27 the initial vocative *Nin kastow* is followed by the noun *halkii* 'the place', to which also are appended two relative clauses, hence the similarity to line 25.<sup>31</sup> Given this similarity in syntactic structure it may be argued that line 25, as well as being part of the local prolongational structure in lines 25–26, is also a point of anticipation in the wider domain in that it creates the expectation that the tension developed in line 27 will be resolved in line 28, in a manner similar to the way line 26 resolves the tension developed line 25. This is further supported when we see that in the second lines in each case, i.e. 26 and 28, the first word is *ama* 'or', followed by a further relative clause. In other words the syntactic parallelism is not only

<sup>29</sup> That is to say, every line incorporates a main verb with the mood classifier *waa* or a focus marker, or the sentence is a *waa* equational sentence.

<sup>30</sup> The *ee* which has elided the *-ay* on *jiray* is the relative clause co-ordinating particle used to indicate a following restrictive relative clause (non-initial) when the antecedent is defined, as here. The first relative clause is a restrictive, indicated by the lack of a relative clause introductory particle along with the definition of the antecedent.

<sup>31</sup> Note the use of *oo* in this line indicating the following (second) relative clause to be an appositive. The initial relative clause is a restrictive (as in line 25) since the antecedent is defined and there is no relative clause introductory particle.

present in lines 25 and 27, but continues into the beginning of lines 26 and 28. In line 26 this relative clause is followed by *wuu*<sup>32</sup> and the main verb, resolving the syntactic tension.<sup>33</sup> So, when the listener hears *ama* in line 28, given the precedent of line 26, the same sort of resolution is anticipated. This, however, is not what happens; the relative clause is the only syntactic structure in that line, that is to say the whole line consists of *ama* and the relative clause 'where you cannot do without my entertainment'.<sup>34</sup> This means that the tension has now been held over two line breaks which, it is suggested, foregrounds and increases the power of the first few words in the final line where the tension is resolved with the main verb of the whole sentence: the imperative *mar*, 'pass'. Since this resolves the greatest tension in the poem its force can be considered that much greater. The rest of the final line following the verb *mar* is, in Cureton's terms, an extension of the arrival.

To sum up, we find that the majority of lines in the poem coincide with full sentences which lead to the expectation in the listener that this pattern will be followed throughout the poem. This expectation is broken in three cases. The first is that of the pivot of the series of couplets between lines 8 and 18 which provides a balance to the presentation of the ideas of the good and bad sides of human nature in that section of the poem. In addition to this, being the first case of enjambement, it sets a precedent in the poem for syntactic tension at the end of a line to be resolved in the following line. The second case also involves two lines, the tension developed at the end of the first of the two lines (25) is resolved in the next line (26). In the final case, however, we find that that expectation of resolution in the second line is not met, leading to a tension which is sustained throughout the whole of the second line of the group (28). The parallelistic syntactic structure at the beginning of lines 26 and 28 (the use of *ama*) and the parallel use of the word *nin* at the beginning of lines 25 and 27 may be regarded as a parallelistic association of these lines creating a greater sense that the resolution of tension in the final case will be in line 28. However, as we have seen, in this final case, the tension remains at the end of line 28 and is only resolved with the imperative verb *mar* in line 29. Further foregrounding of this verb is evident from its position when compared with the previous two cases, whereas in lines 13 and 26 the main verb is set at the end of the line (see also the comments in footnotes 33 and 34), in the final line (29) it is at the end of the first quarter of the line, the unit labelled *waax* in Orwin and Maxamed (1997: 85). The rest of this final line is, in Cureton's terms, an extension and is itself, syntactically, a separate sentence: *waa kuu bannaan, marinkaad doontaaye* 'it is open to you, the path you wish'.

It is suggested here that what has been discussed in this section contributes to the whole dynamic force of the poem and that, in particular, much of the creative use of syntax and enjambement leads to a particular focus on the imperative verb *mar* in the final line.

#### 4.2.2. *Deixis and anticipations*

One of the important aspects of any poem is deictic reference. In this poem we can see how deictic reference shows further the difference between the

<sup>32</sup> The mood classifier *waa* and the 3rd person m. sg. subject verbal pronoun *uu*.

<sup>33</sup> It is interesting to note that the mood classifier *waa* (surfacing as *wuu* with the subject pronoun) is found immediately after the caesura. Given the grammatical position of this particle in Somali sentence structure, the listener will expect the main verb after this. Thus the resolution of the tension, although finally made at the end of the line with the main verb, is set up immediately following the caesura.

<sup>34</sup> In light of the comment in note 33 above, the listener will discern, on hearing the preverbal cluster *igala* immediately after the caesura, that that line will not complete the sentence since, given the word order of Somali, only the relative clause verb can come after *igala*; there is no room left in the line for the appropriate words to create a main clause.

'theme section' and the 'imperative section'. The 'imperative section' is clear in its deictic reference and illocutionary intent. Careful consideration of the use of pronoun references in the 'theme section', however, leads us to see how deixis is manipulated and further enhances the power of the 'imperative section' and the final line.

All three persons are used as subjects of sentences in the poem, but it is interesting to see precisely how they are used. In the majority of sentences, the first person subject pronoun is used (lines 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12–13,<sup>35</sup> 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 24). In other lines the subject of the main verb is suffixed with the first person possessive determiner (line 3: 'my right and left hand sides' and line 21: 'my appearance'). Thus, although not a first person subject, the subject is something which is 'of the first person'. In other lines reference is also made, by extension, to the first person: the subject of lines 4 and 5 is the pronominal *mid* which refers back individually to the right and left hand sides of line 3 respectively. In lines 7, 19, 23 and 25–26 reference is made to the first person through the use of the first person singular object pronoun *i*.<sup>36</sup> In line 7, as mentioned above, the verb is an imperative (used with the first person sg. object pronoun), in the other of these lines, the subjects of the main verbs are in the third person (*nin* 'a man' and associated relative clause in line 19, *Malaa'iigta naartiyo jannadu* 'the angels of hell and heaven' in line 23 and *Ninkii* 'the man' and associated relative clauses in lines 25–26). We see from all this that in the 'theme section' of the poem, the poet is talking directly in the first person, or reference is made to him through the use of the appropriate pronouns. This is the case in all lines of the 'theme section' with one important exception: line 1.

This line comprises a declarative sentence in which the subject is the *dacar* plant and the poet makes no reference to the first person at all. The fact that in subsequent lines the first person becomes the subject may be seen as a way of the poet associating himself, and by extension all humankind, with the metaphor of the *dacar* plant. Of further deictic interest in line 1 is that the subject of the relative clause, *aad muudsataa dhabaqe* 'which you suck as sweet' is the second person subject pronoun. This prefigures the use of the second person pronoun and the second person possessives in the last three lines, especially as no other lines in the 'theme section' make use of the second person pronoun at all. In other words, the first line incorporates the metaphor as a symbol of the theme of the good and bad characteristics of human nature followed by exophoric deictic reference to the listeners. This might be regarded as a 'template' for the whole poem in which we have the 'theme section' followed by the 'imperative section' addressing the listeners directly. It is suggested here that this provides a strong link between the first line and the last three lines, a link which is apparent in yet other ways as discussed below.

#### 4.3. Alliteration

In this section we shall look at the way in which alliteration is used in the poem to contribute further to its force and meaning, and particularly to focus yet further on the word *mar* in the final line. We mentioned above that alliteration is an obligatory stylistic device of Somali poetry and this poem

<sup>35</sup> Remember these two lines comprise a single sentence. In the relative clause within the main sentence, the subject pronoun *ay* 'they' is used, but the poet is referred to through the 1st person sg. prepositional object pronoun *i* in the cluster *igu*.

<sup>36</sup> Note in line 7 this is within the word *hay: ha* (imperative mood classifier)+*i* (1st person sg. object pronoun). In line 23 it is in *waygu, waa* (mood classifier)+*i* (1st person sg. object pronoun)+*ku* (preverbal preposition).

fulfils, of course, all the requirements of alliteration which need to be met in a poem of the *gabay* genre. However, the reader will see in the text of the poem that there are lines which, in addition to the required alliterative word in each half-line, include more alliterative words, specifically lines 1, 4 and 5 and the group of lines 8–18 (except 13). In each of these lines the extra alliterative word is to be found in the first half-line and, apart from line 1, one of the alliterative words is at the beginning of the line.<sup>37</sup> Looking first at lines 4 and 5 we see that the extra alliterative words are *midi* and *midina* respectively:

- 4 *Midi* waa martida soora iyo, maato daadihise  
One entertaining guests and looking after dependants
- 5 *Midina* waa mindiyo xiirayyo, mur iyo deebaaq  
And one being sharp knives, myrrh and aloë

As suggested above, the use of these two words is a factor in considering lines 3, 4 and 5 as a group. The other alliterative words in these lines are *martida*<sup>38</sup> ‘the guest(s)’, *maato* ‘dependants’ and *mindiyo* ‘knives’. We can assume from this that the words which are ‘extra’ alliterative words are the repeated *midi* and *midina*. Looking at the poem as a whole we see that the use of *midi* and *midina* prefigures the use of *mar* and *marna* in the group of lines 8–18. In each of the lines in this group which include *mar* and *marna*, these words must also be considered the ‘extra’ alliterative words. Any poem which were to use repeated words such as these as the ‘main’ alliterative words would be considered very poor, given that part of the requirement of alliteration is that the words used should be different (see section 2 above). When we consider any stylistic role for the use of these ‘extra’ alliterative words two matters come to mind. Firstly there is the role they play in the parallelistic structure of lines 8–18 as discussed above. Secondly, however, we may regard their use in this group of lines as being another way in which the verb *mar* is highlighted in the final line of the poem.

It will be noted in the text that there are 12 instances of the word *mar*. However, as will already be apparent, the word is a homonym, the two meanings relevant to the poem being *mar* (transitive verb) ‘pass (by), pass along’ and *mar* (noun, masculine) ‘time, occasion’.<sup>39</sup> On 11 occasions when the word is used, it is the noun *mar*,<sup>40</sup> and the verb *mar* is found only in the final line. The 11 instances of the noun are in lines 1 and in the group of lines 8–18, in each of which it is an ‘extra’ alliterative word. Thus an expectation is developed in the poem to hear *mar* as the noun and as simply an extra alliterative word in the line. This expectation is then shattered in two ways in the final line:

- 29 *Iska soo mar* waa kuu bannaan, marinkaad doontaaye.  
Just pass along it, it is open to you, the path you wish.

<sup>37</sup> Aside from the presence of an extra alliterative word in line 1, it is interesting to note that here each half-line also includes a word beginning with ‘dh’ (*dhashaa* and *dhabaqe*), these words both occur following the main alliterative word in each half-line, something which may be assumed to make the line more striking to the listener. Some further thoughts on these alliterating words are given in section 4.4.

<sup>38</sup> This is made up of the noun *marti* ‘guest, guests (it may be used as a singulative or a collective)’ and the feminine definite article suffix *-ta*, which surfaces here as *-da* due to its following the vowel /i/.

<sup>39</sup> There are further meanings: *mar* (noun, feminine) ‘honour (of a woman), clothes worn by women around the waist, or the means of holding clothes around the waist’; *mar* (noun, masculine) can also mean ‘lack’ (see Agostini *et al.*, 1985: 415–6; Yaasiin, 1976: 296–7, where the verb *mar* is given in the form of the verbal noun *marid* and Zorc *et al.* 1991: 330–1 for details).

<sup>40</sup> This includes the use of the word with the co-ordinating enclitic *-na*.



Here *mar* is the verb rather than the noun, and, what is more, it is the 'main' alliterative word, indeed the only alliterative word in that half-line. This is in stark contrast to what has preceded it, and it is thus foregrounded through the skilful manipulation of alliteration and the use of homonymic *mar* throughout the rest of the poem.

One further matter relating to *mar* in the final line is the presence, in the extension, of the word *marinkaad* 'the path you ...', of which the lexical head is *marin*,<sup>41</sup> a masculine noun meaning 'route, path, road'. The word is derived from the verb *mar*, thus, can be considered an 'echo' of that important word in the extension, further strengthening its gravity. It is also interesting to note that, according to Agostini *et al.* (1985: 418) *marin* also has the figurative meaning 'just thing, appropriate direction', thus a hint to the listener regarding which path ought to be followed is perhaps presented here. The careful reader of the poem will have noticed a previous use of the word *marin* in line 15, where it is the verbal noun of the verb *mari* 'to cause to pass',<sup>42</sup> the causative derived form of the verb *mar*. This is found in the same metrical position as *marin* in the final line and may be regarded as an anticipation of this usage.

Looking again at the poem in detail, we see that there are a number of words which reflect, to a greater or lesser extent, the sound of *mar*. In line 4 we find the word *marti* 'guest, visitor', an echo of the initial *mar* (see below for comment on this word's metrical position). Then, in line 28, the last alliterative word before the final *mar* is *maarmaynin*,<sup>43</sup> the first syllable of which shows similarities in sound structure to *mar*, the only difference being the length of the vowel.

Aside from the strong arguments in favour of the foregrounding of *mar* in the final line, another interesting point of alliteration is the use of the word *maal* 'possessions, wealth' twice in close proximity, in lines 16 and 18, repeated below along with line 17 in between:

- 16 Marna tuug mu'diya baan ahoon, maal Rasuul bixinne  
And sometimes I am a pernicious thief who would take even the  
possessions of the Prophet
- 17 Mar baan ahay maqaan awliyada, maqaddinkoodiye  
Sometimes I am the place of the leader of the saints
- 18 Marna mudanta shaydaanka iyo, maal jin baan ahaye  
And sometimes I am honoured of the devil, the possession of jinns

Such repetition of an alliterative word (in both lines it is the main alliterative word of the second half-line) might, in general, be regarded as a sign of weak language use. Qaasim, however, as a master poet, may be using the word twice so closely together for a particular reason, rather than simply for lack of finding another alliterative word for one of the lines. We see that the word is used in the phrases *maal Rasuul* 'possessions of the Prophet' in line 16 and *maal jin* 'possessions of the jinns' in line 18. Both instances of *maal* are found in the same metrical position, immediately following the caesura, and the two phrases state in clear terms the opposing characteristics, the good and bad

<sup>41</sup> The whole word *marinkaad* comprises the noun *marin*, *-ka*, the masculine definite article suffix and *-aad*, the 2nd person singular verbal subject pronoun which here introduces the relative clause 'you wish ...'.

<sup>42</sup> Note that the verbal noun here is feminine in gender and distinct to the masculine noun *marin* used in the final line.

<sup>43</sup> This is a negative form of *maarmee* which together with the preverbal preposition *ka* means 'to do without'.

aspects of human nature.<sup>44</sup> This close association thus powerfully foregrounds the contrast of the good and the bad characteristics.

#### 4.4. *Metre*

There is little more to add regarding the creative use of metre to what has already been mentioned in the sections above. One of the most striking instances of its use is the way in which the first instance of the noun *mar*, in line 1, is in the same metrical position as that of the last instance of *mar*, the verb, in line 29. They both occur in the position in which the first compulsory short vowel must appear. This metrical aspect to the foregrounding of the verb *mar* is further assisted by the presence, in line 4, of the syllable *mar-* in the same metrical position, only here the syllable itself is part of a larger word *martida* ‘the guests’. I suggest here that this metrical positioning of *mar* is part of the dynamics of the poem, particularly the aspects of prolongation and the foregrounding of *mar* in the final line.<sup>45</sup>

Another aspect of metre in the poem which needs to be addressed is the anomalous metrical pattern of lines 1 and 27. Looking at these lines in relation to the *gabay* metrical template (repeated below) we see that they do not fit the pattern:

(U) UU UU U UU UU U UU || UU U UU UU U

- 1 Dacartuba mar bay malab dhashaa, aad muudsataa dhabaqe  
The aloe sometimes produces honey which you suck as sweet
- 27 Nin kastow halkii kuu macaan oo ay, muhato laabtaadu  
Every man! the place which is sweet to you and where your heart  
desires

There are a number of possible explanations for this. The first possibility is that there is a mistake in the transcription of these lines in the written text, even though they make sense with regard simply to the meaning. One way of addressing this matter is to listen to the recordings available. In the recording by Qaasim himself, we hear the first line clearly recited just as in the text above. In Maxamed Mooge’s performance, on the other hand, he renders the line as follows:

Dacartuba mar bay malab dhashay ood, muudsataa dhabaqe  
The aloe sometimes *produced* honey which you suck as sweet

As can be seen from the translation the only difference is in the tense of the main verb, ‘produced’ instead of ‘produces’. Given the past tense form with

<sup>44</sup> It is interesting to note in relation to these phrases that it is in line 16 that we find the deviation from the use of *baan ahaye* at the end of the second line of the couplets (and final line of the triplet) in the group of lines 8–18. Given the metrical structure of the *gabay* line, Qaasim would not be able to present *maal Rasuul* and *maal jin* in this same metrical position unless the *baan ahaye* phrase is moved in line 16, which accounts for this change in the parallelism present in all of the lines except for 16. In other words, the parallelism involving the word *maal* may be considered more important at that point in the poem than the syntactic parallelism involving *baan ahaye*.

<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to note that in a number of lines the first syllable of the alliterative word beginning in ‘m’ is also found in this metrical position (lines 2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and 17).

the final open diphthong, this line is metrical.<sup>46</sup> However, it may be interesting to speculate on the 'unmetrical' line which is present in the written text and which is clearly the rendition of Qaasim himself.<sup>47</sup>

Given our focus on the use of language and style, might it be the case that this odd metrical pattern has been crafted to highlight some aspect of the poem? Ahmed (1984: 350) has suggested that line 4 in Sayyid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan's poem *Dardaaran* was unmetrical for a particular reason, as an iconic representation of 'ceaseless banter' which is mentioned in that line. Looking again at the first line in *Macaan iyo Qadhaadh* we can see other things which lead us to speculate on reasons for the apparent unmetricality.

The problem in the metre occurs in the word *dhashaa*, 'produces', the final vowel of which is long where metrically we would expect, given the other vowels in the immediate context, a short vowel. As mentioned above, the word *dhashaa* is also interesting from the point of view of alliteration, in that it alliterates with the word *dhabaq* in the second half-line.<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to note that this alliterative relation may be a reflection of another relation between the words.

The word *dhabaq*<sup>49</sup> is a homonym, in addition to the meaning of 'sweet liquid from the aloe plant', a symbol of good characteristics, it also means 'error in clapping a rhythm' and, by extension, 'metrical error, error in rhythm',<sup>50</sup> something we may regard as being symbolic of bad ways, especially when present in a poem. It may be argued that in this line the word *dhabaq* is being played with and that both 'good' and 'bad' are being alluded to through the word. The good is present in the meaning of the word in relation to the *dacar* plant 'the sweet secretion'. The 'bad' meaning of the homonym, on the other hand, is iconically represented in the 'bad' rhythm of the line, centred on the word associated through alliteration with *dhabaq*, namely *dhashaa*. If this is accepted, the first and the final words of the line are both therefore symbolic of good and bad characteristics being present in one place and the metrical anomaly is yet a further creative use of language enriching the poem and its message.

It is interesting to note in light of this discussion that there may be something more to the word *dacar* itself. In Somali, as we have seen, it means 'aloe', in Arabic, on the other hand, the word *da'ar* means 'immorality, indecency'. The poet was an educated man and, although I am not in a position to say for certain, it is likely that he knew Arabic well when he composed the poem. Is there, then, yet further creative language use in this word with its different connotations in Somali and Arabic?

<sup>46</sup> Another explanation for the apparently anomalous line 1 of the text used here would be to regard the *-aad* second person subject verbal pronoun as being appended to the verb *dhashaa* eliding the verb's final long vowel, a pronunciation which is possible in speech. This would lead to the following:

Dacartuba mar bay malab dhashaad muudsataa dhabaqe

Given what has been said above relating to subject verbal pronouns, etc. this may be regarded as a metrical line, but it is still not what is written in the text nor what Qaasim recites.

<sup>47</sup> The recording of the poet is of variable quality, some parts are rather bad and less easy to understand but fortunately this particular line is quite clear, the other metrically anomalous line, line 27, is, unfortunately, not clear. Another point to make with regard to the two performances is that Maxamed Mooge chants his in the traditional style to the *gabay luuq*, the tune for recitation, whilst Qaasim does not, simply speaking his poem.

<sup>48</sup> There is one other line in which the two half-lines have an alliterating pair of words other than the main alliterative words, namely line 21 with *gelinkiiba* and *gooniyaha*.

<sup>49</sup> The *-e* on the end of the word *dhabaq* is part of the performed rendition (see section 4.5 below for further details).

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Agostini *et al.* (1985: 148–9), Yaasiin (1976: 92), Zorc *et al.* (1991: 125), in the latter only the error in rhythm meaning is given.

These thoughts on the first line are presented for consideration, and, given the intricate nature of the use of words and style in this poem as a whole, it seems not unlikely that Qaasim has indulged his skill to the extent that is suggested.

Another line of our text which is not metrical is line 27. Interestingly, when the metre of this line is considered we see that the point at which it does not meet the template criteria is just before the caesura,<sup>51</sup> in the same place as line 1. Although there is no apparent explanation which I can find in this instance, it is interesting that this anomalous metrical patterning is present in the first line of the 'imperative section' as the previous case was present in the first line of the whole poem, and also of the 'theme section'. This leads to thoughts of it being a parallelistic structure in that a line of similar anomalous metrical structure is used as the first line for each of the two major sections of the poem.<sup>52</sup>

#### 4.5. Use of final -e

The reader will have noticed from the text that the final words in most lines end in the vowel -e. This feature does not have any specific meaning and is related to the traditional way in which the poetry is performed to a specific type of melody known as a *luuq*. This final vowel in a line is most often prolonged in a performance with the *luuq* and this length aspect (which can affect other final vowels of actual words in a poem) has been referred to as a 'sort of sound "punctuation"' by Banti and Giannattasio (1996: 87). We shall not look into this matter in any more detail here but look at the text and the way in which the final -e reflects some of the comments made above. The -e is present in all lines except 25, 27 and 28.<sup>53</sup> This is interesting as it ties in directly with the comments made above on prolongation and the foregrounding of the final lines. The -e may be regarded as a marker of the end of a line, and when, therefore, it is not present at the end of line 25 this enhances the effect of the enjambement. When this happens again in line 27 the precedent of line 25 leads the listener to expect the resolution in the following line; this, however, does not happen, as we have seen above. This lack of resolution in line 28 is further strengthened at the end of the line in that there is, again, no -e. The final line does then return to the pattern of the final -e. Thus this performance 'sound punctuation' reinforces what has been said above in relation to enjambement and is another way in which the effect of prolongation is created in the poem.

#### Conclusion

In this article ideas have been presented relating to the way in which language and style have been used creatively in the poem *Macaan iyo Qadhaadh* by Axmed Ismaciil Diiriye 'Qaasim'. The lines of the poem were divided into

<sup>51</sup> Given that the metrical anomaly is just before the caesura it may be the case that there is some flexibility at this point in the line. This is a matter which would require further investigation.

<sup>52</sup> One final thought on the metre of these two lines is that there may be a relation between what is happening metrically here with what Banti and Giannattasio have mentioned in relation to the *masafo* genre in which they demonstrate that there is variation around the caesura (see Banti and Giannattasio, 1996: 97). In other words, it may be shown, after further investigation, that the two lines mentioned here are not so much 'wrong' metrically, as little used variations of the *gabay* metrical template which have yet to be brought to light in the work on Somali metrics.

<sup>53</sup> Note that the presence or absence of this vowel is not an arbitrary matter relating to the transcription of some particular performance of this poem. The vowel is the final vowel metrically in all of the lines in which it is present, and in the lines from which it is absent the metre still remains correct with another vowel present in the final metrical position.

groups on the basis of parallelisms of different types and deictic reference. This was done in order to show how these aspects of language use enhance the power and meaning of the poem itself, rather than simply being curious structural facets. The interaction of syntax and line ending in instances of enjambement was also considered and shown to contribute particularly to the prolongational structure of the poem as a whole. The individual instances of enjambement are prolongational structures in their own right. It was also shown, however, that the first two cases were anticipations of the final three lines, where the syntactic tension, created through the use of enjambement, is only resolved in the final line. The word which is the final resolution of this tension is *mar*, the verb. In previous lines *mar* (as the homonymic noun) had been used as a secondary alliterative word, whereas in the final line it is the main alliterative word. From the metrical point of view, the first instance of the noun *mar* was shown to be in the same metrical position as the final use of the homonym: the imperative verb in the final line. Alliteration was also shown to play a role in this foregrounding. Further on metre, suggestions were made regarding the intricate use of metrics in what appear on the surface to be metrically anomalous lines, namely 1 and 27.

Deixis was shown to be important in the way in which the poem engages with the listener. The use of pronouns and verb mood is crafted in such a way as to link the first line of the poem with the imperative section at the end. In light of this, the use of deictic reference in the intervening lines was also shown to contribute to the overall flow of the poem's dynamics.

In conclusion the poem can be seen to be an intricate structure which has been skilfully crafted (to what extent consciously or unconsciously one can only speculate) to enhance the meaning and power of the message within. Metrics and alliteration have been shown to be more than simply compulsory stylistic features, but to be something which, when creatively manipulated, become part of the poem's meaning. What is more, all of these aspects interact with each other in a complex but compelling way and provide us with insight into how the poem has the effect on the listener which it has continued to have since it was first composed.

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