

Early Anglophone Somali Circadian Short Stories (1965-1979): A Thematic Survey with Emphasis on Abdi Sheik Abdi

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I. Introduction

The use of English as a medium of expression by Somalis can be linked to two matters: the evolution of the Somali language and the universality of an English readership. The Somali language, *Af-Soomaali*, did not have a unified script until 1972 which made it problematic to write in Somali; but some writers, such as Duhul, Hurreh and Sheikh-Ahmed, had the option to write in English as they were from British Somaliland. The decision to write in English can be explained by the desire on the part of these poets and short story writers to be read by non-Somalis in order to introduce them to a newly independent country and its culture.

A number of Somali writers employed English as a medium of expression, including poets like William Joseph Farah Syad, Abdurahman Gaileh Mirreh, Ismael Hurreh, and Mohamud Siad Togane; others used English to write short stories such as Nuruddin Farah, Yousuf Duhul, Ismael Hurreh, Abdi Sheik-Abdi, and Mahamoud Sheikh-Ahmed. Farah's first short story, "Why Dead So Soon?" (1965), published in *Somali News*, a now-defunct English-language Somali periodical, will not be studied in this essay as it is no longer available for analysis. All of the short stories examined in this piece are set in Mogadishu¹ during the early years following the independence of Somalia and are shaped by the era during which they were written. They also belong to the tradition of circadian fiction where the life of one character is traced during the span of one day, and, except for

Hurreh's "I, You, the Whorehouse," which is told as a first-person narrative, all of the other short stories are told as a third-person narrative.

In essence, this article is a continuation of David Beer's "Aspects of Somali Literature in European Languages" (1983) which explores Somali literature written in French, Italian, and English, emphasizing poetry and novels. This present article, however, examines the short stories neglected in Beer's essay, especially Yousuf Duhul's "The Last Morning of Buttonnose" (1975), Abdi Sheik-Abdi's "The Luncheon" (1975), and "Rotten Bananas" (1979), which Beer deals with only in passing; in addition, this article foregrounds two texts that were not referred to in Beer's essay, namely Mahamoud Sheikh-Ahmed's "The Great Raid" (1965) and Ismael Hurreh's "I, You, the Whorehouse" (1968).

II. Mahamoud Sheikh-Ahmed's "The Great Raid" (1965)

Mahamoud Sheikh-Ahmed's "The Great Raid," a two-page short story, was published in the first issue of *Dalka*, a monthly English-language periodical published in Mogadishu. Though Sheikh-Ahmed published a number of short stories in *Dalka* over the period of two years, "The Great Raid" is his first published short story. It is worth noting that he also wrote a number of essays including "Barre's Secret Plan to Exterminate Opposition in Somalia," "Tutu Defuses Anti-Apartheid Fury by Emphasizing Christian Love," and "Taba Marks Mubarak's Complete Surrender to the Zionist-Occupiers of Palestine," all published in *Issues in the Islamic Movement*.

The first paragraph of the story puts into contrast those who own homes and those who do not: "as the demands of the siesta claimed the well-fed from the centre of town" and brought them into their homes—implying that those who stayed behind are neither well-fed nor with homes to go back to (17). As Omar Eby, a Mennonite Missionary in Mogadishu between 1957 and 1960, writes: "Everything downtown closed at one o'clock and stayed shut until four. We took a 'siesta' from two to three. At four, [. . .] the city was stirring back" (*Sense* 14).

The gap between the wealthy and the poor inhabitants of Mogadishu is further highlighted when rain starts. The destitute "pressed their backs against the outside wall so as to take shelter from the rain" whereas those who "could pay for a drink moved into the bar of the hotel" (17). The hotel's wall acts as a demarcating line between protection from and submission to the natural elements and between the

affluent and the poor; the character Abshir, himself a drinker, stays outside the bar because he could not afford to pay for beer.

As an elderly woman approaches the wall, Abshir “moved away from her with undisguised distaste” for he “detested beggars because they seemed to get away with anything” (17). The old woman also “hated his kind: the numerous unemployed young men who roamed the streets of Mogadiscio, especially those who had good clothes to wear” (17). The old woman, a beggar, thinks that “the money the poor beggars might have received went to [people like Abshir],” her disdain of Abshir obviously driven by her financial concerns (17).

“The Great Raid” is the story of a nomad turned city-dweller and his inability to cope with modern life. For Abshir, who has been in Mogadishu for five years, “the privations of nomadic life now seemed a blessing beside the cruelty, despair, the gnawing boredom of urban unemployment” (17). In order to cope with the challenges of modern life, he has turned to “beer [. . .] the blessed liquid” and “cigarettes” which were “expensive habits” especially considering that he was unemployed (17). It is because of these habits that he has decided to loot the local bank at night.

Abshir’s plotting of the bank robbery is inspired by his “regular visits to the cinema and the banks” (17); Mogadishu used to have more than a dozen cinemas, including El Gab Cinema, Africa Cinema, and Hamar Cinema where “they showed Hollywood movies dubbed in Italian” (Harding 49-51).² Thinking that he is the master mind in a robbery scene from one of the movies, Abshir pictures himself with “the thousands of blue, bewitching notes that he would skillfully and irretrievably remove from the bank” (18). Robbing the bank is, for Abshir, the ultimate answer to “all his problems [which would] vanish into thin air” (17) since the acquisition of all that money would enable him to be the one giving money to beggars which “alone would heal his wounded pride” that had been broken by his having to implore people for help (17). As much as Abshir’s plans are meticulously thought out, the “solid door of the bank” would not give in to his “banging” (18), and separated him from the loot. The lack of success was worsened by Abshir’s drunkenness, after his brother-in-law paid for his bottles of beer, which hampered his ability to envision a new plan (18).

As he stands helplessly in front of the door, Abshir is “alarmed” by a scream which turns out to be the woman beggar; once he comes upon her, he remembers “the story of an old woman who died not very long ago. She was a destitute as well, but later on a modest sum of money

had been discovered in her little hut" (18). Given that the bank robbery is a failure, Abshir thinks that the old woman beggar "would be loaded" like the woman who died (18). Looking at the woman beggar, he scrutinizes her belongings and judges that the money "would be wrapped in a little rag under her head" and "would see him through many a day" (18).

Putting into action his rushed and improvised plan at quick richness by killing the woman beggar, Abshir "kick[s] the old woman on the head and quickly pushe[s] her frail body away from the wall," suggesting that she might have died (18). Upon discovering "a small ball of cloth" inside "the little bundle that was her pillow," Abshir flees the scene and moves towards a lamp post where he could better discern the content of the ball of cloth (18). To his disappointment, when he unfolds the cloth, he only finds "a squashed, damp morsel of bread" with no money in sight (18). With such an ending, Abshir turns into a murderer and a thief as a result of a futile but consequential crime.

III. Ismael Hurreh's "I, You, the Whorehouse" (1968)

Ismael Hurreh, who later became Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation with the Transitional Federal Government, obtained his BA in 1965 with a novel entitled *Off the Somali Coast*. He then obtained his MA in Arts from Syracuse University in 1969. His only published short story, "I, You, the Whorehouse," was published in a volume focused on young writers in creative writing programs in the United States. The editor R.V. Cassill says in his introduction that the short stories in the volume "catch a great deal of the restless and troubled beat of our crisis years [roughly the 1960s]" and are "individual utterances [that speak] against the monotone of all conformities" ("Introduction" xi).

In a rough sense this describes Hurreh's story, which, although not particularly successful, inscribes certain aspects of Mogadishu in the years following independence. The story is a first-person narrative addressed at one point to an initially undefined "You," who appears to be someone referred to as the "High Priest" later in the story. The narrator, a former minor bureaucrat in Mogadishu with a preoccupation with purity and Islam, delivers a disjointed and confusing monologue about events that take place in Mogadishu; the monologue involves his relationship with a prostitute, acts of violence, and his obsession with gaining fame as an inventor, all of which are saturated with his per-

sonal and social grievances and often descend into misogyny and what seems very much like paranoia.

The image created of Mogadishu and the details that the narrator focuses on tend to be of the seedier side of life. For example, the protagonist Robleh emphasizes that the streets are filled with “only beggars and drunkards” (172), that “in Mogadiscio there are many who sleep in the streets” (172), and that “I found out that I wasn’t the only one going through these trash cans [. . .] Invariably they were looking for food or clothes” (181). The Mogadishu of the story is not an attractive one nor one that incorporates any of the positive sides of the city. But, this can be interpreted by Robleh’s lack of money since, as Iris Kapil, an American who lived in Mogadishu in the 1960s, puts it, Mogadiscio “was a delightful city, lovingly constructed and carefully maintained [. . .] and a good place to live, especially if one had a decent income in a hard currency and reliable ties to the outside world” (27). Robleh’s Mogadiscio is limited to the underprivileged and ill-kept part of the city that well-off Somalis and foreigners did not experience.

This, however, does not understate that the details that the narrator focuses on seem to be projections of his unbalanced mind. In fact, the line between reality and fantasy is not easy to determine, which could be the writer’s intention in depicting Robleh’s mind in disintegration. Nonetheless, if Hurreh was aiming for a kind of Poe-like tale in which a first-person narrator reveals his obsessiveness and paranoia in a convincing manner through, in part, the precision of his language and observation, he completely failed. However, the story has the value of providing some details of the Mogadishu scene at this point in time, which are not whitewashed and sentimental ones, but dark, disturbing ones of poverty, sexuality, and violence among the city’s underclass. Also, one can locate Robleh’s annoyance, irritation and verbal violence within a general sentiment experienced by a number of Somalis in the early years following Somalia independence; to quote Hurreh’s 1965 essay “Clean Minds,” were Robleh and other Somalis to voice themselves, they would declare: “We are angry. We are young [. . .] yearning for a warmer and a brighter future for this country” (20).

Robleh, the nineteen-year-old protagonist, describes himself as a former “office clerk” who used to be “diligent, intelligent, [and] hard-working” (170) but “didn’t go to the office for a number of days” (171). In explaining his descent from industriousness to negligence, Robleh blames “the soft bosom of [his] mistress [that] entic[ed]” him and made him “lose [his] coordination” (171). He proudly asserts that

he “steal[s] only from the poor: the beggars who sleep in the streets [. . .] but not from the rich” (172). In addition, Robleh keeps daydreaming of “the green dollar bills that would have cascaded into [his] pockets” and that would turn him into “a millionaire” (175).

Facing a lack of a better future and of financial stability, “the necessities [of Robleh and other Somalis] are pressing in this country,” to quote Hurreh’s “Clean Minds” (20); thus, desperate to achieve his dreams, Robleh has to “find new means to create [. . .] new means to challenge the stagnancy of [his] life in this country” (“Clean Minds” 20). Following the old adage that “necessity is the mother of invention” (“Clean Mind” 20), Robleh devises a plan, in which he will produce and sell “cardboard soles” that are placed inside shoes (174), strengthening the shoes and preventing them from wearing out too quickly. For Robleh, the cardboard soles represent not only a financial relief but also his legacy since “without them there would be nothing left of [him] in the world” (182). In his fear of his invention being stolen by anyone, Robleh “made it a point not to mention anything of [his] invention to anybody” (182).

It is this very fear of having his invention being stolen that works against him. After entering the room of Ebado, a prostitute that he frequents, Robleh “remember[s] that [he] can’t take off [his] pants without first removing [his] shoes,” in which case he will reveal his cardboard soles invention (182). Upon seeing him still wearing his shoes while having sex with her, Ebado is enraged and goes into the kitchen; here, Robleh is seized with fear thinking that she will bring “a knife” and “stab” him and goes after her only to find her bent over and crying (183). Upon telling him that she was hurt by his rudeness in wearing his shoes during sex, Robleh is moved by her legitimate hurt and decides to divulge his secret invention to her. Even though Ebado promised to keep it a secret, she ultimately conspired with her friend Fatima and stole Robleh’s invention, leaving him without his presumed path out of poverty.

As the story comes to an end, one is confronted with Robleh’s dreading of light: “As I was passing through the quarters with the street lights and paved roads. I was suddenly seized with fear [. . .] a morbid fear” (194). It is conceivable to argue that “the glaring lights frightened the wits out of” him (194) because they put him at the spotlight, making him the object of scrutiny and, even, contempt by Somalis who either are financially better situated or disapprove of his “mockery and contempt for good values” (191), including his frequentation of

the whorehouse. It is only when he “reached the whorehouse quarter where there were no street lights” that he calms down and feels at home “like a frightened cockroach scuttling into its hiding place” (194). One might say that Robleh becomes very much a part of the dark scene of Mogadishu in this image of the cockroach, associated with dirt and darkness as well as the image of the insect of Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*.

IV. Yousuf Duhul’s “The Last Morning of Buttonnose” (1975)

Yousuf Duhul was a Somali lawyer, critic and the publisher of *Dalka*, a Somali periodical published in English. He also authored *The Leadership Factor in Somalia and Singapore, A Third World Perspective* (date unknown) and *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon* (1982). “The Last Morning of Buttonnose,” a fourteen-page story published in *Okike* in 1975, is his only published short story, which traces the last morning in the life of Ahmed, a twelve-year-old Somali boy, while also exploring Ahmed’s attitudes toward religion, the “infidels,” his abject poverty, and education.

Characterized by David Beer as a story that “leaves an unforgettable impression on the reader [. . .] of the extent of poverty suffered by street boys” (419), the story starts by describing Ahmed’s house that is, in fact, one out of “five rooms into which the rickety building was divided” (11). Ahmed’s home is a “tiny room made of slum-impregnated wooden walls, flattened kerosene tins for a roof, and the Allah-spread dirt for a floor;” having a “cement floor” is considered a luxury that a tenant would “boast” about and that Ahmed would certainly welcome (11).

In one scene, while examining himself in a small mirror, Ahmed contends with the fact that he had to live with his nickname ‘Buttonnose’ — “the bridge [of his nose] was almost completely missing” — “just as he had to live with hunger” (15); indeed, Ahmed’s breakfast and only substantial meal of the day is “the usual piece of unleavened bread and black tea” (11). It is worth noting here that Ahmed’s tea, which is simply tea in boiled water, is not the celebrated, rich Somali tea with “the sticky aroma of cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and sugar” (Ramzanali Fazel 5). Whereas “the flavor of Somali tea borders on poetry,” as Eby writes in *Sense*, Ahmed’s tea, which probably tastes flat by comparison, encapsulates his utter poverty that borders on tragedy not poetry (14). Moreover, Ahmed occasionally steals “a couple

of bananas to stoke his ever demanding tummy" (23); this is revealing when, in fact, the first thing Ahmed sees in the morning is his mother's "dirt-stained basket, full of eggs" (11), eggs that he is not allowed to consume because they are to be sold in the market.

As he arrives at "the main municipal market at Piazza Rava," Ahmed, similar to other boys, starts "pestering—by the insistent offering of his carrying service—anyone who looked well-to-do and happened to have any kind of receptacle for purchase" (19). Nonetheless, given that the "full-time basket boys" claim to have "the exclusive franchise of carrying for customers in that area," Ahmed is met with their verbal and nonverbal violence including the time when, while carrying an American woman's merchandise, he is attacked by one of the boys resulting in a "sizeable abrasion on his left knee [and] the swelling of his left temple" (19).

Since Ahmed and the other street boys believe that "the Americans were the richest among the white infidel tribes," being hired by an American would mean a large tip of which the boys are in desperate need (20). In fact, Ahmed's assumption about the Americans was common in those days as Omar Eby indicates in a November 1959 diary entry: "Everyone thinks America is all skyscrapers and millionaires. And since we are Americans, they think we must be rich too. We can't convince them otherwise though we do live cheaply here" (*Sense* 126). Moreover, Iris Kapil affirms Duhul's description of the scene: "When a foreigner parked his car on the main street, 'watch boys,' all of them abandoned children, descended on him, saying 'I watch, I watch,' and he gave them the protection money in the form of small change" (32); watching a car, carrying a bag, or simply pestering people, foreigners and well-to-do Somalis alike, is how street boys earn their living—even if it means fighting over who gets the 'job.'

Unfortunately, Ahmed's desire for work is the cause of his "premature extinction on 5th August, 1967" (25). As he was gambling with "forty cents," approximately one third of "his whole worldly capital," someone nearby shouts "Hey, there goes Skinny," Skinny being the nickname given to the American woman because of her thinness (24); upon hearing that, Ahmed, remembering that Skinny "always gave him a generous tip" (21), rushes towards her only to be hit by a "yellow-and-orange" taxi (24).

It is all the more tragic that Ahmed dies at the age of twelve, in that he has an inquisitive mind that ponders about the value of education, life, the afterlife, and the Allah's peculiar treatment of the infidels and

the Muslims; his curiosity speaks of a boy whose views about life are shaped by his personal experience rather than by culture or scripture, views which could have led to the betterment of his life and that of others.

Regarding education, Ahmed, because of his interaction with his friend Abdirahman, a student at Ma'alim Jama's School, regards education as a threat to his manliness: "he despised schoolboys. They were sissies" (19); for Ahmed, schooled children would "take insults" from non-schooled children without being able to respond and fight back" (18-9), something Ahmed loathes. Nonetheless, Ahmed is also fascinated with education and admires the school boys' "capacity of deciphering the little black mark in their books [. . .] the crisscrosses drawn on paper" (18); unfortunately, given his poverty and that his father is not a businessman like Abdirahman's father, Ahmed could only wish to have "Aladdin's lamp" so that "the jinnee" would "teach him to read" (18). Moreover, unlike "many Somalis who were willing to learn English or Italian [in order] to gain employment in the colonial [or post-colonial] system"³ (Cassanelli 92-3), Ahmed's desire for an education is not aimed at "becom[ing] a cop, captain or for any such daft reason" but rather at being able to tell his friends "what the signboards on the shops announced or what secrets were hidden in the pieces of paper" (18). Wanting to be educated is motivated by a love of knowledge and by his desire for respect from his peers when he sees "others enviously shaking their unkempt heads in admiration of his singular ability" of reading (18).⁴

V. Abdi Sheik-Abdi's "The Luncheon" (1975) and "Rotten Bananas" (1979)

This part of the essay examines Abdi Sheik-Abdi's "The Luncheon" (1975) and "Rotten Bananas" (1979) in relation to *When a Hyena Laughs* (1994), all told from the third-person point of view. The main aim of this part is to underline that "The Luncheon" (1975), "Rotten Bananas" (1979), and *When a Hyena Laughs* (1994) actually have the same protagonist and that the two short stories are in fact part of the novel. In order to establish this, a study of characterization, settings, and themes in the three texts will map Olaad's journey from the area between Eastern Haud and Western Mudug to Galkayo and eventually to Mogadishu.

Abdi Sheik-Abdi is a fiction writer and a critic who holds a BA and MA in English Literature and African Studies from the State University

of New York and a PhD in African History from Boston University. In the preface to *When a Hyena Laughs*, Sheik-Abdi indicates that “work on this novel started in 1970 and was completed in 1976; while some minor revisions and alterations were undertaken in 1994” (xiii); nonetheless, in his biographical note at the end of “The Luncheon,” Sheik-Abdi states that “he has completed a novel” (66). These two pieces of information highlight that, by the time Sheik-Abdi published his two short stories, his novel was either completed or about to be; this inference will be crucial in situating the two stories within the general narrative/storyline of the novel.

A. Characterization and Plot

One of the main common points between the three texts is that the three protagonists are all named Olaad; in *Hyena*, the name is spelt ‘Olaad with an apostrophe. A study of their characterization helps determine whether the three protagonists refer to the same character or not.

First of all, in *Hyena*, Olaad is described as being fourteen years old (76) and the son of Au-Hersey Muse (2). Au-Hersey Muse has been married to Marian, his second wife, for twelve years, “beginning in the middle of the first spring following his return to the ‘Eed” (3); before that, Muse “kept [a] shop in Galk’ayo for fifteen years” (45). Since a “narrative always represents one or more events” in a sequence (Prince 60), these three events highlight that Olaad was born in Galkayo to Muse’s first wife. Second of all, in “The Luncheon,” Mahamud Tahliil explains to his wife Asha why he wants to help Olaad: “His father is a most generous man. He was like a big brother to me in my youth when he kept a shop in Galkayo. Besides I do not think that Au-Hersey’s son would steal from anybody” (59). Mahamud Tahliil’s exchange with his wife stresses Olaad’s lineage: Olaad’s father owned a shop in Galkayo and he was named Au-Hersey; these two pieces of information set the link between Olaad of *Hyena* and Olaad of “Luncheon” as being the same character. Finally, in “Rotten Bananas,” Olaad is described as “hav[ing] travelled hundreds of miles in search of” his mother (186) and only gets help from “a fellow northerner” (184), locating him within the general area from which Olaad in *Hyena* and “Luncheon” comes.

In order to further highlight that the three Olaads are the same, one can examine the ends of the three texts which are basically the same, having Olaad running away from acquaintances or relatives; this highlights common traits between the three Olaads—their inability to constructively cope with problems, their passive nature, and their resort to flight whenever challenged. Firstly, following the death of his uncle in Galkayo, Olaad is described as follows: “Farah simply watched in amazement as ‘Olaad bolted out of sight” (*Hyena* 206). Secondly, when Asha tells Mahamud Thaliil that she caught Olaad trying to steal money and that he tried to rape her, Olaad simply “rose to his feet and left the hut without a word” (“Luncheon” 66). Lastly, when his mother Rughio does not offer him the assistance he expects, “Olaad finally turned on his heels and ran, hardly pausing until he was out of Scuraran” (“Bananas” 187).

By examining the way Olaad acts, the dreams he has, and the way in which he expresses his feelings, one can trace common features that locate the three texts within the same narrative about an identical character. In this respect, all three characters can be categorized as being “flat characters,” that is, “endowed with one or few traits and highly predictable in behaviour” (Prince 31). Throughout *Hyena*, “Luncheon,” and “Bananas,” Olaad only wants to be a city dweller and enjoy modern-day comforts including different varieties of food: “Once he found his rich relations there, he could rest assured that he would be surrounded with luxury the rest of his days” (*Hyena* 108), “Why just a few notes of this bulging bankroll would see him to heaven” (“Luncheon” 62), and “it was high time that he found his mother and had a decent meal” (“Bananas 185).

Throughout the three texts, Olaad is driven by his desire to live in the city and to explore life beyond the simplistic nature of life in the camp. At the age of fourteen, Olaad decides to leave the ‘Eed and go to Galkayo on the “momentous journey of his life” (*Hyena* 155), and from there he goes to Mogadiscio, as portrayed in “Luncheon,” and “Bananas”.

Olaad’s journey starts in the ‘Eed camp located South of Gubad Range, West of the Haud area, and North of Mudugh Valley, which is half-way between the ‘Eed and Galkayo (*Hyena* 88, 150, 161). Olaad’s decision to go to Galkayo is motivated by the stories he was told by his Aunt Dahabo, who lived in Galkayo for a period of time before resettling in the ‘Eed, similar to Au-Hersey Muse. In one of the stories, Aunt Dahabo tells Au-Hersey’s children about the “toilet, a special

room inside the building which is equipped for the purpose of relieving oneself," and the "fancy little brush [. . .] with a soapy substance that makes their mouths sudsy" (*Hyena* 106-7); the image of the town dwellers can be contrasted with that of the Somali nomads, who relieve themselves in the open air "on yonder side of a nearby bush" and who clean their teeth with an 'aadi stick (*Hyena* 16, 107).

Aunt Dahabo also "describe[s] the infinite varieties of food and clothing the townsfolk had at their disposal" (*Hyena* 106), such as, "the 'anchelo, a fried cake" (*Hyena* 107); Aunt Dahabo points out to Au-Hersey's children that the townsfolk, who have already had their breakfast, usually return home at noon to have their "noontime meals," which includes drinking "either a glass of cool sugared milk or a bottle of orange drink" (*Hyena* 107-8). The people of the 'Eed, however, survived mostly on a monotonous diet of milk that was their "breakfast," "afternoon snack" and "supper" (*Hyena* 122, 84, 100).

Upon hearing Aunt Dahabo's stories about city dwellers, Olaad becomes "overwhelmed by the realization that he could easily enjoy all the pleasures that Aunt Dahabo had been telling him by simply crossing the few dozen miles that separated him from the town of Galk'ayo" (*Hyena* 108). Until he reaches Galkayo, Olaad is driven by a yearning for what the town has to offer; nonetheless, Olaad "was not impressed [and] could discern neither majestic archways leaning on verdant hills nor domed minarets beguiling the blue sky" (*Hyena* 196). Once Olaad is disillusioned by Galkayo, he shifts his attention to Mogadishu, which also proves to be a disenchantment for him, as described in the two short stories.

B. Settings

Hyena is set between the 'Eed and Galkayo whereas "Luncheon" and "Bananas" are set in Mogadishu, more precisely in Scuraran and Hodan respectively. It is worth noting that *Hyena* ends with Olaad leaving his tribesmen "without the least idea of where to go but determined to escape, nonetheless" (206); given that "the key to it [Galkayo] was in the hands of his own mother's city folks" (*Hyena* 138) who are now "hardly in a position to care for" him after his uncle died (205), Olaad could have returned to the 'Eed where he would continue his life as a nomad but he decided against that and moved to Mogadishu as shown in "Luncheon" and "Bananas." Olaad's decision is motivated by his reaction to Farah's face: "Farah's suddenly grotesque face

recalled to 'Olaad's unsettled mind all that tedious, stifling world he had been running away from in the first place" (*Hyena* 206); Olaad does not wish to lead the nomadic life anymore and Farah's face only reminded him of that which he does not want anymore. Still the questions that arise here are: How and why does Olaad continue south towards Mogadishu? Why does not he go north towards Garawe, Hargeisa, or Berbara? Why does he not go south towards Beledweyne? Why Mogadishu from all places?

Olaad's journey towards Galkayo was partially driven by his belief that his mother was there and that she would provide for him and also because he was escaping his stepmother who mistreated him: "Why continue suffering the slights of a contemptuous woman, the pangs of hunger, the parched throat or the burning feet when the first gate of paradise was merely a two days' journey away" (*Hyena* 138); thus, since Galkayo was not the heaven that Olaad expected it to be, his journey towards Mogadishu can be seen as his last resort to escape hunger, thirst, and maltreatment at the hands of Mirian.

Moreover, Olaad's travel to Mogadishu can be seen in light of an "advance mention" of Mogadishu in *Hyena*; an advance mention is essentially "a narrative element the significance of which becomes clear only (well) after it is first mentioned" (Prince 4). In *Hyena*, Aunt Dahabo tells Olaad and the other children in the 'Eed camp about one of her visits to Mogadishu: "You know, Muqdisho is such a big city with hundreds of cars, streets with lights that burn all night, stone houses so high and stately you cannot look up to them without getting dizzy, and cinema houses at every corner with strange mingling voices in many languages issuing from them" (80); Aunt Dahabo's description of Mogadishu triggers Olaad's "over-active imagination" into a day-dream where "he was standing under one of those street lamps [. . .] he was looking up, his eyes moist from longing, to a third story window from which a pretty perfumed girl's face was smiling down at him, enticingly" (*Hyena* 80). This early scene in Olaad's life might clarify why he continues south towards Mogadishu rather than returning to the 'Eed; since Galkayo was proven to be a chimera, Olaad might have remembered Aunt Dahabo's description of Mogadishu and wanted to enact his early dream about living there, enjoying modern life and finding love.

C. Order of the Three Texts

In "Luncheon," Mahamud Thaliil suggests to Olaad that he could earn a living "by carrying things for people, as was done by basket boys" (58); it is perhaps because of Tahliil's advice that, in "Bananas," Olaad is employed as a "helper" and "errand boy" (184) by a fruit-seller in Mogadishu: "Olaad delicately navigated the creaking wooden barrow [then] stood aside awaiting for his reward" (183). Moreover, in "Bananas," Olaad "envisioned his mother waiting for him with a sumptuous dish upon his belated arrival" (183) which highlights that Olaad had not yet met his mother before "Luncheon." Thus, the development of Olaad's storyline starts with *Hyena*, followed by "Luncheon" and then "Bananas." Moreover, following his mother's rejection in "Bananas," Olaad "turned on his heels and ran hardly pausing until he was out of Scuraran," leaving behind him the "inhospitable Mogadiscians" ("Bananas 187). One can extrapolate from such description that Olaad might be thinking of leaving Mogadishu and returning to the 'Eed.

Nonetheless, Olaad's journey from Galkayo to Mogadishu still poses some questions: How did Olaad know about Mohamud Tahliil? How did he know that his mother was in Mogadishu? Why did he not look for her immediately once he was in Mogadishu—having been in the city for more than five days? Why was there no mention of Olaad's mother in *Hyena* or "Luncheon"? The answers to these questions are presumably found in the material that was not included in *Hyena*; through a careful reading of the three texts, the author of this piece believes that there must be other short stories or chapters that Abdi Sheik-Abdi wrote but never published and that this presumed omitted material might shed some light on Olaad's journey from Galkayo to Mogadishu and on whether or not he actually goes back to the 'Eed.

VI. Conclusion

In brief, the studied short stories deal with the lives of characters in the span of one day, are set in Mogadishu, and are focused on the shattering of young people's dreams. In addition, they represent an early stage in Anglophone Somali short-story writing, which successive writers were inspired by and reacted to. While the early short stories deal with socio-economic difficulties in Mogadishu, subsequent short stories have dealt with female genital mutilation, dictatorship, the civil war, queer rights, Somali Diaspora, and refugees, among others, highlighting the changing socio-political environment in Somalia. Also, whereas early stories were about young men, later narratives are more diverse in their depiction of Somali society.

Notes

1. This article opts for the anglicized spelling of Mogadishu except in quoted material.
2. In a 1951 article, Mogadishu is described as having "nine 35mm cinemas, with a total seating capacity of 7.500, two of which are mostly attended by Somali audience, and there is also one 16mm cinema. [It also has] six 35mm cinemas, with 6500 seats. These give three performances a day, the others only one. All programs are changed three times a week" (UNESCO 313).
3. Andrzejewski highlights the same idea: "Success within this educational system offered substantial rewards in terms of opportunities for government and business employment" (109).
4. Iris Kapil reiterates the same idea writing: "the boys became literate in the manner of a merchant community; they read business related materials and the Koran and booklets about their religion. Reading for pleasure or general knowledge was not a highly held value" (92-3).

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