

**“Pen to Poet Is Weapon”—the Political  
in Abdirahman Mirreh’s Poetry (1976-1994)**

 Helmi Ben Meriem

---

***Abstract***

*This paper examines the political themes in three collections of poetry by Abdirahman Gaileh Mirreh (1942-2000). Motivated by what he witnessed in his native Somalia, Mirreh’s poetry is driven by his belief in democracy, freedom, and human rights. This paper explores how Mirreh’s call for a change in the Horn is rooted in his belief that stability and progress in Somalia can only be achieved by moving from dictatorship to democracy, from a focus on self-interests to an emphasis on collective prosperity, and from clannish to patriotic politics. Even when he was forced out of Somalia, Mirreh’s democratic convictions never waned and were strengthened by the effects of democracy that he witnessed in the West. This paper highlights how Mirreh’s political poetry can be perceived as a roadmap for the betterment of the political scene in the Horn.*

**Keywords:** Abdirahman Mirreh, Somali Poetry, Political Poetry.

*“Where is the pregnant quarry  
From whom young builders fetch stones  
To construct their own huts?  
Where are those volcanic ideas  
Which erupt like molten lava  
When they were thought extinct?  
Where is the tiger  
Whose quiet eyes  
House piercing vision  
No ordinary balls  
Can decipher?  
Why the Silence!!”*

*(Chinua Achebe,  
“Questions for a Silent Writer” 86)*

## **Introduction**

Examining three collections of Abdirahman Mirreh’s poetry, this essay explores Mirreh’s representation of Somalia in the late 1970s and early 1990s, focusing on the general themes of dictatorship, democracy, war, and the ever sought-after peace.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, Mirreh’s pen is still his weapon as it was when he advocated for his pastoral ideals.<sup>2</sup> In fact, as if responding to Achebe’s chastising reflection “Why the Silence,” Mirreh’s poems shatter the wall of silence by voicing a “piercing vision” for an egalitarian country where an inclusive and democratic future is what matters, not clannish politics.

Abdirahman Mirreh’s poetry is a call to all Somalis to persevere on this arduous yet utterly rewarding path because it is the only way forward if Somalis are ever to peacefully inhabit and develop their homeland and live collective prosperity.

### From Political Dictatorship to Political Violence

It is of significance here that Mirreh had to leave his native land due to the outbreak of the civil war that was essentially the outcome of the obstinacy of the tyrannical régime of Barre and its refusal to relinquish power. It is also worth noting that Mirreh’s poetry, which was written prior to the civil war and the collapse of Barre’s régime, did tackle the political dysfunction in Mogadishu, stressing his unyielding belief in democracy. Even though Mirreh describes the fear of being thrown into one of Barre’s detention centers for political dissenters in his poem “Frozen Feet/Hargeisa,” which tells of the infamous 3 am knock on the door (75)<sup>3</sup>, his faith in democracy outweighs his fears.

In “The Wadi Run Red,” Mirreh describes how the color of sand in “the wadi// had turned from//white to red” (54). The *wadi*, meaning a stream, changes color due to the blood that is mixing with the white sand, overpowering the white color and indicating the high number of people being killed by Barre’s forces. As the poem progresses, Mirreh laments the loss of not only people but also of what made life enjoyable:

We left the green  
hills we loved  
behind the citrus  
garden and fled. (54)

In this stanza, Mirreh juxtaposes two sets of colors: one is explicit and one is implicit. The first set of colors is bright and colorful: green, bright yellow, and orange, among others. The green hills and the citrus will continue to exist amid the red sand of the *wadi*, but only for a short period of time; they will give a counterbalance to the gloomy reality that surrounds them. Nonetheless, even the green hills and the colorful citrus will lose their lovely colors when no one tends to them, when no one

waters them, and when all that is left is the blood of those that cared for them once. Hence, the implicit set of colors is that of black, and grey, that is, the colors that would take over the area when it is deserted by its own people fleeing the violence.

The theme of death is further depicted in Mirreh's "The Horses Are Not Whinnying" which includes an apocalyptic depiction of life during war whereby symbols of life are subverted and made into marks of death and destruction: "The wadi ran red// it rained and rained// dusk to dawn" (55)—emphasizing the image in "The Wadi Run Red." At first reading, one is rather puzzled by the two dictions: red, synonymous with death as previously studied, and rain, traditionally a sign of life and prosperity—as will be subsequently studied in the section on nomadic life. It is not until the second stanza that one can fully appreciate the first stanza:

It rained and rained  
it rained bullets  
and bombs [.] I  
didn't hear the  
horses whinnying. (55)

The rain is not that of water-feeding plants and streams, preserving the colorful gardens, and quenching the thirst of those whose "mouths [were] dry" ("The Wadi Run Red" 54). This rain is one of death that drops on the heads of Somalis trying to seek safety and refuge. Bullets and bombs fall from the sky from "dusk to dawn" as airplanes release their loads and as snipers on nearby hills take aim at those running away from them. As this apocalyptic rain continues, the soft neighing of horses ceases to be heard and their natural sounds are replaced by the artificial thuds and echoes of bombs. The new reality gets even more disturbing:

I heard them scream  
and I thought the  
earth’s face was being  
torn. (55)

As the bombs keep falling, the soft neighing of horses is replaced by screams, indicating, among many other things, the shift from peacefulness to violence, and from life to death. Acting as a sort of a barometer for what it is to come, and for what will cease to be, the loud screams, which come to replace the soft neighing, are like an earthquake that shatters the persona’s existence and his surroundings. The earth’s face being torn can be seen to symbolize the lives of Somalis as they are torn away from their homeland or as they are torn between staying amid the killing or seeking refuge somewhere else.

### **Foreign Powers’ Role in Violence**

In this respect, when Mirreh ventures on writing about the violence, he does not only criticize the régime per se but also directs his attacks on the powers that either directly or indirectly supported the régime. For example in his April 1989 poem, Mirreh observes:

Let’s hope that no  
weapon-delivery to  
my country  
and yours. (“Perestroika from the Past” 46).

This stanza is preceded by two other stanzas in which Mirreh express his desire for the Russians and the Americans to leave Somalia “in the cold” (“Perestroika from the Past” 46) which in essence means the act of not interfering in Somali internal affairs. It is here that the third and last

stanza of the poem is a call for no armament by any foreign power of any of the warring factions in Somalia.

Furthermore, in “America,” Mirreh directs his criticism specifically at the American government for its role in the civil war, in the bloodshed that befell the country, and, in the refugee crisis. In “Industrial World—an Eye Witness,” Mirreh points an accusing finger at developed countries in general for selling weapons to the General (70). In the first stanza of “America,” a comparison is set between the trees as they were prior to the war and during it: “The trees that once// bore juicy fruits// are now oozing blood” (87). By juxtaposing two diametrically-opposite semantic fields, the poem further emphasizes, as one finds in the following stanzas, how the American government was partially responsible for replacing life—seen in juicy fruits—with death and blood.<sup>4</sup>

The description of the war invokes the agony of the individuals, “innocent women//and children” (87), who were afflicted by “your [USA]//bullets and bombs” (87), and whose blood “dried in the//African sun” (87) leaving a constant reminder of the effects of American arms. From 1977 until 1989, the US government offered the Somali government around \$1 billion in US military and economic aid, third of which was devoted to arms transfer (Hartung 2); those arms were later used “to repress and kill Somali citizens with great embarrassment to the Reagan administration in 1988” (Qassim Ali 546).

It is because the Somalis’ blood is on the hands of foreign powers, including the Soviet Union and the US, that “America” expresses the desire that the blood of Somali victims “flow[s]” to the “doors of Capitol Hill,” to “the White House,” and to the “Congress steps” (87); the citation of the executive and legislative branches of the US government asserts that both branches of the government were involved in the war and deaths in Somalia and that the legislative branch did not fulfill its duty of balance

and check. The argument is taken even further by emphasizing the wish for the blood to flow:

To the doorsteps  
of every house,  
so that all you in America  
could smell the  
stench. (87)

The poem affirms that the American citizens are to be blamed just as their government should be because they did not stop military aid to Somalia early enough. When they “could see what [their]// aid has done” (87), they would urge their government to cease its aid to Somali régime and any other similar régimes<sup>5</sup>. Mirreh’s inculpating of citizens in the ill doings of their government is consistent with his vision of the world, that every individual has a responsibility in the protection of others regardless of origins, race, religion, or any other demarcation—as will be examined in the following part on Mirreh’s philosophy about life<sup>6</sup>.

### **A Call for Action to all Somalis**

Yet despite the ravages of war, there is still a deep sense of belonging to the land and an emotional connection that transcends borders and time. For instance, in “In Love with Grass,” the persona refuses to leave his motherland despite the war: “Why should I run away//and leave you naked//for the greedy General . . .” (39). The idea of nakedness is both literal and metaphorical. Without those defending it, Somalia becomes unprotected and exposed to those who wish it ill. By staying in Somalia, the persona desires to shield Somalia from any harm that might be lurking around; in juxtaposing the nakedness of Somalia with the greediness of the General, the scene becomes evocative of rape, Somalia as being defiled and violated by a hunger and lust for power.<sup>7</sup>

In the following stanzas, the persona directs his attack against those who left Somalia prey to the General, war, and destruction, criticizing the “weakling [who] deserted” Somalia and “the cowards [who] refused” to stay and resist (39). His main criticism is linked to the fact that those Somalis did not choose to face and “tame the storm” of war (39) but rather opted to flee to safety leaving their motherland falling apart. It is here that one of the main criticisms leveled by Mirreh is explored, in what Nuruddin Farah called, “blamocracy.” In *Yesterday, Tomorrow: Voices from the Somali Diaspora*, Farah observes that “being blamocrats par excellence, Somalis do not locate themselves, as individuals, within the geography of the collective collapse, but outside of it” (188); in his “The Last Ride,” Mirreh explores blamocracy in Somalia:

The citizens wait too long,  
for the redeemer or ancestral ghost  
to arrive or appear in the night  
but neither comes. (64)

Instead of pro-actively engaging in countering dictatorship and violence, a number of Somalis, as the persona indicates, opted for passiveness and relied on supernatural powers to alleviate their misery. When those supernatural powers did not materialize, those Somalis left the country, not realizing the consequences of not resisting the elements of war and not trying to create bridges between warring factions. Afterwards, those same Somalis lamented the fall of the country, the destruction that befell towns and cities, and the rule of disorder rather than law and order; Mirreh insists that one of the most crucial steps towards stabilizing the country is, as put by Ahmed Qassim Ali, to admit that “the responsibility for the present tragedy lies in the first place on Somalis themselves [and which was exacerbated by] foreign governments” (537)<sup>8</sup>.



### **Losing Home: From Citizens to Refugees**

The war’s effects are not limited to Somalia proper but also affect Somalis who have chosen to escape it; as warring factions battled over power, refugees took to the borders and were forced into the four corners of the world.<sup>9</sup> The issue of refugees and asylum seekers in Mirreh’s poetry reflects on how and why Somalis were not helped and assisted by other Muslim countries especially richer ones such as Saudi Arabia. In “False Claim,” which Mirreh partially wrote in 1991 in *Harta Sheikha* Refugee Camp (Southeast of Jijiga, the Somali Region, Ethiopia), he sharply criticizes the Saudis for their passiveness vis-à-vis the Somali crisis:

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
is a Moslem land  
‘it is the guardian  
of the Islamic shrine’.  
Moslem refugees are being killed  
day after day  
by bullets, hunger and diseases. (38)

The two opening stanzas contrast two facets of the Saudi Kingdom: being the custodian of the sites holy to all Muslims and being supine in the face of the plight of Muslim refugees. If Saudi Arabia is to be true to its duties towards Muslims, it would have helped Muslims in needs and not stand by as they suffer and die. Prophet Mohammed said: “A Muslim is a brother to a Muslim. He should neither deceive him nor lie to him, nor leave him without assistance...” [At-Tirmidhi] (Al Nawawi, 97, my translation). Instead of following the ordinances of the Prophet of Islam by assisting and relieving the anguish of fellow Muslims, “Saudi’s billions are lying in America’s banks//the Emirs are enjoying champagne and//women in their villas in Egypt and Spain” (Mirreh, “False Claim”

38): along the same lines, Nuruddin Farah writes in "Praise the Marines? I Suppose So": "I will spare you my outrage at the Arab, the Muslim and the non-aligned league of which Somalia is a member. They are not worth my bother" (qtd. in Qassim Ali 550).

Indeed Mirreh's condemnation of Muslim countries and Farah's outrage at them in general and Saudi Arabia in particular are genuine and justifiable because Saudi Arabia not only failed its duty in helping Muslims in need but also knowingly assisted the tyranny regime in Mogadishu that kills its own people. In fact, it was reported that, Siad Barre's regime received \$70m provided by Saudi Arabia for the war effort "to ensure that Barre did not side with Iraq" (Drysdale "Forward" 4).

Moreover, the Saudis not only financially assisted Barre, but also were the cause of the death of a number of persons as recounted by Mohamud Ege: "One poor group of Somalilanders who had been deported from Saudi Arabia at the height of the civil war were butchered with knives in cold blood at Berbera Airport by the government forces" (61). According to "Article 33" of *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, refugees shall not be expelled "to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UNCHR, np). Though Saudi Arabia is not a contracting state, knowing the danger, to which it was putting these individuals, it should have been the guiding line in dealing with any them.

Compared with the manner with which Mirreh describes the Saudis' treatment of Somalis, Mirreh's "The Greens Hills of Diri Dawa" stresses how any action of benevolence is appreciated—no matter how small it might seem; upon arriving in the Ethiopian town of Dire Dawa, the persona, who was "tired, sick//and frail" (19), expresses his gratitude for

the individuals who “nursed [him] through the nights// to health and hope” and who enabled him to “enjoy a cup of tea or two” (19).

In “The Naked Hills of Djibouti/Six Hundred and Fifty Kilometers,” Mirreh reflects on how Djibouti became a beacon of safety for those fleeing the war, especially in the northern regions: “I was relieved and//sighed as I saw Djibouti//lying before my eyes” (25); even though the landscape is “naked and barren” (25) and although the “volcanic rocks [on which the refugees walked, were] sharper than// butchers’ knives” causing “the feet [to] bleed” (“Fleeing”<sup>10</sup> 21), Djibouti’s plainness and ruggedness are still welcomed as an escape from death on the other side of the border. In this respect, it is estimated that “at the end of 1990 [Djibouti] was host to as many as 65,000 Somali refugees” (Bureau 14). Nonetheless, physical safety being guaranteed within the borders of Djibouti did not necessarily entail food security as Mirreh writes in “A Loaf of Bread”: “I walked the streets of //Djibouti not able//to buy a loaf of bread”<sup>11</sup> (83); Mirreh reiterates the same idea in “Just a Piece of Bread”: “yet there is a child on your earth [addressing the moon]//screaming in the night//for a piece of bread” (78)<sup>12</sup>.

Furthermore, to quote Afdhere Jama’s “Refugee,” “Fear guiding us ahead somewhere// We don’t care where we go” (15); instead of being a haven, Somalia becomes, as Warsan Shire describes it in “Home,” “the mouth of a shark” from which “you only run for the border” (n.p.). It is this fear of country turned against its own people that also made Djibouti a haven for Somali women who could at last be “breathing the morning//air fearing no rape” (Mirreh, “Naked Hills of Djibouti” 25). As with many conflicts, “women have become war casualties and rape has, unfortunately, become a common weapon of war” (Mohamed 438) and “rape was employed as a weapon by militias to humiliate and do away with opponents through attacking and dishonoring their women” (Haji Ingiriis, “Blessing in Disguise,” 318). The trauma of being raped and then being

rejected by family were part of the life of a number of Somali women as told by, for instance, Farhida and Maryan who were both raped while their family members sat helplessly by as gunman threatened to shoot everyone dead (Sheikh 80). As it is with many cases where the victim is blamed for what happens to them, Farhida was divorced the next morning because her husband blamed her for “accept[ing]” to be raped (Sheikh 80); thus, with the rise of rape cases, Somali women found life inside their country unbearable and some of them chose to become refugees—if only to escape being raped. Nonetheless, despite Mirreh’s assertion that Somali women feared no rape outside of Somalia, there were indeed cases of rape against Somali women in, for example, Kenyan refugee camps where 794 cases were reported between 1993 and 1999 (Sheikh 83). Nonetheless, as Miriam, one of the victims of sexual assault, asserts: “I pray for peace in Somalia so I can return to my home and to my parents. They will love me like before” (qtd. in Sheikh 82); which tells of a strong and unbreakable connection with the homeland that transcends personal trauma.

### **Adding Insult to Injury: Refugees Facing Racism**

A number of Somalis opted for asylum-seeking and refugee-resettlement in European countries and other Western nations—Mirreh is a good example of this trend. In “Dear Friend,” which he wrote as a response to a question by his friend Norris, Mirreh criticizes Westerners for not accepting refugees, akin to his criticism of the Saudis. Through this poem, the persona takes the reader through a twelve-line journey of peaceful and war-torn Somalia, and the refugee crisis.

The first stanza tells of times when the persona “lived in [his] country//freely like a sparrow<sup>13</sup>” (14)—a bird wholeheartedly exploring its environment unhinged by any fear; the sparrow’s peacefulness was abruptly interrupted when “you [Westerns nations] gave cannons//and

tanks to the//generals” (14). As with other poems, Mirreh affirms the role played by the West in the destruction of Somalia and other nations alike, through supplying arms to régimes intent on holding to power regardless of the human cost. Hence, the persona, a refugee in Norway, denounces the Westerners’ refusal of refugees: “Don’t ask why//I came” (14); he, like many Somali refugees, was forced out of the country because of the West involvement in the displacement of Somalis only to be not accepted in the Western world or being reprimanded for coming north. In her “Borders,” Shirin Ramzanali Fazel reflects on how Syrian refugees escaped “shelled homes//scattered limbs//and burnt fields” only “to reach, barbed-wired fences//where soldiers hold guns//to defend the border” from those seeking safety (45-6)<sup>14</sup>.

In “Out of Africa,” Mirreh continues his criticism of Westerners, more specifically, those he calls “the Norwegian friends” (23); the persona is employed as a janitor “cleaning toilets where//they piss on//the floor” (23). Given that a number of the refugees, Mirreh included, held university degrees, Mirreh seems to allude to a perception held by some Westerners that refugees can only do menial and low-paying jobs. In “The White Man,” the persona thinks that “at last [he]//reached the haven//of peace and democracy” (58); but to his dismay:

Racism is haunting  
me on your streets,  
buses and trains.  
The looks and  
the insulting words<sup>15</sup>. (58)

The main semantic field in these lines is that of the public sphere—streets, buses and trains—where an immigrant, especially from Sub-Saharan Africa, is more easily recognized as the other when compared, for instance, with a refugee from another European country. Marja

Tiilikainen asserts, in relation to her study of the experience of Somali women in Finland, that “they experience marginalization, unfriendliness, racism, unemployment, and also loneliness<sup>16</sup>” (272); it is worth noting here that the racism experienced by the persona was experienced by other Somalis in Europe as early as 1919 as Ibrahim Ismail writes in *The Life and Adventures of a Somali*<sup>17</sup>: “Fortune is the European: Wherever he goes he finds friendly stations where he can feel at home; but woe to the poor African [. . .] everywhere he goes he is despised and distrusted because of his color” (381)<sup>18</sup>.

Furthermore, a Somali woman, especially one who observes the Islamic garb, is doubly marginalized as the result of “Islamophobia” and “Afrophia” (Haga 45). Also, in relation to Islam and being a refugee the host country, Mirreh reflects on practicing Islam and celebrating Islamic religious festivities in his poem “Alienated Ramadan,” in which “the muezzin is forbidden//in the very same country to say//Allah is great” (57); compared with “A Ramadan Evening—Lover and Father,” one notices how celebrating Ramadan in the native country is linked to “be[ing]//at the mosque breaking//the fast” (1) and to certain traditions—such as serving special victuals, including “tropical fruits” and congregating with the family—with which Ramadan is devoid of its time-honored associations.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, Mirreh reflects on the disorientation suffered by refugees in the West in “Hiding Place,” which describes “a moslem man who owned a shop//selling the Koran-Kitab” as “he sipped his glass of beer//in a dark corner of the pub” (49). The persona, who immediately feels “so sorry for disturbing the enjoyment” (49), realizes that alcohol is a temporary solution to cope with negative and discriminatory experiences in the host country. It is due to the cultural confusion and the existential dilemma that “a large number of Somalis has sought to the bottle as the only alternative to drown their miseries” (Utteh 452). In brief, Mirreh’s poetry

encapsulates, what Asha Hagi Mohamoud told Nuruddin Farah, “a refugee is a person who is a country worse off” (qtd. in Farah, *Yesterday* 105).

### **Against all Odds: Building a Better Future**

Despite all the challenges faced by Somalis, one of the main ideas in Mirreh’s poetry is his strong and unyielding belief in Somalis being in charge of rebuilding their country, regardless of assistance, or lack of it, from any other country. In this respect, “In Love with Grass,” though at one point criticizes those leaving and betraying Somalia, still celebrates those who chose to stay and save their land: “And until death knocks at my door//I’ll stay and adore you” (39). The poem also condemns those who left asking: “who should move you [Somalia] forward?” (39); Mirreh stresses the symbiotic relationship that connects Somali individuals and Somalia, and also the duty of Somalis to care for and assist in the rehabilitation of their country.

In “Mother,” the persona details the actions that he should embark on in order to help his country. It is worth noting that he links “fight[ing] the tyrant” to “fight[ing] injustice in the world” (51) which indicates that local Somali freedom and democracy is part and parcel of the global inclination to embrace such values<sup>20</sup>. His endeavors can be categorized into two sets of actions: idealistic and practical. One of the schemes by which Mirreh desires to bring change is through his poetry as he expresses in “Remembering the Ugly General”:

I shall be rebellious [. . .] then with words  
with the brain and tongue God  
bestowed upon me  
with the ink and the pen I possess. (41)

Using his poetic craft, Mirreh perceives in his words a sword of sorts with which to counter dictatorship and war<sup>21</sup>; Mirreh's words are reminiscent of Safi Abdi's "Mahmoud Darwish, a Tribute", in which "pen to poet is [his] weapon" of rebellion (100). In this respect, Mirreh's emphasis on peaceful means—words, ink and pen—qualifies him as someone whose "passive resistance is only marking time, awaiting the kind of cataclysmic turn of events" (Bulhan 27). In other words, peaceful forms of resistance, such as protesting or poetry, are to be commended insofar as they can be productive and successful; if not, then, as will be subsequently examined, a cataclysmic event, such as mass killings and bombing, will push even pacifists into armed resistance.

Notwithstanding, as with many romantic and utopic individuals, the persona indicates: "I tried to change the system// from within" ("Mother" 51); similar to the persona in "Mother," in his recollections of life under Barre's rule, Somali doctor and politician Mohamed Aden Sheikh writes: "Many of us worked with and tried to take advantage of what we used to call the 'revolutionary process' in order to contrive new approaches and show new paths for development and growth to our deprived people" (15). Also, in his memoir entitled *The Cost of Dictatorship*, Jama Mohamed Ghalib relates how Ahmed Mohamed 'Silanyo,' Minister of Commerce, and Ali Khalif Galayd, Minister of Industries, "objected to the award of a fuel import contract to Abdi Hosh, considering his bid was far from the best offer" (138). In both cases, Barre "preempted most of [the] good intentions and the creative perspectives" that officials working for positive change from within aimed to enforce" (Aden Sheikh 15).

Thus, if those who are within the ranks of power, who are preselected by Barre, cannot bring change to the system, one can only wonder if and how a low-ranking civil servant can bring positive change to the corrupt system. Such actions and similar ones stress that the desire to change the system from within is plausible, but, as "Mother" indicates, change from



within is not an easy or always-applicable option for those wishing a better governance: “I know what happened//to Adan, Ahmed and//Osman” (51). Like the persona, Adan, Ahmed, Osman, Mohamed Aden Sheikh, and the two Ministers were either “dropped” from the government (Ghalib 138), “torture[d]” (Mirreh, “Mother” 51), or “periodic[ally] purge[d]” (A. Jama 241).

Despite knowing the fate of those who voice their opposition to the régime, the persona asserts that “I have to start where//they were stopped” (51) where the persona’s struggle is depicted as a point on a continuum that started with now-deceased activists and that would probably continue with future freedom fighters. The persona also stipulates that, since they “died for us” and “for peace [and] freedom” (51-2), he cannot but “follow//their steps” in an everlasting quest for freedom (52).

For instance, in “Mujahid,” Mirreh expresses the same idea: “And we shall pick up our guns” and go “to the fields// fighting again” (44); there is continuity in the struggle for freedom and death only stresses the need to persist in the struggle. For Mirreh, martyrs for freedom are like “a spark that//set the forest aflame” (“A Northern Man”, 27) and that “ignited the whole” tyranny and cruelty of Barre’s régime (“A Northern Man”, 27); in fact, Mirreh’s image of the spark corresponds to another Somali poem with the same image: “I am the blazing fire//lighting your way//even as I burn to ashes”<sup>22</sup> (qtd. in Bulhan 27). It is of paramount importance here to stress that Mirreh’s call for armed struggle is addressed to those who believe in the ideals of freedom and democracy; Mirreh, in the words of Mohamed Haji Ingiriis, opposes “arms without idea [which have] led to anarchy and atrocity” (*Suicidal* 221) and believes in armed struggle for a just cause—democracy for all and freedom regardless of clan-affiliation. For Mirreh, freedom fighting does not exclude members of Barre’s clan because “not all of them were involved” and thus some of them can be part of struggle for freedom (“An African

Fascism” 11)—emphasizing his refusal of blanket accusations of any segment of the political scene in Somalia.

Nonetheless, it is because of Mirreh’s call for no arms to be delivered to Somalia that Mirreh’s advocacy for armed struggle against Barre seems to be an oddity in the general non-violence doctrine that imprints his poetry. Still, Mirreh only supports taking to arms as both the last resort and only in self-defense. For instance, in “Remembering the Ugly General,” there is a call for a reversal of roles:

With the guns you [the West] give to the general  
I shall strengthen my rebellion  
when I take the guns you give  
to the general. (41)

This stanza locates the speaker in a continuum centered on a developing principle that takes its initial point in his Mirreh’s early poetry. “Remembering the Ugly General” does not call on arms to be flown into Somalia but rather calls on appropriating the arms that are already in Somalia and on using those arms to counter the tyrannical régime—that is, turning the gun’s barrel to the other direction. Thus, Mirreh’s rejection of Western arms being exported to Somalia is not in conflict with using the arms that already exist inside the country to fight the oppressive régime.

### **The Question of Democracy**

Mirreh’s poetry not only dissects the war, its causes, and effects, but it also calls for democracy, one that is native and not imposed by foreign nations; Mirreh locates the question of democracy in Somalia within a framework that takes its start with the European colonization of Somalia. In “The White Man,” he condemns the colonizer’s destruction of the

colonies, stealing “the wealth” including “diamonds, gold, silver” (47) and also denounces how the White Man “built churches” even as he “forbade [the natives] //to worship [their] gods)” (46). Mohamud Togane expresses the same ideas in “White Man No fool” in which the persona deplores how the White Man “took away the best land” while preaching to the natives “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (20).

In addition to stealing the natives’ wealth and forcing a new religion on them, the White Man also denied that the colonized had any culture prior to his arrival: “You told me I had no culture” (Mirreh, “The White Man” 46); similarly, Nuruddin Farah writes: “In their homeland, the Somalis were seen as subhuman by the colonists”—lacking culture in the European archetype<sup>23</sup> (*Yesterday* 62). Nonetheless, while denying that the natives had any culture, the White Man still “exhibited [their] achievements//in [his] museums” (Mirreh, “The White Man” 46) as examples of how primitive the natives are; in his poem “Of Historical Ages” (1965), Ismael Hurreh also denounces reducing the natives and their history into museum artifacts: “The stigmata of historical ages//My head has become a museum piece//Sold in hard cash and stored//In London” (16).

This criticism of the White Man’s erasing of the natives’ culture is essential in understanding Mirreh’s conceptualization of democracy; in other words, as Abdirahman Osman-Shuke, Former Minister of Education, asserts, “during the colonial administration, the traditional leaders had also lost the political power and respect they previously enjoyed” (148), and traditional institutions were replaced by Western ones. The colonizers’ suppression of the traditional systems can be related to the colonizers’ sense of supremacy over the colonized, assuming that the colonized had no culture, as Mirreh indicates, and thus no formal or informal ‘justice system’. It is this “introduction of colonial system and

application of laws based on foreign cultures” not native to the Somali setting (Osman-Shuke 148) that Mirreh rejects in “Roots/Democracy”:

Democracy we had  
before the white man  
came.

.....

No force was used  
to settle a dispute  
persuasion was the  
rule.

And now . . .? (84)

The poem affirms that the natives had their own democratic procedures that, though unrecognized by the White man, were functional and practical in solving internal issues; in fact, the persona’s celebration of Somali political traditions is also “partly as a result of Western disparagement of Africa as ‘a continent with no history’” (Mazuri 205). The persona in Mirreh’s poem is the epitome of what Somali historian Jaamac Cumar Ciise advocates for: “Publicize the good qualities which you have and the shortcomings they have [. . .] After that they will look upon you with admiration” (qtd. in Andrzejewski 108); by drawing attention to Somali traditional forms of governing, the persona publicizes and highlights positive elements of his culture that the colonizer ignored and judged as primitive.

The poem furthermore denounces the introduction of alien concepts such as “jails” and “police” (84) which imposed new forms on interactions amongst the natives and between the natives and the colonizers. “Force,” which is implemented through jails and police officers, was absent from any problem-solving until the arrival of the White Man; to solve a dispute, the natives would resort to the *xeer*, a set of customary oral laws,

which was seen as part and parcel of the natives’ lifestyle. Ali Jimale Ahmed stresses the same point in his “Annealed Symmetry”: “In times gone, under the shade of the *Yaaq* or *Muki* tree, // Word and action were annealed in symmetry // After a meandering verbiage has run its course” (30); verbiage, that is the art of conversing and persuasion, was the tool to solve a dispute—not force. It is worth noting here that the *xeer*, through its “decentralized polities” (Adam 219), addresses the issues at hand in a more “flexible” manner that “varies from place to place depending on circumstances and situations” (Osman-Shuke 159). Instead of a top-down procedure, whereby rules made in faraway places, are implemented regardless of the uniqueness of every situation, Mirreh celebrates the “localized” (Osman-Shuke) traditional pastoral democracy as more genuine and authentic to the Somali experience<sup>24</sup>.

In this respect, there are similarities between Mirreh’s “Roots/Democracy” and Ali Jimale Ahmed’s “A Proclivity for Suing” (1988). In Ahmed’s story, as a result of many visits to “the colonial courts,” Aw Maalin, though not “understand[ing] the language in use,” became “greatly fascinated with the procedures he witnessed” and “soon after that, he developed a proclivity for suing other people” (140); he would sue anyone for the slightest of injuries or offences and, even on his deathbed, he pleaded with his offspring to pursue his case against Geedi. In replacing native “persuasion” in settling disputes with alien colonial courts, Aw Maalin represents a segment of the colonized population that Mirreh fears it becoming the norm. As a matter of fact, Aw Maalin did not “refrain from practicing this alien tradition [even when] its propagators left this country for good” (142) because, as Jaamac Cumar Ciise writes, “the Western people colonized the Eastern people by power, but power does not endure [. . .] it is the colonization of thought that endures”—what Ciise calls “*Alistiamar Alfikri*, Intellectual Colonization” (qtd. in Andrzejewski 108); in order to contest intellectual colonization, as with Aw Maalin, “the colonized’s liberation must be carried out

through a recovery of self and of autonomous dignity” (Memmi 172) which is akin to what Mirreh advocated for.

In fact, the last line in “Roots/Democracy” alludes to what happened with the fall of Barre’s régime—a political system based on European notions of governance, if only in theory; “And now . . .?” is more of a consuming agony than it is a question waiting an answer. In other words, since “the successive Somali governments (1960-1990) continued the same policies and structures as the colonial administration” of neglecting or abandoning the *xeer* (Osman-Shuke 148) and since the Western model of governance failed, the poem ponders about the fate of the management of internal and external affairs of the country<sup>25</sup>. “And now. . .?” can also be read in light of the anti-Westernization sentiments that a number of colonized countries witnessed; indeed, Mirreh’s rejection of the European system and his praise of the Somali *xeer* can be linked to, for example, the Yemeni poet Mohamed AlZubair who wrote: “Behold Japan and what it achieved, neither emulating the West nor imitating it// Will the West be content with us [Muslim world] only when we shed our souls in his worship” ( qtd. in Elchadli 172, my translation). Both Mirreh and Alzubair believe in the preservation of the native culture and traditions and can be described as being part of the “indigenous intelligentsia,” whose “world view is founded on indigenous culture [combined with] their open hostility toward Westernization” (Bulhan 26).

## **Conclusion**

Abdirahman Mirreh’s poetry is driven by the poet’s deep conviction in democracy and the eradication of tyranny in Somalia. In the words of Abdulqadir Hersi Siyad, Mirreh can be seen as one of “the intellectuals given their analysis” and, “with knowledge,” fighting the “atrocities” of Barre’s dictatorship and the civil war (4). In his “analysis” of Barre’s dictatorship, the ensuing war and the hope for democracy,

Mirreh traces the root causes of the “trauma” and the “atrocities,” in order to create a road map for a future of “goodness”—and that is one of the key goals of Mirreh’s poetry. Mirreh’s poetry is like the light at the end of the tunnel, foretelling of a future where equality, justice, respect of human rights and democracy are the foundation for the good governance of the Horn.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Abdirahman Mirreh (1942-2000) was a native of Hargeisa, who published four collections of poetry, poetry—*Songs of a Nomad Son* (1990), *Songs of a Nomad Son, a Galool Tree Named Desire: A Collection of Poetry, 1990-1993* (1994), *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi* (1995), and *From an Acacia Landscape* (1996)— and two scholarly works—*Nomadens Stemme: Fabler Og Eventyr FraSomalifolket* (1996) and *DieSozioökonomischen Verhältnisse der NomadischenBevölkerung im Norden der Demokratischen Republik Somalia* (1978). The present essay is a continuation to “‘Pen to Poet Is Weapon’ — the Pastoral in Abdirahman Mirreh’s Poetry (1976-1994)” (2019) [*Somali Studies: A Peer-Reviewed Academic Journal for Somali Studies, Volume 4, 2019*, pp. 117-135] and “Further Thoughts on Abdirahman Mirreh’s Pastoral Poetry (1976-1994)” (2020) [*Journal of the Anglo-Somali Society, Issue No. 67 Spring 2020*, pp. 36-42].

<sup>2</sup> “Pen to poet is weapon” is a quote from Safi Abdi’s “Mahmoud Darwish, a Tribute” (100).

<sup>3</sup> Mohamoud Afrah describes the knock on the door as “the much anticipated customary ‘Three o’clock knock’ at [the] doors by the NSS [National Security Service] agents” (10).

<sup>4</sup> Shirin Ramzanali Fazel stresses the same idea in “Mare Nostrum”: “We [the West] have got amnesia no memory of yesterday// [. . .] Today we export ‘democracy’//The reality we use dictators//When we do not need them// We bomb them and their whole country//We make money selling obsolete weapons// [. . .] We create death agony displacement//Justified collateral damage” (56).

- <sup>5</sup> Other poems that explore the same theme are “Children’s game, Hargeisa,” “The General/The Donor/ The drought/ The Nomad,” “Lonely Old lady,” and “Industrial World—an Eye Witness”.
- <sup>6</sup> In a different context, Mirreh also criticizes Western citizens for being oblivious to the effects of their consumerism on individuals in developing nations: “Tropical fruits on the stand//the buyer doesn’t know how//they grew, or he doesn’t care.// Sweat and blood are smeared//on the skin, yet the taste is//sweet” (“Bananas on a Tray” 67).
- <sup>7</sup> Shirin Ramzanali Fazel reiterates the same idea in her poem “Mother: “Mother [i.e. Somalia]//I look at you//You are shaped//Like a womb//You are warm//loving//Generous//You are been chained//raped//exploited// [. . .] You are the endless pot//where greedy fingers//dig for more” (57).
- <sup>8</sup> In a 1965 article, Yousuf Duhul addresses the issue of blamocracy in post-independence Somalia: “We tend to blame foreigners for a lot of our problems [. . .] The final decisions always rest with Somalia. Criticism should really be directed at the responsible Somalis” (10).
- <sup>9</sup> For stories of Somali refugees, refer to *A Camel for the Son* (2001), which tells the stories of refugees in Kenya; *Somalia to Europe: Stories from the Somali Diaspora* (2011), which narrates the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe; and *Teenage Refugees from Somalia Speaks out* (1997), in which young Somali refugees and asylum seekers in North America tell their own stories.
- <sup>10</sup> “Fleeing” was republished in a different format in *The Silver Throat of the Moon: Writing in Exile* (2005).
- <sup>11</sup> In “Permanent Ramadan,” the persona bemoans how hunger becomes the fate of many Africans: “Nowadays we fast not//only a month but it became//a lifestyle.// . . . // who ordered us//in Africa//to fast hundreds of years” (63); the persona contrasts the act of voluntarily fasting for religious purposes with the act of involuntarily being starved.
- <sup>12</sup> In “Just a Piece of Bread,” the persona criticizes Man’s twisted logic and how Man is blinded by a desire for grandeur from seeing and addressing suffering on earth: “How much money he spent//to let his feet touch your soil?” when people are starving on earth (78).



- <sup>13</sup> Interestingly, the persona describes himself as one of “the thousand dead//shadows” (14) which can be contrasted with the image of the free sparrow in the first stanza. “The thousand dead shadows” could be a reference to all those who were killed in Somalia and who are embodied in the persona, the one who survived the killings. For more on the image of birds in Somalia as it is interlinked with ancient Egypt, refer to Ahmed Ibrahim Awale’s *The Mystery of the Land of Punt Unravelling* (61).
- <sup>14</sup> In “Hunger at Their Heels. . .,” Somali-Djiboutian poet William Farah Joseph Syad (1930-1993) reflects on how the grandchildren of Somalis, who fought and died on the side of the Free Forces, were subsequently denied access to European countries: “In South of France//The battle of the Point de Grave//The Somali battalion//Honoured the Free Forces// . . .//What in return//have received//The children of those//who enjoy the Everlasting sleep//. . .// Deportation//awaits them//in every sea port” (65-6).
- <sup>15</sup> Shirin Ramzanali Fazel also reflects on refugees being subject to racism: “We bring you friendship,//our human values, our culture with many dialects,//music, dance and strong, spicy food//like our character// In exchange we receive your hostile sneers” (“Rainbow” 1).
- <sup>16</sup> Ladan Affi reiterates the same idea in relation to the Canadian setting: “Somalis are increasingly facing individual and systematic racism which has made their integration much more difficult. In many cases, Somalis have been physically attacked and injured” (447). For more on this subject, refer to Abdi Kusow’s “Stigma and Social Identities: The Process of Identity Work Among Somali Immigrants in Canada” and Fadumo Warsame Halane’s “Somalis Living in Sweden: Forty Years of Ups and Downs.”
- <sup>17</sup> *The Life and Adventures of a Somali* is the memoir of Ibrahim Ismail. It is the first known text written by a Somali in a European language. It describes the life of Ibrahim Ismail, a Somali sailor, as he journeys across the world travelling to India, Yemen, Britain, South America, Tunisia, and France . . .
- <sup>18</sup> In “El Negro,” Mirreh stresses the equality between white and black people: “If the white man//thinks he is the//day//You should think//you are the night.//How could the day//be born without//the night?” (61).
- <sup>19</sup> In addition to the feeling of cultural loss, the Somali refugee, especially the parents, is faced with “estrangement” as it related to “different child-rearing

habits” (Tiilikainen 272) and different expectations from the parents and the offspring alike. In Mirreh’s “Ungrateful—A Daughter in Europe,” he reflects on how much care the father had invested in bringing up his children only for them to “laugh at him//because he is old [and]//bald” (15). In her short story entitled “The Story of Us,” Hannah Ali examines how the house in the West represents an extension of Somali culture and traditions and how that creates tension between the parents and the offspring: “When I step out of the house, I am no longer in *Soomaaliya*” (48).

<sup>20</sup> In his “The Fuhrer’s Ghost,” Mirreh writes: “1939 it started with the Jews//1993 it is starting with the Turks//the Slavs are the next// the bomb for the rest” (88). In “Mutual Trade,” Mirreh reiterates the same idea: “The truth is, we never learned//a single thing from the first//and the second war.// The truth is, we never learned//from Vietnam” (62).

<sup>21</sup> In his “Thoughts in a Night,” Mirreh stresses that the function of the painter and the poet, among other artists, is to “tell the//world there should//be no more wars” (15), that is to speak truth to power.

<sup>22</sup> Dr. Hussein Abdilahi Bulhan translates the full poem from Somali into English but without specifying the identity of the poet. The poem starts as follows: “Poetry is my wealth, //song is my nourishment. //My brain is prosperity, //dedicated to you, my people” (27).

<sup>23</sup> Mirreh also condemns the White Man’s destruction of Tasmania native heritage in his poem “Once There Was a Tasmanian”: “As the white man wiped out//the Tasmanian race// [. . .]// the white man is responsible//for the extermination of this race” (87). Also, in “Thoughts of a Dying Man,” Mirreh laments the obliteration of the Tasmanian people and their heritage: “the Tasmanian//man is gone his//ancestors’ graves//we can never find” (44).

<sup>24</sup> For a study of a localized and self-governed community, refer to Richard Ford and Adan Abokor’s research into the village of Daraawayne, 35 kms northeast of Hargeisa. “Participatory Tools for Peace Building: New Models for African Governance” (341-66) in *War Destroys, Peace Nurtures: Somali Reconciliation and Development* (2004).

<sup>25</sup> For a study on the viability of the *xeer* to address modern issues in Somalia, refer to Ali Moussa Iye’s “The Issa Xeer: Traditional Democratic System with the Potential to Meet some Modern Challenges.”

## **List of References**

### ***Primary Sources:***

- Mirreh, Abdirahman. “A Loaf of Bread.” *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 83.
- . “A Northern Man.” *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 27.
- . “A Ramadan Evening—Lover and Father.” *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 1.
- . “Alienated Ramadan.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 57.
- . “America.” *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 87.
- . “An African Fascism.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 11-2.
- . “Bananas on a Tray.” *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 67.
- . “Dear Friend.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 14.
- . “El Negro.” *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 61.
- . “False Claim.” *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 38.

- . "Fleeing." *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 21.
- . "Frozen Feet/Hargeisa." *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 75.
- . "Hiding Place." *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 49.
- . "In Love with Grass." *Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1990. 39.
- . "Industrial World—an Eye Witness." *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 70.
- . "Just a Piece of Bread." *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 78.
- . "Mother." *Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1990. 51-2.
- . "Mujahid." *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 44.
- . "Mutual Trade." *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 62.
- . "Once There Was a Tasmanian." *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 87.
- . "Out of Africa." *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 23.
- . "Perestroika from the Past." *Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1990. 46.

- . “Permanent Ramadan.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 63.
- . “Remembering the Ugly General.” *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 41.
- . “Roots/Democracy.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 84.
- . “The Fuhrer’s Ghost.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 88.
- . “The Green Hills of Diridawa.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 19.
- . “The Horses Are Not Whinnying.” *Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1990. 55.
- . “The Last Ride.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 64.
- . “The Naked Hills of Djibouti/Six Hundred and Fifty Kilometers.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 25.
- . “The Owner of the Land.” *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996.66.
- . “The Wadi Run Red.” *Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1990. 54.
- . “The White Man.” *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 66-8.

- . "Thoughts in a Night." *A Gob Tree: Beside the Hargeisa Wadi, Book Two of Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1995. 15.
- . "Thoughts of a Dying Man." *Songs of a Nomad Son*. Cirencester, UK: Tuba Press, 1990. 43-4.
- . "Ungrateful—A Daughter in Europe." *From an Acacia Landscape*. Ipswich, UK: Haan Publishing, 1996. 15.

***Secondary Sources:***

- Abdi, Safi. "Mahmoud Darwish, a Tribute." *Echoes of the Silent*. Columbia: Self-published, 2012. 100.
- Achebe, Chinua. "Question for a Silent Writer." *The Greenfield Review: 5<sup>th</sup> African Poetry Issue. Volume 8. Numbers 1&2*. Ed. Joseph Bruchac III. New York: Greenfield Review, 1979.86.
- Adam, Hussein. *From Tyranny to Anarchy: The Somali Experience*. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 2008.
- Aden Sheikh, Mohamed. "A Few Words on Somalia's Crisis: The Need for a Responsible Answer." *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for the Somali Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed. Hussein M. Adam and Richard Ford. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1997. 13-9.
- Affi, Ldan. "The Somali Crisis in Canada: The Single Mother Phenomenon." *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for the Somali Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed. Hussein M. Adam and Richard Ford. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1997. 441-8.
- Afrah, Mohamoud. *Target: Villa Somalia, an Eyewitness Account of Mogadishu's Fall to U.S.C. Guerillas Told by a Man Who Went Through It All*. Karachi, Pakistan: Naseem Publication, 1991.

- Ahmed, Ali Jimale. “Annealed Symmetry.” *When Donkeys Give Birth to Calves: Totems, Wars, Horizons, Diasporas*. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 2012. 30.
- . “A Proclivity for Suing.” *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 16(1). Los Angeles: James S. Coleman African Studies Center, 1988. *escholarship.org*. Web. 12 June 2016. 138-42.
- A. Jama, Mohamud. “The Destruction of the Somali State: Causes, Costs and Lessons.” *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for the Somali Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed. Hussein M. Adam and Richard Ford. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1997. 237-54.
- Al Nawawi, Mohamed. *Heavens of the Righteous, Words of the Master of Messengers*. Beirut: Ibn Kathir House, 2007.
- Ali, Hananh. “The Story of Us.” *The London Short Story Prize Anthology 2016*. London: Kingston University Press and Spread the Word, 2017. 43-9.
- Andrzejewski, Bogumił Witalis. “The Survival of the National Culture in Somalia During and After the Colonial Era.” *The Decolonization of Africa: Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa*. Paris: The UNESCO Press, 1981. 108-18.
- Brooke, Stephanie and Elyse Capell. ““Bye, Bye Little Snow Bird’: Using Art Therapy to Grieve the Suicide of a Father.” *Using the Creative Therapies to Cope with Grief and Loss*. Ed. Stephanie Brooke and Dorothy A. Miraglia. Springfield: Charles C Thomas Publisher, 2015. 41-57.
- Bulhan, Hussein Abdillahi. “The Captive Intelligentsia of Somalia.” 1980. *Horn of Africa. Vol. 3. N. 1*. Addis Ababa: Horn of Africa, 1980. *uniroma3.it*. Web. 12 January 2014. 25-37.

- Bureau for Refugee Programs (United States. Department of State). *World Refugee Report*. Washington D.C.: The Bureau, 1991.
- Drysdale, John. "Somalia: The Only Way Forward." *Journal of the Anglo-Somali Society*. London: Anglo-Somali Society, 1993. 2-10.
- Duhul, Yousuf. "Dalka Diary." *Dalka: The Homeland. Volume 1. Number 2. August 1965*. Ed. Yousuf Duhul. Mogadishu: Dalka, 1965. 10-1.
- Ege, Mohamud. *The Boy Who Learned to Read: The Story of a Boy Who Broke Free of the Poverty of the Somalian Nomad Life to Become a Doctor in the West*. London: Memoirs Publishing, 2012.
- Elchadli, Abdilsalam. *On Westernization and Experimentation: Issues in Contemporary Arabic Literature*. Beirut: Alhadatha Press, 1985.
- Farah, Nuruddin. *Yesterday, Tomorrow: Voices from the Somali Diaspora*. Cardiff: Cassell, 2000.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. Cornwall: Routledge, 2004.
- Ghalib, Jama Mohamed. *The Cost of Dictatorship: The Somali Experience*. New York: Lillian Barber Press, Inc., 1995.
- Haga, Rannveig. "'Freedom Has Destroyed the Somali Family: Somali Parents' Experiences of Epistemic Injustice and its Influence on their Raising of Swedish Muslims.'" *Making European Muslims: Religious Socialization among Young Muslims in Scandinavia and Western Europe*. Ed. Mark Sedgwick. London: Taylor & Francis, 2014. 39-55.
- Haji Ingiriis, Mohamed. *The Suicidal State in Somalia: The Rise and Fall of Siad Barre Regime, 1969-1991*. Lanham: University Press of America: 2016.



- . and Markus H. Hoehne. “The Impact of Civil War and State Collapse on the Roles of Somali Women: A Blessing in Disguise.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2013). London: Routledge, 2013. *academia.edu*. Web. 14 July 2018. 314-33.
- Hartung, William. *And Weapons For All*. London: HarperCollins, 1994.
- Hersi Siyad (Yam-Yam), Abdulqadir. “Society.” *Somalia to Europe: Stories from the Somali Diaspora*. Ed. Jawaahir Daahir, inter alia. Leicester: Leicester Quaker Press, 2011. 4.
- Hurreh, Ismael. “Of Historical Ages.” *Dalka: The Homeland. Volume 1. Number 2. August 1965*. Ed. Yousuf Duhul. Mogadishu: Dalka, 1965. 16.
- Ismaail, Ibrahim. 1928. *The Life and Adventure of a Somali. Africa*. London: Africa, 1977.
- Jama, Afdhere. “Refugee.” *At Noondays with the Gods of Somalia*. San Francisco: A Salaam Press Publication, 2004.15.
- Mazuri, Ali. *Violence and Thought: Essays on Social Tensions in Africa*. Bristol: Longmans, 1969.
- Memmi, Albert. *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Tr. Howard Greenfeld. Intro. Jean Paul Sartre. London: Earthscan, 2003.
- Mohamed, Hamdi. “The Somali Refugee Women’s Experience in Kenyan Refugee Camps and their Plight in Canada.” *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for the Somali Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed. Hussein M. Adam and Richard Ford. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1997. 431-40.
- Osman-Shuke, Abdirahman. “Traditional Leaders in Political Decision Making and Conflict Resolution.” *War Destroys, Peace Nurtures:*

*Somali Reconciliation and Development*. Ed. Richard Ford, Hussein M. Adam and Edna Adan Ismail. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 2004. 147-68.

Qassim Ali, Ahmed. "The Foreign Factor in the Somali Tragedy." *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for the Somali Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed. Hussein M. Adam and Richard Ford. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1997. 537-63.

Ramzanali Fazel, Shirin. "Borders." *Wings, Poems*. London: Self-published, 2017. 45-6.

---. "Mare Nostrum." *Wings, Poems*. London: Self-published, 2017. 53-6.

---. "Mother." *Wings, Poems*. London: Self-published, 2017. 57.

---. "Rainbow." *Far From Mogadishu*. Ed. Simon Brioni. London: Self-published, 2016. 1.

Sheikh, Fazel. *A Camel for the Son*. Berlin: n.p., 2001.

Shire, Warsan. "Home." facinghistory. [www.facinghistory.org/standing-up-hatred-intolerance/warsan-shire-home](http://www.facinghistory.org/standing-up-hatred-intolerance/warsan-shire-home). n.p. 11 January 2020.

Syad, William Farah Joseph. "Hunger at Their Heels. . ." *Khamsine*. Dakar: Présence Africaine, 1959. 65-7.

Tiilikainen, Marja. "Diaspora and Everyday Islam: Somali Women in Finland." *War Destroys, Peace Nurtures: Somali Reconciliation and Development*. Ed. Richard Ford, Hussein M. Adam and Edna Adan Ismail. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 2004. 269-78.

Togane, Mohamud. "White Man No Fool." *The Bottle and the Bushman: Poems of the Prodigal Son*. 1986. Québec: The Muses' Company, 1986.20.

UNCHR. “Note on Non-Refoulement (Submitted by the High Commissioner) Note on Non-Refoulement (Submitted by the High Commissioner) EC/SCP/2.” UNCHR New York August 1977. New York: UNCHR, 1977. *unhcr.org*. Web. 26 July 2018. N.p.

Utteh, Hassan Adam. “The Plight of Somali Refugees in Europe, With Particular Reference to Germany (1993).” *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for the Somali Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed. Hussein M. Adam and Richard Ford. Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1997. 449-60.

### **About the Author**

**Helmi Ben Meriem**, PhD, holds a PhD in English Literature, a specialist of Somali Anglophone literature, the University of Sousse, Tunisia. He is also a fiction writer and has published several academic papers.

### **About this Journal**

*Somali Studies: A peer-reviewed academic journal for Somali studies* is a broad scope multidisciplinary academic journal devoted to Somali studies; published annually by the Institute for Somali Studies in print and online forms. *Somali Studies* aims to promote a scholarly understanding of Somalia, the Horn of Africa and the Somali diaspora communities around the globe. Special consideration will be given to issues which are critical to the recovery and rebuilding of Somalia, a country emerging from a devastating civil war. *Somali Studies* is an open access journal and all articles are freely available to read, print and download from the website of the institute, [www.isos.so](http://www.isos.so).

**Disclaimer:** All views and opinions expressed in the article(s) published in *Somali Studies: A peer-reviewed academic journal for Somali studies* are the sole responsibility of author(s) of the article(s). It does not necessarily reflect those of the editors, the Journal, nor the Institute for Somali Studies.

Published by Institute for Somali Studies

Hodan District, Near Km4 Square

Website: [www.isos.so](http://www.isos.so)

Email: [isos@mu.edu.so](mailto:isos@mu.edu.so)

Tel/Fax: +252 1 858118

Mogadishu, Somalia