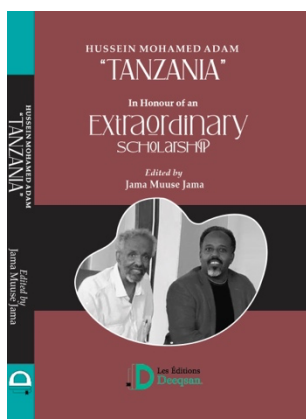




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### CHAPTER

#### **6 CONJUNCTIONS IN BELEDWEYN BY MOHAMED IBRAHIM WARSAME "HADRAAWI"**

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## CONJUNCTIONS IN BELEDWEYN BY MOHAMED IBRAHIM WARSAME "HADRAAWI"

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In this chapter I shall consider the use of the conjunctions *oo* and *ee* in the poem *Beledweyn* by Maxamed Ibraahim Warsame 'Hadraawi'.<sup>61</sup> I shall present some apparent syntactic anomalies with a view to considering how they work as part of the language specific to the poem itself and shall conclude with some remarks on the use in the poem specifically and in Somali poetry generally.

The poem was made in Mogadishu in 1970 (Mohamed 1992 : 29) and so is one of the earlier of Hadraawi's poems to become well known. It was famously sung by Xasan Aaden Samatar having been set to music by Cabdikariim Faarax Qaarey 'Cabdikariim Jiir'. The music he composed is particularly interesting in that it comprises not just a straight melody for the whole poem but changes according to the mood of particular parts of the poem. The poem in both its sung form and in its own right remains hugely popular and well known to the present day.

The main part of the poem narrates a love story which follows an introductory section which comprises a short and ironic dismissal of the power of love to affect people. He states that he held it to be a lie, an untruth, that love could affect people such that they feel it physically or even die of it, as is thought to be the case with Cilmi Boodhari.<sup>62</sup> The main narrative section begins with an elaborate description of the time and place with rich reference to the farms and the season of plenty in which the people find themselves in the town of Beledweyn

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61 The text used is that in Maxamed 1993 : 88-91.

62 Cilmi Boodhari is famous for having composed a series of love poems prompted by his unrequited feelings for Hodan Cabdullaahi in the 1930s. He is said to have died of love for her. His poems are important for the expression of his subjectivity and the manner in which he spoke about love in them. See among others Abdirachid (2017) and Jamal (2014) and references therein.

after which the poem is titled. This is followed by a vivid and hyperbolic description of the woman, called Beerlula in the poem, and the effect she has on the poet-narrator. They agree to meet the following day, but this is thwarted by him having to leave the town early with the troupe of actors and performers he is on tour with. This leads to a series of responses ranging from wishing something to stop them leaving to a brief reverie in which he and Beerlula are together. Following the main narrative section there is a final part comprising a number of supplications to God to bring good things to both Beerlula and Beledweyn itself. The poem is in the *jiifto* metre, a metrical form very often used in *hees* poems of this type, and which lends a specific sense of flow to the language in such poems as we shall see below. Given that the *jiifto* is a short-line metre, many of the lines are not full main clauses or sentences but are mostly syntactic units which are part of bigger main clauses. This contrasts with some other longer-lined forms, in particular the *gaybay*, in which most lines are end-stopped main clauses, full sentences, and in which enjambement is not common.

Turning to the beginning of Beledweyn, the first sections are presented below with literal translations line for line.<sup>63</sup>

|    |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Bi'i waa jacaylow<br>Boodhari inuu diley<br>been baan u haystee.                                                      | O love, may you live forever <sup>64</sup><br>That it killed Boodhari<br>I held for an untruth.                                                                                                             |
| 5  | Boog aan la dhayinoo<br>cidi baanan karinoo<br>beerkiyo wadnaa iyo<br>bogga kaaga taalliyo<br>inuu yahay bir caashaqu | O love, may you live forever<br>An ulcerous wound which hasn't been salved and<br>which no one can nurse and<br>which in the liver and the heart and<br>the side is present in you<br>that love is a weapon |
| 10 | been baan u haystee.<br><br>Webigoo butaacoo<br>beeraha waraabshoo                                                    | I held for an untruth.<br><br>The river which burst its banks and<br>watered the farms and                                                                                                                  |

<sup>63</sup> I have not attempted here to render the translations as good poetry in English in order to draw attention to the Somali language structure. This will hopefully help the reader follow the analysis if they are not very familiar with Somali language.

<sup>64</sup> I translate *Bi'i waa* in this way following Andrzejewski 1993 : 93. In that publication there is a translation of the whole poem.

|    |                         |                                                    |
|----|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
|    | dhulka baadku jiifoo    | the land on which the pasture lay and              |
|    | dhirta ubaxu buuxshoo   | the trees which the flowers filled and             |
| 15 | canabkii bislaadoo      | the grapes which ripened and                       |
|    | badarkiyo galleydii     | the grain and the maize                            |
|    | laga tuuray baalkoo     | from which the ears have been thrown and           |
|    | Bulladiyo ciyaaraha     | the <i>bullo</i> and the dances                    |
|    | lagu waa bariistoo      | which [people] spent the night [performing] and    |
| 20 | beeluhu gu'joogaan      | the communities are in the rainy season            |
|    | sow beri-samaadkii      | did I not, during the time of richness             |
|    | Beled-Weyne maan tegin. | go to the town of Beledweyn?                       |
|    | Dhanka bari magaalada   | On the east side of the town                       |
|    | sow boqorad joogtoo     | did I not [meet] a queen who is there and          |
| 25 | biyo dahab la moodoo    | who one thinks is water of gold and                |
|    | bilicdii haweenkiyo     | in whom the beauty of women and                    |
|    | bili loo dhammeeyoo     | good fortune was completed and                     |
|    | timo boqonta joogoo     | hair which was at the Achilles tendon and          |
|    | baal gorey la moodoo    | which seemed to be a male ostrich feather and      |
| 30 | baarkana casaankii      | which on the top the redness                       |
|    | bidix midig is gaadhoo  | reached from left to right and                     |
|    | bul-cad lagu xiddeeyoo  | which had been decorated with <i>bul-cad</i> and   |
|    | badh ku seexanaysoo     | on half of which she is sleeping and <sup>65</sup> |
|    | barkanaysa qaaroo       | on [another] part she is resting her head and      |
| 35 | huwanaysa baaloo        | with a side [of which] she is covering herself and |
|    | igu beertay lahashoon   | who planted in me longing and                      |
|    | u buseelay maan baran.  | whom I desired, meet? <sup>66</sup>                |

We see in these sections extensive use of the conjunction *oo* but begin with what seems to be the first instance of a conjunction, namely *ee* at the end of line 3. This use immediately throws up a problem however since there is no conjunct following it. I assume this to be an example of use of this conjunction determined by the metre. With respect to the grammar

65 In this and the next two lines, the tense changes to present progressive. This is reflected in the translation and is an interesting feature which will be mentioned below.

66 The verb is at the end of the sentence, that is at the end of the section. I added it also in line 24 in square brackets to make the meaning clearer in English.

of the language, what is expected here is a verb ending, presumably the past tense ending *-ay* giving *been baan u haystay* 'I held for an untruth'. However, the use of this diphthong would, I suggest, break the metre. Despite what the literature on metre published up to now says, namely that open-syllable diphthongs may count as long or short, there do seem to be some constraints on when and where such syllables may count as long or short (a feature of Somali metre I am currently working on for a forthcoming publication).<sup>67</sup> One such instance seems to be this particular metrical position in the *jiifto* line where the verb ending *-ay* seems only to be perceived as short hence the use of a pure long vowel instead.<sup>68</sup> The line is repeated as line 10. More research needs to be put into this as I sense that the *-ee* might not be interpreted as the conjunction as such and pose the question as to whether it might be related to the use of *-e*, often found at the end of the *gabay* line. Alternatively, it may be a simple substitution. There are varieties of Somali in which the pure long vowel /ee/ is pronounced where in others the diphthong is found such as in the word *ahayd* 'she was' which is pronounced as *aheed* in some varieties.<sup>69</sup> We shall see another instance of the use of *ee* below in which it is actually used as the conjunction.

The second verse paragraph (lines 4-10) is syntactically parallel to the first. However, what is 'held to be a lie' here is not just the line with the complementizer clause (line 9) but this along with the four preceding lines, the first two of which end in *oo* (5 and 6) and the other two of which (7 and 8) end with the nominal coordinating conjunction *iyo*. Each occurrence of both of these conjunctions can be accounted for syntactically as can be shown by rewriting the words as follows :

Inuu caashaqu boog [aan la dhayin] oo [cidi baanan karin]  
oo [beerka iyo wadnaha iyo bogga kaaga taalla] iyo bir  
yahay been baan u haystee.

67 This characteristic of diphthongs was first pointed out in Maxamed (1976) though was not picked up in the subsequent literature.

68 I am grateful to Xasan Daahir Ismaaciil 'Weedhsame', who pointed out this feature of *jiifto* metre to me after I made this mistake in a poem I had written in Somali myself. The line in question is the first in the poem 'Sannadkaa carraabay' 'The year has gone home at the end of the day' (it was for the new year of 2016). He pointed out that the *-ay* at the end was weak and that it should be changed to 'Sannadkaa carraabee' because of the metre despite the fact that *-ee* is not a verb ending.

69 It is important to note that here it is in a closed syllable which does make a difference.

In this *boog* 'ulcerous wound' is the head noun with a sequence of relative clauses, enclosed by square brackets, giving a noun phrase which is conjoined with the noun *bir* both of which are the complement of the verb *yahay* 'it is'.<sup>70</sup> We see here that *oo* is used in a straightforward manner as a conjunction joining the relative clauses. Removing the relative clauses associated with *boog* gives the simplified version below which again is syntactically straightforward.

Inuu caashaqu boog iyo bir yahay been baan u haystee.  
'That love is an ulcer and a weapon I held to be a lie'.

Moving on we see in the next verse paragraph extensive use of *oo* which is at the end of seven out of the twelve lines. The single main clause in this section, a negative question, is expressed in lines 21 and 22. All that precedes these lines is a sequence of head nouns and relative clauses. Looking carefully at the way these are presented though, we find the use of *oo* is interesting and not always grammatically straightforward. The beginning of this sequence (lines 11-12) does conform to what we know of Somali grammar. The noun *webiga* 'the river' is a defined head noun followed by *oo* and a relative clause comprising the single verb *butaacay* 'burst its banks' (the relative clause is appositive in this case given the use of *oo* following *webiga*).<sup>71</sup> The verb *butaacay* is followed by another instance of *oo*, which leads to the expectation of another relative clause on the same head noun which is what we find in line 12 with the relative clause *beeraha waraabshay* 'which watered the farms' (having removed the instance of *oo* at the end of that line). In each of these the head noun *webiga* is the subject of the relative verb.

The next instance of *oo* (following *waraabshay* and contracted with the end of the verb) at the end of the second of these relative clauses (line 12) leads to the expectation of another relative clause. In the next line, however, we find a head noun and a relative clause construction with another instance of *oo* at the end which, when this is removed, gives us : *dhulka baadku jifay* 'the land on which pasture lay' (again assuming the tense to be past). In this the head noun is clearly *dhulka* and the subject of the relative verb is *baadku* (the *-u* in the definite article suffix indicates this). Syntactically this leads to the expectation of this head noun and relative clause sequence being an argument within a further

<sup>70</sup> It is to be noted that there are no relative pronouns in Somali.

<sup>71</sup> The tense is not expressed explicitly given the contraction of the verb and *oo*. It is assumed to be past tense given the context.

relative clause on *webiga*. However, this expectation is not met as soon as we encounter the *oo* at the end of that line, which itself leads to the expectation of another relative clause on the head noun *dhulka*. What we find though is another head noun plus relative clause constructed in a manner parallel with the previous one : *dhirta ubaxu buuxshay* 'the trees which the flowers filled'. At this point there is a sense in which the interpretation of syntactic structure as understood to work generally in the language begins to break down.

We can try to make sense of the wider syntactic structure by removing the first relative clause on *dhulka* and see if this helps; relative clauses are after all modifiers of nominals which, if removed, should not affect the wider syntactic structure as such (with certain exceptions we shall return to below). So, removing this relative clause and the conjunction which ostensibly conjoins the second relative clause we have *dhulka dhirta ubaxu buuxshay* which does not seem to be interpretable. This syntactic lack of interpretability is further confounded by the *oo* following *buuxshay* which leads to yet another attempt at syntactic interpretation in these potentially nested relative clauses, something which becomes more confusing as the next line is another head noun with relative clause : *canabkii bislaaday* 'the grapes which ripened', albeit one in which the head noun is the subject of the relative verb. This is a line which again ends in *oo*. At this point I hope to have demonstrated that understanding these instances of *oo* from the strictly syntactic perspective outside of poetry leads to confusion and it seems to me that they are not being interpreted in this way in the context of the poem.

So how might we suggest these phrases are being interpreted? One way is to suggest that each such clause be considered an adverbial describing the place and time when the poet-narrator went to Beledweyn. From the perspective of what these phrases mean, this very much makes sense, and they are clearly fulfilling this role in the context of the poem. We might consider this interpretation to be set up in the two relative clauses on the first head noun *webiga*. It was mentioned above that there are exceptions to the possibility of removing the relative clause from the head noun without upsetting the basic syntactic structure of the matrix sentence. These exceptions are adverbial relative clauses, which express such concepts as time, manner, concession etc.<sup>72</sup>

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72 See Saeed 1999 : 217-224 for more on this.



One such construction is made with an independent personal pronoun followed by the conjunction *oo* introducing an appositive relative clause on the pronoun. These have been called absolutive adverbial relative clauses by Saeed following Thompson and Longacre (1985) and 'can be used to imply a range of adverbial relations between a backgrounded predication and the main predication.' (Saeed 1999 : 216). One example Saeed gives is *Habeen baa isagoo lo'dii soo xareeyay nin socota ahi u yimid*. 'One evening, while he was penning up the cattle, a traveller came to him.' (Saeed 1999 : 216) in which the personal pronoun is *isaga* followed by *oo lo'dii soo xareeyay* (*isagoo* is a contraction of the pronoun and *oo*). We might suggest that what we find in lines 11 and 12 may be interpreted in a manner analogous to these absolutive adverbials. This is, of course, not the case with all such appositive relative clause constructions, but given the context of these in the poem and the way in which they cannot be interpreted in any way other than as adverbial this may be the case. This can be expressed by translating these lines as 'while the river burst its banks / and watered the farms'.

We cannot suggest the same interpretation for the lines following line 12. The relative clause following *dhulka*, namely *baadku jiifay* is a restrictive (there is no *oo*) and so does not display the characteristic appositive relative clause of the absolutive adverbial relative construction, nor is the head noun the subject of the relative clause. Nevertheless, I assume that the interpretation of these subsequent phrases is as adverbials and that the conjunction *oo* is being co-opted, so to speak, from syntax as used generally to perform a particular role in the context of the poem, namely, to link these adverbials together. Adverbials, as pointed out by Saeed (1999 : 124) are 'somewhat problematic' in Somali in any case with the role 'usually performed by noun phrases and clauses' (Saeed 1999 : 124), so having nominal phrases comprising a head noun and relative clause being interpreted as adverbials in the context of this poem seems not unreasonable to postulate. We assume this for the lines 13-15 and lines 16-17 which form a single head noun and relative clause sequence with a conjoint head noun phrase (*badarka iyo galleydii* 'the grain and the maize'). We shall also assume this for the three-line phrase in lines 18-20. However, in this case the *oo* at the end of line 19 does not introduce another head noun and relative clause rather it joins another relative clause on the head noun phrase comprising the nouns *bullada* 'the bullo (dance)' and *ciyaaraha* 'the dances' which are conjoined with the conjunction *iyo*. So, we have the following structure.



bullada iyo ciyaaraha [lagu waabariistay] oo [beeluhu  
gu'joogaan]

I present this analysis because the noun *beeluhu* cannot be the head noun given the subject marking (head nouns which are the subject of the relative verb are never marked as subject).<sup>73</sup> The way in which *gu'joogaan* is written as one word, also suggests the words *gu'* and *joog* are brought together to form a compound verb, *gu'joog*, meaning 'to be present in the *gu'* season'.<sup>74</sup> This is not found in any of the dictionaries, though whether it is a neologism I cannot say. There are however other documented compounds with *gu'* as the first part such as *gu'soore* 'the middle month of the *gu'* season' (see Aadan 2013 : 631).

Returning to the overall syntactic structure of this verse paragraph we see then that the main clause is present in the final two lines (21-22) and, preceding this, lines 11-20 comprise a series of adverbials as analysed above. How these adverbials relate to the main clause is interesting in that they all precede it; there is no sense of what the main clause is prior to the *sow* (the negative particle for questions) in line 21. Having set up the adverbial role for the first two lines in this section by suggesting their similarity to absolutive adverbial relative constructions, the interpretation of subsequent lines as adverbials is sustained even though the grammatical presentation is different. The 'odd' use of *oo* at the end of these lines may be considered then as showing what it conjoins to be analogous at least in intended interpretation, something that is further supported by each of these being set in an individual line (or two individual lines : 18 and 19). In other words, the lineation supports the notion of individual adverbial phrases, each of which is then conjoined by *oo* which, as has been suggested may be considered to be co-opted from general syntax to play this particular role in the context of the poem.

This flow of language assisted by the use of *oo* can only be possible if the metre allows for this to occur at the end of the line which is the case in the *jiifto* metre, though is not the case in all metrical patterns (the

73 In order to confirm the subject marking on the word *beeluhu*, I listened to a performed version by Xasan Aaden Samatar who clearly pronounces the subject marker *-u* in *beeluhu* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIFf9SiGTNA> last accessed 19 August 2017).

74 The *gu'* season is the main rainy season and so is regarded as a good time of plenty during which life is easier and people enjoy social occasions such as dances.

*gabay* or *naa laago laago* for instance).<sup>75</sup> The end of the *jiifto* line can be a long-vowel syllable or two short vowel syllables (where the first does not end in a consonant or the second begin with a virtual geminate consonant, see Orwin and Mohamed 2010 for further detail on this).

The sound parallelism may also be a factor in that the sound of the line-final *oo* leads the listener towards specific expectations once these are set up at the beginning of the verse paragraph with phrases which may more readily be interpreted as adverbials, as mentioned above. Indeed, the acoustic insistence to these line endings may also be considered as having been set up by the first three instances of this line ending in the poem as a whole, each of which, as we have seen, can be accounted for by syntax (lines 5, 6 and 11). Once the listener hears the *oo* at the end of line 12 — the first instance which, when we hear the following line, cannot be accounted for by syntax alone — an expectation and momentum has already been built. Then, when the end of line 13 is heard and there really is no longer a sense in which the syntax can account for the conjunction, I suggest that by this point the listener is accustomed to these adverbial phrases and is likely expecting more of the same. This may be considered as overcoming any sense of confusion regarding its use (if indeed there was any confusion as such). We might call this an instance of poetic license in which the syntax of the language is manipulated within the structure of the poem in a manner which would sound strange in the context of general language use outside of poetry. In the context of the poem, however, it sustains the flow of language from one line to the next until the final instance of the conjunction in the verse paragraph. We have seen that this final instance can be accounted for syntactically and leads to the final relative clause before the two lines of the main clause leading to a resolution both syntactically and semantically.

Turning to the next verse paragraph (lines 23-37), we find another long sequence of lines ending in *oo*. The overarching structure of this section is again a negative question but, in this case, the negative particle *sow* is near the beginning in the second line of the verse paragraph (line 24) and the verb itself is in the last line of the section (line 37, thirteen lines later). Taking the main clause back to its bare

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75 There is not the space to give an account of Somali metre. The point being made here is that lines in the *gabay* and *naa laago laago* metres always end in a short-vowel syllable and thus the specific use of *oo* as presented here is not possible.

minimum with nothing but the direct object of the verb gives us *Sow boqorad maan baran* 'Did I not meet a queen?' The first line of the verse paragraph (line 23) is a nominal adverbial phrase indicating the place where this occurred : *dhanka bari magaalada* 'on the east side of the town', and the rest of the section is a series of relative clauses which hyperbolically describe Beerlula and her hair and, at the end, the poet's reaction to her.

In contrast to the previous section where we saw the syntactic role of the conjunction *oo* breaking down somewhat, in this section, the conjunction seems, for the most part, to play a role which is transparent syntactically. Parsing the first six lines with respect to relative clauses, I suggest we find the structure given below in which the contractions are undone, each word is written separately and in which the relative clauses on the head noun *boqorad* 'queen' are enclosed by square brackets and those on the head noun *timo* 'hair' are enclosed by curly brackets.

Sow boqorad [joogta] oo [biyo dahab la moodo] oo [bilicdii haweenka iyo bili loo dhammeeyay] oo [timo {boqonta jooga} oo {baal goray la moodo} oo {baarkana casaankii bidix midig is gaadho} oo {bul-cad lagu xideeyay} OO [badh ku seexanaysa] oo [barkanaysa qaar] oo [huwanaysa baal] oo [igu beertay lahasho] oo [aan u buseelay] maan baran.<sup>76</sup>

We see that there is one instance (highlighted by italic upper case above) which seems incongruous. We can show this more clearly by removing some of the relative clauses. The following is the sentence with the relative clause *biyo dahab la moodo* 'who one thinks is water of gold' on the head noun *boqorad*, one of the relative clauses on the same head noun with *timo* as an argument and one of the relative clauses on *timo* as head noun. Crucially, the instance of *oo* which is incongruous is left out. This gives us :

sow boqorad [biyo dahab la moodo] oo [timo {boqonta jooga} huwanaysa baal] maan baran.

If we include the 'superfluous' and seemingly syntactically incorrect *oo*, which we hear in the poem we have

sow boqorad [biyo dahab la moodo] oo [timo {boqonta jooga} oo huwanaysa baal] maan baran.

76 As above, the tense of the verbs contracted with *oo* is not fully clear, but this doesn't affect the point being made here. It is assumed in these cases to be present given the use of the present progressive later in this section.

This is not syntactically correct, since by introducing the conjunction the relative clause *huwanaysa baal* can only be considered as modifying *timo* not *boqorad*. Aside from semantics, this clearly cannot be the case as it contradicts the verb agreement (3rd person feminine singular of the reduced paradigm rather than 3rd person plural of the reduced paradigm).<sup>77</sup> We see therefore that all the instances of *oo* in this verse paragraph with the exception of the one at the end of line 32 can be accounted for by the syntax. With regard to the instance at the end of line 32, I suggest this is again an instance of poetic license, an occurrence of the conjunction that can only be accounted for by the context internal to the poem. The expectation is set up for *oo* to occur at the end of the line with regard to sound along with the force of the relative clauses as descriptions of the woman and her hair. Thus, in a manner analogous to what we have discussed with respect to the previous verse paragraph, it is the insistence and momentum of *oo* as a line ending in the context of the poem that allows for it to occur here and be interpretable in its own way in the context of the poem itself.

I hope to have shown that in these two verse paragraphs the use of the conjunction *oo* is something which is both syntactic with regard to the language itself, but also with regard to what we might consider to be the poem-internal syntax which develops as it is perceived by the listener. This allows for the incongruous usages of the conjunction I have pointed out.

In the rest of the poem, the verse paragraphs use the conjunction *oo* and also the conjunction *ee* but are generally shorter and we find that each instance of the use of *oo* and *ee* is transparent with regard to the syntax. For example, the following verse paragraph, the final one of the main narrative section (lines 99-103), uses both.

|     |                       |   |                                                   |
|-----|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------|
| 99  | Nin Banaadir joogoo   | : | A man who is in Banaadir and                      |
| 100 | Beled-Weyn la haystoo | : | who holds to Beled-Weyn and                       |
|     | waxaan ahay la baabee | : | I am [someone] who has been put under a spell and |
|     | sow baadi doonkii     | : | the one looking for the lost [person]             |
|     | weli baafis maan ihi  | : | am I not still searching                          |

The instance of *oo* at the end of line 99 joins another relative clause on the head noun *nin* 'man' and the *oo* at the end of line 100 joins this to the next relative clause on the same head noun which is *la baabay*

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77 There is no gender distinction in the plural verbal inflection, only in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. Also, the noun *timo* 'hair' takes plural agreement.

‘[whom] one put under a spell’. What is interesting here is that the syntax of the main clause is not what we would expect in general use in that the two words *waxaan ahay* would be expected to come at the beginning, that is at the beginning of line 99. This unconventional use of word order is something that we find in poetry in Somali generally (as indeed in other languages). The conjunction *ee* at the end of line 101 conjoins the main clause just mentioned with the second main clause in this section which is the negative question in lines 102-103. This conjunction is used rather than *oo* because a positive is being conjoined with a negative, a context in which *ee* is always used.

Having considered the use of these conjunctions and shown the particular way in which *oo* is used, we might consider why it is that there is the incongruous use of *oo* in the two verse paragraphs discussed in detail and not in the others. I suggest that this may be related to the function of these in the poem as a whole. The two long verse paragraphs that describe the town and the woman respectively are only part of the narrative in that they present the scene of the encounter between the poet and Beerlula and the fact that the poet felt longing for her. As such, they set the scene for the remainder of the poem which is more story-like and is presented as such. I hesitate to use the term *imagist*, but there is a sense in which the irregular syntax and the inconsistent sequence of lines spurred on by the use of *oo* leads to a series of *imagist*-like lines and small groups of lines which bring a vivid setting to the narrative that follows. This is underscored, I suggest, by the hyperbole we find in the verse paragraph describing Beerlula’s hair. It also contrasts with the series of supplications at the end of the poem, each of which is presented as a separate syntactic entity of two lines.

I wish to conclude with some brief comment on how this usage relates to Somali poetry more widely. Do we find any other poems with such use of *oo* and other conjunctions? I suggest that we do. It is the case that in many *jiifto* metre *hees* poems there is a similar use of parallelistic structure featuring *oo* and *ee*, although a quick look in a couple of collections doesn’t present a poem which uses it to the extent we see in Beledweyn. What is more, we see a similar use in earlier poetry, specifically in *geeraar* poems. The famous *geeraar* poem by Faarax Nuur ‘Rag Sabaan ka Sabaan baan’ displays characteristics which are somewhat similar to this as we can see in the last nine lines (which deal with subject matter very different to Beledweyn).<sup>78</sup>

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78 See Rashiid (2009) for all of this poem and its translation.

Hadduu saakimi waayona  
salaaddaan lallabaayoo  
maydal seedo madow iyo  
safkii aan ka dhashiyo  
salligaan cuskadaayoo  
sulub eebo ku joogtaan  
sarartaa ku dhufaaayoo  
sanbabkaan ka baxshaayoo  
markaasuu sallimaa

And if he fails to calm down  
at the time of the prayers I announce the reer is leaving  
the grey horse with black tendons  
and the line I am born of  
and supporting myself on the *salli*<sup>79</sup>  
with a spearhead of iron  
I strike his sides  
and make his lungs come out  
and then he settles

This leads me to conclude with the comment that parallel structures which involve the use of line-final conjunctions in short line metres that allow for them is something to which Somali listeners will be attuned. In other words, when Beledweyn is heard, it is an example of a poem using a technique which has some precedence. What makes this poem stand out, however, is the way in which this technique is used. As a master poet, Hadraawi pushes the limits of what this particular device can sustain calling on syntax, metre and indeed, as I suggest, the very sound of a simple conjunction to produce a piece of poetry that continues to delight people today.

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79 The words said each time the name of the Prophet is uttered : '*sallaa Allaah 'alayhi wa sallam*' 'God bless him and grant him peace'.

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