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# Language and its sound in ‘Allayl Dumay’ by Raage Ugaas Warfaa

Martin Orwin

Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”

morwin@unior.it

## ABSTRACT

In this article I present a detailed analysis of a famous poem by Raage Ugaas Warfaa. Raage, who lived in the nineteenth century, is acknowledged as one of the greatest poets of all time among the Somalis. A good number of his poems have been passed down over the years and in more recent decades have been written down. I consider here one of his most famous *gabay* poems. It is a lament, *calaacal* in Somali, which was prompted by Raage’s fiancée being married to another man when he had been away for some time after the initial marriage agreement had been made. The poem is very widely known and appreciated and one of my main aims here is to show why this is so. In the analysis I outline grammatical aspects of the poem with a view to providing a study of some of the interesting linguistic features. Then, in the main part, I look at the images and language used and, in particular, consider the way sound, both words related to sound and the actual use of sound in the poem relate to its message and to the idea of subjectivity.

**Keywords:** *Somali, poetry, poetics*

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## Introduction

Yaasiin (1984: 61) makes the following comment about the poet Raage Ugaas Warfaa: ‘Se si domanda ad un qualsiasi somalo chi sia il piú grande poeta della sua gente, la risposta è sempre la stessa: Raage Ugaas.’ He then asks the question ‘Ma quando gli si chiede perché Raage è unanimemente considerato tale, la risposta diventa difficile.’ (Yaasiin 1984: 61). In this article I hope to contribute to an answer to this question by presenting a poem which is widely known and loved by Somalis and which I consider to be one of the finest examples of lyric poetry in any language. I shall do this by first presenting an introduction to the poet and the poem, presenting the text of the poem and a detailed analysis of the language and the way in which sound in particular plays an important role in shaping the poem as an aesthetic object.

I am grateful to a number of people for discussions about this poem on various occasions, in particular Maxamed Cali Xasan ‘Alto’, Faarax Axmed Cali ‘Gamuute’, Cabdulqaadir Warsame, Rashiid Sheekh Cabdillaahi ‘Gadhweyne’, Giorgio Banti, Jaamac Muuse Jaamac and Saciid Saalax. I am also grateful to attendees of the Fifth Annual Seminar on African Language Literature and to Wendy Belcher, who organised it as part of the Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association 2018 at the University of California Los Angeles where some of these ideas were first aired. I also thank attendees at the Expressive Culture Panel of the Somali Studies International Congress in Hargeysa in 2018 in which some revisions and other ideas were also presented.

## Raage Ugaas Warfaa the poet

We don't know exactly when Raage was born, and there are quite widely differing opinions. Andrzejewski (1985: 396) and Maxamed (1989: 11) give it as ca. 1810 and don't say when he may have died. Axmednuur (2015: 27) on the other hand gives his birth as being approximately 1840 and his death in about 1880 (p.54). He was born around Sasabane in the region of Dhagaxbuur in what was to become part of Ethiopia. His father was an *ugaas* 'lineage leader' within the Ogaadeen clan (Axmednuur 2015: 25) and he is known to have had a high level of education and to have travelled with an itinerant sheekh as part of the sheekh's *xer* 'group of students'. He was, by all accounts, a diligent student and also studied in Harar and Axmednuur (2015: 39) states that he travelled overseas as well as overland. With respect to poetry, Axmednuur (2015: 39) also suggests that he was familiar with early classical Arabic poetry, mentioning Imru'ul Qays and Labīd as well as al-Mutanabbī, something that would be expected given his education.

There are a number of stories about his life. Andrzejewski (1966: 32–39) recounts one such story regarding his early life as a student of the sheekh. Perhaps the most famous, however, is the story of his betrothal to Cabban Cilmi Xuseen (Cilmi Hagoog) and the way that betrothal was broken. The basic story is that Raage approached Cabban's family and they agreed to the betrothal and the marriage. Raage brought some *yarad* 'initial bride payment' to the family and the marriage was formally agreed to. He then left with the intention of returning to contract the marriage. It has been said that he sent more *yarad* wealth to the family but he was away for a while dealing with some matters (I have heard both lineage political matters and drought as being possible reasons). During this time, another suitor approached Cabban's family, namely Faarax Garaad Xirsi. Cabban's family agreed to her marrying Faarax despite the engagement to Raage, and Faarax, aware of the betrothal to Raage, had the marriage contracted there and then quickly. Raage was unaware of this and when he returned to the family of Cabban he found his fiancée already married. It is this situation that prompted the composition of the poem. The final part of the story is that, although Raage did not marry Cabban, he did marry her younger sister Faadumo. This was arranged due to the wrong done by Cabban's family to Raage and his kin. By all accounts this was a good marriage and he became extremely fond of Faadumo, sentiments which are expressed in another famous lament he composed after her death from being attacked by a lion.

There is another aspect to the story which has to do with avenging the wrong done to Raage and his lineage when Cabban was married to Faarax. Banti (1988: 36), for example says 'Ai suoi amici che premevano perché vendicasse questo affronto, il poeta rispose con questa poesia spiegando che nonostante il dolore che provava avrebbe accettato la soluzione di compromesso che gli veniva offerta', the compromise being the marriage to Faadumo. I have also heard the idea that Raage wanted to take revenge and it was his kin who convinced him not to press for that. Whatever the precise details, the matter of avenging the wrong is part of the poem, as is the lament for not marrying Cabban. It is the perspective of the lament regarding not marrying Cabban which seems, by most people I have spoken to, to be remembered most.

## The poem

The poem is a *gabay*, considered to be the most prestigious genre and as such falls within the category of *maanso* poetry. Genres in this general category are characterised in particular by two things: recognition of the original poet, who is always

acknowledged, and verbatim memorisation. The notion of verbatim memorisation relates to the idea of what I have called elsewhere a *definitive text* (see Orwin 2003, 2005 and 2021, see also Banti 2007). There is the conceptualisation of a specific text which a poet composes and which cannot be changed and which anyone who recites such a poem must adhere to. Having said that, with older poems such as the one considered here being passed on by word of mouth through many chains of transmission over the decades, some variation does creep in. These variations then manifest themselves in the written texts of these poems when they are eventually written down by different people.

With the poem presented here, the variations I have come across are, by and large, relatively small given the age of the poem. I don’t present a full critical edition with apparatus of the poem in this article, that would require a specific work in its own right. The text of the poem used here is the version that is in the school text book Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 8–9). I have then based some variations on the text in Axmednuur (2015: 64–65) and Maxamed (1989: 12). Other differences are spelling and revision based on metre in ll.1 and 4.<sup>1</sup> Axmednuur (2015) has some lines which are not found in the others, these can be seen in the appendix with English translations. I comment on these at the appropriate point in the discussion. It is interesting, and not insignificant in my view, that in all versions the first few lines and the final line are the same apart from minor spelling issues.<sup>2</sup>

The *gabay* form has a particular metrical pattern in accord with the principles of the quantitative metrical system of Somali. It is a long line divided into two half-lines of unequal length the template of which is given below.

	(◡)	◡◡	(◡)	◡◡	◡	◡◡	◡◡	◡	◡◡	:	◡◡	◡	◡◡	◡◡	◡
MP	H1	1	H2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	

◡◡: A position in which two short-vowel syllables or one long-vowel syllable may occur. If there are two short-vowel syllables, then the first may not end in a consonant, a fact that implies that a geminate consonant or a virtual geminate cannot be present ‘between’ the two syllables;<sup>3</sup> there cannot be a word boundary between the two syllables.<sup>4</sup>

◡◡◡: A position like that represented by the symbol ‘◡◡’ but in which the constraints above do not hold.

◡: A position in which only a short-vowel syllable may occur.

(◡): A possible hypermetrical short-vowel syllable may occur in one and only one of the positions marked in this way.

In the second half-line there must be two, and only two, long-vowel syllables, in other words, the second half-line always comprises six syllables.

MP stands for ‘metrical position’, each of which is numbered in order to refer to parts of the line in the discussion below; H stands for ‘hypermetrical position’.

<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations l. and ll. are used for ‘line’ and ‘lines’ respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Spelling in Somali is not fully standardised. We find, therefore, variant spellings for the same word, for example the first word of the poem may be written as both *allayl* and *alleyl*. In pronunciation it is the same and is the same word despite the difference in spelling.

<sup>3</sup> Virtual geminates are phonetically simplex consonants which, in the metre and some parts of the phonology, behave like geminate consonants. They are ‘f’, ‘j’, ‘s’, ‘sh’, ‘k’, ‘t’, ‘w’ and some instances of ‘y’ (see Orwin and Mohamed 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Note it is possible for there to be a boundary between some function words and a lexical word in these positions, but these are very specific instances.

The poem alliterates in the vowels. This is referred to as alliterating in *alif* in Somali (see below for further discussion on this). All the vowels alliterate with each other and because of this, and other reasons, the alliteration is assumed actually to be in the glottal stop. See Orwin (2011) for more on alliteration in Somali.

I present the poem here with a gloss of each word followed by a translation.<sup>5</sup> The gloss is not a detailed linguistic gloss, neither is the translation a literary translation, rather the aim is to provide what is needed for readers who know Somali and those who don't know Somali to be able to follow the discussion.<sup>6</sup>

1. *Allayl dumay albaabbadoo<sup>7</sup> la xidhay uunku wada seexday*  
 [As] fell [as] the one had [as] the together had  
 night doors closed creation fallen  
 asleep

As night fell, as the doors had been closed, as all creation had fallen asleep

2. *Onkod yeedhay uugaamo roob alif banaadiiq ah*  
 [As] thunder called rumbles rain a thousand rifles [which] are  
 As thunder called out, rumbles of rain [the sound of] a thousand rifles

3. *Iihdayda bixi baa libaax iman la moodaaye<sup>8</sup>*  
 My *iih* [which will] FOCUS a lion [which will] one thinks  
 come out approach  
 My *iih* [cry] which will come out will be thought to be a lion approaching

4. *Ragse<sup>9</sup> adhaxda iyo ooftu waa udub-dhexaadkiye*  
 But [for] men the spine and the ribcage are the central pole  
 But [for] men the spine and the ribcage are the central pole

5. *Labadii wax laga eegi jiray waan ka awdnahaye*  
 The two something one-from to see used to *waa*-I from fenced-off am  
 The two [eyes] one used to see out of I am fenced off from

<sup>5</sup> All translations in this article are by myself unless otherwise stated.

<sup>6</sup> Given the popularity of the poem, there are translations elsewhere which the interested reader may wish to consult Banti (1988: 36–37), Maxamed (1989: 12–13), Andrzejewski and Andrzejewski (1993: 9), Saeed (1999: 260–61) and Orwin (2007).

<sup>7</sup> The conjunction *oo* (appended here to the noun *albaabbada*) is in a short-vowel metrical position. This conjunction is one of the morphemes which has been assumed to be anceps with respect to the metre (see Banti and Giannattasio 1996: 87, footnote 7 among others). Given that assumption, it is legitimate in this metrical position, however, such examples do seem to be rare.

<sup>8</sup> The *-e* which concludes the line is a vowel which fills the final metrical position, MP12, (an obligatory short-vowel syllable position) and is heard often in *gabay* poems. I have heard it suggested that it is a contracted form of the conjunction *ee*, though I disagree with this from a synchronic perspective; whether it derives diachronically from the use of *ee* at the end of lines in poems I cannot say.

<sup>9</sup> Other versions including Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976) have *Raggase* at the beginning of this line. This seems to me unmetrical in the context it is present and I discussed it with Xasan Daahir Ismaaciil ‘Weedhsame’ who is a famous poet and very knowledgeable about Somali metre. He confirmed that it was not metrical. I think this has to do with the presence both of the geminate ‘gg’ and the virtual geminate ‘s’ close together in this metrical position (*raggase* does also affect later syllables). Further work needs to be done to be more sure about this and it may be something which is marginally metrical. The change does not affect the main discussion here though. I am grateful to Weedhsame for his help and insight.

or The two one used to look out from and guard against [danger with] I am fenced off from (This interpretation is not certain. See below for discussion.)

6. *Halkaan 'aa' ka leeyahay Illaah keli ah uun baa og*  
 The aa from I say God alone is only FOCUS aware  
 place [which]

Only God is aware of the place from where I say 'aa'

7. *Aboodigu ma lalo garab hadduu iin ku leeyahaye*  
 The secretary bird not fly shoulder if it an injury in has

The secretary bird does not fly if it has an injury to its shoulder

8. *Orod u ma hollado ooglihii adhaxda beelaaye*  
 Running to not try the stallion the spine lacks

The stallion does not try to gallop if he lacks the spine

9. *Ma aarsado il iyo oof nimay<sup>10</sup> iimi kaga taalle*  
 Not take revenge eye and ribcage a man-it an injury in-against is

A man does not take revenge in whom there is an injury in eye and ribcage

10. *Aroos u ma galbado<sup>11</sup> nimuu wadnaha arami jiifaaye*  
 A wedding to not go a man-it the heart a wound lies

A man in whose heart a wound lies does not go to a wedding

11. *Geeluba kolkuu oomo waa olol badnaadaaye*  
 The camels *ba*<sup>12</sup> when they are thirsty *waa*<sup>13</sup> cries become many

The camels, when they are thirsty, their cries become many

12. *Sidii inan yar oo hooyadeed aakhiro u hoyatay*  
 Like a girl young and her mother hereafter to has gone to reside

Like a young girl whose mother has gone to reside in the hereafter (i.e. who has died)

13. *Oo aabbeheed aqal mid kale meel illin ah seexshay*  
 And her father hut [of] other place entrance [which] made

And whose father has made her go to sleep at the entrance [outside] a hut of another

14. *Hadba waxaan la urugoonayaa uur-ku-taallada e*  
 Again and again FOCUS-I with am grieving the sad/hurting e

remembrance  
 Again and again I grieve with the sad/hurting remembrance of it

<sup>10</sup> I follow Axmednuur (2015) here in writing *nimay* rather than *ninkii* as in Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 8) given consistency with the next line.

<sup>11</sup> This verb has the more specific meaning of a newly married couple going to their new home together.

<sup>12</sup> The clitic *-ba* is an emphatic.

<sup>13</sup> This is an indicator particle which implies a positive declarative here.

15. *Ninkii ooriidisi rag kale loo igdhaan ahaye*  
 The man his wife men other one-to given<sup>14</sup>-FOCUS-I am-e  
 I am the man whose wife has been given to another
16. *Ninkii ilo biyo leh soo arko ooman baan ahaye*  
 The springs water [that] DEICTIC sees- thirsty FOCUS- am-e  
 man have and I  
 I am the man who sees springs of water [but] who is thirsty
17. *Nin ugaas walaalkiis yahoo eeday baan ahaye*  
 A man clan leader his brother [who] is - and accused FOCUS-I am-e  
 I am a man whom a clan leader who is his brother has accused
18. *Nin abkiis Ogaadeen yahoon aarsan baan ahaye*  
 A man his forefathers<sup>15</sup> Ogaadeen are-and-not avenged FOCUS-I am-e  
 I am a man whose lineage is Ogaadeen and who has not been avenged
19. *Af-dhabaandhow aayar ah ninkaa aammusaan ahaye*  
 patting the mouth to a little / [which] that [who] is am-e  
 make someone gently is man silent-  
 silent FOCUS-I  
 Gently patting the mouth, I am that silent man<sup>16</sup>

### Syntax and overall structure

The syntax of lines 4-19 is clear, and all except ll.12 and 13 (discussed below) are end-stopped lines which coincide with main clauses in which the syntax is transparent. Ll.1-3, however, display some particularly interesting syntactic features and require some discussion. The first point is the lack of any sentence particles in ll.1-2. This may be explained in two ways: either the verbs are subordinate verbs, in which case we expect no sentence particles, or they are main verbs lacking a sentence particle. The latter can be ruled out since the only two forms of the verb found in such sentences are the positive imperative mood and the independent past tense, neither of which is the form found here.<sup>17</sup> This leaves the verbs to be interpreted as subordinate. However, the syntax of these is still not particularly clear. I have discussed these lines with Somali friends who are knowledgeable about the language and poetry and follow their intuitions in assuming these to be instances of temporal adverbial constructions.<sup>18</sup> The clause *albaabbadoo la xidhay*, is clearly such a clause, given the use of the conjunction *oo* in what Bell (1968: 110) calls a participial clause construction. This is analogous, to what

<sup>14</sup> This is weak as a translation since the Somali verb *igadh* has a much more precise and complex meaning which is explained below. In the present context, it is felt to be sufficient here for the reader to gain a sense of the meaning of the line.

<sup>15</sup> Maxamed (1989: 12) has *tolkiis* for this word and Axmednuur (2015: 64) has *abkii*, both of which are possibilities given the close meanings. I chose to use *abkii* because it alliterates but took the possessive ending of Maxamed (1989) given that that possessive has been used more consistently earlier in the text.

<sup>16</sup> See below for discussion on the interpretation of this line.

<sup>17</sup> For verbs of the type found here, the independent past is marked only by the fronting of the vowel. For the middle-voice verbs ending in *-o*, the diphthong marking past tense is actually present (see Muuse 1956: 66 and Kapchits 2005: 112).

<sup>18</sup> I am particularly indebted to Maxamed Cali Xasan 'Alto', Faarax Axmed Cali 'Gamute' and Cabdulqaadir Warsame for conversations at different times on this topic which were very helpful.

Saeed (1999: 216–17) calls absolutive adverbial clauses in which an appositive relative clause qualifies an independent pronoun (see also Gebert 1984 and references therein).<sup>19</sup> The clauses *allayl dumay*, *uunku wada seexday* in l.1 and *onkod yeedhay* in l.2 are also to be interpreted as temporal adverbial clauses, although they lack the conjunction *oo*. We might explain the lack of *oo* in *allayl dumay* as due to the fact that *allayl* lacks a defining suffix in Somali. The word includes the Arabic definite article *al-* but, as with *albaab*, this does not make it definite in Somali. Undefined nouns in Somali may be qualified only by restrictive relative clauses which are marked, for the first relative clause, by the lack of *oo* as we see here.<sup>20</sup> I have reflected this interpretation in the translation above. This interpretation was confirmed to me by Faarax ‘Gamuute’ who suggested they be interpreted in the same way as the impersonal use of this construction with the 3.f.sg. independent pronoun, e.g. *iyadoo allayl dumay*.

Turning to the clause *uunku wada seexday*, this is particularly interesting because the defined noun *uunku* displays the subject marker *-u*. If the antecedent of a subordinate verb is the subject of that verb then it is not marked as subject: ‘the created beings who had gone to sleep’ would thus be *uunka wada seexday*, with the absolutive ending on *uunka*. The presence of the subject marker here may be explained by the clause being an impersonal absolutive adverbial construction in which the independent pronoun with the conjunction *oo* is lacking: *[iyadoo] uunku wada seexday* ‘while the created beings all fell asleep’ (see example (35) in Saeed 1999: 217 for an analogous example with subject marking albeit in the negative). There is one version of the poem (Axmednuur 2015: 64) which hints at another possibility. He has the word *unkoo* rather than *uunku*. This alternative is not metrical and I assume is a typographical error for *uunkoo*, which is metrical if we assume the conjunction *oo* to be anepithet (see above). This would make the clause a participial clause: *uunkoo [uunka oo] wada seexday* and it may be that this is what was originally in the poem. I leave both possibilities open here, whichever is correct, the meaning is the same.

L.2 begins with the temporal adverbial clause *onkod yeedhay* which is assumed to be analogous with *allayl dumay* mentioned just above. The rest of the line comprises three noun phrases: *uugaamo*, *roob* and *alif banaadiiq ah*. The syntactic status of these is uncertain. The verb *yeehdh* is intransitive so *uugaamo* cannot be its object.<sup>21</sup> Looking at what follows *uugaamo* we find another undefined noun *roob*. I assume these two nouns to constitute an associative/possessive-type construction *uugaamo roob* ‘clamours of rain’. This is followed by the noun phrase *alif banaadiiq ah*. The noun *alif* is taken from the Arabic word for ‘thousand’ which is *’alf*.<sup>22</sup> However, this is not a regular loanword in Somali, in which the word *kun* is used for ‘thousand’.<sup>23</sup> Numbers, such as *kun*, when used to count nouns are in an associative construction with the counted noun, thus, *kun bunduq* (*bunduq* here in the singular) would be the regular way of saying ‘a thousand

<sup>19</sup> Saeed states that such clauses are tenseless and allows only for the present progressive with dynamic verbs and the present general for stative verbs. Bell has an example in which the verb is in the past tense, and instances of the past tense in such clauses are not uncommon in my experience. I assume the variety of such clauses may be greater than has hitherto been discussed in the grammar literature of Somali though do not pursue the issue further here.

<sup>20</sup> Second and subsequent relative clauses on undefined nouns are conjoined with *oo*.

<sup>21</sup> The preverbal particle *u* governs the person being called with this verb: *Axmed u yeehdh* ‘Call Axmed’.

<sup>22</sup> Note the epenthetic second vowel ‘i’ in *alif* allows for the word to be syllabified legitimately in Somali in which there are no biconsonantal syllable codas or onsets.

<sup>23</sup> This observation is based on current usage. It seems unlikely to me, however, that *kun* was not used generally in Raage’s time, particularly as it is a word with cognates in other Cushitic languages. I didn’t find the meaning of ‘thousand’ for *alif* in any of the dictionaries I consulted.



rifles'. We do not see this construction with *alif*, rather it is the head noun of a relative clause with the verb 'to be' (*ah*) and the complement *banaadiiq* 'rifles' (the Arabic broken plural of singular *bunduq*), 'a thousand which are rifles'. This phrase constitutes the whole of the second half-line. I suggest below that this phrase has greater significance than appears on the surface.

In l.3 we hear the first sentence particle of the poem, namely the focus marker *baa* and the main verb *moodaa* 'thinks'. There are however two interesting verb forms in this line, namely *bixi* and *iman* used as relative verbs but which are in the infinitive. I assume these to be parts of the periphrastic future form in which the auxiliary verb *doon* may be omitted (see Muuse 1956: 71, note 26b). This was also confirmed to be a possibility in discussing the line with Maxamed 'Alto' and the meaning was paraphrased by Faarax 'Gamute' in the same conversation to be the same as *baxaysa* 'which is coming out/which will come out' in the present progressive.<sup>24</sup> Assuming this explanation, when we add the auxiliary verb, the clauses become *iihdayda bixi [doona]* 'my *iih* which will come out' and *libaax iman [doona]* 'a lion which will come' each a head noun and relative clause construction, which fits with the syntax of the line. Note also that assuming the periphrastic future implies, according to Saeed (1999: 90), a certainty which also fits well with the interpretation of this line. The subject of the verb is the impersonal pronoun *la*, which points to the agent of the verb *moodaa* as being the people in the scene, those who were asleep. In the same line, however, we also hear the first reference to first person at the beginning in: *iihdayda* 'my *iih*' (see below for more on this).

The rather amorphous syntax of the first two lines seems to highlight the fact that they do not present a scene which forms part of a narrative but provide much more of an atmosphere into which the *iih*, the lament, can enter.

The next group of lines (ll.4-6) is more transparent syntactically. There is a sentence particle in each one: *waa* in ll.4 and 5 and *baa* in l.6.<sup>25</sup> Ll.7-10 are all negative main clauses; l.11 is a positive declarative with *waa* and seems to be somewhat isolated as a line. Ll.12-14 are a sequence which comprise a single main clause in which ll.12 and 13 are not end-stopped but display enjambement and l.14 concludes the sentence with a focus construction *waxa(a)*. I return to the significance of this sequence of lines below. The remaining lines are all positive declaratives with the focus marker and the 1.sg. subject pronoun followed by the verb *ahay* '[I] am'.<sup>26</sup> In addition ll.15-18 begin with the noun *nin*, either defined with *-kii* or undefined. The noun is also present in l.19 but in MPs 6 and 7 (I return to this below).

### Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.1-3

I turn now from the syntax and structural linguistic matters to a discussion of the content, the use of vocabulary and the aesthetics which the poem displays. I shall concentrate on the issue of sound and show how reference to sound and sound itself, the acoustic materiality of the poem, come together in a powerful way which, in my opinion, is part of the reason why it is so well appreciated. It is also a feature which contributes to making it a stereotypical lyric poem in ways expressed in the literature on lyric poetry

<sup>24</sup> I write *baxaysa* in the reduced paradigm as that is what would be used if it were present.

<sup>25</sup> Aside from the focus marker *baa* focussing what immediately precedes it, the word *uun* may also be considered part of the expression of focus in this sentence (see slide 18 of Banti 2019).

<sup>26</sup> In ll.15 and 19 the focus marker coalesces with the verb that precedes it: *igdhay* for *igdhay baan* and *aammusaan* for *aammusay baan* respectively.

more widely such as Culler (2015) and Blasing (2009). I do not pursue this more comparative perspective here though do think that poems such as this have much to offer the more theoretical literature on lyric poetry cross-linguistically.

Although the vocabulary used in the poem is readily understandable, there are, nevertheless, some words which are worthy of note. The first word in the poem is one such. *Allayl*, is a loan from Arabic, though it is not, at least in modern Somali, used generally for 'night' or 'evening' (*habeen* and *fiid* are used). Puglielli and Mansuur (2012: 23) have *alleyl* as referring to 'habeen bar, saqdhaxe' 'middle of the night', Ahmed (1990: 1) has *allayl* meaning 'the second half of the night', and so it may have been that Raage had such a more specific meaning in mind. Another feature of *Allayl* at the beginning is that when we hear the word, there is a similarity acoustically between its sound and that of the word '*Alleylee*' (*Allaylehe*) which is from 'Allaa i lehe' 'God has me' which is used when one is 'making sure, ascertaining that something has happened'.<sup>27</sup> Given the importance of sound in this poem the echo of this in the first word does not seem unreasonable.<sup>28</sup> It is one of two alliterating words in the first half-line, the second being another loan from Arabic, which also retains the Arabic definite article: *albaabbada*.

When we hear the first line as a whole we are presented with a scene of quiet, a peaceful night in which everyone has fallen asleep. This seems further captured by the alliterating word in the second half-line, *uunku*, which implies not just people, but all living creatures, thus hinting at a quiet such that not even the livestock are heard.

In l.2 that silence is shattered by the reference to the thunder calling, the pouring rain and the sound image of a thousand rifles, which also conjures a hint of menace. Some accounts of the story behind the poem recount that when Raage arrived at the family of Cabban to contract the marriage it was raining heavily which may be another reason for this image being used. The word *uugaamo* is, according to Puglielli and Cabdalla (2012: 826) the same as *uugaan* which in their dictionary has two meanings: 'Daruuro cokan' 'clouds heavy with water' and 'Yabaq, buuq' 'a crashing noise, a loud noise' both of which are relevant here, though I would say that here it is the latter, the noise aspect, which seems to be particularly pertinent in the context of the poem. In Aadan (2013: 1411) the singular form *uugaan* also has the meaning of clamouring sound of people and livestock moving together, further supporting the idea that it is the sound aspect of this word that is significant. Finally, the word is onomatopoeic and so the sound of it literally plays a role in its interpretation as well as in its use here in the poem.

The next word which stands out is *alif*, the syntactic context of which was mentioned above. Here I propose that there is more to the word's use than the simple meaning of 'a thousand'. It is the alliterating word in this half-line and echoes the Arabic words in l.1, *alleyl* and *albaab* given both the alliteration and indeed the assonance of the first syllable in *a*. It is its meaning, however, that leads me to consider further significance. As mentioned above, the Arabic for 'thousand', *'alf* is not used as a loanword in Somali.<sup>29</sup> However, a homonym (that is a homonym in Somali, not in Arabic), *alif*, is in fact a

<sup>27</sup> Zorc and Madina (1993: 12), for example, have this as 'honestly speaking, in truth'; Puglielli and Mansuur (2012: 23) give 'Erey la yiraahdo marka wax dhacay ay sidii loo filayay noqdaan; akkidid [*sic*] in wax dhacay ay sidaas noqonayaan. Wuxuu ka koobanyahay "Alle", "i" iyo "lehe"'.  
<sup>28</sup> Yet another possible sound echo is with the name Layla famous from the poem by Qays bin al-Mulawwah, the story of which one may assume must have been known to Raage given the proximity geographically and culturally to the Arabic-speaking world and his education.

<sup>29</sup> None of the dictionaries give this meaning of the word. The only written source of this interpretation of the word is given in a note to this poem in Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 9).

loanword in Somali, but one which means the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. As mentioned above, this is also the word used to express alliteration in the vowels; the poem alliterates in *alif* when the vowels are the alliterative sound, as is the case in this poem. It is not uncommon for poets to use the alliterative sound to refer to the poem itself, and I suggest the word *alif* here may be such an instance. The word *alif*, as well as meaning ‘a thousand’ might, therefore, simultaneously be interpreted as the alliterative sound of the poem and thus be an instance of poetic self-reflexivity. This means that, along with ‘a thousand rifles’, the interpretation ‘this poem alliterating in *alif* which is rifles’ may also be possible. Thus Raage may be referring not only to the rain sounding like a thousand rifles, but also to his poem sounding that way: the sound of *alif*—referring to the poem—is a thousand rifles. Given the importance of sound both in imagery and iconically in this poem as well as the sheer skill of Raage in making poems, this interpretation seems not unreasonable. It seems also to be supported by the next line in which both reference to sound and the actual sound of the line come together to make a wonderfully rich line: *Iihdayda bixi baa libaax iman la moodaaye*.

Assonance and consonance are particularly prominent here, something we can ‘see’ if we extract the vowels (writing the diphthong as a sequence of ‘a’ and ‘i’) and the consonants (including the glottal stop of the alliteration) in the two half-lines:

ii-ai-a-i-i-aa-i-aa      i-a-a-oo-aa-(e)  
 ’-h-d-d-b-x-b-l-b-x      ’-m-n-l-m-d-(y)

The sequence of the vowels ‘i’ and ‘a’, both long and short, is striking and is broken only by the ‘oo’ and the final ‘e’, though the latter is in parentheses since it is not part of a substantive word in the line. Equally, the limited set of consonants and the consequent consonance in each half-line lends a distinct acoustic quality to each half-line and the line as a whole. From a personal perspective, I find this line aesthetically tremendously appealing, as indeed do others I have spoken to about it. The first word that introduces all this, *iihdayda*, comprises the echomimetic word *iih* with the 1.sg. possessive suffix. It is at once both an iconic, acoustic representation of the lament and a denotative representation.<sup>30</sup> It is also, as mentioned above, the first expression of the first person in the poem. This is significant as it is the first direct expression of the lyric voice, though not in the form of a personal pronoun or noun subject, but as the possessive suffixed to the ‘cry’, the *iih*. Given both the echomimetic manner of its expression and the possessive suffix, this word at once represents the sound of the cry iconically and the lamenting lyric voice of the poem.

#### Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.4-6

L.4 begins with the noun *rag* and the adversative clitic conjunction *-se* which makes a contrast with what has come before.<sup>31</sup> *Rag* means ‘men (collective)’, and I interpret the contrast to be between someone lamenting and wailing, as in the previous line, and what it is to embody the expectations of a man of Raage’s age in his society, namely a *waranle* ‘warrior’ who can be depended on to protect and support his family and kin. The idea of support is expressed metaphorically in *adhaxda iyo ooftu waa*

<sup>30</sup> I use echomimetic here to contrast with onomatopoeic since the word *iih* is not one that is used to express a lament or other such concept in general (*calaacal* is used which may be considered onomatopoeic). The word *iih* is not a regular noun, but is a phonetically derived word to express the poet’s vocal crying out which behaves just as any other noun.

<sup>31</sup> See above for a note on *Ragse* being assumed rather than *Raggase* for reasons of metre. The difference in meaning is that in the first ‘men’ is not defined and in the second it is defined. This difference is minor and makes no difference to what I say here.

*udub-dhexaadhii* 'the spine and the ribcage are the central pole'. The use of *udub-dhexaad* is a reference to the central pole of the *aqal* 'the portable hut of the nomads'; it is the central pole which supports all the other parts. Given the family dwelling metaphor, it may be being used figuratively not only with respect to the strength and stamina of a man like Raage, but to include the sense of being the support of the household. This notion may be continued in l.5 if we take the meaning of *eeg* with *ka* as 'guard against neglect / harm / mistreatment'.<sup>32</sup> Previous translations have interpreted the verb *eeg* as 'to see' without reference to the extended meaning with the preverbal adposition *ka*. It seems, however, that the more specific interpretation of *ka eeg* fits better with the adversative in the previous line: 'The two [eyes] one used to look out from / guard against harm'.<sup>33</sup> This does, however, lead to the problem of how to allow for the preverbal adposition *ka* to reflect 'against' and 'from' and I don't pursue the matter further here. I assume the first interpretation to be correct with potential hints at the second; others may hopefully be able to shed further light on this or show it not to be a possible interpretation. Another feature of l.5 is that it is the first in which we hear the subject pronoun 'I', the lyric 'I', in *waan* (*waa* + *aan*).

L.6 ends this second triplet with a line that echoes l.3. We hear another echomimetic word *aa* (cf. *iih* of l.3) in MP2 which is also the alliterating word in this half-line. This, though, is not presented as a noun in the way *iih* is, rather it is a more 'raw' representation of the sound of the lament presented as the literal sound being uttered by the lamenting lyric voice. In contrast with *iih* in l.3 which is about to be heard by others mentioned in the poem the *aa* in l.6 is heard directly in the poem's present. We hear the *aa* as it is expressed by the lyric voice itself which then goes on to say that the emotions that give rise to that cry are known only to God. This is interesting when considering subjectivity in the poem. It presents the feelings expressed in the poem as directly internal to the subject since it is the lyric subject which voices the cry and there is no further mention more directly of what those feelings are. We hear the cry and recognise the anguish of the voice that made it. Even though we know the story, in the context of the poem's present, we are said to be unaware—only God is aware—of what prompted the cry. We are, therefore, in a lyric sense, hearing the actual cry of the lament in the raw sound of *aa* which is an echo of the poem itself given that the whole poem is the cry of this lyric voice.

This is in contrast to the personal subjectivity expressed directly in the series of love poems by Cilmi Boodhari composed in the 1930s. These are generally considered to be the beginning of the expression of a personal subjectivity in which direct feelings of love can be expressed. Cilmi Boodheri, in his poems, speaks directly of his love for Hodan Cabdullaahi and also of the reactions of others to his predicament as he expresses it directly in his life, not only in his poetry. Although both poets present personal emotion, they do it in quite different ways and part of the way Raage does it (more so than Cilmi in my view) is through words which reference sound and the iconic

<sup>32</sup> Cf. 'hawl laguu dhiibay, ilaali oo daranyada ka dhaw' (Aadan et al 2013: 482) also 'halis ka ilaalin' (Puglielli and Mansuur 2012: 280).

<sup>33</sup> Another possible reading might interpret the word *labadii* as referring back to *adhaxda* and *oofita* in the previous line. The use of the *-ii* anaphoric defining suffix hints at this possibility. If this were accepted, then the spine and ribcage are the things with which the poet/the voice of the poem used to guard against things, but from which he is now cut off. I am not convinced of this, but mention it as an interesting possibility.

soundscape of his poem highlighted in the words *iih* and *aa*.<sup>34</sup> Supporting this idea further there is also a parallelism in assonance between the words *libaax* in 1.3 and *Illaah* in 1.6 which are present in the same metrical positions (MPs 6 and 7). Both words are central to what I have just presented: the sound of the *iih* in 1.3 is like the call of a *libaax* ‘lion’ and it is only God, *Illaah*, who knows what causes the *aa* in 1.6. Both words are present in the same metrical position (MPs 6 and 7) and the assonance echoes the vowels in the echomimetic words themselves: *iih* in 1.3 and *aa* in 1.6 as well as the sequence of ‘i/ii’ and ‘a/aa’ in 1.3. These lines display a complex interplay of assonance, echomimesis, words referencing sound and subjectivity which makes a rich aesthetic experience for the listener. I return to these lines when discussing the final line also.

I have discussed these lines as grouped into triplets. Of written versions of the poem, only Axmednuur (2015) formats the poem in this way, but my analysis clearly supports the grouping of these lines in this way. Sayid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan is well known for having made poems in triplets, and on the basis of this poem by Raage, it seems that it was a feature present in even earlier poetry. Axmed (2017: 6) mentions most *gabays* as grouping lines in two or in three and uses the first three lines of this poem as an example of the latter.

Before leaving these lines, it is worth mentioning an interesting intertextual reference in another poem which points to Raage’s poem being widely known already in the early twentieth century. The words *adhax* and *oof* are heard with *aa* all together in the third line of a poem by Yuusuf-Dheere documented in Yaasiin (1984: 84–85). The line is ‘Araxdiyo haddaan oofta midig Aa! ka lee yahaye’ ‘If I say ‘aa’ from the spine and the right-hand ribs’.<sup>35</sup> The poem is a *baroordiiq*, an elegy, in the *gabay* form composed on the death of Yuusuf Cali Keenadiid (the first sultan of the Hoobyo Sultanate) which, I assume, was composed in 1911 when he died. Finding these words in a single line of a poem which expresses sadness and loss is reminiscent of Raage’s use and suggests that his poem had become widely known as a *calaacal*, a lament, in which sad feelings are expressed. The fact that all these words occur, in particular the inclusion of *aa*, is particularly striking and leads me to conclude that this is an intertextual reference which speaks to the fame of Raage and this poem.

### **Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.7-10**

The following four lines in the poem are grammatically negative thus display a loose syntactic parallelism. It is interesting that we hear a group of four lines rather than three. Whether or not the whole poem did have line groups of three and that the number here is due to some changes and/or loss or addition of lines during the history of transmission of this poem I cannot say and leave the lines as they are here. It could also be the case that we have four lines as a multiple of two (see above for *gabays* also grouping lines in two).

These lines are not as distinctive as the first six with regard to sound. The first two mention animals and actions that are natural to them which they cannot do when injured. The secretary bird cannot fly when it has an injury to its shoulder and the stallion cannot

<sup>34</sup> See Banti (1988: 58) for a brief reference to this personal subjectivity with reference to Cilmi Boodheri and Raage Ugaas. See also Woolner (2018 and 2022) for more on the expression on love, particularly in more recent love songs. See also Jamal (2014) and Abdirashid (2017) for more on subjectivity and the poetry of Cilmi Boodheri.

<sup>35</sup> It is translated by Yaasiin (1984: 84) as ‘E io piango pel dolore che mi ha fulminato i lombi e il costato’.

gallop when it has an injury to its spine.<sup>36</sup> The word *adhax* for 'spine' picks up the imagery in l.4 giving a concrete metaphorical reference to the more abstract reference in the earlier line. I suggest that the repetition brings a greater emphasis to this second instance where it is the alliterating word in the second half-line of l.8. Repetition of alliterating words so closely together in a poem might be considered weak technique. However, in the first half-line of l.4, there are in fact two alliterating words, *adhaxda* and *oofu*, thus the word *adhax* in that line can be considered to be an extra alliterating word and thus allows for the single alliterating *adhaxda* in the second half-line of l.8. That is to say we do not have a single alliterating word being repeated in two half-lines. Note that in the next line, l.9, we hear another repeat, this time of *oof*. In this line, it is the second of a pair of alliterating words *il* 'eye' and *oof* 'ribcage'. In l.4 we needed to allow *oof* to be the main alliterating word because of the repetition of *adhax*, now we see that in l.9 it can be the extra alliterating word, given that we have *il* which can act as the main alliterating word which is not repeated nearby. The word is, though, repeated later, but in the plural, *ilo*, and in l.16 where it has the meaning 'springs [of water]'.<sup>37</sup> In the same half-line in l.16, there is nevertheless another alliterating word: *arkoo* [*arkay-oo*] which can then act as the main alliterating word in that half-line which is not repeated anywhere in the poem. The way repeated alliterating words are used in this poem does, I think, speak very much to the intricate way in which these systematic sound aspects of the poem are crafted and point to Raage's great skills in making poems.

There is also one further instance of repetition of the alliterating word in ll.7 and 9 with *iin* and *iimi* respectively (*iimi* is the subject form of *iin*). However in each case the word is the only alliterating word in the second half-line. This is, therefore, a case of repeating the alliterating word close together which does seem a little incongruous and one for which the only justification I can think of is emphasis, putting weight on the wound, presented in a metaphor in l.7 and more directly in l.9 with the reference to it being in a man who cannot take revenge because of it.

It is to be noted that Axmednuur (2015: 64) has another line between ll.9 and 10 of this version. This is *Usha qaadan waa shaybihii, arag dareeyaaye* 'Taking the stick is [being] the old man whose eyesight is getting weak' which I have not seen or heard in any other version of the poem. I don't include the line here given its absence in the other versions. It would, of course, make a triplet with ll.10 and 11.

In the next line, l.10, we hear a direct reference to marriage, which is important given the topic of the poem. A wound is mentioned again, the word for which is *arami*. This is a wound which is not obvious on the surface and which has not properly healed and can lead to illness later. This might be read to mean that the emotional wound he feels at not marrying Cabban is one he knows he cannot show openly for fear of ridicule, but which may yet persist. Alternatively, the reading of not taking revenge might lend a sense of this being a wound which prevents a man from marrying. The reference to marriage here is expressed in an impersonal way, the poet does not explicitly mention his own situation.

<sup>36</sup> The word *aboodi* has been translated in a number of ways: Saeed (1999: 261) has 'vulture', Banti (1988: 36) in Italian has *grifone* 'griffon vulture', Maxamed (1989: 13) in French has *griffon* 'griffon vulture' and Andrzejewski and Andrzejewski (1993: 9) have 'osprey'. The latter seems rather unlikely given that it is a fish-feeder (I have myself observed them on the Djibouti coast, but inland I assume them to be little known if at all). I choose to translate it as secretary bird here given that Puglielli and Mansuur (2012: 8) describe the reddish parts of the secretary bird and Aadan Xasan Aadan and et al (2013: 18) have a picture of a secretary bird with the entry for *aboodi*.

<sup>37</sup> As with the Arabic word *'ayn*, the word for 'spring [of water]' and 'eye' is the same in Somali.

### Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.11-14

L.11 stands out somewhat as isolated, though I choose to group it with the following three lines for reasons given below. The word *ool* that we hear in this line is the sound of the camels when they are in some distress, either because they are thirsty (as they are said to be here) or when they call out to their young which are not with them for some reason. We hear therefore yet another direct reference to a lamenting sound expressed in an onomatopoeic word which is the alliterating word in the second half-line. Although there is no expression or reference to the voice of the poem in this line, the context of the line allows it to be interpreted metaphorically to reflect the lament of the lyric voice. The isolation or abstraction from the voice of the poem expressed through the cry being that of the camels may be related to the next three lines in which we don't have any direct sense of a cry, but indirectly can imagine crying taking place.

Ll.12-14 are striking for a number of reasons. Firstly, as mentioned above, the lines constitute a clear triplet which is a single main clause with ll.12 and 13 displaying enjambement.<sup>38</sup> Enjambement is not common in the *gabay* form given the long line and, when we hear it, we experience the anticipation at the end of the lines that run on giving the poem a great movement.<sup>39</sup> Thirdly, the first line of the triplet, l.12, begins with *sidi* 'like' (literally 'the way') which introduces a simile. Although metaphor is very common in Somali poetry, the use of simile seems to me to be less common and I sense the direct manner in which this simile is presented seems to make it stand out. Following *sidi* we hear the vehicle in the next word, *inan* 'a girl'. This noun is qualified with *yar* 'small, young' and then a relative clause 'whose mother has gone to reside in the hereafter [who has died]'. The next line, l.13, begins with *oo* which immediately implies another relative clause and we hear one which takes up the rest of that line 'whose father has made her go to sleep at the entrance [outside] of a hut of another'.<sup>40</sup> Then in l.14 we hear *hadba* 'again and again' followed by *waxaan la urugoonayaa uur-ku-taallada* 'I grieve with the sad/hurting remembrance of it'. This is highly striking. Raage Ugaas was a young man who was well known, well educated, was a leading figure in his lineage and, we might assume, was already regarded as a poet of repute. In other words, he was a *waranle* who would have been well respected and who would have been expected to behave according to the ways of men of his age and stature. Nevertheless, in the poem, using the first person pronoun in *waxaan*, the lyric voice likens himself to a young girl whose mother has died and who is living with a step-mother. Such a girl can be considered one of the most vulnerable members of the society, quite the opposite of the warrior, the *waranle*. Raage uses the two alliterating words in this third line of the triplet, *urugoonayaa* and *uurkutaallada*, to express how he feels within the comparison of himself in the simile with the young girl. The direct manner in which the simile is presented seems to make it stand out. He would not have been able to say such things in normal speech; it is only in a poem that such a sentiment could have been expressed in this way. This shows the way in which the poetic voice, the lyric 'I', which, though on one level is the voice of the poet, is also a voice in its own right that can express things which cannot be said in normal speech. We accept that the lyric 'I' can

<sup>38</sup> Although enjambement is heard in that the lines are not main clauses, the ends of ll.12 and 13 do nevertheless coincide with syntactic boundaries internal to the main clause, namely the ends of relative clauses on the head noun *inan* 'girl'.

<sup>39</sup> See Orwin (2000) for analysis of another well-known poem in which enjambement is present.

<sup>40</sup> There is a relative clause within this matrix relative clause: *illin ah* 'which is an entrance' qualifying the head noun *meel* 'place'.

voice something such as this striking simile when the poet himself, outside of the poem, could not.

### **Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.15-19**

The rest of the poem comprises a set of lines which are syntactically parallel (see above). Although all versions share the final line, which I return to below, it is in this final part of the poem that the greatest variation is found, with some lines being present in some versions and not in others. Axmednuur (2015) has the greatest number of lines and these are given in the appendix where the version in his book is reproduced. All these lines express similar sentiments and are syntactically parallel as mentioned above. They express, more directly than previous lines, the predicament the poet found himself in when he made the poem. The lines are easily understood, although the use of *igadh* needs to be teased out a little.

The meaning of *igadh* here relates to the homophonous noun *igadh* which is used for a milk-camel which is still in milk but whose calf has either died or been slaughtered. In order to induce the mother to give milk the hide of the dead calf is placed over another calf which, since it now smells of the original calf, is allowed by the mother to suckle. This induces her to give milk and the calf is removed. Since it is still suckling from its own mother, it does not need to take much from the *igadh* camel. When it is removed, the people can then take milk from the *igadh* camel for their own consumption. In this image, Raage is like the calf who has been killed as another benefits from being married to Cabban (in the metaphor the milk camel).

In the next line, l.16, the voice in the poem sees springs of water (representing the marriage to Cabban) but remains thirsty (does not marry her). L.17 refers to the matter of taking revenge and I assume refers to Raage being admonished for what he as suggested with regard to taking revenge for the wrong (see above). The next line, l.18, is one which is not found in the school textbook Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976). This is a known issue and all who I have heard speak about it explain it by the fact that in a school textbook at that time, it was counter to the prevailing political ideas to mention clans in such contexts. The line was, therefore, left out of that version. Note that in each of these lines 15-18 the word for 'man' is at the beginning of the line, either defined as *ninkii* or undefined *nin*.

In l.18 we expect the same basic syntactic structure that we have heard in these previous lines, but the pattern is broken and we hear at the beginning the word *Af-dhabaandhow* 'making someone be quiet by patting the mouth' followed by *aayar ah* 'gently, slowly'. As in the first three lines, the syntax here is not particularly clear. The word *af-dhabaandhow* is the action of patting one's mouth with a view to making someone be quiet. The agent of this action, however, is not quite clear from the wording. Is it someone else or is it Raage who is doing this? Discussing this with others has not allowed me to come to any firm conclusion. What is very clear, however, is the meaning of the final words *ninkaa aammusaan ahaye* 'I am that silent man.' This is a stunning end to this poem. We have heard so much richness in the poem in the careful structure, in the imagery and, crucially, in the sound imagery and the very sound itself. For the lyric voice to then, in the very last words, state that he is that silent man is striking and leaves us with a strong impression. The contrast points to the fact that, despite all the sound that he has made in this lament, he is nevertheless going to remain quiet with regard to taking any revenge. It also points to the sadness which emerges from the poem



and the notion that, although he has expressed that sadness in the poem, he will remain silent ‘outside’ of the poem.

There is a final echo in these last words which is also striking. I mentioned above two key words earlier in the poem which display assonance: *libaax* and *Illaah* in ll.3 and 6 respectively which are heard in MPs 6 and 7. In the last line we hear the word *ninkaa* which also displays this pattern of vowels in the same metrical position. This word is also crucial in that it draws attention to the tension between the poet, *ninkaa*, and the lyric subject of the poem which speaks the words. The lyric subject has been far from silent and has presented one of the most memorable poetic utterances we know in Somali—or indeed in any other language. Within the poem itself, the lyric subject has expressed feelings not only through imagery, metaphor and simile, but also through the materiality of the language (*iih*, *aa*, the assonance etc.). This has allowed the poet as subject, Raage, to express himself in a manner that makes his voice heard whilst, being ‘that man’ of the final line, remaining silent. Despite this silence at the end of the poem, we hear still the lyric subject’s voice today. We hear it each time someone gives voice to the words, or when we ourselves voice the words and even each time we silently voice the words of the poem in our own minds.

### Conclusion

I hope to have shown in this article the way that sound plays a fundamental role in the poem. There is the metrical structure and the alliteration which underpin the soundscape of the poem, but it is the wonderful way in which the materiality of sound has been aesthetically crafted that contributes to making this such a memorable and striking poem. This ties in strongly with ideas of iterability, remembering, formalization and other notions relating to the use of sound in lyric poetry more widely. However, it is not only for these functional reasons that these features are present, they afford an aesthetic experience to the listener which prompts the wish to hear the poem again and again (as it does this particular listener). It is this that has made it a lasting work of art.

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## Appendix

### Text used here adapted from Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 8)

- 1 Allayl dumay albaabbadoo la xidhay uunku wada seexday
- 2 Onkod yeedhay uugaamo roob alif banaadiiq ah
- 3 Iihdayda bixi baa libaax iman la moodaaye
- 4 Ragse adhaxda iyo ooftu waa udub-dhexaadkiye
- 5 Labadii waxa laga eegi jiray waan ka awdnahaye
- 6 Halkaan ‘aa’ ka leeyahay Illaah keli ah uun baa og
- 7 Aboodigu ma lalo garab hadduu iin ku leeyahaye
- 8 Orod u ma hollado ooglihii adhaxda beelaaye
- 9 Ma aarsado il iyo oof nimay iimi kaga taalle
- 10 Aroos u ma galbado nimuu wadnaha arami jiifaaye
- 11 Geeluba kolkuu oomo waa olol badnaadaaye
- 12 Sidii inan yar oo hooyadeed aakhiro u hoyatay
- 13 Oo aabbeheed aqal mid kale meel illin ah seexshay
- 14 Hadba waxaan la urugoonayaa uur-ku-taallada e
- 15 Ninkii ooridiisii rag kale loo igdhaan ahaye

- 16 Ninkii ilo biyo leh soo arkoo ooman baan ahaye
- 17 Nin ugaas walaalkiis yahoo eeday baan ahaye
- 18 Nin abkiis Ogaadeen yahoon aarsan baan ahaye
- 19 Af-dhabaandhow aayar ah ninkaa aammusaan ahaye

**Text as in Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 8)**

- 1 Alleyl dumay, albaabadoo xidhan uunku wada seexday
- 2 Onkod yeedhay uugaamo roob alif banaadiiq ah
- 3 Iihdaydabixi baa libaax iman la moodaaye
- 4 Raggase adhaxda iyo ooftu waa udub dhexaadkiye
- 5 Labadii waxa laga eegi jirey waan ka awdnahaye
- 6 Halkaan Aa' ka leeyahay Ilaah keliya uun baa og.
- 7 Aboodigu ma lalo garab hadduu iin ku leeyahaye
- 8 Orod uma hollado ooglihii adhaxda beelaaye
- 9 Ma aarsado il iyo oof ninkii iimi kaga taale
- 10 Aroos uma galbado nimuu wadnaha arami jiifaaye
- 11 Geeluba kolkuu oomo waa olol badnaadaaye
- 12 Sidii inan yar oo hooyadeed aakhiro u hoyatey
- 13 Oo aabaheed aqal mid kale meel illin ah seexshey
- 14 Hadba waxaan la urugoonayaa uurkutaallada eh
- 15 Ninkii oridiisii rag kale loo igdhaan ahaye
- 16 Ninka ila biyo leh soo arkoo ooman baan ahaye
- 17 Nin ugaas walaalkiis yahoo eeday baan ahaye
- 19 Afdhabaandhow aayar ninkaa aamusaan ahaye

**Text in Axmednuur (2015: 64–65) with translations of the lines not present in the version used here**

- 1 Allayl dumay albaabadoo la xidhay, unkoo wada seexday
- 2 Unkad yeedhay uugaama roob, alif banaadiikh ah
- 3 Iihdayda bixi baa libaax, iman la moodaaye
  
- 4 Raggase adhaxda iyo ooftu waa, udub dhexaad kiiye
- 5 Labadii wax laga eegi jiray, waan ka awdnahaye
- 6 Halkaan aa ka leeyahay Ilaah, kaliya uun baa og
  
- 7 Aboodigu ma lalo garab hadduu, iin ku leeyahaye
- 8 Orod uma holado ooglihii, adhaxda beelaaye
- 9 Ma aarsado il iyo oof nimay, iimi kaga taale
- 10 Usha qaadan waa shaybihii, arag dareeyaaye (see text for translation)
- 11 Aroos uma galbado nimuu wadnaha, arami jiifaaye
  
- 12 Geeluba markuu oomo wuu, olol badnaadaaye
- 13 Sidii inan yar oo hooyadeed, aakhirow hooyatay
- 14 Oo aabeheed aqal midkale, meel illina seexshay
- 15 Hadba waxaan la urugoonayaa, uur ku taalada e
  
- 16 Nin abkii Ogaadeen yahoo, aarsan baan ahaye
- 17 Ninka ilo biyaleh soo maree, ooman baan ahaye

- 18 Ninka ayradiisii ku kale, loo eryaan ahaye  
‘I am the man whose best milk camel has been chased away to the other’
- 19 Ninka ooridiisii rag kale, loo igdhaan ahaye
- 20 Taladii adoogii ninkaa, eeday baan ahaye  
‘I am that man who regretted/blamed the advice of the forefathers’
- 21 Ninka ila-xidhkiisii mid kale, eegay baan ahaye  
‘I am the man whose curtain in the *aqal* another has looked at’
- 22 Af-dhabaandow aayara ninkaa, aamusaan ahaye