

THE ISSUE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY: THE JINX LIVES OF STREET CHILDREN IN *BLACK MAMBA BOY* (2010) BY NADIFA MOHAMED

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ABSTRACT:

The issue of street children is mainly an African and Third World concern. It is both pressing in its nature and topical in its perspectives. In many developing countries, it gives rise to and justifies socio-economic policies whose ultimate objective is to re-socialise and reintegrate disinherited children into the social fabric of their communities and families of origin. Nadifa Mohamed, to contribute to this humanist and humanitarian struggle, recourse to fiction so as to spotlight the causes and consequences of the phenomenon of street children throughout Somalia. Published in 2010, *Black Mamba Boy* is a novel that goes back and forth through the parameters of human ecology to underline the relationship between street children and their social milieu. It, in all-importance, puts on surface the problematic of single-parent families and street children that hangs in the common balance of Somalian communities. Thus being, in this reflection, we target to analyse the ebb and flow of some children's lives who, far from being happy-go lucky kids, walk on the streets of misery through Arden town and Hargeisa to eat and drink bits and pieces of the sulky and dim-eyed existence of poor in Somalia. The figure of the father being described as a missing actor, throws an evil stone into the equilibrium of the family centre to provoke a touch-and-go situation. The paper, in consequence, drives at fixing the dramatic impact of a fatherly missing on the social organization of a Somalian family, highlighting, by the way, the enticement and the influence a milieu can exert on its dwellers.

Key-words: children, street, life, ecology, family, peregrination

RÉSUMÉ:

La question sur les enfants de et dans la rue est une préoccupation principalement africaine et tiers-mondiste. Lancinante dans sa nature et actuelle dans ses perspectives, la problématique suscite et justifie dans beaucoup d'états en développement des politiques socio-économiques dont l'objectif final est de resocialiser et de réinsérer ces enfants déshérités dans le tissu sociétal de leur communauté et de leur famille d'origines. Dans le but de contribuer à ce combat humaniste et humanitaire, Nadifa Mohamed fait recours à la fiction pour

monter et dénoncer le phénomène des enfants de la rue dans toute la Somalie.

Publié en 2010, *Black Mamba Boy* est un roman qui met en évidence les contours de l'écologie humaine en insistant sur la relation intrinsèque qui existe entre les enfants-mendiants et leur milieu de vie. Il analyse le flux et le reflux de la vie de des familles monoparentales et des enfants de la rue qui, loin de mener une vie joyeuse, arpentent les rues de la misère des villes d'Arden et d'Hargeisa. Ils mangent au quotidien leur pain noir pour ainsi mener une vie de bâton de chaise dans les coins et recoins des rebus sociaux de la Somalie. En outre, la figure du père qui est décrite comme un acteur à l'abonné absent, jette une pierre de touche sur l'organisation sociale de la famille somalienne ; une pierre par laquelle se révèle un déséquilibre familial qui, de fait, met les enfants dans la nasse de la rue, laquelle exerce sur eux une influence certaine et définitive.

Mots-clés : Mots-clés : enfants, rue, vie, écologie, famille, pérégrination.

INTRODUCTION

Having belonged to the younger generation of African writers, Nadifa Mohamed is a female spokesperson of the Somalian gaged and out of earshot fringes. In her writings, she dives into social issues that highly downfall the Somalian day-to-day life to raise up the wrongness and hard knocks of African desperate citizens at large.

The phenomenon of street children, which is spread throughout the Sub-Saharan Africa, turns into a fact of life and calls the attention of many intellectuals who, in their capacities as political activists, or social actors in governmental or non-governmental organizations, dwell on the necessity to clean the street of its non-entitled occupiers. They stand on their ground with compelling arguments that insist on the rights of children and the parents' duties as universal and common-like values that give no room for manoeuvre to those who drive at exploiting children's services. It is in such a context that Nadifa Mohamed, in *Black Mamba Boy*, gets a fix on the matter of street children in following, with an educated eye, the long-faced life of dragged children from Aden to Djibouti. As a spokeswoman of black communities and voiceless fringes, the Somalian author goes beyond the silence of cemeteries to light on disrupted families, bungled marriages, and street children. How do single-parent families face social realities? What is the role played by the mother in such alike families? Is there any impact of the missing of the father figure on the family members? To give suitable answers to that corpus of questions, a study on family pattern will be elaborated. Thus being, our analysis is to be based on the theory of 'human ecology' which is defined by Margaret M. Bubolz and M. Suzanne Sontag as being:

Unique in its focus on humans as both biological organisms and social beings in interaction with their environment. In this theory the family is considered to be an energy transformation system that is interdependent with its natural physical-biological, human-built, and social-cultural milieu. Emphasis is given to the creation, use, and management of resources for creative adaptation. (Margaret M. Bubolz and M. Suzanne Sontag 1993, 149).

Thus, it will be of great importance to analyze the bedrock of runaway and expunged children in poor areas underlined in the aforementioned novel.

1. SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES: A BULWARK OF THE AFRICAN CHILD'S BLOOMING

Regarded as being a thorny issue, the phenomenon of single-parent families is a social reality spread throughout the world. The keen motivation to drill and sweat into providing their families with adequate commodities, brings men to ebb away from their houses, leaving kids with mothers or relatives. Thus being, the father's influence, and support for kids whittle away and eggs on the latter to walk the street of misery and despair.

In *Black Mamba Boy*, Nadifa comes up with the theme of forlorn children, shaking the roots of a social evil that looms large in third world countries in particular. Indeed, the Somalian writer points up the family pattern in African poor countries, figuring out the economic and social consequences on kids. Poverty appears to be a catalyst for the phenomenon of street children. As a space for vagrancy, the street becomes a social converter that formats children's spirits and formalizes an ecosystem of life in which the only law that applies is that of survival. Poor countries, including Somalia, are described as nations where childhood is no longer the golden age of play and enjoyment, but a period of doubt and desolation. It is then depicted as a component of the scums of Somalia's social ecology.

Guru, Mamba's father, under prime social pressures, leaves the rural Aden to, with goodness, eke out a living in Soudan where he is to save enough so as to come back home and help in whatever way he can. The absence of the father impacts on Jama's psychology and draws him in a state of illusion:

The boy fantasizes on his father figure and clings on his image: "Jama not finding any companionship inside the compound or outside, retreated deep into himself and made his mind his playground, fantasising all day about the father he had somehow lost (N. Mohamed 2010, 57).

The image of the head of family becomes a dim shadow that invades the boy's horizon to leave him in a disturbed and messed up state. Thus being, Jama broods over an imaginative family detached from reality to sky nice dreams of familial harmony and perfection. The narrator puts it in this way: "conjuring his father was pleasure, his strong muscles, gold ring and watches, nice shoes, thick hair, expensive clothes could all be refashioned on a whim, he said and did only what Jama wanted without the intrusion of reality" (N. Mohamed 2010, 57). However, the overlong absence of the father who does not point a sign of life, demoralizes the boy and rubs out of him any ray of hope to live again in a united household with a dad as a present and devoted head. The absence of the father deprives the family members of their breadwinner and compromises their social stability. The telepathic relation between the father figure and the son is shaken into pieces. The family is then pitched into an upside down pickle and for "there is a gradual destruction of the family [...] the relationship between father and son crumble down" (A. Dione, 2019, 89). Indeed, the father figure, in some African societies, is presented as a personality, who carries the great responsibilities of the kinsfolk on his shoulders. He should guide, educate, orient and assist the members of his kin in all circumstances. Nevertheless, he is attributed the power to define the philosophy of life and the different social values to be transmitted to his children. However, his absence from the family for a long period of

time, can unbalance the internal organization and affects the psychology of the children who, growing up in a social environment marked by total deprivation, may; at any time, go off the rails and fall into the depths of a confusing and destabilizing social ecology. In *Black Mamba Boy*, Jama's father takes leave of his family and withdraws into a perpetual silence-absence that will definitely destructure the family stability. As a consequence, to meet the challenge to take care of a child boy, Ambaro, Mamba's mother joins hand in stone. She puts her nose to the grindstone to provide her son with the minimum convenience that likely comes at a cost in Aden:

Unlike many Somali woman, who abandoned four-and five year-old boys on the street when their fathers absconded, she had guarded Jama as best as she could, and thought day and night 'how can I keep my baby safe? How can I keep my baby safe?' (N. Mohamed 2010, 18).

The repetition of interrogation, 'how can I keep my baby safe?' tells much about Ambaro's attachment to her child she still calls 'baby'. Her duty as a mother is plainly assumed and put under the service of her son's well-being.

With a child to take care of, the woman finds accommodation in an extended family where she and her child are victim of stigma and prejudices. Daily harassed by those who intend to bail them out, mother and son go through day-to-day emotional stresses. Their *un-belongingness* to a unified family expresses their everyday lives to a permanent humiliation. To cut short that sketchy existence, Jama walks down the streets and entrusts himself with the responsibility to carry the social burden of his own. He leads adrift life and takes a growing interest in street awful activities with his likes "Shidane and Abdi applauded Jama when he told them he was never going back to Islaweyne house" (N. Mohamed 2010, 17). Jama's taste of street life grows and becomes irredeemable. He redefines his survival plan and finds on the street all his *raison d'être*. The narrator reveals: "sleeping on roofs and streets had changed his sleep from the contented slumber of an infant, safe within his mother-sentried realm, to a jerky, half-awake unconsciousness, aware of mysterious voices and startling footsteps. (N. Mohamed 2010, 23). Jama barges into the street and immediately becomes aware of the difference between the two spaces. The family home, though modest, is far better than the open-air house offered by the street which, in fact, brands the children and skid them into the depths of its ecology where life is conjugated in the present of pain and the future of despair. The mysterious lanes and the sound of strange footsteps that the homeless child can hear set the scene for the new home where Jama has come to live. It is a fatalistic environment damned and tamed by the forces of evil, whose shadows haunt and torment its occupants. Their voices pollute the atmosphere and their footsteps damage the social ecology and profoundly affect the psychic and psychological well-being of the children, who are given over to theft and drugs. Social exclusion is thus materialized by the presence of these kids who have neither past nor future. They are hopelessly condemned to live in total de-socialization far from the elementary educational and health structures. Their universe is that of social waste, ambulatory ruffraff and family renegades.

Ambaro's son conversion into a 'runaway kid' is much telling about the socio-political and economic situations in Aden. With a deserted setting and lopsided economic system which is majorly ground on camel

selling. Aden is a region where the prime mainstream of inhabitants scrambles into poverty and destitution. The happy-few who bash in a secluded bliss and good-natured exploit the have-nots who are employed as coolies or handworkers or just helpless laborers. Ambaro is one of the slender and enslaved mothers who dedicate soul and spirit to energy-consuming tasks to meet ends afield “Ambaro left for the coffee company at dawn and didn’t return until dark” (N. Mohamed 2010, 8). Indeed, she grieves for her missing husband and finds it hard to fulfill the duty to manage a household. Left to her own without any adequate job-skills, Ambaro cannot but makes do with low paying employments.

Jama, the mamba boy, therefore goes astray because of lack of strong parental direction : “Jama did joke with the hashish smoker but it was because he did not have brothers, cousins or a father to protect him like the other children. He knew his powerlessness so did not argue or make enemies” (N. Mohamed 2010, 15). Victim of a family break-up, the young boy, who now lives in precariousness and stigmatization, suffers from behavioral troubles that are inevitably linked to his de-socialization. The absence of his father and the destitution his mother goes through make him lose his identity references which turn into a social vulnerability aggravated by his living environment, which is indeed a social ecosystem made of fear, disarray and distress. The mental strategies of survival lead Jama and his friends to an adaptation that turns their group and their territory into components of their ‘human universe’. The interactions of his peers with their hostile environment reveal rules of abidance, principles of existence that speak volumes about their emotional and filial misery. Jama transforms himself into a bold runaway kid in Aden’s streets in spite of her mother’s efforts of being solicitous with him.

Mamba’s mother fails to supervise properly her little boy. Their loving relationships as a mother and a son are disrupted by the fallen fatherly social budge: “Jama had also grown weary of his mother, she did nothing but give him a headache” (N. Mohamed 2010, 23). As ‘Mama’s boy’, the young boy can see his mother sinking into lassitude. She can’t afford to keep up with both the father’s and mother’s roles. The burden implies to be beyond her strength and her presence seems increasingly boring and uninteresting in the eyes of her son. This trying situation is all the more helpless as the emotional gap dug by the father’s absence cannot, by any means, be ironed out. The basic humanity that grounds a family building is smashed by the sorrow of a mother in turmoil.

Ambaro’s hectic existence is definitely washed asunder out of any opportunity to experience a sheer exuberance of financial facilities. Her margins to make a “Leap out of the Darkness” (Dieng 2002)¹ are too narrow and far between. By and large, the noticeable psychological driving consequence can be read through these lines: “She wept in sunshine and moonlight, she refused to get up, to feed herself or Jama. She blames Guure for making her carry a young baby from village to village in the heat and dust” (N. Mohamed 2010, 22). Through that passage, it can be underlined a singular inner truth on abandoned women in Aden. Left to her own devices, Ambaro breaks down and abandons herself in self-flagellation. She recognizes her weakness and her inability to play and assume the role of a father and husband. Her social status as a woman relegates her to a social background from where she can only play second fiddle missions. For this

¹ Title of a novel written by Gorgui Dieng.

reason, she fails miserably in her undertaking to provide a correct living standard to her own son. She then blames her inadequacies on her husband who is conspicuous by his prolonged absence.

Ambaro and her likes are inexorably put under the dehumanizing fate that condemns them in a noetic attrition which, by the way, exposes readable signs of a pathological decline. Single-parent families grapple with unsolvable issues that turn their day-to-day lives into obsessive bitter affects that demean their sinew and provoke their moral decay. The donkeyworks they are doomed to exert prevail upon their beings and becomings to raise inmost suffering to the utility of a social mirror. Their essence as women and holders of single-parent families is infused into an unfathomable distress that seems to thwart time in an endless present of ordeals. Aden becomes, in their innermost understanding, a place of obduracy that completely curtails and wipes out any hopeful future. In so being, it becomes possible to identify the father figure's *missingness* as an exclusive motive that defines a vacuum which engulfs all shafts of hope to maintain women in contact with humble realities. They are preys of an economic system that condemn fathers and mothers into episodes of abandonment and absence.

Bedridden, Ambaro lies pointless and helpless with a worsening illness that pins her down. Not being able to rely on a faded away husband, the boy's mother has little choice but to accept a dogged fate. Such a pathetic situation touches off Jama to join in hard daily labors so as to rescue and save a dying mother. From that stance, the black mamba boy plays a father-like role to stamp out a father's absence.

Aunty Jama cried. 'Aunty, hooyo needs a doctor! He ran into each room looking for Dhegdheer, finding her in the kitchen. Hooyo must see a doctor, please fetch one, I beg of you. [...]. I will pay, take this and I will earn the rest after, wallaahi, I will work forever (N. Mohamed 2010, 43).

With a bedbound mother who can only rely on her son for her medical expenses, Jama tries to take action to rescue a mother who has exhausted herself working day in day out. The abysmal gap left by a father is challenged by a son whose shoulders are so weak and fragile to support familial charges. However, the young boy decides to go and roll up his sleeves to save his mother. The streets turn out to be, in point of fact, a life-saving space from where a child converts himself into a breadwinner.

In her capacity as a female writer, Nadifa limns the female tragic destiny in a context of single-parent families. She voices the wrongness and awkwardness of men's decision to drop out of sight, obliging women to carry the vitriolic recipe of resourcefulness.

2. FROM RUNAWAYS TO JUNKED CHILDREN

Written in a frame of social turbulences, *Black Mamba Boy* is a mirror that magnifies the twelve plagues of Egypt from which Somalia and other developing countries suffer.

In following the peregrinations of a father roaming around, Nadifa slips her thoughts into the semantics of children in street situations. Through an effective and committed concern, she spotlights the untenable lives of street children. Jama, Shidane and Abdi are deprived kids who have turned the street into a temporary haven to protect themselves against the vicissitudes of a miserable existence. The street is then described

as problematic as the lives of its occupiers are. From *infinitude* Jama and friends move towards a *finitude* dead-end in turning their beings into instrument-bodies that flash out their physical mourning which is accorded to the harsh reality of the street lives. The gang bear bodies that speak the language of horror and funnelled faces. They are all set on the edge of existence and daily duck the heavy-handed destiny of lives clogged at point zero.

Boys are animated by the instinct of survival. They, indeed, lead them to go through the logic of “social tests²” (Greimas 1976, 132). Such a peregrination goes hand in glove with psychological transformations in a universe of junction and disjunction. The street bears a code that Jama and his gang decode to eke out a living. They grasp here and there odd jobs to get something to eat. They live in expectation and carry to excess their will to find a point in food chain. The street is then a place, a milieu where unflaggingly children’s lives and destinies are shaped and defined on the basis of suffering, violence and derision. Jama’s and his likes’ corporealities’ are “offered as sacrifices and hopes for redemption” (F. Cheng. 2006, 107).

Among the different causes that push out Jama and his likes to a jubilating juvenile haven of youngsters in poor countries, one can put in bold the economic causes grounded on economic system that favors social inequalities. Aden’s and Hargeisa’s equal opportunities cards are biased to such a point that the happy-few draw a vicious circle of indigence for the vast majority of their fellow citizens. With a political go-down and an economic meltdown specifically in the 1990s, Somalia stands as a geographical area where social turbulence and military conflicts bang the population to transform their daily lives into infernal spirals. The powerlessness of the state to re-establish an institutional order exposes the civilian “populations to the military repression of the Shebabs³” (SENE 2013, 65). Somalia is nose-dived in a political dead-end. In other respect, tribal wars bring about depravation, starvation and insecurity. The bad governance is raised to the rank of a bylaw to suffocate the poor masses who *de facto* bear the brunt of the structural adjustment policies. As a consequence, family organizations go to pieces and children who are left for themselves, fumble for bare lives on the streets. In her analysis of the social inequality in Somaliland, Jinnow informs in the following:

life in this world allows one man to grow prosperous while another sinks into obscurity and is made ridiculous, a man passing through the evil influence of red Mars is feebler than a new born lamb punched on the nose [...] life there is too hard everyone, is peering over the horizon (N. Mohamed 2010, 55).

Jama’s ambition to leave his life on the street which is a descriptive board of a two-tier society individualizes destiny trough which they are caged in a solitary walk on the street of Aden. In the thick of their being, Nadifa lifts a veil on the Somalian social groups who live on the fringe of society. With a total absence of poverty program, the have-nots who are condemned under the poverty line cannot but go busking or panhandling as hobos and vagrants. Urban evils are then laid naked by Nadifa who through thick and thin speaks out the wheeling and dealing that have gangrened the Somalian society to an extent that the hustle and the bustle of poor’s lives are torn apart beyond healing and recollection.

² [La logique des épreuves sociales] My translation.

³ [Les populations devant les volontés militaires des Shébabs] . My translation.

Jinnow's social situation enlightens a familial structure that falls apart to dispossess parents of their abilities to nurse and attend prosperity for their kids. The latter find it coherent to stretch themselves full length in the social din of the street to eke a mien of life. They struggle along the streets of death and mourning to make the most of a game achieved in black misery. The narrator describes the image of Jama's life on the street in this way:

His favorite place to sleep was an earth-smelling crook on the roof of teetering apartment block. The crook was made up of a mud wall that curled over to make a three-walled tomb, inside it Jama felt as safe as the dead, in this world but not of it, floating high in the sky. At down he would wake up and watch the little insets as they carried on with their busy lives, scurrying across the wall with so much self-importance, crawling over his fingers and face as if he was justly a boulder in their war (N. Mohamed 2010, 23).

Jama, Abdi and Shidane turn the difficulties they meet on streets into opportunities to make men of themselves. In the heat of darkened existences, the unfortunate kids smile to high heaven to live and let other social scraps to alike their actions of roaming and vegetating in the concert of the poor. Their living environment is a cocktail of explosive evils. Hygiene is lacking, security is absent, as are the possibilities of accessing to the most basic health care. Their dormitory is a space of extreme dehumanity, a perimeter of dumping ground for social effluvia. Misery becomes their all-occasion companion. The street boys operate then an attachment and a fusion with their living environment. Without iota doubt, a humanly ecological relationship takes shape and begins to brighten between the space and its occupiers who, in trivialized lives, evolve like tramps ridden roughshod over by the society in which they live. Lerner and Damon illustrate the ecological relation between the person and his/her milieu in the following: "an individual's current functioning and life-span development are not isolated from the environment in which he or she lives" (Lerner and Damon, 2006: 401).

In Aden and Hargeisa goings are hard! Abdi and his comrades are kept on tenterhooks to let go to waste the joy of living a happy boy's life. Famine and thirst are the corollaries of their everyday vagabondage.

In fine, the street boys go ape over a nail-biting existence through which nothing is too bad for them to experience. Begging to meet basic needs sound to be an over-riding necessity to survive: Indeed "begging for, someone's leftover food, leftover attention Left over love" (N. Mohamed 2010, 41) is but a survival strategy in the streets of Aden and Hargeisa.

However, the harshness of street realities they grapple with shapes their identity on the ground of self-worth and self-confident. The gang vies against chief obstacles to make out a living. Having no support from neither families of origin nor social structure of their areas, youngsters explore the dustbins as second hand dishes. Jama and his bad luck friends, who operate a narcissistic retreat, team up to snatch the rest of the meals in a restaurant. The narrator puts it this way:

Yallah yallah abid! Leave our customers in peace; he shouted. The boys pulled back from the restaurant and regrouped at the palm trees lining the road. Hunger was the motivating principle in their lives, whether they were searching together or alone. [...]. Abdi gestured towards the Indian couple who were settling their bill. Jama and Shidane sprinted to the table and in one desperate movement tipped two plates of leftover

spaghetti into their sarongs. [. . .]. They pulled the food to their mouths as if they would never eat again, silently and with a fixed attention to the meager meal in their laps (N. Mohamed 2010, 29-30).

The indigence that trims ins and outs of Aden and Hargeisa is undoubtedly one of the main causes that list out children on street. Jama's band's situation is grossly similar to that of a great number of kids throughout developing countries. As it goes: "Children from one of the main population are victim of poverty worldwide" (Gordou DSN et al 2003, 29). In fact, the street is one of the cradles of human suffering. It constitutes a human ecology for street children in many African countries where they are usually thrown for lack of choice and opportunity. Their presence on that space is usually due to parental abuse or crushing poverty. In *Black Mamba Boy*, Abdi and his fellows are reified and condemned to live a hobo life in public streets. In so being, they are preys of all kinds of jeopardies. Their exposed lives as children are portrayed by Augendra Bhukuth and Jerome Ballet who state that "all children of the street are subject to some form of institutional violence which denies them the right to live and develop fully in a secure environment" (Angendra Bhukuth et al 2003, 1).

To cut it short, it can be noticed that the economic reasons are the main motives that souse the root of street children phenomenon. Aden and Hargeisa are places where life never smiles to those who enroot on the street life situation.

Failing to gain coins as beggars or having leftovers to eat, children align themselves close to hard labor to survive. Jama converts himself into a meat-docker. The menial works he exerts here and there in Hargeisa streets are money-making activities that bail him out and provide him enough to eat and save.

Butchers are jammed by street boys who line up in early morning hours in camel-butchers' gate doors with the hope to be selected for tasks that are not theirs. Kids work like adults and without any possibilities to hint disapproval or sign of fatigue and resignation. To be exploited through harsh labors is the best that can happen to them in Hargeisa's and Aden's streets. The narrator illustrates it in the following:

The butcher arrived already, smelling of blood with an impatient slap on the shoulder and a grunt they pushed out of the line the boys that they would employ that day. Jama was one of the chosen few. The unlucky ones returned to their mats or patches of dirt and prepared to sleep away the day and its insidious hunger pains to avoid (N. Mohamed 2010, 59).

Being in a grip of a general destitution, young boys adamantly stand their ground to find a way out of their hand-to-mouth existence:

Jama was tired of always turning up a beggar at people's doors begging for someone's leftover, leftover attention, left over love. Everyone is too busy with their own lives to think about me, he muttered to himself as he walked to Al-madina Coffee (N. Mohamed 2010, 41).

The young boy deploys his mind into a perspective to get rid of his label as an imp to grasp back his dignity as a human being. He voices his will to dispose of his eerie life to pin down another way of existence. However, his life as a child on the street seems fated to be

CONCLUSION

In *Black Mamba Boy*, Nadifa Mohamed vocalizes the troublesome destinies children in Aden and Hargeisa make do with. The issue of waifs, which is generally swept under the carpet in African societies, is forthrightly addressed by Nadifa who points out the ins and outs of such an unsavory social phenomenon. The notion of single parent-families is another rousing matter the Somalian writer has dealt with. Indeed, women who are abandoned by their errand husbands flummox against social burden that pull them down and blow asunder their family ties. By implication, children who cannot stand grinding poverty, run out of homes to ring the bell of their quixotic thoughts on the streets. In approaching the notion of street children, the author of *Black Mamba Boy* succeeds in bringing into view a social ecology through which a group of social 'dross' forge a special bond with their environment. The street is then described in the novel as a social converter, a social transformer through which a human ecology emerges and manifests itself in Aden and Hargeisa. In doing so, Nadifa Mohamed takes the road of denunciation to paint the street as a mirror of a failing society that can even no longer guarantee its most vulnerable stratum the minimum for a humanly acceptable existence. Indeed, the Guure family is a sample of the heart-broken families who indeed are the lengthening of the woeful political and economic upshots that, for a long period of time, have mapped the image of Somalia and that of Somalians. In *Black Mamba Boy*, Fathers run away from their offspring, leaving their wives with the burdens of pain and anguish to bear, what highlights the terrible image of fragile women who lose control of their children.

Nadifa deepens her pen into the ink of denunciation to emphasize the abject misery Jama's mother goes through. She and her son content themselves with dark bread to survive. In limning the wholeness of the social mayhem in her country of origin, the young writer runs circle around many Somalian thinkers whose first concerns about Somalia drift away from the issue of children deprived of parental care and protection.

Nadifa Mohamed has casted a look at her society to portray the unsaid and voice the unseen. She has pulled the gloomy curtain of the streets of Arden to expose the street situation that bridles kids' joy of life. Hence, the female writer's firm and pathetic call to gain some perspectives to nix such a gangrening social talking point in Somalia and in other developing countries.

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