This book uses several words in the Somali language, and consonants and vowels written in Somali are often pronounced differently than they are in American or British English. There are additional differences in dialect, pronunciation, and spelling preference and practice among Somalis living in Africa and around the world. For example, some of my interlocutors who grew up and lived in Jigjiga in the Somali Region of Ethiopia used different spellings and pronunciations of words than persons living and working in the rural districts north of Jigjiga, in Dire Dawa, and close to the borders with Somaliland and Djibouti. I have done the best I can to spell and describe the words people used, as variable as they are.

Consonant sounds in Somali:

q A voiced uvular plosive made by pronouncing a hard “k” sound in the back of the throat.

x Pronounced like an English “h” as in “help” but more from the back of the throat. This is called a “voiceless pharyngeal fricative.” For example the Arabic word for the “hajj” is spelled “xaj” in Somali.

’ This apostrophe signals a glottal stop.

Vowels in Somali

c Pronunciation is similar to the “ou-” as in “ouch” or “ah” in English but voiced at the back of the throat with the mouth and throat wide open. So “Ciise” is pronounced more like “ahee’-sah” with only two syllables.

a Pronounced like the vowel in “crop” in American English

e Pronounced as in “red” in English

i Pronounced as in “bit”

o Pronounced as in “top”

u Pronounced as in “put”

ii Pronounced as in “reed”

uu Pronounced as in “fool”

ay, ey Interchangeable, and pronounced as in “hay”

aw Pronounced as in “cow”

ow Pronounced as in “show”
LOVE AND LIBERATION