

POEMS  
MAANSOYIN



Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac  
'Gaarriye'

POEMS  
MAANSOYIN



ENITHARMON PRESS

*in association with*

poetry  
translation  
centre

First published in 2008  
by Enitharmon Press  
26B Caversham Road  
London NW5 2DU

[www.enitharmon.co.uk](http://www.enitharmon.co.uk)

Distributed in the UK by  
Central Books  
99 Wallis Road  
London E9 5LN

Distributed in the USA and Canada  
by Dufour Editions Inc.  
PO Box 7, Chester Springs  
PA 19425, USA

Poems © Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac 'Gaarriye' 2008  
Translations from the Somali © W. N. Herbert and Martin Orwin  
Introduction © Martin Orwin

ISBN: 978-1-904634-73-7

Enitharmon Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support of  
Arts Council England, London.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.  
A catalogue record for this book is available  
from the British Library.

Designed in Albertina by Libanus Press  
and printed in England by  
Cambridge University Press

## Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	6
Self-misunderstood	9
Seer	17
Death of a Princess	25

## *Introduction*

The 1970s were a pivotal time for Somali literature for many reasons. Poets were using forms in innovative ways; the first official script for Somali was introduced in 1972; cassette tapes were increasingly being used to disseminate what was (and still is) to a large extent oral poetry; and all of this was set against the political background of the military regime which had taken power in Somalia by coup in 1969. Poets played a very important role in commenting on and indeed shaping these times and one of the most important of these was Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac 'Gaariye'. In the 1970s, Gaariye was living in the capital Mogadishu having grown up in Hargeisa, where he was born in 1949, and in Sheikh, where he attended secondary school. Although he studied biology at university, Gaariye later taught literature at Lafoole College, before becoming the director of the Department of Somali Literature; later on, he moved to the Academy of Science, Arts and Literature. He currently lives in Hargeisa.

As a member of a circle of poets and intellectuals, Gaariye came to national prominence in the early 1970s with poems that could be innovative in form and subject matter, but which were nevertheless rooted in the Somali poetic heritage. It was at this time too that he began working on the metrical system of Somali poetry; in 1976, he published the first article on this topic in what was then the national newspaper. This was a very important contribution to Somali literary studies and a major intellectual achievement.

Various strands run through his poems, many of them displaying a strong sense of social engagement, questioning the political and social status quo with a sense of intellectual enquiry exemplified in the poems in this selection. In 'Garaad-daran' (1972) he turns the gaze on himself, questioning his own nature, both physical and psychological, taking the listener/reader through a journey grappling with these two sides of himself. Twelve years later he takes up one aspect of his character, the poet, in 'Uurkubbaale' (1984) which

considers the nature of poetry itself. He handles this theme sometimes directly but mostly through affecting metaphors which reveal the importance of poetry to Somali society as well as to the individual self. His language is characteristically striking: with images ranging from the delicacy of a butterfly feeding on a freshly bloomed flower, to the force of likening a poem to a bomb which explodes inside the listener or reader, and all of this is set within a carefully structured flow of language that uses syntax, alliteration and metre creatively. The third poem 'Geeridii Ina Boqor' (1981) is an example of his engagement with international political and social issues, being based on *Death of a Princess* (1980), a famous and controversial docu-drama by Antony Thomas about a Saudi princess who was executed for adultery. Again, it includes striking imagery, in one part the sky, the sun and the moon feature strongly, a set of images that are to be found in other works of this remarkable poet.

MARTIN ORWIN

## G A R A A D - D A R A N

Garaad-daran naftaydaay!  
Geeri iyo nololeey!  
Guluf lagu negaadaay!  
Gabno laga dhergaayeeey!  
Gabbal dumay habeenoo  
Hadh gadiidan yahayeeey!  
Lammaan aan is-geyinoo  
Guri qudh ah u hooydaay!

Googgaada xaajada  
Gaaxdeedu waxay tahay,  
Maan garan xogtaadee,  
Maxaad uga gol leedahay?

Ma wax gaar ah baad too  
Goonidiisa jira oo  
Garab aan u baahnayn?  
Mise gobol dad-weynaha  
Ka go'aynnin baad tahay?

Maadigaa ah Gaarriye?  
Mise laba gudboonoo  
Is-geleynin baad tiin?  
Gurrac-loo-abuuryeey,  
Bal geddaada ii sheeg.

Garaad-daran naftaydaay!  
Gurey iyo cadceedaha  
Isku gedo miyaad tiin?  
Gacal miyaad wadaagtaan?

Bal Giriig warkiisiyo  
Guutadii Fircoon iyo  
Waxa boqor la gawracay,

## SELF - MISUNDERSTOOD

I can't understand you, curious self,  
nor grasp how you're both life and death,  
grabbed land and peaceful settlement,  
grudging milker that makes me full,  
sun set at evening whilst casting  
noon's shortest shadow: how can you be  
two who can't marry  
yet share the same house?

How can I set this riddle and  
give away its answer if  
I fail to understand your secret  
or even what you mean by it?

Are you something separate,  
a stand-alone that leans  
upon no man's shoulder,  
or such a part of the people  
that you can't be parted from them?

And are you that which is Gaarriye  
or two opposing halves  
he cannot fit together?  
I call you, crooked creation:  
bear witness to your character.

I can't get to grips with you, gregarious self  
are you the same age as Gurey  
and his fellow constellations?  
Are you all kin?

And what about the history of the Greeks,  
the Pharaoh's army and  
the goring of kings,

Ama aad gariir iyo  
Guri ba'ay u taagnayd,  
Googoos u mariyoo;

Giddi waaxyahaygiyo  
U galaydh xubnaha oo;  
Midba gees u taagoo  
Ka gur sheekadoodoo;  
Malaayiin gu' oo tegey  
Ku dheh gebaggebeeyoo;  
Geeddigoodi dheeraa  
Mid kastaa guduudiga,  
Halkay galabba joogtiyo  
Goorteey kulmeenee  
Gaariye sameeyeen,  
Godolkeeda ii mari.

Garaad-daran naftaydaay!  
Sida gacanka Waaheen  
Hadba gaaf-wareegaay!  
Arrin aad gorfeysiyo  
Waxaad shalay u guuxdaad,  
Maantana ka giigtaa  
Gol-daloolo yeeshee;  
Miyaad dhalan-geddoontoo  
Dib bay kuu gardaadsheen?  
Ma runtaa gaboowdoo  
Geedkeedu waareyn?  
Guul-darradu dhankay tahay?

Guud ahaan waxaad tahay  
Dadku kugu go'doonyoo  
Isla waa go'aanoo,  
Mid baad geesi adagoo  
Gabbanayn la tahayoo;

what about the groans of war,  
the dynasties you saw destroyed?  
Bear witness to it all.

My limbs and all their molecules,  
call them to the stand:  
line them up in ranks,  
collect their statements;  
those million monsoons that marched past,  
tell them to complete  
the tale of that trek  
which each one took, the night-walking  
and the assignations,  
where they were each afternoon  
when they made Gaarriye:  
make their stories flow like milk.

I can't seem to fix you, quarrelsome self,  
you're like that riverbed, Waaheen,  
shifting between long drought, brief spate –  
that business you concluded yesterday,  
signed, sealed and celebrated,  
today you snatch it back  
and poke it full of holes.  
Did you tear up all natal traits,  
redraft infancy and all its rites?  
Or did truth grow old, and find  
its essence not eternal after all?  
Where does the failure lie?

Your usual impact is to put  
the people in two minds,  
to keep them from deciding:  
one casts you as the hero  
they could never see back down;

Maan-gaab lumaayiyo  
Mid baa ceel ganuuniyo  
Kuu haysta goco-roo;  
Mid baa kugu goblama oo  
Gurxankiisu damihayn  
Haddii saxar ku gaadhoo;  
Gaadaa wax boobiyo  
Mid baad good la tahayoo;  
Mid baad garab laxaadliyo  
Ruux guda abaaloo,  
Loo galo wanaag iyo  
Gaashaan la tahayoo;

Garaadlaay xogtaadii  
Cidi gaadhi waydee  
Dadkan kugu gabaabsiyey  
Kumaa helay guntaadoo  
Gacan-qaad la siiyaa?  
Miyey gabi habaabeen?  
Maadigaa wax gabayoo  
Hadba geed is-mariyoo,  
Goobba midab la joogoo  
Gallibaxa habeenkii?

Garaad-daran naftaydaay!  
In kastoon gucleeyoo,  
Garmaamada haldhaagiyo  
Gammaankaba ka jiitoo  
Cirka sare galaa-baxo,  
Adigay la gooshoo

Iga gaabinaynoo,  
Goobtaan is-taagaba  
Adigaa galluubane,  
Ma gashaygu baaqdo

while another thinks you short of wits –  
your way lost, your well dry –  
a barren camel; another one  
misses you as he'd miss his own son –  
if a speck of grit scratched you  
he could not be consoled;  
one casts you as cobra,  
trustless as a looter; while another  
has you as the strong shoulder,  
a sure repayer of kindness,  
deserving of good deeds,  
a shelter and a shield.

Unquantified soul, secret from yourself,  
ungraspable for others –  
they all fall short in the fathoming.  
Did anyone ever track you down  
and shake you by the hand  
or did they all end up lost?  
Or could it be you who fails them?  
Hiding within your shapeshifting,  
a different colour for each place,  
each night a new beast, a different face?

I can't get to grips with this garrulous self  
even if my lope outstrips  
the galloping of ostriches or horses,  
even if I vanish from their horizons,  
enter and depart from orbit  
in the same instant you are with me,

you never fall short of my side.  
Wherever I stand, whenever I stop,  
you stand and stop with me  
as though I carried round a debt

Lagu yidhi ka soo goo?  
Mise gaari inan oo  
Guur-u-meer ah baad tahay?  
Maxaad gama' u diiddee  
Iga daba-gureysaa?

Dambiyaal waxaan galo  
Ama geysto fool-xumo,  
Gabigoodba ceebaha  
Aan gaar u leeyahay,  
In kastoon is-gijoo  
Weji kale gashada oo  
Dadka been ku gaasiro,  
Adigaa giraanoo  
Gunta iimahaygoo,  
Hoos ii guhaadshee;  
Godobtiyo xumaantada  
Inaad tahay ninkeed-gaba,  
Maxaad iigu garataa?

Garaad-daran naftaydaay!  
Gumaysaad ku nooshoo  
Dadkaa kugu garaacdo,  
Guddoonkooda mooyee  
Kaa gareysan maayaan  
Waxad adigu goysee;

Maad galabsan hawlaha  
Kugu gaardiyaayee,  
Galbiskii adoogaa  
Goco oo ilmeeyoo,

Hooyadaa u goohoo  
Galabtay ku dihatiyo  
Eerso uur-galkaagii.

and someone said, 'Collect it!'  
as though you were a good catch,  
a woman looking for a husband.  
Why is it you never sleep,  
following me everywhere?

Whatever crime I commit,  
whatever ugliness I enter into;  
each shameful deed  
that is my very own –  
even though I gird myself to lie,  
pull on another mask  
to leave people at a loss –  
you record each defect  
as though set down on tape,  
insidiously fill me with guilt,  
obligation, injury:  
you see through me as a wife does –  
but why understand me by my flaws?

Curious, gregarious, garrulous self,  
did you fail to grasp the stifling norms?  
To quarrel with those who rap our knuckles  
for whom only their diktats  
need be acknowledged,  
and not what you conclude:

You don't deserve the problems  
that barrack and assail you.  
Remember the marriage ceremony  
of your father and weep;

bewail your mother because of  
the afternoon you entered her womb  
and the world, blame her.

## UURKUBBAALE

“Cawdu billooy balooy baydh.”

“Bismillaahi Yaasiin.”

Botorkiyo ciyaartoo

Sidaa lagu bilaaboo,

Anna biito-biitiyo

Bille-jire ku dheelaan

Beri hore garaadsaday.

Dadka waxan ka bawsaday:

“Dhool bari ka hirey baa

Dhaanka loo bariiyaa”.

Gabaygana Burhaanoow

Waxa aniga lay baray

Inu laba u kala baxo

Beeshana u kala yahay:

Waxay Biliso igu tidhi:

“Hadday maanso beer tahay

Run baa lagu biyeeyaa.

Bilicsiga dareenkaa

Lagu baalaleeyaa;

Xaq baa lagu bac-rimiyaa.

Baaqbaaqa noloshiyo

Biyo-dhijjinteediyo

Xilligay ku biqishaa.”

“Midho waxay u bixisaa

Habka loo barbaarshiyo

Barta lagu abqaalaa.

Sida loogu baahdaa

Loo buushe-bixiyaa;

Ama loo bislaystaa.”

SEER

In my cradle I heard the women sing  
'In the name of God, "Yaasin":  
this is how we begin,  
with the dance step and the dance.  
I was playing 'biito biiti',  
singing 'Bille-jire' –  
this is how Gaarriye grew.

I suckled on hearsay, drank in lore:  
'A cloud in the east means rest your feet,  
the rain will trek to us.'  
Dear friend, dear Burhaan, I was taught  
there are two types of poem:  
that which tells you how things are  
and that with another agenda –  
the people know which is which.

When she brought me up, Biliso said,  
'If a poem is a farm  
then how things truly are, that's water;  
the best words for the best thoughts,  
that's how it begins.  
Justice is your only compost,  
life itself is what you hoe:  
just squeeze truth from what happens  
and in its own time it will sprout.'

'Whether a poem brings forth seeds  
depends on how it's tended and by whom –  
the spot in which it's planted;  
depending on who needs it and for what  
its husk is hulled or boiled.'

“Waxa lagu bardaanshaa  
Baqoolkiyo geeddiga  
Fac kastaa intuu bogo.  
Bullashada dagaalkana  
Bunduqay tilmaantaa.”

“Waa buun wax lagu hago;  
Boodaanta yeedhmada  
Bigil ereygu leeyahay.  
Caws baar leh weeyaan;  
Lana baxay sabool-diid  
Soddon laguma baayaco.  
Boqor laguma caabudo.  
Biidhi-qaatennimiyo  
Baqas waa ka xaaraan.”

“Waana biime liidda ah,  
Boqnihiisa lama xidho.  
Nin baqdaa ma halabsado;  
Bayd-gaabku kuma galo;  
Beentana wax kuma laha.  
Waa Bilan ma-geyno ah;  
Bog-dooxeedu waa sino.”

\* \* \*

“Waxay bilic wax dheer tahay;  
Iyadoon bariidada  
Ballankeedi ka hor dhicin,  
Kolkay bocorta maansado,  
Adoo baalku kaa qoyey  
Xadantana u baahnaa,  
Sidii baalalleey iyo  
Balanbaallis qalimo leh,

'A poem is the measure for  
that trek beneath the draining sun  
each generation adds to;  
when you have to stand and fight  
it shows you where to point the gun.'

'It guides you like a conch shell horn,  
the call of the large camel bell;  
it is the words' own bugle.  
It is the finest matting, woven for a bride,  
the one the song calls "Refuser of poor suitors".  
It's not sold for coppers,  
it's not for praising the powerful;  
to put a price on it, any price,  
cheapens it and is forbidden.'

'It's riding bareback on an unbroken horse –  
you don't hobble its heels.  
Those who fear for their hides  
and won't ride without a saddle,  
those lacking in the craft, can't get near this:  
lies have nothing to do with it.  
Poetry is a woman you do not betray,  
to abuse her beauty is a sin.'

\* \* \*

'It's most lovely when most perfectly timed,  
as though, met at morning,  
you exchanged greetings  
at just the right moment.  
When your own wings feel so bedraggled  
that you need another's touch,  
then the full beauty of a poem  
is like a butterfly meeting

Ooy ubax baraarugay  
Isku waa-bariisteen.”

“Bogga kuu salaaxdee  
Burcad kuugu duugtee,  
Bu'da leebka kugu mudan  
Baydari-abbaarree,  
Bulxankeedu laba-dhaca  
Sida uur-ku-baalaha,  
Boogahaaga hoosiyo  
Bayrtaada qoomee.”

“Kolba baaq xiloodin ah  
Barta aad u nogoshahay  
Intuu baac u sii dego,  
Tixda miino-baadhkii  
Fiix kugu biskootiyo  
Dhul bacdii ku taal iyo,  
Ku banayso meel aan  
Beryahaaba gacal dayin.”

“Ee baahi-laawuhu  
Adigoo basiiro leh  
Intuu boodhka kaa tumo,  
Xiisaha basaasiyo  
Beer-qaado laabtee,  
Tuduc wali gun iyo baar  
Meel baas ku taabtee,  
Intuu baaxad le'eg yahay  
Isagoo banbaane ah  
Badhtankaaga ka sanqadho.”

a just-wakened flower  
at the exact moment of dawn.'

'When it seems to caress your flank,  
to massage a salve into you;  
when the pupil of its arrow pierces you  
striking the mark exactly,  
splitting your anguished cries in two.  
Like a seer who peers inside you,  
it homes in on your over-sensitivities,  
your innermost wounds.'

'When you suddenly hear of your betrothal  
it sends the message deeper  
into your most vulnerable point.  
Poetry is the mine-seeker  
opening your old, scarred-over hurt,  
discovering your untouched earth,  
that place closed off  
from those closest to you.'

'When Baahi-laawe, that dancing verse,  
brushes the melancholy from you  
as though it were a dust  
that settled on your lust for life,  
choked the desire in your chest;  
it's like a grenade, a bomb,  
its blast-range perfectly judged  
so each stanza touches you  
from problematic top to troubled toe,  
exploding from your core.'

“Ee kugu ballaadhee  
Markii bayd la sheegaba,  
Sidii baal qarsoodi ah  
La bac dhabay xogtaadii,  
Hadba baallo-daymada  
Faraq-bood ka qaaddee.”

Maansada ba’leeyda ah  
Ee baadi-soocda leh,  
Bog kastoo la soo rogo  
Sir aad bixisay mooddee,  
Nafta oo baraad li’i:  
Kolba “baga!” tidhaahdiyo,  
“Bishmaha Eebbe kuma jaro.  
Ninka yidhi run badanaa!  
Ma afkaygu kala baxay?”

'When it permeates you  
each time a line is recited  
as though from a secret page  
on which your own secrets are exposed  
so that each time you scan it  
you jolt with anxiety.'

This poem alliterates in 'b'  
but all the best poems are branded  
so that each page which is turned  
makes you believe you've confessed  
and each time your soul  
involuntarily cries out, 'Bravo!  
Dear God, don't seal this man's lips –  
may the truth he speaks continue  
as though it burst from my own mouth.'

## GEERIDII INA BOQOR

'Xaye cala salaa'  
'Xaye calal falaax'  
Xilli loo addimay  
Ma xusuusan karo;  
Xilna waa jiraa  
Waana xaal-adduun;  
Xiddigihi cirkana  
Xalaa laygu yidhi:  
"Xinjireey liqeen".

Dhulku wuu xarkagay  
Sidii xuuko geel  
Waanu xiiran yahay.  
Xooluhu dhammaan  
Waa xaaluf-daaq.

Xaggu waa qaniin  
Xaggu lama-degaan;  
Xidhku waa saliid,  
Daad-xoor dab-liyo  
Xadhig-lama-sitaan  
Ku dul xeeran yiin.

Xaggu waa bacaad  
Xanfar iyo dabayl;  
Malaa waa xagaa.

Xaggu waa masniyo  
Fooq iyo xaraar  
Isha xiijiyoo;  
Demesh iyo xariir

## DEATH OF A PRINCESS

Xaye cala salaa  
Come to prayer  
Xaye cala falaax  
Come to salvation  
I can't remember  
which prayer time it was  
but I had to answer.  
It may be the way of this world  
beneath the witness of the stars  
but last night I was told,  
'They gorged on clotted blood.'

The earth there is dry and gleaming  
scraped smooth  
like camel fat.  
All the goats and sheep  
have grazed the land bare.

The place is ridden with ticks,  
a desert where no-one can rest,  
a scrubland sitting on oil;  
floods of people with guns  
and without restraints  
surround it.

The place is duned,  
with a humid wind;  
it is, perhaps, the hottest time.

It is also cities  
sprouting skyscrapers  
which exhaust the eye,  
furnished and fringed

Ku xiddaysanoo  
Cirka soo xansada.  
Oo dad loo xil-qabo  
Xamastoodu taal.

Togag baa dhex xula;  
Biyii Xaramka iyo  
Wiski xooriyaa  
Dhex xumbaynayaan.

Xaggu waa dar-xumo;  
Xaawaleey carruur  
Ku xansheeran oo,  
Xiiq iyo harraad  
Xuurteysan iyo  
Xammaal iyo wastaad.

*Afartaasi xidhan.*

Xaggan kalena eeg:  
Gabadheenna Xiis  
Waa xabag-barsheed;  
Waa xero-u-dhalan  
Xulad geenyo ugub.  
Oon xiito guluf  
Dirir iyo xabbaadh  
Loo sudhin xakame.

Waa xuural-cayn;  
Iyo Xaaliyeey  
Dayax xoosh ahoo  
Xalay gaadh ahaa,  
Saakana xarrago  
Xil-wareejintii,  
Xuubkii cirkiyo  
Daahyadi xidhnaa  
Kor u xaydayoo;

with damask and silk;  
they eavesdrop on air's gossip.  
This is where those responsible  
hoard their possessions.

Rivers flow within that land  
waters of the Holy Places  
and whisky foam  
and froth up there.

The place is misery itself,  
women burdened with children  
hawking and gasping,  
bearers and bricklayers  
ground down and harassed.

My first quarter is done.  
Look still more closely:  
see our young woman, Xiis,  
wholesome as a honeycomb,  
born within the pale.  
Like the choicest virgin mare,  
she isn't bridled for  
some camel raid, nor  
a share of the loot.

She is Heaven's eye, a houri;  
she is the sun, sharing  
the horizon with the moon  
who last night guarded the earth  
and this morning passes on  
his watch, elegantly  
drawing back the hem,  
the membrane of the sky  
like closed curtains.

Sagal xaradhyo lihi  
Qorrax xiiso wado,  
Xaraaraha bulka leh  
Ku xiddeeyeyoo;

Xod-xodtooy iyana  
Xaradhaamadiyo  
Hab-xiloodintii  
Xadantootayoo;

Xummad iyo kulayl  
Naf-xaraare baas,  
Xaam-xaamadkii  
Xayn furatay oo  
Xusul joogga le'eg.  
Xaashaa kallaa!  
Xubno-jeedalleey  
Haddii aan xistiyey  
"Xaal qaado" dhaha.

\* \* \*

Gabadheenna Xiis  
Xubin bay ahayd  
Xuddun webi ku taal;  
Oo xidh oodan iyo  
Xakab loo dugsiyo;  
Oon xagaaga arag  
Dhirta xaalufshiyo  
Xanaf iyo kulayl.

Mar uun bay 'xaf' tidhi;  
Mar uun bay Xorriyo  
Ka kufriday xumii;  
Laye Xaawo hee!

He paints the dawn sky  
as she rises in her urgency  
with the fletches on the arrows  
of the morning's rays.

And she, in this flirtation,  
because of his caresses,  
these delicate advances,  
lets herself be roused.

In her fever and her heat,  
her rising and ripping,  
self-consuming passion,  
she throws off her clouds  
and stands, the length of a forearm  
from the horizon. Can you see  
her whip-lithe limbs?  
If I've failed  
then ask her to forgive me.

\* \* \*

Dearly-missed, our Xiis  
was a navel to the river  
of the people; she was part of them,  
but penned in scrubland,  
and fenced in the pen,  
she did not have to see  
that season which sears the trees,  
feel its harshness or its heat.

Only once did she break out  
only once feel the freedom  
of transgressing their strictures.  
It was said of Eve that she

Xadhka-goosayaa;  
Xadki jabisayaa.

Is-xabaal wax badan  
Godka uu xabkiyo  
Xinjiraha ku cuno,  
Huwin jirey xariir  
Ka xayubisaa;  
Xin u qaawisaa;  
Ceebaha xilka leh  
Xabbaad-qaaddayaa.

Geedkii xaskiyo  
Xuladada wax guba  
Xaabuu u yahay  
Loogu xeeban jirey,  
Inu xabag-dhunkaal  
Xordan yahay dadkii  
U xaqiijisaa.

Xubbi iyo kalgacal  
Laab xuunsho galay  
La xariidisaa;  
Dareenkeeda xalan  
Iyadoon xidh-xidhin,  
Hanadkii xasladay  
Xiiseeysayaa;  
Xasil diiddayaa.

Xusbaddana ma gelin  
Inay xilo nin tahay  
Qasab loogu xidhay;  
Xaaleeyna-mayn  
Xaafaddeey ka timi,

cut the rope that bound her,  
breached her limits.

And so she tore the silk off  
that used to cover the hole  
in which the rat eats  
afterbirth and blood clots,  
deliberately exposing  
its shameful weaknesses,  
its irresponsibilities:  
she set them out one by one.

That tree, the twigs  
and dry branches of which were kindling,  
the dead leaves a fuel  
which used to threaten fire,  
she confirmed to the people  
as hollow, a tree  
of poisonous resin.

She disclosed our strongest feelings,  
that intense intimacy of love,  
which enters into us all;  
she longed for her elegant boy  
who swept her away;  
by not closing off  
her clean desires,  
she refused stability.

She didn't consider how,  
betrothed through obligation,  
she was another man's wife;  
nor took into account  
that place she came from,

Iyo Xaaliyeey  
Xeerkii ka jirey.

\* \* \*

Waxay xawlisaba  
Xanti durugtayaa;  
Xogsigii horeba  
Xigtadii Gobaad,  
Dir-xumaan-ku-nool  
Ka xanaaqdayaa;  
Baha-xaydho-weyn  
Xayraantayaa.

Gabadhii Xaddiyo  
Caashaqa ku xidhay  
“Laan-gaabka xune  
Xagga sare ahayn,  
Xulashada gurraacan  
Ee sumal-xadka ah”  
Ku xujoowdayaa;  
Xabsi loo diryaa.

Iyadoon Xorriyo  
Aan cidi xukumin  
Qalbigii xallaa,  
Xaramkii cishqiga  
Xadradoow ahaa,  
Taalladi xubbiga  
Xabbad lagu furyaa.

Laye Xaadsan iyo  
Xuurkeey jeclayd  
Loogu xiiryeyaa;  
La xabaalyeyaa.

nor, poor girl,  
the law that holds sway there.

\* \* \*

As this liaison continued  
it went beyond whispers.  
As soon as the secret was out  
the family of that princess,  
those wrong-doers,  
grew wrathful;  
that gluttonous House  
got angry.

That gifted girl  
was found guilty of what?  
Love that was tethered to  
'the branch with short roots  
that can't reach the heights;  
the wild choice  
of the wrong ram' –  
so they threw her in jail.

Then, although no-one tried her,  
that Holy Place of love  
which was a seat for  
her clean heart,  
that shrine to passion  
was opened by a bullet.

This is how it was told:  
she and the boy she loved  
were cut down  
and put in their graves.

Halna waa xusuus  
Sheekada ku xidho:  
Meeshu waa Xijaas  
Xaruntii waxyiga  
Halka loo xaj tago,  
Ee Xabiibalaah  
Xudduntiisu tahay.

If you only remember one thing  
about this story, let it be this:  
the place is Hijaz,  
the centre of the divine revelation,  
destination of the hajj;  
it is the navel of the Prophet,  
where the Beloved of God was born.

