

# ‘The Language of Equality’

The Mayor’s Annual Equalities Report 2006/07



## Twelve Poems in Praise of Diversity

The Mayor of London’s Equalities Report 2006/2007 includes 12 bilingual poems. The poems celebrate and exemplify London’s diversity, as well as the power of language to bridge difference.

Each of the poets was photographed in a London venue of his/her choice. The photographs accompany the poems

The poems can be read here, each with its non-English “partner.” The non-English version is sometimes the original, though by no means in all cases. The original of the poem by Sean Timon can be accessed by ringing the Public Liaison Unit at the Greater London Authority, 020-7983-4100.

David Morris, Senior Policy Adviser to the Mayor of London (Disability) had the original idea of making language the report’s main theme, with poems appearing at intervals, each with a photograph.

Rogan Wolf runs a project called [Poems for...](#) which produces small poem-posters chiefly for healthcare settings. The latest collection produced by the project consists entirely of bi-lingual poems. Rogan was therefore commissioned to help bring together a similar smaller collection for this report. In the event nine of the poems were collected by Rogan and three came through David’s connections.

All but two of the photographs were taken by Hugh Hill.

[Poems for...](#) is funded by the Arts Council, the John Lewis Partnership and the Department of Health Equalities and Human Rights Group. The project is managed by the charity Hyphen-21 ([www.hyphen-21.org](http://www.hyphen-21.org)).

*Rogan Wolf*



## The Language of Equality

I am the language of equality  
I am glad to see the city of London  
From the west  
Reaching to the east  
And the north  
Reaching the south  
From the month of January  
To the month of December

I can see the House of Parliament  
The River Thames and its bridges  
Seeing where congestion charge ends  
Where the train to Heathrow starts  
Schools where the youth learn  
And where Notting Hill Carnival happens

As the language of equality  
I can see those speaking with others  
Seeing those with no one to talk to  
Seeing the elderly and the youth  
Some Asians and some Jews  
Some black and some are white

I can see struggles for equality  
Others being seen as foreigners  
Maybe because of their religion  
Maybe because of their disability  
Maybe because they are young  
Maybe because they are women  
Maybe because they are gay  
Maybe because they are old

Its me the language of equality  
I can see people of other races  
In the city which is hot sometimes cold  
Which sometimes makes the happy cry  
Sometimes pleasing those crying  
The healthy ones or the sick

As the language of equality I speak  
What the eye has seen should be fixed  
That road let it be fixed continually  
From employment  
Let there be equality  
To living comfortable  
Let there be equality

*Pax Nindi 2007*

## Mutauro Weruenzano

Ndiri matauro weruenzano  
Ndinofarira kuona guta re London  
Kubva kuchamhembe  
Kusvikira kumaudzanyemba  
Ne kumabvazuva  
Kusvikira kumawirira mhupo  
Kubvira mwedzi we Ndira  
Kusvikira mwedzi we Zvita

Ndirikuona imba ye Parliament  
Rwizi rwe Thames ne mazambuko ayo  
Kuona panopera mutero we congestion  
Panotangira chitima cheku Heathrow  
Panodzidziswa avo vana muzvikoro  
Nepanoitwa Notting Hill Carnival

Semutauro weruenzano  
Ndirikuona avo varikutaura nevamwe  
Kuona avo vasina vekutaura navo  
Ndichiona avo vakuru nevadiki  
Vamwe makura vamwe majuta  
Vamwe vatema vamwe vachena

Ndirikuona kutambudzikira kuenzana  
Vamwe kuonekwa se vayenzi  
Pamwe nenzira ye kwavanonamata  
Pamwe nekuti vakaremara  
Pamwe nekuti vana vadiki  
Pamwe nekuti madzimai  
Pamwe nekuti ingochani  
Pamwe nekuti vakachembera

Ndini mutauro wekuenzana  
Ndavekuona vanhu vemamwe marudzi  
Muguta rinopisa pamwe kutonhora  
Dzimwe nguva kuchemedza vanofara  
Pamwe kufadza vanochemba  
Vakapona kana vanorwara

Semutauro wekuyenzana ndinotaura  
Zvaonekwa neziso ngazvigadzirwe  
Iyo nzira ngayirambe ichigadzirwa  
Kubvira kunoshandwa mabasa  
Ngakuve ruenzano  
Kusvikira mukugara kwakanaka  
Ngakuve ruenzano

*Pax Nindi 2007*

*The original of this poem was written in Shona and translated into English by its author Pax Nindi. Shona, or chiShona, is an African language spoken by nearly 80% of people in Zimbabwe. There are clusters of Shona people or Shona speaking people in Botswana and Mozambique, and in most of the countries sharing borders with Zimbabwe.*

*Pax Nindi came to the UK from Zimbabwe. He worked for ten years for the Arts Council and now acts independently as a cultural consultant. Pax is a musician as much as a poet and is renowned internationally as an expert in the organising of carnivals.*

*The poem opposite was produced especially for the Mayor's report.*



## Hotel Gordon

An Irishman with holes in his boots,  
fresh from the soup kitchen and Victoria station,  
a South African, sleeping in night buses,

visitors, not even speaking the language  
of the country, let alone the sense of sanity,  
women with histories of sad adoptions,

a man from Eton, addicted to drink and crack,  
a black man, knifed, and abused as a child,  
yet gentle as the father he became at sixteen,

an Italian who lost her mother aged four:  
all these I mean, people lost in the in between  
of life, as some make good and others fall back.

*Sarah Wardle*

## Hotel Gordon

An Eirishman wi holes in his buits,  
fresh fae the soup kitchen and Victoria station,  
a Sooth African, sleepin in nicht buses,

veisitors, no even speakin the language  
o the countra, forby the sense o wit,  
weimen wi histories o doolfu adoptions,

a man fae Eton, addictit tae the drink an crack,  
a black man, chibbit, an abusit as a bairn,  
yit douce as the faither he becam at saxteen,

an Italian that tint her mither fower year auld:  
aa thir I'm meanin, fowk that's tint in the in atween  
o life, as a when win throu and ithers faa back.

*translated into Scots  
by Andrew Philip*

*Sarah Wardle has had two books of poetry published, Fields Away (2003) and SCORE ! (2005), both by Bloodaxe. She teaches creative writing at Middlesex University. She recently spent some time as a psychiatric patient in the Gordon Hospital in Pimlico, run by the CNWL NHS Foundation Trust. The poem published here is one of a series she wrote about that experience. Andrew Philip's translation into Scots was produced especially for the Mayor's report.*



## Ophelia in London

You drift in white along the Embankment  
with restless hands and voice.  
Whispering.

Footfall scrapes and echoes in the night silence,  
a shadow leaps to touch yours before passing.  
Another tortured soul  
mutters and slinks in the yellow lampflare.

Your thoughts bend and race and  
slide in chaos, never meeting in coherence and fullstops.  
Will it be the river My Lady?  
The oily, silent Thames  
or the thundering rusty train wheels?  
The hospitals are full.

Wander, randomly turning,  
locked in the nightmare of your world,  
cruel voices, laughing  
teasing, mocking in your mind.

Ophelia, Ophelia walking in the back streets  
with weary, wide unfocused eyes.  
Singing and sad.

The drugs don't work,  
there are no beds.  
So in the end there only is  
the grass-green turf and stone.

*Janey Antoniou*

## Ophelia Londinii

candida veste proxime ripam erras,  
manus agitans, vox vigilans,  
sed quiete susurras.

pedes in silentia noctis strident.  
umbra saltat ut te tangat, et tum praeterit.  
alter ego misera  
facit murmura et fugit ad flavem lucem.

tuae sententiae et flectunt et cursu fluunt et  
in gurgitem cadunt, convenientes dialecticis et finibus numquam.  
visne in flumen ingredi, o mea domina?  
nonne Tamesem taetrum et silentem est?  
nonne Jupiter tonans cum ferro est?  
non semper asyla in templis sunt.

erra! vertere huc illuc!  
mane in insomnio, in tua orbe terrarum,  
atrocibus vocibus deridentibus,  
vexantibus. ecce te inludunt deceptam!

o Ophelia, o Ophelia! ambulans per angiportus inclaros,  
defatigata cum oculis apertis.  
tristia carmina cantans tristis.

venena non necant.  
stabula sunt nulla.  
tandem, igitur, tantum herba est  
et terra cum lapillis.

*translated into Latin  
by Sarah Wardle*

*Janey Antoniou is a trainer and writer on mental health issues. She often stands on the edge of Trafalgar Square watching the world's ebb and flow. Her poem "Ophelia in London" took first prize in the Perceptions Forum poetry competition 2006. "Perceptions Forum" has recently changed its name from "Voices Forum". It describes itself as "a UK user led organisation run by mad people for mad people". Sarah Wardle's Latin translation was produced especially for the report.*

## Near Hammersmith

*“Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song”*

*Edmund Spenser (?1552-1599)*

High tide  
this misty  
February afternoon.

A small duck  
shoulders hunched  
indefinite  
at river’s bend

permits  
the great currents  
to pour  
between its feet.

May I  
not waver

as my sweet song  
rushes  
to its end.

***Rogan Wolf***

## Le Hammersmith Xa

*“Eto Thames Vãvã, si, blewuu, vase de esime nye hadzidzia Na wunu”*

*Edmund Spenser (?1552-1599)*

Etɔ dze aglã  
Afu dódó  
Le fe yleti Dzódzé fe nyidɔ mela

Akpakpaxe suade  
Le blanui mavɔ  
Le etɔ sisia fe xaxeme  
Hena be etɔsisi dze aglã la

Si, hetó  
Efe afɔ bide wó dome.

Nye maa trɔ  
nye susu gbede gbedeo

Esi me, nye hadzidzi vivi la  
Le gódóm le nunye  
Vase de efe nuwuwu.

*translated into Ewe  
by Grace Kokui Tamakloe*

*Rogan Wolf has worked in London for years as a social worker, Hammersmith and Westminster being the areas he knows best. He founded and runs the charity Hyphen-21, as well as [Poems for...](#) This photograph was taken near where Rogan’s poem was written. Grace Kokui Tamakloe, who translated the poem into Ewe especially for the report, teaches in North London. Baffour Ababio, her son, put us in touch with her. Baffour works in London as a psychotherapist and mental health social worker. Ewe is pronounced with both “e’s” short and equally emphasised. It is one of the languages spoken in Ghana and Togo, Africa.*



## خدای من

خدای من از خاک می روید  
مثل خوشه های سبز گندم  
تاریشه های گرسنگی را  
بخشکند بر زمین

خدای من مثل آن درخت تنومند جنگل  
سایه می دهد به کاروان مورچه ها  
در تابستان  
وقتی به سوی لانه می روند  
و پناه می دهد  
به جوجه های کیوترها  
زیر بوته های تمشک  
تا چنگال هیچ گریه ای  
به آشیان بلندشان نرسد.

خدای من می جوشد از خلال صخره ها  
چون آبی زلال  
تا تشنگان را سیراب کند  
می خواند  
چون لالایی مادر  
می تپد چون قلبی بزرگ  
در اندام روز و شب.

خدای من  
دامنی به پهنای اقیانوس دارد  
خیس از اشک کودکان  
و نامی  
که در هیچ کتابی نمی گنجد.  
او مثل بوی بهار پراکنده است  
خدای من چشمی است نگران زمین  
و پس از هر انفجار  
سر بر بالشت ابر  
به پهنای آسمان  
زار زار می گرید

خدای من  
اگر باشد.

شاداب وجدی

*Shadab Vajdi has written poetry all her adult life and has several published collections to her name. Her poems, in Persian, have been translated into English, German and Swedish. She was born in Iran and has lived in London since 1970's. She worked for years as a lecturer at the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), where this picture was taken. Prior to her work at SOAS, she was a producer with the BBC World Service. Her husband Lotfali Khonji was a colleague there and has translated some of her poems into English.*

## My God

Like green ears of wheat  
my God rises from the soil  
to eradicate  
all hunger from the earth.

Like a great tree of the forest  
my God puts forth his shadow  
to protect a column of ants in Summer  
as they march to their nest.

And he protects the new-born pigeons  
resting under the raspberry bushes  
so no cat may claw them  
from their sanctuary.

Like clear water  
my God runs forth  
from cracks in the rock  
to quench the thirsty.

He sings a song  
like a mother's lullaby.  
He beats like a great heart  
through the body of day and night.

My God  
wears garments vast as oceans  
soaked with children's tears.  
He has a name no book can contain.

He is scattered everywhere  
like the scent of springtime.

My God is an eye  
anxiously watching over the earth.  
And after every explosion  
he lays his head on a pillow of clouds  
and his sobs and cries  
fill the skies.

My God. If He is there.

Shadab Vajdi

translated from Persian by Lotfali Khonji





## The Peacock in Walpole Park, Ealing

The heart sinks when the peacock screams  
The night bleeds pierced with its cries

The heart sinks when the peacock screams  
The colour laughs and then wails

The heart sinks when the peacock screams  
The body shivers and the world rejoices

The heart sinks when the peacock screams  
It yearns for mango flowers lost long ago

The heart sinks when the peacock screams  
It rains incessantly, it never stops

The heart sinks when the peacock screams  
Trying to slake the thirst burning in its chest

The heart sinks when the peacock screams  
Weighing its wings in the sweet prison

Everybody saw it in its cage  
Moaning and dancing

*Amarjit Chandan*

*The translation from Punjabi is by the author, with Amin Mughal.*

*From "Mother Tongues," ed. Daniel Weissbort and Stephen Watts, publ. King's College London 2001. Reprinted by permission.*

## ਈਲਿੰਗ ਪਾਰਕ ਦਾ ਮੋਰ

ਬਾਗੀਂ ਮੋਰ ਬੋਲੇ ਦਿਲ ਖੁੱਸਦਾ ਪਿਆ  
ਕੁਕਾਂ ਵਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਛੱਡੀ ਰਾਤ, ਲਹੂ ਸਿੰਮਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ

ਬਾਗੀਂ ਮੋਰ ਬੋਲੇ ਦਿਲ ਖੁੱਸਦਾ ਪਿਆ  
ਰੰਗ ਹੱਸਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ, ਰੰਗ ਰੋਂਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ

ਬਾਗੀਂ ਮੋਰ ਬੋਲੇ ਦਿਲ ਖੁੱਸਦਾ ਪਿਆ  
ਪਿੰਡੇ ਕੰਬਣੀ ਛਿੜੇ, ਜੱਗ ਹੱਸਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ

ਬਾਗੀਂ ਮੋਰ ਬੋਲੇ ਦਿਲ ਖੁੱਸਦਾ ਪਿਆ  
ਕਿਥੇ ਅੰਬਾਂ ਦਾ ਹੈ ਬੂਰ, ਇਹੋ ਲਭਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ

ਬਾਗੀਂ ਮੋਰ ਬੋਲੇ ਦਿਲ ਖੁੱਸਦਾ ਪਿਆ  
ਪਿਆਸ ਮਚਦੀ ਨੂੰ ਸੀਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਦੱਬਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ

ਬਾਗੀਂ ਮੋਰ ਬੋਲੇ ਦਿਲ ਖੁੱਸਦਾ ਪਿਆ  
ਸਿੱਠੀ ਕੈਦ ਵਿਚ ਬੰਦ, ਪੱਰ ਤੋਲਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ

ਜੰਗਲੇ ਚ ਪੈਲ ਪਾਈ ਸਾਰਿਆਂ ਨੇ ਦੇਖੀ  
ਨਾਲੇ ਝੁਰਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ, ਨਾਲੇ ਨੱਚਦਾ ਰਿਹਾ

**ਅਮਰਜੀਤ ਚੰਦਨ**

*Amarjit Chandan has lived in Ealing for years and is now retired from his job in local government. His poetry is celebrated and in circulation in both Punjabi and UK circles. The poem printed here would have a special significance for readers of Punjabi, as the peacock is India's national bird. Amarjit chose to be photographed at the Tate Modern. He often visits the South Bank – either the Tate Modern or the Royal Festival Hall – as this is his favourite rendezvous and source of inspiration.*



## In the Mountains

another road winds up and down this green leaf  
a pine cone split open  
is the small round heart of the woods  
pine scent opens its casket  
a bee  
inside another smaller casket still  
a buzz  
and the blue of sky

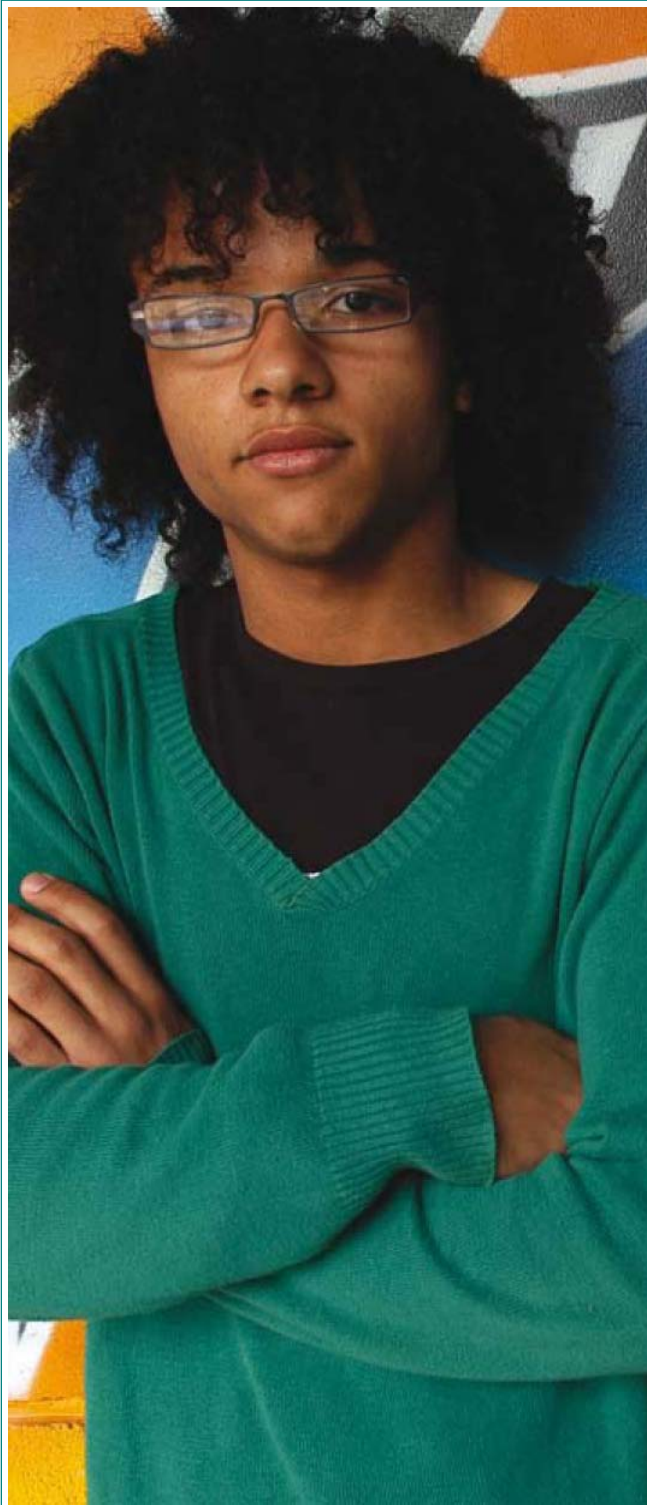
*Yang Lian*

*Translated from the Mandarin Chinese by John Cayley. The Mandarin text is a copy of the author's own handwriting.*

*Yang Lian settled in London a few years ago, having left China after the Tiananmen Square massacre. He spent some years wandering from country to country, but now lives on the edge of Lea Valley and has become fascinated with its history and specific local detail. His long poem about the Lea Valley has recently been published. He chose to be photographed in Springfield Park, near Stoke Newington, because it overlooks the valley.*

山中  
有另一条路抵达这片绿叶  
松果裂开  
树林的+三圆心  
松香打开盒子  
一只蜜蜂  
在更小的盒子里  
一叫  
天就蓝了

杨联



## Half Personal Poetry

I am half rich...      ...and half poor  
I'm always half happy in the morning...      ...and half sad in the afternoon  
I always go on the half safe bus...      ...and half non-safe bus  
I am half fast running...      ...and half slow walking  
Sometimes I'm half active...      ...and sometimes half lazy  
And I'm really half neat...      ...and half messy  
I'm usually half playful...      ...and half serious  
Maybe I'm going to be half nice...      ...and half mean  
I'm half child...      ...and half adult  
My age is half of 28 years old...      ...and double of 7 years old  
I have half close friends...      ...and half stranger friends  
And I have half good friends...      ...and half bad friends  
I'm half Irish...      ...and half Caribbean  
I'm half colours, half white...      ...and half black  
Until I die I will be half Deaf...      ...and half hearing  
Also half signing...      ...and half speaking  
I want to belong half in the Deaf world...      ...and half in the hearing world

**I don't want to half belong in a whole world**

*Sean Timon*

*Sean Timon wrote the original of this poem in British Sign Language (BSL), as part of a project called "Life and Deaf." The original can be obtained as a videoclip by contacting the Public Liaison Unit at the Greater London Authority, 020-7983-4100. BSL is just one of many sign languages used by Deaf Londoners from all over the world. It is estimated that it and ISL (Irish Sign Language) are used by over 2000,000 people. As with English, BSL has its own London dialect. Sean chose to have his picture by Tim Sutton taken at Thomas Tallis secondary school in Kidbrook, south London. Sean is educated in the Deaf Support Centre there. BSL is taught on the school's curriculum, all assemblies are signed and Deaf children work alongside hearing children in mainstream classes.*



## Haiku to Electric Avenue

In the market place  
thought creates magic  
tattooed on a bare breast bone  
the eye of Horus.

In the market place  
a first light marvel singing  
an electric avenue  
makes this body shine.

*Dorothea Smartt*

## Haiku an 'Electric Avenue'

Auf dem Marktplatz schafft  
Gedanke Magie  
Bloßes Brustbein tätowiert  
Des Horus' Auge.

Auf dem Marktplatz ein  
Erstes Licht herrlich Singen  
'Electric Avenue' gibt  
Diesem Körper Glanz.

*translated into German  
by Ursula Hörmannsdorfer*

*Dorothea Smartt was born and raised in London and is of Barbadian heritage. She was Brixton Market's first Poet-in-Residence, and a former Attached Live Artist at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts, and most recently Guest writer at Florida International University and Oberlin College, USA. Her new collection, *Samboo's Grave*, was inspired by *Sambo's Grave* on Sunderland Point, Lancaster, where *Samboo*, a young African who died on his arrival in 1736, is buried. Ursula Hörmannsdorfer translated the poem into German especially for the report.*



## *from Central London*

The bus or train is packed, no place to sit,  
You have an appointment, or work: part time or full,  
A tight squeeze now, but you must venture on.  
Exhausted from it all you want to leave,  
The train swings to one side, you're flung together,  
You miss the handle, grasp another's thigh,  
In broken English 'Please,' you say 'I'm sorry'  
But most just don't return the smallest word.  
You look at them and everyone is busy  
Their heads are buried in the latest paper and books,  
Like spies they steal a look at one another,  
From under eyelids glances reach across.  
Then two of my own enter: all is noise  
And talk; you'd think it was a hundred people.

**Abdullahi Bootaan Hasan**

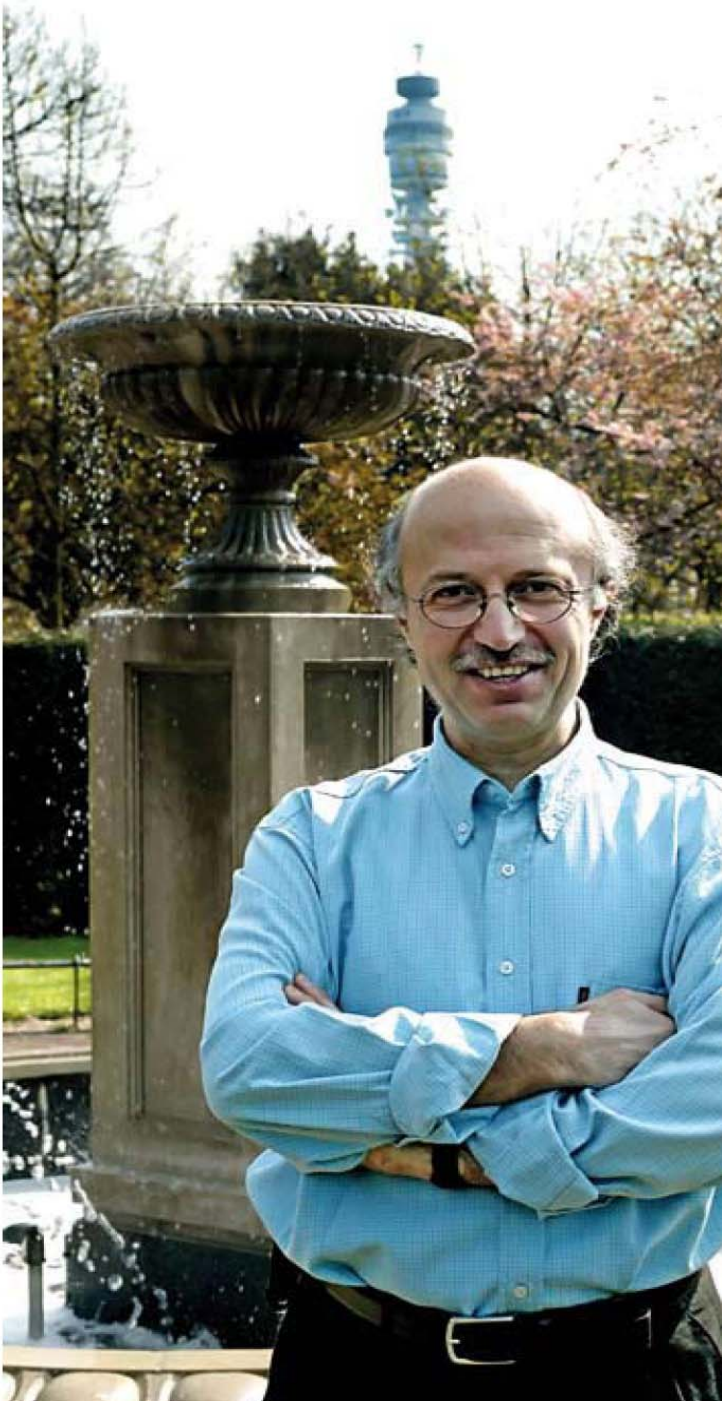
translated from the Somali  
by **Martin Orwin**

## *ka Farasmagaalaha Landhan*

Baas iyo tareen buuxa oo, boosna laga waayey  
Ballan iyo shaqana aad lahayd, baarti iyo fuulleh  
Haddaad baal ciriiriyoon, gashiyo is biir qoolid  
Adigoo bestaa jooga oo, bixiso doonaaya  
Is buurbuurad goortuu dhacee, yaraha baalleeyo  
Barxagsiga kolkaad weydo yaad, bowdo togataaye  
'Biliis' 'Soori' baad kuba tiraa, weedh barookan ahe  
Butullina inaan cid ku odhan, yay u badataaye.  
Dadku biisi yuu wada yahoo, badi markaad eegto  
Buug bay ku wada fooraraan, baybar soo baxaye  
Misana way is beekhaakhayaan, sida basaaskiye  
Oo baasha hoos iyo ishay, balac ka siiyaane  
Kolkase laba bahdaydaa timaad, buuq u maqashaaye  
Oo bulaankii isku baxay yaa kolkaas, boqol la moodaaye

**Cabdullaahi Bootaan Xasan**

*Abdullahi Bootaan Hasan began writing poetry quite recently, though has quickly won recognition for his work. This picture is taken in the small café he runs in the King's Cross area, which attracts and caters for Somalis living around there. Doctor Martin Orwin, his translator, lectures at the nearby School of Oriental and African Studies, specialising in Somali and Amharic. Martin often goes to the café for his lunch.*



## LIVING IS AN ART

I and myself on a road  
resilient as skin

I come from every house  
altering the tedious words

The straight line  
of destiny

Runs through all of us  
we are all its ushers

I am the people  
I am nothing

The same funerals run  
through all of us

*Mevlut Ceylan*

## YAŞAMAK BİR SANATTIR

ben ve kendim  
bir yolda  
tiril tiril bir ten gibi

Geliyorum bütün evlerden  
değiştirerek can sıkıcı sözcükleri

Kaderin dosdoğru çizgisi

Geçiyor içimizden  
bize düşen ev sahipliğinden başka nedir ki

Yani halkım ben  
hiçbir şey

*translated into Turkish  
by Turan Koç*

*Mevlut Ceylan chose to be photographed in Regent's Park, as he lives nearby and loves the Spring flowers and the silence there, so close in to the centre of the city. Mevlut teaches in a north London secondary school, and also writes for newspapers. His poetry is widely respected in this country and in Turkey. He often now writes in English, his work being translated into Turkish by friends in Turkey.*



## The Dwarf Raindrop

Hoping  
To gain height  
A dwarf raindrop  
Clings to the edge

In pursuit of their own  
Innate desire  
Some more drops  
Pushing and shoving  
Ape her

And each becomes tall  
But then in a flash  
They fall  
Flat on their faces

And grossly mortified  
Quietly melt away.

***Divya Mathur***

*Translated from the Hindi  
by Shelley Smith and Rogan Wolf.*

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## एक बौनी बूँद

अपना क़द लंबा करना चाहा  
बाक़ी बूँदें भी  
देखा देखी  
लंबा होने की  
होड़ में  
धक्का मुक्की  
लगा लटकीं  
क्षण भर के लिए  
लंबी हुईं  
फिर गिरीं  
और आ मिलीं अन्य बूँदों में  
पानी पानी होती हुईं  
नादानी पर अपनी।

**दिव्या माथुर**

*Divya Mathur loves this view of the Houses of Parliament, as she crosses the bridge on her way home from work. Since 1992, she has acted as Senior Programme Officer at the Nehru Centre, founded by Gopal Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. The Centre's purposes include promoting Indian culture and Indo-British dialogue. Among many other activities and achievements, she is involved in a charity which helps blind people and is a founder-member of "Vatayan : Poetry on South Bank." She is a published poet and story writer.*