

In a Lighter Vein

I have long followed winding rivers
to nowhere, birds that
do not sing, bushes
without names or flowers to toss;
those winds that stand
and twist on you
interrogative.

With a new postal address each
year brings a fresh childhood window
from which to peer
into the street,
wave and smile to
upon recognition.

II

Usually I sit by my cup of tea —
and talk to myself
by talking to my wife.

The doorbell.
But we don't really live here.

III

I have worked out the equivalents;
It's five rupees to a franc,
or five hundred tongas to the tram.
Yet no horsepiss.
The place is too clean
to have emotions.

IV

If that absence is the jacaranda,
what must *this* here be?
Not the civil riot of gulmohars,
not oleanders, not mimosas.
Springs,
as you come yearly like a wrecking
crew, not leaving behind
visiting cards,
is this polite?

V

No land but love be one's true country.
The Six o'Clock News differs vehemently.
As I recite my Holy Writ,
my wife begins to knit.
I say, Honey, please take heart;
we are aliens here,
it's only a start.

ALAMGIR HASHMI