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