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THE HIDDEN IMAM OF NEVADA

A Thesis Presented

by

AVRAM J. KLINE

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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Program for Poets and Writers

THE HIDDEN IMAM OF NEVADA

A Thesis Presented

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for Dhita

ABSTRACT

THE HIDDEN IMAM OF NEVADA

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M.A. TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

M.F.A. UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Dara Wier

A collection of poems.

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OKEMOS

Once he finishes his almond
the mayor will christen a pond.
Think of all he has done, say
the papers. He used his elbow
to mend the polka, loaned
his knee to the middle school,
donated his bed to a lonely
buffalo. We admire him for
the sacrifice but want his face
to stop getting pocked from
poison dinners—the face
of Okemos is a tender thing.
Near Lake Monona six foals
are born without ears. An ear
cracks like a potato chip in
this frost, there's nothing
you can do. Mayor buys a rack
of frocks. Then comes a calf.
Frightened by the boy assigned
to her, she breaks into a field.
He cannot rope her, she's too
quick. Fingers are useless.
Store them in coin rolls?
Mayor sends a Henry Fonda
lookalike with two scouts
and gives them our oldest snow.
The glow in a heifer, a mayor.

PROFUSE LITERATURE OF MANNERS

Rose moonlights
as my morphologist
and in my face
has found a triangle.
Temporal precision
the rage, she depicts
me in future
progressive.
I hear a book
sipping italics,
as an epigraph
arrives unannounced.
Horses in
the Renaissance
will be accepting
serviettes.
What will edges
in me mean?
Rapacity, she notes.
Open the book.
At 8 pm, an event:
Rose appoints
the complex with napery,
serves a dish
of something sizzling.
*May the ape
work this loom.*
I amend
the width of my eyes.

HILLSIDE CONFERENCE

A peach asks a man if it may drop.
Say you hear a hawfinch sing, says the man.
Will you interfere by whistling?
Don't lecture me, says the peach.
I'm tired and so is this bough.
They hear enthusiasts forking fish

and someone tapping a mike
at the rostrum—a banquet beckons.
In this small grove, men like this
man come to think. I've a keynote

in my pocket, he says, patting
his breast. They await me.
You touch on death? asks the peach.
The man goes red. In my book,
he says, things live to be plucked.
I live with a tic in my Achilles.
Hang on, peach, you must, for the sun

on the sea is greeting the break
of courtship. We are a mind, our world
is mad and ripe. Make a list of timely
considerations: how crossing differs

from circling when a brook
is most a brook, how pleasure
is fruit, and fruit, a delicate
ambush we choose. Now speak.

BRATTLEBORO

This kidney center was once a foundry,
it has machines that get dirt out of men.
This café was once an aviary, it has two

teachers named Jess buttering madeleines.
They pause to ask me for sperm. Younger
Jess speaks most and clear as a windlass—

she'll come get my semen and put it in
her wife. It's true my chest was once
a spinet. Pastor says he can hear children

in me turn as I kneel. He's pretty liberal.
Decide you are perfect, he says, no point
asking forgiveness if the good Lord

won't forgive. This station has always
been a station. It has Marcel Duchamp
arriving, surveying the white spires,

the wide common. His first coming scared
the Jesus out of us. I was twenty. Snow
was stealing the edge of spring or glazing

the gables or maybe some yippies were
tapping young maples. I was skilled
in religious science, had commonsense

from the farm. Look, I said, I know
your plan for us. I led him to the futurity

show where he counseled the breeders:

Put versions of your calves in me *dedans*,
dedans, dedans. The man was a mantra,
a truth in a birch. Now when he comes

gals cross the Winooski to hand him
their earrings, fellas surrender their studs.
Smelt the gold, make us a calf, *nous sommes*

pour vous, pour vous! The birds of Vermont
so loud and lovely. Marcel has touched
our Charolais and left in her a note.

Conductor needs assistant, it says.
Might the large shepherd wish to apply?
He's a beauty. His chest was once a timpani.

STATE OF MY ECONOMY

My secret month is visible to birds.
I light an odometer and brandish
new plates without telling Susan,
who won't let me fill the veranda
until the caution tape is removed.
Argentine ants cross my sink,
bramblings circle the lawn.
I am tracing the roof, tapping
the soffits, making plans to startle
myself. I hear a girl taking a vow.
I hear all the leaves. I hear Werner
Herzog has issued a PSA on texting
at the wheel, which I've done too,
once grazing a boy who tried crossing
Route 9 in his cleats. In the colonies
I get accustomed to removal.
I hear my house and ask my love
if he admires men who take
the time. Stupid appropriation
of a sweet saying, he says. It hurts
him to hear. Labor is for the birds.

ABILENE

We've tuned our thimbles
to some ungulate on a lawn.

Something has stirred the
warren, some sect is rising.

We feel it populating, we
feel the ungulate aching.

Are we arranged right?
Mayor says probably just

rabbits riffling the prairie.
Still, he calls the tomboys

who found that calf
on her side by the sluice.

She'd been exsanguinated
and cleaned, her udders

snipped like cactus fruits.
Aliens come to Abilene,

take box elder and bluestem,
then drain the calves. Clabe

Merchant woke one morning
to find he'd divorced his wife.

He got up and baptized
his lawn, and Sheriff said

what's municipal is allowed.
Take two cottontails and go.

CHICAGO

When celebrity wears off they tunnel in.
Porters of Burnham handle the thighs,
Indians line the lounge with timber.

Natalie Cole arrives late.
The bed in her suite hasn't been turned
down, so I pull the duvet, fold the corner

of the sheet into a triangle, place a mint
on the triangle, fluff the pillows and restack
them decoratively. I dim the lights, too.

She proffers a hand and asks my name
and says to me, You will not leave me.
You will stay with me. You will touch

my nimbus. A lean figure mans the dais.
Bulls await his order—they want to
breed but the figure is rattling. Rail

tracks are sleeves and I am undressing.
We pass Jean Baptiste Point du Sable beside
a lakeside cottage where he learnt the native

tongue and felled the trees and settled
the mouth of the river. He is reaching into

an ox. He is saying, I'm done with Indians—

I'll do as I please. *This is my beast, my beast.*

Recognize me? The aquifer holds my name.

Brittlebush feeds the current, then comes piñon.

UNITED STATES

I sleep by the wind machine.
Barack taps a caduceus, whispers
leche until I wake. At the cookout
I play my ocarina and swell
to a pink serpent. I've misplaced
my turtle—the ribbon looped
to him tore off as he burrowed
beneath the fence. I say, Hermes
that's fine by me, you stay where
you like. At night, he pulls out
to eat a cricket. I rise, cufflinks
jangling like seeds, head to the
bivouac for love. Are the facts
getting warm? I feel someone
plucking my cowlick. Barack lifts
me, kisses me, lowers me leeward.
I need moisture. My nurse reports
Hermes marching the strip near
Safeway. Bg mn, she calls, gt yr
turtl. Hecklers find my property
by the *Trespass* sign and that card
of me cornering my pull horse.
I've grazed with her; I can speak
her ways. In this wilderness of me,
of God juxtaposing me by making

animals of me cooperating with
words, I issue more wives, pull
their heels from the canopy.
Let them come. I will sleep-count
birds in anticipation, coach spiders
to fill rooms with prepositions—
strings around, around. Picking
of mate, running of office, skulls
for looters. A guard on the premises
to keep an eye on the footprints.

DANIEL JUNCTION

I can't see the bears that haunt my home, so I must dream them. They are skinny and upright, with tabby fur. Two are jumping, and two are sorting my dishes. I yell *bears, bears!* A month into marriage, I go to the prairie to gaze at a Brahman. She is masticating and she is interpreting me. It's not bad or anything, but last summer when a ventriloquist slipped a curse into a trout, four steers fell sick from eating tramp iron. Dan Cunningham handed the trout to his raptor, who flew it to the next pueblo, and Ben Trissel put magnets in the cows. It was a lot of trouble. I don't believe they'd accuse me of mischief, but they know there's a stag in me. I lose control of my Buick near the bank, scrape its blue steel against the Pinto of an unemployed man. I mean to shove off, but two clerks see the scene from their window and call the police. The cooler is full of little ones, arms roped, feet fastened to soles of clay.

LAST RECORDED SPEECH OF PANCHO VILLA

for Dara

Chihuahua, enter me
in a moonbeam.

My bird knows the heart
in your net. He clutched

his breast. The press gasped.
Headlights of blue calcimine

flickered from the lot.
He excused himself.

I excuse myself, he said.
The chauffer opened

the Dodge, set the Moviola
in the trunk, drove him to sea.

BALTIMORE

anglicans say boil milk in
this inn or do porridge
the way frisians inscribed
their knuckles & took
a wullop, fishing along
the get-go, toenails
in the worst places,
cranes sacking the eyes

OVERTURE

They've put the arboretum on lockdown to get the terrorist.
He's found a trunk suitable for standing in—
when he lifts his arms it fits. Agents
from the Federal Bureau could use some help,
but the guards are sipping ayahuasca
in a nearby grove they call Popeye.
Trees are florescent. Some have drawers for shoes and jewelry, some are decoys.
One agent passing Popeye overhears a female voice:
I'm too lucid to see you again.
They met in April. She was summoned to the conference room
where he was sitting on a wooden stool carved into a tortoise.
He was wearing turquoise and a crown of crimson feathers.
The agenda was carbon dioxide. A table displayed
a fan of leaves, jungle tobacco, a gourd bowl and a clear
plastic soda bottle. Decisions made:
a plaque would soon adorn the gas,
another would mark the level of the sea. Priests
from the Atmospheric Administration would get bonuses.
His leadership seduced her and she disrobed. We say
the agents could use their help and we mean it.
There is no way to find a terrorist unless
you cooperate—no time for breaking up or feeling superior.
We can't limit the warming without sacrifice. We can't
wiretap every tree without sacrifice. We can't—
They consummated their love on the tortoise.
Every story reveals what will not happen to everyone.

THEY SAY COME HERE

Red grosbeaks pecking a shingle
Morning chairs in the purlieu, a baby
in Navasota—
Why drywall? asks the glazier
This shall open thusly, this thusly
Mirror in the birdhouse is a favor in the brush
Mirror pulled from Tennessee
Substrate for the living room
We'll have met here
Long before this frame on this land
With your breast bristling and we marrying
With this sale on earth, this upgrade to modern
Synthetics, to clear
Plains you trace from Mars
To loudness, the white gulf of no biography

AUGUSTA

I am a friend, he says, handing you the receipt. An air-conditioner the size of a shrub, the Sharp Portable CV-2P13SX, waits in a box by the exit. It's a hot day. You need a dolly. The salesman prevails on you again. Honey, he says, they're called waves for a reason—expect another soon. From his necklace dangles a small Tepanec snuffbox. You tell him you once survived a heat wave without so much as a paper fan. He tells you the price for such stubbornness is sleeplessness and swelling. You should purchase a *window* unit, he says, a Frigidaire with fifteen thousand British Thermal Units. A window unit is always better than a portable. The super of your complex will install it, removing one-fifth of your casement with a blowtorch. You will tip him twenty-five dollars. He will secure the unit to the facade with a bracket. It will be a permanent appliance resting mostly outside the window. During storms, its metal shell will resound like a snare, and this will make you feel needed. But you can't get a window unit without obstructing your view of the obelisk, I understand. That's why it's a conundrum. He smiles. You ask him to estimate a utility bill associated with the Sharp portable, knowing it can't offer the efficiency of a Frigidaire window unit. He notices the tuft of hair on your forearm, thick and black like horsehair, stemming from what he assumes is a nevus. He tells you to purchase a dual hose unit manufactured by Amana. Having two separate hoses for drawing and removing hot air will give you greater efficiency. This should do the trick, he says, patting the Amana. Given your concern for saving money, I mean, this should do the trick. You consider the point, but scoff at his impudence. In this business of air, you say, I will cut no corners. You stick with your Sharp, with its thirteen thousand British Thermal Units. You supplement it with the purchase of a five-liter dehumidifier. Then you order a large fichus. Word spreads within the store that you are an uncompromising customer, a believer in quality. The manager

approaches you, signaling the first caballero to step aside. He offers you a maté. I see, he says, you've come with expectation. He gets closer. He puts his lips to your ear with thoughts of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Music, he whispers. When soft voices die, music vibrates in memory. He is handsome. His eyes are Olmec moons. I am a friend, he adds, a friend. He brings you to the stockroom where clerks are testing ions and Freon through long *bombillas*. The air is full. He touches your clavicle. How contrived, you say coquettishly, the suddenness of such affection. He turns. My ancestors drove huskies, he says. They were tenacious. They'd circled a city until its citizens accepted their love-tokens. They'd lug Gatorade for miles and miles. At this, you collapse into him. You get real bright. You think, *May these electrolytes bring us together*. Your voice comes out in sparks.

CORRESPONDENCE

Next morning, four million cicadas
rise to the surface of Staten Island.
We come to the shore with Kadima
rackets (I want to say Kadima *sans*
rackets the way pita is pita).
A cameraman lumbers along the beach
and two nymphs drop to Dhita's shoulder.
When she goes sleeveless, her lacey back
tattoo expands like a tymbal. I thumb
the exoskeletons and ring the domes.
It's true, cicadas move like mosques.
We play count-the-mosques till I remember
the Kadima ball—Dhita keeps a spare,
a red one. What is extra for the brood?
By dusk, glittering elders have taken
the island, filed into leafy graves.
I have brushed her with my forearm.

PHILADELPHIA

An Israeli phones to explain that sad is a state, lonely is a story. My sleeping bag contains a code, she says, of fruit and barnacles. It's delicate. A pupa has such a bag. An imago unwinds and shuttles off, but a pupa remains in there, unsure and unconcerned. I'm told about human babies too—how they don't get discouraged from learning to walk. And about the paradox of choice, where grapes get competitive. Still, I have technique. I thump the cantaloupes and press their fontanels. A thin Swede sees me, gets envious. She scans the goods in my basket. She may remove my marmalade, slip it into her basket as I turn to weigh the plums, but who really owns anything here? I'll call an emergency assembly. Serbs will come in taco trucks—everyone needs a buck. I need a trim. My barber knows the cowlicks of my head. Snipping the little flags, tapping my temples, he steers my eyes.

DANGEROUS FICTION

Men on the street are shaking the fruits. Soul song, reports my Phoenician from her Fiat. She's a rare breed. She will engineer the reversal of a river when a lake wants relief, and she will track my moves. A man should know how he's doing.

TUSCON

we convey purses to the apache
because that fellow back in yuma,

the one with the levis shop, said
take this big box to the apache,

got clothes & equipment in it,
put it in that hearse of yours &

do not open it unless some cop
pulls you over for going too fast,

which happens at roosevelt near
ann's bakery near ann behind

that bread counter, ann going on
re martin luther king sales

at walmart, saying stuff's on sale
on account of martin luther king

to geronimo who handles a brioche
& ponders a martin luther discount

on sterno, saying something re
querechos needing to settle down,

saying when coronado came out
his tent to ask who they were

(they were eating walnuts)
he was frustrated, having searched

the harahey—all naked with things
on their heads & that copper bell

they got—having found nothing
but a copper bell, that bush

hacking conquistador still
smelling some gold somewhere,

conceding in the private
of his book a goodness re

the thatching, the fields of plum
& mulberry, & now these querechos

roaming the plain with buffalo?
curse these eyes, wrote he, curse

this horse, curse this eye of this horse
& that eye too & back & forth went

he between querechos & harahey
until he summoned the lord & the

harahey obliged & two hundred men
in coyote skins brought the lord unto

him & when he, coronado, from atop
his tall white ungulate muttered

something re the love of saint john
three talons fell upon the helmets

wounding the ungulates & as we
say, when an enemy comes in

like a flood the spirit of the lord shall
lift up a standard against him as martin

was saying, he was saying look,
i was writing, signing my book

for some lady, next minute i felt
a beating on my chest—that blade

went through & x-rays revealed
the tip of it on the edge of my aorta

& once that's punctured
you drown in your own blood—

that's the end—had i sneezed
i'd have died, cops taking my organs

like that cop on that cb
ordering some shepherd to search

our pontiac, sniff that box
of purses, purses waiting

like turks in us, those canyon
guides those salesmen saying come

huachuca we'll forage for a bean
a dime-a-bean got gold in a bean!

& that dog penetrating our pontiac &
that cop ripping our ribs for those

blue sequins in our chests—
belen echandias, english retreads

the prada, louis vuitton, ruehl no.
925, the hansen gross, birkin, vera

bradley, the hester van eaghen—
the wolves the ships the white

HIDDEN IMAM OF NEVADA

He spoke through his ram
of origins

Sun typed trees onto the bank
Bedouins tinselled the prairie

Some changed their voiceprints

to a tree of shoulders
or narrow sills—

wind gilded
lichen, gods
of confetti

Then the man burnt
Nevada with the asteroid

LOS ANGELES

Just before the quake, a Khampa beauty dropped a hair-band and a man reached for it. She'd have ignored it, hair bands being what they are, but there he was, holding it. He could see some hairs had formed a clot. I guess that's normal, he thought, strays fighting for life like that. Being so near a woman with her finery thrilled him, for among his mates he was marginal. He played the idiophone, and like most herders, preferred the older sutras. He kept a journal where he penned the line: *Picking things up for women keeps me motivated.* Some thirteen hundred years later, Belinda Carlisle would describe seven types of femininity, starting with the dropping of trifles. Many men would oblige. She'd validate their work with thank you cards: *Something 'bout you right here beside me touches the touched part of me.* One fellow would come from corporate. Awed by the gold in her eyes, he returned to her the hair-band, though she didn't want it.

OKEECHOBEE

She is a handsome specimen
of the seven-spotted ladybird
whose eggs survived the winter

like hornpipes. He is a young
rabbi on a stem tasting aphids.
Captions ring: *O great mandibles!*

We ink into this Okeechobee,
trawling for cinema, for strips
of ladybird & rabbi that spool

around the roe. We empty
our bladders of records so divers
can touch them. Seminole hits

go *wee wee wee*. Hard to pour,
I add, with gulls wrapping our
feet. Stomps, trebles, clicks,

captains tacking the current,
clams chanting, wearing
bodies so loose, they shake.

I tell the tub I'm swallowed
in spume. Take me, tub, take
me to my mate. I'll make vows

to the glades, I'll put some bait
in my mate & fetch the reel.
The promo goes, *He likes her!*

The promo goes, *Insect in pleats*

*gets stiff! It goes, Bubbie feeds
a rabbi who belches like a mufti!*

Poof, his hand is a corsage!
Poof, a prom! Sources say
a smooth man plays the inter-

faith officiant. Funny, he met
his mate on a spatterdock.
A swampy nymph, a slip jig.

THE WATCH WITH RED HANDS

The Western is a man losing a watch,
then going blind. I lose the one with red
hands that Dhita gave me.

She guides me to a clerk who squawks at bluebirds
about cologne. Where are the watches?
Come closing time, old birds will land from overseas.

RENO

Somewhere in the sierra, Hosea
Ballou Grosh has stepped
on an ax. He will lose his leg

to septicemia and a nation.
Appendages are morons.
Gerald Ford phones from

his diorama for an epilogue
but someone booby-trapped
the cabinet. Mr. President, fire.

Fire, Mr. President, fire!
He fires a poor john. Pelvises
surge in value, bunnies flood

the common with slogans—
Love ain't fun without a gun
Razzmatazz ain't just a bunch of birds

LES BOULEVARDS DE LA VIERGE

She takes my hand and sways
with me to Sarah Vaughan.
You're my plume, she says.

Paul wipes lint from his sword.
Jerome smells a book. We ditch
them, head to a diner for eggs.

In the booth she's more lithe,
more like a girl. I want to slip
beneath your tulle, I say, graze

your luminous tit.
She calls the busboy, tells him
to recite a prayer for the road.

He's seen her nimbus on screen.
He mumbles and exits, and she
says, Pass the hooded angel, Baby.

That's how she says pepper to me.
Inseminate me, put blood in me, etc.
A trucker eyes us from the counter,

thumbs a packet of mayonnaise,
wills words for the new moon.
Small boulevards meet his approval.

CLEVELAND

thday tadashi was driving thcorolla,
four menonites showed up with signs

that said contemporary opinion re
our use of color is mixed, come try

thmeatloaf & in this anabab booth
ye may unto all preach thgospel & eat

this meatloaf among among among,
& tadashi sat in thbooth & admired

thbonneted waitress who said to him
huldrych never saw a beachball

as ye never saw my buggy, now as
snow ye come to me, court me

in my rummy rummy home & bundle
me in quilt as wick goes & mate with me

& bundle me, & tadashi came upon th
pulpit as pastor elm was carrying on re

standing naked before his captors, saying
i come from elms along the cuyahoga,

areola crinkling onthtongue, let us
irrigate, let us make supple this bullock

& all his flesh with his head & his legs
& his inwards & his dung & burnhimon

the wood sharab, & horace, sitting beside
tadashi, sitting beside young men beside

men declared amen yah women yah! as
elm went on re thmountain zebra, thplains

zebra quagga quagga, th*zevra* ye wild ass,
he warned, ye hear four skins rattle? we'll lose

our coats in wildfire! & reba sitting among young
women among women stood & from her throat

came huldrych zwingli did ablute he did!
tadashi put thjug of rootbeer inthtrunk

THE STATE OF OUR ECONOMY

If you set down a baby like a tub
of popcorn, someone will take it.
The scenario resembles the life of anemones
with their wavy opening and closing, tentacles sheltering a clownfish.
Somewhere a line-cook thrusts a lobster claw
up a new dishwasher's behind. Initiations vary.
We shuck oysters before we know we're killing them. No one tells us.
They are sipping and smacking.
In a flyer, you study the voice:
Flounder, floured and baked, improves the tone.
I sanction the extravagance. I am a young
man scrubbing and slicing the watermelon radish
a celebrity will eat. Intimacy happens.
It happens too anonymously for science.

KANSAS CITY

It is 1972. Folks in rocket
Ships are betting their limbs,
saying *cockies* for cocktails.

It is 1972 more than now.

I am on the stoop with
my flashcards, an extra
at the edge of the frame.

Insects have lit the elm
with kisses. A barouche
chaise, then a flotilla
of hats roll upon igloos
that pave the tall planet.

I WILL BEAR THIS LIFE

Sir, I was born
in Amenia of
a widow who
soldered rings.
The radio left
report: balcony
cut loose. I'm
in ruins, sir.
They pounded
my wagon
to a hound.
Tomorrow
I trade medals
and tomorrow
other wares.
I go leagues
to the harbor
to steal upon
yachts. Great
men fill epodes.
Play him?
—No sir, for
he is dead, sir.
Played Iago
once, said evil
deciphers the
words, colludes

with the real.
Elegize him
by the pond.
The cows, sir?
The cows notice
you from a new

direction. Lean-
tos collapse to
a bank and fog
unmoors a field
where the rich
put their ears
to a Labrador:
my ear to his,
my sack shifting
my bulk. I speak
for mankind.
I say gravity.
I do not mean
poems, sir. I
mean the men.

EL MONTE

A country singer's son is fingering your girlfriend and this is ruining your prom. When she returns from his Pontiac you marshal her to a green settee that you will use as a bunker. But she straddles you on it. We might say she sidesaddles you on it. Unimportant really. What's important is that your thing presses into her and she leaves and you remain there like a pylon. Strike that. You remain pinned to the green settee by the devastating weight of your blue balls. You're on record. Romans, you say, make pins of iron and bone. Make reliefs of your victories! And you go on about the tombs and the tuber fields. But let's say a blind citizen offers you a suit. It's white with red epaulettes. It rubs like insect wing. When officers see you in it, they escort you to a secret ranch where cows avoid antibiotics, living, as they do, at the mercy of Christ.

ANGELUS NOVUS

What I miss about youth
is how I peed curveballs

and threw the whole bird.
Earth would sign earth in

gauche, its wind holding
the arm. Nowadays we lift

lines from a more delicate
form. There is father

sounding a ram's horn,
and me, walking a bird

past cats that cue
the window holding

the Nude who holds
a Coors, constellating

the game through cat-eyes.
I wipe my sleeve on the air.

SYMPOSIUM

We prefer ocean fish, she said.
This was a river bass drifting
in a pool by the bank, tethered
and forlorn. I told Mrs. Pinochet
I'd give it some thought,
then I waded into the oxbow.
When I returned to the dock,
her husband drew the fish
for me to inspect it. It whipped
eight seconds. I touched its nares
and slapped it over my shoulder.
Englishmen buy shimmering
tarbooshes, woo Bedouin girls.

BUTTE

A flamingo is the one big seabird
I can imagine, says a woman to a field. I don't know about egrets.
An egret is a heron, says the field, and a heron isn't a seabird, but a
freshwater bird. They talk more about seabirds, then the field grafts
onto her face the look of a technocrat. She returns to the
homestead, where her husband has been sifting durum. He gazes at
her. I love your face, he says. They dine cautiously. There is a
tremor in the earth beneath them.

EVERYTHING WITH ME IS SUBORDINATED TO DUTY

I thumb the wing of a great white
moth perched on the dashboard.

Take me, says the moth.

Before this windshield I die. Adieu.
Blue hills sing with wing. I wanted
to make a sound for you.

HAIFA

I hand a bouquet to the prime
minister's wife on the tarmac.
In the desert she insists we sit
apart. We play a docudrama

of salesmen hocking soda siphons
and the concessions
girl says, Drop, give me
the green line.
Se mettre en position, I
say, rubbing the bauble my

father would sell on the street:
a dome governed by
pelicans, circled by paddling Tortugas
with Monarchs and Sequins
and four Germans bathing.

It's mine when he dies, the bauble.
My mistress, an airliner wishing
to merge, happens on my father:
her big breasts once
intractable, find his
coordinates, greet him delicately.

SHORTLY AFTER DEATH

Men moving ghosts want
tall ships, and so Horace

finds a landing.
I am mad and ripe, he says.
Stevedores take a knee.

Lord, stamp eternity
on the eyeballs, says one.
He's a fire—
give to him some great ball.
Then, mercury

mercury, smoke—
a flame licks the sky to a nation.
Two hundred years hence
a fireball will skim the pitch,
cleats hugging the earth.

THE ROOMS

In these Upanishads
rooms fill sensation.

Rooms with men
that face the trees

are men with dark
animals. What begins

in a room in a manor:
Material and Color,

the original number.
Man, idea, sky.

One holds a blackbird,
the other's from India.

A batsman, his boot
hangs from a tamarind.

He seeks some room
in which to say: What

surrounds me. What
room opens and dims.

IN A BATH BY A TREE

Note the red leaf
on the private organ,

the bright bole
bearing a woman,

the hint of lime.
It's you, the sky,

arms in position.
It's you alone.

Not Sheila you
but Sheela you

from Karachi.
I'm the tambur

leaning on you.
Slivers of hip

and rotund chest.
Glasses on a cube

of photographs.
In one, you sling

me in your dress.
In one, a chandelier.

LOVE POEM

We blaze into the open.

Red can on a pond

nearing bright edge.

The can revolves,

accenting a toque,

a pepper, an earlobe

gleaming on a cool

surface like a bell.

Bustelo, small planet,

casual brio of Café.

Gray water seals it.

Baby, it is our love.