

AT HAJJ

Amaan Hyder was born in 1982. He is a graduate in English of University College London, and of the Creative Writing MA at the University of East Anglia. His poetry has appeared in various journals, including *Poetry Review*, *POEM* and *Blackbox Manifold*. *At Hajj* is his first collection.

At Hajj

Amaan Hyder

Penned in the Margins

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY PENNED IN THE MARGINS
Toynbee Studios, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6AB
www.pennedinthemargins.co.uk

All rights reserved
©Amaan Hyder

The right of Amaan Hyder to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act 1988.

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Penned in the Margins.

First published 2017

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International

ISBN
978-1-908058-44-7

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| At Hajj | 11 |
| The Clot | 12 |
| Coats | 15 |
| At Hajj | 17 |
| Mohammed's Mobile | 18 |
| End of the Hall | 20 |
| At Hajj | 21 |
| Inheritable Landscape | 22 |
| Salaams | 26 |
| At Hajj | 27 |
| Hyderabad | 29 |
| Calling Mohammed | 30 |
| At Hajj | 35 |
| My father in his bed sounds like ice cracking | 37 |
| Wet Collected | 39 |
| At Hajj | 40 |
| Grain | 43 |

| | |
|---------------------|----|
| At Hajj | 44 |
| two urines | 45 |
| At Dinner | 47 |
| Cement | 48 |
| At Hajj | 49 |
| Sleeves | 50 |
| Kamal's Baba's Head | 51 |
| At Hajj | 53 |
| What Were Giraffes? | 54 |
| At Dinner | 55 |
| At Hajj | 56 |
| Some Permanence | 59 |

■

At Hajj



He sees people standing to pray, putting their hands on their knees and drawing up and going down to touch their foreheads to the ground. These are the movements his thoughts make. They sit for a while at the end of their prayers. They sit long after the prayers are over and ask what they have to ask for. You can walk between the groups and know they are all asking in silence. You can see that.

The Clot

Alif

What is a fit?
A holy thing is a fit.
A life is a fit.

I hear fifty machines stitching,
inking a grip.
Someone came to the door.

Someone was listening to us.
When I wake I am told what happened.
I pressed eject, mouths my father.

I pressed enough, mouths my mother.
She leaves in a car that shoots light.

Lam

What is a fit?
Someone trying to believe is a fit.
A life is a fit.

I'm sitting at the dining table.
I don't know what the words mean

but I know the letters. This is alif,

this is beh, this is the sword that
shoots light. Yes, that's right, I nod.
I can see my father in the hallway,

signing the channel to be recorded.
My father is a video forwarded.
My mother is a video recorded over.

Do you remember ejecting a tape,
the ribbon crackling behind it?
That's the currency.

A snippet of preface notes.
Someone making a face in belief is a fit.
One country and then another is a fit.

Mim

In America, there are Mayo and Baylor.
There is a video of opinion meeting itself.
They request you rewind as a courtesy.

So I'm sitting at the dining table.
I don't know what the words mean
but I know the letters. There is my father

interrogating after.

There is my mother and what's going on
behind our heads. There are the letters

passing through my fingers:

this is a house, this is an ox's head.

This is beh, this is alif.

Coats

My parents in a playground,
playing Follow The Leader.

I take my father aside. He says, 'My father says...'
I take my mother aside. She says, 'My father says...'

We walk through school, me between them,
their small hands reaching up to mine.

They are given messages to carry between classrooms.
The *rr* you get in squirrel is an English sound they don't have.

At lunchtime I see Mr Speedy take off his jumper.
His shirt rides up:

I come out to them.
They are looking to see who has eaten the mash.

Yesterday, when they were clearing their plates,
my father was scolded for accidentally dropping his cutlery in the
food bin.

'The light wasn't open,' they say.
Their drawings are pinned to a noticeboard.

They point out which houses are theirs.

I don't recognise them.

These are the pictures they grow up in.



The young man faces away from him, looking out to the crowds. He has finished his prayers and will be silent now while they are meant to be with their own thoughts. There is someone with a cough nearby. They have heard it a number of times. They look through the crowd to their right, past people praying and those talking, those getting up to find somewhere else to be, picking up their mats and shaking the sand off them.

On Arafat he needs to remember to eat or there is the risk he will become sick. He picks up the small bag by his feet and he takes out what is in there: a handful of dates and nuts wrapped a few times in cloth so he has to turn the package over and over until he can get to them. He picks out a date and puts it into his mouth and he takes another date and a few of the nuts. When he is eating the young man comes over and asks him whether he is feeling well and he nods. The young man has to bring his head right down to speak to him and he sits down at the old man's feet after he hears the answer.

At his shins, the pain is bad. Each time he puts down a foot, he has to take a breath. There is the heat also. The middle of the day makes the pain easier and means that he is able to walk more than he has been able to walk previously. When he started, when the walking began, he was shocked at how much he was managing. Each movement of the cane going forward, one more step than he had expected to make and no hoarse breathing. He was able to walk the whole first day and it was as if they said somewhere that the place for him was the desert but no one had told him and he had had to find out for himself and a man sitting in his childhood house in the forest knew nothing of all of this. That such a thing might be unknown.

The old man.