

the poet

of sand

umar sidi

The Poet of Sand

Umar Sidi

□ This poetry pamphlet is published by Saraba Magazine as part of its individual poetry chapbook series. Download other free chapbooks on sarabamag.com/chapbook.

□ The right of Umar Sidi to be identified as the author of this work is protected by Nigerian and international copyrights law. (c) Umar Sidi, 2014

□ Introduction (c) Richard Ali, 2014

□ Cover & book design by Illa Amudi. To be read on all PDF-compatible devices or printed on a regular printer

□ Umar Sidi is a helicopter pilot with the Nigerian Navy. His debut collection of poems *Striking the Strings* is coming out with Origami (Parresia) soon. He lives in Lagos.

The images are vivid and the narrative is exciting. These, alongside the playfulness and linguistic glitter distinguish *The Poet of Sand* as one in which both the public and the private worlds of poetry are seamlessly blended in a language at once fresh, sensual and sophisticated.

ISMAIL BALA

Umar is a child and teacher at the same time in his writing. He is a mortal and an immortal being, fluidly transcending through the burdens of mystery. It is impossible not to enjoy his work.

BEVERLEY NAMBOZO NSENGIYUNVA

BN Poetry Foundation

This is delightful poetry, unusual and sublime.

DAMI AJAYI, author of *Clinical Blues* and *Daybreak*

This poet is daring and audacious, treading and challenging the inviolable and the sacred, and brazenly querying the very meaning of life.

USMAN AKEEL

Sidi transports the reader in this playful tour-de-force, where genealogy and geography blend indiscriminately, where poetic context is annotated, parsed, and jettisoned for the sake of a deeper taste of the universal.

JOANNE ARNOTT, poet, author of *Wiles of Girlhood*, *Breasting the Waves*, *Mother Time*, *A Night for the Lady* and *Halfling Spring*.

- 07 □ An Introduction by Richard Ali
- 12 □ The Peninsula of Poets
- 15 □ The Peninsula of Poets (II)
- 21 □ Instructions to a Poet
- 24 □ Testament of Sand

The Poet and the “Who Am I?” Question of Philosophy

There is a myth gathered about Odysseus’s old age in which the hero, seeking the painless death promised him, leaves Ithaca for the last time. Shipwrecked yet again, his goddess mother floats him ashore on a paddle unto a strange land—a final cosmic joke. He then walks inland resolutely, stopping only amongst a people one of whom inquires what it is he bears under his arms. And it is here, where the paddle and ships of his story are unknown, that Odysseus spends the last of his days. I find the story of this man, this sojourner from sea to sea and land to land, for love and wealth and revenge, the tale of whom informs the most famous poem ever written, instructive in this introduction to the poetry of Umar Abubakar Sidi, for the persona beneath the three poems here gathered is one in the mould of that hero, and this chapbook is his testamentary. Epical in scope, Umar Abubakar Sidi’s poems draw in a cast ranging from a 13th century Persian poet to contemporary American ones, borrowing a wealth of allusions liberally from Judeo-Christian-Islamic religion and from the street just around the corner, all made elegant in a template decidedly inspired by Sufi thought.

The Peninsula of Poets is a coming of age poem and it is telling that this process begins with a slap (administered by Martin Espada)—this action mimes well a birdling’s breaking out of its shell. In the first of two segments we find the persona thrown into an “Academy of poetry” where he wanders, Gulliver like, in a space of strange education. There he picks up pieces of wisdom from an array of eminent writers dead and alive yet—Gogol, described as an ancient ape, captures the absolute supra-sensical depth of poetry, the common core to which all the other poets draw from, in his formulation of “*hukku yyakku huhhu huk*” as the alphabet of poetry. This is strange enough, considering he is the only non-poet of the lot. Beloved Syrian poet, Adonis, as well as the late Palestinian poet and nationalist, Mahmud Darwish, besides Americans Charles Simic and Billy Collins, all come to attend to the persona’s education. The Sufi poet Jalaludin Rumi, famous for his *Masnawi* and his *Divan e Shams e-Tabriz* and the Beat poet, Alan Ginsburg, do not speak to the persona though they are there in the Academy, in that peninsula of poetic influence.

The second part of this poem is a testimony to what the persona has learnt. What distinguishes one school from another, school in the classical sense, is the method with which it attacks the overriding philosophic questions it seeks to answer. In some schools, as in this Academy, there is one Question. Umar Abubakar Sidi plays his first trick on us for the Question in this academy of poetry is not “What is Poetry?” but “Who is the Poet?” Explored mostly in deliciously distracted couplets spiced with nonsense refrains, we find that—

“A poet is he who searches frantically for his sexy chick (Good Poetry)
Knowing he will never find her even in the Brothels of the sky”

And

“A poet is he that sees Tutankhamen’s army
Marching from the left to the right side of his brain”

And

“A poet is Baboon, Beast, Boxer,
Buffalo, Bubaram, Bat”

And, for the sake of finality, my favourite lines—

“A poet is the dark strangling absence of mother
The grave of mother, the silence in the grave of mother
The parapet of sand on the grave of mother”

The persona learns, and we see this through a choice of striking imagery, what it means to be a poet, not what poetry is. For to learn what poetry is would be to be in the grave danger of merely imitating what one has been told poetry is. To know what poetry is is for the art to die. Scorn must be meted in full measure on poets who mime poets past without neither understanding the dynamic in which these poets lived nor being able to bring the sensibility those poets past brought to bear on their dynamics. A consequence of this lack of authenticity is the resorting to all sorts of trickery to cover the poverty of the offering. Far too many African poets fall into this state. What makes poetry vibrant is the sense of authenticity of the poet, not, not the mere technical dexterity in the manipulation of form and history and even language. And one cannot learn this. One can only discover it, just as the persona does. It is the primacy of this “authenticity” that the persona in *The Peninsula of Poets* leaves the Academy with.

The second poem, *Instructions to a Poet*, is a poem about the casting off of influences; it is the concentration of essence. I imagine it is the same persona from the *Peninsula* now in the limbo of a personal hermitage, atop a mountain like the Prophet Mohammed or entering the wilderness like Christ, to ponder. This persona, slapped into consciousness as it were, here casts off Martin Espada and Rumi and Gogol and Simic and Billy Collins and all the academicians of the previous poem. And I recall the Jewish prophet who receives a scroll from Yahweh after making his way pure in the sight of his god, a scroll that tasted like honey in the mouth but when swallowed was bitter. Only after this could that prophet open his mouth and deliver the message of his god. This poem is the

interregal space within which all that is superfluous is taken away so that the essence of the poet alone remains. It is the long silence before speech, before the entering into the meat of ones theme. Listen—

“Poet. Awaken. Rise
Rise against the Litany of Letters
The innuendoes of I
The villainy of V
The obscenities of O
Rise against lies
Against the alphabet of lies”

Now, read this—

“a l - a r s h a d , w h a t i s t h e m e a n i n g o f t h e l e t t e r J i m ? ”

This is the primal question of the third and final poem in this chapbook, the poem in which the persona of perhaps the previous two poems is revealed to be the character Al-Arshad. The style is different from the other two, for in *The Testament of Sand* Umar Abubakar Sidi adopts a universal voice to interrogate the character Al-Arshad. Nowhere in modern literature has there been such a devastating universal voice since the majestic Diety in those final chapters of the Book of Job—I mean that One who spoke out of a whirlwind and revealed both itself and its creation using the method Socrates would later come and finesse. The poet, Umar Abubakar Sidi, here reveals his theme to be Everything and his poetry to be one of contemplation of Everything. The interrogating voice is perhaps a Diety (as the one in the Book of Job), perhaps the Cosmos, perhaps it is even God. But regardless of what any reader might imagine it to be, there is set clear an umbilical relationship between this stuff of all reason and unreason, this Primacy, and the Poet, in this case the character Al-Arshad. Listen again—

“AL - A R S H A D poet of mud;

they said You were there when God moulded mud to make man
in the image of Man

they said You were there when God breathed into Man
the immortal Breath of God

they said it was You who scribbled the destiny of Man
on the bare soul of life

they said it was You who implanted the Fall in the Scroll of Life

as metaphor for twist of fate

they said You are Eve, or the aromatic curves of Eve

Some said You are the vituperative fangs of the Serpent
Some said No! You are the bushy valley of life, the *forbidden*
fruit
tucked between the mighty thighs of Eve

they said it was You who created *mythos* to distract Man
from deciphering the original face of God hidden behind
palisades of clouds

they said it was You who carved out *logos* from the left ear of God

they said it was You who created the alphabet and encrypted it
with
metaphors

This third poem is the masterwork of the poet, Umar Abubakar Sidi, and he achieves it by the creation of the persona Al-Arshad, through whom he (Sidi) explores the entirety of phenomena using a querying universal voice and by this device teaches this persona (Al-Arshad), who has already learnt who the poet is at the Academy of Poets, what poetry IS. It is a clever hall of mirrors in which what is obvious [the universal voice interrogating Al-Arshad] is upstaged by what is less obvious [Umar Abubakar Sidi showing us what poetry is]. *The Testament of Sand* thus fittingly completes the trilogy started in *The Peninsula of Poets* and formed in *Instructions to a Poet*.

We return now to the Greek roots of modern thinking where we find one of the universal questions of philosophy—Who Am I? We return here for it is this same question the poet, Umar Abubakar Sidi, tackles in this chapbook, employing the poet and his art as interpreter and teacher, as victim and product. In the wide reaches of metaphor and the personal touches of reminiscence, in the wildness of desire and the implacability of the questions that illumine without the need for answers, Umar Abubakar Sidi provides his answer with this basic question of philosophy—Who Are We? This poet, in the end, tells us clearly what he thinks “the letter jim” is.

I started this foreword with the story of an old Odysseus at the end of his story, having slipped out of even the furthest extents of the pages of Homer. It is now time, over a thousand words later, to explain how that fits with the poetry of

Umar Abubakar Sidi. I imagine that the old king of such adventures wild and wide and experiences various and ironic, now quiet in a place of men ignorant of his story, an arena so far from the sea and the stories told about him, I imagine him at peace at last. And I imagine him as an African griot with the people gathered around him, standing up, white of beard and aged in every way, saying—"Men and sons of men, listen to my story, of the places I have been without knowing why, and the places I sought to go but wound up elsewhere. And the things I have seen! The paddle is but a will, an overrated thing, but all we have until we can cast it away. There is only the process and it will never end. And there is only doing, which we must do just as well as we can, as we dare, as we know how to. Beyond that, there is nothing else." I imagine Odysseus dies after saying this.

In this epic testamentary, borrowing heavily from Jewish, Christian, Islamic and contemporary secular imagery, bristling with a hundred fresh images, Umar Abubakar Sidi reaffirms the primacy of the poet as philosopher. The process is the meaning. The journey is the way. And reading these three poems is the key.

□ Richard Ali
Author, *City of Memories*
Editor in Chief, *Sentinel Nigeria Magazine*

MARTIN Espada welcomed me with a slap
On my left cheek, he pulled my ear
& tossed me into the 'Academy of Poetry' where Gogol
An ancient ape, the Peninsula's poet Laureate
Sat me up and taught me:
Hukku yyakku huhhu huk
The ABC of poetry & the 7 articles of a poet's faith

ADONIS handed me the key to
The Peninsula's treasury.
He spoke through many voices:
The voice of Mihyar of Damascus
The voice of sand and salt
The voice of the blood of Adonis
The voice of the interrupting sky:

It lies inside You, within You, about You, outside You
It is a dense fog of darkness, It is the meaningless(ness) of life

DARWISH led me through the absence of presence

SIMIC bestowed me with love
A girly roach, my queen, the coquette
I sing lyrics for every other night

I took her out on a date last evening
She wore lipstick and high heels
On her seven sexy legs

While I consumed hot chocolate and chips
She sniffed the inside of a breast,
She even ran down, ran up to the next table
For a reason I quite do not know,

The table was home, a dark corner,
The shadow of a tree, a thick flowerbed,

A roomy wardrobe for two septuagenarian lovers
Whose thighs & tongues were interlocked & hands
Busy dipping into each other's underwear

BILLY Collins was the very last I met
He tied me to a chair and tortured
A confession out of me:

What is P?
When is P seen as P?
Who made P P?
Why is P considered to be P?

When I was leaving, he consoled me with a gift
An apple that astonishes: Good Poetry, he said, is a chick
A voluptuous curvy, sexy chick, with protruding breasts
Heavy backside, an enormous clit
And a never ending quest to go more and more

Her dude is a lanky thing
Equally endowed with a small tiny thing

Some call him a mad man drunk with lust
Some call him a little tipsy thing
Some call him a (*teop*) please, do not read backwards

You may find him at the beach lying naked
In the sand & lost in a conversation with a dog
A bitch actually,
That has just been xxxed by 7 huge, well fed hounds

You may find him, sometimes, in shorts smoking a pipe
& scavenging through rubbish dumps

RUMI: I didn't see him, I only saw something of him.
A silhouette, a transparent gel, a shiny crystal,
Probably a holy ghost. He gave me a very heavy
Simple thing, a ring of words
Wear this always on your heart, he said:
A poet is nothing but a universal ambassador of love

SIMIC issued a statement to all budding poets:
Creative insomnia should be a poet's only shirt

I saw GINSBERG perched on a tree high on dope
Chanting: Holy Holy Holy Holy Holy
I asked him who is a poet & he said:
Holy Holy Holy Holy Holy
A poet is a holy fool

Laikhur offers me a river of wine
I drink, I stagger, I stutter:

A poet dreams through wakefulness
A poet walks & sings through dreams

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is the craze-man of the stars
A poet is the grand lunatic of hell

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is a fat snobbish pig rolling
Through the dirty mud of life

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is broken porcelain splintered
Upon the mountains of the sky

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is a disgusting worm
Lying around the spaghetti of life

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is Baboon, Beast, Boxer,
Buffalo, Bubaram, Bat

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is a blind artist painting upon
The invisible mirror of the sky

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is a dirty filthy bitch who must
Be (x)ucked 7000 times per day or die

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is the genitalia of doubt
A half-naked breast of life

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is Suk, Kuk, Nuk, Ruk,
Yuk, Sluk, Ciuk

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is bad smelling mucus, foul breath
Shit, the bullshit of shit

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is Confucius, Buddha, Basho, Judas,
Simon, Peter & Lao Tsu

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is iron-clad rage reverberating
Through the earth's four corners

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is the F in Faith, the A in Faith, the I in Faith
The T in Faith, the H in Faith

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is a barrel of wine, a staggering crippled
Sleep-laden alcoholic, master of the Tavern of Life

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is Shaman, Babalawo, Sangoma, Boka
Seer, Healer, mental-patient, a penetrating eye
Through the dark regions of Night

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is rotten meat & egg served
On the buffet of kings

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is the face of Faith seeing through
Faith for Faith

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is the dark strangling absence of mother
The grave of mother, the silence in the grave of mother
The parapet of sand on the grave of mother

Hush Hush Hash Hash

Harabab, Hukurut, Hurubub, Hurukup, Hushurut, Hut

Hush Hush Hash Hash

Harabab, Hukurut, Hurubub, Hurukup, Hushurut, Hut

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is a mad-king, a lunatic, the mentally deranged locked
Behind the very cold, old wrought iron bars of life

Hush Hush Hash Hash

A poet is silence contemplating the sound of silence
Sound contemplating the silence of sound

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is an x-ray of the ribcage of the sky, a vision vanishing
From the photographic centre of the brain

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is Basho, eating plantain & writing haiku
On a narrow path to the deep north of the mind

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is the vagabond Sufi Saint Laikhur
Chanting songs to the stupidity of poets & kings

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is El-Hallaj, drunk with the wine of God
Whispering to the trees of Baghdad:
Anal Haqq, Anal Haqq, Anal Haqq

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is a single sailor sailing through
The dangerous murky seas of his own mind

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is a talking book, the only surviving copy
All others have gone extinct

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is he that hears the disturbing
Claptrap of dumb demons arguing in his own mind

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is he that sees Tutankhamen's army
Marching from the left to the right side of his brain

Jam Jam Dum Dum

Harabab, Hukurut, Hurubub, Hurukup, Hushurut, Hut

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is Adonis spitting blood, naked blood
Over deserts, over the oceans of words

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is he who listens to or reads these
Very little, simple, silly lines

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is he who upon reaching here
Closes his eyes to contemplate

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is he who searches frantically for his sexy chick (Good Poetry)
Knowing he will never find her even in the Brothels of the sky

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is he who walks naked, stark naked through
The nakedness of Time

Jam Jam Dum Dum

A poet is he who sees nothing, hears nothing, believes nothing
Understands nothing, about the nothingness of Time

Jam Jam Dum Dum

Harabab, Hukurut, Hurubub, Hurukup, Hushurut, Hut

Jam Jam Dum Dum

Harabab, Hukurut, Hurubub, Hurukup, Hushurut, Hut
Hush Hush Hash Hash

Poet. Discard. Forget
The poisonous fangs of
Ferocious salamanders
Blood sucking chameleons
Wild hairy scorpions
Vampires of the empire of bats

Poet . Dispose. Forget
The salamanders
Shit-sharing Sheikhs
The (un)wise wizards
Clever fools who float
On rusty iron clouds of the sky

Poet. Accelerate. Speed past
The orchard of rusted steel
Dumping ground of crippled caterpillars
Dumb tractors & half crazy cranes
A graveyard of steel
The Cemetery of Cars

Poet. Awaken. Rise
Rise against the Litany of Letters
The innuendoes of I
The villainy of V
The obscenities of O
Rise against lies
Against the alphabet of lies

Poet. Mutate. Levitate
Praise the erudition of G
Create. Imagine. Reflect
Capture the cheerfulness of G
Inscribe the munificence of G
On the sanctified holy roll call;
The Anthology of Saints

Poet. Crystallize. Hold holy
Not the words, but the shadow of words
Of the enigmatic poet, the Kano Master
Who sang: "God is the Sky

That travels with my flock
Bob Marley is in my sitting room
Singing *Chant Down Babylon!*"

Poet. Freeze. Solidify
Become stone—the pyramid
That stands upon the tomb
Of the poet Darwish.
Weave. Become the silhouetted shroud
That will wrap the holy body
Of the poet-god Adonis.
Splinter. Become steel
Point. Become the nails-words
That will hold the coffin
Of the still alive Billy Collins
When he dies

Poet. Scatter. Expand
Become steel. Be the saxophone
That will echo a dirge
On Martin Espada's funeral
In Cuba, Ghana, Nicaragua
Bangladesh or a little oasis
Suspended between the moon & sky
Dubbed 'Republic of Poets'

Poet. Blaspheme. Deny Love
Deny the existence of Love
Declare Love a tasteless wine
From the Vineyard of Lunatics
A tasteless wine that dulls
The eagle-eyed sight
Of the poet-sage

Poet. Soar. Ascend. Transcend.
Above the flowing waterfalls of wine
In Paradise. Above the period of eternal bliss
With big buttocked Houris, the untouched Virgins
Ascend. Above the kingly life in the Mansions of Emerald
Above the ravaging tongues of Fire
Above the cries of crushed scapulas in Fire
Above evil, good, heaven & earth

Poet. Create. Make poetry
That will break the rules of grammar
& cripple the orders of syntax. Make poetry
That will throw shackled chains on metaphor
Torture & condemn it to a life sentence
In the impenetrable Dungeon of Words

Poet. Sketch. Paint. Make poetry
That will be read by the blind. Poetry
That will be heard by the deaf and dumb.
Poetry that will stir passion
In schizophrenics, lunatics, mental patients
Poetry that will loosen their metal manacles
Make them run into the street
Jump into the sky, laugh & scream for Joy

(Genesis or Book of God)

□

Al- Arshad poet of sand

Al- Arshad poet of dust

Al -Arshad poet of the testament

AL - AR SHAD poet of mud

□

Al- Arshad poet of sand

poet of the ocean of sand

where the particles of sand are consumed

like fine grains of milk

Al- Arshad poet of dust

poet of the waterfalls of dust

poet of the expanding worlds which are swirling

over infinite space as floating quarks of dust

Al -Arshad poet of the testaments

the tall tambourine of the family of drums

the accursed poet, the black sheep,

a tarantula who testified against the tentacles of time

AL - A R S H A D poet of mud;

they said You were there when God moulded mud to make man

in the image of Man

they said You were there when God breathed into Man

the immortal Breath of God

they said it was You who scribbled the destiny of Man

on the bare soul of life

they said it was You who implanted the Fall in the Scroll of Life
as metaphor for twist of fate

they said You are Eve, or the aromatic curves of Eve

Some said You are the vituperative fangs of the Serpent
Some said No! You are the bushy valley of life, the *forbidden*

fruit

tucked between the mighty thighs of Eve

they said it was You who created *mythos* to distract Man
from deciphering the original face of God hidden behind
palisades of clouds

they said it was You who carved out *logos* from the left ear of God

they said it was You who created the alphabet and encrypted it
with
metaphors

*and when God said let there be light, You were there, as the Form of
the photon,
the tiniest quark of dust*

*and when God peeped into the void, You were there as the shadow of
darkness omnipresent in the nothingness of things*

*and when God said let the universe be, You were there as the big that banged,
the bang that bigged*

*and when God said let us shape the destiny of Man, You were there
as the pen and the scroll, the scribbles and the scribe*

A L - A R S H A D poet of many colours

- the purple mare of paradise
- the chlorophyll in the garden of red
- the red *arakarabura*
- the yellow hissing flames of hell

A L - A R S H A D
the many season of songs:

To the Angels

You are the Serpent, the venomous viper filled with bile

To Eve

You are the blessed rod, the pathway to endless bliss
the monstrous delicious member of Man

To Man

You are vinegar, the white water, crystal drops-
the sacred elixir of lust

To Words

You are the emptiness between the letters,
the very gap separating E & O, V & L
to words, You are the neutrinos, the photons,
protons of language, the central atom of speech

To God

YOU ARE THE FORCE
always the FORCE
the pestle that stirred the cosmic soup
when God said LET'S MAKE LIFE

□

A L - A

R

S

A

H

D - poet of dust

You are A L - A R S H A D poet of dust
the ? that begets question
the lofty permanence absent from the fields
the codex
the invisible secret
the custodians of codes?

al-arshad? What is the meaning of A L - A R S H A D? :

ALIF: The letter of sand, the invisible
time keeper of the cosmic clock

LAM: The letter of Ram, the sacrificial shards of meat
blood and veins slain at the base of mount *arafat*,
the clinical tree which extends to heaven to strangulate
the jugular of God

AYN: The consonant of light, the eastern duck that flaps
the wings of emerald, the Butterfly, the Unicorn,
the nebula of the horse; the ancient labour room of stars

RA: dust. The consonant of dust. The brown gazelle gazing
at (*mim*) the island of frogs & the constellation of Ba

SIN: Sack. The alphabet of the cordage. Strands . Web. The stellar net,
the escape point of earth, Saturn, Pluto & Mars
from the barricading sheets circling the dungeon of God

HA: Heat. The letter of Heat.

Al HamZa:

The letter of light (at the very beginning),
the pointed beak of the paragon of birds
the bright blackness of the black Madonna, the luminous bulbs
atop the forecandle of the Tall Ships of Sand

Da: t h e D a r k
 l e t t e r

Da. The thick black bush of the intercrural valley

Da. The scent. That scent. Cunt. Fuck.

AL - ARSHAD who witnessed the wedding
between sky and God?
Angels? Satan? Black holes? The stars?

AL- ARSHAD - poet of light: where can we find the
rare ring of GOD?

is it on his thumb in the arch-horn of Leo
far in the seventy seventh realm?

is it on his magisterial seat in the *black hole of miria*
where the sacred sound Om, Om, Om, Om is being
continuously fertilised?

is it in the Circular Zone of Flames at the *wormhole tak*
or is it a string floating in cosmic (un)consciousness or
is it lying flat on *al-arsh*, the inscrutable throne of God?

AL- ARSHAD, did God impregnate the sky to give birth to the universe and
dhuljoom?

AL-ARSHAD, did the universe impregnate space to give birth to the planets and the stars?

AL-ARSHAD, did the earth impregnate the ocean to give birth to Dinosaurs and Djinns?

AL-ARSHAD, did the Dinosaurs impregnate dust to give birth to grass, the green gorilla, the genomes and genes?

AL-ARSHAD, how did God impregnate the sky?
If Andromeda is the clean cleavage, and dhuljoom the navel & milky way the intercrural valley, the garden of the thick black forest where the holy apple is grown?

AL-ARSHAD, is it the original sin for the phallus to veer through the intercrural valley, the thick black forest, to seek & taste the holy apple of life?

□

AL-ARSHAD

how did God mate with sky
is it with droplets of words, did he say BE and sky CAME?

and when God said LET THERE BE LIGHT, and there was light,
was that an affectionate smile from a love struck
couple longing for a kiss?

or did God use the Omniscient Force
the ungraspable power of thought?

AL-ARSHAD

To Vandals, inhabitants of Androgassos
You painted the face of God

To Zoks citizens of Kazok, the belt of rocks,
You can perceive the fluorescence of God

To Zelinians of ZHUL
You hold the key to the gallery of truth,

where the invisible portrait of God is kept

AL- ARSHAD

is God the big old man with silver beard smiling in the sky?

is God the Integer, the perfect number of Pythagoras and his ilk?

is God the invisible energy of Socrates & the unmoved mover of Plato?

is God the Lord of the Kaaba, and did he instruct the Bedouins to kill, to cast sacred stones against the arch enemy Iblis?

is God the solar disc of the Aztecs
the Osiris of Egypt &
the total Force of the old African sage?

AL-ARSHAD, is God the One, the Oneness of the mystic,
the unity of oneness & the whirling dance of a dervish in a lodge?

A L - A R S H A D

When El Hallaj ejaculated on the streets
of Baghdad: *There is nothing in my cloak
except the awesome face of God!*
Was he possessed by the curtain ghost,
the 97th spirit robe of God?

When the white-gowned, bell ringing prophets
dance on one leg in frenzy chanting: *shey mama shey mama
shey mama*, are their souls being melted by the heat
effusing from the angry eyes of God?

When Omar Khayyam peered through the telescope
and was blinded by the circling halos emanating from the interstellar
stars, was that a heavenly dimple on the brow of God?

When Hippasus of Metapontum broke
the Pythagorean accords, was he contemplating about the letter Jim,

the invisible lock to the mighty mind of God?

A L - A R S H A D, what is the meaning of the letter Jim?

Jim : Jameel. The beautiful face of the apple. Mermaids.
Maidens of light. Nine maidens feeding from a tray
of aboriginal smiles and singing from the branches of palms
floating through the coral scales of time.

Jim: Jim Harrison. Book of the Alphabet of Sand.
Scrolls. Papyri. Tablets cast from magnesium
the base element of the mountain of God?

Jim: Gymnastics. Gymnastics of the letters.
Architectural majesty. Royal slabs
of the temple of light.

Jim: Breast. Buttocks. Lips.
Nose Bridge. The green nape of neck.
Innards of metaphor. Thighs. Juice.
The intercrural juice of the poet(ess) of light.

Jim : The dry leaves of Palm. Palm grove.
The garden of the blue foliage. Palm. Seeds.
Sperm. Eggs. Spermatozoa. Floating
in the holy liquid of life.

Jim : The Big Black Gates of the Higher Heaven.
The Entrance to the original House of God,
the black dome of words.

Jim : The Black Dome of Words.
The Alphabet of the Heavens.
The phosphorent waterfall. Quartz.
The diamond river. The translucent Island
where original poetry is made.

Jim : Juice. The congealed juice of
Shakespearean sonnets, the holy water of poets

and the liquor of saints.

Jim : Gold. Pure gold. Strands. The eye.
The bight. The figure eight knot. The giant
noose of gold-woven hawsers tied around
the jugular of space.

Jim : Invisible Vehicle. Mercedes made of the
atoms of light, the automobile of God.

Jim : D. C. Q. L. The anti-letters of death.
The dark cloak, the shadow of skulls. Bones. Blood.
Baphomet. The incisors of *Ifrit*, the arch demon. Damn!
Damnus. Damnus. Daminus. Damnamus.

Jim : Genuflections of white feathered
faithfuls in unison over the shoulders of time.

Jim : Mean. Time. Mean Time
a rectangle halved, cylindrical circles
the unbalanced distance between the wedlock of faith.

Jim : The Zodiac. The astral filament.
The sign.

C A P R I C O R N.

Jim : The ? that astounds:
God is Leo
God is fierce?
God is Sagittarian
God is Calm?

Jim : The essence of the Specimen.

Jim : Blood collected in Invisible Banks.

Jim : The Genotype of God.

Jim : L I L A C .

The voice of the cream damsel. Layla.
The ghost sobbing over the tomb
of the poet al-majnoon.

Jim : The unperturbed calmness of the poet.
The purple lily, the crystalline fragrance
that strangles the haughtiness of faith.

al- a r s h a d, w h a t i s t h e m e a n i n g o f t h e l e t t e r J i m ?

A L - A R S H A D

About the font: Ubuntu Light is a member of the Ubuntu Font Family, which is a sans-serif typeface family with an intended coverage of thirteen fonts. It is an OpenType-based TTF (TrueType) designed and implemented by Dalton Maag.

□

Saraba Magazine publishes the work of emerging writers in its biannual magazines, poetry chapbooks and on its website. Our bias is for writers and artists based in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. Visit sarabamag.com.

