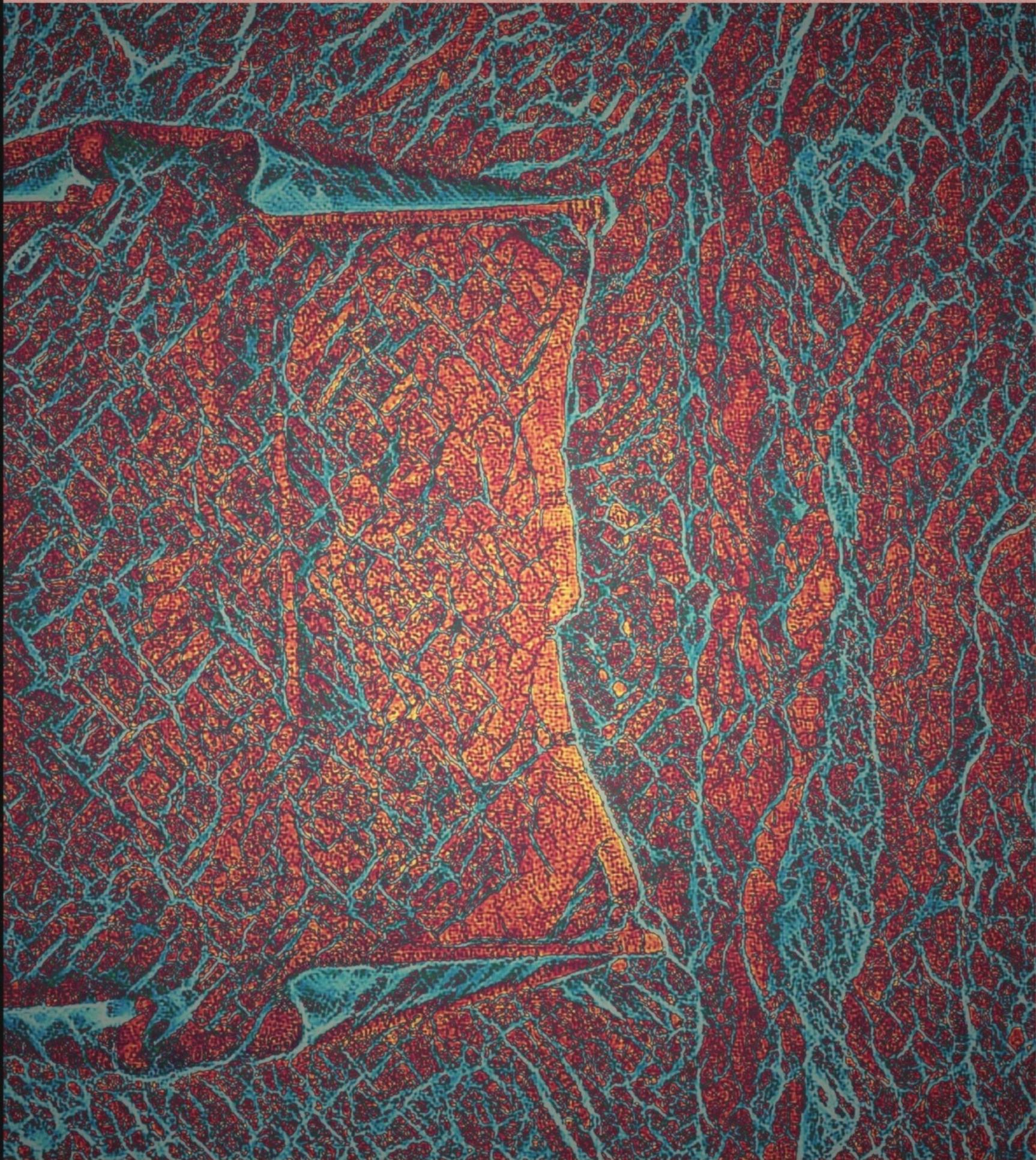


THE DIAGRAM OF HOPE

NORTHERN NARRATIVES INITIATIVE



ABDULMAJID HARUNA

CULTIVATING
CREATIVITY



NORTHERN NARRATIVES INITIATIVE

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Finally, Alhamdulillah for the gift of intellect and the wisdom to write compelling poems that leave readers in awe.

DEDICATION

Lovingly dedicated to my parents: Alhaji Haruna Jibril and Mallama Zainab Aliyu.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Abdulmajid Haruna's The Diagram of Hope is a small book with large ambitions, a mini-chapbook that thinks like an atlas. Its decision to arrive in distinct parts is brilliant. I love how the fragmentation here is not mistake but method. Part One: The Apocalypse opens like a warning and a witness, where domestic radios and collapsing gardens fold into global catastrophe. It was his way of saying before there's a creation, there's first a destruction; Part Two: Familial Grief descends into intimate ruins, naming hunger, loss, and the sharp architecture of shame which in a way attacks the subconscious voice in us. The poems in the second part were furiously tender, magical yet daring and carefully opened into the Part Three: The Diagram of Hope lifts us toward repair without flattening the ache that makes repair necessary. It makes healing a process, not a final act, the rough was felt, now the tenderness is here.

What astonishes is how each phase functions as a mode of attention, from private rumblings, public catastrophe, and the painstaking work of becoming. The poems move the reader from the small room of the self into the dangerous theater of the world. Haruna's narrative instincts are deft: storylines unfurl within lyric lines so that the narrative poems never sacrifice music, and the lyric in turn, fragments but never abandons the story. The experimental gestures of the ghazal, duplex, and form poems command the aesthetics of beautiful language even with instructions aside.

These poems are elegy and consolation. They insist that silence is often a choice, that grief can be a map, and that hope is a practical geometry we learn to draw with broken instruments. The Diagram of Hope is a necessary small book: urgent, humane, and quietly brave.

Abdulrazaq Salihu

Author of Quantim entanglements with notes on loss

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PART ONE: THE APOCALYPSE

INNER RUMBLINGS

When it was time for us to bloom, humanity started losing its virtues. Tinkering with my muse and my rumination is met by a reflection: is it possible to heal the world of all its maladies? Father said, I think too much, and that as a camel, I wouldn't last long in the desert; because not every straw is meant to be carried. Picture a world where every person is a gardener laboring on the field of his neighbor. Is there any kindness greater than mowing the world of all its weeds? Before our arrival, everything was in the box; by which I mean, a period when all the troubles of the world were locked away. The new century is more of an unboxing; from one apocalypse to the other, the world thinning down to a frail planet.

THE APOCALYPSE

There is a portrait of the universe. In it, the artists are drowning.
A carpenter, smitten by the apocalypse's might, is unable to build
life-saving boats.

There is the gardener whose flowers reek of decay, and a
monarch, whose kingdom
is a river of crimson red.

There is the painter whose brush serves as the history's only jury,
yet cannot grasp
the sheer fury of the tempest.

IN THIS POEM WHERE THE WORD WORLD IS ANOTHER NAME FOR MY FATHER

I sit beside the old radio and i hear the words of my father

Climate change is bringing the earth closer to an
irreversible change.

Several decades and counting; and the song on the radio is still
the same: the seas are
rising faster than never before and the glaciers are melting at an
unprecedented pace.

When tomorrow comes, my father would say, I will reduce the
greenhouse emissions
to the barest minimum.

Tomorrow is here and the song on the radio has switched for the
worse: Mother earth
is standing by the edge of the cliff and my father is going about his
days oblivious
of the abyss yawning in front of him.

I pray the abyss is not the fire that will consume us.

OF SILENCE & WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A PALESTINIAN

There are many ways to side with the oppressor. Silence is one of them.

Silence in the face of a misconstrued headline; silence in the wake of an encompassing ethnic cleansing.

I don't know why the lies are leaping taller than the facts in the newsroom.

I know of a few things to be true. Aside the square root of twenty-five that is an integer. What else, in this contemporary world, is not a shenanigan?

The flock remains in trance while the wolf devours the lamb. The air hung heavy with the stench of blood. The places of worship are soiled with the blood of the slain.

Where are the human rights activists? their hands are on the keypad. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the deceased.

Notes: ["I know of a few things to be true" is borrowed from Warsan Shire].

ART TWO: FAMILIAL GRIEF

DROWNING

There is a boy drowning next door. He has a perforated intestine & his feces, slowly leaking into his abdominal cavity. There is a boy and there are lots of them - boys trying to stay afloat in the water but everything is going against them including the current. Imagine starting your day at the edge of a metaphorical cliff; trying to regain your balance, trying to relax your airways, trying to reach for an inhaler you know is not there. Imagine finding yourself at the train station waiting for a train; a train that looks exactly like your father or your mother or any of your relatives, a train you know will never appear. The problem is: we carry it so well the world assumes it is not heavy. Silence does not denote the absence of a howl, sometimes it means the coyote is sinking deeper in the water. Have you ever found yourself at the bottom of the sea? Your chances of survival winding down to zero; your father, villages away from the hospital; your mother, in a frenzy trying to contain the news of your predicament; your sisters, at a motor park trying to make ends meet by hawking groundnuts. Most times, it appears to me that tomorrow is the paradise we've been waiting for. But then, who knows if that tomorrow is an extension of today's darkness.

WITHOUT A SILVER LINING

The sun, burning in orange flames, ignited the city into a bustling spectacle. As usual, we are at the madrasa moistening our tongues with the nectars of the Quran. My body is here but my mind is not. I left home but home has not left me. My memory is on fire, juggling many things at a time. What does it mean to be home? What does it mean not to be home? What is grazing & what consequence does it have on the flock? The city, with all its splendor, deprived me of grace. My breakfast is sticky porridge. My attire is threadbare. Don't ask me about kindness. I'm a lost lamb trudging through a wilding meadow. I tread on many broken bottles to be here. I was milked dried by the herdsman who called himself a shepherd. My father walked me into the pen & has not visited since. Everything here is bitter, including the people. With no cloud to carry a silver lining. I'm afraid I'll die without the sky mourning my exit.

FAMILIAL GRIEF

It is possible for someone to have a feel of your grief and still not recognize the roughness of its texture. Is sympathy not the other name for pretense? How can you measure the miles when you've not travelled the distance? The world says: come! show us where it is hurting. I turned around and a multitude of tongues were sinking their claws into my grief. illegitimate child, the by-product of a bedroom whisper. Irony: is blood no longer thicker than water? Why then was the neonate uprooted from the familial orchard? The earth was wide and sparse, yet on the day I was born, mother chose the trash can as my cradle.

LABYRINTH OF LOSS

In the vicinity of a lonely forest/ I found myself cradling the fur of your absence/ Absence so sharp/ It slices my body into a plate of grief/ I'm learning how to navigate the labyrinth of loss/ But nothing prepares a child for the death of his mother/ Nothing prepares a fish for the life outside the water/ I gave myself a deadline to heal/ On the first day/ I wilt/ On the second/ I drooped/ By the third month/ I'm withering / Every step towards healing is a trap to sink me further in the abyss/ There is no end in sight for a grief that's as wide as the sky/ Nothing sadder in the world than a bird traversing the sky without the wings of its mother/

PART THREE: THE DIAGRAM OF HOPE

IMPOSTER SYNDROME (DUPLEX)

Try to remember the time you talked yourself out of greatness.
Even before the world finds you.

Even before the world finds you;
The journey was already in silence - a tree
afraid of the sharp edge of the axe.

What was meant to forge, shrank you into stillness - the edge of
the axe.

The warrior fled the field, not because of fear, but doubt.

Not because of fear, but doubt.

A shadow dressed as a voice.

Your dreams, curled into the corners of oblivion by that little
voice.

Is this how you want to be remembered?

Huh....is this how you want to be remembered?

A wick should not be afraid of the fire – burning is how we light
up the darkness.

Born to burn – burning is how we light up the darkness.

Try to remember a time you talked yourself out of greatness.

BECOMING (GHAZAL)

The sky unfolds and the view is breathtaking but no one
remembers the crack
of the dawn - the quiet agony of becoming.

The dreamer may tarry - worse still, mire in the quicksand but the
obstacle is
usually the way: a whirlwind of becoming.

Think of the butterfly: once an egg, then a chrysalis. Change is the
first cry
Of becoming.

The ashes are a mirror to the past - a silent proof that the crucible
is the cradle
of becoming.

When asked, how did you find the path? The traveler answered,
wandering
is the prelude to becoming.

INSTRUCTIONS

When you
stand at the kitchen
table. Always pry closely at the
myriad of condiments. A pinch of
salt can look exactly like a pinch of sugar.

When you
come in contact with
a Samaritan. Look intently into
the content of his kindness. A venom
can stretch from the hands of a generous giver.

At the twilight
of your years. You will
realize it was never about
dying. you know you are going
to die. The question was: how & when?

Unless you are
in a burning house.
Don't force the door open.
If it is yours - when the time is
right. The stars will align in your favor.

When you go
to bed. Don't chew
the cud of your sadness lest
your body becomes a garden of trauma.

She won't be perfect.
if she's, you're living in utopia.

Be prepared!
She will die and leave you
or you will die and leave her. Every
love affair is culminated by a heartbreak.

THE DIAGRAM OF HOPE

Two men in a gloomy cavern instead of fixing the lamp are busy cursing the darkness

half full or half empty the most important thing is how we choose to see the glass

Whatever it is don't say when are we going to find rapture? follow the trail of the faint light and soon the track will guide you into the morning

Is everything not about faith? why do we sleep with the alarm on even though we are not promised the morrow?

Once when my curiosity led me to the pages of a book the author said: the road is never smooth the hills are there to guide us to the destination

I'm telling you this to understand that there's always an ark waiting for relentless pilgrims come with me friend there is a place where milk and honey overflow the tributary

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



ABDULMAJID HARUNA

ABDULMAJID HARUNA is the author of THINGS I HAVE COME TO LEARN ABOUT SADNESS (PIN CHAPBOOK SERIES, 2021) and 'THE DIAGRAM OF HOPE ' (NORTHERN NARRATIVES INITIATIVE, 2025). His poem 'My Beautiful Home' won the third-place prize in the UNDP GEP_SGP National Art and Essay Competition for undergraduates in Nigeria. In 2021, he was shortlisted for the Nigerian students prize for poetry. You can say Hi on twitter @Ampicillin_

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