

# The Far Mosque

by Kazim Ali

Kazim Ali's poetry debut draws on mystical traditions of the world's religions in its urgent quest. These gently fragmented narrative lyrics pursue enlightenment in long, elegant yet plainspoken, dark yet ecstatic lines. The poems travel by water and by night, seeking the Far Mosque and its overarching paradox: that when God and Self are one, an ascent into Heaven is a voyage within.

## praise for *The Far Mosque*

"Painterly minimalism, open-field technique and Near Eastern traditions together give Ali a neatly varied verbal palette for his smart, quietly attractive poems....his unresting intellect and acoustic talents make him a poet to watch."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"Ali, author of the novel *Quinn's Passage*, reveals a rich and daring poetic voice in his first book of poetry. If one of the poet's tasks is to revive the mythological powers in things, Ali does so skillfully here."

—*Library Journal*

"The young T.S. Eliot's personae in "Gerontion" and other pre-Waste Land poems resonate in Ali's work, but unlike the studies impersonality and austerity of Eliot, Ali has a vibrant and generous personality that lets one hear the inner music that makes us remember what it is to be human."

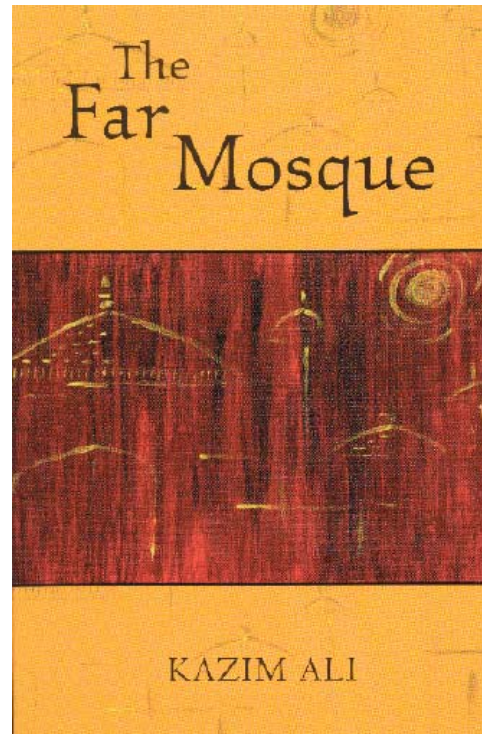
—*Painted Bride Quarterly*

"...the terrain outside the speaker's interior landscape is represented primarily through allusion and the transformational power of metaphor, and is often refracted through the pieces of a fragmented and broken syntax that Ali weaves nonetheless into a music that is quite moving."

—Richard Jeffrey Newman in *The Great American Pinup*

"*The Far Mosque* by Kazim Ali is a book in which the author has managed to render into the English language the universal inner voice. These poems talk to the reader from the realm in which we are all human. What a poet to be able to define spirit using the American vocabulary! These poems, so very different from my own, speak clearly to me. What a gift!"

—Lucille Clifton



"Kazim Ali's poems feel both ancient and entirely new, marrying the old Persian tradition of discontinuity to the rapid shifts of postmodern disjunction. This is a first collection of genuine originality and strange distinction, each poem a fragment of the deep notation of one 'not listening to the music, but to the door.'"

—Mark Doty

"There is a metaphysical feel to this poetry that renders it fit for our globalized age, a geography underwritten by the loss of fixed abode, so that the journey, shifting in all its elements becomes all there is to hold onto."

—Meena Alexander in *American Poet*

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## poems from *The Far Mosque*

### Renunciation

*“The Sailor cannot see the North—but knows the Needle can—“*

The books were all torn apart, sliced along the spines  
Light filled all the openings that she in her silence renounced

Still: her handwriting on the papers remembered us to her  
The careful matching of the papers’ edges was a road back

One night Muhammad was borne aloft by a winged horse  
Taken from the Near Mosque to the Far Mosque

Each book likens itself to lichen,  
stitching softly to tree trunks, to rocks

what was given into the Prophet’s ears that night:  
A changing of directions—now all the scattered tribes must pray:

*Wonder well foundry, well sunborn, sundered and sound here  
Well you be found here, foundered and found*

### The Year of Summer

You came down from the mountains to the shore with your  
father’s voice ringing in your ears, saying over and over again  
the call to prayer.

The stairs leading down to the water are cracked  
and marked by awakening.

Awakening in the south the morning sun shines lemon yellow  
for eleven months, the leaves of the trees telling a book of  
eleven dreams.

In this book, the sky is sometimes lavender. In this book are  
colors you have never seen before.

In this book is the taste of white peach.

The blue-black sea turns milky under the noon-sun.

In the twelfth dream your father whispers your name into  
each of your folded ears.

In the year of summer you came south into a city of yellow  
and white, and what was told of this city was told in trees, and  
then in leaves, and then in light.



**Kazim Ali’s** poems and essays have appeared in such journals as *The Iowa Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Hayden’s Ferry Review* and *Catamaran*, and in the anthologies *Writing the Lines of Our Hands* and *Risen From the East*. A graduate of the Creative Writing Program at New York University, he is the author of a novel, *Quinn’s Passage*. He is the publisher of Nightboat Books and assistant professor of English at Shippensburg University.

[http://www.alicejamesbooks.org/far\\_mosque.html](http://www.alicejamesbooks.org/far_mosque.html)  
<http://kazimali.com/default.html>

### *The Far Mosque*: publicity & events

#### Reviews/ Features:

*Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *American Poet*, *The Great American Pinup*

#### Events:

October 11: Reading: “Word for Word” Sponsored by the Academy of American Poets, Bryant Park, New York City

October 16: Reading: Tabernacle United Church, Philadelphia, PA

November 3: Reading: the Just Buffalo Literary Arts Center

January 4: Reading: Poetry Project at St. Mark’s (with Paolo Javier), New York City

January 24: Reading: Folger Shakespeare Library, “Young Poets and Faith,” Washington, DC

February 12: Reading: The Hudson Valley Writer’s Center (with Anne Marie Macari), Sleepy Hollow, NY

March 2: Reading: New York University Creative Writing Program Alumni Reading

March 9 – 11: Reading: 2006 AWP Annual Conference (with Anne Marie Macari, Leslie Lewis and Brian Turner) and Panel: “The State of Small Press Publishing,” Austin, TX

March 17: Reading: Small Press Traffic (with Mark Wallace), San Francisco, CA

April 3 - 7: Online Journal at [www.poetryfoundation.org](http://www.poetryfoundation.org)

April 19: Reading: Mad River Literary Festival, Northwestern Connecticut Community College, Winsted, CT