

RUMI CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY AND THE ARTS PRESENTS

OPENING THE EYE OF THE HEART II

POETRY ANTHOLOGY FROM THE SECOND WORKSHOP



WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY BARAKA BLUE

Opening the Eye of the Heart II:
Poetry Anthology from the Second Workshop
with an introduction by Baraka Blue

Shawwāl - Dhū al-Qa'dah 1439 / June - July 2018

*Workshop taught by Baraka Blue and organized by
Rumi Center for Spirituality and the Arts*

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Compiled by the students in the second cohort of Opening the Eye of the Heart
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Dedication

This anthology is dedicated to all the beings and encounters that have nourished our hearts, and all we have been awed by in creation. We pray that these poems touch your soul, reach your heart, and are a thread of connection between us and the Beloved, peace and blessings be upon him.

We sincerely thank you for partaking on this poetic journey by reading these glimpses of the hearts.

Acknowledgments

Praise be to HU for gifting us this companionship, the experience and the hearts from which the words and poems emanate. We thank The Beloved for gracing us with the opportunity to produce this anthology.

Peace and blessings upon our master, our beloved Messenger, perfect human, healer of hearts and the unlettered one, guide of guides and teachers, who continues to inspire and awaken as he has generations of poets and lovers.

The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “He has not thanked Allah who has not thanked people.”

Gratitude to our teacher Baraka Blue for putting this course together and to Ângelique Monae, Ifrah Magan, and Efemeral of the Rumi Center for Spirituality and the Arts for their efforts. Gratitude as well to the seekers on this path who have made this a healing and sacred heart space.

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Today,
I surrendered--
gave in to the
gratitude overflowing.
On this beautifully blessed day,
my being is grateful,
for this sacred space
and creative community,
grateful, for each mirror
reflecting my soul,
for each guide and seeker
who shared their struggles,
who allowed me
a glimpse
of their reality.
I, am grateful
for each shared post
and the love pouring forth,
for each "like"
and conversation starting comment,
but especially
for finding this beautiful family.
Today, my being is grateful,
to have crossed paths with you,
to carry your words
throughout my day,
for being in on secrets
between your heart and the Divine,
and for all who helped me see
the Divine in me.
Today, my heart is honored,
to carry you as guests within.
On this blessed day
may your struggling soul
find ease,
may each shared burden
lighten your load,
may you recognize and honor
the Divine within.
Today and each day,
may your heart be filled with
Love, Awe, and Peace,
and may I know,
each of you, when I rise
from my final sleep

Peace and love my beloved community. This course has been heart opening and on a cellular and soulular level, my entire existence is exuding gratitude. This piece is my thank you to each of you.

With peace, Tazmin H. Uddin

INTRODUCTION

By Baraka Blue

Emily Dickinson once wrote, “If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know. Is there any other way?”

Poetry is language that must be felt to be understood; like a well told joke, if it has to be explained, it loses its power and potency. Poetry is beyond paraphrase because, more than other forms of language, what is being said is always inseparable from the way it is said. Poetry must be felt with the heart and not just coldly understood. If it is merely understood, and has not moved one, then it has not succeeded.

Poetry has always been intimately tied to mystery, the unseen, and the spiritual path. Many were the great masters who confessed that when they sought to express their realizations and awakenings - poetry was the most capable vehicle available. Edward Hirsch remarked that, “the poem delivers on our spiritual lives precisely because it simultaneously gives us the gift of intimacy and interiority, privacy and participation.” Poetry allows us to go deep within ourselves, and to experience this interiority communally. Poetry takes spiritual work. One must face oneself and work to peel the layers of ego away so that one can “get out of the way” of truth and beauty. The great sage Imam al-Ghazali wrote allegorically of a pure spring that flows from the depths of the human heart. This spring is a type of inner knowledge, a primordial awareness innate in all of us. It is covered over, for most people, with the polluted water of distraction, attachment, desire, and illusion that flows into the heart through the five senses. The spiritual aspirant must discipline himself with the practices--like silence, solitude, contemplation, and fasting--which close the doors of the senses and allow the fountain in the heart to flow unobstructed and undiluted. Poetry, in essence, is a contemplative method which leads to heightened awareness and removes the rust of heedlessness from the heart. The mystic German-language poet Rainer Rilke advised aspiring poets, “Make your ego porous. Will is of little importance, complaining is nothing, fame is nothing. Openness, patience, receptivity, solitude is everything.” The task of the poet, like the seeker on the spiritual path, is to become receptive to divine inspiration, and to cleanse the mirror to more fully reflect the divine light. The spirit is a vast ocean, and the poets--who have done the work to develop lungs to dive deep--allow those of us nearer the surface to witness and experience what they bring back from the depths. This encourages us along and gives us the courage and the inspiration to dive deeper ourselves.

Walt Whitman said that the deepest spirit of poetry is awe. I think he was onto something very profound. The poet must write from a place of awe. And, perhaps more difficult to accomplish, he or she must somehow capture that awe and plant its seeds in the reader or listener.

It is commonplace to bemoan the loss of poetry in our age. Undoubtedly, the role of poetry has been greatly diminished in the 21st century. Some attribute this to the prevalence of literalism, materialism, and reductionism—which are anathema to the poetic soul. Others blame the rapid shift from an oral culture to a print-based culture to a digital-visual culture. Some credit the loss of a symbolist spirit, the indifference to the sacred, and the general disenchantment of the world that has been underway of late. For others the culprit is a general lack of silence and the blinding pace of modern life, which reduces time for contemplation and reflection—things necessary for the development of an interiority so common in other ages, and so necessary for an appreciation of poetry. At root all of these reasons can be reduced to the loss of “awe.” We might use the word “awe” to translate the Arabic word “taqwa.” Taqwa is one of those notoriously untranslatable words. It is an awareness that the Ultimate Reality is

ever present and that the Presence of the Infinite is never absent. The spirit of poetry is awe at the particularity and the entirety of it all. And for the believer, the awe is always the awe of the One, or the awe of multiplicity in light of the One.

Poetry is a connecting science; an art of unveiling the web of interconnectedness that lies hidden in plain sight beneath the appearance of outward forms. Poetry is a means to point to the eternal in the temporal, the universal in the particular, the pattern in the random, the meaning in the seemingly inconsequential. In the words of Percy Shelley, "Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar." William Blake put it succinctly,

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour*

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with these poets to hone their craft, and dive into this ocean, throughout the month-long Opening the Eye of the Heart workshop hosted by Rumi Center for Spirituality and The Arts. We came together to read and write poetry every day for a month, but somewhere along the way we ceased to be 30 individuals sharing poems and became instead 30 mirrors facing one another. I have been moved to laughter and to tears by their words and I will miss waking up each day and drinking my morning coffee while reading their fresh poems and reflections. This collection is a selection of the poems that were written throughout the course. The course was organized around four weekly themes and the four chapters of this book reflect this.

Many people think poetry is just about self-expression, but poets know that poetry has always been more about self-discovery. It is a powerful contemplative method which allows us to explore the deeper recesses of our consciousness, and to examine some of our unanswered questions and unquestioned answers.

I congratulate these poets for carrying on the tradition and for having the double bravery to dive within themselves and to share what they have retrieved with the world. They remind us that awe is the natural state of the human being. Small children are perpetually in awe. And the poets are among those who have survived into adulthood without having lost it.

Baraka Blue

Shawwāl - Dhū al-Qa'dah 1439 / June - July 2018

Week One

The Heart's Language: Words, Images and Imagination

In the opening week we explored the way that words relate to images/symbols and imagination in order to understand how poetic language moves us. We considered the role of the poet and poetry in traditional societies on the individual and communal levels. This week served as an introduction to the month long workshop as well as a means for us to begin to reflect on our own relationship to language and imagination and the symbiosis between creativity and spirituality.

Home *by Raidah Shah Idil*

sit beside me, little ones
unfurl your hands and let me
read the constellations on your palms
the dewdrops of your innocence, paid for by
the blood of those who came

before

you, two tiny souls
burrowed deep, heartbeat to
heartbeat - grew, thrived, birthed
upon the waves of my pain
ancient, knowing eyes

every day

I was born thirsty
into hunger, carried across generations
cut from my roots
grew in hostile soil
you are my home now

teach me

how to breathe
swallow light
let go
hope
love

come

walk Home with me
may we sip, gently
cool, deep waters from the
hands of our Beloved
and never thirst again

Childhood *by Sumaiyah Mohamed*

I had dreamed of being a gardener
I picked weeds and they were actually a bouquet of gerberas for my father and daisies for my mother
who were waiting for me
with banana fritters and a Bollywood movie
and as I stole sips of my mother's strong milk tea
guaranteed to uplift my mood no I was not cranky
I looked at my father's eyes and cocked my head to the side in wonder
at how it spun stories so deep was his soul
strength over difficulty and quiet persistence
and as I sat amazed, my mother said with words that reverberated through me
and now floating through my bloodstream, she said
Maya, look at this gorgeous carpet
we bought from the shop down at Arab Street
it is a treasure and makes us feel so rich,
we are ants on this lovely carpet, Maya
and though I nodded my head with all the seriousness I could muster,
because I was a big girl and understood
now, as I wave to go and build
my own mosque with my own potted plants and my own roses and goodbye feels like
please pray for me forever
I sit and I say thank You for Your plans God
though I can't make sense of this ache
and this pain and this confusion and this lack of confidence
I am but an ant on a beautiful carpet
the patterns are so lovely and the colours so royal I love it
and no I did not get to be the gardener of my dreams
but I will smile imagining sunflowers in the sidewalk's weeds
and the ants beside them, marching on gracefully

Grandmother *by Fatima P*

By the henna on your palms
I love thee
in all your states,
& in your isthmus lain in wait.
your accented voice with
vestiges of a child-like smile,
snippets of narrative all the while;
tasted, wasted,
walk, then fall
you give it your all,
they may peer through the gaps
but you stand tall...
under your rainforest canopy
how did you fare
in the mysterious Malagasy?
golden face, in dazzlin' grace
you God sent beauty
in your flame red dress, flowing
in dreams of motherland
scented with jasmine and bread
that your compassionate hands fed
(in sleep) to long gone Dodos
& your epoch of Arabian nights
on the old wireless radio
Umm Kulthum soprano-
eliciting heartstring chords
that keep eyes brimming -
did Romeo wake?
did you feel an ancestor's embrace?
do they know our names?
and their blood,
does it run in our veins?
now they slumber well,
under the trees bearing
pomegranates - as sweet as cheeks
before bairns know speech -
all your 14
including my Papa.

Motherhood *by Jennifer Zaynab Zaghoul*

I held my boy tight in my arms tonight.
His head nestled deep in my heart.

Listening to mine, for signs of life.
We shared silence but the whispers did start.

So I ran my tired fingers through his tender soul
Searching for a memory or two.
Surely I'd find something to make me feel whole.
From back when the pain was still new.

I'd be happy to settle for a worn memory
Or a tattered make-believe tale.
Anything to make me believe once again.
In forgiveness and how it prevails.

How I long to release this malignity
That keeps me from knowing my child.
And I pray for the day that this heart is set free
From this insatiable self that is wild.

Until then I hold my boy close to my heart
In hopes that he might come to know me.
A woman in need of her youngest son's love
To make peace with her humanity.

Sleep by *Raidah Shah Idil*

sleep deprivation is a wartime torture tactic
which my beloveds wantonly inflict on me
from time to time
so humbling, how little it takes to
shatter me

I used to gorge myself upon sleep
its rich, bloody carcass
intoxicate myself in its heady
oblivion, grow fat

now, I am emaciated so
hungry

my seeing eyes, red-rimmed, sting
but my third eye is wide
awake

every day, I am consumed
in a conflagration

of love
all else has been
burned away

Tattered Love *by Khadija A.*

My heart implores You for the world
My words sway, seeking freedom from it
I ask for strength to conquer myself
Yet, silently plead for that which conquers me still
I know that all I want from You is You
If only all of me could agree to agree

The Well (Ego prison) *by Anastasia Filippova*

Escaping into the darkness of the well,
That feels secure, shading from thyself,
Avoiding the sunlight through descent,
The coolness of the water keeps you going back.

It's spacious depth promises company,
Being with self is often tiring,
Here in the well, where no one sees,
Where no one hears your sighs, choose ease,
But not the one that shows up after hardship,
The one that heals your wounds anew,
The well, it hides you from the battle,
The sandstorms bursting into savage dance,
Cover your mirror with a layer of desert sand.

And in this well, you sense your power,
Like you could leap across the lands,
It seems so cozy and enchanting,
Could spend forever dwelling there.

Down in this water you find comfort,
This well's a shell, a bunker space,
A place you won't be found, you are protected,
And wisdom won't step foot o'er there,
For your defenses built high fences,
Sense this, your hiding place is not safe,

Come out from this sea of knowledge,
There're better waters flowing by,
Sit by the fire and let it burn you,
Reveal your scent like burning incense,
Come alive under the breath of coals,
A clay creature then, can take true form.

A well can never be a stove, and can't pretend to be,
Their functions opposite, you see,
One cools your skin, offers a limited oasis,
A stove transforms eternal destiny.

Make me Whole - Self Reflection *by Wadud Hassan*

Perhaps I haven't arrived,
In the presence of the Divine?
But is that His yearning that burns in my soul?

Perhaps I wasn't nourished -
by His direct Noor

But why do my eyes light up?
In the company of His beloved?

Perhaps my earthly body -
is too weak for His devotion
But is it His love that I feel in every existence?

I know I am deficient in nourishing my soul
But can the real nourisher: Ar-Razzaq
Open the gates of His heavenly Spring? His love and light?
To carry me forth and make me whole?

You by *Mikel Aki'la*

whatever you are
that will be in what you do
you
will copy and paste
onto every aspect of your life
there you are
showing up on your spouse
on your children
on your masjid
on your community
on your practice
the question is
which you is there?
is it the one who gets annoyed easily
the one who argues
leaves the mess of them everywhere
and thinks that this is righteous?
or
is it the one who smiles
who loves deeply
is present
who deposits light everywhere
and cleans the entire room
and thinks that this is striving

Pray by *Humera Jabir*

The call to prayer
shames you

A long bellow of Allaaaaaaaaah
from someone else's throat
not yours

You did not call today
You did not reply

The call to prayer
frightens you

Is this the moment
He realizes
you will never answer
He knows
you have not remembered
He chooses
to shut the door?

The call to prayer
stirs you

Will your slumbering heart awake?

Say no, no to despair
Now, now, is the hour
You are, your heart's master

Call

Looking Upward by *Abu Balqees*

At night, the Sky lets her Children play
And they light up the night with their joy.
They put on a show for lovers to watch;
They direct weary travellers home.

But day breaks, and Stars fade,
And I love not that which fades.

Each night, the Sky drops a Pearl in her cup

And it glows amidst the darkness of her wine.
The lonely traveller swears he sees
A face to keep him company.

A pearl in wine dissolves, and so the Moon must wane,
But my love shall never wane.

And as the Sky puts off her veil,
And her glorious Crown shines forth
Its radiance overtakes the Moon and Stars,
A Crown of ultimate conquest.

But the Sky's head grows heavy. As the Crown falls, so the Sun must set.
And I love not that which sets.

Then Where Are You Going? *by Zaire Ishmael*

I was walking through a desert
alone and insecure,
hunger, thirst, fear, my only company.

I walked and I walked
searching for what is real,
every dream sold
every truth told,
when reached for
proved a mere mirage.

I walked and walked
with unquenched thirst
and hunger pangs,
each soul that I crossed
spoke of that ever elusive thing.

Flavorful food and delectable drink,
in pristine palaces and shining chalices
with magical music and glistening gold.

Then there it was a captivating scene.
Just as I was set to enter,
all before my very eyes,
finally in my grasp
in an instant,

Gone.

Stars fallen,
into night as it departs
mountains and palaces dissolved
to dust,
into dawn as it brightens.

I fell to my knees
heart shattered
into remnants of hollow hope.
Face in hands,
certain of death,
began to weep.

As I sank into silence and despair
I heard a voice,
not a stranger,
a voice that without my knowing
had always been there.

Unable to move,
shaken to my core,
“I will never abandon you”
I’d heard it say,
long before.
A voice pure, a song clear
A perfect love,
that casts out fear.

81:26
(Faayna tathhaboon)
Then where are you going?

Hope by *Sumaiyah Mohamed*

The hair of a newborn measured
by admiring bright-eyed parents
The drops of elephant tears
as she says goodbye to a kindred spirit
The tribe will never be the same

The sound of my mother’s prayers
a secret of the night calling on the Ever-Listening
for the sweet sincerity safety and serenity of her babies
This is softness

A shield made up of sunflowers in the pocket

behind a chest from which springs out resolutions
of a quiet voice trying again afraid of falling
but diving within reaching for the stars with one palm
catching tears the other placed on the heart
the prayer mat like a petal from an infinite rose garden
a promise from the Ever-Listening God of ours
This is strength

Softness and strength
The significant hope of every breath

Hostel Life by *Cemre Öztürk*

People are coming and leaving,
Things are always in motion
I like to have a look on this flow
Reading different stories from every face
Inspiring and exhilarating
Remembering Evliya Celebi,
Who many centuries ago travelled around many geographies
Collected his notes in Book of Travels,
Made the far closer
Made the unknown known
Made the other worlds familiar to his readers
I, on the other hand, feeling prisoner of my thoughts
I find life in opening my eyes to new houses, strangers, meals and museums
Where at the end
Every house I pass by tells a new story
Every person I meet leaves a shred of truth, which only I can understand
Every portion I eat enriches my appreciation of worldly blessings
Every artist I visit touches my soul
Some go deep inside, some leave after an instant flash.

Letter to the Dreamer by *Camille Dumond*

Dear one, you tuck away your folds and blossoms and call them private parts.
You keep your legs crossed and secretly abandon the garden.
So Spirit sends a dream to open the gate your pain closed.
Your vulva a red red rose,
Swollen out beyond where you hide your secrets,
Thick petals salmon pink, clay, brown earth.
Impossible to deny her pulsing presence your muscled flower.
BLOOM.
The world doesn't know it needs our roses shamelessly whole:

But you do.

Heart, I said *by Alouise Urness*

Heart, I said
Why the fickle flutter?
How can you chase one dream
In the morning, and alight on another
before sun has set?

My soul, do you know yourself?
How then can you know your
garment? Though
it feels familiar and soft.

The heart replied: I've known
since before I was, but there's more
to being than can be known. Crane
your neck to peek round the bend,
you'll see the dreams as one garden.
I knit that soft garment,
and it wove me

(after the heart's conversation in Rumi's "To Take A Step Without Feet")

Requiem for Dreams *by Cemre Öztürk*

One clock at night
Staring at the sky
It is dark but
I can't see them
City lights blunt my stars
I need artificial ones
Turned off
And my ears
Closed to foreign voices

When I try to reach the stars
They fall into my hands
In the form of burning coals
The heat on my palms
I cannot help but drop and get back
Constantly
Adrenaline, blisters, pain
If only I could sustain

Now the coals become a cliff
Standing on top of it
Stepping towards the sky
Hundred and fifty feet
Fall or fly
Is it worth risking all
For nothing but a bunch of dreams

Skyscrapers out of sand
Taking years to build
On the ground with just a flip
Start over
Dreams are only dreams
By fits and starts
I'll walk along this life
Part of it my dreams
To the extent allowed by Him
Rest at His discretion
Which I will be able to fully appreciate
Hopefully before my last breath

Dance by *Tazmin H. Uddin*

There are moments,
I dance
before the veil,
try and keep my footing.
Other times,
I trip
over my self
and fall,
deep
in Divine ecstasy.

Saints by *Raidah Shah Idil*

There are saints, who pass on -
yet their jugular veins still murmur
praise of the One

Where Lovers Meet *by Zaire Ishmael*

bring me where the lovers meet
let me drown in that vast sea
a place where thoughts are lost,
but hearts will greet
remove the eyes from my head if you must,
allow me the eye of the heart
with which lovers see.

“There is a thin line between losing oneself
in the Beloved,
and losing one’s mind.”
they warn.
Love, you may take this mind
and this form,
no matter,
with you, Love
there is nothing to mourn.

Barbed Beginnings *by Jennifer Zaynab Zaghloul*

There are poems that will bare you
Down to a smoldering silence.
A silence that will scare you
But eventually teach you
The meaning of your name.
A silence that’ll dress your wounds in freshly ironed slacks
And a cream-colored blouse with transparent buttons.
Because transparent buttons, you believe,
Will keep you unseen.

And while you wait,
You drown out the noise of every gnawing need
That plants seed after seed
Deep in the whet of your womb.
Where words that have only just begun to take their first steps,
Weave war-free worlds out of dreams you’ve never even
Dared to dream.

Fingers crossed.
Breaths bound.
Perhaps this is where your lost gets found.
Where you finally get to redeem
Yourself.

Or at least fragments of an innocence
You've yet to meet.
And for every prayer you've waged war with,
But were too afraid to weep,
You hold a vigil.
Because it is time
To be seen.

There are poems that will hold you
Beneath the weight of solitude.
A solitude that'll carve your initials
Deep into the flesh of your fears.
Taming your toughness into tears
As you count each moment you'll never get back.
So that you can make peace with the endings
You have not yet learned how to grieve.

And you better believe
That there are poems that will make you
A warrior and a lover all at once.
Poems that will mould maybes and tomorrows
Into promises that will not break.
And on those days when maybes and tomorrows invite you to feast
At the banquet of uncertainty,
You might just embrace the beauty of your
Barbed beginnings.

Take off the armour.
Rest a while.
It's time to write new reasons
To be seen.

“Your favours, I can't deny” *by Amna Akthar-Patel*

One warm afternoon
I approached a swan
Who I swear smiled at me.

God's glory quickly became undeniable.
His mercy quickly became indescribable.

Then suddenly,
While kayaking between lush and ancient trees,

Sporadic summer rain
Showered and kissed my face,

And nothing but sounds of laughter
And gentle raindrops filled the air.

Song of thanks *by Fatima P*

Let me dust my desk,
And polish my pen,
Let me bring out a lawh
And cut a reed again.
Let me throw out the
Cloddish and
Flawed metaphor,
And by the poets of old
Let me be awed.
Let me utter a grace
But let me begin with HIS name:
Rabb al-mashriqayn
and Rabb al-maghribayn

ALLAH

For the words and music
For darkness and light
For Mutanabbi's steed and the desert night,
For Chaucer and Hildegard
Dylan and Farroghzad,
For Hallaj, Hafez and Blake
Who grace our conference
As Attar's birds at the lake.
Let me be grateful
For today's boon,
The fine black medicine this afternoon
For the muddy boots
My wee bairns leave behind,
For the breath of life,
And the daily grind.
For the fine gilled fungi on the forest floor,
For the teacher, illumined, who opens the door-
Allowing spirits to soar...
As the veils lift from the inward eye
Let us give thanks,
Let us eulogise!

Birds vs. Buildings *by Anastasia Filippova*

There are two types of poems birthed to light,
A crafted sort, built like a home,
Refined structure, foundation, detail,
Blueprints to marvel at.

Consultants of the highest calibre reviewed the plans,
And they went to town, all pieces changed.
Balconies facing East, will now face West,
The glass ceiling with a rooftop terrace,
Each tile and ornament chosen like a science,
With neurosurgeon's precision, dancer's balance.

The other poem arrives without warning,
Flutters effortlessly much like a feather in the wind,
It lands into your hand, and then another,
Until a precious bird takes form,
Which direction did it come from?
Will there be another, will it return?

And just like that,
A hummingbird of emerald,
Sometimes a crow revealing darkest tales,
A darling dove detailing deepest wisdom,
A sparrow singing
Songs of
Spring.

If sent your way,
Greet gently birds of knowledge,
And draw its features on a page,
Don't worry when people don't believe you,
That just like this, the birds came forth today.

When winter comes, the birds stop coming,
You put your drawing pencil far away,
You know the season's changing when a feather,
Effortlessly sails with the breeze,
Delivering to you awaited keys.
Draw, please.

Week Two

A Universe Of Meaning: The Sacred Nostalgia

This week we explored some of the major themes and symbols prevalent in the Sufi poetic tradition. We read, reflected on, and discussed samples from prominent Sufi poets, with special attention to the most influential work of Sufi poetry, Rumi's Mathnawi. We practiced writing poems that employ these themes and symbols.

Hajj, October 2010 *by Raidah Shah Idil*

At the Haram, it poured
my pocket doa book. borrowed
got wet
ten years later
the pages still curl

On the Day of Arafat,
I sat beneath a vast, multicoloured tent
our only shield against the brutal sun
surrounded by women
lips, hands, limbs murmuring pleas to the One
breathing in
the dusky, pregnant, pink, pre-Maghrib
sky
knowing that soon
we would all be
 forgiven

O Rawdah!
I stepped into Paradise
gave my salams to the Beloved
my heart, incandescent
but too quickly, pushed out
because women are only permitted
to visit twice a day
and there is never enough time
to sate our longing

everything, after this
has been a steady decline
but life rises

and falls

I wait for the day
where I can bring my girls
to the Ka'bah
introduce them to our Beloved
and show them what it feels like

to come Home.

Galactic Poem *by Anastasia Filippova*

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Which word am I | Which word am I? |
| In Your Galactic Poem? | Which language do I serve? |
| A noun pronounced, | Like chai in use, |
| I'm down with pleasant sounds, | Across all lands, |
| It rings complexity or, | Encapsulating time and space, |
| Simple, | Timeless, |
| Like a cup, | Am I in any of a sacred text, |
| A rare vessel pure, | Waiting |
| Just but one syllable, yet | For recitation? |
| Metaphor profound. | |

You who never left *by Sumaiyah Mohamed*

My heart carries your name
like a proud soldier holding this one flag
a celebratory journey home
and without any sense of solemnness
I sing our lullaby my child-like spirit
squealing with glee and rainbows of pain dissipate
spreading wings of light
yours you and your lovely luminance
you gave the world with your gentle smile
you who never left
I will not weep
We will meet by the river
I will know it when I see its radiance
dip my legs and we will have a race
and when butterflies float by we will be in wonder and copy its dance
remember the river, remember the river
I see you in flowers - soft shades of lavender
in little girls skipping and holding hands
chanting best friends forever

in bus stops with ice cream and lots of time
in words I will always have for you
who never left me

Lest I forget *by Fatima P*

Accompany my thoughts
In the mountain cave
With Rabia's longing,
And Rumi's nay.
Show me the treasure
In the sunlit stone,
Of a fountain sacred
And the hermit, alone.
Gift me the scents of
Amber and musk,
The cricket's love song
On twilight's cusp.
Let me kiss that
Hair of the blackest layl,
Give me Jonah's prayer
In the belly of the whale.
Give me the hope
Of lucid dawns
Then, make me a balsam
For this heart all torn...

O Saqi, pour me that ancient drink – then
Allow my lips to sip liquid bliss.
Show me the light, lest I forget,
The garden, the garden
Where we lovers met.

My Garden *by Raidah Shah Idil*

In my corner of the Garden
my mother is always smiling
my father is content
my siblings are whole

In my corner of the Garden
my husband still makes tea for me
my daughters braid my hair
my friends sing old songs

In my corner of the Garden
there is soft, damp grass
birdsong, the rich scent of
petrichor

In my corner of the Garden
there are bright campfires,
roast lamb, slowly turning
stories shared over hot, sweet tea

In my corner of the Garden
I feel no pain, no grief, no longing
my every worldly ache,
forgotten

In my corner of the Garden
I am Home.
I will smile at the Beloved
And he will smile back at me.

Fire by *Tazmin H. Uddin*

There is a fire raging
in me.
My heartsong is
drowned out by
roaring flames engulfing
each painstakingly planted tree.
The blaze burns my garden
dissipating, only when
I've exhausted
all my energy.
As quiet falls over
the destruction I've caused,
there's a gentle breeze,
a single note,
calling me to listen
to the Breath that still
flows through me.

fall awake *by Zaire Ishmael*

To fall in love
Is to fall awake,

To give and give with no concern
Or attempt to take,
Like roaring ocean waves
Swallow the still lake,
The reality of love
Swallows illusions and
All that's fake,

To fall in love
Is to fall awake,

To gamble all
Even your life at stake,
To sip this wine
Only lovers make,

To fall in love
Is to fall awake,

Heed its call
But make no mistake,
You must take this path
Only for the Beloved's sake,
For from this truth
You can't escape,
Where there is love
Hearts will break,

To fall in love
Is to fall awake,

And give it all away,
And when the trumpet sounds,
And flat is how the mountains lay,
And all that's earned is due for pay,
And limbs will speak, we pray
We pray,

That on this day
words of love
Is what they say,

To fall in love
Is to fall awake,

For you and I
To fall away
Into the abode of the Beloved,
An eternal stay.

Choose the Road *by Humera Jabir*

Home is a honey trap
rich in comforts
that kill

Choose the road
the hard bed
and live

Ease is a salt sea
you can float
but you can never swim

Choose the coal path
your feet will burn
but the earth is richer

'O Teacher, My Guide *by Siti Aisyah Jamil*

'O my teacher,
The seek, the yearn and the supplications
Have been on-going, certainty only deepens.

'O my teacher,
As much as I have taught, I long to learn
With you, potentially the meeting shall be soon.

'O Rabb, make us close to those whom You love.

Carving Chaos *by Jennifer Zaynab Zaghloul*

I've been searching for home
Longer than I've known what home is.

For a way to keep the chaos at bay.
But somewhere along the way,
I stopped looking up.
And the hope-crumbs I left behind,
To find my way back to You,
Waned.
Soon my reckless reaching for something--
Anything--
To fill this vicious void,
Defined me;
Fattening my fears and fueling fantasies
That made my longing for You
Disappear.
I feasted on cookie-cutter-“forevers” meant for those who sleep,
I, too, fell.
Deep into the seduction of the forgotten.
And soon the light was lulled right out of me.
It was there, in the depths of my own darkness,
Where I learned to
Carve chaos into prayer.

Wanderlust by *Raidah Shah Idil*

A decade ago
I sat upon a mountain and
sang qasidas to You
my fractured heart
only comforted by this -

one day, I would be gone
and these leviathans would
remain

my brother hovered behind me
making sure that
I wouldn't fall off said mountain
or injure myself
 in other ways

the traveller inside me still
longs for deep forests
blue desert skies
vast oceans
for in motion, I see You

I am homebound now
growing two daughters
from scratch
like bread, they rise

It's harder now to
catch glimpses of You
when my days are filled
with so much minutiae

Sometimes -
From the periphery
You surprise me
- my youngest's gummy laugh
my eldest's fearless dance
I forget myself
for a heartbeat

and then I remember
and fall back to earth

You are so close! and yet, always out of
reach.

midnight drive, Cherryville, NC *by Abu Balqees*

a half-eaten pomegranate moon
shines down on heavy southern air,
i drive through lightless, bewildered
tree-canopied roads
please God let me get back home

Broken *by Tazmin H. Uddin*

You, who left me
broken
in sorrow,
I stand
before you
hoping
these tears will
make flowers bloom.
The soles of my feet
knock upon the earth

alerting you
of my presence.
Ancient words escape
My lips, a prayer
Carried on angel wings,
Kiss your soul.
May I always be
Your living legacy.

Something in the Clouds *by Zaire Ishmael*

There is something
In the clouds
That brings memories
Of home,
Wherever that is.

I wander,
And I wonder.

“Who are you?” I was asked
I responded
With certainty,
But yesterday’s reply
Did not live
To see today.

How many shapes
Can one cloud take
as it moves along
Its written path?

There is something in the clouds
That brings memories
Of home.

Thinking about community *by Mikel Aki’lah*

we can’t just throw people away
and leave them to rot in the world
we claim to be followers of a man
who was sent to perfect good character
but we bury our own brothers and sisters with our words
hate both sin and sinner

we shun and silence
the off beat and out of pocket
rather than holding them closer
we curse their melodies
as if to say
my music is more holy than yours
I am more human than you
we can divide so well but are unable to gather
how dare you try to take someone from God

But You by *Nazeera Mohamed*

Light knows no boundaries
we held hands
before the image of Jesus
morning service
and she? Jewish.
one that sings,
a cantor
interfaith is mostly undefined
just like
any
one
of
us
it is just a term
for
the greater Beauty
we sometimes refuse
to be a part of
she placed in my hands
a pair of earrings
“these are from Jerusalem”
the gold
i have been yearning to see
but never been
physically
“I brought them with me not thinking of anything
but now
i must
give them to you”
and so we wept.
heart upon heart;
in my hands
not some jewelry

but
her heart
and mine
in her arms
“the angels will be with you
and God
will show you the Way”
she said to me
as I still try to grapple
with the idea
of our God
being One and the same
because this world feeds
on our differences
than the Divinity we all share
and reflect
these days
i look in the mirror
wonder who i’m seeing
only to remember
the one on believers
and soldiers
who recognize one another
fancy finding one in a Jew
perhaps there are but a few
for those who actually do
Light knows no boundaries
but You.

My soul remembers *by Sumaiyah Mohamed*

My soul struggles, flies
fingers dance on prayer beads
delightfully dares

Retreat *by Fatima P*

When the mind discombobulates,
And thought’s arena fragments,
Retreat to an ellipsis
Of silence and solace!
Towards the palm oases
And moonlit gardens, retreat!
To where, from the cave of

A kindred mountain comes whispers
Of the name of its Beloved
And the names of martyrs...
Then O heart, return!
To the elegies of old,
That, like the soft rain
And the sweet evening breeze, bring forth
The musk of Medinese earth,
And imbued in the healing and bliss
of its Beloved become!

The Song isn't You *by Alouise Urness*

This haze isn't purple
but milky, Tiresian
Or maybe just a sandblasted
Fishbowl

This step isn't seven
It's flailing, akimbo in a doorway
that feels like a tunnel

This tangle isn't blue
It shifts, shades of green,
grey, golden, as we near
the peak, which is a precipice
Before caving in
on myself, breathing
the colors in, the ruh

I take not five
Breaths, but some
precise measure
In an unknown meter
still in the making – to be in the flow
of this riff is the gift

Jumuah time last, I did not hear
the final rattling rubato
of an opus many years
in the making
But late to the club, I saw the instrument
left behind, a monument
To life's song

New Eyes *by Cemre Öztürk*

Look at me with new eyes,
Hold your feelings inside
They can be read in your pupils
While the eyes talk thoroughly,
Every word needs pages of explanation
So do not complicate
Look in the eye
And listen

Some Poems Are Like Fire *by Jennifer Zaynab Zaghloul*

Some poems are like fire.
They burn truths into our flesh.
They refine us into warriors;
Strengthening our core,
That one day we might reach
Home.

Some poems are like fire.
They light the way for us
As we fumble into forgiveness.
Palms raised.
Hearts alight.
Softened.

Nafsy, Nafsy *by Humera Jabir*

Just hold up a minute
I'm not ready for this relationship

I don't want to be eviscerated in you
Moth to a flame, and all that - is not what I'm into

I can't have you up in
My jugular vein

This love is suffocating
I call a time out on meditating

I want to see me for me, and not through you
Give me back my eyes

Love is the erotic anguish
of our embrace
An enchanting bridge to eternal Grace.

Love is the qalam (قلم) and the looh (لوح)
Love is the jasad (جسد) and the rooh (روح)

Love is the vessel and the wine
Love is Eternal; Love is Divine.

Dream Children by *Humera Jabir*

You who will never arrive, are still dear to me.

The chubby, cherub children of my waking – dreams
Are still real to me.

I have spun a thousand tales of you,
Your name, your walk, your dance, your talk
Your need for me.

Even now you feel so near to me.

I reach out and take you into my waking - arms
A graze, a touch, a hand in hand, cheek to cheek
You are here with me.

I cry the cry of Abraham
For you, child, who would be the best of me.

Dream children, who fill the empty in me.

If Love Is Divine by *Sarrah Buker*

If Love is Divine it would dwell betwixt
the kaf (ك) and the nun (ن)-
“BE” and it is.

Lost Treasure by *Wadud Hassan*

A new year, a new resolution
Setting my soul in motion

My quest begins
To dive deep in the ocean
To find my precious –
A gem more valued than all the sultan's treasures.

Lost –
through the fierce waves of this world,
I must set out to seek this buried pearl.

What do I speak of? It is anyone's guess!
If found, my heart will be happy
My soul will dance in tranquility
My mind beaming with positivity -
My tongue will always be moist -
In singing His praise.
Everything it touches will always be blessed!

The treasure I seek is Gratitude!
My beloved Prophet's divine attribute
To be deeply in sync with God's decree
'Always be content and no complain' philosophy
If the kings knew its value – their army would travel through the lands and sea
To snatch it from our saintly, the righteous, and those gifted with the hearts of purity.
"And remember when your Lord proclaimed:
If you are but grateful, He will surely grant increase abundantly." [Quran 14:7]

Orphaned by *Khadija A.*

Words
abandoned
mid-thought
Rudderless
in an ocean
Grieving
Waiting to
Belong

Week Three

The Divine Mirror: Nature & the Names

This week's theme built on the previous weeks as we explored the Sufi understanding of the Divine Names, allowing us to envision the world as the great Sufi poets may have seen it. We introduced the Sufi understanding of the 99 Names, as well as the symbol of the mirror as representing both the world and human consciousness. This week required each of us to spend some time in the natural world meditating upon the Names and writing about our experience.

I Write Poems in Secret *by Jennifer Zaynab Zaghloul*

I write poems in secret.
Secrets write me in poems.
In silence is where my words find me.
Between breaths, composing a home.

A place where my fears don't define me.
And where I can learn to be free.
Unveiled and beautifully broken.
Gently stirred by your sweet melody.

You arouse my thoughts with your valor.
You undress my wounds with your rhyme.
You deliver me from my demons.
You unravel the illusion of time.

Our union is one of enchanting.
Our parting a cruel twist of fate.
Come fill me with your raw reflections.
Empty me onto your slate.

Shall we meet between awe and wonder?
Shall we graze by the edge of delight?
Come and lead me into communion.
It is time for these words to take flight.

I've abandoned every past notion.
I've no longer a reason to hide.
I am yours, begin the unfurling.

I've got plenty of truths to confide.

I write poems in secret.
Secrets write me in poems.
In silence is where my words find me.
Through your eyes I am never alone.

Trees by *Raidah Shah Idil*

lay your roots down here, my love
please rest your weary head
I know how long you've travelled
and how many tears you've shed

unfurl your long-limbed branches
let loose a flower or two
mayhaps birth a zesty fruit
if the desire catches you

tell me where you came from
which progenitor carried your seed
and where you long to travel next
whose mouths you hope to feed

you come from lucid fisherfolk
who lived beside the sea
drank moonlight, sang to mermaids
and dreamed you here to me

draw strength from your foremothers
and from your forefathers too
this spark that drives you forward
is their answered prayer for you

I know the pain you carry
Entwined with joy so true
know that you are not alone
in your journey to the HU

Beloved Rose by *Tazmin H. Uddin*

Beloved,
You, are the rose,
I yearn to pluck,

kiss,
and carry,
but I pause--
afraid,
that I will crush you
with disappointment,
so I leave you,
rooted
in my heart.

Come back
to water you,
shower you with
sunshine praises,
tenderness in daily
motions.

Your remembrance
brings light to my face,
You, fragrance my heart
with peace,
put my soul
at ease.

Beloved,
You are the rose
in full bloom,
budding new hopes,
teaching me
to love,
and love again

The Maker and the Mushroom *by Fatima P*

Tranquil teachers,
healing and incandescent,
glowing low,
scattered and
nourishing your lovers.
Enlivening decaying stumps-
of birch, of oak, of pine root,
domed guides that bind the living and dead,
bringers of lucid dreams, of sleep, and
harbingers of death-
in your secret lairs, remaining hidden,

but subtle and steadfast earthly witnesses
vast and outspread you are.
Epitomes of abundance,
sought by all manner of beasts
and the children of Eve
found in these forests
and found in praise --
upon the tongues of bards and shamans.
Darlings of a child's eyes,
of morning glories and autumn stories,
in regiments and clusters
or alone, unique, but brazenly manifest,
with filaments fine and treasure-like,
subterranean and reaching out,
longing for connection
singing of oneness,
and loving to be found [wujud]

Sandfly by *Camille Dumond*

Why wait to rest in peace?
Hasten your death.
You live like a sandfly, hopping from one thread of crusted seaweed to the next.
As if you could find the ocean
In the dried up promises of the status quo.
Let that poison free you.
From your ceaseless striving
Why live the world's myth of you? You have your own sea to drink.

Sea by *Raidah Shah Idil*

I am a daughter of the Sea
and I birthed my spirit guides
my teachers
grown from clot to wailing babe
decimate and elevate
transform me into diamond

O young self!
the tides of Mercy will always, always, carry you
try not to puncture your own boat
choose self-love, over self-flagellation
it feels better, in the long-run
And there is no blood price
Only let go and

Be!
And it is.

Sustenance *by Anastasia Filippova*

It is the river I drink from that deceives me,
It is the crashing of the waves that shakes me,
I washed my face in the embrace of lazy droplets of the rain and it consumes me,
The salty sea invites the seagulls in,
I follow, my skin wrinkles.
The lakes, they promise fairytales,
“You live, you eat, please come again,
This pond was made for you to keep.”
And I believe, oh I believe!
Pour me a cup of poudy pitiful delight.

meanwhile,
from desert gushes forth
a distant light,
A zam zam spring with no promises, fireworks, nor clever rhyme,
just Sustenance

One Sky *by Zaire Ishmael*

You are the Sun
i am the moon.

They think
We live separately,
That You take the sky of day,
And i the night.

We laugh at such illusions,
Knowing what is so,
Through the day and the night,
The dark and the light,
Is one sky,
We dwell within,
Together.

Perennial Reflections *by Tazmin H. Uddin*

Al-Karim, your generous spirit
fills me with salaam,
And yet, when I ponder
Your existence,
I am taken aback, stunned

by your majesty, Al-Jalil.
You stand tall
as a witness, Ash-Shahid,
reach towards the sky
Seeing all, Al-Basir.
You are the Source
of shelter, the bearer of food
Ar-Razzaq,
The giver of life, Al-Muhyi.
Your ancient limbs
speak of untold wisdom Al-Hakim,
Knower of secrets, you are
The all knowing, Al-Khabir.
Within you, around you,
and under you,
we all gather, Al-Jami,
And beneath you, I rest,
knowing you are
Al-Raqib, the ever watchful.

A Child's Altar *by Jennifer Zaynab Zaghoul*

He keeps his shoes up on his dresser.
Like trophies, they hold memories.
Unsoiled.
They call him to adventures his heart has yet to take.
To promises he keeps asking me to make.
But I won't.
Because he needs to learn to trust
Again.

He keeps his shoes up on his dresser.
He mentions them like they're an old friend
Whose number he's misplaced.
But it's the kind of friendship he's too young to replace
Because these shoes remind him of those moments
I was okay.
Like the day he held my heart as we made our way
Across the river.
Socks soaked.
Souls quenched.
Again.

He keeps his shoes up on his dresser.
His eyes fill with joy as he announces proudly

“These are my hiking shoes!”
I smile.
\$14.99 sneakers.
Nothing fancy.
Nothing more than a little boy with a need
To be near.
To be here with me.
Again.

He keeps his shoes up on his dresser.
Next to his 4th-grade class picture
His iPad charger
And a half-eaten bag of Skittles.
Right next to where his “best Pokemon cards” used to stay.
An alter
Of a child’s sacrifice
Where innocence consoles
Regret.

Attributes in Dreamscapes *by Fatima P*

I ventured into dreamscapes,
moonlit rendezvous, fluid and
other-worldly; mundane algorithms
became remembrance.
I saw Your beauty
in giant drops of turquoise that fall slowly-
into the mouth of the forest,
each one held in a nocturne.
I heard Your light
in those synthesised arpeggios
and in sample laced - deep bass,
and in the movements of the cyborg dancing,
for it made me turn to the heavens and
marvel at the stars and the auroras
that flicker in and out of existence...
At times the sea held me,
and once a weeping bear reached for my heart
but I was afraid to speak,
and in your subtle kindness
You rendered me a heroine of the epic (of sorts)
--for just a few blinks of the eye-- so that even
in the monk’s madrigal I could hear angels
in glorification,
a melody containing

the last verse of Ya sin,
glorifying Thee in Whose hand is all dominion
And to Whom we shall return.

Maghrib Mural *by Alouise Urness*

On a quiet street, could be any place
A crew of artists shake their cans, making haste

Latif tests a new color, short bursts of gold
Glisten below clouds near the top of the wall
Shades of apricot are Mu'id's play
Across the words and filth of the day
Saboor fills in shadows, little by little
In all the blank spots of others' dismissal

Muqsit wants balance, so stripes some mauve-gray
The tapestry takes shape in no ordinary way
Nur steps out from behind Hafiz' screen
Spangles on her top light it all with glowing beams

Rashid calls out, wait, time to tone it down
Spreads a swath of indigo like a Tuareg gown
Majid paints his insignia above Samad's mountains
Ba'ith brings back the stars, a well-known pattern, one by one
Zaahir covers Batin's tag, meant to be hidden
Waarith gathers all the lines, signs on the horizon

Salaam's fine brush and Jami's soft mist
Bring the wall to Oneness, they're about to call it quits
The time has come, the work complete
Peace and darkness embrace the street

Jabbar calls out for prayer, Muqit unlids the pot
Muhsi's on hand, to know who's there and who's not
The faithful spill from all the doors to taste Rahim's stew
Wadud sings a love song, to all believers true.

The ninety-nine are manifest each evening at this time
They're the hidden treasure - mercy, beauty, sublime.

To the Red Planet *by Cemre Öztürk*

Secretive to humankind,
12.5 light minutes away,
Al-Mutakabbir arrays these gigantic balls
In an order based on
Finest mathematical rules
Deriving from Al Alim.

Unaided eyes cannot grasp its glamour,
This tone of red tingles the soul of seekers
With excitement
Calling them to Al Haqq.

While Al Zaahir is manifest on the surface,
Al Baatin excites us to explore its composition,
The crust by the mantle by the core.
Master minds are on track of life,
While Al Muhyi fills every bit of Earth
With creatures varied in shape and size,
How can we accept the lack of life
On this unexposed ball to human perception.

The greatest distances ever expanding
Outer space in a never ending, slow motion race,
Ya Fattaah expand our internal, external world
Like you do with the universe.

Love in a cubicle *by Khadija A.*

I love You
- it is a
factual certainty
like any
analytical inevitability

I love You
with a longing
thoughtfully crafted
and a drunkenness
soberly acted

I love You
with the efficiency
of obedience

and the giddiness
of reticence

I love You
with the fervor of
a winded checklist
and the precision of
a recovering perfectionist

I love You
with a love
lacking any grace
that only Your immense Mercy
can possibly embrace

Resuscitate my Soul *by Amna Akthar-Patel*

I meekly witness
Thirsty Mother Earth
Become drenched
By the Nourisher

Gently,
Slowly,
Mercifully,
Kindly.

Drenched with Joy.

The soil moistens
Developing an enchanting, sweet musk
Created by the Reinstator
Who brings back all.

A smell that summons
My body back to life.

And everyone knows
Without a doubt
That a gift like this
Could only be revealed
By None other than
The King.
The Enricher.
The Forgiver.

Drenched in His blessings
My tears of joy are incognito.
My heart is pounding with happiness
And The Powerful, strikes the earth.

And then

Every atom in my body,
Gently,
Slowly,
Mercifully,
Kindly,
Surrenders

And begins to chant:
Allah Hu. Allah Hu. Allah Hu.

Darkness & Light by *Wadud Hassan*

(collaboration with my 7 year old Alishba Hassan)

There is light -
in the night,
But only if you know
How to see.

When you look at the night
In a different light
Only then you'll realize -
You filled your mind,
With the lack of divine
The darkness of this world
Kept you blind.

When you search
With an open heart
The shadows start to sink.
The light seeps through
And You never knew
What was your true potential.

But then shadows return
As the night overturns
The world comes back with all its demands.
But, soon you'll see,
Both Shadows and light
Maybe, they are meant to be together

Words by *Raidah Shah Idil*

I wonder what words taste like when they are still
tucked inside our tongues, buried in our chests, simmering inside our souls
what if words were swallowed whole by the sea, deep within the belly of Jonah's whale
what gems could bubble up, if we were only to exhale

Dhikr by *Amna Akthar-Patel*

I may be standing still
But my heart is moving mountains.

A letter to Rasul Allah ﷺ from *Jennifer Zaynab Zaghloul*

Dear, Rasul Allah ﷺ,

Bismillahi wal-hamduliLahi was-salaatu wa salaamu 'alayka ya Habibi, ya Rasul Allah.
As-salaamu 'alayk ayuhan-Nabi wa rahmatulLahi wa barakatuh.

I could never find the words, ya Rasul Allah;
To thank you for all you do for me, for everything you are.

For your caring smile that comforts me,
When I feel I'm all alone.

For the love I know you have for me,
A love I now call home.

I could never find the words, ya Habib Allah;
To thank you for all you give to me, for everything you are.

For your gentle heart that holds my pain,
For the way you truly care.

For your concern for me when I fall,
For always being there.

For sacrificing everything to gift me with tawhid,
For enduring pain and suffering to leave me with no need.

I could never find the words, ya Shafi' Allah;
To thank you for all you mean to me, for everything you are.

For praying for me night and day,
For missing me despite my flaws.

For promising me I am with you,
For promising me because...

I love you.

I love you, ya Rasul Allah. I love you with all my being.
I know now, I need no words because my heart you've always seen.

You see me through my cloak of fear,
You see good in me, though my shame gnaws.

You see the little girl weeping abandoned tears.
And the woman who, wounded, withdraws.

You see the spark of hope in me,
And you know this spark's not new.

For you planted it in me long ago:
How I yearn to be with you.

I am yours, ya Rasul Allah.
No words between us now.

None save La ilaha il Allah;
Our shared eternal vow.

With every breath that passes through this thankful servant's soul,
Know the only gift I await is your glance to make me whole.

I live each moment of this life in celebration of your Nur,
With your perfection and your grace you made God's creation pure.

The best way I know to thank you now for the countless gifts you bear,
Is to hold others with your empathy; to lift the broken from despair.

To share glimpses of your kindness, to teach with your tenderness and love.
To remind each soul of the truth you bring: seek none but God above.

I am at your service, ya Sayyidi.
I remain in awe of your beloved heart;

Oh Mercy sent to all the worlds,
From your light may I never part.

Ameen.

Your adoring daughter,
Jennifer Zaynab

Week Four

The Beloved & Beyond

In the closing week, we reflected on the relationship between human and divine love. Are they related? Are they opposed? Are they the same? How do the Sufi poets conceive of love? We also explored the ineffability of love. Across cultures, the great mystical poets assert unanimously that love is the way to realize the truth, but also assert that the truth that can be spoken is not the truth. As al-Ghazali put it, "Anything that can be said about experiential knowledge (ma'rifa) necessarily mixes truth with falsehood." The taste of the word 'honey' is not the taste of honey. Yet, despite their affirmations that the great mystery cannot be spoken, the mystic poets were compelled to write voluminously about the mystery. How do we reconcile this seeming paradox? We explored the concept of apophysis and read examples from various poets.

Dhikr of the Most Merciful by *Wadud Hassan*

I stand in front of You in awe
But my heart smiles
Knowing Your mercy surrounds all things
Ya Rahman Ya Raheem

You seem so far
Yet so close
You knew me in the world of souls
Nourished me in my mother's womb
And from a drop you made me bloom

Your mercy divided in 100 parts
1 to Adam and his children first to last
To all animals and living things
All the mothers' unconditional love
Who could count - who could measure?
Yet all that is just a drop from Your treasure

Anywhere I gaze I see manifest
Of Your signs, Your beauty, Your majesty
The morning sun kisses my feet
If this beautiful earth is only a sample treat,
Your mercy in Jannah then how sweet?
You subdued the heavens and earth
At our service, at our deeds
Forgive me then when I forget
To read Your signs

To be in a continuous state of remembrance

Provision me Your blessed countenance
Never deprive me Your merciful glance
I stand in love as I stand to pray
Please don't You ever look away
If I ever get distant from You like the night and day
Guide me gently, always show me the way

Wrap me up in Your loving embrace
Host me with Your most chosen guests
Sustain me through Your Prophet's hands
Honor me with the most beautiful dress
By Your majesty and the most divine face
The company of the Messengers, the Most Truthful, Your Most beloved - And no less!
Not by my doing - by Your mercy, Your grace.

Yes! *by Jennifer Zaynab Zaghloul*

When did I stop saying "Yes"?
When was I shrouded in the dust of this
Harrowing heedlessness?
You Created (me)
To love
To see
You.
Full stop.
Yet here (I) lie
Imprisoned by (my) own negligence.
(I) am drowning in this deadly drought
Of deluded desperation.
Begging of
You
To break (me).
To break (my) silence;
That (I) might see
Beyond the smokescreen of (my)
Omnivorous nafs.
Please give (me) just one
Breath;
A single unadulterated Yes!
You, are my Lord.
And (I) am nothing
Save the reed that dips deliriously into
Prostration.

A Letter to My Beloved *by Maliha Abbasi*

The tide does turn,
Many a time in a season...
It is to You my heart yearns and returns,
Do I need a reason?
Thoughts of You fill my mind.
No matter how I slice them,
Perfection is always the find.
Accept me, love me, be forever mine.
Give me a drink from that metaphorical cup of wine.
O My Beloved, being in Your Presence gives my breath meaning.
Who will hold me if You were ever upset with me?
On You I am always leaning.
My eyes see your Perfection.
It's the opposite of my reflection, riddled with flaws.
But don't ever leave me my Beloved...
Love me and accept me,
For I can't bear to live without you.
You light up my world,
The One I am sure I can count on is You.
Your beauty is true.
The tide does turn many times in a season.
My Beloved, my heart yearns and returns to you...
I am unable to count all the reasons...
That I love you.

The One *by Sarrah Buker*

When my eyes and lips are smiling
and my heart and soul weep
When thoughts are rushing through my head
and my tongue refuses to speak
When the room is swarming with bodies
and I'm the only one around
When birds and babes are sleeping
and I'm screaming without a sound

It's then that You will fill my heart with joy
And release the 3kda عقدة from my lissan لسان
Accompany me through the crowd
And soothe my restlessness with Quran

But for some reason, sometimes
when You draw near to me I run

towards a castle made of icicles
or the blazing brutal sun

Every time, it never fails,
I return and find You waiting
Taking me back into Your arms
Your love unconditionally penetrating
My heart, my soul
and every inch of my being
You become my everything
My end and my beginning

You cherish me in a way
I do not understand
Undeserving of Your love
I reach out to You with both hands
I will not ask You to stay near
because that You have always done
Beloved, I promise not to turn away again
because I know now that You're the One

(un)veil(ing) by *Zaire Ishmael*

They tell me that you were a
vessel, to bring me closer to the
True Love and Mercy of the Beloved.

They say that what I take as
love for you is on a higher
and deeper level a veil for the
Love of the Beloved.

I say,
The Beloved,
sent the most beautiful veil
the eye of this heart has witnessed.
I search high and low, east and west,
without and within, for words that
could even come close.

How,
the sweet taste of ripe mangos
bring to mind the image of your
pursed lips.
Or how,

Blossomed rose petals remind me
of the way your hair curled,
playfully behind your ear.
Or how,

The touch of the wind against my skin,
has me grasping for your small
soft hands.
Or how,

The shine of high noon sun sends
down rays bright like
your smile. And speaking of the sun,
the simple thought of you
still melts my heart like hot
summer days.
And the stars like your
eyes, leave me swirling in a daze.

I don't know,
if it makes sense.
From the moment you walked
into my life, time...
Stopped.
I know, no past, no future,
not even present tense.

In evening I lay upon the earth,
and talk with the moon.
They say I'm crazy,
Majnun.

But just how its glow gives
to the night.
So you also, in my darkness
brought light.

None suffice, not even
these few words,
that my tongue conjures.

I'm sorry.
Please forgive me.
Thank you.
I love you.

My Love by *Amna Akthar-Patel*

I swear, since seeing Your face,
I cannot look at the moonlight,
And not see You.

Since being soothed by Your sweet voice,
I cannot listen to the rainfall
And not hear You.

Since being wrapped in Your strong arms,
I cannot have anyone else hold me,
And not feel You.

Since being showered with every flower,
I cannot walk through a garden
And not smell You.

And ever since I recited the words from Your love letters,
I cannot sip on a spoon of raw honey,
And not taste You.

Shustari's Odyssey by *Fatima P*

Love annihilated me
Nothing existed, save it.
The world imploded
And love engulfed me-
I became lost
Rendered wanderin'
Came and went as I pleased
Into places unimagined

...at the mountain valley
Ascension was difficult
Oxygen finite
Hallucinations...
I fell onto an icy mountain lake
And froze there--
Until the breath of an oryx - Arabian- no less, thawed me
Had he also wandered too far?
But my questions escaped
When we nuzzled forelocks and
The intellect resigned when
Irises locked;

I became the hooves that circumambulate and
I witnessed Salma of the hearts.

With faltering, drunken steps
I left the world of images
I left the world of forms
But my secret was manifest
To the intoxicated ones
Standing and swaying, when
I returned to the courtyard.
Love wove the voices of the singers
With the star canopy above
Until they faded away and
And only a vestige of the folk,
With faces illumined, remained in the night.

Awakened by the ceremonial tea
Of flowers golden,
I sipped, dazed by
the removal of cares,
And hatred
And separation.
For love had obliterated me,
Seeped into my senses
Until He was, and nothing else.

Tree of Life by *Tazmin H. Uddin*

My life
Is a tree,
hidden roots
I will never see,
branching off in
different directions,
getting tangled
in deceptions,
floating free
with the wind,
climbing towards
my Beloved,
breaking,
and blooming again.

The Poetics of Touch *by Camille Dumond*

The poetics of touch
Is a topic best explored
In early morning
When his skin reflects the light
And your body is still wrapped
In the reverence of dreams.

Wakefulness *by Sarrah Buker*

the scent of the desert
a savior's desire
longing for home
the language
the colors
the zimzamat*
the mbutten**

your charismatic smile
your Arabian eyes
your refusal to see me
'cause I didn't want to be seen

the word habibi

whatever the motivation
it was decreed that
I am for you &
you for
Me

I fooled myself into believing that
what we had was love
My world revolved around you
I made you the sun and I the earth
Your flames hypnotized me
All I felt was warmth

But the fire began to blaze
leaving me bruised and burnt
You could not contain the fire
You could not control your rage
my only choice was leaving
To protect my heart from

the sparks that penetrated my skin

My story did not end then
nor did it then begin
It took a decade to awaken and
start healing the wounds within
I realized my heart wasn't broken,
it ached

I don't blame you for my agony
my struggles, my tears
The one to
blame is
Me

In fact, I want to thank you after thanking the Almighty
Because of you I know that true love has yet to find me
And when it does, I'll see past the sun and her mirages
I will not be conned by adornments that
leave women scorned and hearts scorched
Because of you, true love will find me in wakefulness.

*traditional musical groups that perform in Libyan weddings

**a Libyan dish

Call It Love *by Zaire Ishmael*

We live within a poem,
From below the dirt,
Past the vast sky dome.
Look!
With the eye of the heart,
All, including you, a line
Inside the epitome.

We live within a poem,
No matter where you go,
Surely you are home.
Listen!
With the ear of the heart,
All, including you a thread
Perfectly sewn.

We live within a poem,
Open the eye,

You will be shown,
Open the ear,
Hear the song.

The Great Writer has written,
You within His epitome,
The Great Poem,
We call it life,
We call it,
Love.

Sometimes *by Raidah Shah Idil*

sometimes
if you tread lightly

upon the earth

you may uncover
broken hearts

in need of
mending

remember to tend to
your own heart
first

because you are the cup
from which they
draw

so listen
to the hidden

and collect remedies
from the sky
and sea

and know that we
are in the best of
Hands

Layla's Mountain *by Fatima P.*

In exile
all moments are darkness.
This being is all ears, seeking paths,
stumbling faultily
up Layla's mountain
of infinite longing.

When I find myself at your feet beloved,
I will be as a spirit animal,
small and unassuming.

I will clamber up and
arrive at your breast listening,
listening for the deep bass of your crimson organ...

and when I feel it resonate in my chest,
I will bury my head far into the warm abode
of your armpit
where I shall hibernate
as your heart's neighbour
until all traces of this tempest fade out...

Specials *by Alouise Urness*

I'd seen You through the window,
sat in Your section to be closer
But I lost my nerve and hid
in the mundane business of this place.

When I picked up the menu
You were already writing.

I'll take the gray hair, please,
enough time to go
all the way gray
(though I like this streak for starters)
And successful children, light on trouble –
just enough to learn from.

So much here looks tasty...
How about some good friends, steady airplanes, ecstasy?
But no refill on the major embarrassments, thanks.
I hope I have room

for love in balance,
more northern lights and noctiluca,
calm cells, slow breaths, inspiration
(and I hope I brought my card with the low balance)

But I know You have to move along, so can I
keep the dessert menu? Thanks.
Oh wait – with that gray hair, would You
Hold the incontinence and dementia?

You listened as I jabbed
at the worn menu
You tucked Your pen away, along with
that Specials sheet
I'd forgotten to even ask about.

So many say, just go
with Chef's Choice, it's good here.
But I know what I like,
and I've worked in those kitchens
where Special means how you sell
what's getting old.

This place seems different, though,
High end, so
Wait! I say, too quietly, waving my hand
(I'm embarrassed
to raise eyes by calling for You)

Alone at this table
I wonder - if I dump out my bowl
Will I get Your attention?
Will I give You mine?

Ghazal: Searching For Comfort *by Raidah Shah Idil*

unexpected cups of creamy hot chocolate
 cradled in tiny, trusting palms - perhaps it is this, perhaps it is that
sprinklings of rain on bright summer days
 nourishing thirsty roots - perhaps it is this, perhaps it is that
steaming bowls of lamb noodle soup
 our version of ambrosia - perhaps it is this, perhaps it is that
rich slabs of fair-trade milk chocolate
 temporary portals of bliss - perhaps it is this, perhaps it is that
quiet nights spent in contemplation

behold! The arc of a shooting star - perhaps it is this, perhaps it is that
a mother's hug, warmly given
decades of hurt, forgiven - perhaps it is this, perhaps it is that

I See You *by Tazmin H. Uddin*

I see You,
in the water-filled
waxy hands that
smoothed beads
with Your remembrance.

I see You,
in hazel blue eyes
reflecting soul
prayers, when feeding
tube keeps Your words
in.

I see You,
in the paan
stained red lips
and the gentle kiss
when You let her
know me, again.

I see You,
in the radiating
noor as we wrap
her body in white.

I see You,
in the fresh dirt
that marks her grave,
in her salaam
carried by the wind.

I see You,
in the absence
my heart feels,
in the pang
my soul felt,
when You claimed her
for Yourself.

I see You,
in my Nanu's absence,
and existence
I see You,
in her company,
and I, am jealous
of You.

Replaced With Yourself *by Khadija A.*

When that which is lost
You replaced with Yourself
Is grief thanklessness?

My Station *by Wadud Hassan*

I forget, You Forgive
I falter, You Uphold
I fall, You Exalt
I don't ask, You Answer
You and I reside in opposites; yet we are so close?
If that is the reward of just saying I believe,
What is the station of Your truly beloved?

eternity *by Humera Jabir*

what folly
it is
to seek
what Is

for when
you came
to Be
you became

- Eternal

we are
and
we shall
always Be

the Believers
are
the ones
who believe

Ghazal: Farewell *by Raidah Shah Idil*

Garlands fall atop our brows
Blessed farewell, beloveds!

Nourished hearts ready and well
Blessed farewell, beloveds!

Cosmos within us thrumming with hope
Blessed farewell, beloveds!

Irrevocably changed, can anyone tell?
Blessed farewell, beloveds!

Haikus *by Tazmin H. Uddin*

I.
I searched for You and
found You in the beautiful
words of my mirrors.

II.
These days, I see You
when I look in the mirror
and my heart smiles.

III.
Seekers, together,
built a community, and
I am inspired.

IV.
This journey has been
a blessing and my heart is
full of gratitude.

Heaven is Here *by Humera Jabir*

As I lay there, dying
I thought at last
to wonder

What world of splendor lies
Behind these dimming eyes?

I tried, to dream
Of hanging gardens, leafy fecundity
Rivers running cool and sweet
All this, I tried to see

But my dreams returned
in a rush
To my mother's eyes
My father's touch

The child in my tender arms
The land my ancestors farmed

Heaven is here, I whispered
In a voice only the Hearer could hear
Heaven is here.

My mind turned to the stars alight
I prayed to die in the desert night
With luminescent skies in sight

Heaven is here.

In my mind's eye, I traveled
To gold hued lands, dotted in domes
Spiraling minarets, stairways to Home

Here, heaven is here.

From my lowly perch
I stood
Upon the highest piercing peak
My eagle eyes would beauty seek

Heaven is here

And I begged to stay.

To my surprise,
the Hearer whispered back

How long, beloved?

Your mother's eyes
My gaze
Your father's embrace
My protection
The dancing stars
My light
The marble mosque
My porch
The alpine air
My fragrance
The sea spray
My very breath

How long do you wish to stay?

The gaze of Mercy beheld me
As I lay bundled in my bed
Mercy beheld my mourning eyes
And with love untold, said

Awhile longer, you may stay
To revel in my splendor
Toil, rest, sing, and pray
Here, awhile longer

But my beloved, listen here
Have no fear
Have no fear

Heaven is here, and Heaven is there
For I am here, and I am there

Heaven is everywhere.

BIOGRAPHIES

Maliha Abbasi is a lover of nature...sands, skies, forests, mountains and the sea. She seeks nearness to the Beloved, through reading and writing poetry. As a Mother and an aspiring educator, there is much to learn and write, in gratitude and self reflection in the day and night. Maliha uses the words that pour from her heart to her fingers to gain a deeper understanding of her soul. Her creation of poetry is key in reminding her that God is the end goal. She can be reached at maliha.abbasi@gmail.com

Khadija A. lives out her life in a corporate jungle and uses poetry to dive into the depths of her soul, to examine thoughts, emotions and states and grow her consciousness in hopes of increasing her love and longing for her Master.

Mikel Aki'lah is a 19 year old writer from Brooklyn, NY. She has been writing since the age of eight and uses her work as a way to share her reality as a black muslim woman. She has been published in the 2012-2014 Poet Linc Youth Anthologies created by the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and has shared her work at the Nuyorican Poets cafe, Lincoln center, and the Brooklyn Public Library. She is currently Studying in Lyon, France.

Amna Akthar-Patel is a Canadian-born Pakistani. For the last couple of years, she has prioritized her spiritual and physical health by performing Hajj and taking up Yoga, among other things. She has an undergraduate degree in Sociology and loves picking your brain about what it is that makes your heart light up. Amna loves to be of service to her friends and family and aims to live a minimalist lifestyle. You can usually find her exploring Toronto, trying new restaurants and bike-riding along the lake with her husband, Azim. Amna can be reached at amnaaktharpatel@gmail.com or @amnaaktharpatel on Instagram.

Sarrah Buker is an educator and lifelong learner. Born in Tripoli, Libya and raised in New Jersey, Sarrah is daughter to two of the most generous and kind people in the world, sister to all the children of Adam and Eve, and mother of two amazing boys. You can reach her at sarrahbuker@gmail.com.

Camille Dumond is a first generation member of the Indo-Afro Caribbean diaspora, a dreamer, somatic therapist, transformative educator and conflict mediator. You can reach her at camilledumond@hotmail.com.

Anastasia Filippova is a Russian-Canadian songwriter, continuously seeking wisdom and composing melancholy pieces on the piano. Her first pop album is featured on iTunes and Spotify. Anastasia is in the process of recording a new collection of soulful pieces. Other than music, Anastasia fills her time with photography, books, traveling to Turkey and seeking the Beloved in all the aforementioned places. You can find her at www.AnastasiaSongs.com and Twitter/Instagram: @AnastasiaSongs.

Wadud Hassan is a seeker of God's love and beauty. Wadud lives with his wife Leiya, and daughters Alishba and Jannah in Dallas. Wadud is the co-founder of Define, a faith-based emotional intelligence online center for parent, teacher, and youth development. Wadud completed his M. Ed from Vanderbilt in Leadership & Organizational Performance after co-founding three independent K-12 schools in

Dallas. Wadud completed his Principal's and leadership trainings and certifications at Harvard, IDEO, and the Neuroscience Academy. Wadud is passionate about emotional intelligence research, mentoring youth, and the importance of faith based mental health and life skills coaching. Among his notable projects, Wadud led the R&D of the Founders to CEO Succession Leadership Development Program at the Nashville Entrepreneurship Center, worked with the Metro Nashville Public Schools on Human Capital Diversity Strategy, and conducted an organizational case study of Nashville Mayor's Afterzone Alliance. He has also served on Teach for America's diversity council and co-hosted the Deloitte & GE Human Capital competition.

"I rummaged around the rubble and wreckage of ruins, and found the treasures of a broken heart. I promised from that moment on to listen, to trust and to follow the guidance of my heart. To risk everything for this path. Even when it doesn't make sense to others, or in my own mind. Explanation proves futile in this land, but if they ask, "Why?" And you must answer, tell them that I did it for love. The Love of Love." **Zaire Ishmael** is a writer and traveler with a vision to explore the world, and use various forms of storytelling to spread the message of love, connection and oneness throughout. He is the son of Mary and Ishmael, a brother to twelve siblings and an uncle. You can connect with him through email at ishmael.zaire@gmail.com and on Facebook.

Humera Jabir is searching for healing through poetry. She lives in Canada and is a recent transplant to the Pacific Northwest.

Siti Aisyah Jamil loves reading, listening, thinking, discussing and observing. Passionate about studying, her interests include writing and doing research. Travels, past, present and future bear meaningful lessons and reflections. While she has completed her Bachelor's in Singapore, she has yet to pursue further studies. She is indebted to teachers who have guided her. Connect with her on Facebook and email s.aisyahj@gmail.com.

Cemre Öztürk is a seeker of truth. She tries to live with the consciousness of transitory nature of the world and to open her soul to new people, places, cultures and experiences. For now, she works for a company with the hope of changing her career into a more meaningful path. She loves to be surrounded by modest, spiritual and artistically-minded people. Cemre dares to have beautiful dreams. You can reach her at ozturkcemre23@gmail.com.

Fatima P is a nomad of several years, moving between Arabian sands, South Australia and the UK, all the while becoming a mother of three. She was rescued from academia by the love of her life in 2009 where she was exploring themes in Sufi poetry and Ibn 'Arabi. She has lived/studied across the Middle East taking epic train/bus journeys and meeting with mountains. These days, she clumsily cultivates whatever she can, dreams of sleep and less chaos, and can be found in the woods of Shires with her wee ones on most weekends. She prefers analogue to digital with most media and loves cycling around her beloved Edinburgh where she is returning to live. She continues to seek a more 'real' context and medium to explore Ibn Arabi's writing on spiritual states and welcomes companions in that pursuit. She has an aversion to social media and screen light but can be found on Facebook and at highuponahilltop@gmail.com.

Sumaiyah Mohamed is a Singaporean mother of a beautiful toddler, lover of words and a mental health advocate. Reading and writing has been a huge part of her journey as she finds comfort, strength, connection and direction behind the meanings of words. She can be reached at her email sumaiyah.mohd@gmail.com.

Raidah Shah Idil is a mother of two, poet, writer, and dreamer. She has lived, worked and studied in Singapore, Australia, Jordan and has laid down her roots in Malaysia, her ancestral home. Raidah is inspired by trauma healing work, the power of storytelling, and reconnecting with tradition. You can find Raidah hunting for patches of green in the city, playing puppets with her young daughters, and writing when she really should be sleeping. Drop by her blog at www.raidahshahidil.com, or visit her on Instagram @raidahshahidil.

Tazmin H. Uddin is a New Yorker of Bangladeshi descent. She is an educator who works with youth and seniors. She is passionate about social justice, community service, and poetry. Tazmin is an empath, lover of life, and dreamer committed to changing the world one smile at a time. You can reach her at tazminhuddin@gmail.com or @soulful_reflections on Instagram.

Alouise Urness writes poems first thing in the morning - at least, that's her intention. After that, she mothers and implements community dreams - at least, that's her intention. Her efforts are deeply rooted where they manifest, which is mostly Seattle. Alouise can be reached at alouiseurness@gmail.com, or, concerning community dreams, through www.wearewasat.org.

Jennifer Zaynab Zaghoul considers herself to be an educator and an artist, and she truly believes that the most beneficial learning results from a special combination of the two. Her passion for creating and teaching led her to the founding of her company, Kids with Voice Inc., where she runs children's personal development programs that put the HEART back into Islamic Education. Her fun, skill-building workshops and retreats offer hands-on, creative learning opportunities in an uplifting environment where kids get to develop the character, confidence and communication skills they need for life. Jennifer Zaynab writes poetry, music, children's literature, and educational content, and has been blessed with the opportunity to share her work both locally and internationally. She runs Creative Self-Discovery workshops for girls and women in Toronto and is currently working towards the publication of two of her children's stories. She loves lattes, nature, travelling and connecting with heartfelt people. Her professional website is www.kidswithvoice.com. Her personal Instagram account is @braveselflove.