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The Lover

Exploring Sufi Concepts of Love and Death in Psychotherapy

A New Therapeutic Perspective
-Conditions, Value Judgments, Emotions

The University of Edinburgh with Elif Zapsu

Health in Social Sciences: Creative and Relational Inquiry
Counselling and Psychotherapy: Doctor of Philosophy
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**Acknowledgements: With Endless Love and Gratitude**

To: My supervisors Jonathan Wyatt and Fiona Murray, who have been guiding me since my therapeutic training, and have stuck by me through the pandemic and long-distance. My endless thanks to you for helping a dream come true.

To: My parents and family for their support without which this would not have been possible, my endless love to you, always.

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To: Ahmed Hulusi, my endless love and thanks to the one whose work is at the heart of this exploration, without which this thesis would not be.

To: Being Human.

With Love,
Elif

Graphic Images: Nürfer Tercan

**Declaration:** This thesis has been composed by myself, and is my own work, it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified. I am solely responsible for this thesis and its content, and ask for forgiveness for my mistakes and limitations.

Signature

02.28.23
Abstract

In Sufism (Islamic mysticism), one needs to be in love to enter the path of spiritual actualization, for love is said to be the primary way to break free from the chains of the 'ego.' To do this, one must release one's conditions and fully accept the self. After which, one might comprehend the unity of existence, which results in 'ego death,' the end of the thought of 'I' as a separate being. In this process, love and death are intertwined in an unrelenting embrace, each triggering the other, ending in an eternal state of being where all is experienced as 'one.' As such, the Sufi is the ultimate Lover, and in the process of becoming, one realizes that one already is and has always been Love.

In this journey, auto-ethnography and fiction blur the Magic and the Real to form a medium for literature-based research to blend with the colours of lived experience. Here, I suggest an alternative perspective of the self to inspire greater spirituality in dominant therapeutic approaches. As Sufi concepts of love and death are explored, the relationship between these concepts will depict a release of collective conditions, related judgments, and emotions as a healing process. The extent one can integrate what emerges from the inquiry into person-centred literature on the self and psychotherapy is considered; suggestions are made for a Sufi inspired therapeutic avenue.

Keywords: Sufi Therapy, Collective Conditions. Writing as a Method of Inquiry, Auto-ethnographic Fiction.
### Lay Summary

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In Sufism (Islamic mysticism), one needs to be *in love* to enter the path of spiritual actualization, for love is said to be the primary way to break free from the chains of the 'ego'. To do this, one must release one's conditions and fully accept the self. After which, one might comprehend the *unity of existence*, which results in 'ego death,' the end of the thought of 'I' as a separate being. In this process, love and death are intertwined in an unrelenting embrace, each triggering the other, ending in an eternal state of being where all is experienced as 'one.' As such, the Sufi is the ultimate **Lover**, and in the process of *becoming*, one realizes that one already is and has always been Love. In this journey, auto-ethnography and fiction blur the Magic and the Real to form a medium for literature-based research to blend with the colours of lived experience. Here, I suggest an alternative perspective of the self to inspire greater spirituality in dominant therapeutic approaches. As Sufi concepts of love and death are explored, the relationship between these concepts will depict a release of collective conditions, related judgments, and emotions as a healing process. The extent one can integrate what emerges from the inquiry into person-centred literature on the self and psychotherapy is considered; suggestions are made for a Sufi-inspired therapeutic avenue.
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The Lover’s Soundtrack

Please click on the YouTube Channel “Elif Zapsu Ph.D. Soundtrack” for a complete list of songs in order of appearance in the thesis for your convenience. Thusly, with the channel open, you can click on the song as the link appears and receive the playlist as a whole.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfBxv_rXwiPHDDKBOQqlcbfsRKrMHOx3I

I have created a poetry video, please click on the link above to listen and watch to The Lover. It is the introduction to the thesis and appears first on the soundtrack. I have also written a song, it appears at the end of the thesis.

It has been produced together with a loving group of individuals. With special thanks to the amazingly talented Seren Akyoldaş for her hard work in helping in creating this piece, bringing it to life in every way from singing to coaching the children’s choir; the wonderful, amazing children who I will leave nameless here, Elif Özede for volunteering to sing, Rubar Dindar for arrangement and mastering and IFMO Orchestra and Encore recording. The song is called “The Rose.” It is the last piece on the playlist. Please feel free to listen to the songs in the order in which they appear in this study.
Key Concepts

- **Sufism**: Sufism is the spiritual path to mystical union with God. There are and have been many Sufi orders throughout time and place, though perhaps some of the most popular now are the followers of Rumi; the dervishes of Turkey.

- **Allah**: The name that points to 1: The “absolute essence.” 2: The realm of infinite points in which every single point is formed by the act of observing knowledge through knowledge…One can ponder and contemplate the essence of creation and existence but one cannot contemplate the Absolute (infinite) Essence of Allah” (Hulusi 2013, 32).

- **Spirituality and Religion**: Religion is interpreted as being a path that brings you to your true self, and Spirituality as the experience of the essential self. As one can obtain such experiences without following a Religion, it can be differentiated. Whilst we explore these concepts in this thesis, one might see how I begin with thinking of religion as sets of rules and end at a place where religion does not exist, there are no labels, we are one, united love. In this exploration, I utilize religion and spirituality together as an experiential path that ends in onness.

- **The Unity of Existence**: The belief that existence is Unitary, that the creator is one being which is all of creation. There is ‘multiplicity’ that arises from Unity, and the One observes all it creates. Duality, the thought that I am a separate being from all that surrounds me, is an illusion.

- **The Ego in Sufism**: The creation of the brain that says “I”. It is the collection of information that forms your data-base and creates the character in which you believe to be “you.” This database is filled with conditions, judgments and associated emotions. I begin with thinking I am my ego, and end with me beginning to feel that I am beyond it.

- **Sufi Actualization**: The goal in Sufism is to become an actualized human. Examples of some of the greatest actualized humans can be considered to be the Prophet Muhammad, Jesus, Moses, Abraham, and Adam. It is believed that the first step to actualization begins with letting go of conditions. The ultimate goal is to shift the perspective of our self-concept from our Ego, to the creator of that Ego.

- **Human**: The existence that has the capacity to express and manifest all of Allah’s qualities; whilst all of existence is a composition of Allah, the potential to be a vicegerent of Allah is specific to humans (Hulusi 2021, 170). I begin without knowing what being human is, and end with the conclusion that I can only hope to experience and explore it further.

- **Death in Sufism**: “Ego death” in Sufism is the key element to actualization, without which actualization is not considered possible. Although often described as ‘death’ the Ego does not disappear, rather a shift in perspective occurs, that brings our self-concept from the Ego, to the creator of that Ego. “Physical death” is considered a transition to another form and dimension.

- **Love in Sufism**: Love is often associated with Unconditional Acceptance, described as the Divine. The experience of Love is said to be the key element that allows one to break free from ones conditions and speeds up the process of actualization, thereby helping one achieve “ego death.” Love at its ultimate capacity is considered the only thing powerful enough to trigger “Ego death.” A very strong mind can also achieve this, however, it is said to be almost impossible thus the path of love is discussed at length. In actualized humans, this experience is said to be a constant state.
About The Author: A Letter

My dear reader,

I arrived in this world thirty-three years ago, on a warm August night in Istanbul. My father insisted that I should be born in Turkey, so they flew in from their home in Munich, Germany, for my birth. On my father's side, I have Kurdish-Turkish ethnicity, and from my mother, Turkish origin Crete-Macedonian. In truth, we are a mixing pot of being, as most post-empire families are. I grew up with many different influences, a German mentality from my father's upbringing, Crete-Macedonian culture from my mother, Turkish emotionality from both, and a multicultural, united perspective I received from an international school. I became a world citizen first and an Istanbulian second in many ways.

In 1979 my newly married parents moved to Germany because of political unrest, after which there was a military coup in Turkey. We moved back from Germany when I was a little over two. However, the political unrest continued. Things began to change for the better as I got older…at the beginning, my father had a significant role in that change, but that is another story.

I grew up with politics but did not grow up religious or spiritual. My father was a traditional Muslim. He wished for us to follow the rules. Very German. My mother was and still is a spiritual Muslim, a Sufi. From a philosophical point of view, I listened with great interest to my mother for years and did what I had to in terms of rituals to make my father happy. But I did not know or understand anything about religion; in particular, I questioned women's role in Islam: Why couldn't I pray with my husband, my father, my brother, and my friend in a mosque? Why were we separate, why did women sit in the back, if we had to have a division, why not let the women sit at the front and the men at the back sometimes, why were there no women as Imams? I had endless questions but no answers…most just told me not to question! Which made me even more curious; why? Without answers, sometimes I found that I was spiritual, and sometimes that I was not. My maternal grandmother showed me a deeper connection with nature and humanity, with creation. She told me everything was energy, that I should hug the trees, befriend them, speak to them, and ask them to heal me when I am unwell. She would tell me old ottoman stories, with angels disguised as humans always leading the protagonist towards a 'truth,' teaching of high morals and altruism, that the human heart is worth all the gold in the world.
Like Scheherazade from *One thousand and one nights* (Burton 1994), she would create tales to entertain and guide me to my heart. From her, I learned how to connect to nature and people, and with her I fell in love, with words, with stories…

The spiritual world is close to us here in Turkey. Invisible beings live with us called the Jinn, fortune telling, energy healers, and sorcery are all normal; thus I grew up with an open mind. I was also curious. I was born questioning creation. Rather, I always felt like I remembered where we came from, but as I grew older, I forgot, and since then felt a deep yearning to go back to what I called "home." As a child, I would spend hours looking at the stars, looking at the depths of the sea, feeling as though I was looking at myself, wondering who we are and why we are.

So though spirituality and religion came to me very recently through a series of events, I began searching and yearning for whom we are many years ago. Together with my struggle with mental health, along with witnessing many I love suffer from mental illness, I found myself on a path of a psychologist. I desired to find a way to heal others and myself but I also wished to discover who we truly are. Thus spirituality and psychology merged as one and have led to today, to this paper.

Over time, I met beautiful people who allowed me to connect to the source within us all. I met interesting people who allowed me to perceive the illusory nature of this world.

I sat in a wise master’s home one day.
I asked, *when will I become one with all?*
He responded,*
*A rose has been and will always be a rose.*
We have always been what we were looking for.
We created doors and locks so we became blind to ourselves.
But one day, you wake up and find,
That there were no doors.
*A rose born is always a rose.*
Even if all you see are thorns.

May we be inspired to love and accept ourselves further and feel more at peace. This is the true heart of this paper. In a world filled with struggle and strife, the least we can do is allow ourselves without fear, to just, be.
As I matured, the pieces of different elements in my life, science, and spirituality, fell together and began to form a picture, starting with billions of stars, atoms forming our oceans and the sky, and ending with nothing but love.

Welcome, my friend, to the story of the lover of love. Welcome home, my friend, for home is where the heart is.

❖ For further information in relation to the topic of this thesis please feel free to visit this website: www.elifzapsu.com or write to ezapsu@elifzapsu.com.

❖ For further information on the main source I used for this thesis please feel free to visit: https://www.ahmedhulusi.org/en
Dear Reader, written in this thesis is both fiction and non-fiction. One is not separate from the other. Welcome to the illusion, and if you so desire, may “love” and “death” find you, so that you may awake...

**A Lovers Dictionary**

**Death**
A Butterfly.

**Life**
A Breath of Love.

**Love**
The Caress of Death.

**Hate**
The Illusion.

**Heart**
Your Essence, Your Home.

**Home**
Where Love and Death Collide: The Lover.

**A Lover’s Key**

♫ Click Me

Smell and Colour

Food  Activity  Drinks
Orange. Happy energetic and uplifting (Appendix page 274).


All of Adam’s race are members of one frame;
Since all, at first, from the same essence came,
When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed,
The other members lose their wonted rest:
If thou feels not for others’ misery,
A son of Adam is no name for thee.
Shaykh Sadi of Persia (d.1291) in Dehlvi 2009, 23.

Forward

Alif

I see doors within walls, and worlds within them.
Birds fly around me, butterflies on my hands and feet.
Trees whisper as friends, dogs, and cats guard me.

The cherubs listen to me pray, like children listening to bedtime stories.

I sprinkle fairy dust,
over grass, over people,
protecting them and giving them life.
My heart
is the key that opens doors, allowing me to embrace all there is.
This is me as a child.
Tinkerbell.
She is still me.

Outside my home, my three-year-old nephew plays in the garden with his sister, “if you want to be a ninja, follow me!” He is a Green Ninja, on a mission to save the world.

For most children, magic is real.

Children utilize “magic” in their daily lives, both in play but also as a normal part of their being. They tend not to question what is real, for “real” is whatever you, and they, desire it to be.

As we get older, we don’t lose our child selves, they are within us, and I believe it is through them that we remember how to be fearless and to create within the realms of infinite possibilities. It is through play that we discover ourselves (Winnicott 2005), and through magic that the secrets of the soul are revealed, often colorfully and enticingly.

“Magic” as a term in recent days might inspire connotations of witchcraft or sorcery, being used in various ways across time and place, for better or worse, from the Salem Witch Trials (Blumberg 2007) to Harry Potter (Rowling 2014).

However, that’s not where the definition ends. Rather, it has now become something far more than simply magic; it has become at times mystical and perhaps indefinable.

During the recent decades, Isabel Allende (1993) wrote of *A house of spirits*, and Haruki Murakami (2003), depicted how a giant *Super-frog saves Tokyo*, and magic took on a new life, with words…

It became, Magical Realism.

*Magical Realism* within the literary world can be traced to the 1920’s, where the German art critic Franz Roh was one of the first to use the term to describe work that depicted the abnormal within the normal (Bowers 2004, 7). After the success of Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s novels, the term swiftly expanded into literature (Aldea 2013, 1). Magical Realism, as a
technique of writing, can be defined simply “as stories rooted in reality—with a touch of, well, magic” (Ausubel 2020). It "exposes inequalities among realities," creating a new category of its own with its fusion (Polanco 2010, 4). In my limited understanding of the literary world, there appears to be a subtle but vital difference between magical realism and fantasy. I would like to explicate this using the words “primary” and “secondary.” Magical Realism implies Magic anchored within Realism, thus making Magic secondary and Realism the primary element. Within a "normal" world built according to our five senses, something “abnormal” occurs. However, if the roles are reversed, and Magic becomes the primary and Realism becomes the secondary element (Realism in Magic), we have something akin to the Harry Potter series, Fantasy-Fiction. Of course, these generalizable categories are still currently debated.

Let us take a look at this term further.

In Gabriel Marquez’s (2005, 105) short story, a family living in poverty by the sea finds A very old man with enormous wings on the shore, an angel looking a mess and not speaking Latin, certainly not fitting their expectations. Thus they decide that he must then not be an angel and leave him to live in a chicken coop, using him as a strange attraction to make money, until one day he flies away. One of the many magical elements of magical realism depicts the dark side of judgements and expectations. Within a few pages, Marquez manages to leave a strong impact on his readers through exploring power relations within many layers, from religion to society and politics. Some post-colonial authors have argued (Cooper 1998, 1) that magical realism tries to capture the "paradox of the unity of opposites," but as a result, creates a theoretical third space of observation of the colonizer and colonized. It is here where magical realism becomes political, for "with opposing forces comes both cultural multiplicity but also stereotypes of the other" (Aldea 2013, 5).

As Nietzsche (1966, 205) states in Beyond good and evil, “What is harmful to me is harmful in itself...it is value-creating,” which brings me to Sufi Poet and Saint Rumi’s (2017) words, “Out beyond wrongdoing and right doing, there is a field, I will meet you there.” Although Marquez focuses on the more daily political divisions and dangers of biases, philosophers and spiritual guides have pointed towards the escape of such dangers, a place within being where we are all one. Thus magical realism might depict both the external world's problems of division, but also the deeper individual, spiritual problems of duality. Within psychology, it is widely discussed how our value systems and conditions
create a “false self” or “incongruent” self, where ego integration is required for healing and inner peace (Laing 2010, 98 and Rogers 1980). I suggest that in Sufism, one can also see that a similar process of assimilation is required for actualization (Zapsu 2017), a state of wholeness of opposites or halves that are not divided but appear to be. It is a course that brings balance, unity, and actualization to centre of healing.

One must also note that some have placed magical realism in the heart of post-modernism (Faris in Aldea 2013, 10), as they argue that it ultimately always concerns questions of being, and fragments the world in a “post-modern” way, utilizing factors such as meta-fiction and self-reflexivity (Zamora and Faris 1995, 163), where reality cannot be defined (Sheeba 2017, 182). Modernism arose out of the 18th century European enlightenment, amongst the bustle of industrialization, and some suggest post-modernism was a counter-reaction, a more pessimistic look (Sheeba 2017, 187) at the results of a capitalistic and individualistic society. The postmodern wave can perhaps be traced to Foucault (1980) who although rejected to identify himself as a post-modernist, did trigger new work concerning multiple perspectives, where objectivity doesn’t necessitate truth as it is a matter of perspective, but “truth” does equate to power. Here, I recall a famous psychological experiment (Tajfel 1982) where the mere act of dividing strangers into randomized groups with minimal information such as a simple toss of a coin, was enough to create a feeling of “difference” to instigate power relations, resulting in bias and prejudice. One will always be an “other” but the “other” will change according to the perspective in which the story is observed (Becker 1963, 3). Difference is always political. With the existence of difference comes power. Thus existence is politics.

AAAAA: What is a language without difference?

Derrida (in Güney and Güney 2008, 222) also rejecting a ‘post-modern’ label suggests that language is built upon differentiation, that “meaning is the product of difference.” Derrida (in Güney and Güney 2008, 223) constructs the term “deconstruction,” to depict the hidden deeper meaning in language, concerned with “overthrowing the hierarchy of dualism,” thus giving equal value and acceptance to infinite interpretations of the written word. While the definition and stance of magical realism is problematic due to its universal nature, literary critics generally agree, that it enables the written word to deconstruct the dichotomies of “magic” and “real,” mind and body (see Descartes in Wonizak, 1992), life and death, and explore transgressions of all “boundaries including ontological, political,
Giles Deleuze (in Aldea 2013; Oladi 2017; Ott 2019) has often been considered a post-modern philosopher, and his work has been interpreted by authors as having parallels to themes of magical realism, Sufism, and actualization (Aldea 2013; Oladi 2017; Ott 2019). For example, the paradoxical relationship between the magic and the real has been compared to the heart of Deleuze’s (in Aldea 2013, 19) ontology which is focused on what he depicts as the “actual” (matter and form in time and space) and the “virtual” (actual and potential multiplicity presupposed by time and space); both are two aspects of the same thing, everything is not the same but Being is the same for all instances of being. Through actualization and counter-actualization, both sides can communicate, and this process is a way for the full potential of reality to be realized and individuation to be achieved (Ott 2019). The ontology of multiplicity within unity, and the theme of actualization have led to an interpretation of his work as a “philosopher of the One” (Aldea 2013, 21), akin to those on the Sufi path such as Mevlana, Rumi (Oladi).

At this point, I must acknowledge with great respect, that these authors can all be discussed and explored singularly at great length, however in consideration of the aim of this forward I cannot do anything other than note the importance of their presence.

Returning to the topic at hand…

After World War Two, the literary movement was dominated by modernism and colonialism, after which the post-colonial and post-modern wave, fused to create the technique we know now as magical realism (Diler 2015, 489). Within this realm, authors who utilize magical realism are often discussed as being rooted in one path or the other. For example, award-winning magical realist author Gabriel Garcia Marquez is often depicted as a post-colonial writer (Carrica 2019) due to his frequent use of themes of economics, politics, religion, and culture in relation to power and colonial hegemony. On the other hand, award-winning author Haruki Murakami, is depicted as a post-modern writer (Zahra and Bahadori 2016, 52), as throughout his work he has often explored the consequences of a traditional Japanese social society living in a post-industrialist era. However, both not only deny clear distinctions of this definition but also refuse to utilize the term magical realism.

In an interview (Quadri 2011), Haruki Murakami explicates why:
“People say it’s magical realism – but in the depths of my soul, it’s just realism... I can’t always see the borderline between the unreal world and the realistic world... In Japan, I think that other world is very close to our real life... I get the impression that in the Western world it isn’t so easy to go to the other side; you have to go through some trials... So, in my stories... you can’t necessarily tell the difference between this side and the other side."

With this statement, we might question again, what in truth is Real in a system in which every brain interprets the world according their own individual database, where the world we view when we are awake and asleep occur in the same place, the theatre of our minds... With the rising debate of what is real and what isn't, also came a deep consideration of power and balance, created from difference and unity. It is here that I ask, must we all conform to one definition, why the disease?

By giving power to the author to determine their alignment of the term, we pay homage to “magic” and fight a system, which forces us to be confined to geographic labels. By doing so we do not disregard the historical background, and the importance of postcolonial and modern work, but rather allow room and space for all voices to speak, as needs to be spoken, for the writer and reader to decide and co-create for themselves, what the written word may or might not mean.

As I write, I recall Eugene Ionesco’s play (1960) where actors in the script swiftly and successively transform into a Rhinoceros. Amongst many possible meanings, one that was startling for me, was the dangers of conformity, of herd psychology creating a process of dehumanization, where difference is destroyed in the name of one power. As Nietzsche (1966, 115) said, "Morality in Europe is herd morality...(there) is only one type of human morality." I believe it is equally important to validate diversity, as it is to note the unity within. With such a balance, can come peace. When one is out of balance with the other, history and the present have shown us various atrocities against humanity, from the genocide of the Jewish people and minorities of Hitler’s Germany (Fromm 2013) to the genocide of Muslims (Uyghur Turks) of China now today (Ellsworth 2020).

I would like to further discuss the word “balance” here, as it may be an important theme that arises with this term. Balance, is the roots in measurements, numbers, and mathematics, as in the equal distribution of
elements, or a pleasing integration of opposing forces...balance, as in a state of the spirit in which one feels safe, secure, and can find peace. Such balance I refer to includes a give and a take. We give and take from nature and if we take too much, we deplete it or destroy it beyond repair. Our world and our bodies are made up of the most delicate, intricate “balance,” one small portion out and the formula, humans as we know it, the world would not exist. Such is the miracle of existence. Our bodies like our world are created by nature, with their special equation that requires respect, and the right computation. We must calculate correctly, for each response in error disrupts our system. I believe that with our birth, we were given a most precious gift, a body that requires love, nourishment, kindness, and compassion that needs to take care and be taken care of. A part of this care is our special code. If we give too much, we harm our most precious partner (our bodies), if we take too much, we become heavy with greed. I feel that this can be applied to everything, sleeping too much or too little, speaking too much or too little (according to our own system), “loving” too much or too little.

I suggest that this balance or ‘division’ can be seen in all that is. Just as “good” and “evil” are opposites of a single coin, the sun is complete with the moon, the light comes only with darkness...my fear determines the existence of my bravery, my happiness depicts my sadness, Romeo cannot be without Juliet. The union of opposites is the most romantic, longing of love, for one cannot exist without the other. Thus one might find that ‘balance’ as a theme may have an important role within a magical realist perspective of existence, one that may hold many secrets waiting to be explored, where everything both is and isn’t, within unity and duality. Building upon Hegel’s statement “there is nothing in heaven or on earth which does not contain in itself being and nothingness,” Sartre (2003, 37) discusses at heavy length how Being and Nothingness, are one of the same things, they are two complementary states of a single coin. In the Sufi novel Awakened dreams (Hilmi 1993, 75), the main character speaks to a old crazy “grandpa” living in a graveyard, dressed in pieces of mirrors:

Opening my eyes, I saw the smiling, loving face of the Mirror Grandpa.

“Who can prove that nothingness and existence are the same, a single thing? Even this statement is crazy. Who could prove it?” I asked.

“Who?” The Mirror Grandpa replied, “The mad one who accepts knowing and not knowing as equal!”
In *Awakened Dreams*, Hilmi (1993) writes non-fiction within fiction. Magical realism blurs the boundaries between the magic and real and the world is turned upside down as those labelled as “crazy” in Asylums become the “masters” and the visitors outside are those lost in the illusion. As such boundaries dissolve, breaking the walls built around “madness,” questioning the very foundations of what we call normal and reality. In regards to this, some narrative therapists suggest, that a magical realist stance in therapy is quite natural as life “consistently undermines neat distinctions between imagined and real experiences” (Speedy 2011, 170), particularly as ones endless imagination can be a great source of support during difficult times (Speedy 2011, 427). Despite this, *magical realism* remains a lost topic within therapy, “perhaps (because) the medical discourses militate against leaning towards the magical rather than the real” (Speedy 2011, 428).

It is my hope that within the field of mental health, we reconsider what reality and thus “normal” might mean, and that *magical realism* amongst other ways of thinking beyond boundaries, are discussed and utilized more often.

I digress. In this forward, I have tried to depict (with my limited understanding), that *magical realism* for me, explores the beautiful *balance and or integration* of opposites that create the whole, the dynamic yin and yang, the constant dual nature of existence.

We are one, but we are many, the creator of our holographic existence, both nothing and everything, internal and external, we are East and West-
the east and west merge and create Istanbul,
the east and west merge and create Elif,
the east and west merge and create this paper.

The unitary composition of nature, is at the heart that beats within this study.

This research is in part, my reflection on *magical realism* from the perspective of a “Sufi psychologist.” The way I write is the way I think, and the way I am.

Naturally, a magical realist perspective enfolds. Although like Murakami I would suggest that it simply is “real,” labels do serve a purpose in helping us ground in a movement that guides us through the “nonsense” within
the “sense.” A tree without roots will float unable to grow. As such I allow myself to take root within this technique but throw in my unique seeds.

This technique is utilized within writing as an inquiry and autoethnographic fiction, it depicts the theme of unity and multiplicity but also the secrets of the Sufi self-concept, the non-existence of existence, where the boundaries between real and unreal disappear, where there is no difference between being awake and asleep, where the world is but a dream. This will be explored in various ways and in-depth in this paper so that we can see what the Sufi self is, and how it takes the person-centred self into different dimensions and worlds.

It is here where we explore the mysteries of alif (the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, Turkish form is Elif, it is written as a single line-stroke as seen at the start of this forward).

The pen touches the paper, a dot is formed.
That dot turns into a stroke,
and all that is one becomes many, alif and the dot are one. The dot is Ahad (Arabic word for Oneness) it is the infinite expression of the one.

As such,

Elif writes
Of Elif,
Within
Elif.

I ask you to forgive me for my shortcomings,
And welcome you to the best of my ability,
To the world of

Alif.

Meanwhile, as I write…

A foot, a leg, then a whole body steps out of my book Awakened dreams (Hilmi 1993). It is one of the Crazy Ones that chatter about the universe, an old man with a ragged torn white shirt and pants, a long grey beard and a wrinkled smile.

We recite a monologue (Hilmi 1993, 108, 109):
I ask: “How did you realize the Meaning?”
He answers, “With Alif/Ba. One becoming two and two becoming one.”
(Ba is the second letter in the Arabic alphabet coming after Alif).
Elif: “What is the name of this?”
Crazy One: “The Word of Oneness.” (*La illaha il Allah)
Elif: “What does alif/ba mean?”
Crazy One: “The phenomena of universes…”
Elif: “Then how did alif happen to be?”
Crazy One: “This is a problem. Words cannot contain it!”
Elif: “Give an example!”
Crazy One: “There can be no equal or anything similar or opposite to it.”
Elif: I throw up my hands exasperated, “Impossible to understand! Is Alif Allah?”

The crazy one scratches his beard and winks. I realize I have gone off course; we are no longer following the book.
He responds, “Alif is nothing, Alif is everything, Alif is Ahad.” He then jumps with both feet, back on the book, getting sucked in, disappearing into the words, the paper, and my mind…

***

**Chapter Notes**

- Magical Realism can be defined as stories rooted in “reality.”
- As a literary technique it can be used to critique “norms” and describe or give light to political issues.
- I suggest as difference is inescapable, existence is politics.
- Historically, magical realism can be traced to post-colonialism and post-modernism, and world-renowned authors including Marquez and Murakami.
- This thesis utilizes a magical realistic perspective to: question norms and politics of the ‘self’ in mental health, to show a union of opposites, to show how multiplicity might arise from unity or oneness, to suggest a ‘balance’ required in daily life for health, to argue that the “magic” and the “real” are One, equal in experience; to explore auto-ethnographic fiction as a tool of writing as inquiry; to question the idea of ‘reality’ as we know it.
Chapter One

Nothing
"You live and dwell within your imagination and your imagination alone!" (Hulusi 2020, #2)

**Note:** In 630 AD the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) led a group of Muslims for the first official Hajj, walking against the idols that had been placed there, saying there is no God outside of you to be worshiped, that everything can be found within. Of a series of rituals he completed there, perhaps the most notable worldwide is the circling (Tawaf) around the Kaaba, which holds a black stone (suspected to be a meteorite) with special properties (Fetin 2009).

**Mecca, Saudi Arabia 2010**

**“Hac (Hajj), The Pilgrimage.”**

*Elif's memories are written ten years later.*

I don't know what I am doing here. I'm a twenty-year-old university student and have no interest in religion, yet my father has brought the whole family to Hajj, a religious pilgrimage for Muslims. I spent the week before arriving and the many hours traveling to get here trying to learn and memorize prayers desperately. When the Ezan (call for prayer) is heard, I scramble and copy people's moves for Namaz (an Islamic prayer ritual that involves a series of movements). Up, down, up, down, head on the ground, I repeat whatever prayer I know, feeling like a fraud and a little like a robot. Eventually, a strange feeling of peace settles. I sit around the Kaaba.

Do you not find it strange that millions arrive worldwide every year to circle a black stone within the box?
Right now, it is the morning's early hours, and only a few people are doing "Tawaf," circling the stone, chanting, and praying.
I tried to understand the logic before I arrived. I struggle to do things unless I know why I am doing them...
I have arrived at the hypothesis that the stone emits a powerful high frequency,

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1 The abbreviations (SAW) will be utilized next to the Prophet Muhammad’s name throughout this thesis out of respect; its origin is the Arabic word “Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam,” which means “prayers and peace be upon him” (Huda 2019).
thus if within a close enough radius, it increases whatever thoughts (and prayers) you have. For example, let us say you do one prayer; when you are there, it is as if you have done ten or a hundred.

I have not found evidence for this, of course.

But why turning around in a circle?

I am reminded of the smallest atom, with protons and electrons, then the world, and the planets, everything turning, turning, turning.

But why are we turning around the stone anti-clockwise?

Because the Earth and most of the solar system spin counter-clockwise if viewed from the northpole? (Chodos 2020)

Metaphorically it might represent the turning "inward" from the external world, but the physics behind it is what I am curious about; if we spin in the direction of the Earth, what happens?

Seven turns around the stone are equal to one Tawaf; it takes seven to complete the one single process. Why seven? Could it be related to the Earth's seven atmospheric levels, the traditionally accepted five, with the addition of the Ozone and Ionosphere making seven? (Zell 2015) In Sufism, there are seven levels of the self-actualization (Hulusi 1995), is there a connection?

Where did the stone come from, was it an asteroid from space, or did it come from Earth? Endless questions...

The questions fade, and suddenly, all I feel is peaceful and deep, quiet.

Hours later, I decide to leave.

When I get up, I reach out as a young girl stumbles, I then hand over a cup of water to an old lady trying to get water, and suddenly everything happens in unison. Everything is synchronized. As I walk towards the outer stairs, I hold an elderly lady's arm and help her up amongst the bustling crowds.

By the time she has realized someone helped, I am gone. Every step I take is in unison with the beat and song of those around me. I am both the hands that support and the hands that have been helped.

I feel at one, and every moment and movement around me is united. We are all notes, and together we create a perfect, beautiful symphony- it is myself, speaking to me in different forms, from the stones beneath my feet to the faces in the crowds. By the time I have returned to my hotel room, the feeling drifts away. Ten years later, as I write, I realize I haven't felt it since.
Munich, Germany.
December 2020
“Lion King”


It all starts with a little ant, named Baa-baa-pii-poo.
"Baa-baa-piiii-poooo,"
He loves to nibble on sugar, on toast, on toes.
He loves his queen dearly but is ever so naughty.
He sneaks away from his brothers to see what’s around the corner, and the next corner, and the next!
He crawls up large trees with glee, searching for fresh treasures to bring home.
He loves stretching his legs and feet, and wings!
One day, he returns home and finds his mate.
As he merges with her, he gives her life and in return, dies.
His mate moves to another kingdom and gives birth-
Faa-faa-ki-kii is born.
Faa-faa-ki-kii isn’t aware that around him is a kingdom of giants, called humans.
The humans may not be aware that around them might also be a kingdom of giants,
and they, in turn, may not be aware of other giants,
and they, in turn, might not be aware of their giants,
and those giants, in turn, will most certainly be unaware of Faa-faa-ki-kii and his kingdom.

Even though they share the same space, Faa-faa-ki-kii and his kind will be so small to them, that they will be equivalent to nothing, and those giants will speak, dance, and love according to themselves.

One day, a girl was born. Her name was Elif. The wise ones told her stories about the giants. They said that there are galaxies, conscious beings and planets within, speaking and dancing, and we are but an atom in their bodies...
She knew, just like her beloved friend, Baa-baa-Pii-Poo, we followed a system of creation and when we must die, we die, when we must create, we create. The strong eat the weak, like the lion king and the circle of life. We are after all animals. However, they told her we were a very special kind of animal. One who could go beyond the body we were born into, one who if utilized the gift we were given at birth, could achieve a state of unity where we could feel the whole galaxy within, where “it feels as if... all the planets and other bodies are like parts of (you), (your) arms, (your) hands...” (Hulusi 2012f, 71)

Elif was curious, a very curious cat. What did the galaxies talk about? So in her “mind castle” (a home she built in her mind, for her mind was her home), she began to yell, Hellooooo giantssssssss, It’s me! Your little atom Elif! But she did not hear a response. She asked the wise ones, Why do they not hear me? Even if it is a squeak?

They responded, They hear you, but you will not hear them until you know you are ‘one.’

She asked, Well how do I become ‘one’?

To which they stated, a rose has always been a rose. To which she asked her final question, how do I see my true self?

They responded, Your mind, is your book, your book is your life. You have written it, and read it from start to finish. From the day of your birth to the day you die. You, know everything. All the answers are within you. To see your true self, you must read your book, and when you read your book, you will see the creator of all books. You must read. Ikra! ²

² Ikra in Arabic means to ‘read’, which describes reading the system of creation, reading in the essential sense, yourself (Hulusi 2013, 1). The Revelation of the Quran begins with the word ‘Ikra’ Inviting one to ‘read’ themselves, for as the prophet Muhammad SAW (in Chittick 1994, 36) said, ‘He who knows himself, knows his Lord.’
I have a friend working on a frequency healing system. It's a machine that’s created in China, and you are given training for it in Europe. You hook up a small box onto the laptop. The laptop and box have a small gadget that generates healing frequencies, which you place on your body. He has tried this gadget with dozens of patients over several years and is recording his results. He told me he had achieved miracles with the machine. People who cannot stand suddenly get up within a few sessions; people have healed all sorts of illnesses. I believe this might be important for the future of healing, and I am curious to know more.

If we use machines to heal people, does that mean the end of psychotherapy? I don’t see that happening anytime soon. Within the next few years, machines may dominate the field of health, but surely there are some things that it cannot do, which might include actualization... I am curious to find out more.

I am at home by my desk, thinking about how concepts in physics match up with chants we use in Sufism (chants of words that hold meanings that depict different potentials in our brains). For example, Vedud (pronounced Ved-dood) is said to be unconditional love and the power of attraction. By chanting vedud you increase the neuronal capacity of your brain to emit this frequency (Hulusi 2012e, 188). In physics, I believe you can explicate this phenomenon through “binding energy,” objects are bound together by forces of attraction; the Earth and moon are bound to one another in this fashion, the planets are bound to the sun, atoms are bound into molecules by a form of electrical current (March 2003, 56). This might also explain our attraction to our partners! We are pulled in, and if we separate, it indicates a change in our chemistry; just like for the moon to escape Earth's gravity, its chemistry would have to change. To escape its electromagnetic field, it would have to increase in power. Thus, the physical laws of attraction can also include our bodies,
which can clarify aspects of “love,” within the Sufi World (as is one interpretation). While the sciences may not be able to depict the experiential sense of existence sufficiently, I do believe they can explicate beautifully, to some degree at least, the mind of Allah, God, or if you prefer creation...

I sit in thought. While I had been contemplating the physics of being human, I perhaps should have first started with understanding how our brain works.

My phone rings.

The screen shows, “Mommy Zaps.”

Elif: Annem (my mother in Turkish).
Beyza: How you feeling sweetheart?
Elif: Fine ... Actually, now that I recall I have been meaning to ask you, I was thinking about the Kabaa recently and had been wondering why we turn anticlockwise around the stone.
Beyza: Well, I don’t know the physical reasons behind it, however, when you do Hajj, you go as if you have died. As it is said, “People are asleep, with death they will awake” (The Prophet Muhammad in Hulusi 2000, 41)... You have left the World behind.
As you circle, you first become “blind.”
You say, “I know nothing.” You forget everything you know. Remember how Sems threw out all of Rumi’s books into the pond when they first met?
You throw out all you claim to know.
You metaphorically undress.
Elif: If you're unwilling to undress don't enter into the stream of Truth (Rumi 1999, 21).
Beyza: Smiles and continues. Yes. You undress and are purified and have expelled all worldly thoughts so that you are as you were before you are born. It is only after you delete everything you know, all information you have gained that you begin to truly see.
When you truly see,
you see nothing but yourself in all there is.

That’s why Sufi teachers try to break down the walls of your ego. If you say you don’t like someone, they say, see those you love in that person. If you say you don’t like to wear colours, they say wear colours. When walls are broken, truth is revealed.

By turning against time, we are releasing all we have learned becoming newborn, as one with sight,
with eyes that see all as Allah.

Elif: Thank you Annem! I need to quickly write something then will call you back.

I close the phone and write our conversation.

Point received.

I have jumped into the middle of the ocean of existence when what I should have done was started from the beginning,

I should have started from -

Nothing.

***

Chapter Notes

- Here there are some selections of auto-ethnographic work where I transition into the thesis, not knowing how to begin and finding my way to the next chapter, the introduction. This section was included to give clues to what is to come, and how the thesis may end. It is also included to give readers an experiential sense of the writing process, the transition, the struggle one might face starting a thesis, and in particular the difficulty condensing a topic. The desire is to give a feeling like you are being dropped into a middle and end of a thesis before even beginning. This is done, to allow you to feel the timelessness of the brain, which may be unconscious of the end but know it already.

- I mention that to actualize in Sufism, as seen in some interpretations of Hajj, the Muslim pilgrimage, may involve letting go of everything and all learned conditioning and be “reborn,” in some ways experiencing “death” before physical death, allowing one to feel at one with all. Here readers are introduced to the Sufi concept of “death.”

- I present the idea of going on an internal journey of finding yourself, through metaphorically “reading” your self.

- I touch on the idea of healing through frequencies, and question the future of therapy in regards to technology.
I suggest what oneness might feel like.

Through the story of the ants I suggest how little we might truly know about existence, and indicate our significant insignificance.

I introduce a word used to describe love, one of our main concepts in Sufism, and hint at an exploration of integrating quantum physics and science with Sufi concepts.

I end with the idea, that the best way to start a project might be from the point of no knowledge- nothing, nothingness.
Chapter Two

The Beginning Starts
With
The End
“The ‘ego’ itself can only be exterminated by the power of love!” (Hulusi 2020, #549).

Mint Tea: Warm in winter, iced in summer (Appendix 274).


Istanbul, Turkey
Date Unknown
“The End.”

I know nothing.
The pilgrims go to Hajj to be reborn, and begin again from the point of nothing.
So we must begin from nothing so that we can go to nothing.
Easier said than done, of course.
For a philosopher, that point of “nothingness” can perhaps be described as both being and nothing.
For a physicist, it can be depicted as being in two places at once, an atom blinking in and out of existence.

For the wise ones, it is “being,” emptiness, silence, and pure observation without the curtain of the ego.
For me, perhaps, a simple human at best and an ignorant animal at worst, for me...I will have to begin with the end.
I will begin with the end, with the hopes of beginning again.

In the end,
I have found that I know nothing,
I am
Nothing.
But I am also all...
I am also all.

Istanbul, Turkey
December 1st, 2020
“Welcome!”

I invite you warmly into a glimpse of my world.
The heart of this research is about acceptance and love. My biggest challenge, perhaps one that is also difficult for others, has been accepting myself unconditionally. For what is unconditional acceptance but the most beautiful expression of love?

Van Kalmthout (2013, 140) suggests that self-love is necessary to experience love for others and is distinct from narcissism or egocentrism. In exploring self-acceptance, we also explore what the self is and how we can reach a state of peace and love within ourselves, which in contrast to narcissism, allows us to be even more giving. This is what I believe Sufi actualization and the person-centered approach can offer. To my knowledge, most of us have yet to understand what humans are. I think any study that attempts to expand our knowledge of what we are, how we live, and experience is of great worth. All stories represent a flower within an infinite field, each beautiful and very much ‘alive’ in its own right, each of equal value, bearing a different scent, shape, colour, and form.

That is the beauty of existence, the rich, endless diversity of intricate and unthinkable combinations…each one holding the same potential.

Each is made of the same quantum material, atoms, quarks, and tetrahedrons, which are 99.999% space (Sundermeir 2016). All of us are elemental parts of a field of 'nothingness' trying to understand how we are 'something.'

The Sufi path is not easy; it requires one to face death and let go of worldly desires and your sense of ‘I,’ your identity, as you know it. Many only decide to pass through these doors after deep suffering. Only such suffering can dissuade one from our external life and live facing towards our internal one. My experiences and encounters allowed me to arrive here, a life in darkness suddenly found light.

Today, just like I did when I was a child, I continue to ask daily, ‘what are we truly?’

In essence, this is a journey of actualization as a Sufi, and it is one I will take by facing both Love and Death...

**Project Introduction: A Guide**

“Whoever knows their self, knows their lord” (Hz Muhammad in Ibn’ Arabi 2011, 17).

With this thesis, I would like to offer an alternative view of being human, of the 'self' within psychology by exploring the relationship between Sufi scholar
Ahmed Hulusi's (2020) concepts of Love and Death, "dying" or transforming before physical death and experiencing a love that sparks this change. I would like to start by clarifying, firstly, that there are several paths and interpretations within Sufism (Dehlvi 2009, 107); thus, no study can singularly define a Sufi perspective. I have chosen Ahmed Hulusi's (2013) understanding of Sufism for several reasons. Amongst many, I found the way he explicates his perspective to be clear, modern, and unique, as he integrates his knowledge with continuously revised science-based research (Hulusi 2022), which I found, allows his work to be more readily understood, accessible, and reliable. Secondly, I discovered the way he writes elicits emotive responses triggered by the feeling that the author is writing from his own heart and experience. Thirdly, I preferred the freedom of practicing Sufism outside of Sufi orders, and his work provided an avenue to utilize his work and live as a Sufi without requiring much else.

Additionally, my heart connected to his work like no other, and I realized I had found what I had been looking for; I had found my way Home. For these reasons and more, I chose his work as my primary source for my "Sufi" way of being and for this thesis. I give endless gratitude and love to be able to do so and apologize for my many limitations and mistakes.

My ultimate goal is to integrate what emerges into the Person-Centered Approach and discuss its role in therapy. Person-centered Therapy is arguably one of the most effective approaches in psychotherapy, often used in various fields (Silberschatz 2007). Carl Rogers (2014, 68) once stated that in "all psychological laws, aspects of the same order, we find the Universe as a whole," for it was in his later years with his work with his clients that he found feelings of spirituality and oneness, of being beyond the self (Sivori 2018, 169). It has been argued that he was, as such, an "accidental mystic" (Sivori 2018, 167) who was excited about the idea of merging the newest findings in science with a spiritual perspective in his work (Sivori 2018, 172). Thus, one possible way to re-vision this approach, in a path that he too may have evolved into, is by exploring our view of ourselves as being beyond the ego. As Thorne (1991,127) said, "The future of the person-centred approach may well depend on its capacity to embrace the world of spiritual reality."

I desire to do so here by utilizing the work of Ahmed Hulusi (2013), who also integrates spirituality with science. I suggest that redefining the concept of the "self" would also undoubtedly impact the therapist's method and way of being. I do so to offer a new perspective on the therapeutic process and help increase difference diversity within mental health.
A Critique: The Concept of Self in Person-Centered Therapy

In person-centered therapy, *ego integration* and *conditions of worth* are vital concepts within the self and its process of actualization. To have a greater integrated ego, one needs to shed conditions of worth that have been interjected throughout life and become more congruent and genuine (Rogers 1963, 31). I would like to look at two possible problems with this equation. Firstly, Rogers suggests that an essential aspect of successful healing is that therapy is built upon an accurate description of the human organism (Rogers 2003, 347).

However, person-centered theory is ego based. What if we are not only our ego? What do we do about billions who believe a spirit also exists? Secondly, building upon this question, I ask if being free from conditions is our goal, constricting ourselves to the possessive belief that we are our ego and all the labels it contains might be the ultimate condition of worth and counterproductive to our ultimate goal. Allowing ourselves to accept the ego as it is but view it without possessiveness, with the belief or feeling that we are beyond the ego thought construct that we have created, may expand the approach into a spiritual realm that can ease the process of therapy and actualization.

The idea of the self-transcending the ego is not new in psychology and philosophy. As a concept, it has been utilized by prominent thinkers such as Carl Jung and the *collective unconscious and archetypes* (Jung 1991), and integrated into the field of transpersonal psychology that is based on the premise of working with the spirit within therapy, which has resulted in the creation of approaches that include Assagioli’s (1965) “Psychosynthesis”. One way I choose to do this is by exploring the relationship between Sufi concepts involved in the actualizing tendency, love, and death and integrating what emerges into therapy, specifically Roger’s concept of the self. I did so because I believe that Sufism (Islamic mysticism), ultimately beyond all boundaries, is a path of acceptance and love that embraces all regardless of religious paths, where one can meet in a space beyond conditions.

**Grounding the Project**

*Defining Religion and Spirituality*

There is no agreed consensus on the definition of religion or spirituality as it is challenging to define a personal experience and interpretation of being. For this paper, I will utilize a general description (Koening 2012, 2):
“...Religions usually have specific beliefs about life and death...(and) multi-dimensional constructs that includes beliefs, behaviors, rituals and ceremonies...(they are) also an organized system of beliefs, practices, and symbols designed to facilitate closeness to the transcendent and foster an understanding of one’s relationship and responsibility to others in living together in a community.”

Perhaps, religion can generally be depicted as a belief system that includes rituals, prayers, and “rules” or suggestions on how to live life. Religion emphasizes the written word. It can be associated with negative connotations due to bias and prejudice. Religion can be spiritual, but the spiritual can be without religion. The spiritual is the experience of existence, from a deep well of being. Its emphasis is on the experience and usually inspires positive connotations such as unity, connection, and inclusion. Teams of researchers have depicted spirituality (Elkins et al.1988, 10):

“Spirituality, which comes from the Latin word spiritus, meaning ‘breath of life’ is a way of being and experiencing that comes through awareness of a transcendent dimension, and that is characterized by certain indefinable values in regard to self, others, nature, life and whatever one considers to be ultimate.”

This author would not be the first to concede the difficulty in defining a personal experience (Miller 2012) and thus invites you to consider for yourself what ‘religion’ and ‘spirituality’ may mean to you, and their role or lack of, in your state of being. In regards to our subject at hand however, one might note that Hulusi (2017, 2:15) has simplified the purpose of religion as being a path, which allows us to experience our essential reality, showing us that we are not restricted to our body but are an immortal existence, that by experiencing Allah within, we are able to recognize our own non-existence. Thus, in essence, religion according to the lens of this particular paper is a path of love that is beyond labels, which includes the word “Islam” itself; it is simply the path we find ourselves that bring us home, where our heart is.

From the Past to the Present

Religion, spirituality, and mental health have had an intimate relationship across cultures and time (Koening 2012, 1). The roots of the word psychology can be traced to the term psyche, perhaps first noted in the sixth century B.C (Kemp 1982, 106). Its definition was continuously transformed; the earliest usage of psyche referred to the blood or breath (elements that left the body upon death); it developed to include an etheric version of the self that
continued after death (ibid). In ancient Egypt (3100B.C-30BC), priests were the “physicians of the soul,” they used sorcery and chanting spells, amongst other means, for psychological ailments (Nasser 1987). In ancient Greece (700-480 B.C.), many sought magical and religious remedies for mental illness (Beck 2014); however, philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were also the thinkers of the soul, health, and what it means to be human (Fromm 1950, 3). In ancient China, starting from around 206 BC until the integration of western psychotherapy in the 1800s, the dominant thought (in alignment with Taoism) was that mental illness was caused by an imbalance of the Yin and Yang or within the five elements (wood, earth, fire, water, and metal), in which case natural remedies included acupuncture, exercise, herbs, and more (Cheng 1970, 399). Another line of thought followed myths, superstition, demons, or spirit possession; thus, remedies were given by priests or sorcerers through prayers (Harper 1990, 210).

The Islamic Golden age, a period of cultural, economic, scientific, and spiritual flourishing, known to begin around the 8th century and lasting until around the 13th century C.E., spanning across Islamic nations, depicts various brilliant minds (Falagas et al. 2006). Al-Balkhai (in Badri 2013, 13), a 9th-century Persian Polymath, in his manuscript “Sustenance of the soul,” described psychological ailments in ways that were centuries ahead of his time, during a period where mental health was confined to the physical realm, he stressed the importance of the mind, soul, and body connection. He also created perhaps the earliest version of the DSM, categorizing illnesses from depression and its types to stress, anxiety, anger, and obsessions and emphasizing a connection to prayer and God, exercise, music therapy, and much more (Badri 2013, 15). Al-Razi (in Yılani 2018) was a 9th-century Persian polymath with revolutionary contributions to mental and physical health. He was one of the first to describe psychotherapy and introduce the concept of a clinic for those mentally ill, where treatment included diet, medicine, occupational therapy, aromatherapy, baths, and music therapy, including an early form of cognitive therapy for obsessions (ibid). He also wrote extensively on the soul, particularly in “The spiritual medicine” and “The philosophical life,” depicting the soul as located within the brain and of a substance that survives death (Druart 1996, 257).

As we move forward in time, one can see mental health care in the West being given by religious orders (Koening 2012, 1). Europe’s first mental health hospital was noted as being the Priory of St. Mary of Bethlem, built in London in 1247 (ibid). However, these institutions treated people inhumanely (Millon 2004, 87). In response to these human rights abuses, a devout Quaker named William Tuke formed a new approach called "moral treatment," and
they brought this to America, where it became a dominant form of psychiatric care (Millon 2004, 103). The Friends hospital in 1813 in Philadelphia was the first private institution in the US dedicated solely to mental illness, after which many followed in its footsteps (Koening 2012, 2). In the later 1800s in Germany, Wilhelm Wundt (in Fahrenberg 2019, 9) was known as one of the first to call himself a psychologist and brought psychology into the lab, both founding experimental psychology but also perhaps leading it away from the vital component of the soul as the "metaphysical notion of the term "soul" is absent in Wundt's psychology." However, closely following, William James (1902) was known as the first to offer a psychology course, and his work included a focus on both religious and spiritual experience. Around these times, Freud (1917) founded psychoanalysis, the first "talking cure," which aimed to be as scientific as possible, soon after which Freud (1927) depicted religion as an illusion, a mass delusion that can lead to madness. It is suggested that his work could be noted as both a grounding point of psychotherapy as a practice but also as one triggering a greater separation of psychology from religion (Hood 2012, 1).

Authors have argued (Kemp 1982, 105) that most of the 19th and 20th-century depicts a “psychology without a soul,” for academic psychology, trying to imitate the natural sciences dealt with everything except the soul and developed a science lacking one (Fromm 1950, 5). Although one must note a cultural movement in the ‘60s depicts a sharp rise in interest in spirituality, belief systems and psychedelic states, increasing research in this area (Hood 2012, 1). Today, spirituality and the soul have been incorporated into psychotherapeutic approaches such as Transpersonal psychology (Mcleod 2013) and Psychosynthesis (Assagioli 1965), but remains mostly absent in the dominant and more widely accepted approaches of Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Psychodynamic and the Person-centered approach (Mcleod 2013).

However, I must also state that I believe anyone who watches videos of Rogers’s work, not just reads his theory, might sense that his way of being, his acceptance and tenderness, softness, openness, desire for unity and healing can be felt. This can be a spiritual and physical experience. I would argue that Rogers is a spiritual practitioner in this sense. That when his “inner intuitive self...is somehow in touch with the unknown (within).... then simply (his) presence is releasing and helpful” (Rogers in Kirschenbaum and Henderson 1990, 137). Rogers’s concept of presence (ibid) can be experienced as the healing of the mind and heart. At a fundamental level, presence is the stepping-stone at which one can be open to the connection of the other, to empathy and oneness.
Criticisms of this might be that one may not know how to embody “presence” or a spiritual and mystical way of being. I hope towards the end of this thesis, I clarify ways in which one might do that, by utilizing a holistic approach and emphasizing practices such as meditation and chanting which helps us be attuned to the self and the other. For those who do not desire “mystical” or “spiritual” ways of being as they find it to be nonsensical or not practical, non-desirable or non-scientific, I would state that firstly this is merely an alternate option, and as humans are diverse therapeutic perspectives must be as well, and secondly, regardless of whether scientific evidence can be utilized to argue for or against spiritual and mystic paths, the experience of oneness and spirituality is important to many, as shown by countless studies (Koening 2012; Barnett and Johnson 2011).

I would argue that Rogers way of being is very spiritual, but maintain that his approach could theoretically at the very least, be expanded upon. In this respect, I must add that there is wonderful spiritual writing and research growing connected to the mental health field. Brain Thorne’s (2012) extensive work is an excellent example of Rogers’s approach being seen expanded upon within a spiritual context. Thorne (2012, 75) believes that Rogers’s core conditions are, in fact, an expression of love, a way of loving clients. Here, he expands Rogers “presence” to include the concept of tenderness, a multifaceted experience that can involve a desire for unity, love, and the mystical (Thorne 2012, 35). He states that, “Jesus was a great lover and greatly loved” (Thorne 2012, 116). As a Sufi also loves Jesus, this resonates with this thesis. While the differences are vast, the heart is in Love together.

Whilst I am most grateful for Thorne’s valuable and precious work in this field especially in regards to spirituality and the healing power of love, I do question his decision to be naked with one of his clients (Thorne 1991b). I personally feel that certain boundaries must not be crossed. The clients need to feel contained and safe whilst feeling most vulnerable is understandable and most certainly she might be healed by such an experience, however such an experience might be best left to others in her private life, and not the therapist’s self for many reasons. The consequences of complying would need to be considered, at the very least, one might suggest that breaking boundaries can often end up (at a later date) breaking trust and reliability in the relationship.

I am also particularly grateful for the work of West (2000; 2004) for both highlighting the need for greater spiritual study within psychotherapy and also sharing the spiritual or mystical sides of our nature. Thanks to West (2000, 2-3) seeing auras or feeling “awestruck…uplifted…cleansed,” when with the
divine can be perceived by some as natural, welcome and healing as opposed to illness. Additionally, I personally have witnessed the widespread interest in Shamanism across Europe in wellness centres for mental health, as well as the use of the drug Ayahuasca to help stimulate a healing, hallucinogenic journey (though these two things are most certainly not necessarily practiced together, in fact many Shamanic healers in my experience do not use drugs in their practice). However, what I wished to note was that the interest of healing in this area could partly be due to the fact that research shows the experience of unity and transcendence as being immensely healing (Lewis 2020), and one might suggest that it might be possible to induce such states without drugs.

It is here that I desire to ground myself in the idea that such experiences of oneness can heal us, give us peace, and allow us to truly feel “human.” I desire to also argue against the post-human stream that declares a state of being “after” the human. The words, after the human, suggest that we know what the human is. Instead of rejecting the Westernized Eurocentric Human understanding, we are accepting it as a definition by claiming to be “after” the human. I am not against any ways of being. I am merely suggesting that there appears to be a cognitive dissonance at the core. It is claimed that we are all one (Braidotti 2013) and equal, yet Eastern, mystical or spiritual ways of being appear not to have relevance in that unity. Most certainly, we are all diverse and different, and that is truly beautiful. I too, propose a path of healing of unity, and I suggest that it can be a part of the post-humanist stream, provided that it accepts difference and diversity. Not everyone is meant to live as a tree, a dog, a machine, a Sufi, or an atheist. I thus would like to request room for the spiritual paths of billions across the world within the current climate of the post-Anthropocene.

There are many brilliant minds I have failed to mention in this small snapshot of the past and present. I have briefly mentioned some diverse cultural and religious sources. However, a world history of mental health is waiting to be explored and tends to remain missing from mainstream Western psychology textbooks, which can confine psychology to European history. I suggest that religion, spirituality, and mental health have always been linked and perhaps were born together, and I question the Western claim over the psychotherapist. Although there seems to be a divide together with the medicalization of psychology, it slowly appears to be merging once again and becoming whole in the present day. West (2000, 41) suggests in his extensive work on therapy and spirituality that it can be incredibly valuable to view therapy as a spiritual process and explores ways it has been and can be done; he also states that perhaps what we need to consider is the phrase
“spirit psyche,” bringing the spirit first into our psychology. With growing spiritual approaches, mindfulness, and meditative practices (Mcleod 2013), I would suggest that psychotherapy has been progressing back to its roots, of the psyche, of the soul, and that together with our increased knowledge and experience over the centuries, we are finally making our way back home.

What and why Sufism?

Islam is the religion revealed by the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) through the Qur’an in 610 A.D; it embraces the prophets of all faiths, including Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (Fadiman and Frager 1997, 4). Sufism (also known as Tassawuf) is a mystical branch of Islam, where seekers wish to experience divine love and knowledge, depicted as Truth (Schimmel 2019). It is most prominent in Islamic countries but can be found worldwide in various communities (Ohtsuka 2017). There are several approaches to Sufism, but its heart belongs to the Qur’an (Fadiman and Frager 1997, 2). It concerns the personal experience of Allah, which is seen as one being, reflecting its essence as multiplicity (Hulusi 2015).

I would like to clarify further why I have chosen Sufism. Growing in the United Kingdom is the practice of Buddhism as therapy, especially the mindfulness movement, where the belief is also that the notion of a separate self increases suffering (Parry 1987, 177). Buddhism and Taoism, shares similarities with Sufism; however, the Sufi’s do not believe in deity’s, gods or even a God; the belief is only in One existence. As such, I wonder why the gap in Sufi methodology, especially during times when women in Islam need to be empowered and Muslims need to be supported against discrimination and hatred?

I also believe this path is merely one out of many, but it is accessible to all regardless of faith, as it is ultimately the way of love; it is about Unity, and I have experienced this as healing.

As Rogers (1980, 20) said, "I feel enriched when I can truly prize and care for or love another person..." One of Sufism’s main goals is being condition-free, so I considered this as an excellent avenue to explore by integrating and synthesizing what exists to create something original that may be beneficial to others. I also felt that my practice of Sufism would be necessary in its reflection of my work. I must note that this approach would give voice to a large group of those from the Sufi faith and allow billions who follow Islam to have another avenue for a home in the West, regardless of sect. Despite the lens of the word "Sufi," I hope that it may instigate greater research into
spirituality in therapy as well as, in general, creativity, experimentation, and openness to evolving.

**Actualized Humans According to The Sufis (As explained to me by mother)**

*Note: In Sufism the words saints or prophets may not be used in the way it is in English, but I utilize them here to avoid confusion and give a general understanding.*

A good way to understand the “Sufi” world may be to introduce you to a few essential humans. Let us begin by taking a brief look at short events of some “Sufi’s” retold to me by mother. Whilst more accurate and detailed descriptions might be found, I found this telling to be more personal and inviting to the reader. What do you feel when you read them?

**The Prophet Muhammad SAW (c. 570–632):** *The Prophet Muhammad was the founder of Islam. By the age of 40, on one of his pilgrimages to meditate in a cave, he began to have revelations, which we now know as the Qu’ran (Biography 2020). He had a very difficult life, full of suffering. Below is one of the many events he experienced, often retold by my mother.*

When the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) tried to explain Islam, the belief in one being and unity to the people of Mekke, who at that time worshiped several idols and Gods, very few listened. It was suggested that he go to another city in Saudi Arabia, called Taif, and try to explain Islam to people there. When he arrived in Taif, the people there did not believe him and treated him terribly. Amongst many things, they stoned him, yelled bad words, and pulled sheep organs over his head. He escaped there, from what he described as one of the most difficult days of his life (even more so than wars, and deaths of loved ones). On the way, in such pain, he released a prayer, which triggered what Sufis might interpret as the brains angelic force of “Power.” This angelic force, released from his brain, asked of him, “I will do as you will, with one word, I can destroy this place.” To which he responded, “I do not wish such things, forgive them Allah, for they do not know what they do.”

Readers can interpret and learn from this telling many different things. I suppose one of the most apparent lessons might be forgiveness and compassion, even to those who give us our most hardships and pain, which I would personally describe as love, endless and unconditional, the ability to see yourself in the other. When looking at history and the lives of saints and prophets from various religions, we might perceive that some of the most
difficult struggles are given to these beautiful humans. I feel that is worth thinking deeply about, in reference to our own lives.

Saint Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi (1165–1240): “Sufi saint”, mystic, philosopher, poet, Arabi, born in Andalus, Spain, was an influential and well-known spiritual teacher. His writings have had an immense long-lasting impact, particularly in the Islamic world.

Arabi spends his last days in Damascus. He is distraught that the city's people have eyes only for money, running after wealth and worldly ambitions instead of their hearts and spiritual inner-search. One day Arabi tells a crowd in the town, “that which you are obsessed with and have made your God, is under my feet.” The crowd misunderstands him. They think he says, *God is under my feet*. They ask, “what do you mean by this?” He responds with a riddle, “When Sin (a letter in Arabic) goes into Shin, Mim will be found.”

The crowd does not understand, with anger they hang him, and bury him in a ditch and cover it with trash. Two hundred seventy years later, Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Selim sees Arabi in his dream. Arabi tells him how to pass a large desert none had been able to until then and gives detailed directions. Sultan Selim follows his advice from the dream. He manages to go through the desert, reaching Jerusalem, Mekke and Medine, gathering many religious artifacts that today can be found in Topkapi Palace, in Istanbul. He finally reaches Damascus on his return and asks the people where Arabis's grave is but no one knows. After searching for long, a shepherd he meets says, "over there by the mountain, my sheep don’t eat the grass despite there being plenty." He digs there and finds Arabi's perfectly preserved body. He creates a tomb for him in Damascus. Then he asks the people, show me where Arabi said, “under my feet is what you have made your God.” They show him, he digs and finds endless bricks of gold. Arabi had said, “when Sin goes into Shim, Mim will be found.” Sin is Selim, Shin is Sham (Arabic for Damascus), Mim is Muhiddin. When you translate it, the first letters of the words mean, when Selim goes to Damascus, Muhiddin Arabi (his body) will be found.

There can be many meanings here, lessons learned. An important one that I perceived was that treasure is not outside of you but within. You are the treasure waiting to be found. Thank you endlessly, Arabi.

The Prophet Moses and Hizir (Khidr) Peace be upon him:
*Moses (13-14th century) was a Prophet, teacher and leader who freed his people from Egyptian slavery (Beegle 2021). Hizir is described in Islamic and non-Islamic sources as a saint with special attributes of the creator, who aids those in distress (Lyons 2005, 46).*
This story is written in the Qur’an. The Prophet Moses has a prayer. He wishes to go on journey with someone with a greater capacity of actualization than him so that he can develop himself. His prayer is accepted, and he meets a very special human, we know as Hizir (peace be upon him). The Prophet Moses meets Hizir and desires to learn from him by following him. Hizir says he doesn’t want him to join because he won’t understand what he does and keep questioning his actions. Moses promises Hizir that he won’t ask questions or protest, he will just be an observer. Hizir agrees and they leave together. The first stop is at a village by a seaside. These are kind people, and they make their living off the food of the sea. That night Hizir creates holes in all the ships of the village, causing them to sink. Moses says, “what are you doing, you just destroyed the livelihood of these good people!” Hizir says, “I told you, you wouldn’t be able to cope.” Moses responds, “you are right, I promise I wont do it again.” On their second stop, they arrive at a kind and welcoming husband and wife’s home for dinner. This family has a small child. Hizir kills the small child that night. Moses struggles greatly it is beyond his ability to withstand, so he questions Hizir. Hizir says again, “I told you, you wouldn’t be able to cope.” Moses apologizes and promises, that this time he truly wouldn’t question his actions. Hizir says, “this is your last chance.” They arrive the next day to a castle. The villagers stone them and treat them terribly. Moses and Hizir are chased out of the castle doors. That night they spend the night outside the moors of the castle, and Hizir sees broken down walls, which he fixes and rebuilds. Moses explodes, “I can’t stand it! You are helping people who treat us terribly.”

Hizir says, “this was your third chance, you can no longer follow me on my journey. But before I leave you I will explain why I did these things. The first day, I sunk those good peoples boats, because that night, the chief of that land was going to get their boats and kill everyone. When I sunk the ships, they were not able to kill them. The second day, the kind husband and wife’s child was going to become a terrible inhumane person, giving his parents and his surroundings nothing but strife. Now many lives will be saved and the wife will give birth to another child. Finally, here there are two orphans that live in this castle. The orphan’s money was hidden under the broken walls. The money needed to be hidden so that the orphans could find the money when they are old enough to use it, if it is found now by those within wishing to fix the wall they will use the orphans money for themselves. These were the reasons why I did these actions, and these actions came from Allah within. However you judged externally and did not understand the compassion within them.”
I interpret this as: Nothing can be understood from the point of our own judgements and values. In order to see the truth, we must free ourselves from our conditions, and thus not only be able to accept all as it is, but also see that there may be hidden mercies in all that occurs.

**The Prophet Jesus (6-4 BCE):**
*A Prophet revered and loved by many across religions and spiritual paths in particular Christianity, known for his angelic properties allowing for various miracles such as bringing the dead back to life (Sanders 2021).*

The Prophet Jesus arrives at a village one day, to see a crowd yelling. In the middle of a crowd is a woman who is said to have slept with men unmarried. The crowd, hearing of this, decide to stone her to death. He yells at them to stop and says, “Any one of you who have not sinned, you can throw the first stone.” Everyone freezes, startled, and no one is able to throw. He saves her from the crowd. She is said today to possibly be Mary Magdalena.

Potential Interpretation: Everyone’s rights and wrongs are learned and there is no one without a wrong, yet we are quick to judge and blame others. We must first look at ourselves, try to free ourselves from judgments, from “rights” and “wrongs.” When we accept others as they are, we accept ourselves, when we accept ourselves as we are, we can accept others.

**Saint Shems and Mevlana (Rumi):**

*Mevlana is a 13th century Persian Sufi Saint who lived in present day Turkey. Shems is a 13th century Persian Sufi Saint, his teacher (Kaya 2016).*

A wandering mystic called Şems (pronounced Shems) rejects traditional rules and searches for a pupil to impart his knowledge. He meets a traditional Sufi teacher Mevlana and begins his work at breaking his boundaries of judgements. Mevlana doesn’t like alcohol, he makes him drink wine. He doesn’t like women of the night; he sends him to a tavern to see what their lives are like. They spend a few years together, and he teaches Mevlana everything he knows. One night when they are having a discussion at home, there is a knock at the door, and Shems goes to see whom it is. He opens the door, steps out, and never is seen again. We know from several sources that he was murdered by Mevlana’s students (jealous of his attention to Shems), of around seven to eight people, one of which is said to be Mevlana’s son. Upon his disappearance (not knowing he was murdered), Mevlana falls into great despair and looks everywhere for Shems. Wandering one day in complete misery, in the marketplace by the goldsmith, he suddenly reaches
an enlightened state— he realizes that Shems is within him, united in him as one being, accessible in his brain and with that joy, listening to the goldsmiths banging, he beings to whirl. One hand facing the sky, the other the ground, the sky representing the source, and ground showing the giving of information of the divine to the Earth. From this moment, Mevlana, becomes Rumi, and begins to whirl, and with whirling, writing. With his existence comes the creation of the whirling dervishes, Mevlana’s followers, and beautiful poetry that even today touches millions of hearts across the world.

While there is much to say, I will interpret this simply as: True love breaks through all labels and boundaries of physical separation, and you find yourself united with all there is. You are everything you are searching for, holding all of existence within you.

**Spirituality and Religion in Psychotherapy: Locating the Project**

Religion and or spirituality are often essential aspects of our lives. One study has specifically shown that one-third of therapists reported the feeling of god in their work, and over three-quarters felt on occasion, the presence of something greater than themselves (West 1995). Despite this, many therapists lack the training to effectively and ethically address client’s beliefs (Barnet and Johnson 2011, 147). Therapists debate the inclusion of religion and spirituality in practice, and training in its integration into therapy ranges from little to non-existent (ibid). Though the historical reasons for this were discussed earlier, currently, some feel uncomfortable with this combination, while others are genuinely concerned for the well-being of their clients, thinking that they might be negatively influenced by bringing religion to practice (ibid). While this might be true, supervision can be helpful in this respect, and research-based evidence indicates its benefits.

For example, hundreds of quantitative data in peer-reviewed journals from 1972 to 2010 (Koening 2012, 7) suggest religion and spirituality (a belief in a transient force), help people deal better with adversity, coping with physical and mental illness and are related to overall greater well-being with a positive relation to hope, depression, suicide, anxiety, bipolar, crime, and more. Religion and spirituality often provide resources for coping with various disorders, addictions, and harmful behavior, emphasizing love, acceptance of others, compassion, patience, forgiveness, honesty, altruism, pro-social behavior, physical activity, and much more (Ibid). It has been suggested that religion and spirituality is rapidly moving into mainstream healthcare, and all healthcare providers must address the whole person, body, mind, and spirit (ibid). Today, some of the most common methods utilized in therapy
(cognitive behavioral therapy, psychodynamic or psychoanalysis and person-centered approaches), do not utilize religion or spirituality, and they might not always offer training that addresses these issues.

Regardless of ones approach, I feel it is important to acknowledge clients' spiritual or religious beliefs as they can serve as a source of strength and support, especially as there are evidence-based reasons for using clients' faith for encouragement (Barnett and Johnson 2011, 148). Additionally, one author has argued (Lines 2006, 2) that various schools also function on a belief system. For example, the evidence for the unconscious, ego, emotional blockages, collective consciousness, innate or intrinsic self-actualizing tendency, and more are all to a certain extent based and formed from a belief rather than hard, factual evidence (Lines 2006, 3). It feels important to break down the walls we have built against religion in general and between belief systems, to get beyond barriers that different paths bring, and look at each other from the point of unity.

Despite the dark side of religion (or rather its misuse ranging from terrorism and human rights abuses to murder), I could not imagine a world without such beautiful humans like the Prophets Jesus, Moses, Muhammad, and endless more that we can see across religions and spiritual paths. For this project, it is interesting to speak of faith, as the Sufi speaks of a state of being that is beyond religion that can be reached through various paths. On the other hand, it shows a road that is intertwined with the Prophet Muhammad (saw) and the practices he taught, so one must tie it to religion. However, one must not forget that it accepts you, my reader, as itself. Regardless of how you think of it, it thinks of you. It loves you as you are. It says I am you. It says we are one.

Thus, in this aspect, it leaves no boundaries. No gender, age, ethnicity- most certainly no religion.

So from religion, we go to a state of being without religion, where we are all one.

Badri (2013, 9) suggests, “the real revolution in psychology will come when it regains its ‘soul’ and liberates itself from the constricted scientific and medical models for erecting an image of human nature.” Some authors believe this is currently occurring, that we are in a time of transition of greater spiritual study and research, especially in psychology (Hood in Miller 2012, 20). One small pebble creates ripples throughout the lake, and so I throw mine, in the hopes of joining many others. I do so with the wish to increase current existing
spiritual methods in psychotherapy and inspire creativity and renewal. I do so with the hope of showing a path of healing that can come with acceptance, unity and love.

**Sufism in Psychotherapy: A Gap in Research**

In recent years, there has been a rise in spiritual research (Nizamie 2013), perhaps depicting a need for a greater connection with humanity. Sufism is a prominent spiritual tradition of Islam and is of interest to Muslims and non-Muslims (Nizamie 2013, 215). It is used at times as either an alternative form of therapy or in combination with psychotherapy (Solihin 2017, 2584). When utilizing a holistic approach, the therapist can switch between psychotherapeutic and spirituality-orientated interventions (Sperry and Shafranske in Kaya 2016, 20). Lately, there has been an increase in Sufi therapeutic practices, which has begun to create a field one might call “Sufi Psychotherapy,” where spiritual enlightenment is integral in practice (Solihin 2017, 2585). It has been found that integrating Sufi beliefs into practice with Islamic clients helped them progress quicker (Badri 2013, 42). It has been suggested that Sufi mindfulness can be integrated into western therapy (Mitha 2019). Sufi thoughts have also been used successfully in “philosophical counselling,” a practice interested in solving problems through philosophical dialogue (Bunyadzade 2019). Also of interest, bibliotherapy is the use of literary works to help recognize problems, selected stories are read in or before sessions, and clients are encouraged to share thoughts; this is shown to be effective in the long term with depression (Kaya 2016, 21). One doctor has begun to utilize this technique in Turkey by using Rumi’s philosophy under the name “Mesnevi Therapy” (Tarhan 2017), although research is needed to judge its effectiveness.

Religion can be a powerful source of identity and meaning, so emphasis is sometimes given to integrating spirituality into therapeutic care (Hussein 2016, 26). In Islam, poetry and the arts have an important place in spirituality. For example, in Africa, Sufi poetry has been a strong source of spiritual strength (ibid). Psychiatrists have reported that Sufi music and Rumi’s poetry are offered to clients suffering in Kashmir due to the conflict’s impact; doctors have noted partial recovery as a result (Anadolu Agency 2019). A Sufi dance school in Kabul, Afghanistan, has been opened by a woman for women to whirl to help fight depression and find inner peace in a war-torn country, despite attacks from Islamic militants who view Sufism as heretical and religious conservatives who disapprove of women dancing (Shalizi 2020). Music as therapy has long been used to heal mental ailments in the Ottoman Empire (Anadolu Agency 2014), and today is still practiced.
For example, Sufi music is played to cardiac patients, and it has been noted that after twenty minutes, all vitals improve (Heart rate, blood pressure, etc.), specific songs are played to help patients relax, while others are utilized to help with depression (Werman 2012).

Many Muslims choose not to seek therapy due to concerns that treatment does not address their religious or spiritual needs and difficulty trusting therapists (Haque et al. 2016, 75). Thus, there needs to be more research on the successful integration of spirituality and religion into clinical practice to increase trust (ibid). Studies have depicted the importance of religious and spiritual lifestyles as therapeutic, and effective in treating many psychosocial issues (Haque et al. 2016, 76). Additionally, mindfulness-based therapy models, which are usually connected to Buddhist psychology, are also apparent in Islamic sources (Isgandarova 2019, 1146). Islamic psychotherapy and meditation show mindfulness-based therapy benefits physical and mental health (Simlain and black 2014 in Isgandarova 2019, 1146). Dhikr is used as a meditative tool (Isgandarova 2019, 1147). Dhikr is at times described as the contemplation, remembrance, or manifestation of Allah, and it mainly has a vital role in the Sufi path of enlightenment (Hussein 2016, 28). There have been a few studies examining the impact of dihkr, for example Naz and Kahlily (2015) found them to be effective in reducing anger in Muslim clients.

Despite these widely spread scattered studies, the tree of Sufism has only just begun to branch its leaves. Research and practice of Islam within psychotherapy is still developing (Haque et al. 2016, 76), and is much more apparent in Islamic nations. Authors suggest that unique Islamic interventions are required, drawn from Islamic or Sufi sources, and they need to be compared in effectiveness to other approaches (ibid). Sufism in Western literature is limited (Mitha 2019, 202). Little research-based evidence exists; thus, more studies involving Sufi practices within the mental health field are required; therapeutic models are missing (Nizamie 2013, 221). Of note, increasing literature of growing female Sufi authors within different therapeutic fields (Isgandarova 2019; Ivanishkima et al. 2020; Harel et al. 2021; Khan 2022), could help further women’s rights within Islam. Within this background, I begin attempting to merge the East with the West to create a Sufi-based psychological approach that one can build upon further.

Our Questions

1. What is the relationship between the Sufi Concepts of Love and Death? (Explored theoretically and experientially).
2. How do we integrate what emerges with the Person-Centred concept of the self and mental health practice?

Summary Content of Thesis

- **Chapter Three:** We are introduced to Death and Love as concepts, creations of the brain. I discuss Sufism, gender roles and politics. I highlight the relation between Sufism, Love and living beyond conditionings, labels and attachments. I explore the healing aspects of Sufism within mental health but also the hardships of being on a Sufi path, particularly being born as a woman. I understand that I am Love, what I was looking for, but I also conclude that I need to discover what love is, what I am.

- **Chapter Four:** In this chapter some crucial ethical concerns are addressed. I argue that integrating spirituality and or religion with therapy is not that different from philosophical approaches that are based on belief systems. I suggest Sufism is the religion of love, by which I mean it is beyond “religion,” it enters a place of unconditional acceptance where conditions and value judgements are no longer of relevance.

- **Chapter Five:** In this chapter, I begin by stating that as I am love, in order to find Love I must find myself. Thus, I begin with the philosophical question, “Who are you?” Through a series of dreams, I explore who I am. I discuss the importance of storytelling and narration, as a way of knowing yourself, along with spirituality. I play with and suggest theoretical concepts for my methodology. I conclude that merging writing with inquiry and auto-ethnographic fiction within a post-qualitative arena can result in the reflexive, creative and relational method of “writing with life,” that adopts a Magical Real perspective, and integrates the knowledge of the East and the West, from the point of unity to multiplicity.

- **Chapter Six:** In this chapter, we begin our story within our story (auto-ethnographic fiction), which is divided into three chapters. We begin briefly in the future, with scientists searching for a way to save humanity. We then go back to the past and meet Elif, who is receiving her training in psychotherapy and learns of her unknown illness. There she meets a Nomad who tells her she can find a cure through love, after which she enters a series of dreams within dreams with a strange being called Zu. Within dreams and dimensions of her brain, we meet different characters, explore the concept of love in Sufism and its
relation to Death, and learned conditions. I give the sense of being beyond the body, which is the ultimate and most difficult Sufi condition. At the end of the chapter, Elif realizes that she is Love.

✓ **Chapter Seven:** Here, we begin in Edinburgh again, for our second chapter of our story, Day Two. Elif is trying to find a way to no longer fear death and to heal. Elif visits a friend’s funeral. She explores death, and how it (and funerals) are conditioned according to one’s culture and belief. Elif finally lets go, surrenders, and each release is experienced as a butterfly, a death that unravels. Love triggers Death, the release of conditions, judgements and associated emotions, and she is transformed.

✓ **Chapter Eight:** We manage to get to day three and end our story within our story. Elif pixels into another dream and finds herself in a garden by a large house. There she meets a wise one, and they have a long pleasant discussion on the porch. They discuss the holographic principle and the world as an illusory dream. They explore love as the experience of being “self” less, of unconditional acceptance, and that the experience of it, can trigger death (transformation), and help release our conditions, associated judgements and emotions. Elif questions if she can continue as a psychotherapist after internalizing this information. We end our story, the way we began, in the future, with the question of what it means to be human.

✓ **Chapter Nine:** In this chapter I take a break to reflect on breakthrough findings through my auto-ethnographic fiction. I explore my way of being as a therapist. I decided to let go of the Westernized claim over the label “psychotherapist” to see what unfolds.

✓ **Chapter Ten:** I summarize, evaluate and synthesize my findings. I discuss limitations and strengths of my work, and refer back to the meaning behind my methodology and interpretation of Magical Realism. I suggest that love is hope, it is unconditional acceptance, a way of being, a path of actualization and healing. It triggers death (as transformation), and helps the release of conditions, associated judgements and emotions. I sift through findings and allow for three pathways to possibly emerge and instigate further study: Sufi psychology (non-traditional therapy), Quantum psychology (without spirituality) and Person-centred Sufism (the expansion of Rogers work into the spiritual realm). I personally choose to leave my person-centred self behind and continue on the “Sufi Psychology” path, wherever that might take me.

✓ **Chapter Eleven:** We end where we began my thesis, on a pilgrimage to
Hajj, this time in the present. I end by surrendering to love, in love, with love.

- **Appendix:** A brief collection of Sufi techniques for therapeutic practice mentioned throughout the thesis

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**Chapter Notes**

- In this chapter we are introduced to the thesis subject: the relationship between Love and Death in Hulusi’s interpretation of Sufism. I state my desire to integrate findings into the Person-Centred concept of the self and to increase difference and diversity in the field of mental health.

- I argue that spirituality is missing in the Person-centered Approach, that as Rogers himself was becoming spiritual in his later years and was searching for a way to integrate science and spirituality, this might be an opportunity to do so.

- I follow Hulusi’s purpose of religion here as a path that allows us to experience our essential reality (Hulusi 2017f, 0:26), thus as much as Sufism is rooted in Islam which we acknowledge and celebrate, it is also the religion of love, a path beyond all labels including the word “religion” itself, and is offered to all to take as they will.

- I revisit history to show how psychology was originally rooted in spirituality and question the Western dominance over the definition of both being human and of “psychotherapy” as a practice.

- I suggest that as Sufism is a path of being that involves unconditional acceptance expressed as love, it can be beneficial to therapy.

- I show that there is a gap in existing literature, describing how Sufi ways of being in Western therapy is lacking, particularly in regards to the person-centered approach.

- I introduce Sufism through stories of strength that imply their therapeutic presence of love.
Chapter Three

Kolaylaşsın (Kolay-lash-soon):

May It Be Easier
“I swear by Allah, who you think you love, what you think you love in them and what makes them lovable to you is no other than Allah!” (Hulusi 2020, #548).

5 minutes of Deep breathing and Stretching  (Appendix 279).


We begin our magical-real journey here through a series of entries. Death is metaphorical creation of my brain and is here to lead me to love. Death will continue weaving in and out of this thesis.

Istanbul, Turkey
February 2021
“Just sitting.”

Death flutters in. Her long, wavy, hair sparkled gold. A thin, plain, silk, beige dress flutters and honey eyes glints as her small four year old feet glitters silver in open-toed flip-flops.

She jumps onto the chair next to me.

Death: What’s up.

I look at her from my laptop.

Elif: Is it time?

Death: Rolling her eyes. Why is that like, the first thing you always ask me? Your time has already come and gone, you are just unaware of it. You know this. Tisk, tisk.

She pulls out a long, light, pink pen from the air, with a fluffy pink ball on the top and begins to draw hearts on my folder.

Elif: I don’t actually know it. I mean I believe that my brain is slowly watching a film of my life that has already been finished, that it is timeless and is thus processing events slowly, as time is a concept the brain creates in order to process (Nilsen 2021)… but I am not living that understanding, if it is true. So yes, I am going to always ask, is it my time. Well then, what do you want? I
am trying to work.

**Death:** Wachya doin? Waiting for love to come? Just sitting thinking he’s going to waltz in here like me?

**Elif:** He?

**Death:** I don’t know, it will be whatever your brain will interpret as love. Right now it’s him. He looks gorgeous.

**Elif:** Who doesn’t like Antonio Banderas in Zorro? I mean, he’s Zorro. Though, to be honest, what’s her name, steals the show-

**Death:** Catherine Zeta- Jones.

**Elif:** Yes! *Smiles.* She reminds of me of my mom when she was younger.

**Death:** Right. Anyhoo, Antonio’s not coming anytime soon. So, how about I help?

**Elif:** How?

*Death looks at me innocently.*

**Elif:** *Feels uneasy.* Time to die?

**Death:** *Giggles.* You are kinda loco my friend. Yes, yes, I will help you… “die” so you can truly “live”. But first, you should begin with Catherine-Zeta Jones.

**Elif:** Mom?

**Death:** Exactly. First understand yourself and your paper through your mom. She had a role in you writing this. Start with her. Invite her for a chat, ask her about Sufism, about herself…understand her so you can understand yourself, so you can let go of your “mother” figure and see her as she is…so you can see yourself in another form.

*She jumps up after finishing drawing hearts all over my folder.*

**Death:** Talk to your mom!
Giggling she leaves, leaving a trail of strawberry scented sparkles.

Weird.

A talk it is.

Istanbul, Turkey
March 2021
“The Interview.” *Translated from Turkish to English, poorly.*

We sit at home, sprawled on couches by the garden window. It is a late evening and we are both sipping a black coffee. We can see the lights of the third Bosporus bridge in the distance. I have unicorn slippers and a cozy thin blanket. My mom has her feet curled next to her. She leans to her left onto the couch, long, gleaming white pearly beads grasped in one hand.

**Elif:** I would like to start by introducing Beyza Zapsu, a well-known and respected Sufi here in Istanbul, who also happens to be my mother. I thought it might be important to talk about your path as a Sufi and the struggles you faced. Perhaps you would like to introduce yourself instead of me, who is Beyza?

**Beyza:** A human.

*Laughter.*

**Elif:** A human?

**Beyza:** Twirling her white prayer beads. Sufism’s goal is to guide humans to their essential reality (observation without the veil of the ego). According to Sufi’s a human’s essential reality does not have labels like student, teacher, politician or doctor, those are our attributes depicted in this world but do not confine us. The core of a human is not the job or role you depict in this world. Our challenges and struggles, our desires and that which we reject, everything we face on the road in which we play these roles depict knots that need to be unravelled to allow us to reach the point of experiencing our essential reality. Life naturally propels us towards experiencing our essential truth by unravelling the knots we reach along the road.

**Elif thinks of her knots, labelling each one ‘mom,’ ‘dad,’ ‘sisters.’**

*Perhaps this resembles the unravelling one might see as a part of Carl Rogers (1961, 351) actualizing tendency.*
Beyza: If it is within our fate, we learn what it means to live like a human being (actualized human like prophets and saints) and we end our worldly journey and continue our eternal one, in a different form. This is my belief. The actualized ones are able to experience all the potential of our brain in the afterlife, as opposed to those who have not actualized, who continue reliving that which they have learned in their worldly life. So, I can only describe myself as a human, because any other attribute I might describe constantly changes. I can be both a student and a teacher, if I say I am a Sufi, what kind of Sufi, according to who am I Sufi...I suppose what I can say is that I am a someone who has the desire to live her true potential as a human being, to become an actualized human being.

Elif: Smiles. I am curious as to how you got to this point.

Beyza: When I was 18 years old I read a book. It was about Yunus Emre’s life (A Turkish mystic and poet, lived in the 1200’s).

Elif: “The City of Heart I entered, in its depths immersed, thought-free. In wondering love I gazed-and there it was, in Life, I found the trace (Emre 1992, 85).”

Beyza: Smiles. Yunus in our culture was someone who lived his “actualized potential.” When I was reading about his life, the book described a “love,” it wasn’t a worldly love. There was a woman he loved, a mother he loved, a village filled with people he loved, and he was always afraid that those he loved would one day die. However, while describing his fears of losing those he loved, he also talked about a different kind of love. Something incredible, a love that annihilates all in its presence, including fears, troubles and hopelessness. For the first time, I felt something strange within me, and I realized there was a love with a definition and experience that I had never before encountered.

Elif: You hadn’t had any thoughts of life or religion before this?

Elif’s eyes glisten with tears as she thinks. I remember when I was a very little girl, staring out of the window, sitting for hours thinking about why we exist, where we came from, what I had forgotten.

Beyza twirls her prayer breads. No actually the exact opposite. I was just a young rebellious girl, who rejected religion and rules, everything was no, anything you said I rejected. I didn’t think too much about anything other than to rebel against what people told me. Then I got married in a hurry at a very
young age, I was 18. Those days girls married young. It was normal for those times, and it was my choice. Your dad asked and I said yes. But yes, it was around then I said I want to live this, whatever this is I want to experience whatever it is that Yunus is experiencing.

_Elif takes a sip of her coffee and thinks._ That’s the key. All these people we know and read of, have experienced what they write, this “love.” It makes it “real” and even if appearing impossible you hold onto the hope that you too, might be able to.

_Beyza shifts and also takes a sip from her coffee._ Some time passes and I get married, I have three children and I live a classic child rearing life. We live in Germany and occasionally visit Turkey. During this time, I begin to gain interest in the Quran.

_Elif:_ What makes you want to read the Quran?

_Beyza:_ My husband’s parents were reading and discussing the Quran, and I wanted to be a part of the conversations in the family but I felt like I knew nothing so I started to research it. When we returned to Turkey, life continued, your sisters started to go to school; only you were at home around 2-3 years old. I started to get really dissatisfied with my life and then problems began. All sorts of personal problems, my mom was really sick and my dad doesn’t like dealing with illness, so I had to travel with her and her illness got worse with time until she got cancer. This was one of the biggest traumas for me, my mom was my world.

_Elif:_ You loved your mom a lot.

_Beyza:_ She was an angel.

_Elif thinks:_ I remember her as an angel too…everyone you ask says she was an angel. But she suffered so much…

_Beyza:_ She was good to everyone, kind to everyone, loved everyone. She was gentle and very ladylike, wonderful education, beautiful…intelligent…She used to write stories about her travels with my dad, who was in tourism, and back then there was no television, everyone waited for her to describe their travels to different countries on the radio. So I had personal problems myself, in various areas of my life, but I was very worried about my mother. My husband went into politics, and I felt very alone. He was very upset with the conditions in the country, the military coups, the human rights violations and
corruption so he decided to do something about it but as a result I felt very lonely. So amongst all my problems, I found an escape in religion and I started practicing Namaz *(praying ritual in Islam)*.

**Elif:** By yourself?  **Beyza:** Yes.  **Elif:** How old were you?  **Beyza:** 33

**Elif:** Okay 33, but before that you had learned how to read the Quran (as it its in Arabic) so you have a little bit of a past but your struggles at 33 push you into practicing religion.

**Beyza shifts her beads to her left hand and takes a sip from her coffee.** Yes, before that I was questioning things and trying to read and understand the Quran. You know… my in-laws had friends who were preachers at Mosques. They would get together once every month, for dinner and chat for several hours. My mother-in-law would make the dinner, and I would have to wait in the back room, separate from the men talking. I felt really left out and upset, I was small then around early twenties. They were a conservative family and this had become a tradition not to do with religion. Back then, and with their family, it was like that. I always felt strongly about protecting my rights, why couldn’t I sit with them, just because I was woman? The interesting thing was that my mother in-law who took part in this by sending me to the back of the room, had the same thing done to her and hated it. So it was this tradition, cycle that never ended. She had judged her mother-in law and ended doing exactly as she did. This is why they say in Islam, don’t judge, or else you will end up doing the same thing as they do, just so you understand *not to* judge.

**Elif remembers her telling this story before.** So you were in depths of struggle and found yourself in prayer as means of escape.

**Beyza:** I was struggling, searching for an escape from a well. I wanted to experience what I had read when I was 18, of Yunus Emre. I thought it might bring me peace. So I began to pray and travel around the city going into different chat groups, different religious orders, weaving in out, lost, trying to find a place that fit me.

**Elif is pensive.** I feel there is a real struggle in your life until you are 33. An internal and external struggle for freedom, but also there is a huge role of woman. Its as if the men are absent but the women-their actions or their pain are more present. For example as you just said, your mother in-law, keeping you separate and leaving you out because of your gender really bothered you and hurt your feelings. So you are focusing on her, rather than my father or
your father in-law in the story. It’s like she’s the boss.

**Beyza stands up straighter, her face animated.** She was the boss! When I first got married at 18, we didn’t even have anything in our home, no items, nothing, and your father would say, *go visit my mother* every day. I was like, *why would I go visit her daily?* He would say, *because you have nothing to do, go spend time with her.* This was really twisted logic to me at the time. He had this clique with his mom, brother, and father and I felt really left out. But within 8 months when we moved to Germany on our own away from our family, that’s when I relaxed. Oh at the same time my family also wished to see me, so we both relaxed in Germany actually. In Germany, however, I had a struggle for survival. I had three kids, was really young and I was alone with no one to help.

**Elif wiggles her toes in her slippers.** Until you are 18, legally in Turkey you don’t have your own power. So you didn’t have your own power, you’re under your parents control and you kept fighting against a “Godlike” figure who also wished to empower you and thus decided God did not exist. Then at 18 you went from not being under the power of your parents, to being under the power of your husband, his parents and your parents! So you are still not “free.” Within that there is different complicated dynamics going on, gender roles, mother roles, wife roles, then you go to Germany and you gain some freedom but this time you have a struggle to survive and have children. So your freedom is restricted by access to means of survival, and well…by your children! So you are under the power of your children and means in that sense.

**Beyza looks surprised.** Of course. You can’t do anything because of the kids. Again powerless!

*Laughter.*

They both take a moment to sip their coffees then place them down. **Elif shifts her legs and faces Beyza more comfortably.**

**Elif Nodding.** Of course if you go way back to your childhood, I am sure you also saw a specific dynamic between your mom and dad.

**Beyza:** My dad was like a dictator and my mom did whatever he wanted, she didn’t like fights. My father’s family created big problems; they lived next door to us.
Elif: So you have this angelic mother who never raises her voice, who is the star of your universe, and a dictator like father (who we all really loved, but he was difficult). Then you got married to a stranger basically, when you were a kid. So we know the struggles that carried you to Sufism, which is why I was interested in talking about the past, as everything is connected. Because I saw so many women in my life struggling for their rights and this had a huge impact on me, men were mostly absent and or oppressive figures…. The newspapers wrote about a woman dying in “honor killings” at least once a week. Crying, lonely women, ghost and or cheating husbands, violent partners, is what I saw around me and on the news. I was raised by women, and my closest friends were a small group of girls…I saw my sisters struggling, and had many personal experiences as well…It became all I knew, women struggling, and a world of absent and or terrorizing men… and it had a role in who I am today, so I wanted to understand how your past led to your events too…

Beyza: I never thought about it like that, it makes sense. I guess I just wanted to be treated equally as men. I want to be asked my opinion too, why must I sit in the back room? Why am I not allowed to go pray in the mosque (women were not allowed to go to mosques for Friday prayers until recently). Why am I squished in the back of a mosque? I wanted equal rights and equal respect for women. I always loudly voiced my opinion.

Elif: Which is interesting because your mom was the complete opposite.

Beyza: Yea.

Elif: I wonder if a part of it WAS because your mom wasn't like that.

Beyza looks surprised. Yea probably. Also they say, the year you were born has an impact on your character. For example, I was born in the year of revolutions. There was a huge military coup in Turkey, and Menderes, who was a beloved leader in Turkey, was hung by the military on May 1960. My mom would tell me that she cried as she listened to the news of his death with me in her arms. So they say here that the children of the age of the revolution are like me, always fighting, always saying no to any oppression. That is what I was always like…I drove your dad crazy…so… you are right. I spent my life fighting for the rights of women…for example, being a housewife, is no less of a job than other working woman or the work of a husband.

Elif grins. A mother’s job is most difficult and precious.
**Beyza:** I couldn’t experience my youth with kids, I couldn’t experience university life properly, it was disrupted, I changed schools a lot—I would have liked the experience to be different, to have studied different things, and I felt that loss for a long time. It can involve a lot of sacrifice, but I found a freedom through religion.

**Elif pauses.** Ah okay, so recapping where we were before, you are 33 years old you begin to pray and weave in and out of talks and different religious orders.

**Beyza looks likes she is in the past, her eyes distant.** Yes, and I begin reading different books by diverse people, but I have serious concerns about all the different interpretations of what is written in the Quran. I am confused and frustrated and say, I just don’t understand what is written, and translations are not bringing me closer. However, within the chaos, I feel a drive, a pull to the hidden truth within and I need to understand, to decipher what is written. I am pulled to it. I am curious too, why does the Prophet Muhammad talk so much about Moses, Mary and her family, of Jesus, why does he speak so much about them, like why? There may be more references to the Virgin Mary in the Quran than in the New Testament. I wanted to know why. I felt pulled into it, towards it, I had a huge drive to understand what is written because I could feel that the answers to my questions were hidden in it. However, I couldn’t decipher what was written, because its all metaphors…and I couldn’t find someone to give me answers that made sense to me. I ask the learned preachers in mosques and they too could not give me answers to my questions. This continues for three, four years. I go in and out, meet everyone I can, asking questions.

**Elif nods.** Did you worry at all, that you were going to meet someone weird or go somewhere strange?

**Beyza softly.** No, no not at all, everyone was known by someone I knew. It was always someone or somewhere that was recommended to me. So around three or four years of this, suddenly your father meets the mayor of Istanbul of the time, and he asks me if I want to go to Saudi Arabia, on a pilgrimage together. I said yes, lets go, I was excited. That’s when everything changed for me. I returned and immediately found my first teacher who was able to show me a path that fit me. He showed me a Sufi path that took me out of classical Islam.

**Elif thinks.** *This was really difficult for me as a child. I felt abandoned. I understand now, as an adult the things she told me at the time, like how she
is not in truth “my mother.” In terms of labels. But I was too young, and I just didn’t get it.

Beyza shifts to another position. That’s when my internal ego struggle began, which I saw reflected outside of me, with my rebellion, and fights for my rights. I began struggling, fighting with my external environment because of my internal conflicts. Women were not allowed to go for Friday prayers to the mosque. So I began fighting for these rights- why was it that women had less rights than men? Especially, what was the meaning behind “man” and “women”? I was being taught that Islam shows us that being human is not confined to any label, you live your potential as a human being within a man’s body as well as a woman’s.

Elif agitated mutters to the side. How the hell do they excuse making a “man’s” prayer more relevant or important than a “woman’s.”

Beyza: We see it as we are all human, and we play roles. There is the role of a “woman” and a role of a “man.” A role of “mother”-

Elif: So sorry, one second, what we are going into here is the Sufi understanding of being without labels, which is really difficult because at its heart, it explains unity. Could you help explain this better?

Beyza: Yes, of course, but first let me tell you what happened. So in response to my frustration, that women didn’t go to Friday prayer, together with a group of friends both men and women, I tried to go. We struggled so much. They told us, we couldn’t attend funeral prayers because we were women. We began to go and pray at funerals. No one wanted us at their mosque. We went to mosques; they refused to let us in because we were women. We fought. We said yes, of course it is important to respect people’s beliefs and needs but what about ours? There should be space for all kinds of belief. In a huge, empty, mosque you shut up the women in a tiny room in the mosque. You don’t let women pray. For this, I wrote endless letters to political leaders, I entered endless arguments with preachers at mosques. I would wait for Friday prayer to finish then go speak to the Imam. Those days, I was like this. I saw discrimination, and I believe in the eyes of creation, the heart of Islam, does not accept any form of discrimination.

Elif: You couldn’t stand being discriminated against. Can I ask to explain more about how you see that the heart of Islam doesn’t discriminate?

Beyza: These days we accept that about 98% of the universe is dark matter.
But its not dark actually- it’s just not definable –

**Elif**: Unknown. **Relaxed, she picks up her coffee for a sip.**

**Beyza**: Yes. Then there is the one-two per cent side we see, which we call the Universe, which holds infinite galaxies. So we cannot even comprehend that which we see! So this is what we call Allah, the infinite, unknown essence of existence. The essence of this is everywhere and in everything, its information, and the same information in every single atom. When this information is manifested, we call it a galaxy, sun, stars, whatever, Earth and humans. It’s the same matter, the same information. The human has the most incredible thing called the brain, which projects this information. The most evolved brain that WE know of is the human brain. The Sufis read the Quran as it saying that, whatever there is in this infinite known and unknown-in existence, the human can decode in its brain. The brain has it all, and the people who can connect to this information (actualize) can bring out certain amount of this information. But those who don’t know of this, will think they are only their body and their labels, rather then as one who holds the whole universe in their being. This is the experience of unity, of infinite manifestation. Thus you are in essence, without an identity without any labels including man and woman. Your body is the role you play, a manifestation of the information you were born with.

**Elif who had been staring into her mug, suddenly imagines herself inside it, the darkness turning into stars, galaxy’s, and the endless Universe.**

During those years, I was taught this, and I was frustrated that my surroundings did not respect my beliefs and my rights to pray. So, during those years, I was fighting for my rights, and learning. There are different ways of understanding Sufism, I was taught a way in which my teacher made me constantly try to break the boundaries I had within me, boundaries being any bias I formed, any label I posses. I entered this path because of my struggles, as an escape. Then entered more fights and struggles. Finally, I was left with just a desire to live this path. It no longer came from desperation, a need to escape suffering; it eventually over time, just became a desire. There was nothing else that I wanted more than, simply living this path and it had nothing to do with suffering. I just wanted it.

**Elif**: I entered this recently, you know, mostly as an escape; it was the only thing that gave me relief. It felt like I was burning, the whole world was burning then someone came and threw a bucket of water on me. That water
was this. But these days, I do feel a change like my longing for this experience is beginning to be more than my desire for escape. Like I no longer long for it as means of escaping the fire, I long for it for the experience— for it’s self.

**Beyza nods happily.** Exactly, that’s when this information begins to take hold and settle in your heart. It’s called love of Allah. The love of understanding reality. But it’s a love that it’s not possible to turn away from it because it’s no longer because of something. If you are left with no reasons of why you are on this path. For example, the most frequent reason is escapism, relief. If that no longer exists and you still long for the experience, then that means it’s starting to take a permanent hold on you. It doesn’t mean you don’t still suffer or burn, it just means it no longer becomes a reason of why you do this, and this speeds up and eases the process. This makes you stronger, this belief.

**Elif:** Okay, so around 37-38 years of age you return from your trip to Saudi Arabia and finally find one who teaches you in a way that fits your perspective.

**Beyza:** Yes. He had a small group mixed with men and woman, and taught in “the Melami” way, where the objective is for the teacher to be your mirror, and help break the labels you have adopted, like Shems did for Mevlana. Yes, so when I found him I stopped going from place to place searching for a best fit. Every group or order I visited had a different method or path in Sufism. Some did more chanting, some did more praying, some had their own personal rituals… but these all felt a little… like I wasn’t really getting down to the real work, like it was just external practice and I wanted to get to the internal work. I felt that while doing many prayers, chanting, fasting and these rituals were important, I didn’t get enough personal work done. I wanted to find my Shams. Someone to help me pass the boundaries of my ego. There is a saying that the prophet Muhammad returns from a huge war, and he says; now we go to the real big war. They ask him what he means, he says now, we go fight within ourselves, we fight with our Ego, and this is the true Jihad. So I had understood this, that the real war was within us and we couldn’t reach that with only doing the rituals like prayers, fasting and so on. So during those times it had felt like the places, the orders I had visited emphasized this internal “war” less, and focused more on the external practices.

**Beyza shifts.**
But this was simply just not my preference, there are many different paths to Allah, so its not that I thought they were wrong, it just didn’t fit me. Just like there are many different approaches in therapy and you chose the ones that fit you the best, that helps you get better. So the end result is the same but the path is different. So it’s not about right or wrong just about you and the best fit for you. So this Melamlik, this way, that focused on working with the ego had fit best with me. It requires you to be honest with yourself, always look at yourself, not the other person. I felt that I had a very strong ego and I wanted to work on it…and so it is that sometimes with such an intention, things enter your life, so that you can conquer the “problems” or knots in your ego. Sometimes when that one single thing is resolved many things also get resolved like a domino affect. For example, I was at the time overly concerned about what people around me would think. Then something happened to me that not only did my surroundings hear about my personal life, the whole country heard about it! When this event happened, this issue I had with being concerned about what people thought about me disappeared.  

Beyza pauses as Elif coughs and takes a sip of her coffee.

For one month, I made front news page, I was on the TV, some people commended me but most said terrible things about me, threatening things. This event occurred without me planning it, or desiring it, but it broke three big taboos in this country. So I had, with my small group of friend’s men and woman, finally found a hidden room in a mosque, which had agreed to let us pray on Fridays. I had been going to this mosque for a few years without anyone knowing when all of a sudden, one day, a while after my husband, your dad entered politics, a reporter followed us there. Your dad’s name became known in the ruling political party, which happened to be religious and conservative. So they snuck into this room, that no one else normally saw (we were not disturbing anyone, no one saw us there it was a small section on the upper floor), took our picture and gave it to all the newspapers. I was praying on a Friday at the mosque, amongst men and women and without a headscarf. Three big taboos in one. Those in charge of religion in the state said, my prayers were not accepted, on the national news. So, my fears of what people would think about me or say, suddenly finished… and when you realize that everything happens the way it needs to, the way it was supposed to, your fears just sort of…fade away. This is called submission, submission to Allah.

Elif: Okay this is a peak point, let's pause here before I forget. I wanted to ask you, I was curious about how you made your decision on your path, because unlike you I didn’t go searching many different paths in Sufism. I
was always attracted to Mevlana, Rumi, his poetry and whirling. I remember twirling endlessly as a little girl and wanting to be a dervish and experiencing that for a while at least. So that was attractive to me, however the little experience I had with the Sufi orders in Turkey, I found that it was just not for me. There were so many rules, hierarchies, segregation of men and women; it felt just so rigid to me. I thought, this is not for me. But for me, for someone who is a lover of freedom, and for whom Sufism is complete utter freedom, from all labels, I found these paths to be incredibly restrictive, repelling even. I want to be able to wear what I want, do what I want, be relaxed free from restriction and rules! So that’s how I end up attending some chats here and there but I am a solo, wanderer. I found the scholar Ahmed Hulusi provided me with that freedom and an interpretation of the path that made logical sense to me, and so I am here.

**Beyza:** Yes, I am like that too but some are much happier with big groups and orders. Everyone has their own path. There is no right or wrong way...

**Elif is conflicted.** This makes me wonder, to what extent is what I am going to say in this paper, representative of Sufism if at all?

**Beyza:** No one can represent Sufism. I think no one can represent a religion also, because it’s just about a personal experience and how can we represent or talk about personal experiences? Everyone can only witness themselves and how can someone represent their spiritual or religious experience? That’s why when you first said describe yourself I didn’t say I am a Sufi, because I can’t. Because Sufism is the core and the essence of the reality, there is no religion to it, its just reality that is experienced so how can someone represent that? You are completely free to write or express whatever you are going through and experiencing in this realm there is no one who can say you cannot write your thoughts and experiences. You most probably found some healing things in Sufism that you want to put into the psychological world so that people might get better and you can do this, you are allowed to this because you are putting things that you yourself believe that you experienced because you also went through a lot of things and you found that this path made you feel better, and you want to share it. You went through a great depression, and found a way to heal and now want to write about it! So no you don’t have to be a professor of Sufism, because like I said, it’s about the experience and for everyone the experience is different.

**Elif feels reassured, but a little overwhelmed.** You are right, I suppose I am just holding this intense dynamic...like Sufism is not a religion and yet it is based within a religion, within Islam. So you begin with addressing Islam, the
power dynamics there from terrorism, to Islamaphobia, so its external group relations. Then there is the internal group dynamic, this power struggle between different Islamic paths in which many don’t even consider Sufism as a legitimate practice, Sufis are killed and belittled, and of course there is all sorts of politics, gender having a big role, too. Then within Sufism there are different paths, there is brainwashing, there are some...really sketchy preachers...you know what I mean there so many layers and dynamics and power struggles. I remember, I had gone on a date with this man, and the second I started talking about Sufism he tried to “save me” because he thought I was brain washed by a Sufi order. I thought, I’m just a solo practitioner, if I were a Christian, Jew, Buddhist and so on he wouldn’t be doing this. Though I understand it’s just the bias that enfolds from the Turkish media. Anyway, amongst all of this, there are all sorts of layers in the psychological world as well, from the medical school of thought to even different ways of practice within the therapeutic world and power relations there...so I just kept thinking I am just one person, to what extent is what I say representative of the world of therapy or the world of Sufis…and what you said, hit it home for me...I need to discuss these things without claiming to represent them, without claiming anything other than trying to find a place for myself within them...

Beyza nods. Yes...this is human. Human means brain, brain means ideas, many stories. Everyone has their own story, its not our job to make our story the same as others, it’s just to tell it. Sufism is not a religion; it’s the core understanding of reality, it's not even Islam actually. Sufi just means, an experience of living reality without labels, it doesn’t matter which religious group that being belongs to. Because the path to that state can be any way! Any, way! Any religion or sanction! Being human doesn’t belong to a religion once you reach that state, of being beyond labels. It doesn’t mean that the path doesn’t matter; it just means there are many paths. Sufism says you have it all in you... You have all the paths, all the prophets in you. The universe is within you! So talking about religion becomes obsolete because you become one with all paths, with information that contains all the prophets that have come to be, with all existence. However yes, in the Sufi path to that state, you follow the prophet Muhammad, and it falls under the title Islam.

Elif: I understand reality is beyond religion it’s an experience- however it’s important to hold both together without the path overwhelming the destination but acknowledging its importance.

Beyza: Yes and this isn't an easy path. Getting to that state of non-judgement. So with practice and life you get there but you always tend to
judge, because the brain tries to protect the identity it has build up. So that’s why you also need a teacher to help you through the hurdles.

Elif: My teacher at University once asked me, “why would someone want to go through this if it’s so difficult?”

Beyza: Because I want to live my “reality.” For freedom. Freedom from struggles, from labels. Most come into this path because they suffer, and this helps people get relief from that suffering. Suffering comes from our learned conditions and expectations that arise from those conditions.

Elif: Or you go through physical or psychological trauma like accidents, abuse, war, and poverty…

Beyza: Yes, trauma and expectations from learned conditions. Small ones and big ones. These expectations usually don’t match with your life. You don’t get them all its impossible. I want this job, this relationship, and this person to do this, so on…

Elif: So most enter this path because they are suffering and there is something that helps them, pulls them into this way, because it offers a different way of thinking of their lives that helps alleviate their pain.

Beyza: Yes, and this is freedom. If one can reach a certain consciousness, it’s a total freedom.

Elif: This is why I wanted to bring these two things together. Sufism made sense because it offered a way for me to understand being human but also helped me heal, which is also what I found in psychology. But I am aware that the Sufi path goes beyond this…like ultimately its existential, it’s about not just healing your ego, but also in a metaphorical sense its destruction. However, most people who follow Sufism do not actually want to reach that state of “ego- free” they just follow the path for its therapeutic gift?

Beyza: Yes, usually people like following an idea, feeling like they belong to something, for the relief that comes from the path, they like learning, they like the practice…so perhaps there are many reasons but some don’t actually feel that intense drive to experience being “beyond the ego constructed self,” despite stating that is their ultimate desire…for many it might be that they are there for the journey rather than the destination. But that’s what the prophet Muhammad said about Jihad- the war against your ego, to observe “beyond the ego self.” In my years in this path, I found that there are few who truly
Elif: So then, I need a teacher, to be my mirror.... if I really want to throw myself into love and death that I talk about in this paper...I can't do it by myself?

Beyza: Umm...during my time in the Melamilik path with my first teacher, he always turned my mind from blaming the external world and finding what needs to change within myself. This is very difficult to do by yourself; very few people can do this. The brain works to protect the person and their identity they have formed. For example if someone says you are so ugly, you might say no I am not ugly, you are ugly! You know how children do? So usually the brain automatically finds fault in the external world, so that it can protect its self-concept and esteem. Whereas in Sufism there is no other, so whatever I am seeing is within myself. So if I attribute all that I see to the others around me and say that I do not have it within me too, then we fail to live unity, we live as though we are separate. So this habit or ingrained process is very difficult to break that's why you usually need a wise teacher, to guide you through this and show you yourself. So many go into Sufism to alleviate their suffering, a few continue to the very end, trying to do what I do.

Elif: So can we go back to how you were a feminist and then felt a shift within you?

Beyza: So during this phase in my life, I understood that the Quran was here for the human, not the Man or Woman, or any gender orientation or sex, it came for all the humans, the manifestation of the attributes of Allah, of creation, in the human brain, and I believed that we were here to be human, to live as an actualized human. I believed a human, in its truest form does not have a gender, that consciousness doesn't not have a gender. We have to raise the understanding of consciousness so that we could be free, but they were not letting women have the same rights as men. So I began to struggle, fight against this. I learned that you cannot prohibit a woman or anyone in fact from entering the mosque and they were doing this. In the Quran there is a special section for Friday prayer yet women were not being allowed to go to Friday prayer. So I started trying to push through this with my friends. It was kind of a feminist movement in a religious path. They were not allowing women to take part in Funeral prayers either, as if women are not allowed to pray- why? There is nothing of this in the Quran, nowhere, this is all tradition or politics it had nothing to do with religion. So I tried to pray. We got kicked out of many mosques, sometimes in the middle of our prayers. Finally, the event I talked about occurred with the reporters took my picture and it became...
Elif: How did you feel when that happened?

Beyza: I just kept thinking, I didn’t do anything. I didn’t plan it, I didn’t organize it, I had no idea people were following me that they would take my picture. I didn’t do anything. I was only praying, I went to a private Friday prayer that didn’t disturb anyone, in secret. I didn’t do anything. It was such a big bomb, it shook everyone. For one month the papers argued about women praying, if it’s okay for them to go to Friday prayers, amongst men and women, without a scarf…there were TV programs, professors came, religious people came, every channel…there was an army of reporters in front of my house and I couldn’t leave the house for a month.

Elif: How did you feel?

Beyza: I was shaken because of my husband, and my children…because my children had to face things at school, children saying things about me, and my husband was a known figure in the ruling political party that promoted wearing a headscarf. I had nothing against headscarfs but I personally did not wear one. At the time, I was experiencing the glimpse of freedom, of feeling of being without a gender, or boundaries- this freedom-feeling, so I didn’t think what I wore had any importance…like you don’t need these boundaries, I was in that mode, so it was normal for me and I didn’t care about what I wore or who I was with man or woman at prayer. I didn’t do this at the time to show something to someone or create a movement, to rebel…so I wasn’t scared but I understood as a result, that I actually did not care about what people thought of me, said about me and that made me happy. I felt free of that…the whole country is talking, the prime minister made a speech about me saying don’t ask questions about Mrs Zapsu, it is their own private family business, but I didn’t care what people said. It was…freeing. I had nothing to do with politics and didn’t mean any harm. I had been going to this place to pray for many years.

Elif: What happened next?

Beyza: So what happened immediately after was that the government announced that this movement happened –they called it a movement, probably because women wanted to go to the mosque for Friday prayer. So they decided to make sure every mosque in the country would have space for women for Friday prayer. So this changed. So my praying next to men was not accepted, nor was praying without my headscarf. But women were
allowed to go pray on Fridays. Everyone wrote about this, with mixed opinions negative and positive. But one woman, a reporter wrote something, which made me happy. She said, she has a seven year old son, and every morning the headlines was about this subject with my picture on it without a headscarf and the discussion was can someone pray without a scarf or not. She said, “some say yes and some say no, I don’t know what is true but what I know for sure is, if they will ask my 7 year old son after 10 years can someone pray without a scarf, he will say yes, because I saw it.”

Laughter.

This made me happy. Another thing that made me happy was, I got very negative writings on social media, especially from those who had head covers, they thought I was discriminating or something...during those years, public buildings and schools didn’t allow girls with headscarf’s to study or work because of Turkey’s “secularist” policies, this changed later. So they said, the only place we are allowed to go feeling accepted with our head covered is a mosque and you did this…and so on. So, after one month I went to the cinema with my friend, for a change. I went to the toilet, and a woman came into the toilet she was covered completely head and body. I saw her, I thought oh no, she recognized me. She looked and said, can I hug you? I was surprised said yea, sure. She said, because of you we can all go to Friday prayer now, thank you. That really made me happy.

Things like this happened…and within myself I felt, I didn’t do anything. This was meant to happen, but I didn’t plan it I didn’t do it on purpose...I felt a need to change things yes, but this was not planned, never my intention.

Well, then I got this image as an activist then...But interestingly, the reporters were trying to connect me to someone; they wanted to create a story a sensation. They didn’t believe I was just trying to pray on my own not make some kind of movement. So they found scholar Ahmed Hulusi, who I had no relationship with at that time. They knew he had open, modern perspectives so they found him and asked him questions on a TV program if he knew me, and so on…and tried to make a story. But that was the first connection I had with Ahmed Hulusi. One year later we met face to face through a friend, and during this time I had begun reading his work. After I met Ahmed Hulusi, I gained another perspective, and found answers to all my questions regarding Allah, creation and the Universal system. He saw me and said, “Who are you fighting with?” That changed something in me. That’s when I stopped fighting with the systems around me and turned my struggles into my internal world. It’s not that I didn’t speak up
about my thoughts about the external world, but my fight ended. I stopped going to mosques and fighting with people.

*Laughter.*

In the meantime lots of things changed, women were allowed to go to funeral prayers, for example, women with scarfs were allowed in public institutions and so on…

So after my meeting, I shifted into a different perspective. My external war, turned into an internal one. I eventually didn’t even feel the need to go the mosque to pra anymore…So I became more at peace when I changed, when my struggle from my external world shifted to my internal one, when I felt like the external didn’t have power over my internal one.

**Elif:** I was wondering if we can talk a bit more directly about the role of women in Sufism and your internal struggles as a Sufi woman, who has been teaching and learning about this path for over a decade.

**Beyza:** When Islam first surfaced, females were almost not considered human. They were burying, killing, female children that were born, they were not considered valuable, and they were considered a burden.

**Elif:** They still get killed now….

**Beyza:** Yes, but then it was even more prevalent, and it was considered normal. But then, information that explains the importance of being human and living your reality through the Quran was revealed, with specific references to the value of female children, and importance of women and of mothers. Interestingly, the prophet Muhammad’s only living child, is the saint Fatima, and all those linked back to him genetically are linked to saint Fatima, everyone from the Sufi tree genetically, comes from a woman, saint Fatima. The Prophet Muhammad says she is one those closest to him, in terms of actualized potential. There is Rabia el-adeviyye, a most frequently talked about Sufi saint across time and place, of course Mother Mary, Zeynep the Prophets grandchild and a few others but again, compared to the men that are discussed they are very few. I think this is because woman even today are still not given equal power and rights, just look at the ratio of men and women in politics today, for example and so on. Though we are seeing a time in many nations where more and more women are given more rights. However, another thing, I also believe that it is more difficult to live as a actualized human in a women’s body because of our hormones, and if we have children our attachment to our children. This can make it very difficult to
let go of labels and attachments, our possessiveness, of our ego identity as women or mother. You can see this in the animal kingdom at times as well. It’s a brain issue, hormones (until menopause) and attachment to your children with emotionality makes it more difficult to live your “reality,” as these things strengthen your ego making it very strong.

**Elif:** Of course these are all generalizations.

**Beyza:** Just generalizing here. However, I do think, after reaching that point of being beyond the ego, the process of actualization is easier for women than men because a strong ego is a strong consciousness but these things are just my opinion.

**Elif:** There is a perception that woman in Islam still today-

**Beyza:** That has nothing to do with Islam-

**Elif:** I know but there is a perception that women in Islam have little rights due to probably Islamic nations we see today, especially in Saudi Arabia, UAE-

**Beyza:** Yes, but not all nations. For example, when I went to Malaysia 15 years ago, there were women police officers, women with headscarves on motorcycles, they were going and doing everything like the men. In Turkey even, during those times, women covered wouldn’t leave the house, all of that changed with the current political party. Its all about perception and struggle…sometimes women against women…learned behaviour but not religion. People must learn the real message of Islam. I believe its not about gender, its about being human and living our reality, that we are not the roles we are playing, mother, father, sibling whatever role we are playing, women, man, it doesn’t matter that’s just the role we are playing and our only purpose in our lives is to live our essential reality, without this there will be fighting for power amongst those roles you think you are. That’s what I believe, what I learned from Sufism. It’s not our physical attributes or who we claim to be externally, it’s our internal process of being and actualizing. It doesn’t mean our body doesn’t matter or exist, but that its not something we can confine our true selves to, which is the observer of that information.

**Elif coughs and clears her throat. She is beginning to feel tired.** Yes. So returning to that point when your external struggle shifted to your internal…

**Beyza looks peaceful.** The second I realized my environment can’t change me within I relaxed…
Elif pauses. Carl Rogers (1961, 248) might say it was a shift of your self-concept from an external locus of evaluation to an internal one…

Beyza: I guess so, but I also realized that real, big change, takes time. I was at peace with that too, like it was a submission to the process. The gate was open, it was beginning, women were going to prayer, and so on, but it is a slow but steady change and I was happy to be in an internal state of the observer. When my internal self felt secure, when I was sure of myself that nothing external could change my internal world, the fight feeling left.

Elif: I get it, its not that you didn’t voice your opinion its just that you were content to say and do what you felt but also not be “in it” so to speak, so it was a shift of perspective from rebelling and fighting, feeling unsafe and searching for a safe place to an internal perspective, feeling safe in your own internal home, and observing and responding to events, and submitting to the process. Doing what you have to and knowing everything enfolds, as it needs to. Which was possible by feeling more secure in your own self, not needing external validation… So would you say one of your biggest internal wars, after your shift from the external war to internal one was to be a woman with children? So letting go of your “attachment” to your children, feeling possessive of them, unable to let go of the label of “mother”?

Beyza: Yes. My biggest internal struggle has been and still is, my children. When you suffer, I suffer, I want to save you and so on…

Elif: Ah, that reminds me of the story of how the prophet Abraham is told by Allah to Sacrifice his son, so the Sufis say it was a metaphor, sacrifice your most beloved “identity” as father and son, for the love of god, and see that we are all one. So when you are one, you lose all of your identities and the strongest identity for many is that of mother and father…

Elif pauses and feels tired. So we are coming to the end of our talk, we have spoken about a lot of struggles that you personally went through in your life, living and teaching Sufism and as a woman and mother in Turkey. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Beyza smiles warmly. I am just very happy that you are doing this, bravely. You found that this path, you own path was beneficial for you and wanted to merge it with your training, and I just respect that…just the fact that you are attempting it, doing it. So I want to say thank you for that.
Elif also smiles and leans over to half hug her by the legs. Awww-

Beyza looks happily down at Elif. Yea. I believe there will be beautiful outcomes, whatever it might be...yes... That’s all...we don’t know what your study will produce who will benefit from what, but just the fact that you are writing, opens a door for anyone to come and take things from it, its great.

Elif leans back, smiling at Beyza. I want to thank you for everything. This “interview”, everything you have taught me and taught many people who have learned from you, for ma lifeee

Laughter

...and for just being you and giving the most valuable gift to people, which is you, yourself. May Allah give you health and peace...

For this project.... I thought that...both therapy and Sufism just fit so beautifully together, I found the benefits from them too, and thought both sides could benefit from each other...they just sang in unison for me...and I just wanted...I just wanted this journey we all are on, to be easier, for everyone. Because it’s really difficult. So...if I could describe my intention in one word it would be “Kolaylaşsın” (English translates to a few words, “may it be easier”).

So that is my intention. Simply to make this process, our lives, whoever we are, our struggles, easier. So that is my desire, my main hope, why I am doing this. If I can achieve that in any way possible even just a little, for even just one person, I will be very, very happy....

Kolaylaşsın.

****

A while later...

I walk into my office upstairs. Death is there, wearing a skull and bones black and white t-shirt and white shorts. She props up her small feet onto my desk and fixes her nails with her black, glitter nail file.

Death: What’s up.
Elif: Is it time?
**Death:** *Rolling her eyes.* What are we doing here, re-enacting *Waiting for Godot*? (Death is alluding to Samuel Beckett’s (2006) play, *Waiting for Godot*, it is also phrase generally used to depict waiting for something and or someone that never comes, in this case Death never comes as a form of an “end” as I am eternal). I mean, are you ready to unravel your “mother” knots?

**Elif:** What are they? I feel like I have done so much unravelling already. I love her. We have gone through hard times together these past few years, which I believe have unravelled my biggest knots with her. I mean when I was younger I equated attention with love. If you love someone, then you spend time with that person, give them attention, and mom and dad were absent a lot so I felt unloved. But as I got older, I got very ill for a long period…and with that we spent a lot of time together and I felt my parent’s love and care and I believed that was healing. When I saw how much my mom was willing to do and go through to make sure I was okay, my past pain dissipated…that sort of…empty feeling I carried with me all those years, left, like a miracle.

At present, I realized that I equated love with empathy and sympathy. If you love only according to how you feel with no sympathy or empathy for me how can you claim to love me? It felt like such a big disconnection from me, and I felt that love came with connection and flow. Obviously there are occasions and reasons this could not be possible- but generally. Anyway, I am going off topic. What I mean to say is, I have come to realize that everyone has different ways and capacities for love. I cannot claim to comprehend it and it is not my place to judge it…and for me my whole issue with my mother, my knot was the need to feel that I was loved…which is why I think…my biggest knots are gone, with her. I realize that better as I listened to her life story. I forgive myself, and her for all our mistakes. I love her and I am grateful for her for everything…I am not any different, from anyone. It was always about accepting myself unconditionally anyway, not about her in truth.

*Death nods along, now painting her nails black and white.*

I mean that’s not to say all my expectations from her as a mother have disappeared and I no longer see her as my “mother.” I am not sure how to unravel that!

**Death:** *Finishing up her polish, looks up.* Oh, I would have to get rid of her. *She gives a cheeky grin.* I mean, transform your “mom” as a character in your book that you have written in your head. Here let me put it this way, her character ends, and in return you see her in her true form. You see yourself in her, exploring the world of your novel.
But I don’t work for free hun, for this you need to pay the fee by meeting love. Love is definitely not Antonio anymore though, if that helps.

Elif: Wuhuu! Who is it now?

Death: Blows on her nails. No one.

Elif: Wow, nice! Juliet killed Romeo! Quick work. All those romance novels I read as a kid, those “I will die without you, my soul, my heart,” stuff is finally over! You know I read so many of them, most of them historical romance novels. Don’t get me started on Disney films either. I mean thinking about it now, its so harmful to teens, it idealizes genuinely unhealthy, obsessive, relationships as the reason for living and I think I must of adopted that line of thought- my partner will complete me and be my only reason for happiness-thought. Why are all these romance novels and films so addictive? Why was I like this?

Death: Shrugs. Lonely hearts search for completion in the form of themselves.

Elif: On a much more spiritual level, Rumi stops searching for Shems when he finds him within…anyway, so great. Romeo is dead…but how dead is he?

Death: Well, he is not dead he is just not Antonio, or Romeo…he is not a lover. He is no one. He is you.

Elif: I am the lover.

Death: Well, there is no other you here, who else would it be?

Elif: Wow. That is true. Sufi’s devote their lives to unraveling the hidden mysteries of the universe, which can be understood by unraveling the mysteries of YOU. I mean Me. I was looking for love so that I could “die”, but I was love all along. Wait-hold up- I feel like we just arrived at the end of this journey, this search, this thesis! I AM LOVE. Now, what?

Oh, is it time?

Death: Her laughter tinkles through the room as she stands to leave.
No hun, its not the end, its just the beginning!
Now it’s time to meet YOU. You are love, yes. But who are you?
Show me yourself, that is when your time will come. She dissolves into
In this chapter we are introduced to Death, a creation of my brain, who is here to lead me to love. Death suggests I must understand myself better in order to find love.

We are introduced to my mom, her life story, its impact on me and thus on this thesis and our interpretation of Sufism.

We are presented with possible gender roles and political dynamics within Turkish Islam.

I suggest that this perspective of Sufism is based on living as one that is beyond collective conditions and labels, as one being manifested in different forms.

I discuss reasons why Sufism can be beneficial with my mother, I note that in particular it has helped me heal my mental health and thus I desired to formulate a way for it to help others as well.

My mother and I note the difficulties for a woman on a Sufi path, she suggests that is of particular hardship for women with children, to be able to let go of their attachment to the label of them as their “children.”

Death arrives for a conversation, and I understand that I was in fact Love all along, the Love that I was looking for, however the real search now is to discover who that Love is-who I am in truth.
Chapter Four

Intermission: In Transition
Reflections on the “Interview” with my mother:
“Ethical” thoughts while walking

Sage and Bay Leaf, Protection and Grounding (Appendix 274)

“It is through the female that the world is set free” (Goethe 2006, 212).
- The last words of *Faust*.

October 01, 2021
Istanbul, Turkey

I stand outside my door and stare at my grey and white shoes. They are new and clean, for a change. I am pretty tired and moody, but also good. A little grey. But also white.

My shoes open their mouths and start nagging.

*Hey, Elif! Why are you just standing there? Did you forget how to walk?*

I glare at my shoes and head out, zipping up my thin-white-raincoat and pressing down my white cap.

My cap liked the “interview” and wanted to share its feelings.

It strokes my hair and sadly begins:

At times, in my “woman’s world,” there can be:

Abuse, rape, and murder.

A bruised eye, a body in a bag, absent fathers and husbands, secret families and lovers, broken-hearted depressed mothers…

Abuse, rape, and murder.

Leers and fondles, cover up or get chased, don’t be alone in a cab or a club-

Abuse, rape, and murder.

You can’t be intelligent or strong,
You can’t work, or you work too hard,  
Sit separately from men or on their laps.  
Stay at home.  
Be quiet.  
Serve your master.

Abuse, rape, and murder.

At times, my women’s world in Turkish Islam can be:  
If you cover your head, and go to the bar, they laugh at you.  
If you don’t cover your head, and go to the mosque, they shout at you.

Abuse, rape, and murder.

At times, my world in Sufi Islam can be:

You are dehumanized by those who hate Islam.  
You are rejected by those who love Islam.  
You are considered a part of a brainwashed cult OR  
You are not considered a Sufi because you do not belong to a Sufi sect.  
You are outside politics. Outside religion. Outside societal norms.  
If you stay silent, you are left alone.  
If you use your voice,  
at best, you are misunderstood,  
at worst,  
depending on where you are,  
you get killed (Specia 2017).

But,  
Silence Speaks,  
And if left unheard for too long,  
grows into language.

From this point forward,  
I will speak.

I will speak for all those who are repressed and unheard,  
regardless of who they are and what they believe.  
I will speak of love and acceptance beyond boundaries.  
I will hear, and I will be heard.
I may be loved, and I may be hated, but I will be Me, and I will SPEAK.

I will use these words in this paper to find where I begin and end, to discover how to provide a haven for all who wish to live freely as they desire,

beyond religion, ethnicity and boundaries, gender or politics, within a country filled with gender based violence, political, class, ethnic and religious division.

My experiences led me into feminism in my twenties, after which I evolved into a humanist, and now perhaps I have simply become Ibn’ Adam (son of Adam).
A human, “activist” for the rights of the human, including the post-human, Or simply Hu.
Hu encompasses all, from where I look out and desire the rights for all to live with freedom and respect.

It is amongst these lines that I decide to push boundaries.

What right do I have to mix spirituality and religion with research theory, method and practice?

Perhaps, all the right, as the right to be me, should be given, and the right to read me, or be with me, is also given.

Psychotherapy is based on belief systems, which often incorporate different spiritual thoughts. What makes theory acceptable but spirituality and religion untouchable?

Perhaps, it is but our boundaries and dis-ease at bringing taboo and or sensitive subjects into academia, our dis-ease that comes with the unknown, and our personal belief systems, religious or non-religious. It appears to me that philosophy has become religion. Theory is stressed that it must be “lived and practiced…for philosophy is praxis” (Ferrando 2020, 21:33). That it impacts the way one
eats, behaves, and perceives the world (ibid). Philosophy at times has had even greater power than religion and has been used as a tool for atrocious acts and crimes: for example, Hitler and Pol Pot cannot be associated with any of the popular faiths, yet both can be described as following and living a philosophy (Kiernan 2001; Sherratt 2013). Why is it that religion is untouchable? Is religion not also about personal interpretation and lived experience of a text? If I spoke about being an atheist, would that be more acceptable?

It is these points I wish to push.

I am not concerned about being ridiculed or rejected. I am also not here to preach about a way of being, as someone who desires to create an approach which accepts all orientations and beliefs into its heart: Atheist- Christian-Jew-Buddhist-Anything-Anyone.

But I do desire to break boundaries.

For in truth, at its core, this thesis is not about religion or even about spirituality.

It is about love.

Sufis believe in the religion of love, a love that comes with acceptance of all regardless of faith and only grows with our capacity to let go of the walls that we have built against each other because of our differences.

A love that comes with death.

The death of the self-concept we have built which separates us from the other.

I begin walking toward the forest, but no one is around.

I am not a Priest, Shaman, Rabbi, Monk, or Imam. I am not a Saint or a Prophet. I have no religious power and I do not speak for any religion. However, I create my path from spiritual and religious concepts in Sufism. What I am suggesting is ultimately exploring a way of being that is my own, thus, is not religion, merely “based on,” as are many concepts and theories. For example, one can suggest that Carl Jung (1991) was inspired by Sufis or by mystics in his work with the collective consciousness and archetypes. One can take that further and write and explore whether Jung was a Sufi. One
could do the same for Carl Rogers (1961) and explore to what extent he might have been inspired by, or his works are similar to, Christian and Buddhist concepts...or perhaps, one could even expand his theory into Sufism! Hence first and foremost, I must state that this is not a religious paper, and I have no religious power. It is, however, at times a philosophical and spiritual discovery, an experiential exploration, mindful and mindless exploration—
or as my supervisor once called it, a mind fuck.
Ah-yet another point. Is it okay for me to swear to use profanity within the same pages I use the word, Allah?
It is for me, is it for you?
It is important for me to be authentic and let my audience decide and react to the things I say. To note moments of discomfort or comfort—fear and love, sadness and elation, confusion or clarity.
I write with the hope that we learn more about ourselves by exploring our internal reactions to the words on the paper. But if you do happen to get angry or upset, please do feel to write to me or please do feel to note it down, because learning about and expanding our sense of self gives joy and freedom.
Even negative reactions are progress for the both of us. The more we understand each other, the more we “become.”
At least, that is my belief.

*Bright-yellow-dandelions are laughing at me, their faces smiling, they pave my way on the forest hill, happily whirling in the wind, they want me to join. I kneel down, gently pet one and tell them, “maybe next time.” I continue treading up.*

What are the risks of bringing religion into theory, method, and practice?

There are considerable voices against this because of ethical and religious concerns (O’donoghue 2012; Freud 1927; Hood 2012). Arguments may include, firstly, that religion is untouchable and should not be subjected to research or study, and secondly, that it provides room for many ethical violations.

I would suggest that if I and many in my environment desire for this approach to be manifested and be of use, then for those who deem it acceptable, it should be a right to access and for those who do not, they are free not to read it or to reject it. In Turkey, there currently is a new therapeutic approach built around Rumi’s work called Mesnevi Therapy (Tarhan 2017), which utilizes
Rumi’s Sufi philosophy, storytelling, and poetry as a means of healing, showing that Sufism has already begun to take hold and offer solace within mental health to the people of Turkey. Additionally, it is worth remembering that historically Islam and health have been intertwined and used by polymaths, that it was not until the rise of Western medicine and its power on the world that religion and well-being split (Badri 2013, 13; Druart 1996, 257; Yılani 2018).

Is there any way for my words not to offend my readers who do not share my beliefs?

I certainly hope so. By writing conscientiously, not claiming my words as truth, and repeating my love and devotion to all, regardless of their positions on the world. By being unconditionally accepting and asking for empathy, that I too, deserve the right to live my own reality in my own way and to practice and share my beliefs.

While I might play with theory, method, and approach, I will always adhere to the COSCA code of ethics (Counselling and Psychotherapy in Scotland 2018). I also do not claim to be trying to change or alter a single word of religious text; these are just my interpretations of Sufi concepts and cannot be in any way compared to the Quran.

This paper may be distressing to those who disagree with Sufism. This is inescapable.

As mentioned earlier, I can only hope that readers or individuals recognize my love and deep respect for difference and diversity and not take my words as a means of threatening their view of the world. However, it is a study that lets the audience know about the subject. No one is forced to see it in their daily lives; this paper gives the audience a choice. There are millions of voices, and we might not want to hear all of them. This is where I protect my right to be different, within ethical boundaries by giving the audience the freedom to be or not be with me within my words. My readers are given a warning, given love and acceptance. The rest is up to them, whether or not they wish to open or close the doors to my mind.

Regardless of what may come, it is important to note that I will have the support of friends, family, and therapy throughout this study and beyond, and my health and safety are not at risk.

A few raindrops sprinkle down, and my hat absorbs them, breathing them in
deeply and gratefully. Large pine trees lining up the path begin to giggle. They hear us rambling and think we are amusing. One opens her eyes and says,

“Hello, child.”
I stop and look at her, “Hello grandma tree.”
She stretches out her arms, “Want a cuddle?”
I go gratefully and hug her.
She pats me awkwardly with her branches, taking my pain and healing me, “everything can be resolved with some love.”
I laugh and say, “thank you!” as I leave.
I have almost reached the top of the hill where I can rest.
I continue.

At the end of my study I must discuss the ethics of my results including access to therapy, but as of now I must note that this paper is also about creating SPACE. By merging the West and East we create Istanbul and make room for a decolonized way of being that appreciates feminism and the role of women in Islam.

My shoes slip on the stones and I grumble, “Careful!”
Whoops! I am starting to get weary...

I wander back into my thoughts, back in time.

When I arrived in London at 17, the airport security asked why I did not return to my country and study there. It was not a surprise that I was initially only able to make friends with Turks and Pakistanis. When I moved to Edinburgh, I automatically gravitated to the only Muslim female in a room filled with white Americans and Brits. Perhaps, the “Brexit- Turks are coming!” headlines (Merrick 2017) had helped exemplify what I was unconsciously feeling, that I was less than welcome.

Perhaps something about the past and present British and American Empires filtered through and colonized my mind, though it is worth noting that I was born from the remnants of an empire, bringing states of power and the powerless together.

Deconstructing therapy both within the West and within my home felt necessary; this is “…about challenging a very hostile, violent and white-dominated system…and decolonizing our mind(s)…(by continuously) reviewing our conditioning” (Mullan 2020). While this paper will review our
conditions in both Sufi and Rogerian terms, I must begin by stating my privilege, which starts with not having to live in poverty and having a safe space to write and to live. It extends somewhat into checking a “white other” box on forms, which is still seen as a “higher” status across countries, though most certainly an outsider (Rothenberg 2015). It continues with the fact that I am a woman, and this too can at times, be a privilege; as one is exempt from the expectations and conditions of men in society, one basic example might be not being forced to go to the army here in Turkey (Hurriyet Daily News 2019). Finally, though the list can be dense, I will continue with the fact that I write from privilege as the University of Edinburgh and my supervisors have granted me the freedom to be me (within basic boundaries)-a very precious gift. As such, I am both powerful and powerless. I am grey and white. I have spoken more about the white, and now I need to bring in the grey.

I feel that female voices need to be heard more, especially in the Islamic world. A “Woman must write her self…(a)Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement… (For)” (a) woman has always functioned within the discourse of man….” (Cixous 1976, 875, 887). Using religion as a tool to take away the rights of females across ages is unacceptable, at least for many. After the Turkish Republic formed from the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, the first President’s daughter, Afet Inan (1962), wrote about women’s emancipation in Islam; she admitted that it was not Islam but social and cultural norms that brought down the status of women. While doing background research (private, written for Scotland Yard) on Honour Killings and Forced Marriages for my Masters’s degree in Criminology in 2012, I also found that crimes were committed due to culture and society and had nothing to do with religion. Consequently, we must begin by separating religion from people and focusing on the actual cause; let us focus on this instance on the women…

I slide into another memory.

I am twenty-one. I sit with a group of women at a school in a conservative and poor neighbourhood in the outskirts of Istanbul. The principal walks the corridors with a gun. I have arrived as a social worker, checking in on their school’s conditions. They are reluctant to speak, so I ease the tension. “I am here as your friend, nothing you do not wish to be known, will leave this room. Any complaints or wishes you have that you desire to be heard, I am here to pass them on to my organization so that they can assist you. Please feel free to speak about anything….”

I continue talking, giving examples, and stories of myself…time passes and I
note down concerns, about their children, and teachers, when suddenly one
parent looks at me and says,
“I want to leave my husband, he beats me and my child. But my friends say
that men have the right to treat us, as they will, that I should just stick through
it… I often consider running away…”

Just as I begin to speak, several women chime in.

“You should leave him!”
“No she can’t what will people say?”
“Men can be like this, we just have to accept it and do our duty.”

More voices are against her leaving than supportive of her desire to end her
marriage.

I feel upset and frustrated.

I recall the bruised faces of the women I saw, who also were afraid to end
their marriage because of what “others” would say.

I recall the weekly murders in the newspapers of young girls for doing nothing
other than being a girl.

I recall a friend with her abusive husband:

“He keeps saying he never laid a hand on me, and so does my family and
friends…but the way he screams at me, I feel like I am being punched over
and over and over, and the things he says, I feel like I am being
stabbed…sometimes I feel afraid for my life or that I need to stab or punch
him to protect myself and get him to stop…yet he never, not once, touches
me…so, no one understands…I don’t even understand.”

I recall endless faces, including my own, filled with fear.

That day, I returned home and decided to study Criminology, so that I could
help protect women from violence and murder in Turkey, a daily and weekly
occurrence.

I received my Master’s degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice a year
later.

I come back to my awareness.
I look across and see a breathtaking view of the Bosphorus strait.
My shoes shout, “Phew! Give me rest!”
I sit down on the benches with a smile and sigh. Silence.

One minute later, I fall back into the past again.

During one of my sessions with my therapist in my early twenties, I was told that I knew how to be a child and a mother, but not a woman.
It’s been ten years and I still didn’t forget that one sentence—it goes to show you the power of words!

I didn’t forget because I remember being utterly confused. I didn’t even know the meaning of the word, let alone being it!
What WAS a woman?
Befuddled, I went home and actually typed it into Google, “What is a woman?”
The first answers that came out were along the lines of “an adult female human being and a female person.”
So, did she mean I didn’t know how to be a “female?”
Well, what in the world did THAT mean?
I believe Google answered by saying something akin to, “a person that can produce eggs, that can produce offspring. Like a deer.”

A deer. I laughed, and moved on.

Looking back I realize that I should have asked what being a woman meant to her, that would have been much more enlightening than the standard definition. I did, however, sense that what she meant was that I wasn’t really aware of my body, as a woman. I had a boyfriend, but my first instinct was always to look from a child-like and mothering mind rather than a mature one.

I get up and make my way back home, my shoes rolling down happily.

There are definite biological differences with being born with male and female bodies.

Generally speaking (Goldman 2017): females are said to use both sides of their hemispheres more, whereas male brains have been shown to prefer generalized locations more; female brains are said to have a bigger hippocampus and males larger amygdala’s, female brains secrete more oestrogen, males more androgen, females have XY genotypes and males XX…
These are all generalizations. Every brain and body is different, hence the LGBTQ+ rights movement.

Of course, the near future might be very different with genetic modifications and the rise in post-humanism.

However, in the here and now, this is still the case and will likely be so for the next few years.

Despite gender being a social and cultural construct, there is much evidence to show that there is very much, in fact, a type of human or person born with these generalizable biological differences and is called a woman. That yes, of course, there are women.

To suggest otherwise might be incredibly upsetting for millions across the world who still struggle to gain acceptance and the right to utilize the label “female,” “woman,” and “girl” to have freedom and equality within those words. Let us not forget that “…writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural-hence political, typically masculine-economy…where a woman has never her turn to speak…” (Cixous 1976, 879).

Freedom should not come at the cost of others losing their rights. Within transition, we need to make sure that the rights of others are not abused or lost. In my own country, I believe secularism liberated some but also reinforced the oppression of others. Women in Turkey with covered hair were banned from receiving a public education or being a part of the public workforce (Head 2010); my grandmother, who decided to cover her head at thirty, had even been thrown out of restaurants for wearing a scarf!! Sufism, too, was banned in the name of modernization, of reforms when Turkey was founded (Harvard Divinity School 2021). This process might be seen as an example of why, when trying to give rights to one group, we must be careful not to lose the rights of another.

If it does not bother me to wear a headscarf, I can put one on so that others feel at ease when I go to a mosque, for others cannot as easily take them off. I can also request separate sections in a mosque…and thanks to my mother, I can go to Friday prayer. There are alternative solutions to allowing freedom for difference and diversity while ensuring we are not just changing those in power within groups. I believe this should not be about a shift in power from one to another and continuing the endless repetition of mistakes of dictatorship, but the spread of power across differences and diversity.
While I state all of this, I must add that I don’t always feel that I am a woman (perhaps my old therapist was right!), at least not entirely. I, too, believe that “…gender that is introduced through the simile lacks “reality,” and is taken to constitute an illusory appearance” (Butler 1999, xxiii).

This view is not merely about breaking the chains of the connotations and expectations that come with female organs, such as giving birth or marriage. It is not just about accepting our male and female aspects within our personality, within our brain. It is about breaking through all shackles and all labels. I am given this body but I am beyond it. It does not confine me, but out of respect to it, I try to give it food, shelter, love and freedom of living as it desires. My body is my friend, my animal, and my machine. I am beyond my body, thus I feel at times, beyond gender- not genderless, but body-less. I create the body I desire.

As I walk down the forest, I pause as I see Death pixel in through the trees. She is wearing a shirt that says Love, black tights and rocker make-up. No longer blond, her hair has grown into a deep shade of brown, which she wears loose, she looks like me as a teenager. She is wearing large earphones, connected to her phone. She smiles and waves, and gives me signal as if to say, ‘listen.’ When she steps closer to me, I get the scent of vanilla cupcakes and see a dash of sparkles. She show’s me what she is listening to.


Death smiles. She steps back, and pixels out.

To lose my self and become label-less. That is what I desire. To “abandon (my) conditionings…(my) humanly emotions, stop thinking like a person and open (myself) to the Universal realities” (Hulusi 2020, 1). I desire to sleep as much as needed and have sex as much as needed, but if I am beyond the body, I do not want to be addicted TO the body and its needs. To food. To sex. To work and so on. I wish to be free. To lose my sense of “self” as an “other” from all that is.

That is my “felt sense” (Gendlin 1978, xvi), that is my perspective and at times my lived experience. If asked, I state that I am a woman. However, in truth my first response will be to say, I am a Human. I accept difference and embrace it, I encourage all to live as they desire and I am against force and
manipulation.

My female body desires love, love that comes first with unconditional acceptance and next with “self” annihilation. I am not separate from my body but I can separate from it. It is an animal-machine, I am a cosmic-one. Rather than as a woman, I would prefer you saw me as yourself in another form, where we are one but look from two.

That is how I desire to live, but around me, many see me as a woman, divorced and alone. Head covered at times, open at others. Covered clothes at times, mini skirts on others, a “female” in need of affection at times, “masculine” dominating at others. They see my character and its fluidity. They don’t see Me.

If Sufis live as though they are beyond the body, creating politics out of dress is absurd. Dress is irrelevant. You wear it not to upset your surroundings, cover on or off. Your dress is your gender, sex, occupation, ethnicity, and clothes. You dress to change character. You dress to perform.

I have arrived to where I have begun. I wait in front of my door looking at my shoes. Have I gone off topic, on target, have said too little or too much? Perhaps I have said enough...At least for now.

What do you think, shoes?

Chapter Notes

- In this chapter some crucial ethical concerns were addressed.
- I argued that integrating spirituality and or religion with therapy is not that different from philosophical approaches that are based on belief systems.
- I suggest Sufism is the religion of love, by which I mean it is beyond “religion,” it enters a place of unconditional acceptance where conditions and value judgements are no longer of relevance.
- This approach is not and does not represent a religion or all Sufi’s, it is merely based on Sufi concepts, as interpreted by myself from existing sources. It cannot be compared to any religious text and I hold no religious or spiritual power.
- I mention how this is not new, that historically Islam and health have always been integrated until therapy became colonized by Western
approaches.

- I commit to writing as honest and conscientious as possible and to adhere to the COSCA code of ethics.
- Points of personal states of privilege from my perspective are noted.
- I note my desire to increase the voice of “female” authors in Islam and therapy, especially as a means of supporting human rights and empowerment. I explore what the word female and woman means to me, as a “Sufi.”
Chapter Five

HU*
Are you?

*HU: The source of all names, including Allah (Ahmed Hulusi 2013, 33).
MAP OF TURKEY
(Orangemile 2021)
Dark Chocolate: Please enquire its heavy metal content as some brands can be toxic (Appendix page 277).


Urfa Town Centre, Turkey
Balikligöl and Abrahams Cave
October 22nd 2019

“Love annihilates the ego; there is no ‘me’ in love. This selflessness is what enables one to enter the land of power, where miracles occur” (Hulusi 2020, #677).

On the left is the cliff where the Prophet Abraham is said to have been thrown into a pit of fire by King Nimrod as a punishment for breaking the idols in the city that were being worshiped: It is said that the fire turned into what is now known as Balikligöl “the lake with fishes” seen on the right (The Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2019).
I stand watching the cliff, waiting to board the bus to the ancient site of Göbeklitepe just outside the city.

**Death** is next to me. She has on a white, thick, bathrobe with a towel wrapped around her head, her small toes are wiggling in flip flops, she looks like she just got out of the shower.

**Elif:** What is this, a water theme?

**Death:** Don’t ask me, you are the one who always gets out of the shower late.

**Elif:** He wasn’t scared of you. He jumped into the fire, knowing he had all he needed within.

**Death:** Are you scared of me?

**Elif:** The more I feel I have control of my body and that I am beyond it, the less I fear you. These days, I do not fear you for I am getting to know you. But Love… that is perhaps more frightening and unknown.

**Death:** As we said, to find love, you must find yourself. **HU are you?**

As the bus honks its horn death pixels away and I turn to head to the unknown.

*In the anonymous “Theosophia Tubingensis,” a man asks Apollo, “are you, or another God?” to which Apollo responds, “Born of Himself, untaught, motherless, immovable, Not contained in a name, many-named…This is God. We angels are but a particle of God” (Uzdavinsys 2020, 3).*

**On the Road: Bus from the city centre of Urfa to Göbeklitepe**

**Who are you?**

The whisper flutters through my mind as I look around. Ancient ruins surround me.
(Image *Apollo Tapınağı* in Dainel 2014).

I am momentarily confused, recalling the bus but then adjusting to my surroundings. There is a sign that reads, 
*Welcome to the Oracle of Apollo!*
Ah, I see that I am in **Didim, near Ephesus**.
I walk towards the ruins, surprised that it is a cool and cloudy day.

I see a statue of a sphinx; next to it an extensive writing in stone which reads *gnothi se authon*,
“Know thy self.”

I recall Sophocles (1982, 184) and how Oedipus searches for whom he is by trying to find who his parents are. While the Delphi of Apollo warns him of his fate (Sophocles 1982, 185), we realize that there is a foreshadowing of what’s to come, that we are like characters in a play that has already been written.

This makes me question three things.

**One**: What role do our genes play in constructing our selves?
Two: Foreshadowing is apparent in much literature, suggesting some parts of the collective conscious (Jung 1991) believe that we have no free will as our fates are written. I suddenly recall Marquez's (1981) *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, where the main character's death was foreseen in his village home, but no one was able to stop it. My mind wanders to the Japanese thriller Takasi's (2003) *One Missed Call*, which I happened upon many years back, the characters each get a call from their future selves warning of their death, as we follow each character trying to escape their fate, none succeed. All the main religions also tell of the future; for example, that of Jesus and the anti-Christ is told across religions, albeit with differences (History 2018). Although some consider fortune telling outside of religion to be forbidden, perhaps because you are not supposed to try to find out and change your fate, for everything that happens is meant to happen. Amor Fati (love of fate), all that is, is what is best (Nietzsche 1992, 10). The most beneficial event to occur is that which has already occurred (Emre in TRT 2015, 0:10). Perhaps we are given warnings of what is to come not just so we can prepare for it but so we can also help create it (what you think, you create). In which case, the act of creating it would also be written. Nevertheless, foreshadowing depends on the inevitability of events, and just like any tale, the story of the world may already be written.

Well then, is there no free will?

Finally, three: What role does storytelling have in constructing ourselves?

Suddenly the sphinx steps out of the statue, coming into life, first her lion paws, her broad wings and then her head.

I am startled at first, yet still, I see this as both normal and expected. Of course, the sphinx will be waiting and guarding the temple, and I was, after all, just contemplating Oedipus.

She asks, looking with calm and deadly eyes, "What is that which has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?" (Apollodorus 1921, 349)

I respond. "A human, first a baby crawling on fours, then an adult on two legs and then with old age, walking with a cane" (Ibid).

She nods her approval and tells me I will be given a gift.

I watch with trepidation.
She transforms into a sparkling, breath-taking turquoise and white
–Jug.

-Enter Wisdom the Jug-

Oh. That’s not what I expected.

Just as I reach to touch it, it shudders and speaks with a light ethereal voice.

**Jug:** I am Sophist Gorgia (Lover of Wisdom). That is what the “first philosophers,” starting with Socrates, Isocrates and Plato called themselves (Brown et al. 1995, 3).

*I think.* Like Socrates (Brown et al. 1995, 30) I view philosophy and life as the preparation for death through wisdom, (death which is seen as the eternal soul continuing without the physical body). Like Socrates (in Brown et al. 1995, 39), I feel that I am “a prisoner awaiting release from the prison of my body.”

**Jug:** You have answered correctly and will be rewarded. First you will receive the answers to the questions you had on arrival, second, entry to the temple.

You asked, **what role do our genes have in our self-construction?**

It is widely accepted that sex, height, and susceptibility to illness and diseases are inherited (Haslam 2007, 77). However, the impact of genes on personality traits is still debated, as research cannot cancel out variables such as environment, upbringing, and experiences (ibid).

**They** have said that solid genetic links have been found to attributes such as extraversion, neuroticism, faith, and the extent of spirituality and religious inclination (Nield 2016). If correct, then you would not be a Sufi student had you not had, at the very least, an adequate expression of VMAT2, often called the “god gene” (Hamer 2005). Some world religions also state the importance of genes; perhaps most notable is the intergroup marriages amongst Jewish sects (Mozersky 2012). For you Sufi student, you should know that Sufism might say genes are important but that they work together with other variables that include astrological effects at conception and birth (Hulusi 2021, 33).

Let us not forget that accidents or illnesses of the brain have shown drastic changes, where good-natured people can turn into cold-blooded murderers (Johnson 2018). If who we are is depicted through our personality, and it can change with brain damage, then one might deduce that genes are not the only proponents of our identity. Yet, if one is expressed through genetic
information, albeit with various influences, then every single gene is elemental in what makes us human. Humans share 99% of DNA with chimpanzees (Gibbons 2012), so one might question if a one percent change is enough to create an entirely new species.

You asked, why is storytelling important to humans?
I answer.

Artists draw, author’s write-
therapists listen.

All want to be told, all want to be witnessed. All is a story that exists to be heard. “If a tree falls in a forest, and there’s no one around to hear it, does it make a sound?” (Bobrowsky 2019) The trees speak, the forest listens, the Earth shakes, and they observe each other. They tell each other their stories. All exists, in non-existence, only to tell and witness a story.

The wise One said, “I created Adam (you) so that I can be known!” (The Prophet Muhammad in Hulusi 2012c, 33).

You said,
“Let me write,
so I see my reflection within my words,
so that we see our reflection in all that is.”

Something
In
Nothing.

You asked, is there free will?
I answer.

It has been said that, "free will isn't a scientific reality, it is a myth" (Harari 2018). Haven't you thought of how "if a stone which has been projected through the air had a consciousness, it would believe it was moving of its own free will..." (Spinoza in Durant 1926, 418). Have you never felt that you were "a spectator at the unfolding of (your) thought(s)..." (Rimbaud 1871, 251). Have you never heard physicists say that the universe created all that is and slowly unfolds it and that brain scans depict choices being made before we are consciously aware of making them (Kaku 2011). Heisenberg (1927) has shown us that observation changes reality and that there is always an element of uncertainty to electrons' movement; we cannot accurately predict
where they go, so you see, this suggests free will. However, we might also say, "God doesn't play dice with the Universe" (Einstein in Kaku 2011).

Let us remember that the unknown does not eliminate the known.

Perhaps they say it does not matter if our freedom to choose is an illusion; as long as we are actively choosing, the making of choice itself, whether it is predetermined or not, can be called free will (Burkeman 2021). The truth, they say, does not matter, as free will brings responsibility for actions, without which there would be chaos in society (Big Think, 2021).

However, you, Sufi student, must be aware of the words of the wise One, a master of the Universe.
The Prophet Muhammad has revealed, "They have no choice!" (Quran 28:68 in Hulusi 2013). "No calamity befalls you on Earth...that has not already been recorded in a book (formed in knowledge) before We bring it into being!" (Quran 57:22-22 in Hulusi 2013).

When the time comes, the truth will be undoubtedly illuminated; whether it is accepted is up to fate. Leave the truth up to the world; decide according to your heart.

So speaks this Jug.

It stops vibrating.

I contemplate its words.

A deterministic perspective would coincide with the Sufi thought that just as existence is an illusion, so is free will. It may be horrifying to feel like we are similar to robotic beings with no will. Some could also misunderstand this perspective and use it as an excuse to do bad deeds, for if there is no choice, there can be no blame. They would fail to realize how this statement would not suggest that the absence of free will means no consequences for our actions. We must also consider this: how can you tell a family who has lost their children to a war or a crime that there will be consequences, but "no one is to blame?" For some, this is unacceptable.

However, for others, it can equally be the opposite. It can help relieve guilt from past actions, promote healing and self-acceptance, and help free one from all conditions. It can help dissolve hatred and anger to reach a point of existence that one can call peace. It can be profoundly healing,
transformative, and freeing. Acceptance of others and all does not mean there are no consequences to actions, but it frees one from the anguish that can come from unmet expectations; it frees us from guilt or other types of hurt and pain. I do not know about others, but for myself...if I were able to digest this and live life as such, I would be free; I would be at peace.

The Jug starts to shake. **Jug:** *I have answered you questions. You are free to proceed.* It dissolves back into the block of cement, in a form of a sphinx.

-Jug exist-

(Image 2.*kısım ve 3.*kısım giden tünel, in Muhammed 2018).

I walk further in towards the temple, through a dark tunnel.)
When I reach the end, I see a figure in the distance.

The Oracle waits in a plain, thin, white dress and long, thick, brown hair down to her waist; a transparent, white veil flutters around her. Next to her is a statue of Medusa’s head and pieces of broken-down ruins.

I know it is the Oracle of the Temple, instinctively accepting it as a given.

When she turns, I gasp.
“Grandma?”
Tears gather in my eyes. “How are you here? You died when I was a child, years ago!”

The Oracle smiles with love.
I hesitate. WHO is she? Another being? My creation? Am I dreaming?

Suddenly with suspicion, I recall the Wizard of Oz (Victor 1939). The almighty wizard who, in truth, was no wizard at all. With some trepidation, I desire some red shoes to tap out and head home!

She looks at me with kind brown eyes and a serene face.

“You arrived here willing, and freely you shall leave. However, I believe the actual question you ponder, is who are you?” She gestures around her as she says, “Is that not why you have come to seek the Oracle?”
I relax somewhat. “Yes…” I look at her closely. “I miss my grandmother. She was so wise. As such, I must have misplaced you both…” I recall the oracle from the film *The Matrix* (Wachowski and Wachowski, 1999) and wonder if she is going to tell my future or help me break through the illusion of existence.

My attention lands on a screaming head with snakes. I point at the horrified Medusa. “Why is she here? It makes me sad to see her like this.”

![Medusa sculpture](image)

(Image *Untitled* in Claus Paul Heibel 2021).

The Oracle walks and places a gentle hand on Medusa, "Medusa was wronged. A pure heart, unjustly cursed into a form of a monster (Diver 2020), she isolated herself not to cause harm and, despite her circumstances, never gave up her faith—yet still she was hunted and killed for being different (ibid). She was the temple's most faithful servant. Medusa is here to teach us valuable lessons, lest her death is meaningless."

I sigh. "Everyone thinks Hercules's great-grandfather Perseus was the hero for killing her (ibid) when in truth Medusa is the true hero. When I see her, I want to bring her back and heal her."

The Oracle is surprised, "Heal her?"

I recall Cardiologist Dean Ornish's (1998) research on the healing power of love on hearts.
I nod. “Yes, I think she was cursed with hatred, which turned her heart into stone and mind into snakes. Love will heal her. She was not born as a monster as some may be, but was transformed into one out of circumstance.”

The Oracle smiles. “Ah, your next question, what is the self? But more importantly-before that, I will tell you this....” She walks close to me. Her face shines with inner beauty, and she smells of flowers. She places her hand on my heart.

I feel it shock through as heat spreads and my eyes fill.

“Heal yourself, heal her...if all is one, that which you love or hate is you. How can both exist, in truth? **If you love one, you love all.** Choose then to love. You too, are Medusa.”

Suddenly there is a crack of lighting.

She steps back and says, “Perhaps you would require your answers first.”

I respond, “I have come in search of myself. I cannot hope to heal or actualize without knowing what I am. How do I know myself if I don’t know whom I am- who we are? I wanted to start with the question of the Soul.”

The Oracle walks towards a large black cauldron. As she sprinkles dust within, like spice in a soup, she says, “Come closer; let your hand reach out to what it wills.”

I step beside her and observe as objects materialize amongst darkness, stars, and mist. I see a brown antique clock carved around the circle of its face. It writes in black, “The Library of the Soul.”

I dig my hand into it and grab it.
I feel nothing but wind around the object as I pull it out.
The clock has years written on its face; instead of numbers, its hand travels around, skipping some years and landing on others.
On each number it lands, it speaks with a booming voice:

-They said there must be something that gives us life in the “psyche” (Homer in Crivellato and Ribatti 2007).
-It is invisible, intelligent, immortal, and leaves upon physical death (Plato in Crivellato and Ribatti 2007).
-Some say the Soul is revealed through the pineal gland (Descartes 2016).
- The Soul is believed to exist by billions across the world, all the world’s main religions, beginning from ancient civilizations (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021).

- Many have felt they transcended their bodies (Newman 2017). The oracle decides to take the clock gently back and places it in the cauldron. She speaks,

  “As technology doubles with time, answers will be revealed. If the soul’s existence were to be proven wrong, the whole world would drastically change. If proven right, there would also be a change. Why not see for yourself, and place both hands inside?”

I place both hands in the swirling stars, and with a gasp, I am sucked into the darkness of the cauldron. As I fall in emptiness, I hear The Inferno (Alighieri 1954, 28),

  “Death could scarce be more bitter than that place! But since it came to good, I will recount all that I found revealed, thereby God’s grace.”

After an initial shock and fear, I feel trepidation at these words. Letters appear in front of me, typed:

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND
OCTOBER 23rd 2016.

I land into my old apartment in Edinburgh, Stockbridge, where I had stayed during my counselling training. I am 26 years old. I look around. It’s a mess. I can see myself sprawled on the couch in front of the doorway, wearing layers of sweaters. I am sucked into my body.

A sharp pain stabbed through me as I drifted into a deep slumber. My breath grew shallow, and I felt my heart slow almost to a stop. Did it stop? I feel myself drifting from my body. I look around and see my room, and across from me, a bright light. I am curious, what was inside the bright light? A fear shook through me, if I were to step in, would I be able to return? Suddenly with a gust of wind, something took me back to my body. I felt a fingertip touch my forehead, and my eyes flew open.

I was awake.

I felt like I had died, and “an angel” or being brought me back. I took a deep breath and looked around and saw nothing. I whispered, ‘thank you’ into the emptiness.

I am suddenly whirling in nothingness, when I get pulled in and spit back out into the ruins.
The Oracle, who had been waiting patiently, puts a hand on my shoulder. "Do you have your answer?"

I nod and swallow. "We continue, eternally. I believe this because I have died. Or rather, I am dead and now I am waiting to be alive."

I suddenly jolt awake with the bus screeching to a stop. My eyes grow wide open in shock.

Confused, I look out the window as the rounded body of the driver jovially shouts,

"Göbeklitepe, We have arrived!"

Göbeklitepe Ruins: The first temple in the world, suggested to be where Adam and Eve eventually settled (Go Turkey, 2019).
Urfa, Turkey

October 21st 2019
“das Epos der Todesfurcht” the epic about the fear of death (Rilke in Anonymous, 1999).

What is life but a story, a film where you are the main character of the script?

I walk around the ancient site of Göbeklitepe.
The air feels light as a feather, empty and still.
Nothing much is known about these stones.
Why were they made and hidden only to be found forty years ago?

Storytelling has existed since cave paintings of hunters and gathers, yet these carvings were much more advanced for their time.
Göbeklitepe is believed to be the world's first temple and sanctuary preceding the pyramids of Egypt by 7,500 years, perhaps the first settlement after the Ice Age (Go Turkey 2019).

What happened here? What voices have been buried and why?
Not too far from here, the Sumer of ancient Mesopotamia, one of the first, earliest known civilizations of the world, emerged around the bronze ages (Muscato 2018). Female deities were worshipped, but the Goddess most beloved was Inanna, the Queen of Heaven and Earth, who "played a greater role in myth, epic, and hymn than any other deity, male or female" (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983, xv). The Huluppu-Tree is one of the world's first recorded tales (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983, 141): Inanna, born of divine parents, descends to Earth and waits for a tree to grow to use it for her "throne and bed," however, without the assistance of her Earthly brother, Gilgamesh, she cannot help the tree transform. One interpretation of this story is that "the Huluppu-tree reflects the dual forces of the universe: Enki and Ereshkigal, consciousness and unconscious, light and darkness, male and female and the power of life and the power of death" (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983, 144). Resembling the story of Adam and Eve, the world's first recorded tale might depict the magic and the real, unity and multiplicity.

However, here, this was the remnant of an even older civilization.
I squinted, looking down at the carvings on the stones, noticing a symbol (H) on one of the T-shaped rocks.

Amazing! One of the world's first written words, a letter symbolizing "God," reminds me of the "HU" found throughout the Quran, described by some as the source of all names, including Allah (Hulusi 2013, 33).
Here we are, the origin of language, of narration. On the top of a vast empty
hill, there is a circular path around a deeply dug up ditch, that you can walk around and observe from above. I sit down on the ground near the entry, way in front of the ruins to contemplate.

"Narrative practices highlight and question conversations with ourselves and others" (Speedy 2002, 425). For Cavarero (2000, Viii), the 'Narratable self' always needs a necessary other; it is an innate trait dependent on interaction to thrive and explore who we are.

For Karen Blixen (in Cavarero 2000, 4), 'the question of 'who I am' flows sooner or later from every heart,' becoming realized through the process of narration...As a way of telling one's tale, we are perhaps releasing our death anxiety, thus becoming immortal, at least within words, within moments.

Just as we become immortal by having children that continue on our genes, or students that continue our wisdom, friends and families that share our memories...Stories provide insight into personal experiences and are a powerful way of constructing bonds with others (O'Reilly and Lester 2016, 577-578).

As social beings, it is ingrained in every way. In different forms, all of existence speaks. At every moment, breath, second, renewing itself and regenerating.

The tree here holds a hundred years' tale of what it has experienced and observed in its home since its birth. It has grown and developed limbs and flowers, stretched and flourished, breathed air to its surroundings, fed its neighbours, and cleaned its partners.

The stones I walk on tell a story. They yell with pain or sigh with pleasure. They speak of all of those who have walked before it. They whisper of creation, and with every molecule and movement, they dance to the rhythm of the Universe...

As a young child, I was quiet, introspective, observant, and far too mature. My grandmother, a beautiful angel in my eyes, was the kindest and most gentle human. She would often come for dinner, bringing gifts and softness. "The trees will heal you," she would say as she stroked my hair, blew prayers for protection, and whispered old Ottoman tales in the still darkness of my
mother's living room. Stories utilize narrative as a "primary from where human experience is made meaningful" (Polkinghorne 1988, 1). Each one she told held lessons to be learned, and each telling was a performance. Her name was Hepsen, meaning 'Always-You.' It was as romantic as her smile. She gave me my first diary when I was seven. It had colourful perfumed pages and images of ladies with open parasols strolling with their suitors. That is when my love of writing began. Along with my love of trees, of course. I never knew her as an adult. But she left me with a great gift; she helped me discover that storytelling and writing increase empathy and human connection (Leavey 2015); it allows us to question who we are and can help both the writer and reader heal (Ellis et al. 2014, 280). Through her, I realized that home is where the heart is and that the pen, my dearest friend, could take me there.

I think of her now and always.

_A cool breeze caresses my face as the sun shines forcefully. I close my eyes and lean my head and back against the wall that surrounds the ruins._

Psychotherapeutic research has for many years depicted the health benefits of listening to people's stories (O'Reilly and Lester 2016, 577). Healing through the telling of stories traces back to ancient traditions; they are "central to our self-concept and...well-being" (Jenkins 2013, 140).

Perhaps therapists are lovers of stories because with every story we witness we gain a greater understanding of our own. Just as the more we understand the way the world works, how the Earth spins around the sun, how the sun vibrates through the galaxy, how we perceive night and day,

the more we can understand who we are, where we are, what we are, why we are.

So it is in this place where writing first began, _So it is Here and Now, Here and Always that_ I write to know who you are, to know who I am. I write to be free. I write to be.

In narrative inquiry, meaning is not made through facts or the known but rather from multi-layered, storied accounts of the uncertain and the unknown. It is not about what is 'real' but the experience of being (Speedy 2008,
17). Narrative is a general term to describe the "stories we tell ourselves" (Speedy 2008, 6). For some, they are required at the very least to have a "sequential order of past events...(a) teller and receipt (to) co-construct narrative ...") (Mandelbaum 2013, 492). This may sometimes be true, but from the perspective of this paper, "all of existence is but a story" (Howard 1991, 187), and this does not necessitate order. This definition is challenged by authors (Vogel 1994, 249) as being unhelpful in defining what a story is. Yet I also suggest that it can sometimes be helpful, as it is in this instance. This paper suggests that existence, that which says, "I am" (the projection of information forming creation) is always observed. The act of observation creates meaning, and that meaning speaks. However, this research also does not concur with those who suggest that without narration, there is no self (Bruner 1991, 2), for one might argue that the self is beyond narration. It tells tales in infinitely diverse ways, but it is also not confined to its words, for it suggests that the true self is a being, the creator, that was never born or given birth to, it simply was and is.

From the real it creates the magic.

It is here that together with storytelling and fiction that writing involves experiencing a way of being. It is a way of knowing and exploring (Richardson and St. Pierre 2005, 923), where 'in the process of writing itself, we create new knowledge' (Werder 2016, 2). Thereby, I will utilize the method of writing as a form of inquiry, where data collection, analysis, and creation are written as 'one' in "a seductive and tangled method of discovery" (Richardson and St. Pierre 2005, 962). Reflexivity is exposed through "writing as thinking" (Kaufman 2012b, 75) as I intertwine my thoughts with others during my journey. Narration is one of the most instinctive human traits, allowing us to grow and develop, learn from the past and present, and become who we are. I hope to allow my readers to experience my world through theirs, to "write so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart" (Angelou in Leavy 2015, 39).

I must also mention that to me, "writing as a method of inquiry is creative-relational" where desire is the force that pushes me towards change (Wyatt 2019, 42), movement, process, an endless, unpredictable, unfolding (Wyatt 2019, 45). It is "the process of relating itself as creative" (ibid). The creative-relational works outside of traditional walls and boundaries (Murray 2020, 27) and attends to the awkwardness (Murray 2020, 29) of our limited knowledge, as does the Sufi Nomad, who claims to be and know-nothing. Within the creative-relational comes the innovative coming together of contrasts (Murray 2020, 34) or opposing forces that "provides an easier coexistence and does not value one side over the other" (Murray 2020, 36). As such, within this
home, I build my thesis and attempt to explore the Magical and the Real. I see myself in it as such as one in quantum unity, a Sufi Nomad Writer, a Sufi Nomad, a Sufi, a…

“What you think Aliens built these too?”

The laughing voice of a young Turkish girl jolts my eyes open, as she passes by holding hands with her partner.

I smile. I love how all that we do not understand is attributed to aliens.

My eyes land on the symbol (H) on the ruins again.

Within this exploration, I suggest that the creator of all stories is one conscious entity; one may give it many names and symbols (H), in which we disappear, but I shall call it All-ah. I call it Allah for this study, but I also call it Allah to break the walls we have built around the name and its connotations. I call it Allah in response to Islamaphobia but also to exemplify opposition to all discrimination, whatever it might be. I call it Allah because many, like me, see it as beautiful. It creates to tell itself infinite tales, the architect of “love” and “death” as we know it. Through writing, we merge with ourselves, our thoughts showing our reflections on paper, and we get lost and become one. Beyond time, you meet the Elif of NOW, and we are together, in your version of me. Losing yourself leads to moments of the death of “I” as a separate entity. Death always follows love, or perhaps death leads to love, or more accurately, death is love. We are one, for a moment, and what is uniting, other than love in action, where words become The Lover.

A wise One once said,

“I was a hidden treasure. I loved to be known, and I created the world”

(Prophet Muhammad in Ibn ‘Arabi 1975, 104).

Another Master said,

“…there is no movement in the cosmos which is not a movement of love.”

(Ibn 'Arabi 1975, 104).

Thus this is a study of movement,
of creating knowledge.
It is a telling so that it is knows and is known,
It is the tale of the master storyteller,
Of the holographic lover,
The greatest wizard of Oz.

I turn away from the small stone sanctuary. There really is not much to see yet, though much more excavation is to come. As I walk down, making my way through the dry path of the mountain, I pixel forward through time. I am now in the city of Konya, in Turkey, where the Sufi saints Sems and Mevlana (Rumi) are buried in mosques beside each other.
It is said (told to me by my mother, past down from generations), that a wandering dervish (Sems), came across Mevlana one day and asked him to show him his most precious three books. Mevlana, with pride and excitement, brought them to him. He took Mevlana's three books and threw them all into the water. When Mevlana rushed after them in distress, he stated:

_You cannot find what you are looking for in books,_
_Nor can you find it across the Earth or galaxies._
_All you seek is within._

I am now inside Mevlana's Mosque by his tomb. Sems is next to me, wearing a beige cloak, a large hat, and holding a staff. Surprisingly, he is silent. I always imagined he would be talkative. He gestures toward the tomb of those before Mevlana, asking that I look. I read their names, "Isimsizler," meaning those without names. I recall Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 3) asking, "...why have we kept our names? Out of habit, purely habit." Many see this as the epitome of anti-humanism, whereas I merely see it as a redefinition of the human. Rumi's friends have "determinitalized" their minds until they have become beyond the ego.
They reconstruct the "anti" so that the human emerges. They experience nothingness, the greatest Lovers of all. They have stolen my heart. I turn to say thank you to Sems, but he is gone. After I pray, I leave to sit outside the rose garden, walking towards Sems' tomb. It rests in the much smaller, empty, plain, broken-down mosque across the street from Mevlana's majestic home. The contrast is always unsettling.

Like Rumi, Deleuze and Guattari's ontology of unity to multiplicity and theme of actualization has led to an interpretation of their work as "philosopher of the One" (Aldea 2013, 21). Deleuze and Guattari's (in Oladi 2017, 67) nomadic "war machine" has been likened to "Rumi's war machine of love," where the nomad (inspired by Muslim scholar Khaldun) depicts the collective consciousness, resistance to assimilation, where "to think is to voyage." It is a never-ending transformation without a destination, constantly leaking from the capitalist state in a system demonstrating the rhizome (ibid). Both Deleuze and Sufi actualization might be interpreted as involving the "actual" and the "virtual" (Aldea 2013); however, traditional humanist perspectives remain within the bonds of the growth potential of one's self-concept. Nevertheless, while on the surface, Sufism is in opposition to what some might define as Deleuzian anti-humanism, others may argue that "humanism" is not Western liberalism and, secondly, that they are alike as the Deleuzian "war machine" transforms from the state to the self just as Rumi's "war machine" transcends with selfless Love. Both do so through connection, action, and creativity without a destination (Oladi 2017, 70). I see one as representing an external jihad and the other as emphasizing an internal one.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1983, XVII) "anti-Oedipus" resonates with this inquiry, where schizoanalysis opposes psychoanalysis, the oedipal and oedipalized (such as family, school, party) is "detrimentalized," moving from wanting non-existence to being all existence, just like those on the Sufi path, one is encouraged to journey through annihilation in the form of experiencing all without the "ego-curtain." However, if perhaps schizoanalysis declares external war on imperialism, colonization, and fascism; the Sufi declares war on the "ego-self" found within, all the while recognizing that the external is found within the internal. Anti-Oedipus is not isolated, mad, or alone but rather a collective present (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, xxi). Yet, for the Sufi nomad, physical isolation does not dictate a mental one, whether with many or alone; it is always connected to the whole, even within madness; it is always both WE and ONE together. The Sufi nomads at a time get so lost in Love that they are known "as the crazy ones"; they have no care about social norms, and they never conform. Some can adapt; they get past the LOVER's frenzy, learn to be within the collective, and act as observers.
What about *The rhizome* (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7-25)? How does it resonate with the Sufi or the Sufi in this paper? The rhizome connects to all points; it has no beginning or end but is always inter-being, an endless stream (ibid). However, while everything has elements of the rhizome, not everything is the rhizome (for example, ants are not, but books are). This is where *The Observer* differs. The observer is everything but is only one, the multiplicity is the illusion (the Magic), and the Unity is the truth (the Real). Thus, to counter, encounter or entangle with the rhizome and offer the best metaphor, ideology, epistemology, and method for this endeavor, I must present an alternative, a fusion, or an evolution. Something similar but different, something created by this amateur writer, as “amateur” also comes from “amator,” latin for lover (Merriam-Webster 2021).

I will utilize *The Mycelium*. Mycelium’s are multicellular assemblies, microorganisms that can grow into macro structures like mushrooms (Bayer 2019). The mycelium is a fungi network that is hidden underneath our feet; they grow across forests allowing trees to communicate and feed; with more connections than the neurons in our brains, they are a secret source of our life energy (Green 2010). The mycelium, which has existed since this Earth was found, can be a metaphor that describes the *magical* and the *real*, as it is a whole interconnected web that gives us life. There is nothing that is not the mycelium that forms the soil and forms our bodies. It creates the illusion of multiplicity from the real (unity), each mushroom representing a Universe. It too is non-local, it too, resembles the rhizome- with one vital difference, it is not some it is all.

The mycelium dictates the rules of the system it creates, the rules of *The Game*. Everything is connected and is One. One Unit has all components of all units. This brings us a magical realist perspective, where all that is thought of exists. Let us explore this further with an example using a die. A die has many faces but one body. Each face can only show you its external number, but it is a part of a whole. The same material with the same information is used in all areas of the die. The number 6 shows you its unique 6 quality but has all the qualities of the die, all the numbers. The die is all of existence with infinite numbers. Each unit of creation is "stamped" with its qualities (predetermined, a generated fate). The number 6 is created instantly, and its organic makeup is a 6 forever. If so, what can change? Perspective. Actualization is when the 6 stops living "thinking" it is "6" but lives as "the die looking out through 6". "I am 6" turns into "I am the die with many faces, but I am looking out through the 6, eternally". This change in perspective is the key to the approach, and one becomes *The Observer*. This shift is from the lens of the ego to "oneness," to unity. When it occurs, it lasts forever. If it is to
occur, it is decided when it is stamped. Many are created to live as though they are the number; only a few are created to live as though they are the die looking through that number. Yet let us not forget that, if one realizes they are at the point of Nothing but information, in truth, one also cannot be anything, including The Observer. One merely experiences as though they are.

Time and location are non-existent in the cube, which holds infinite potential to generate numbers. However, when experiencing as a number, time is perceived as linear; every move brings you forward, and you cannot take back any steps or any rolls of the die. You remain unaware that the GAME of your life has already been played and finished. The stamp of your number was both START and FINISH. You are merely experiencing each move on the board slowly, step by step, move by move. Sometimes the speed feels fast, other times excruciatingly slow but the player always remains unaware of the game.

The Observer, however, recalls it and watches what it knows is to come; it sees the hands played from the point of non-emotional, detached observation. Ranges of emotions exist but are fleeting, for they belong to the 6, as you watch from within the cube's empty, stillness, and silence. The cube simply creates and observes its creation. It is a generator, a machine-like, intelligent, all-powerful being. It is unconditional, it is giving, it is love, and it is all. It loves to be known and creates infinite numbers so it can watch itself, within itself… As such, the mycelium depicts the Sufi Nomads' journey, similar to the Deleuzian path but differs in the focus and depth of the internal journey of unity and observation. My thoughts return to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and the subsequently inspired anti- and post-humanism approach to being (Braidotti 2013; Kaufman 2012; Landgraf and Weatherby 2019).

I decide to get up and walk towards Sems. As I walk, time moves forward again, the air shifts around me, and forests on a mountaintop near Ephesus in the city of Izmir, Turkey, surround me. I am in front of what is believed across religions, as Mother Mary's last home. There are a few visitors scattered around. The bird's chirp, and the wind blows softly. A small group of Christian priests sit in the shade.
I walk inside. It is compact, cool, and dark. If the miraculous human brain created Mother Mary and her son Jesus, how can we use words such as anti-human? How could we possibly wish to eradicate the birth of angelic beings? For this is what the word “anti” can suggest though that is not the intention of all who utilize it. Mother Mary materializes next to me, serene and silent. I expect her to be silent. She gestures towards the candles. I understand she wants me to make a prayer. I pray for humanity. I feel love, her love. I turn around and she is gone. I walk out and sit on a bench by the house to contemplate.

The human is introduced to us through the powerful and more economically developed nations; through Eurocentric imperialism (Braidotti 2013, 2). In opposition to this, post-colonial and feminist studies have declared that if “humanism” has a future, it must be beyond the Western, white, male-centered view, and as a result, anti-humanist positions emerged from post-structuralism evolving the field of the post-human (Braidotti 2013, 3). Eventually, some authors adopted a more radical post-anthropocentric view that declares a complete deconstruction of species supremacy and separation (Braidotti 2013, 8): the environment and humans no longer have a hierarchy in existence, boundaries blur, and difference dissipates. They have argued that being human is not special, that allowing us to evolve and the boundaries between existence to dissolve is the answer against the cruelty, atrocities, and abuse of power that we see in the “human” we have come to know (Ferrando 2020, 26:27).

Perhaps, the most powerful and active wave of post-humanists are transhumanists who seek the evolution of intelligent life beyond its human limitations, through various ways, such as eliminating aging and enhancing human capacities (More 1990, 10). The ultimate dream is for the “upload” or transfer of the brain to the computer hardware (Hofkirchner and Kreowski 2021, 227), which some say is possible by the year 2045 (Kurzweil 2013, 3:43). One can suggest two functional problems with any upload: first I would
hypothesize that the human brain constantly evolves in ways we cannot predict at 100% accuracy. A program can upload an instant of who that person is and foresee how that person might act based on past thinking patterns, but it cannot evolve in the same way as an organic substance. By this, I mean that mechanical development may not have the same results that you usually would; that is to say, not everyone and their actions can be predicted, and there will always be a "divergent" (Burger 2014): there might be those that cannot be mechanically controlled thus difficult for mechanics to predict. The second problem involves the belief that you have a soul, which is not material and cannot be uploaded. For the first challenge, I currently cannot envision a solution. For the second, I believe that with the advancement of science and technology, we will soon get "evidence" for or against the non-material soul.

Regardless, at the rate at which technology is evolving, Professor Stephen Hawking argued that it could spell the end of the human race, and Steve Wozniak, the co-founder of Apple, has warned us that "artificially intelligent computers will take over from humans and the future is scary and very bad for people" (Hawking and Wozniak in Sparkes 2015). I would suggest that we have entered a phase I would call, "The Hydra." Hydra's are small invertebrates made of stem cells, which regenerate through replication and cloning; without external threats, they can live forever (Rigby 2019). The hydra represents a time when humanism has shifted into post-humanism, and the dominant power is looking for ways to live forever (Can we live forever, 2021). Despite this, I believe that we will not lose the Human, at least not yet, not any time soon...but eventually, yes...one day.

Critical realists (Porpora 2017, 355) suggest that anti-humanism and post-humanism is dehumanization in theory, that humanity equates to compassion, and it's the absence of humanity that is being discussed; thus their definition of what the human is different. The Prophet Jesus was not born an ant, wasp, or dog for a reason. Yes, that reason dictates difference, and difference IS power, it IS political, and it is hierarchal-and that is okay. It is okay; it gave us the most precious beings in existence...it gave us true love. I feel that we must learn what the human is before we decide it is "not enough" that it needs to be upgraded, altered, or destroyed.

We must learn to love, again. To be a Lover.

I sit in silence.
The birds chirp.
The dark green forest on this mountain is without human visitors, though there
is a bustle behind me from inside Mother Mary’s house. The breeze speaks from the branches of the ancient trees that surround me, what it says I cannot decipher. If only I could understand the words of the wind. Perhaps one day I will.

I think of Mother Mary. I cannot imagine living here, back then, surround by trees on a mountain by myself. Though, who is to say she was by herself? A bell rings in the distance and I see a priest walk by, looking determined, with a bible in his hands.

I smile and rest back on the bench.

This study argues that our goal is to discover and embrace who we are, including the illusion of the self. Privileging the human does not necessitate a compassionless existence for animals, planetary life, or machinery…on the contrary being human is love, compassion, and rights for all. At least, that is the perspective of some of us (Porpora 2017).

With this paper, I urge readers not to hasten to abandon who we are but embrace and explore it within organic nature in our natural born state. Transcendence does not require machinery; you do not need robots to learn how to “fly.” By the end of this study, I hope to have defined an alternative version of the human. If we allow machines to take over our bodies, we may not be able to utilize the full spiritual potential of our brains. With difference comes power; it is inescapable, but with the destruction of difference, we no longer “exist.” All of the darkness resides within us, but so does light, and it is worth fighting for.

From the perspective of “The Lover,” we are, in essence, ONE being; even a stone has all units of existence. This belief is also similar across various religious or spiritual beliefs, such as Taoism and Buddhism (Joshanloo 2014). However, according to the Magical Realist perspective of the Lover, there is a difference, a unity forming a multiplicity that cannot be destroyed. Difference is existence, it can be redistributed, but it cannot be escaped. A Sufi perspective of the Magical Real shows us that being human IS special. The human is born with a miracle that is the brain, which might allow us to actualize and experience reality as saints do, to experience the whole universe within, to experience unconditional love and being beyond boundaries. A smell of roses drift over from the forest. I breathe it in deeply and smile. My gaze drifts upwards to a clear blue sky. Branches of post-humanism argue that the human is not special, thus machines, humans, animals, plants all existence is equal in worth and must
be treated with love and dignity without hierarchy (Braidotti 2013). Yet, this goal can come at the price of destruction, for the hierarchy to disappear so too must difference. A magical realist perspective thus conflicts with the post human in application, but it holds it within its body. It says, you too are a part of the magic, you have also come from me, and you are a part of the multiplicity. But my description does not fit yours; I embrace all within difference and diversity and protect their right to exist, while you desire the destruction of difference.

The post-human is critical of the Eurocentric human (Braidotti 2013, 53, 65), yet it is a concern here that by attempting to escape the colonial, one risks becoming the colonial; by attempting to escape the Western man, one risks becoming one. By becoming anti-human, one is stating that the western definition of the human is accepted universally, giving it power and claim to the name. We have come very far and are quick to discard the human without truly discovering its potential, stating that the West could not find the answer, so the West must again discard it and create one again while still ignoring eastern versions of the human! It is interesting because much of Eastern philosophy and spirituality also believe in a monistic existence (Joshanloo 2014; Hulusi 2013). This approach is thus a re-definition, a return, or a different look at the human in its actualized potential; perhaps it can be called the actualized post-human, or human in the post-human… it is not for the hybrid but for the homo sapiens. Not out of discrimination but from logic. A machine-human or animal-human will have different needs. As this is based on being an organic human, it might not apply to another or even be necessary. Thus, I write for humans…

I watch as clouds playfully drift towards me and –
I wake up. I wipe slight drool from my mouth and rub my face confused. I am at home in Istanbul, Turkey. My head on my table, I realize I fell asleep whilst trying to work on my thesis. An orange blob pops up and grins with wide green eyes, licking my face, his mouth-smelling foul. “GARFIELD, so stinky.” I groan, a little grumpy as I nudge my cat away and sit up. Okay, I am awake and I am home. I go and wash my face. After a swift walk, I get back to my desk an hour later.

I decide to gather my thoughts about the approach that best fits what I am trying to do.
We live in a time where nothing can be trusted, for even “pure science” shows it is something that is variable and uncertain… that “the natural science ideal (of research) cannot even be found in natural science” (Flyvbjerg 2001, 28). We now not only question “scientific evidence,” along with Corona, we
have begun to constantly question each other and ourselves, taking blind
leaps of faith in order to protect our lives and livelihood. It is within this
context and climate that I push forward a method, which proposes the magical
and the real, where being asleep and awake are the opposite sides of the
same coin, both of equal value and validity. This is where we focus not to on
one single truth but accepting countless, multiple, endless and diverse truths.
By doing so I do not fight against “evidence-based research” or the “hard
sciences.” On the contrary, I hold it up as a possibility amongst endless
others. However, I also note that “scientific knowledge” valued over narrative
knowing diminishes the significance of stories (Jenkins 2013, 141). That the
growth of science and technology has correlated with the loss of legitimacy of
narration as truth (ibid). Through the magical and the real enters a script. One
of many but of equal worth.

This deconstructive path is often useful by marginal and disadvantaged
groups, giving them a collective voice (Speedy 2000, 366). There is no longer
one truth, one authority. All is balanced, all is true, and all is false. This allows
therapy to seep from the room and merge with the world (ibid). It fits with a
Sufi perspective which does not feel at ease with a Western individualistic,
isolated way of being; after all, we are all one. This stance pulls the medical
discourse of madness into question and relocates the power to individual
perspectives (Speedy 2011, 428). For the Sufis, all observed is an illusion,
and all is one. The projection of the illusion is where one gets the "false"
sense of binary states.

We have discussed writing and storytelling, but there is more that we could
expand into. Auto-ethnography is a genre of writing that depicts "multiple
layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis et al.
2000, 739). If writing is a way of knowing and personal narratives are often
used in auto-ethnography, it seemed a perfect fit as both elements are in my
exploration of the self of love and death in Sufism. Reflexive auto-
ethnographies document the process in which the researcher changes as the
project's main focus asks one to examine ourselves, questioning why we are
and how we became (Ellis and Adams 2014, 27). Auto-ethnographic fiction,
where life and stories, the magic and the real blend and become one, would
further allow me flexibility in expression of my world experiences whilst
simultaneously adhering to my personal ethical boundaries of protecting the
life stories I have shared. It feels particularly appropriate as a magical realist
perspective claims, that fiction and non-fiction are equal in the realm of
experience. As such, in this sense, auto-ethnographic fiction within the
magical-real simply becomes auto-ethnography or real. However, while this
integrative stance makes sense, I wonder if it is necessary.
Traditional academia has great strength. It provides us with numerical data to make observations about the world, know how to treat problems, and predict risks. It provides us with verbal "data," where we get an in-depth look at the internal lived experience to understand who and what we are. Structures allow us to order our existence; it can help us both cope and evolve. However, it also restricts creativity and genius that can stem from chaos. It constrains our natural state of progressing perhaps "outside" boundaries, which is often discomforting to even qualitative researchers, as order gives a sense of false security that we have control over existence. It has been suggested that despite being created as a movement against positivism, qualitative methods have become positivized (St. Pierre 2017b, 603). Authors argue that if we are in alignment with Deleuze and Guattari we must leave humanism behind, we must become post-qualitative writers that are free to create beyond constrictive methodology (St. Pierre 2017, 1087). In this instance, even auto-ethnography and "data" is incompatible with the Rhizome (St. Pierre 2017, 1081). Language is an "assemblage," an abstract machine in which we must be able to create beyond boundaries. Theories must be lived; method must not exist (ibid).

In such instances, one must constantly be analyzing power relations and deconstructing structures. “The experimentation required in post-qualitative inquiry cannot be accomplished within the methodological enclosure...(it is) risky, creative...it cannot be measured, predicted...described in a textbook…” (St. Pierre 2017b, 604). I would suggest that while methods can be too constrictive this in itself is the greatest restriction, more so than methodology, for you constrict your perspective on life, on living! Though valid for some, for many, this might be taking theory too far.

However, if we, in the spirit of post-qualitative inquiry (although perhaps not defined as such), decide to use “auto-ethnography” and “writing and inquiry” as our method within a post-qualitative frame of reference, then perhaps we can also utilize the term coined by Marshall (1999) as *life as inquiry*, to further depict our process. It suggests that there is fluidity, a semipermeable membrane between life and research, where one often becomes the other (Marshall 1999, 158). Elements relevant to research and experienced in life are transferred to the study. This gives *writing as an inquiry* depth and intimacy without confining it to a method or construct. It refines it, polishes it, and lets it shine. What we are then left with is *writing with life as inquiry*. The difference between *writing with life* and writing as inquiry is that it emphasizes that personal experiences co-exist with the quest on hand, they are one. “Life” and “research” are two separate entities that become one, whereas not all writing as inquiry does.
The difference between writing with life and auto-ethnography is that the latter has a goal: to write life as opposed to allowing life to write itself, to allow life to merge with writing. Alike Murray (2021, 461), on an exploration of writing the self, I hope through writing, to find “…that there is intimacy in the passing smile of a child…(in) the offering of a paw from a stray dog. In these intimate gestures (I hope to find) a strange and productive tenderness capable of redirecting becomings.” Perhaps, writing with life more accurately describes what we have determined to do in this study, what we have already begun to do…it embraces freedom from restrictions but suggests that post-qualitative work does not necessitate abandoning humanism.

As such, this paper introduces the concept of Writing With Life. Writing with life is a depiction that describes the reflexive merging of writing as inquiry and auto-ethnographic fiction. It adopts a magical realist perspective. The magical real is a tree with branches that embraces the whole: post-colonialism, post-feminism, post-structuralism, and the rights of the post-humanists. However, just as it accepts the evolution of the human species into hybrids or humanoids, it also protects the survival of the homo sapiens and their right to live with dignity. It places the HU, the creator, in the center and allows the rest to branch out. To protect the Homo sapiens from extinction, it speaks for as long as it wants to be protected. It is all; it is creation.

A narrative perspective can help distance oneself and others from the story (Speedy 2000, 366), which from a Sufi perspective can be called becoming an “observer.” Psychotherapy, listening to the teller of stories, is based on “talk therapy” as the main cure. However, as we know, stories are not only expressed through words. As such, we developed “music therapy,” “art therapy,” and “yoga therapy,” where the primary therapeutic tool is not largely condensed to verbal communication (Hanser 2016; Gibbons 2015). As I attempt to integrate Eastern and Western thinking, I also re-consider the method of practicing that approach. Most therapeutic approaches do not change the main elements of practice despite having different theoretical backgrounds (Mcleod 2013). Perhaps this is also why research has found that the approach is not as relevant or healing to the process as the relationship (DeAngelis 2019).

Not just because it truly is the relationship that heals but also because approaches (generally) do not drastically change practice, so if theories change but the method does not, we cannot expect a significant difference in impact. Thereby, I question what this theoretical study will look like without boundaries and explore what painting emerges. Perhaps, talk therapy will be the second component, and art, music, and meditation may be the primary.
Perhaps, something completely unexpected may emerge.

A method cannot claim sovereignty or hegemony. I cannot help but feel that any approach aiming to dominate or obliterate difference and diversity can be nothing other than a dictatorship. A consequence of a post-anthropocentrism or trans-human dream may be doing that, and it might be that the fusion of life and the loss of the human genome will result with the homo sapiens settling in nicely next to the fish in the Natural Museum of Scotland. This movement, or any perspective that does not see the human as special, can be interpreted as a lack of understanding of the miracle that the human race holds- amongst the darkness, there is a brilliant light; in trying to abolish one half, we destroy the other.

This paper is not written against a thought process. It is not ANTI. It simply is; it embraces all ways of being (including post-humanism, trans-humanism, and more) but declares its right to exist amongst all others as equal. Baring in mind that the concept of “The Sufi” in this paper is an image of the human based on Sufi concepts and that cannot be generalized as Sufism, I have called it The Lover:

The Lover is a nomad on the quest for actualization.
The Lover believes in a non-material soul/spirit/body.
The Lover believes that the path to the experience of existence from beyond the ego is through the natural born brain.
The Lover is and will always be created for the experience of being human.
The Lover defends all those who wish to remain human, embracing all difference and diversity, including religion and spirituality.

As such, using writing with life, we explore being human-with a Sufi twist…. As I finish my last sentence Death comes in.
She is older now, around 12, a pink blob, dressed in neon pink tights, shirt and jewellery. She sits and props her feet up on my desk.

Elif: Where do we go from here?
Death: Home, where our heart is.

Chapter Notes

- In this chapter, I begin by stating that as I am love, in order to find Love I must find myself. Thus, I begin with the philosophical question, “Who are you?”
I am in the city Urfa, on the bus to the ancient site of Göbeklitepe when I fall asleep, and in my dream find myself at one the oldest temples of Apollo in Ephesus, where the quest has been to “know thy self.”

At the temple, I address existing thoughts on the main topics of debate on the self, which include: genes, free will and the soul.

I mention that I believe that love can be healing, and that which we see is love.

When I wake up again we are at Göbeklitepe, thought to be the world’s first temples holding one of the words first words, the beginning of language. Here I discuss the importance of narration and storytelling as a way of knowing, as well as writing as the medium of inquiry in which narration and stories unfold.

I restate the importance of knowing yourself but this time from a spiritual perspective, at which point we end up waking up in the city of Konya, where Mevlana, Rumi a Sufi saint is buried.

I explore the differences and similarities of Sufism with Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical positions, and offer an alternative to “The Rhizome,” with the example of “The Mycelium” representing an interconnected, whole network of life. I explain that “The Mycelium,” shows the rules of the system that functions like a game, and use the example of the die, where the Sufi nomad aims to change perspective and observe from the point of “nothing” looking out from the number it was given, as opposed to believing its not the source, but just one number and as such suffering consequences. There is no time, location or space, all is and has been, and as such there is no free will in THE GAME.

When I wake up again, I am at Mother Mary’s house in Ephesus. Here I discuss the importance of being human. Some authors of post-anthropocentric views declare that as all is one, being human has no greater hierarchal value as such difference amongst existence should dissipate. I argue that such thinking accepts a Westernized definition of being human, that Sufi concepts of humanity are different, and claim that difference is not bad as it gave us beautiful humans like the Virgin Mary and the Prophet Jesus.

I conclude that merging writing with inquiry and auto-ethnographic fiction within a post-qualitative arena can result in the reflexive, creative and relational method of “writing with life,” that adopts a Magical Real perspective and integrates the knowledge of the East and the West, from the point of unity to multiplicity.
Chapter Six

Home, Where our Heart Is
Dear Reader,

We have learned that for Death to come and lift the “curtain of the ego,” we must fall in Love. We must discover who we are, as WE are Love. So knowing that “home” is where the heart feels like an excellent place to start! If we find home, we find ourselves, our heart, and we finally find Love. As such, we enter three long chapters of autoethnographic fiction that is set as a private journey. It is here that we meet a friend, called Zü. Zü is written in reference to Zülkarneyn, who is often described in writings as having two horns; this represents his name as well as his abilities (Türe 2010, 39). Zülkarneyn is someone with great power, as is described in a chapter of the Quran (18: 316-317 in Hulusi 2013):

According to my interpretation (please forgive my lack of knowledge), in “Al-Kahf,” he is described as holding power over the world, place, and time, seen and unseen, East and West. He is given a choice: punish or save the people. He decides those who do wrong will receive wrong, and those who do right and search for their true selves will receive good and truth. He then helps humanity find their selves by protecting them with a barrier made from copper that ensures that evil from the other dimension does not take over Earth (this can be both real and metaphorical—everything in this paper is Magical and Real). This wall can be seen as a symbolic barrier that protects the brain from harmful frequencies, which can lead one away from reality and illness. Interestingly, we are now aware of the importance of copper for our body and, in particular, our brain health (Ware 2017). Regardless, it is said that this wall will one day break completely, allowing “evil” to cross over into the dimension of humans and wreak havoc in our minds…

A brisk walk in fresh air: Increasing our circulation and oxygen will allow us to get the break that we need in a rejuvenating way that is beneficial to our health (Appendix: 279).

Title: Before we were born, I was with you
Location: Beyond Time and Space

“Pre-eternity and post-eternity… is a single instant” (Hulusi 2021, 99).

We are in darkness, nothingness.
No body.
No thoughts.
We have “no need of eyes, for there (is) nothing outside to be seen; nor of
ears for there (is) nothing outside to be heard...for there (is) nothing...” (Plato 1935, 33), just “something formless yet complete” (Lao-Tzu 1958, 174). Merely a conscious observation-just a cloud of quantum potential (Hulusi 2021, 68), a field of information.

It is silent, dark and empty.
We are one entity, observing without thought or action.

We are (The Quran, “Al-Ikhals” in Hulusi 2013, 112: 685):

Ahad (Infinite One),
We are Samad (beyond any need, limitation, a non-divisible One),
We created none and none created us (no other existence was created from us, and we were not created by another),
There is none like us.

We decide to speak.
We say, “I am a hidden treasure, I love to be known!”(The Prophet Muhammad SAW in Ibn’ Arabi 2016, 53).
The pen touches the paper, a dot is formed.
That dot, turns into a stroke.
We say “Kun” –Be- and from the seed of
Love the Tree of Life decides to grow (Ibn’ Arabi 2016, 93).

All that is one becomes many; Alif and the dot are one.
Elif is born, you are born.
Endless branches and leaves,
All invisible in truth, circles and waves carved into the sand of our mind....
I grow from one end; you grow from the other,
We lose sight of each other in the chaos-

Until,
We meet again,

In The Lover.

Title: The Near Future, Date Unknown
Location: Unknown Lab

“Time and space are modes by which we think, and not conditions in which we live (Einstein in Perkowitz 2018).”
“She’s dead,” the young male Scientist scratched his dark head and glanced uncertainly to his blond female co-pilot as he gathered his headgear and handed her a metal helmet.

She takes it, turning it around, determined, “It doesn’t matter. We need to get to the bottom of this before we become the *Last Humans.*”

He sits down and mumbles, “How are you sure she can help us?”

She sighs, snaps on the metal to her head, and begins dialing in the code into the machine:

*Name: Elif Zapsu*
*Birthdate: 15.08.1989*
*Date of Death: 15.08.1989*

“Oops,” she mumbled. She fixed the date of the death, and then glanced at her partner and responded, “I am sure, because she must have even more answers now...that she is dead.”

**Title: Death waits for us all**
**Location: Edinburgh, Scotland**

I struggle to get out of bed. It takes three hours today. Chronic fatigue, a symptom of my unknown illness.

The doctors say that every day, I may slowly fade.... How long I have is uncertain. Some days I long for relief from the chronic pain in my body. Others, I am frightened of the unknown.

Today, I am better but exhausted.

I feel sorrow at leaving my family. My siblings, their babies and my parents. I am still only in my mid-twenties. My life has not been, as I would have liked. So much potential and opportunity, all gone to trash with illness. Alcohol, cigarettes, parties.... Just a blur.

I did not take care of my body. I spent too much time reliving the past,
unable to live in the present, thinking too much of the future.

I hate leaving things unfinished.

I should finish my training and head home and use what time I have left with those I love.

Yes.
I will finish my training and head home early.
If I have only a few years, I want to spend it with my loved ones, maybe travelling a bit and writing.
Let me at least leave something to the world of myself…perhaps it will be useful?
That is why I am writing to you,
My reader.

Yes, You.

I know you are there reading with me, beside me.
That gives me strength to go on.

I finally manage to get up and get dressed.

Sometimes more than dying, I am afraid of losing my identity. It is this intense fear, like I am in darkness, constantly waiting to be pushed off a cliff into nothing.

Perhaps, some part of me is hoping for a miracle and doesn’t really believe it will happen. After all, I have always told myself, that there is no such thing as impossible, as long as it is within the rules of the “game.” Whatever those rules are…

But some days, I have accepted it somewhat. It is a working progress.

Even if I find a cure, I must accept it…

After all, death waits for us all.

**Title: The End of the World**

**Location: Edinburgh, Scotland**

One month later
"Listen to the voice inside! That's the voice calling you to depths you haven't yet discovered...The mind kicks in later, don't listen to it!" (Hulusi 2020, #682).

**Text:** I am here.
**From:** Nomad.

It's a chilly Saturday morning. Christmas lights sparkle across the street stores; we are on George Street, at Starbucks, for a coffee.

I received a text from a Turkish Sufi Nomad. He has spent the past few years wandering from country to country, city to city, meeting people and sharing Sufi wisdom. I happened to get in touch with him through my mother, a Sufi teacher.

He is sitting in front of me. A diminutive figure with greying hair, a soft white sweater, and jeans. He is sips a black tea and smells like roses.

I hold my large cappuccino looking into the foam.

We both look up at the same time. His light blue eyes pierce into mine.

I ask him, “What can I call you?”

He responds, “The letters of my name have slowly fallen, one by one, like leaves of a tree. They have drifted away with the songs of the wind.”

My thoughts fade, and I am silent.

The chatter around us dims in my mind.

Elif: “Why am I here?”
No Name: “To find yourself.”
Elif: “Why are you here?”
No Name: “To find myself.”
Elif: “What happens if I don’t?”
No Name: “You will be lost forever, never knowing who you are. You are the greatest treasure there is. You must fall in love. Love heals all, love cures all, love is all, love will set you free.”
Elif: “I thought I did...once...he was very harmful.”
No Name: “You are now more than a dot, Elif. You must move from the dot to the stroke.”
We are one-Ahad. But our faces, bodies, and “avatars” are all different. A child cannot see such a difference. Grow up and observe all the faces of your existence. The seed has been planted and transformed into a beautiful tree. Look at your branches, flowers, leaves, and see how you have changed. Accept your body as the gift it is and the truth of your being, and you will accept and see the truth in others and their difference from yours. When you do this, you will pull not those who harm you but those who do you good, those who give you…YOU! You will find yourself in all you meet. You will find love.”

Elif: “How do I find myself?”
No Name: “With yourself.”
Elif: “How can I know love if I do not know myself?”
No Name: “It is your every breath, movement, and moment. If you cannot perceive it, merely whisper, “I love you” enough times, and you will begin to see it.”

The Sufi Nomad begins to laugh. He thinks he is funny.

A couple nearby sends us a strange glance.
He gets up and pulls on a dark blue coat, hat, and gloves.

As he nods goodbye and walks through the crowds, I realize that the entire conversation occurred in our heads…

A few hours later, I am back in my flat. I have accepted that I am most likely experiencing temporary insanity due to extreme and prolonged stress. I long for a vacation. A tropical island would be wonderful.

I sit down by my table and sigh.

_How do I find love if I do not know love?_  
_How do I open my heart if I do not know my heart?_  
_Whom am I supposed to fall in love with?_

I place my head on the table and close my eyes, slowly drifting into slumber.

I am flying.
I don’t have a body yet I can feel the wind on my face.

Across the Ocean, over the stillness and quiet.
I reach the top of a mountain. It is the Yellow Mountain\(^3\) in Istanbul. There is a green-coloured house surrounded by a forest looking out towards the Bosphorus.

I enter.

At the entrance, there is a large writing in Gold lit up with lights:

**Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.**

In the name of Allah (God), who has infinite qualities and who is the observer of infinite qualities (The Quran in Hulusi 2013, 26).

It’s now dark outside. The house appears to be empty.

I walk into the living room. The floors are wood, the walls a pale shade of cream. A vast window spreads across the entire floor, looking out into the darkness.

I see the shadows of the couches to the left, and ahead is a large dining table to the right. There are two small lamps next to the table.

I walk towards the window. The lights across the mountains of Istanbul sparkle above the darkness of the Bosphorus Straight.

Breath-taking!

I love Istanbul in the night.

Abruptly, I feel a sense of darkness, of foreboding. I get a mental image of the world burning.

In an instant, the city is covered in flames, and the fire is getting closer and closer to the house—suddenly, the entire window is covered in flames—

I wake up with a scream, jumping from the table.

My head is drenched in sweat. I can feel the fire, the heat…dazed I look around.

I am in my apartment in Stockbridge.

\(^3\) Colours and scents are important in this story and are addressed in reference to practice at the end of the thesis.
Thank God. I sigh with relief and wait for my heart beat to slow down.

A minute later, I decide to get up from the desk.

Just as I stand, there is a knock on my door, and someone slides an envelope beneath it.

I head towards it and pick it up.

How strange. Who in in the world is that, I wonder.
I take out a smooth paper from within and read:

A sliver of fear runs down my spine. Zu? What the hell? Do I have a psychotic stalker? I am starting to think I am still dreaming. I must not have woken up-

**KNOCK-KNOCK.**

I startle awake. My eyes open wide. My head is on my desk, a trail of drool drips down my open mouth, my heart is beating rapidly.
Knock-Knock.
DING-DONG.
I look around confused, wiping my mouth.

Someone is at my door. I feel the cramp in my neck. This time it must be real.

I get up and open the door.

It’s the postman. A young man is standing in front of me wearing a blue uniform.

“Elif Zapsu?”

I smile, “Yes, that’s me.”

“There you go,” he smiles in return, hands me the mail and trots back into the street.

I feel a sense of dread as I look down and read what’s written on top.

*Scottish Rail.*

Phew. With a sigh of relief, I head back in and close the door.

**Title: The Matrix (Red or Blue Pill)**
**Location: Edinburgh, Scotland**
**One week later**

“*Elif wake up!*”
“*Elif wake up from the illusion.*”

A woman's voice whispers through my mind as I open my eyes.

I look into my high-ceiling room in Stockbridge. The voice is still echoing in my head. She sounds oddly familiar, like a mature version of myself. I look around me I see nothing. I can see the particles in air vibrating, almost as if someone can appear from them at any moment.

I am in the middle of my psychotherapy training and I am exhausted-it must be getting to me. Although this voice is becoming a monthly occurrence and always the same words.

It is a cold and rainy night. My shutters are closed and I have piled clothes on
to keep warm, a small night lamp is on.

The wind is rough, howling through the cracks in my window.

*Knock-Knock.*

There is a knock on the door. I grumble and feel embarrassed. The apartment is an absolutely filthy mess with clothes, papers, books everywhere and dishes piled up in the kitchen, I am not ready for a visitor!

I reluctantly head to the door and peek through the hole, “Argh!”

There is a man in his mid-thirties with a thick black beard; dressed in a gold amour, on the centre of his chest is a picture of a scale. Two goat-horns protrude from his helmet and perhaps most startling, his eyes too, glow a warm gold.

He knocks again.

*Knock-Knock.*

I think fast- gun or knife- wait I don’t have a gun- with a whirl, solid pixels materialize next to me, building and forming into the golden birdlike-scale-goat-man.

He smiles, “Hello.”

My mouth hangs open.

He starts to whistle as he looks around, “What a mess!” I decide that I must be dreaming and I calm down. I do have strange and vivid dreams.

I relax.

“This is a really ‘real’ dream…what do you want? Tell me why you are here so I can wake up!”

He sighs. Lifting his eyebrows obviously exasperated he says, “I am Zü (pronounced Zoo). I’m here because you called. You know, like this-” he lifts two fingers and blows a whistle.

“Right…” I sit down, tired.
I throw off a pile of clothes so he has space on the couch.

He laughs; sounding like a bird's chipper tweet and sits down next to me.

“So are you like an angel, demon or another being-“

He interrupts with a smirk, “Maybe all, maybe both, maybe some, or maybe none.”

“Great.” I stretch out my feet and grab my thick robe that has a hood in the shape of a lamb’s head. My feet in my unicorn slippers curl, searching for heat.

He laughs again, tinkling and winkling. I could swear some golden feathers appeared and floated off his head.

“You know sheep is often a metaphor for sacrifice in Islam, it is almost as if you are playing the role of a victim- that acts like a child.”

I glare at him, snuggling deeper into my robe.

“So speaks the goat- bird- scale –what ARE you pretending to be? What is your purpose?”

He smiles broadly flashing pearly teeth on darkened skin,

“I am simply here to guide you home, where your heart is.”

My heart?

I suddenly remember that I hid my heart; a pink crystal, heart quartz somewhere but I forgot where I put it. I stand up and begin opening and closing drawers,

“Actually, where is my heart?”

“Elif. You have to find your heart. I warned you that you have three days to save yourself, to save the world.”

I sit down. Depleted, afraid of the unknown.

What will happen to everyone? Instinctively, I feel that what he says is true. I can leave the world, but I cannot bear for the world to leave itself.

"What do we have to do? I will do anything."
Zü gets up and points to a portal of light that just opened within the walls.

"First, You must come with me there."

I look at the brilliant light, and I am frightened...wait a second...have I already died? Is this like the portal of light people talk about, you pass through and leave the world behind?

I hesitate. Zü understands my trepidation.
"Remember, we have three days. Death won't come until you meet Love until you meet YOU in Truth. Don't you want the Truth? Or would you prefer to live in ignorance?"

My response is immediate, "Whoever knows themselves knows their lord." (Prophet Muhammad in Ibnül-Arabi 2011, 51).

I nod yes, "Truth. Always."

He nods in return with respect, then grins, "Hey, even if we separate, as long as you wear these bracelets, you will be protected, and I will find you."

He gives me two long copper bracelets, shining purely, with Arabic prayers engraved. The second I put them on, I see a ghostlike image of a copper armour all around me, smooth, shiny, and round.

As I admire the armour that fits around me like a glove, trying to read the engravings, I feel a whirl and look up to see Zü appear as a large golden bird.

He speaks to me in my brain, "Hop on."

I decide to trust him. I do like copper.

I get onto his silky back and hold on to his neck, and with a “whoosh,” he zips through the portal of light.

"Elif, wake up!"
"Elif, wake up from the illusion."

A woman’s voice whispers through my mind as my eyes jolt open.

I look into my high-ceiling room in Stockbridge.
The voice is still echoing in my head, but around me, I see nothing. I can see the particles in the air vibrating, like waves, almost as if someone can appear from them at any moment.

It is a cold rainy night, my shutters are closed, and I have piled clothes on me to keep warm; a small night lamp is on.

The wind is rough, howling through the cracks in my window. That was a very vivid dream.

As I get up to get a drink of water, I don’t notice the wind that blows in and dissipates a trail of gold dust by my door…

**Title: Kun!**

**Location: Edinburgh, Scotland**

“Could it not be said that death is, in fact, the black hole of mankind…A transformation from a corporeal existence to an existence without the body (Hulusi 2020, #1286).”

A New Year

“Elif, wake up!”

“Elif, wake up from the illusion.”

A woman’s voice whispers through my mind as I open my eyes. I look into my empty high-ceiling room in Stockbridge. The voice is still echoing in my head, but around me, I see nothing.

Not again! I can’t tell if I am dreaming or if I am awake. Please tell me I am awake- please tell me I am awake, no more weird dreams!

The wind is rough, howling through the cracks in my window.

*Knock-Knock.*

With a whirl, a golden-bird-with-a-hat-of-horns- and a scale on his armour sifts in. Zü smiles widely, eyes glinting with humour.

“Hello, Elif.”
“Go away.”

I throw my pillow at him. It bounces off, and he raises an eyebrow, amused.

"Grumpy? Don't worry, we will make it quick; come on! We must first travel through space and time."

Time travel?

Einstein (in Paralaks 2013) believed space and time were one, that past-present-and future was an illusion, which other physicists also echoed, albeit from different positions (Closer to Truth 2015; Rovelli 2014; The Institute of Art and Ideas 2019). While not everyone can claim this as truth (Smolin 2014; Muller 2016), it would concur with many monistic perspectives, including Sufism. The idea that a united inside and outside, the micro human in the macro universe is echoed by ancient philosophers (Jung 1973, 76), and in this case, just as Zü depicts, there is a belief in the Unity of Opposites (Hulusi 2012, 130-31), where time both exists and is non-existent.

So, we are actually here: But then we are also here simultaneously!

From darkness into light!

Nothing into something, unity into multiplicity, real into magic, just like Zü...just like a black hole, destroying and creating, seen and the unseen or emptiness within. Though one might also argue that the word "nothing" implies "something" in itself, thus countering its argument by suggesting duality, however obviously, one must accept the limitations of verbal communication.
If, from a Sufi perspective, existence is one, there can only be one instance (Hulusi 2021, 67), where even names or words cease to be. Thus when one has actualized their mind, they reach a plane beyond space and time.
I recall Ibnül-Arabi's (2021b) book, "Devleti’l Osmaniyye" (The Ottoman State); around seventy years before the Turkish Republic was founded, he saw the future and wrote about the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire, as well as other details, including Sultan's names.

Zü reads my mind. "Yes, but this time we will begin with a stop in the past, in your memories...."

He transforms into a large bird, with golden-red, large feathers, that glint with the appearance of blue flames.

It is strange, but it is as if I had seen his bird form before...I recall it, from my dreams from when I was little.
This time I have no fear. After all, all of this is but a dream, and you, my reader, are with me, making me feel less alone.

I shift into a copper armor, hop on, and we step into the light.
I hold on to his feathers tightly as I feel the wind whirling around me. Suddenly, I get a sense of vertigo, and we are in a hospital in Istanbul, Turkey. It is the American hospital in the Şişli neighborhood, a summer night in 1989. I am in a room, watching the doctors look at my mother with fear.
It's been hours, and the birthing is complicated.

The young doctor is thinking, mother or child; one might die.

I get sucked in. I am inside her belly, and the chord is choking me!

I am lost in a panic, and I feel like I am drowning, suffocating. I can feel the movement of the waves around me, but I am slowly losing oxygen. I feel the tightness around my throat getting stronger. That which fed me is killing me.
My heart slows, close to a stop, and I am staring at - Electrons?
No- billions of neurons firing and wiring in the form of a brilliant, bright light.
Brain cell or Universe, I can’t tell the difference, I am the microcosmic Brain in the macrocosmic Universe (Hulusi 2021, 28).

It fades away and there is darkness, from the darkness, a circle emerges.

Is it an eclipse? No, it is a black hole.

I am in nothingness. A star, collapsed, atoms crushing until we are within a space-time singularity, space and time have stopped (Downey 2021).

Zü whistles, and abruptly, I am thrown out of my mom’s body. I now watch next to them, invisible.
I touch my tight neck muscles gingerly. "Zü, I think I died."

He has turned back into the shape of a man and touches my arm. "Death does not mean non-existence (Hulusi 2014, 13)."

I respond, "Humans are asleep. When they die, they awaken" (The Prophet Muhammad SAW in Hulusi 2021, 284). I think many with out-of-body or near-death experiences would suggest that there is a soul and this world is not what it seems...though there is not yet agreed upon scientific evidence."

Zü laughed and responded,

"Many people have had near-death experiences (Stern 2021); usually, what is described is positivity, transcendence, and dissociation (Greyson 1983). Billions across religious and spiritual beliefs feel that the soul exists (TRT World 2020), with compelling research building up from the world's most prominent physicists that suggest that quantum information can continue indefinitely as a "soul" within the quantum field (Hameroff 1998; Selbie 2021). The real debate for most appears to be in choosing religious and or spiritual paths to find our way home. There are many paths to the same destination."

We watch as the doctor manages to save me from the chord and pulls me out.

The young female Obstetrician laughs in relief as my mom, drenched in sweat, her long dark hair stuck to her face, leans back in exhaustion, close to a faint.

Death materializes next to me. She appears to have done a Benjamin Button and reversed, as she is now a toddler. A one-year-old, dressed in a white dress with black letters writing “AZRAEL,” the name of the angel of Death in Islam (Hulusi 2013, 423). She is holding onto a pink rattle. She gurgles and winks at me.

Zü laughs again, “Oh hello, you cute- little –chubby-dumpling.” He picks her up in his arms, “What are you doing here?"

He listens to her response intently and turns to me, “She wants to tell you, that which you speak is a physical death, which is merely the end of one body, and the continuation of another (The Quran in Hulusi 2020d, 465), one does not experience another death after the first one, and they are eternal. Remember what your grandmother taught you? How do you start your every morning? What do you say before you eat and leave the house before you start anything?
I recall and say, “B-ismillahirrahmanirrahim. The name of Allah, who is Rahman, has infinite qualities, and Rahim, who is the observer of infinite qualities (Hulusi 2013, 26).

Zü and baby Death look at me. “What did you think B symbolizes? Alif extends from the dot; the top semi-circle represents “Zahir” (outer), and the bottom semi-circle from the dot “Batin” (inner) states of being (Hulusi 2012b, 198). So you see, I am Magical and Real, Zahir (seen) and Batin (unseen). I have two functions. One is the physical Death; the second is the metaphorical, unseen one. You desire for me to get you before you physically die so that you awaken from the illusion of this dream.

You desire the Truth... So you shall die before your Death.”

He stops and glances back at her in his arms and then continues, “To die before (physical) death is to remove your identity and become free to take any form, any name, any meaning you like…” (Hulusi 2021, 165). As such, “duality,” the assumption that you are separate from all that exists, ceases.

Suddenly, I feel a vibration. My phone is on me! I reach and slide it out of my pocket.

I look at the screen to see a message from an unknown number:

“Zahir, Batin, Hidden and Seen, may all duality cease and the curtain of the ego lift. This is what you have to say daily, morning until night.”

I put my phone back and briefly wonder who this is from and how I can say this chant constantly while also going about my life. I look at Zu and see Death grab his cheeks and giggle.

I smile and ask, first in Arabic, than English, “Ve yes’eluneke amir Ruh? What is the Spirit?” (The Quran in Hulusi 2013b, 304).

Death speaks through Zü:

Everything that exists, that which is one and cannot be divided, that was not born or given birth to is the true Spirit (Hulusi 2020b, 9:37). It is the Real, the Unity. The Multiplicity, the Magic, is you. After the brain was created, I blew in my Spirit (The Quran in Hulusi 2020d, 154).
By the 120th day, your brain allows the Spirit to emerge (Hulusi 2020b, 11:35), your brain creates your own Spirit (Hulusi 2011, 05.26). It is a holographic wavelength with different functions and layers, continuing after physical Death through various dimensions (Hulusi 2020b, 16:11).

I sigh, confused. “There isn’t any evidence for this.”

Zü and Death exchange looks. They say,

“Come, let’s skip ahead two years.”

Zü puts baby Death down, who winks goodbye and with a rattle fades away.

He then transforms, and I hop back on, bidding my mom goodbye in my mind. This time I pett his feathers and enjoy the ride, a slow movement in stillness.

We land in a room in a house on a mountain; we are still in Istanbul.

It is my room.

I am inside my little body. My chin and arm hurts due to a virus that has spread and resulted in stitches.

But I am happily giggling on my own. I see colours swirling, little blobs of light whirling, and hear music; there is a distant, soothing and angelic song in the air.

I try to catch the blobs.

I am sucked out.

“Still following me Zü.”

“Yes. You are a bit over two, and it’s before the wall of your ego was properly built.”

“The wall? Didn’t you build one?”

Zü laughed, his feathers ruffling as he transformed into a human. “Yes, but specifically, this is about your wall. The wall that gains in density over time are merely thoughts formed from neurons, and these thoughts say, “I AM.” So since thoughts are non-existent in a physical sense....
“Then my ego does not exist. What I claim to be me does not exist other than as information.”

Zü nods. “Vahdedhü la Sherike leh” (The Prophet Muhammad in Ibnül-Arabi 2021, 41). If existence is One being without equal, then how can we be two? “I” can only be One as “We.” When you know your true self, thinking as though you are separate ends and We as One begins (Ibnül-Arabi 2021, 65).

You must know yourself. You must “know the whole” (Hulusi 2014, 12). That is why we are on our way home. To find ourselves, and where can we be, but in our hearts…in Love?

I look around and notice that where there is a flat ceiling, there is an image of a chandelier, almost ghostlike. Where there is a wall, there is a door. Where there is a bookshelf, there is a window. Another room has begun to appear in this one simultaneously!

“Zü…”

He nods. “Yes, within one are 11 dimensions in our brains (Hulusi 2012b, 110). Neuroscientists have proven that brains can operate up to 11 dimensions instead of previously thought 3 (Dean 2018). But we will take the fast track and go only through three. Come, let's go in.”

He takes my hand this time, and we walk through the door shimmering into my wall.

Day One

Noah’s Heart: Many Worlds, One Brain

“One word free us of all the weight and pain in life. That word is love (Sophocles 1982).”

* Note of Interest: Noah’s Ark is currently believed by various sources to have landed around Mt. Ararat in Turkey (Soylemez 2021).

As we shift in emptiness for what feels like a minute, I hear an echo of a song in the distance:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzop9xUiupY&list=PLfBxv_rXwiPHDDKBOQqlcbfsRKrMHOx3l&index=7.

As I am trying to place the song, we walk through a shimmer, out into streets riddled with trash and reeking with a foul stench of sour food. It looks like I am somewhere in South East Asia. It is incredibly humid; the air is grey with pollution. It reminds me of Hanoi, Vietnam, where I lived for a short while, working with children at an NGO. My thin, white, dress flutters around me in a breeze. What in the world am I doing here?

Zü lets go of my hand and speaks through my mind.

Zü: Everything is a frequency, a realm. Why you chose to visit this one is only something you can answer. It's day One. You only get one chance to make it to the second door. If you are honest, you will find your way out. If not, you will be lost in this dimension forever, your physical body in the real world will die, and the copper wall will break.

Elif Thinks: It's going to be fine. It's all a dream, all a game.
Elif: (With fear) What happens when the wall breaks?

A disease spreads across the World, and the lights go out. The World enters a War, both physically and mentally. The end will not be taken lightly.

You need to wake up and save yourself. Save yourself, save the world.

Elif: How?
Zü: First, get through day one and learn the rules of the "game." You only get one chance.

Zü disappears into a cloud of dust.

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4 He is actually referring to saving her world, the world in her brain.
I look around me.

It's a poor neighborhood with clothes hanging to dry from balconies and windows on houses lined with bars.

The streets are silent. It is getting dark, and there is no one in sight. I start getting frightened.

I need to get to safety fast, I think.

A tall man with black hair and dark eyes appears around the corner, sees me, and leers.
I begin to slowly back away. He notices, and I am running, panic freezing my brain. My feet feel like they are getting heavier as I turn around the corner. An arm grabs me and pushes me to the wall, holding my mouth.

With wide eyes, I see who it is.
Scruffy brown hair and green eyes, now in his late twenties, but he looks like I last saw him years ago.

Mark. My childhood sweetheart.

He is furious. He grabs me and pulls me down the dark alley through a door of an old wooden building. We enter a small empty room lit with candles, filled with books lined up on a shelf, and a large dark throw on a hard stone floor. It's warm, a bit humid, and dark.

He closes the door and yells, "What the hell are you doing here!"

I am equally angry, "What the hell are YOU doing here? This is supposed to be my DREAM! Wait, where the HELL are we? Are we even dreaming?"

He pauses, staring at me, then sighs and sits down on the thick, sizeable black wool blanket. "Elif, I think we are both on the same plane…I have been waking up in this room many times. This was the first time I went out to explore… It's very real, but I guess we are dreaming together…"

My pulse slowly returning to normal, I sit next to him, crossing my legs, covering them with my white flower-printed pale, thin dress. I notice for the first time that he's dressed in his white-polka-dot pyjamas and starts laughing.
"Hey Mark, you haven't changed. You are even sleeping in your dream."

He grins and looks at me.

"You look-what is up with those thick wristbands?"

I grimace.

"Long story! How did we end up here together?"

He looks confused. His voice is deep, but his accent has changed a bit from what I remember, now British-tinged with American. "I don't know. This is the first time I ventured outside and happened to meet you. It looks like a very chaotic and somewhat unsafe city…I am not certain. But most certainly, I can recall this place when I wake up back home. I concluded tentatively that I just have vivid dreams …seeing you now, I am starting to believe that I have lost my shit."

Laughing, I pull at my ponytail, trying to relax my head, "You and me both."

He senses my anxiety. "Don't worry, no one ever comes or knocks. 5 The lock is solid and its pretty quiet in this neighbourhood…we can relax here for the time being. I usually just read and write, and continuously wake up and sleep in the room…this was the first time I was here long enough to even think of venturing out, and I only just began to realize that I was dreaming—I mean you know how when you dream, but you don't know it's a dream?"

I nod silently, feeling calmer and safer.
I look around the room.
Typical Mark, books on history, music, and literature falling out of every corner. He must spend his time here, reading in his dream.

I look at him and smile.

"I missed you."

He looks embarrassed.

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5 It might be that she breaks through his “prison” as he never left the room or had the thought that he could leave until she arrived in that dimension. He goes out and pulls her into her world, thus integrating her information. Though she is much “freer” in her mind, she might have returned in order to integrate him better as well.
I can feel this invisible chord pulling him towards me.
A strong force vibrates, and I realize that perhaps he was the one who missed me.
Or did it matter?

He admitted, "To be honest, I had this crazy need to see you, but I have no idea why."

I smile.

"How have you been, Mark? There must be a reason why we have found each other again.
The last I saw you was in Istanbul..."
We ended our relationship two years after graduation, after which he moved to New York. We have barely spoken or seen each other since.

"I am good. I am still in New York."
I raise my eyebrows in surprise; at least over five years there it must be now...His mother is American, father is British, so I suppose he chose where he found most home.

"I am teaching history and finishing up my Ph.D. My parents are still together, despite their bickering—"

I laugh, "Barb still forcing Adam to go on weird health-detox diets?"

He smiles softly, "Indeed she is. She worries about his heart, over ten years since his last operation, but she still won't forget..."

"Hey, it's her way of showing her Love. Maybe that's why he's made it the past ten years without a second operation."

Concerned about Adam, I suddenly get excited. "I have read a lot about the healing impact of Love. It has been shown that self-defined Love is healing, conquers fear, and is transformative. An over 75-year-long study by Harvard researchers has shown that Love, a positive connection, is the key to a happy life (Valliant in Gregoire 2013). Countless studies across the field of health (physical and mental) indicate results that depict the experience of Love, as often physically and mentally healing (Green and Sheldrake 1996; Seikkula and Trimble 2005, 473). Particularly striking is a longitudinal study of patients with coronary disease, who had a 45% lower recurrence of myocardial infarction after counselling sessions they depicted as receiving Love (Green
and Sheldrake 1996, 44). Sorry for rambling on. It's just... what I mean to say is that your mom and dad have a loving relationship. She really loves him. That's how I remember her, which is key for his health.

He nods, eyes gentle. "Yes, she does, and you are probably right. They are likely extending each-others lives despite the fighting! Anyway, they are both great. I'm good too, and I do have some news."

He twists his silver engagement ring around his finger. "I am getting married."

I laugh, "That's wonderful! Who is the lucky girl?"

He looks serious and says, "someone who makes me happy and helps me feel at peace...being an only child, I am looking forward to having kids, a bigger family than I am used to. I guess I just had to say goodbye to the past and that I was sorry."

I'm surprised. "For what?"

"You deserved better. I hurt you. Do you hate me?"

I suddenly remember why I had been angry with him years ago. We had planned on going to Hanoi together, but he ended up with our friend Lucy on the beaches of Spain, and I went alone to work with the orphans.

I smile and kiss him on the cheek. "It is okay. We loved each other as children do, but we were not a right fit, and we hurt each other...you know, someone very wise once said that our anger and "Our hatred must be directed towards the action, our Love must be directed to the One! We must see the one present in the essence of the person (Hulusi 2021, 204)."

He gives me a perplexed look. Then recalls my interest in Sufism and smiles.

"So it's safe to say there is nothing left to forgive between us?" I ask and look at him.

He smiles softly, "Never was."
We both look into each-others eyes in silence.

I think, or is it him who thinks, perhaps we both think in one instant-
I Love you.

I begin to fiddle with my bracelets, deep in thought.

"Do you know what Love is?"

He laughs and shrugs. "Something different for everyone, I suppose?"

I think silently to myself.
What do I know of love?
Hearts dance,
breathless,
flirting kisses turn to heat.
When will you meet again,
one more second is much. Every thought consumed-
a smile on your lips
eyes filled with clouds
of bliss,
another message and call,
a touch,
another fall.
So tempting-too tempting, the meeting of the bodies, hearts, and minds.
Two houses become one. Until one day, you wake up and say
good morning, heartache.
Never-ending,
Morning heartaches.
Is this what I know of love?

What do I know of love?

Is it the peace you see with two partners of 50 years,
holding aged hands, feeding the birds by the pier?

Is that love?
What do I know of love?

Is it the joyous and adoring eyes of your dog waiting for you to arrive,
not wishing for much more than your presence?

Is it a mother's unconditional caress?
A moment or a series of moments, an album of moments?
What do I know of love?
I speak. “There is detailed work of an anthropologist who writes extensively on different types of love, "romantic, platonic, spiritual, futuristic, and parasocial" (Machin 2022, 06). With Reiki and other alternative healing, often the belief is that love is the “Universal Life Force Energy” which flows to the individual and heals, regardless of whether the patient is deemed “good” or “bad”(Stone 2008, 46). I met many energetic healers in Turkey with different backgrounds; Buddhist, Shaman, Muslim…the most shared belief I saw was that which heals is energy, and as all are considered One, there is no “possessing” that energy; the healing comes from you-to you, call this source Love or if you prefer, call it quantum information. For some, “Love…is an affirmation of the other regarding the other in his wholeness…the state in which he is most himself…love operates as the desire to help others return as much as possible to that original state of wholeness” (Demarco 2010, 44). Many might also believe that the “breaking open of the Heart is the transmuting force in the alchemy of love,” (Welwood 1985, 40) in what is called “Maitri” a Buddhist concept of unconditional self-acceptance (Welwood 1983, 49). For Christians, God is at times identified as Love (Demarco 2010, 46), which is similar to Sufi perspectives that view Islam as the religion of Love (Dehlvi 2009).

Everyone has their depiction, I feel I must find mine…” I stop talking, feeling conflicted.

Mark starts to laugh. “Go on…”

I lean forward towards him, eyes lighting up.

"I have heard of love in terms of frequencies. That partners, who cannot bear to be separated from each other, are those whose frequencies pull each other like magnets, feed each other the most, and those who can't stand each other are repelled by energy from the brain, so liking someone, disliking them or even loving them it is not entirely about beliefs or thought systems but magnetic resonance (Hulusi 2017). Thus some people develop together and stay together as their frequencies adjust. However, when people change, they no longer match, and the relationships end. Everyone finds their kind, so what need is there for sorrow? In any case, we are no longer the people we used to be. You have found the person that is now a better fit-"I pause and touch his hand with affection. He smiles.

"As for me-"

I pause and look into his eyes.
He is listening intently.

“I think it might be healing to find my perfect magnet, so to speak. But even if I find that kind of love, if that exists for me, I am looking for more. A love that passes the boundaries of just two people. To love only one is nothing but suffering for me, it cannot contain my heart, it is endless and full. I feel that my “love should be for the One…(otherwise I) will create suffering for (myself) (Hulusi 2021, 204).”

**Where is that love?**

I will find it some way. So, I am good. At least I will be once we get out of this place. Now that you know, you can let me go. Let go of our bond, have a wonderful life, and don’t look back. Don’t live as a prisoner of past events that no longer exist. Everything happened the way it needed to.”

He is silent.

“I don’t know about this frequency shit, but I understand what you are saying. Those people we once were are truly gone. So it is like hanging onto memories. Even if we wanted to, we can’t go back, and even if we did, we would still end up separating.”

He feels a deep sadness. But then a tremendous, freeing relief.

He smiles and nods as if to say thank you.

Suddenly we feel a shift between us, almost as if a wall was being lifted. He begins to look at me differently, without barriers or the heaviness of the past. Gently, as if seeing me for the first time, without expectations or preconceived notions.

It is so strange, but I feel as though I am perceiving my inner child being mirrored back. The child had failed to grow but was now being seen and accepted, surprising me.

I feel warmth fill my chest and I realize, that in that precise moment, there are no words that can describe what I was experiencing…that the way I was feeling Love was through a sense of oneness that was beyond explanation, **love was a feeling that I could not describe with words.**

As I watch my reflection in Mark’s eyes, I feel the scars in my heart surface.
What an odd thought; I look down and I see nothing yet I can “sense” it as it rises battered and beaten, slowly beginning to heal.

There was so much warmth and acceptance in his gaze. The feeling was soft. Very soft. I also began to see not just characteristics or traits but the energy I was giving. It was like some of my core qualities were being reflected with unconditional acceptance, with warmth, with love…

Where a ‘fully functioning’ person experiences all of themselves without conditions, Unconditional Positive Regard (UPR) is depicted as the acceptance and validation of others as they are, without personal judgment (Rogers 1961, 283), allowing for the development of the congruence of self (Bozarth 1998, 153). Is acceptance of the self and others an expression of love? For what other emotion can be so strong as to override what we generically call the “ego”? It is possible that acceptance of others will not be pure from its conditions until you are condition-less and to become condition less, one must become self-less? Thus, perhaps the greater the love and acceptance, the more the conditions and judgments dissipate …

Is that what was happening now?

As the cracks of my heart began to sow together, I realized the chronic pain I carried, the inexplicable autoimmune illness bound to lead me to my grave, began to release; my head, shoulders, and body, began to feel-bearable and lighter.

Perhaps, being ready to “grow” up allows for the development of the self, for one to be more true to the present, thus clearing negative thought patterns that may be making me sick…

Was this a form of love?
It is only by reference to the flow of feelings in me that I begin to conceptualize an answer…I form an inner hypothesis from the experiencing going on in me…” (Rogers 2014, 73). Perhaps I must use “intersubjective verification” and ask him if I love him, if he loves me (Rogers 2014, 75).

Yet I think Love is abstract. Endless, morphing, fluid, and often selfish. It suggests self-love and as such that there is a “self” to love.

It requires external generation and internal reception to trigger integration and
projection.

As a friend once said, how am I supposed to love myself if I don't even know what it is, if I have never felt it, perhaps even received it?

It implies rose-tinted glasses, a Disneyesque self-romance, it cannot be measured, let alone depicted, and changes colour according to perception. As another friend put it, it's "not even real."

Connotations are made with mystical no-sense, *Eat-Pray-Love* (Murphy 2010) Hollywood; endless self-love books that hopeful's read, but many without the proper guidance feel worse after (APS 2009).

Yet the search for love and acceptance is undeniable, often projected into the literary and film fields of “romance,” “drama”- even a good horror film might surround a lover or family members; think of the Mummy (in Daniel and Jacks 1999) Dracula (in Stoker and Hart 1992), Warm Bodies (in Marion 2013) and endless others across time. Is it not some form of “love” that binds and creates connections and networks that, at times, we call “home”?

It is said that “Feelings…as relational beings… (are what) make us truly human…the only transcendence of our individual loneliness…is through love (Seikkula and Trimble 2005, 473).” We are “social animals,” and for most of us, that is true. However, in recent times, we have seen growing isolation, possibly leading to depression and loneliness worldwide, especially among the elderly (World Health Organization 2021, 1). Perhaps we can call love, at the very basic level, a type of connection, an attachment that allows us to bond and “feel” (Johnson 2014, 20). Without such a connection, most are lost for in this sense “to love is to survive“ (Machin 2022, 7).

It felt like a miracle. Was it possible? What I needed to heal all along was this frequency which one might call a dimension of Love?

I sat back, surprised… silent. Contemplating. One small exchange triggering a whirlwind effect.
He is equally silent, surprised, and pensive.

Various studies looking at the biomagnetic resonance of the heart and synchronization suggest that living systems are interconnected and communicate through magnetic resonance (Russek and Schwartz 1994). A 42-year follow-up of a Harvard study on graduates was particularly interesting (ibid). Results of participant's EEG records showed that their hearts synchronized with those that sat across from them; specifically that those who rated themselves as having been raised by loving parents had greater synchronization with pairs than those who reported not being raised in loving environments; they also reported significantly greater health in adulthood. Thus perhaps it was possible that "Love unifies and in this unifying process heals...if (it) does not provide a healing cure in certain instances it nonetheless can relieve suffering" (DeMarco 2010, 51). In this instance, I felt my suffering begin to be relieved.

For myself, Love is existence thus Love is information, frequency, energy, you-me-us. Unity and Multiplicity, the Magic and the Real. This was an experience of it within it.

Western therapeutic theory, however, rather than exploring Love, has tended to focus more on empathy, the awareness of suffering, and the desire to relieve it (Stone 2008, 46). It is interesting that Love has been a less acceptable topic of discussion than empathy, which also happens to be intangible and difficult to measure experience or state. At least, that has been my experience.

I wonder how to further describe what could be dimensions of Love.

I ask Mark for a pen and paper. He laughs.

"Elif, we are in a dream, and you are creating a lecture! Here, take my notebook. "

A thin silver chain with small cross glints in the candlelight at the opening collar of his pyjamas as he gets up and walks toward the bookshelf. He reaches over an organized array of dark-coloured, worn, thick books and pulls out a soft brown cover, throwing it over to my lap. I touch it softly and open it, seeing illegible blue scribbles on pale white pages. I smile. "I think you are the one getting ready for a speech. What is all of this?"

He quickly shoves at my hands, "It is just some notes on the history of the world and a projection of a probability for the future."
I smile, my heart feels-bigger, pinker, and brighter—
Happy?

I love this side of him; always thinking, dreaming, creating…
“Now I am very curious, what do you think is going to happen?”

He grimaces, “Long story short, if we look at the statistical and repetitive pattern of human behaviour, shortly we will face another World War” (Blake 2022).

I remember Zu’s warning and feel a shiver down my spine. *Save yourself, save the world*…

He walks over and kneels down, touching my hand. “Elif? It’s just my random thoughts.”

“It's not that...never-mind…” I shrug, and he backs away sitting down next to me.

Whatever will be, will be, and has been, so we must learn to find strength within, learn to be the Observer, in this game that is life…I believe…but how? I go back to my thoughts on love.

“Okay so…I was just thinking of something. Assuming that science strongly suggests to us that all of the existence—the material and non-material world is a frequency or energy unit (Talbot 1991) then people and their relations can also hypothetically be explored in terms of energetic exchanges. From a Sufi perspective internally, we might describe love as all of existence, one unit, God or Allah, but in reference to experiences or dimensions within the One, what would it look like?”

I pause for two minutes to doodle messily with a black pen, and then hand it over. Mark doesn’t have an expression as he looks down at my drawing.
“So here is Hulusi’s (2017) interpretation of the pull between people as dislike, like, or love, an explication of love as different frequencies that are based on magnetic resonance. For now, I will hypothesize that higher frequencies emitted by humans are produced by ‘pure love,’ which is ‘self-less,’ given without expectations or conditions and that this can be more easily achieved when you are “in love.” For example, those who murder, slander, rape, and partake in various atrocities will be operating at a very low frequency. If you have the capacity for compassion, unconditional acceptance, and altruism, you will be operating at a much higher frequency. So, stage 5 of being “in love”
reminds me of insecure attachment (Gomez 1997), where there is “duality”; one feels that they are separate from and cannot be without the other as opposed to being “one” with all. It might then make sense that a constant state of ‘Pure love’ enables actualization, and a way into that path might be to get to Hulusi’s stage 5 of my drawing, of being “in love.”

Of course, according to Sufi terms (Hulusi 2014c, 79), one has to have “died” before physical death, so being in a constant and eternal state of unity of love to truly experience the “human.” Perhaps those of us who cannot live in the actualized state of being “human” can be called “humanoid,” one alive and the other like a robotic-living dead (Hulusi 2015, 124). Think of those who take the red pill versus the blue in the Matrix (in Wachowski and Wachowski 1999), those who live aware of the program, and those who live unaware.”

I leave the notebook on the floor and look up at Mark.

Surprising for him, despite his dishevelled look, his green eyes are lit up, very alert. “Elif, you know how I feel about this stuff.”

He gestures to his cross on his necklace. "I wear this, but you know it's mostly for Barb; I am not particularly religious. I work best with facts, so I don't know how to feel about this…I am surprised, though, you used to be a romantic when we were kids, and now here you are talking about love mechanically, and it has no evidence! How would you begin to even try to prove this without being able to measure frequencies? Also, you just called yourself and me, most of humanity, humanoids. I mean…I am getting married, and if I were to explain my feelings for her in this way, none of this would go down well at my wedding."

We laugh.

"Well…Okay, here we go. Let's discuss this. Quantum physics suggests that existence is an interconnected unitary field without clear boundaries between the non-material and physical realm (Penrose 1989, 514). There is a broad acceptance that our body's internal system communicates through an electrical network. Biophysics has recently shown that living organisms are surrounded by an electromagnetic field (Hammershlag et al. 2015, 2). Authors suggest that a bio-field hypothesis has sufficient evidence to be considered a scientific discipline though it still is at the very early stages of development

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6 The meeting of hearts and minds are beyond religion. Mark is also symbolic of her attempting to integrate Eastern-Western, “Male”, “Female,” or in general dual aspects of her personality.
(Hammershlag et al. 2015, 38). In the 1920s, a researcher at the Yale University school of medicine, Harold Burr (in Oschman and Oschman 2017), suggested that diseases could be detected within the body's energy field before physical symptoms appeared, as such ailments can be prevented by altering one's energy field. At present, magnetic fields can be measured with a sensitive detector called a Superconducting Quantum Interference Device (SQUID), where fields from various body parts can be shown, and data can be utilized in the medical field (Cohen 2008)."

Mark is surprised. His eyebrows fly up as he murmurs, “okay so, the energetic body as a field has already infiltrated medicine, was not expecting this much legitimacy …”

I am excited. “I wasn’t either! But it is growing into scientific inquiry in different ways. For an example, science is validating energy principles with Seoul National University finally proving the existence of the body’s meridian’s (ReShel 2016). Goodwin (2006) a NASA scientist has found that when tissues are exposed to correct pulse electromagnetic fields (PEMF) they experience a 300% improvement in mitochondria; PEMF frequency is now being used in hospitals and wellness destinations. A luxury medical-holistic German health resort chain Lanserhof utilizes bioresonance-healing machines as a treatment and calls it Bioresonance high frequency measurement and therapy (Lanserhof Tegernsee 2022, 39); which essentially scans and maps your body’s energetic fields for diagnosis and healing. It appears that we are heading towards an increase in medical and holistic interventions with relation to human electromagnetic fields, with prominent doctors proclaiming that as science uncovers the mechanics of human energy fields, the further we will understand ‘how they mesh with other people’s energy fields, and how we all mesh with the energy fields of the universe…’ we may even reach conclusions about the spirit and consciousness itself (Bjurstam and Renna 2020, 50). It might be that we are on the path of complete renewal in the sciences, health and most certainly in psychotherapy. Markster, a frequency based depiction of Love is perhaps not that far from the Truth!”

Marks bright green eyes glint with annoyance as he scratches at his stubbles. “You know I hate being called that.”

I laugh, “Sorry couldn’t help it!”

He stretches out long legs and thinks in silence. Finally, he begins to look impressed. “I didn’t realize how scientific frequency or energetic perspectives were getting. Although, I did happen to read a report recently that the CIA
released files on Russian ESP experiments, who have said they have perfected their methods, implying not only is bioenergy possible but mass psychic control (Aratnani 2021).”

Mark’s suspicious. “But it all sounds shit crazy to me. How “scientific” is science anyway? Our science and technology is still so limited compared to that which might exist, we can easily be wrong about many things as we have been in the past (Siegfried 2020). I also still can’t help but feel that the way you describe love feels cold, like a program. Like we are machines.”

I smile. “I know, it is a bit robotic but there are emotions there that are so beautiful that it feels like, it's okay. A love so pure we have yet to explore, that all else falls away… and yes there is still a while for advanced evidence, though what I have said certainly isn’t new. It has been implied that what creates loving relationships is selflessness; members move from “I” based relationships to “we” focused bonds (Mickel and Hall 2006, 32) others have also divided love according to ranges of “selfish” actions to “self-less” ones (Kierkegaard 2009). What is interesting, that I would like to share now that you mentioned mechanical, is that I recently had the opportunity to try a machine. It was created in China and is called the Metatron Hunter 4025 Bioresonance Machine (Bioresonators 2022). What is fascinating, even if one argues that it is not yet fully accurate at all times, is that along with scanning the frequencies of your organs through earphones and displaying them on the laptop, it also scans your emotions. So there you get a list of emotions according to how much they are being released and you can see everything from fear, anger, isolation, anxiety, to even unconditional love being listed…I just thought it was incredible, such diverse emotions we all have at various moments of time, and just how mechanical we are-like organic machines programmed to feel! As such my judgment started fall away, I realized I too carried the full spectrum of emotions even those I felt that I couldn’t fathom like hatred. Even if you do not generate it much, everything you perceive is within you.”

I begin to think to myself. It was at that moment that I saw everyone and myself like a “cosmic machine” (Hulusi 2021, 267); beings observing their creational program. The same questions, same answers, a database that has grown in time, but is always on loop. Am I but an organic machine, merely a program?

As frightening as that thought was, there was something I could hold on to…acceptance and love.

Mark is startled. “Organic machines…humans as machines…what an odd thought. Elif, I don’t think many would like the idea of only having the illusion of
choice."

I completely understand. “I know, but I also believe in Unity, so choice is an illusion, but you are the writer of that illusion—so you create the program and watch it as it unfolds. But I guess what I hold onto the most is an emotion that feels the closest to the truth to me, which is love and self-other acceptance that comes with love. How many people do you have in your life, where the boundaries fall away and all you see is you in the other or that you accept completely and unconditionally? Where you would give up everything for the sake of the one you love?”

Mark looks as though he is far away…perhaps thinking about his fiancé. I begin to wonder who she is.

I gently ask, “perhaps being human comes with being able to love, and be one in love…and that feeling makes everything and this system we live in, however it truly works, be okay?”

He turns to look at me, and we lock eyes.

I feel a warmth spread through my heart.

We both silently acknowledge the merging of an invisible bond that was so strong it even pulled us here together.

I cannot explain it…it is as though…I found a part of myself, it was validating me, and showing me myself, and it was healing my heart.
I feel surprised and in awe that we are together. My feelings, his feelings, become one.

I begin to feel a physical attraction. A thought fleetingly passes through my mind—*perhaps it would be okay if we spent the night together, it's just a dream*—

I back away. That would be a grave lapse in judgment.

We break eye contact and get up. He moves towards the single, barred, small window at the corner of the room. I get up and place his book back on the shelf.
I shake away the moment. Physical attraction may come and go it was irrelevant. We were not meant for each other; love remained, and that was okay.
I had seen shamans, healers, sorcerers, and spiritual guides; travelled to Buddhist, Hindi, and Sufi Circles, and witnessed many charlatans… Thus "Love" also implies—perhaps the greatest deception of all.

However, for all that love, an illusionist lover though it might be, that animal-love—
and I do not dismiss the animal—
contrary I am endlessly grateful for it—
for all of that love,
one must be blind to not understand
how many minds and bodies have seen the light when connected at that moment to each other and to the self.
When accepted and cherished even if for a second,
when the frequencies rise, and the darkness fades,
a fall of hope arrives and that is Love.

In an existence based on a lie, on Magic, on illusion, on a virtual state of being, the only thing I could find myself holding onto as Real, meaningful, or grounding, is this manufactured state one might call love, for all that it might be, is alive—by alive I mean in a constant state of observation within the transformation.

I cannot imagine a world without it, even as I see darkness spread over the planet. I do not lose hope.
History has shown that even one loving heart can turn on the light of many.
So,
I believe,
and back in this instant with Mark,
I realize, that this animal-love is opening my heart, bringing myself closer to my truest version of love—
to a point of unity.
It was a drop but a drop that was enough to trigger a river, and perhaps that river will turn into an ocean…

We were not meant to be together, Mark and I. But I realize now, that we did hold affection and love for each other, to whatever extent that might be, and whatever that might mean…and that…well that helped the cracks in my heart, the hurt we gave each other fade…
I might not have had a chance to heal the wounds I gave myself in this way, but I knew if I could access that love, without conditions for him...perhaps the end result would have been the same.

Love is healing, truly, for me at least. We just need help accessing it internally.

**We just need to change perspective....**

I think about how endings of relationships can mimic feelings of mourning, in a way they are like mini-deaths (Bogaard 2017). I wonder though, why we have a habit of holding onto past memories. Is it partly the attachments we have made and the conditions we have formed from them? Greenberg (2013) states that love is increased with a feeling of connection and interconnection, a trait associated with secure attachment tendencies. Research suggests that those with “secure attachments” where the individual is able to find a point of safety and security in their sense of self without needing an external object, are better able to be present, live in the moment, and move on from the end of the relationships such as divorce compared to those with insecure attachment styles (Marshall 2013; Sbarra 2006). While some spiritual perspectives, in particular Buddhism, focus on letting go of attachments as they cause suffering (His Holiness The Dalai Lama 2022) is it possible that to get to the point of “detachment” we must first form “secure attachment”? It is said that Sufi poet and Saint Rumi, upon the separation from his beloved, was only able to end his mourning for him by finding him within (Rumi 1999). So there is a sense of “objects” or information being internalized, accepted, integrated (Gomez 1997).

If Mark had been able internalize me more, and vice versa, perhaps letting go would have been easier.

Yet this too was a ‘condition,’ we were taught to place these meanings on these relationships, specific connotations to the words partner, husband, or wife. If we had been brought up differently, to believe that endings are normal, nothing to be grieved, would our lives look completely different?

If we were not conditioned into believing “the romantic story line” where one is expected to enter a relationship where ones internal identity is dependent on it and mourn it when it ended.

What if we had been brought up in an environment, where relationships ending and or funerals were a cause for celebration of the life that had been experienced rather than a cause for mourning?

Perhaps the key to end this type of suffering, is not just the “internalization” of
others, but to unlearn our conditions and relearn a healthier alternative …to break free from the collective conditions and change perspective. In which case, it is not so much about “de-attachment,” as much as it is about “de-conditioning,” in which detachment arises. We may not be able to change our fate, but we can most certainly change the way we perceive it.

I am pensive as I look at Mark’s face. He looks tired but content as he is organizing his bookshelf.

“Mark, do you feel like you can let the past go now?”

He freezes and turns. A flash of guilt passes over his face. “I feel bad even talking about it, but I suppose I didn’t realize I was holding on until I proposed…and I don’t know how to explain this connection to you, to myself let alone her, now."

I shake my head as if to say don’t worry about it. “Listen, for me its normal to love many but be with one, but for you I understand it feels very wrong. I think the important thing is to remember that whilst you may love me, she is the one you want to spend your life with.”

I smile and head back to the carpet to sit down.

He relaxes, nods and joins me, sitting by my side. We have both our backs to the wall, facing the front door. The candles have started to flicker towards the end, its getting darker and colder…

I think about what’s outside, the unknown. I feel trepidation. I recall Zu telling me that I must be honest to be able to leave. I think its time to go. The pieces of the puzzle clicked, connection allowed for healing, which assisted growth and de-attachment. Though our collective conditioning needed to be worked on.

“Do you feel ready to go?”

He smiles. “Yes. Most certainly. ”

I feel pretty tired. “Do you think if we tried sleeping, we can move on from this place? ”

He laughs and shrugs. “Well, you never know and I would never refuse a nap!”

We pause in silence and then both begin to settle into a corner.
He mumbles, “Thank you.”

I laugh. “Thank you…have a wonderful wedding.”

He smiles, his eyes closing again, and mumbles half asleep. “Her name is Sarah. She is a beautiful brunette from the South, she teaches English Literature, is an awesome chef, makes the best damn fried chicken, she is funny as hell, and always smells fantastic, like vanilla cupcakes. You would like her, you know…but would she like you, that I don’t know.”

*Understandable* I think as I smile and curl on the ground, close by his side.

His scent drifts. Fresh shampoo, mint, I think… as I feel a peace settle in my heart, my eyes close and

I fall deeper into the sands of my mind.

I wake up.

I throw my legs over the bed, they are long and shapely.
I look up at the mirror and see long curly black hair and hazel eyes.
Startled I gasp; it’s my friend Aleyna from University, now a famous actress.

She is staring sadly in the mirror. She gets up and walks closer.

She stares at her aging skin, counting the wrinkles around her eyes and mouth. The Botox weares off too soon.

She laughs; fluttering her lashes she imagines posing for the cameras.

She presses the button on her phone and calls the butler.

“Ramen, please bring my detox tea.”

She sits staring at her face in the mirror, magazines with her on the cover piled around her.

Friends, lovers, husbands, even children…
Fame…money. More money than she could ask for.

The world in her palm.
Yet she was miserable.

*I am never perfect.*

*I am never enough.*

Nothing is enough. The parties, the drugs…the more diamonds she receives, the miserable she feels. One more Chanel bag, one more private jet, endless items, a house filled with a fortune all looking like dust in her eyes…

As she cries silently⁷, she whispers,

“*Where is love?*”

Oh Aleyna….

I feel myself slowly sliding back into the sands of my mind….

I wake up again.

My eyes open wide.

My hands are large and hairy. I am in a man's body sitting on a marble floor of what looks like a Buddhist temple.

What the hel-

I glance at the silver shining from the wall beside me and see the blurry reflection of a young man with a thick beard.

It's Ben from Boston.
We had flirted for a few months; we met by chance when backpacking through Vietnam and Cambodia.

He has been living at a Buddhist Temple in Thailand, teaching English and cleaning.

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⁷ The pull of sex, money, power, fame, beauty and more can be a very strong conditioning that blocks us from our true selves causing incongruence. The idea is to be okay with our without these things, “to not posses” them if you have them and to feel “beyond” them or at the very least, at peace regardless of their presence in your life, a closer version of the “real” you.
Buddhist Mantras echo through out the clean marble and wood spacious temple. Ahead are two monks wearing orange robes.

It is peaceful.

You are cut off from the world.
You eat little.
Sleep little.
Speak little.
You have no troubles, no responsibilities other than basic cleaning and cooking.
No reason for sorrow. All there is the temple.

Smoke from incense dances towards him.
Momentarily he is startled and feels something is missing. He wonders, where is love?

But then he focuses on his chants.

I feel his sense of inner peace, that emptiness and stillness.

That nothingness that comes from long meditative contemplation.

“Thoughts can act like viruses and can control your mind…(but with practice) a space within you can open up and you can look at them without judgement,” (Tolle 2020) and eventually be left with silence.

You learn to leave your body, and with your mind you fly.

I am in the wrong place, wrong frequency and plane.
Right for him, wrong for me.

Why do I keep revisiting my past?

My eyes open wide.

I am flying. The wind whipping across my face. I see my dark talons flex as I land on a small patch of grass searching for pray, my bright green feathers fluttering. I am inside the parrot that lived beside my childhood home in Istanbul. Up I go again, the breeze feels cool against my body. I land on the
branches of a pine tree in a large empty park close by the Yellow Mountain\(^8\).

I watch a man and woman arguing. Sonic waves vibrate hatred and anger. He looks like a black cloud, the woman is green but as the darkness spreads to her from his mouth, she too begins to look black. He hates her. He feels small and insignificant, threatened by her strength. He considers killing her, if she disappears any threat to his power will be gone.

I am in panic in the bird, wanting to yell but I can't move. Why is she standing there, can’t she see their colours don't match, that he is danger?

She is frightened and realizes that her partner has no love for her, in fact he has hatred for her, for himself. She knows it is time to leave. She tells him that she is going home so that they could cool down, secretly planning on locking him out.

She is calm. She is always calm in frightening situations. He suddenly stops speaking aware that soon his control will slip, and he will be in trouble with the police. She backs away and walks quickly through the park, and eventually starts running.

We fly with her, following her, perching on one tree than another.

Panting and out of breath she stops by the road. She reaches the bottom of a mountain, and starts walking up, her green dress fluttering in a breeze, a beige cloth tote bag writing “Save the Earth\(^9\),” slipping off her shoulders.

She is almost by her parked car. A street kid is sitting next to her car, looking skinny and pale. She pauses and takes out a Simit from her bag (a Turkish, circular sesame bread). She silently hands it over to the child, who looks up and smiles. She pauses, uncertain how to proceed- but then remembers her husband, quickly unlocks her car, hops in and drives off.

We get tired and land on a branch of a tree by the road.

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\(^8\) Scents and colours are important in this story and are thus of relevance for practice implications in the discussion of the thesis. Here the height of the “mountain” reflects a spiritual symbolic climb. Yellow can symbolize hope, light, knowledge, life but also the light of the fire or “burning” that allows you to move forward, the release of the past, of conditions and depicts how suffering can bring actualization.

\(^9\) As she desires to save the Earth, she desires to save herself. The Earth within her. Her external world is reflecting her internal one.
The street kid gets up after a while. She looks around 8 years old, face dirty, brown eyes tired, hair a nest. She is wearing torn brown and grey clothes. She grips her Simit tight. She walks up the mountain heading towards her makeshift tent in the ruins of a mansion by the road.

Her stomach growls, she is starving. But today she was gifted this Simit by the kindness of a stranger, so she is happy. She has been lucky so far, she has been able to protect herself from men, but she knows that it will only be time...she considers her options.

The trees are blooming beautiful pink and white flowers; one drifts down and falls on her head. She doesn't notice as she climbs up, past the wooden, broken down old Ottoman houses\(^\text{10}\).

The roads are empty and silent so she is surprised when she suddenly sees an old man sitting by the street holding his stomach.

She pauses by him. Her stomach hurts too...

She wistfully looks down at the clenched Simit she was saving and looks back up. Thin, greying hair, white clothes-

She can't see his face. “Esselamu Aleykum Dede.” (Hello Grandpa).

He looks up and she gasps. Light blue piercing eyes stare into her from a weathered face\(^\text{11}\), He looks pained and says, “Aleykum Selam Kızım” (My greetings back to you, my girl).

“Bu senin için.” (This is for you) She hands her simit to the Grandpa. He smiles brilliantly.

“Çok teşekkür ederim kızım, bak bu da senin için.” (Thank you very much my

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\(^\text{10}\) She is leaving her past as she climbs the Yellow mountain and actualizing as a result. A spiritual climb.

\(^\text{11}\) The wise ones appear with blue eyes (symbolizing wisdom, knowledge and life from the “colour of water”, as well as protection in reference to the “evil eye”). They also smell of roses; the most used scent in Sufi and Turkish culture, said to be a high frequency, the symbol of the human spirit in Islam (Appendix: 273).
girl, look this is for you).

He radiates with happiness and hands her a black rock from his side. She looks startled…but thinks he is confused from lack of food and drink so thanks him and turns to leave.

As she walks and thinks about where to find food, she slips and the rock falls from her hand onto a pile of stones on the street corner. She looks down and gasps in shock, her mouth dropping open. All the stones it has hit looks like gold!

She rubs her eyes and picks them up, watching them sparkling in the sunlight. She piles them in her arms, and turns to the old man when the black stone falls again from her arms on the ground, turning the pebble it hits into gold in front of her eyes.

She stares in shock. I tweet happily as I watch the angel in the image of the old man disappear into the air, leaving with laughter and a scent of roses.

As she turns around trying to find the Grandpa, I wake up tweeting…

I am in a large empty room. There are mats spread around and a bare table in front of me. I look down and see my hands, small, olive skinned with a diamond wedding ring. My small feet are curled beneath me, I am wearing a comfortable loose beige coloured shirt and pants…I smell familiar…like the Kaaba.

Someone calls my name.

“Beyza.”

I’m in my mom. I laugh internally.

She must be in her early thirties, I think.

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12 Everything in this depiction of existence is ONE thus triggers each other. What you give you receive. Acts of true kindness and “selflessness” are rewarded in some way.
Ali a Sufi Master sits in front of me sipping a Turkish Black Tea. He sits on a mat with a wooden coffee table next to him.

He has a rounded face perhaps in his late fifty's, dressed in green pants and a sweater, a thick black beard, and soft dark eyes. Behind him are sliding glass doors, where there are dervishes whirling to the sound Ney (Sufi Flute),


My mother is upset about the press finding her in the Mosque praying next to men without a scarf.

“Beyza, didn’t I tell you whatever you see is yourself. How can you still be sad, angry or proud?”

I look down at the paper in my mother’s hands. It writes “The Rules of Love.”

1. Meditation, fasting, prayer, pilgrimage and charity are all here to help you feel beyond yourself, to see yourself in everything and everyone by opening up different functions in your brain (Hulusi 2021, 8; Hulusi 2021, 33).
2. Everything is One, there is nothing but One (Hulusi 2021, 232). Thus whatever you give, or whatever you do, it is to yourself.
3. Transcendence comes when you “fall in love with the formless, only then can you renounce your ego” (Hulusi 2020, 715).
4. The Brain creates a holographic reality, where everyone creates their own unique holo-world, according to the information it receives and responds according to the conditions they have placed onto that information (Hulusi 2020c). These conditions are different for everyone and can cause great suffering.
5. As such there is no Real “I” as the brain works mechanically creating a sense of self from information it receives (Hulusi 2020c).
6. The brain works within a trigger system, seeing as it is mechanical. Every action has a reaction (ibid). It creates what it is programmed to every action instigating a reaction. This puts “free will” as we know it out of perspective, which is a possibility that can potentially ease suffering due to actions of others (Hulusi 2020c).
She puts down her notes and says,
“I just wanted my freedom.”

A young man walks by and brings a feast, platters of food, meat, rice, bread,
Turkish pizza, baklava….it doesn’t seem to end!

“I am fasting, a couple days in row,” we respond.

Master Ali tells him to leave the feast in front of her.

My mother is strong, it does not bother her.

I want nothing more than to devour it all and cry a little within.

He laughs, flashing pearly white teeth as he takes another sip of his tea. “What
did I tell you about love?”

We smile, “Let love be your food, let it be all you yearn for13.”

My mother excuses herself. We walk outside the room through a dark and
narrow corridor. There is a small bathroom to the left.

She goes in and stares in the mirror.
I smile and think, ‘Mom, you’re so young!’
I wonder if I am going to have to even go to the toilet with her. That feels a
little unnecessary.
She looks still, without expression.
She says, “Everyone I see is you…every word I speak is from you, to you…
You must be the love I am looking for.”

As I stare at my mom’s face in the mirror, it fades into a golden door with
Arabic inscriptions. On the knob there is a number, a deeply engraved 2.

I walk out from my mom and step to the door, it opens up and shines a brilliant
light-

I wake up.

13 These are some Sufi “trials” of actualization. You can have food, sex, children and
so on but the goal is to be okay with or without them and feel that you are beyond the
body, to not posses these labels, every label a condition of being, including thinking
that you are this body.
Sweat dripping down my face, I rub my eyes. My throat is dry and my heart is beating fast.

Oh god...please tell me I am actually awake.
I look down and see myself lying on my couch in front of my television-high ceilings-

I sigh with relief; I am awake in my apartment in Stockbridge.
I slowly get up and swing my legs down.
Placing my hands in my face, I begin to cry.
I sob a little, grabbing some tissues by the couch, blowing my nose.

After a few minutes I stop and sigh.
I am utterly exhausted and feel completely confused.
I grab my phone from the table in front of me and call my mom.
She picks up immediately.

“Elif, What’s wrong?”

“Mom, I had the weirdest dreams, I’m scared.”

There is a pause on the phone. “What happened honey?”
“Can’t explain…”

I begin blabbing about the end the world,
I finally get to the end and say, “I saw you in one, you were really young and it was like I was confronting aspects of myself through different lenses, through people or even pets I was connected to strongly, giving me the feeling of being beyond place, time and even “body,” leaving me unsure of what is real, what isn’t and if even now I am truly awake…”
I can tell my mom is now worried that I am having a mental breakdown from the stress of the training.
“Honey...why don’t you come home for the weekend? Just hop on a plane and come home, even if it’s only three days.”

My face pales.

“Mom...I only have two days left.”
Chapter Notes

- In this chapter, we begin our story within our story, which starts in the future. Two space scientists are trying to communicate with our main character Elif, who has already passed. We go back to the past to Edinburgh, where Elif is receiving her training in psychotherapy and learns of her unknown illness. There she meets a Nomad who tells her she can find a cure through love, after which she enters a series of dreams within dreams with a strange being called Zu. Zu claims that in order to save herself, and the world she must find Love and she has three days to do so.

- They travel through the dimension of time and visit the point of her birth to discuss the concept of the spirit, death, oneness and multiplicity, and “dying before death” as changing perspective of being beyond the “self” concept as the ego (within this Sufi perspective).

- Dreams within dreams continue as we entered Day One and met someone Elif was unable to let go of, her ex-boyfriend Mark. With him I discussed love and attachment in Sufi terms. I suggest Love is a frequency, an experience that cannot be expressed with words. I introduce the concept of “conditions” and letting them go with a change of perspective. We move through another dream and find that we are beyond the body, within Elif’s actress friend, who is upset due to a disconnection to “love” or within; we move to another person she is “connected” to, a Buddhist friend who is at peace but wonders if there is more to his spiritual path; we then enter a bird Elif grew up with who observes a couple fighting and a child’s self-less actions (two opposing expressions of love); finally we end Day One in Elif’s mother’s body, who finds what she was looking for in herself, that she is love.
Chapter Seven

The Butterfly
Lemongrass Tea: Warm or cold and with honey if desired. It is considered uplifting and an immune boost (Appendix 273).


**Translation**

We came for love

*To Love and for love we came to this world.*
*Our purpose is love, to love the Lover.*
*Each part of our being proclaims Allah*
*What of those who see an other.*

*The Earth and heavens call out “Allah.”*
*Forego your self to befriend Allah*
*What worth has the world for one who finds love?*
*At every instant the call is for Allah…Allah!*

**Note to Reader**

I thought this was a simple story about telling stories. Perhaps one about a lover in love with all, a lover in love with you.

For what do therapists do but listen to the script we have written for ourselves and help create better ones?

For is life not a narration?

Sufism has ingrained and used the method of storytelling and metaphors (Douglas-Klotz 2018; Shah 2019; Rumi 2018), yet it often refrains from the frightening, dark, and gritty truth—or non-truth.

Rumi is known to spread love, and studies have shown that his words can be healing (Gilani 2019). But perhaps, to truly fall in love, one heals as one disappears. Thus, in actuality, this was not a story about love but one about “death,”
and death for those who cannot experience unity is always frightening. At least, that has been my experience. For the past year, I have been preparing for my death. I felt inescapable pain with no biological cause. No healers or doctors were able to solve the equation in my body, in my brain.

And so I began to write, to you, to me, so that I wouldn’t be afraid to die, and perhaps just as difficult— I wouldn’t be afraid to love— is not Love after-all la petit mort (though not necessarily in a sexual sense)?

So because I loved you, I died many ‘little’ deaths, and it was only after dying that I realized that I was afraid of living in love with you.

My teacher, during my psychotherapy training at the University of Edinburgh, once told me that there is no other way to heal but to burn and burn until you stop burning. Metaphorically speaking. I rebelled; I thought there had to be another way. At least a much quicker and easier way.

However, it appears that one must go to hell in order to get to heaven, at least for most of us. At least for me. So it was a strange occurrence and circumstance that after floating in feelings of “being in love,” I woke up and found myself stuck in hell. To my surprise, it was in the most unexpected place, and it was the most unexpected experience. I had to visit hell and find out that I had been there my whole life, to find my way back home.

**Title:** “You live within an imaginary illusion, a Hellish existence defined by your assumptions” (Hulusi 2020, #792).

**Location:** Istanbul, Turkey.

**Date:** The Next Day (DAY TWO)
Death
I watch.
Fear consumes them,
My loved ones.
Their minds freeze as the clock stops,
My loved ones.
Hearts beat like a wild thunder
In the darkness of the unknown
I cannot help but wonder
How to slowly bring the heat.

I wish to show them,
How much I love them.
To show you,
How much I love you.
For who are you?
A killer
A thief
A hero-
Hercules.

Who are you?
You are me and today you are who you choose to be.

Is it strange to hear that I love you, even as I speak of death?
I love all of you,
The fool,
The philanderer,
The gambler
Too.

With such longing, I gaze upon your faces.
If you could only hear
The bird's eternal joy
You would forgive and let go.
When Death comes,
From one world to another,
We flow.

Death longs
for you to notice
Life, its mistress, and dear friend.
To shower it with kindness and love,
To be in awe of its glory,
It shines ever so brightly.
So precious and brief,
The life of a butterfly.

Yet Death knows well,
That you have the same fear of Life.
For what is life but the greatest gift
Of love?
You hide and run,
Building walls and bricks.
We fear it, fervently,
a life of Love.

For Love is Death.
The ultimate destroyer,
with it, we melt
And lose our sense of self.
We are never the same again.
But we become more
So much more.
From one grain, we become eternal stars.
From a prison of endless empty desires
We reach freedom and joy.

So, don't hold your breath my friends,
Take it in and let it go.
That is how short time we have
Together on this Earth.
Do not you see how much I love you
I am Death
I am Life
I am You.

I beg you
Submit to the river of the unknown.
Your time may be today or much later,
So let the current carry you home and never forget,
You are never alone.
You are never alone.

My loved ones
My loved ones

I watch.

I close my notebook as the car comes to a stop; we have arrived at the graveyard. I had been re-reading what I had written after a distant family member passed away a few months ago. It is confusing and non-sense. I will leave it as it is. It so happened that I did end up getting on a plane back home, although for unexpected and painful reasons.

I am on the European side of Istanbul on a forested hill. Empty graves stare at me like seats of a theatre waiting to be filled—all are called “Zapsu.” Curtsey of my father, he likes to be prepared.

I stand behind my mother.
They are burying our friend.

Young, with no health complications, died unexpectedly from pneumonia and organ failure.

The second funeral I have been to this year.

A dark cloud is around us, heavy with shock and grief.

The cold is biting and numb. I stand watching the empty grave.

My friend flashes before my eyes.
It is the first time that we met. I am in my early twenties, in Istanbul. He is standing with my cousin older by ten years, his black head in contrast to my
cousin’s blond. The newfound friends are on “sibling” duty, watching me drink and flirt my way through the room, both amused and frankly bored. I go up and say hello, but as I do I slip and spill my beer all over my white blouse. He laughs with a dimple, warm chocolate eyes glinting, as my cousin’s sharp blue ones narrow sarcastically, “had enough to drink?”

I am at a karaoke bar in Edinburgh on a visit to my cousin at University. We are there with a large group of friends, singing along to the Spice girls.

We are on a trip to Nepal, watching the sunrise on the top of the chilly mountains, the four of us, together with my cousin and his girlfriend, curled under blankets woven by Tibetan refugees, holding dirty cheap cups filled with hot milky sweet tea, trying to find Mt.Everest in the distant skyline.

We are arguing, by a rock bar in Hanoi, Vietnam. He came with my cousin to visit me during my work placement. It is dark, the small tea lights spread around the trees are twinkling, and my cousin is inside dancing. The music drifts from within towards us:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhc-dnps6MU.

We are in a quiet spot, having gone out for some air. He is conflicted about a woman he is with, and isn’t sure if he should get married. I am fed up with his indecision and tell him to make a choice and move on. He is equally fed up with my inability to forget Mark after he ditched me at Vietnam. His thick eyebrows are in a frown as I pause mid-conversation, feeling nauseous, “Elif, how many times did I tell you not to drink when you are upset?”

I keep moving countries, and we lose touch. A few years pass without communication, but he hears I am unwell. He calls. Surprisingly, he has reconnected with my mother and found himself on a Sufi path. We meet in Istanbul and decide to drive to Ankara the capital of Turkey, trying to follow a famous Shaman from Mongolia in the hopes that she can cure my autoimmune illness. The sun is bright; a breeze flutters through the window. Bob Marley is playing:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5T3UmvutR8k.

I get tired of driving and try to hide it. He immediately notices, and tells me to switch. When I don’t respond he sends me a look, “Enough with your
stubbornness, Minion.”

I come back to the present, standing in the biting cold, looking at my friend’s grave.

Now…and now…where is he now? My heart squeezes. Remember what you learned? Find him within you.

Death appears. No longer a cherub she looks my age, she looks my copy, she is me. Wearing a white thick jacket, hat, and shoes. She is glowing. Like an angel. Oh wait, Death was an angel in Islam, right? Azrael is described as a being that sends out “radio” waves to many instantaneously (Hulusi 2006, 39). But this is my way of exploring the angel, metaphorically. Everyone interprets all within their perceptions in their brains; information is received through the senses to create our own very incomplete versions of our illusory worlds (Eysenck and Keane 2005). If all is one unit then this is my way of confronting Azrael, and Azrael is non-other than myself in another form…thus I see myself in another form….

I confront myself at all points as we “live in (our) imagination and (our) imagination alone!” (Hulusi 2012c, 5)

Death starts dancing and singing completely out of tune. She is jumping around and belting-I glance around at the crowd- no one but me is getting this.

What in the world is she singing?


I struggle to hide a laugh at the absurdity.

Suddenly I feel somber. This is, from start to end, a solo journey. The Sufi Masters did say that as we “abide” in or observe the silence of our brains and its creation, we are born alone, live alone, die alone, and continue thusly for eternity (Hulusi 2012c, 12).
I feel both intensely connected to this network of information we call life but also strangely detached and devoid of emotion.

“Àujourd’hui, maman est morte. Ou peut-être hier, je ne sais pas” (Camus 1988, 3). Today, mother died. Or was it yesterday, I don’t know.

I recall Camus’ opening line from his lead, Meursault, a social outcast in his book, The Stranger (ibid). The readers are shocked with the introduction to the character as having no emotions at his mother’s death. Interlaced with various themes, the first thought that entered my mind when I had read it as a teen was the challenging of our norms about funerals and grieving. The second was to wonder if his was a true state or a psychological defence. But the deepest impact that had lingered with me was the challenge to societal norms and mental “illness.”

Now with a similar detachment, I wonder if this is my true state or a defence mechanism. I feel just like Meursault did perhaps, that it is a bit of both, as I wonder has my time arrived as well?

Some prominent scientists have argued that almost nothing is solid; 99.9% of matter can be confined to a speck, thus in very real terms, the body is the creation of the mind (Lanza and Berman 2016, 171), and whilst it does die our consciousness, a cloud of energy, the "true" you does not (Lanza and Berman 2016, 176). I have heard that the brain forms the spirit by the 120th day, and at the time "death," it departs the physical body and changes dimension to a plane according to the extent of one’s spiritual actualization, continuing eternally (Hulusi 2014, 44; Hulusi, 2012d, 115). That, for most of us, much like a computer system, when we die, the laptop loads all the data you accumulated onto a file, and when your brain activity stops and the electromagnetic force of the physical body is cut off, "death" takes place; the system prints out your form of what continues in a holographic dimension with your astral or holographic body (Hulusi 2006, 73).

None of this can be proven as of yet, but it is a belief that gives me peace. I believe in terms of "fate," my life has already been written; as they say, it has been written at the point of conception (Hulusi 2021b, 250). I have already finished the story of my life; the book titled ELIF ZAPSU is merely slowly unfolding. Belief in fate is a prerequisite in Sufism, "…they have no free will…" (The Quran, 28.Kasas: 68 in Hulusi 2013). They have no choice in what they do, a pre-determined video game of our lives enfolds for "...We have created everything with its program..." (The Quran, 54: Kamer:49 in Hulusi 2013). As such, every one acts according to their natural born coded disposition (Hulusi...
2014, 29). Thus what choice do I have but to accept my time whenever it may come?

My legs are beginning to ache, and I feel my lower back throbbing. There is a long delay, which is unusual, and we have been standing for two hours. People quietly chat to those by their sides, like a disarray of different-sized black crows hoarding around an empty dust hole and white stone. The forest is dense up the hill but sparse here. The wind finds us, at times caressing our shoulders at others slapping our faces. As the clock edges forward, I stare into the dirt; soon, they will bring him there- Mert.

I can say his name now. My eyes tear. His wife stands in front of me next to my mother. She doesn’t know me well but knows enough to trust me. I feel that I must stay strong for them.

I speak to him in my mind.

Mert, I will find a way to heal. I feel Hope. I become Hope. It guides my will to survive despite all obstacles, to be of benefit to myself and others; to never give up until my last breath, until your last breath- and even beyond yours; to find you in the depths of your illusion beyond the grave and be a source of light, of ease. A hope so strong and endless that it can never be defeated. A Hope that is Love, My Love, For you, For us.

I walk forward and kneel at the grave, my loose purple headscarf sliding off my head. I grasp at the dirt and pray into it. *May this ground give you peace.* I look up and see Death. She is sitting serenely on a large white, round stone, smiling. Her mid-length hair is spread out, shining like the sun, an array of brown-orange-gold-red-yellow shimmering under a green cap. The sun is heading to set soon. She speaks softly, her brown eyes glinting with a tint of green as she looks at me deeply. *Elif, he is fine and will be okay, he has trained well for this day, as unexpected as it was for him, and he is calm and ready. It is you that I am worried about. You are unwell, go home and rest.*

I stand up with a sigh, shaking the dirt off my palms. I look around and see that no one has noticed or heard her. Heads are bowed in prayer, some leaning towards each other and a few staring off into the distance.
I suddenly wonder, am I asleep? Then again, they say that, “we are all asleep, and we only awaken when we die” (The Prophet Muhammad in Hulusi 2000, 41). This is why they say “die” before you “die” (Hulusi 2015b, 27), by which one might mean to surpass the illusory “duality” formed by the “self” and its conditions to see that our true selves are “consciousness emanating from non-existence...we are not confined to flesh and bones” (Hulusi 2012c, 1).

Well I know that I am not dead, and I can't be dreaming this time it is real. I am at the funeral. Yet if this is no “dream” then I must be hallucinating Death, because it is unlike any of my previous experiences. I sit back down next to the empty grave and rest my hands in my lap, tired. I vaguely notice that I have copper bracelets on as I begin to contemplate sight of all things.

The brain, a bundle of mostly empty air that we call solidified information or mass, sitting in silent darkness, is “the most complex machine in the Universe. There are a hundred billion neurons ...each of them sending tens and hundreds of electrical impulses to thousands of other neurons every second of your life” (Eagleman 2020, 41:00-43:00). You have at least 22 senses, in addition to our known and generalized five, these might include Thermoception (temperature), Kinaesthesia (sense of movement), Nociception (pain), Chronoception (time) and much more (Gray 2017). It is here that our senses collect a reductive copy of information from our external reality, which enfolds like a movie in our minds (Big Think 2021, 1:38). However, the clip in our minds changes due to blind spots, inability to perceive all information that exists and of course- where we choose to direct our attention. Let us not forget bias and prejudice or any pre-existing information for narrative forms from both prior beliefs and sensory information (The Atlantic 2018, 4:00).

I begin to absently draw an infinity sign into the dirt by my feet, occasionally poking at weeds, working through an explanation.

As a result, in reality, what we see is a blur in fact we are born not even seeing in colour! At the back of our eyes, there are photo-receptors called the “fovea,” the only part of it capable of seeing rich detail, this area covers an area in our visual field “no bigger than the moon in the sky,” it relays almost the entirety of the brains visual information (George 2018, 36). We fabricate projections that are not objectively real; colours, smells and tastes, they are our experiences but they do not exist outside of you, which is merely in truth beyond colour or form, waves of information (BigThink 2021b, 2:46).

How information is weaved to form a film of your life is still relatively unknown (George 2018, 36). Your auditory system is also filled with gaps and glitches that the brain cleans up through predictions. Your internal representation
bears little resemblance to reality more like a hallucination (George 2018, 37). Perhaps the only difference between clinical “hallucinations” is that one is elicited by active external data and the other is not (George 2018, 39). As such, you can say we hallucinate all the time and when we agree, we call it real (The Atlantic 2018, 0:30-0:33).

Within this non-location and emptiness, we create a sense or experience of time, which is processed in a delay to the external information (Eagleman 2020, 14.00). As time is experiential, magic rather than real, we might find that years go by faster as we age as opposed to our youth; studies suggest this is because greater novelty creates a longer sense of time, as time, memory, and emotion are processed together in our brains, we need more memorable events to feel like life is slowing down (Eagleman 2020, 45:24). Thus, according to science, within a bundle of neurons, we sit in silence and emptiness and observe our illusory worlds in our brains, where a video that has already been played is being observed. Just as colour is perceived but in reality externally is non-existent, in a wavelength world (Lanza, Pavsic and Berman 2020, 130), space, time and everything within space-time, objects electrons, quarks, the sun, the moon, their masses, and velocities are also constructions our brains create to tell a story (BigThink 2021, 2:44).

I pause my thoughts as a young girl comes around. Passing bottles of water she asks if I want one. I shake my head no and smile. It's mind-blowing to think that all of this is an illusion. Some of the world’s most famous scientists explicate how the external world, in fact the Universe, which is essentially waves, is experienced from the perspective of an observer in their consciousness, and how that wave function is a representation of the world, not its true self (Lanza, Pavsic and Berman 2020, 130), thus there is no all-encompassing perspective (BigThink 2021, 5:11) and as such no one can live as God or Allah or the creator of the entirety of existence. I am starting to understand just how important storytelling is and that perhaps it doesn’t matter how “real” Death is. However, the feeling that she has arrived for me too unsettles me.

I can leave the world but I am very far from being content with the knowledge I have accumulated and managed to experience. The idea of reaching an “end” to my learning is something I wouldn’t desire at this point.

I begin to realize just how precious this brain is. Without it, I cannot explore what the human is.

I am left with both fear and curiosity of what is to come.
There are endless theories and beliefs about death. I have heard of what the Prophet Muhammad SAW (in Hulusi 2012d, 109) has said that he has “never encountered a more frightening scene than that of the grave, for it is said that, when most of the deceased first realize they are dead because they are conditioned to feel that they are their body, they will be unable to leave if for some time, feeling as though they are awake but in a coma (ibid). This means the “deceased will know who washes and shrouds his body, who partakes in his funeral prayer, who puts him down in his grave, and who offers condolences,” thus they will be grieved by your mourning (Hulusi 2012d, 108).

Currently, science is slowly evolving and recent research shows that brain activity continues and brain cells grow for a significant amount of time after being pronounced “dead” thereby raising ethical considerations especially for organ donations (QPS Neuropharmacology 2021). Although, more research is needed to see just how long it continues and of course document “death experience!” With thoughts being translated from brains into computers (Adam 2022; Heath 2022; Neurolink 2022), and the speed at which technology is advancing, the secrets of the grave and spirit will perhaps be brought more clearly into light. But for now, I follow myself, I follow my guide…

Death.

Death waves. She points at the empty grave as if to say focus.

He is a friend. It is a loss but right now all I can think is that I don’t want him to be afraid. I watch his family crying.

If he were seeing this he would be upset. Two kids wander by the main, grey-pebbled street with a football. Dark brown heads and eyes, torn shirts blue and white, ripped jeans; they are street kids around ten years old. One hits the ball hard and it goes straight toward us and lands at my feet. I smile. I hit the ball back to them and they laugh running away, completely oblivious to the funeral. I turn to an acquaintance that wandered to my side and say, “I would like it if children played at my funeral.” She gives me a blank look.

I withdraw inwardly thinking, why wear dark clothes and cry? I would love mine to be like a party.

Death rituals exist across religions, cultures and even species. In Judaism, a member of the group stays with the body until they are buried continuing to recite passages; in the Catholic church, members gather together in a
ceremony called a wake (Goldman 2012); Buddhists usually cremate bodies or if the cannot, they allow birds to eat the bodies on a mountain top in what is known as sky burials (BBC 2022); even amongst animal passages we can see elephants, dolphins and chimpanzees and more, who stay with the dead for a significant amount of time, allowing for members to come and visit the body (Goldman 2012).

However, not all mourn their dead. For example, the Mosuo tribe in China believe that the soul continues after death, so while there are sad and weep for a brief period at funerals due to their physical attachment to the deceased, soon after, the family can be seen laughing, relaxed and celebrating and the funeral becomes a large festival full of activates and feasts (Feng and Xiao 2018, 3). What is also interesting is that they are known as the “Kingdom of Women” as women are the heads of households, they make business decisions, choose whom to form sexual and emotional relations with (as traditional marriage does not exist), and are in command of everyday life; they are seen equal to or even superior to men (Feng and Xia 2018, 2). This shows an interesting alteration in the collective conditions of gender roles in society. Perhaps, in someway similar, African-American cultures in New Orleans see death as a passage, a release from being Earthbound and a spiritual continuation of life, thus through a tradition of Jazz festivals, with music and dancing, they hope to aid the spiritual journey, as they say; “we are sad because you are not here anymore, but we are happy because you are going to a better reward” (City of a Million Dreams 2021, 00:21).

One might see these funeral festivities in many other religions and cultures, from Mexico to Peru (Johnson 2021), and interestingly of late we have seen it expand into some circles in the Western world under the term “celebrations of life” (Tanguay 2021). Sufis are taught about death differently, that death is not an end and should not be mourned, as Rumi (in Khan 2016) said; “…When you see my corpse being carried, don’t cry for my leaving. I am not leaving: I am arriving at eternal love.” I think for myself, that death can also be seen as a relief from the chains of the body into the freedom of another eternal realm.

Why then, was I still seeing a Western funeral in a predominantly Sufi crowd, despite that it wasn’t what Mert would have wanted?

Ever since the foundation of Turkey in 1923, we have felt that we must be westernized, join the European Union, and “civilize” our selves-for we are after all a predominantly Muslim nation (Akgul 2019, 17). We adopted western clothes and we even lost the Ottoman Arabic alphabet in favour of Latin letters (Akgul 2019, 17). Perhaps in some ways arguably for the better, yet still, Asian
Turkey was diminished in favour of a white, European one. A once large mixing pot empire dwindled down to a country, begging to be accepted by the new powers, their new parents; even if it means changing looks, clothes, education, language and as much as possible religion (Akgul 2019, 67). The colonials for better or worse were now becoming colonized.

Here and now, in Istanbul. The modern Turkey, some of us are still confused. Torn between the East and West, “Splitting” ways of being (Holmes 2001, 65), often into good and bad; covered and uncovered, chaotic and beautiful, lacking freedom to be and stability in balance, but effortlessly rich in culture, belief and history.

Istanbul reflected me. My genes and instincts were telling me, that this was wrong. Right for others wrong for me. This was not how I should mourn a loved one. I want to dress in colourful wraps, play joyful music and soothing prayers, give positivity love and joy to someone I had cherished and held dear, and help him move on without fear. Instead I am wrapped in black, standing stiff like an iron, holding onto those with tears.

As far as I have observed, funerals in Turkey have become westernized despite what the Prophet Muhammad SAW (in Hulusi 2012d, 109) desired. Death and the rite of passage had become conditioned, and our collective conditions informed our experiences. We cannot choose when we die, but we can choose our perspective on it, as long as it does not counter our spiritual-religious beliefs.

If we cannot let go of conditions and must create them, why not let them be positive ones? Let mine then be a positive conditioning, let there be dancing, music, prayer, poetry. Let there be beautiful dress, laughter on lips and joyous smiles. Leave me with flowers, roses of all colours in disarray. Let each, if any, speak from their heart, mine will hear. Let them say, “Elif has finally gone home.” Let the children play ball.

They are bringing him. Finally, he has arrived. How many hours has past? It is not usual for it to be so long. The sun is now setting, it is getting dark and I am beginning to get very, very, cold.

I speak to him in my mind, sending him my love, prayers and thoughts to his brain. I notice a stranger hold up a phone. Someone is watching the burial over Zoom, looking horrified, as he is laid into the hole in the ground in a white cover.

Minutes pass to what feels like hours and darkness invades, curling its fingers
around us. The Imam is done with his prayers, and a group of men in the
crowd, some with familiar faces, begin to shovel dirt on top of his body. I move
forward and take the shovel from one. I think that women should be
encouraged to help the burial if that is what they desire, and it was what I
desired.

I grab the shovel only to wince in surprise- it is very large and heavy! Why
don't they make these things lighter?
I pour some on and give it back. After a few shovels by the group, he is swiftly
covered, it is complete. They begin to water the ground, planting roses my
mother brought across the grave.
A silence commences, the funeral is complete.
A mix of sorrow and love exudes my heart, as I say goodbye.
The crowd slowly begins to disperse.
Death looks at me and points at towards the trees ahead. There is a bright
light, like a door. She mouths, GO IN.

I grow still.
Then in a state of exhaustion I think, why not it can't be real.
I go forward through the crowd, walking towards the light, carefully moving past
dark figures. I recall ZU and his 3 days.
Perhaps I couldn't pass the GAME…

Perhaps my time has come too.
Or perhaps, I have been dead all along. Is this Limbo?

I finally reach the blinding light.
I take a deep breath, let it go and step in.

PAUSE.

CONTINUE…
I take a deep breath and I am in a blinding light; which then turns into neurons, or is it stars?

I am in pitch black, darkness- this is familiar- like a black hole.

I can’t see or feel my body, at this point I am in an empty, scentless quiet. I then begin to see flashes like a video clip, some with long academic contemplations as voiceovers in the background, others shifting quickly.

FLASH. 0
I am in my mother’s belly. My parent’s egg and sperm are carrying life experiences impacting their genes. While offspring can be affected by environmental challenges through the mother like diet, drugs, and chronic stress it can also include such information by the father (University of Pennsylvania 2013); for an example, it has been shown that if the sperm of the father has experienced chronic stress at any point in its life, there is a higher likelihood of disease such as anxiety or depression in offspring (University of Pennsylvania 2013). The diet of parents is just as important as stress or drugs; studies have shown that if a mothers diet is high in carbohydrates it can cause childhood obesity in offspring (Gallagher 2011). Research supports the claim that behaviours of offspring can be affected by events in previous generations, phobias, anxiety, PTSD and even smell aversion passing through genetic memory (Gallagher 2013). Studies on animals indicate that these memories can be passed down up to 14 generations (Signe 2018).

Thus there I am, a packet of information, genes from my mother and father together with their life experiences, mixing and aligning to form the keys of my piano. It is then suggested that astrological effects (Hulusi 2021b, 84), along with environmental and genetic information, help choose the sonata that emerges as Elif (thus the keys or genes that are pressed by the frequency received are those that are active). Astrological impact on genes and personality, in general in life, is an area that needs further inquiry, however despite the lack of scientific support is believed by millions across the world religions and cultures (Campion 2012). I believe that this belief along with general findings on the nature of reality being based on frequencies (Einstein 1976, 330) make this an area for greater exploration. For example, we all know now that the moon’s frequency impacts the tides (Nguyen 2021), and the sun is both vital and potentially harmful to our health (Mead 2008). We also know that studies suggest DNA can be reprogrammed through frequencies
(Gariaev et al. 2011). One might argue that this on its own, along with its connection to ancient wisdom on cross-cultural beliefs, might make the scientific exploration of astrological-genetic interaction worthy.

As such, I begin to form, information melding and moulding, being projected into the system we call life. Much like a computer game, or a simulation hypothesis (Virk 2019) but one that debatably could not possibly be created by mechanical engineering due to the sheer infinite, endless creation with no beginning or end (Galeon 2017). Regardless of the complicated and mysterious process, however it may truly enfold, there I am. I grab hold and grow, information moving and expanding without thought, a bud flowering into being, deciding that in its brief “life” it shall be called by the name “Elif.”

FLASH.
2 Years old
A mosque’s call for prayer flows through dirty, broken, windows and soothes my feverish head. I am crying from pain.
Some say, I have a virus that doesn’t have a cure, others say its a curse, regardless I never stop crying.
My mother’s desperate face looks down at me, a bundle in her arms.
She is grasping at straws having tried everything in vain and has flown in from Germany to take me to a healer in a village outside of Istanbul.
The small wooden shack is dark, smelling sour, with spiders and insects crawling out of corners.

The long gnarled fingered old lady, dressed in a black dress and headscarf, takes me into her arms.

She mutters, “Good you brought her!”

She begins to pray, and blows her prayers from the Quran over my face.

I suddenly stop crying.

My mothers jaw drops as she looks at me.
The burning pain is easing, an endless throbbing finally going down. I begin to quiet...the more she prays the more I feel the pain leave, like a dark cloud leaking out.

A little over an hour later, I am smiling all dimples. My mom is in shock as she thanks the lady and leaves with me in my arms.
I have healed. With prayer. **Is prayer also a form of love?**

FLASH

6 years old

The brain, heart, and gut form three central "brain" systems, a cluster of neurons that communicate with great speed (Jensen 2016). The adult brain is the most complex machine with up to 100 billion neurons, the heart has 40,000 neurons, and the gut-brain has 100 million neurons (Jensen 2016, V). Mine is almost building up to that state at six years. When one brain dysfunctions due to, for example, "leaky gut" syndrome or heart disease, the others automatically are impacted (Jensen 2016, VI). The heart brain is said to play a role in personality (Liester 2020), and the gut-brain has a direct role with the seat of emotions, the amygdala (Henke 1991). Information received sends impulses the seat of our emotions or what some call the creator of fuel for the fire of "I," from which information filters throughout the brain, active mainly in our frontal lobe, which it uses to get processed into a story (Martone 2021). Everything I eat turns into biochemical energy, which impacts my three brains, driving my needs, desires, and wishes (Jensen 2016), cementing the **self-thought** that I am this body, that this body in its truest sense is "solid."

Together with genetic information, (as stated earlier argued to also be impacted by astrology) my self-concept has begun to develop. Twin studies in particular have been used to depict that there is around 20% up to 60% genetic influence on personality (Medline Plus 2017). The self-concept has been debated and explored by philosophers for centuries yet one thing counselling therapists can agree to our knowledge one is not born with a “self-concept,” it develops over time, and as such it is a learned, organized and dynamic thought-structure (Purkey 1988, 3), that is essentially, in in truest terms, only existent as information.

Now external information is being filtered through my mind, forming my conditions. Good or bad, right and wrong, is being taught by family, friends, teachers and government. As Carl Rogers (1959, 200) said the self-concept “Develops through interactions with others ...(it involves) the characteristics of the "I" or "me" and the perceptions of the relationships of the "I" or "me" to others and to various aspects of life, together with the values attached to these perceptions. These values are our conditions, "to condition is to make a judgment based on bits and pieces of data through comparison construed according to one’s own understanding, and then to confine others to this judgment" (Hulusi 2012f, 30). As Hulusi (2012f, 5) states, your experience of the world is based on the values you have created in your database; your emotions are a consequence of these values. Thus the root of the creation of
your emotional world, are the conditions you have created (Hulusi 2012f, 48). I begin to think I am this body, and live according to my body’s desires (Hulusi 2011b, 22:00). The gut-brain is controlling the creation of these bodily desires and conditions, sending hormones, enzymes and more convincing me that I am this physical body and the labels it contains (ibid). A curtain is beginning to build from my conditions, creating blocks in my perspective from the origin and source (ibid).

Some are general social conditions, “shoes must be left by the entrance, you must use your fork with your right hand to eat, you must cover your head in the mosque and always give favour to those that are older, you must go to school, then University and then we would like it if you married and had children…”

Then some more specific conditions have begun to filter in, especially watching Disney films. “Life’s purpose is to marry and live happily ever after, you must be beautiful and act like a princess, and you must be kind and intelligent to be worthy…”

The list is exhaustive and they have already begun to take hold, these are likely the “lighter” ones.

However, tension is beginning to build, things I don’t necessarily feel is intrinsic to my self-concept is taking hold and forming me into something that does not come naturally. The need for positive self-regard and the introjection of conditions one believes they need in order to be accepted, loved, and or feel of value are creating this discord.

These interjected values are becoming “conditions of worth,” creating a belief that one must be something they are not in order to be accepted which in turn forms an “incongruence” with ones actual organismic experience (Rogers 1961, 282-283; Rogers 1959, 96-97); thus leading to disorder and possibly depression. The “individuals’ greater understanding of and prizing of themselves,” lead to greater accurate and thus congruent representation of the self and a sense of peace (Rogers 1980, 159). As Rumi (in Hulusi 2015b, 8) said, “appear as you are, be as you appear.” However here I am, before I have time to explore what that ideal self may be, my self-concept, or might I say, thought-concept is already building itself into something else, due to fear that lack of acceptance will lead to great pain. It’s at this stage that one might need unconditional positive regard (Rogers 1961, 282-283) at home and at school, to develop without fear, into their innate selves.

At school, my friends are from around the world. My Malaysian friend is eating
rice with her hands, and tells me she must pray with her whole body covered. My American friends tell me they go to church and eat candy. My Japanese friend eats sushi for breakfast, doesn’t believe in God but agrees- we must take off our shoes before entering indoors! One child doesn’t speak, she is told to always stay silent at home.

Another child likes to hit us; he was told violence is the best way to communicate. My teacher thinks we are all rascals and believes one who reads is intelligent, and we need to be very smart to be important, thus makes us read more than any other class! None of us has chosen our written creational program; our “colour,” ethnicity, background, gender, family, culture, religion, etc., thus blaming or ostracizing each other for something beyond “choice” is absolute ignorance (Hulusi 2018, 25). Indeed I had also been told, “do not judge for you will most certainly experience what you do not accept before passing (The Prophet Muhammed SAW in Hulusi 2012c, 78). Whilst this might be indicative of the system mirroring itself (you receive what you release), it also might be indicative of what Rogers (2003, 488-491) described as the actualizing tendency, as a part of the development of the self-concept acceptance is necessary. In Sufi terms, one needs to break all conditions for actualization (Hulusi 2015, 23). Thus, experiencing that which you do not condone most certainly helps you break free from conditions, aiding the actualizing process.

I don’t think it’s important to be smart or pretty. But I feel that others believe I should, and this makes me sad if I am not. I do believe it’s important to be kind. That kindness makes you “good.” This is also a condition. My concept of “good” and “bad” have become a burden. Like a sharp teacher, I scold myself for acts I deem as “bad,” like selfishness or lies, and pride myself in acts of “good,” like altruism and truth. Thus layers, like cement, both filled with positive and negative vibrations, begin to form and build around my heart. I sit on the grass in the garden in front of my home on the mountain in Istanbul and watch the clouds pass, the birds move... Something I do often is sit for hours and contemplate what we are, why we exist. I vaguely recall almost sensing that I was somewhere else, or rather that I was forgetting something very important. I was forgetting who I was, where I came from, why I was here...

What am I?

I lift my small hands towards the sun and look at them strangely, not able to
see them or feel them as “mine.” Feeling like I am in a dream. Maybe then, this isn’t really me. Is it? What am I forgetting?

**The Flashes of my past begin to speed up.**

**FLASH**
12 years old. I am at my grandmother’s funeral, the light of my heart passing, creating a wound that lasts until now. Sitting by her body in the garden, she looks like an angel, golden and peaceful in the sunlight. I am unable to let go.

**FLASH.**
16 years old.
An abusive romantic relationship leads to me to being bedridden with chronic depression, my girlfriends try to reach me but I don’t answer my phone. I stare at the wall by my bed, one week turns to four. My mother is worried, I am deteriorating. One day I wake up and realize I had been staring at a painting of a lake, and it was titled “A fall of hope.” Suddenly I realize, I am that hope and that no one but myself can save me. That day I stop waiting. That day I get up.

**FLASH**
21 years old.
I am at the Hajj pilgrimage. I am staring at the Kaaba. I am not sure how I got there, but I am upset. I am upset that I don’t know who I am.

**FLASH**
22 Years old.
I am in Paris fighting then making up with Mark. Laughing and kissing, writing our names on the locks on the love bridge (Pont des Arts), walking hand in hand looking at the artwork by the Seine river, eating crepes at Montmartre during sun fall, having a coffee by the Notre Dame.

**FLASH**
23 Years old.
I am in Istanbul working late nights at a foundation and dancing away nights at pubs in the evenings. I move to Hanoi, Vietnam as a social worker at a children’s foundation. It’s so humid I shower several times a day. I sleep on what feels like cement, sharing a house with ten people, random volunteers from across the world. I wake up every morning at six am first to the chickens and ducks, and then to the national radio that plays Britney Spears and Back Street Boy’s songs. I ride a motorcycle across the foggy city to work. The weekends are spent drinking and dancing at a pub, flirting with tourists. I miss home.
FLASH
24 years old.
I finish work in Vietnam and I am taking time to travel. I am in Cambodia walking through the ruins of Siem Reap with two girls I met on a motorcycle tour across Vietnam. I am in Nepal watching the sunrise on the mountains with Mert, my cousin and his girlfriend. Then I am in India on a road trip with my best-friend Fatima, burning in the sun, trying to take photos in front of the Taj Mahal. I am alone in Thailand on the beaches of Koh Samui, reading a book on Rumi’s poetry of Love.

FLASH
25 years old. I am at the University of Edinburgh medical school building just starting my psychotherapy training. We are a group of eleven. One of my teachers asks us to start by saying our names and something interesting about ourselves. I am silent…
My mind goes blank as I stare at the faces of people, strangers from across the world, from different backgrounds I will soon get to know very well, and care deeply about.
“Umm…” Crap…I must not be that interesting. I can’t think of anything.
“I love anime?”
That was weird…and not exactly true. I liked it sure but I was not a lover. They laugh and I hear a girl from Beijing yell enthusiastically, “mee too!”

FLASH
26 Years old.
Mark and I are talking in a dream. His love and unconditional acceptance begins to heal my broken and conditioned heart.

Next, I have flown in from Edinburgh. My parents are at home taking care of me after my diagnosis, helping me heal. My father holds my hand as I lay in pain and tells me a story; my mother warms a cloth in lavender mist and places it on my forehead. I grew up mostly without them that too had formed a wound, which now with their love and care begins to heal.

I am then driving on a road trip with Mert to see the Shaman. He forces me to switch at a road stop. The sun is bright on the highway, he opens my door in the driver’s seat, and as I get up, my head is whirling. He gives me one of the most life-changing and warming hugs of complete acceptance and strength, "I am here for you, minion."

I begin to cry, and my bruised heart, once again, even more so begins to
rebuild. I am beginning to feel physically better.

But there is still some anger and hurt. From isolation during youth, abusive relationships, betrayals...you name it all of it. But the acceptance I can call an expression of love, and the warmth and happiness that comes with the experience of it, is starting to heal my heart. Yes, this wasn't the actualized state of "love" where the "self" disappears, but it was something...healing...something that took you very close to it.

FLASH
27 years old.
I am in Istanbul at home preparing to leave to go to Mert's funeral. I don't feel like I am able to stand.

Here and NOW.

My whole life gone by in a series of snapshots that lasted no more than a few seconds, I could barely catch on. It was at that instant that I realized I was in Hell, and had been since I was born. My conditions and related expectations were turning my life into Hell, the same causes of "burning" continuing over and over until they no longer bothered me (Hulusi 2012f, 34). I longed for my mother, my house, my friends. I missed my grandma. One should not have the thought-concept of owning anything; houses, money, people and jobs. You should feel that you can be with or without these conditions (ibid), for one day soon you will leave behind all those you know, and all that you own will be dust as you continue indefinitely with the pain of not being able to let go of those you “posses” (Hulusi 2015b, 17).

Watching it like this, I realize the error in coding these memories, with detrimental emotions, or even hanging on to any of them. We must de-condition our “emotional” coding. Detach events from any negative emotional value. Fighting with past events and people is a condition that burns! I must live in the moment, every second I am someone new. I must live in the now without my past or future haunting me.

As I drift in nothingness, I feel that I must have died...at what point? Was I always dead and didn't know it? Or did it happen at the funeral without me realizing?

How do I release or let go of the past? Let go of my possessions?
Faced with death, and remembering that feeling of complete acceptance and...brightness, warmth-positivity- pink, white-yellow, colours of the rainbow, feeling a burst of love for the first time in my life, I reach a point of letting go.

Abruptly, my inner child needing to heal surfaces.
In the empty colourless silence, I suddenly feel alone, like I am two years old. Like I need a hug.

I feel a whirl, a presence, and a light. Someone warm, loving. He hugs me though I can't see his face. I think, am I “home”? Is this Zu? No...someone I know... I hear him whisper, "wake up, I am waiting," and then feel him disappear.

I finally feel a sense of inner peace like no other. Like my internal fight and struggle with myself, to be someone I am not, to hold on to all my past memories and code them with emotions, and then possess those emotions which are no longer even relevant- to hold on to a “self” that I created, events that no longer exist and people, whom as much as I love, I will likely never see again after death, and yes even to myself, and this life- to hold on to all stubbornly and insist this is “me,” and allow my past traumas to repeat and circle in my head, did not make sense or matter any longer.

I let go.

Every release came with self acceptance and acceptance of all, events and people. Each change a butterfly, a little death evolving into something beautiful.
Love had arrived and held me in its arms; death was they are holding my hand, both triggering each other, both me in different ways and forms.

With each loving breath I died and transformed. A colourful colourless array of light.

I see a flash of a door,
White with Arabic golden letters writing,

DOOR THREE.
With a whirl, a golden fire bird-man materializes. Zu pushes me through the door.
Chapter Notes

- Here, we begin in Edinburgh again, where Elif is trying to find a way to no longer fear death and to heal. We enter day two with Elif at her friend’s funeral. She explores death, and how it (and funerals) are conditioned according to one’s culture and belief. She believes Sufi funerals should not surround mourning but happiness and peace. She suddenly realizes she is still dreaming when she sees death, who tells her to go through a shimmering door. We get a flash of her life from birth to present. She works through the idea of life being a “dream,” a holographic film, where our conditioning creates our suffering. Elif finally lets go, surrenders, and each release is experienced as a butterfly, a death that unravels. Love triggers Death, the release of conditions, judgements and associated emotions, and she is transformed.
Chapter Eight

A Gift of Love
Dance like no one is watching to a song. Prefer something calmer? Why not give whirling a try? (Appendix 279).


*Translation of Lyrics:*

**Obvious is the ONE**
*If only you wish to see*
*It's only the ONE that exists*
*If only you stop saying "ME."

**You think you have an existence**
*Yet this is only for instance*
*The one comprises your essence*
*If only you stop saying "ME."

**Welcome To Door (Day) Three**

I hear the birds chirping. The sun is shining bright. A cool breeze brushes across my face. Seagulls in the distance whistle, we must be close to water. Green grass pixels in, coolly caressing my bare feet; an array of pink, white and red roses appear behind me in a straight line, like soldiers protecting a small white wooden bench within. Towards the right of the entrance, there is a bush of lavender, pulling bees and butterflies. The white, wooden bench looks worn. On it is a thin book; I squint and read its name, “The Lover.” A smell of pine drifts; ahead of me across a green field I see a forest protecting a large green house with a wide clear window. Glinting from within is wood, white and gold. In front of it borders a white porch with a rocking chair, a couch and a table looking towards me. The garden extends towards the end of a hill overlooking a breath-taking view of the Bosphorus strait in Istanbul. We are at

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14 Lavender might represent healing and inner peace. Bees can be interpreted as life and intelligence and butterfly’s transformation, hope, joy and purity. Here we get the sense that dreams (life), can be understood by decoding (interpreting) symbols and metaphors.
the Green house from my dream on the top of the Yellow Mountain\textsuperscript{15}. I look down and see that I am wearing a white dress with flowers and lace. A black-framed white butterfly lands on my right toes. I smile and watch as it flutters back up and drifts towards the house. A figure is moving, opening the large sliding doors of the porch.

It appears to be a man with white hair down to his shoulders, wearing a silk blue shirt, suspenders and blue pants. He too is barefoot\textsuperscript{16}.

He walks and sits down by the chair at the porch, holding a book. He takes out slim, silver, reading glasses from his pocket and begins to read as he rocks in his chair. He pretends not to notice me.

I hesitate.

I know him but I don’t know him. The one who gave me a hug in the “empty silence”? I am not sure now, what is going on…but I did see a sign that said door three and that gives me hope that if I make it through this last realm, that I can get back home and Zu can help me finally wake up\textsuperscript{17}.

I walk forward through the grass, and as I do I feel strangely that he has been waiting, that he knows exactly who I am and why I am there but still pretends not to see me as he continues reading his book.

I get to two stairs at the porch and walk up. They creak slightly but are smooth

\textsuperscript{15} Green has been symbolically linked, as a frequency, to spirituality and Islam, as such most coffins are covered with green cloths and some Islamic nations prefer to have green flags (Buendia 2012). The house here symbolizes a brain, your true “home” which is believed to contain all of Allah’s attributes as does every atom in existence. The Yellow Mountain can represent a light that illuminates the darkness, the peak of enlightenment that comes from seeing beyond “mountains.”

\textsuperscript{16} In Turkey, some are taught to walk barefoot on Earth to “ground” themselves, release static electric and receive positive currents through the soil. This is said to help both balance you, support your mental health by cleansing you and exists as a practice across the nation (Lockett 2019). Research supports the overall health benefits of “grounding” for common health disorders including inflammation and stress (Chevalier 2012).

\textsuperscript{17} Three Doors can symbolize many things. For example, it depicts the rise in consciousness, the actualizing process of three stations, where you finally live the experience of the One as many (Hulusi 2014b, 34). It can explicate getting past three main obstacles to Love in this perspective of Islam; your bodily desires, your false sense of “I” we often call EGO, and all the “conditioning” you have received through out your life that help form that EGO (Hulusi 2013b, 21).
under my feet.

The windows of the porch are wide open. I see pale cream couches on both sides, gold framed lights, a white piano at the left corner; brightness, lightness within and feel peace emanating from the ground around me, in the air and from the person in front me.

I stand still and quiet, a little awkward then decide to sit down on the empty chair beside him.


As I wait for him to finish the last pages, a bird’s song and a feeling of inner peace leads me into a soft “half” awake and asleep slumber.


I hear him move and I am startled awake.

“Ah!”

He laughs. He has put his book to the side and is holding another one; I think it’s the one I had seen earlier on the bench.

“Did you recognize me?” he asks.

I get the sense he means; do I know his functional program, have I found him within, can I see myself in him, and as the brain is essentially beyond time and space, do I remember meeting him…I get a sudden image. Nothingness, endless stars, a milky way, a galaxy, a Universe…I understand, he is a Sufi Master, living on a mountain top in seclusion, a beautiful and temporary abode that perhaps I created in my own “Matrix,” or program if you prefer.

“Yes, but it comes and goes.” I am curious and peek inside wide windows into the sparkling empty living room, ”do you live alone?”

He pauses. “According to you, perhaps.”
My eyes grow wide. Invisible beings? Inter-dimensional interaction? Or he is never alone as he is one with all? What did he mean? I don’t want to know. Freaky.

“Do you recognize me?” I ask with a grin.

“I know you,” he responds.

“But you don’t appear to know yourself,” he says as he hands me the book he holds titled, “The Lover.”

“Tell me about this book,” he says gently.

I look down, holding it sideways and flipping it around. A black cover, *The University of Edinburgh* written on the side, my name across it.

“I don’t know…it’s unfinished. At a very basic level, it begins with an exploration of the relationship between Love and Death in the hopes that I can understand myself in my world better. I just want to know who I am, why I am and as a result how we can heal and become who we truly are. I met a Sufi nomad once who told me that the road to myself began with falling in love, as he said that is one of the only ways for ‘ego death’ or a perspective of beyond the ego to occur. So I felt that the answer to myself might be hidden in the relationship between the Love and Death. Honestly, it was supposed to be a nice little romantic story…perhaps a thriller romance. I was supposed to fall in love and document it-don’t ask me how!”

He laughs as he leans back.

“Don’t you know who you are?”

I stare at him, silent.

The smell of sweet roses drifts over in the wind\(^{18}\). The birds chirp in the distance. Inside the house is silent.

A pale smooth shade of wood on the porch warms our feet. A white butterfly drifts over and briefly lands on his toes, startles and moves over to his shoulder. The sleeves of his dark blue shirt are rolled up halfway to his arms, revealing a delicate flower pattern underneath. His hands hold both sides of the rocking chair as he sways slowly, back and forth, a warm smile on a pale

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\(^{18}\) The Rose, a flower known to have a very high frequency, is a symbol for the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) portraying divine, eternal love amongst other things (Açikel 2018).
face from behind a white beard. Kind warm blue eyes\textsuperscript{19} look out from smiling wrinkles.

I finally respond, “I’m not sure.” I lift my hands up and look at them as though I am seeing them for the first time.

He stops rocking and grows still. “If you want to know yourself, first you must get rid of the notion that you are this physical body or even your spiritual body that continues after death, you must understand that you are not confined to any sort of ‘body’ (Hulusi 2014d, 15). You might argue that this dissolution of such a concept, or identity is in a way, a death. You have began with Love and Death and are searching for nothing, perhaps you should have begun from nothing to then reach the illusion of something in which concepts of Love and Death emerge.”

A look of confusion crosses my face. “Nothing?”

“We say “Kun” – Be- and from the seed of Love the Tree of Life decides to grow (Ibn’ Arabi 2016, 93).

All that is one becomes many, from nothing we have ELIF…Didn’t you write that in your book?” He gestures to “The Lover” in my hands.

I nod, staring solemnly.

“Then you mention black holes…”

I shrug. “I don’t know, it is just what comes to mind when I think of pre-birth.”

He stares at me, silent. “You want to go beyond time and place, and you end at a black hole, which has a point of singularity, a central point that is beyond space and time” (Sutter 2022).

I am surprised, “Oh…”

He smiles. “Do you know what else? You want to write about nothing that creates the illusion of something. That too can be told through the secrets held in black holes can it not?”

\textsuperscript{19} We see a pattern emerge where all the wise ones have blue eyes. This is not a preference of colour merely a symbol for wisdom, the depth of the sea and sky and water; of knowledge.
I place my book down on the chair and fly up animated, “Yes! So in the most basic terms (as far as I can understand), a black hole is a densely packed matter where the gravitation pull is so strong light cannot escape (NASA 2014). Now some of these holes can have tens to millions of times the mass of our sun trapped at a point smaller than a tip of a pin, and they just keep eating more and more mass from around them, it sucks everything in even light its crazy! That point of being trapped is called the singularity, and the circle around the invisible black hole is called the event horizon (ibid).”

“The problem Stephen Hawking presented was, how can information known as Qbits-Quantum bits, get sucked in and essentially get destroyed if the laws of quantum mechanics suggest that nothing can truly get destroyed in the Universe? (Susskind 2018, 29:00) He hypothesized that information that falls into a black hole, has a copy of itself, like a projection, on the event horizon and as such there is no loss of information (Hawking 2018). This perhaps was built upon the already existing work of one of the most distinguished physicists of his time, David Bohm (1980, 190), who in his ‘holomovement’ explicated his idea that space is not empty, but is a cosmic sea of dynamic, interconnected, and undivided wholeness where each part is represented in the whole akin to a holouniverse. Think of going to a movie theatre, the screen shows a projection of the information on a 2D film (University of Southampton 2017). So then there is an illusory duality. The actual information is static at a single point, and the active bits are the projection, which is essentially like an illusion. Thus our world and the Universe interpreted within it, is nothing but an illusion created by our brains. This suggests that we are living in a simulation, though not a computer simulation, just one that functions mechanically with the rules of nature (Trosper 2013).”

So what is interesting is that a famous physicist Maldacena (1997), has now proved this through a formula mathematically, and it is now utilized and accepted by the scientific community (Cowen 2013). Essentially, what this indicates is that the Universe also has an event horizon, which follows the same principle and that we and the Universe, is in a sense a hologram, a projection of information (Susskind 2018, 51:39). This explanation is of course limited, as it an analogy that helps us understand the general idea of what they have discovered. Accordingly, the brain is a hologram that creates its holographic world within a holographic system.”

He looks at me with innocence. “Even ‘proven’ science can be disproven. Perhaps, what is equally important is what you think and feel about all of this.”

I look pensive. “How do I feel? It resonates with every fiber of my being…it
calls me, my numbed, painful body, willing it back to life. It is my every heartbeat, it is why I am here and still alive, and it is what will heal me, Love that is existence.”

I pause.

He is silent, staring into the distance at the roses in the garden.

I look calmly at him. “When I am with you, I remember…I feel more alive. Like I am waking up from never-ending dreams within dreams and finding my way home, where my heart is. But I am still asleep, I am still numb.”

He still and silent.

I change and become more upbeat. “In terms of what I think, that is much easier to explain. Well, I already knew that our atoms and thus we are made up of 99.9% space (Sundermier 2015). Heisenberg’s (1930) uncertainty principle depicts how we cannot know the position and speed of a particle with certainty, there is always an element of uncertainty in a wavelength existence, indicating an existence beyond space and time. This compliments the observer effect (Weizmann Institute of Science 1998) that depicts how the ‘greater amount of ‘watching” the greater the observers influence is on what actually takes place.’ Quantum entanglement (Cowan et al. 2013) shows us how objects or rather matter can communicate beyond space and time, all of this and more complementing each-other, implying unity within a wave-like energetic being and supporting the holographic principle (Maldecena 1997). This view also explicates telepathy and other out-of body experiences as well (Trosper 13), it all is one.”

I am on a tangent. The wise one is rocking in the wooden chair, back and forth looking out into garden. I pause. I feel like I have been talking to myself. He glances me as though hearing my thoughts and nods, “Go on.”

I smile and jump around in my seat.

“So this is my favourite part, its worth noting here, that ‘every iota of existence carries all of the qualities and attributes of its original form’ (Hulusi 2021,181), as the Prophet Muhammad SAW (in Hulusi 2013, 6) said, the ‘part mirrors the whole.’ This is also a property of a hologram; every part must contain the whole, it’s all connected. As such, science is showing us brilliance! Even now, scientists are proving through research that the body is alike a bio computer (not a computer in actual sense-again its an analogy). Research even
indicates that DNA has the basis for a Quantum bio-computer (Gariaev 2011b), depicting DNA as a frequency (holographic entity). So it all connects, makes perfect sense to me and fits my thoughts on Sufism. According to my interpretation of Magical Realism, the illusion is the magic and the essence-you-One Unit, is the Real. Or in Sufi terms, all of existence-God-or Allah is One, and we are all reflections of the qualities of the One, our multiplicity is the projection-the illusion. Love is the essence, and the trigger that allows Death to arrive (the death of the concept of the self).”

The Wise One interjects, stopping his rocking and raising a bushy white brow.

“God and Allah are not interchangeable.”

Suddenly I am deflated. “What?” I ask as I walk back and sit down on the couch, grabbing a white pillow to hug, like a child protecting herself.

“God and Allah are not the same. Recall Nietzsche?”

I nod. “Yes, in one of his most famous works, he wrote of a character who, like the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) fled for solitude on the mountain in a cave where he realized there was no God…he said, God is Dead” (Nietzsche 1961, 41).

His eyes are sharp as they gaze into mine.

“Yes, as such ‘Godhood,’ the idea of someone perhaps that looks like me even, or a Zeus, residing in the heavens, or something creating a machine that then creates us, any sort of separate creator in which is called a God, is very much ‘dead.’ Does not exist, in both Nietzsche’s world, and for the Sufis. ‘La ilaha illallah,’ there is no God (hood), only Allah, meaning there is no duality, only one source (The Quran in Hulusi 2013, 16). As there is no external duality, there too is no internal duality, only one essential being reflected in many forms (Hulusi 2021, 175), or names or information-or qbits if you prefer. As such, with this perspective comes the ‘Death’ of the self that you seek. However, here too there is a problem with the terminology. How can there be a death of something that already does not exist?”

I groan and place my head in my hands. “Agh, then how must we speak!”

He laughs.

“Indeed, even the word nothing implies something as such is a contradiction to
its meaning, as the Prophet Muhammad SAW (in al-Jili1983, 37) said, “God is the darkness”, alluding to non-manifestation and nothingness. We might call it the non-existence of non-existence (Ibn Arabi 2013, 15). We are beyond names… for the purpose of speaking, we must choose some labels, but use them wisely.”

He pauses and stares at me intensely.

“Death. Why have you feared it so, that you have spent years contemplating it in this book?”

I am sombre. I whisper.

“I think it’s because I was told that I have an unknown illness, that my death will not be far. I think I am frightened of the grave and of losing myself in the illusion…no, I am frightened of dying before experiencing my true potential and being of service to others. I do not wish to die without waking up from the illusion, I do not wish to be lost in it.”

He looks serene and is silent. He then brushes his chin softly.

“You know, someone once asked, do you even exist, to fear non-existence? (Farabi 2020, 33)” He sees my blank expression and abruptly changes direction. “Firstly, you must set your fears aside with the realization that Death does not exist.”

My eyes grow large in surprise. “What?”

“Yes,” he laughs. “It does not exist. Death implies an end to existence, which I just mentioned is in truth non-existence. But the experience of non-existence is as such that, you will not end, but change shape and form and continue for eternity. That is the Sufi way, if you believe the knowledge we have gained from the Prophet Mohammed (SAW) you will believe this. The angel of death is mechanical in a sense, functional, it allows for the release of one body and the continuation of another (The Interpretation of the Quran in Hulusi 2013, 432). As the “law of the conservation of energy” states (Mach 2014), nothing created is ever destroyed but can be transformed. So first understand for a Muslim death does not exist as an end (The Interpretation of the Quran in Hulusi 2013, 432). Perhaps spoken without yet “evidence”, but one day there may be.”
“You are beyond time, and space. You have the atoms, the stars, the Universe pulsating within you. Yet you constrict yourself to this concept of the body and the labels and emotions, as if they are you, but all they are is a dream. It’s all a dream that you have created. Did you not write about how the brain perceives and creates this illusory world in this book? Yes, you have created it, as such you believe in fate, that all that was written has already been played.”

“Whether or not you believe you are nothing or something, existent or non-existent, we are energy or information viewing a ‘dream’ in which we call reality. The Magic and the Real, as you say, become One in this Holographic Dream we call life. How can you not like the ending that you have written for yourself to watch? If you truly desire to live your true self, to find the Universe within before you change shape or death arrives, then you will. If you do not, you will not.”

He leans forward and says strongly, “You are the only writer here, Elif.”

“If you believe these things, you will not fear the arrival of Death. You are human, this means you are eternal it means you are ‘…a virtual reality formed by the five senses…a cosmic robot programmed to fulfil a particular purpose…(holding) the infinite qualities of the Universe’ (Hulusi 2021, 263).”

My eyebrows fly. “Wait…as in the simulation hypothesis (Bostrom 2003) is true?”

“Perhaps, it is true only as an analogy. Just as the ‘holographic principle’ is an example we use to explicate a condition. To imply a computer game with a creator is again dualistic. It also might be overly minimalistic to constrict the dimensions of existence to that of only solid or mechanical engineering, when infinite creation, and Allah is vastly beyond our comprehension. As it has been said, (Abu Bakr (ra) in Hulusi 2014b, 92) To comprehend Allah is to understand Allah cannot be comprehended. Though if existence is one unit, in truth there cannot be parallel dimensions or universes as we are all within the One (Hulusi 2011b, 17:20), the symbolic Dot that forms Elif.”

With the second finger of his left hand he draws a dot and then extends it into an invisible line on the hand of the armchair.

I nod starting to follow but I am still frustrated.
“Oh, then the dot, symbolic of unity or oneness is the *real*, and when you extend a dot into a single stroke, that stroke would symbolize how the brain creates the *magic*, the illusion. I mean logically, I understand but in truth not so much. If duality doesn’t exist why do we experience it as if it does, and in this instance if everything is ‘naturally’ programmed then how are we any different from robots other than the fact that we are born from organic material and they from mechanic?”

He smiles and lifts his hands. “So the ‘absolute being’ decides to “observe itself” and thus you are ‘born’ (Hulusi 2012c, 36) with a holographic wave-length information packet we call the brain that in turn creates the spirit “body” or rather the “backup of our astral wave brain” (Hulusi 2012c, 12). You explain this in your book. This brain functions with tools called the senses, which makes you experience things as if you are this body and its desires, and it does such a good job most of us believe it!”

I interject. “I think you would have to prove that machines can’t develop a spirit or astral backup of the brain, and that humans have one, to really explicate the difference between the human and machine in spiritual terms.”

He shrugs. “Perhaps. Regardless, that is a debate for another time. First we must understand the human, then we can understand how it differs from the machine. The brain, in essence quantum waves, receives information, and creates dream worlds within it (Hulusi 2011b, 16:30). In truth we all are still that nothing. We are just thinking we are not due to our brain, that creates with our very limited senses in an ocean of infinite wave-lengths within one unit (Hulusi 2011b, 16:40-49). We live as a quantum wave that is our brain (ibid) within one single unit of waves. There is not inside or outside in truth!”

“As such, what we see when we are awake is our "daydreams," and when we sleep are "night dreams," both creating your holographic reality (Hulusi 2011b, 07:50-08:20). In psychology, did they not teach you that all you observe in your night dreams is you, seeing as most of the brains sensory responses are shut off and thus you no longer perceive people around you? (Driscoll and Neufeld, 2014). The only difference between a night dream and a daydream is that one has more functions open than the other. It’s still the same brain, and you still have no "real" interaction with the outside world, everything you see is still YOU. So we must wake up from this dream to realize that we lie to ourselves by believing that we are something when we are nothing but information.”

*Elif wake up. Wake up from the Illusion.* I recall a woman’s voice that I had
been hearing like a broken record for the past year. Who IS this woman?

I suddenly see an image of a woman in her early thirties. Mid-length curly hair the colour of the Sun, sitting at a desk by a finished black book, titled “The Lover.”

It’s me from the future? I shake away the image.

The wise one is staring at me intently.

I am serious and with trepidation ask, “How do we...wake up?”

"It's all about changing our perspective to increase our knowledge and ease our suffering. Both come together. Information enters our brain as a frequency and is visualized in our brains as an illusory world according to our judgments (Hulusi 2020c, 3:40). It integrates with our pre-existing database and creates a world based on values, judgments, beliefs, and conditions; every one according to their birthplace forms their worlds and conditions, according to how you are raised (Hulusi 2020c, 5:13). Thus seeing as we live in our own database formed by our conditionings, we can at least change our perspective on them to ease our suffering! (Hulusi 2017b) This system works automatically, "mechanically," input-output, in the form of a trigger system where every action has a reaction (Hulusi 2020c, 10:49). This is explained well by scientific research and experts on the brain (Driscoll and Neufeld, 2014). This means we must integrate new information to get a new reaction (Hulusi 2020c, 11:30). In this automatized system, there is no" I" or control over our creational program (ibid). Understanding that we cannot control events or change people to be how we desire would ease our suffering; accepting them will bring peace (Hulusi 2017b, 0:33)."

I suddenly sit up tall. “What do you mean there is no I, is there not a wall to break through, an ego?

He laughs. “No. We keep saying that, but there is no I to begin with anyway! You already are ‘self’ less. Within the quantum automatic system, there is no separate division called the ego; there is simply one single information packet, a database. You were not born with an ego, and you never developed one, as in truth all you have is the culmination of data (Hulusi 2014g 6:54).”

I am confused. "But did Sufis not say, 'Only once we become selfless can we become one and attain true love' (Hulusi 2012c, 40). That the 'self is like a
curtain between the lover and beloved…when duality ceases only love will remain…(that) to love is to become the beloved’ (Hulusi 2012c, 40). I mean, I chased Love and Death (symbolically) all this time to learn how to be selfless only to understand I never had a self, that there is no death as an end as we know it. So then what is being ‘selfless,’ does love even exist?”

He laughs, “Yes a constant play of words, appearing to contradict each other. We say there is a veil, but in reality there is no EGO or “self” as there is simply one single data-packet, unit of information (Hulusi 2011b). If you like you can see it as static information that is you, which is processed pre-birth and projected into the illusory world like a computer producing a program. This Unit then convinces itself that it has some sort of ‘self’ or ‘curtain’ when its just pure information. It convinces itself that it is its character and calls its character ‘ego.’ So this LIE is the metaphorical veil; which in truth, does not exist as anything other than information (ibid). Lifting the curtain, is akin to reprogramming yourself so that rather than believing you are the character you created, you are the creator of it, and everything else heaven, hell, the stars the Galaxy or Universe is all the MAGIC as you like to say- none of it is ‘real’ (Hulusi 2017e, 08); it is living what you IMAGINE. Thus we say, ‘One must escape the veil until there only remains the observer…be free from conditions and the emotions attached, let go of the illusory self and let death come before it truly arrives so you can live as the eternal one’ (Hulusi 2012f, 69). When one moves beyond the self, the sense of external and internal duality of the self and other as two separate entities ceases to be, and you become the ONE, who watches, hears, touches and walks without boundaries with all (Hulusi 2014b, 88).”

I am beginning to grasp what he is saying. “As such, our concept that we have a self dies, before we physically ‘die’ which is a transformation to another dimension in another form.”

He smiles. “Yes, but do not forget that the spirit form is vehicle and both that and the dimension you are in is imagined, not the Real you. Which is the essence, the Observer of all the bodily forms and worlds it creates.”

I curl my legs up on my seat, and rest my head on one knee feeling pensive.

“So basically…this is not what I thought it would be. I thought love was healing, and it truly is and has been and I thought at its utmost capacity that being beyond the self could essentially be an extension of Roger’s (1963), why not? But I am beginning to see that, in truth there are similarities but they cannot be the same. One works with the ego, the other says there is no ego. One
strengthens concepts of the ego to ease suffering, and the other says, let them all go, that the identification with the illusory self causes suffering. One tends to focus on the past and healing it, the other says, let yesterday be for yesterday, today is to be renewed! Focus on the now, don’t live in the past, it is gone, and so is the past you.”

I pause and think about my past that zoomed by...


I come back to now and imagine myself with a client attempting to tell them that their past is irrelevant and they have no self as they believe. I laugh.

Yes, I cannot see this working out, in the traditional sense at least.

“I am going to have to completely rethink my perspective on therapy, on healing and on being human.”

The wise one is silent.

A bee buzzes in the silence.

“What of Love, then?”

“Love, that which you love, that which loves is always the ONE (Hulusi 2014b, 217)” Yet as you explained, it is a frequency or a pull. At the most basic level it is merely liking, and wanting to posses that which you like for ‘When you like you want to possess, but when you love you abandon your identity and become nothing…. (a) microcosm in the macro unity, you become one... (Hulusi 2012c, 40).”

“We hear a call and a tinkle of a bell, as a white cat saunters next to us, first brushing coyly against my legs then walking towards his. He smiles and picks her up.

20 Please regard chapter nine and ten for further discussion on this.
21 Cats are known to be highly intuitive with healing energy, particularly beloved by the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Sax 2001, 62).
“Hello princess.”
He smiles as he strokes her and continues.

“In truth, if all is one then if you love one, you love all. For example, here you say cat, and see with the conditioned eye of the cat, you see another animal and call it a dog and associate it with other conditions, but all is a part of the ONE unit and its properties. If you were able to see this you would love all as it is. ‘True Love is self-less, it gives and accepts without conditions’ (Hulusi 2015, 170). Accept everyone as they are without conditions! You cannot force others to be as you desire; everyone is unique and programmed accordingly, everyone has rights and wrongs according to their own individual conditioning and value system which you cannot change, once you accept this life becomes peaceful, you have much less stress or depression (Hulusi 2017d).”

I respond, “As such, life becomes love.”

I suddenly miss my cats.
“I have two cats in Istanbul, Garfield and Kaymak (Cream). I love them without conditions and they are my joy. Though, I feel this not only just for my cats.” I smile.

I feel a sudden happiness and sense of peace, that I am connected to myself and the one in front of me. Interestingly, my bodily pain I carry even in my dreams begins to dissipate.

He smiles in return.
“Then, why are you trying to develop your ‘self’ to actualize your self, when you have no ‘self,’ did you not realize yet that ‘Sufism is the practice of annihilating the concept of the ‘self’ and discovering Allah?’ (Hulusi 2017c, 1:24) You create it with mostly your ‘conditions’ and as a result ‘burn’ because of these conditions (Hulusi 2017c, 2:10).”

I am silent. I bend my head down and apologize.

“I am sorry, I didn’t know better. I am still learning.”

He smiles.

I think to myself. “Perhaps Sufi concepts don’t really fit into Carl Rogers’s (2003) conditions as well as I thought. They are similar in that, some ‘conditions of worth’ are learned from the environment and causes distress
(Rogers 1963, 31). However, at the core they are very different, as one is based on strengthening the self-concept by creating greater congruence of the self (ibid), whereas the other claims, there is no self only the one, and information in which we perceive the one (Hulusi 2012c). I begin to talk to myself.

“I suppose then to accept without conditions we must also abandon expectations. So then, Love is the Observer, the One, You, I, Everything, and to love is to accept everyone without conditions and expectations, to give freely without desiring a return (though you most certainly will receive it energetically for there is no separation)."

“At its pure form, love triggers the death of a program that convinced itself it existed so that it can awaken and observe itself as the creator of that code which in truth does not exist. Imagine this world was a simulation. Though it functions with a set of rules like one, we believe it most certainly isn’t a computer game but imagine for an instance that it was. The characters in the game do not know they are characters in a game. But one day one wakes up and realizes that they are not characters but the creator of the game. Its script and actions can’t change, the program is already written. If you marry or divorce, when you live and die its already been written and played out but what does change is perspective and that change of perspective is a butterfly, a death, and in that sense we are eternal, with no beginning or end. Ahhhh I think I’m starting to make sense of things now.”

He laughs, and the movement startles the cat into running for the garden. “I am happy you understand, though I am not sure I followed what you just muttered to yourself.”

I smile. “I mean, I understand that only love at its utmost expression brings us to the truth of our origin which in a sense, is nothing but information.”

He exudes a pull, a rose red current, softly encircling us as we talk.

“Did you not write, that your heart was created for all that is the One?”

I laugh brightly, and experience a joyous feeling like I have finally found home.

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22 Regard chapter ten for a comparative analysis.
23 She often talks to herself, and occasionally you might not even be sure if she’s speaking to herself or to the person next to her. This is done on purpose to reinforce the feeling, that everyone and everything is in her brain, and she is ultimately always “alone” in that sense.
where my heart is, in this human I was only starting to get to know. “Yes.”

He looks at me warmly. “Did you not partly chase Love and Death because you knew that it was pointless to hold on to past events, labels, any item, animal, person as it will all be gone, once you have changed dimensions with death?”

I nod. “Yes, life is as short as breath…in and out, we are gone amongst billions of others.”

He gestures upwards with is hands. “Why then, would you not choose to live an eternal life together as One, as opposed to someone lost in the illusion, holding on desperately to people and things that will no longer exist?”

I lean towards him. “I have no reason. Nothing is holding me back. I am happy to surrender myself to myself. I cannot see anything or anyone that would make me feel otherwise. I just couldn’t find my way, but in you, I have found it. It is myself that I see in you. I think I am falling in love.” I laugh, feeling slightly strange at saying those words but meaning something other than romantic.

His eyes appear to get a darker, stormier shade of blue. He gets up and his voice booms. He places his hands on my head and says,

“So then, ‘…abandon yourself, and let me abandon me and let us meet in nothingness and be!’ (Hulusi 2012c, 41).”

Suddenly I am flying. I have no real body but my mind is in darkness and emptiness, feeling like I am zooming through a timeless space. I hear his voice speak but I do not see him.

“You wish to know, THE LOVER?”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBHWsKz0Nk0.

"The lover knows only the beloved. He has “died” and become one with the beloved… The lover sees only the beloved, upon every face his eyes gaze… And in every sound he hears, the voice of the beloved pulsates… Love is the land of unity… Love is the land of nothingness… A nothingness in which you become naught, and in which you become all. When your enflamed by the fire of love there is no going back… The lover accepts to fall apart, to become..."
isolated and humiliated, and to lose everything he owns, to lose his sense of identity! For, in love there is no ‘other’… there is no ‘I’… Love is to become non-existent and this non-existence reigns supreme over all existence… Lovers are those who, like moths, throw themselves into the flames of love; annihilate themselves in the One… At every instant the call is for Allah... Allah, Allah!”

I am afraid of the unknown. I begin to see endless stars, they twinkle around me.

Suddenly, I am pulled into a whirlwind and sense an intense radiation. It is the Sun. I’m not in it but it is in me, it is as if I AM holding it within.

I feel intense fear and with it a burning… like I am burning, and I am startled to realize, that I am in my bed in Scotland.

It’s winter.

I am dreaming, but having intense physical pain…

I am both in the Sun and in my bed.

The pain in my body is so intense that I believe that I am finally dying…

I think of Zu.
Did I get out of the last door?

One last flash of pain—
and nothing.

**Title: Past and Present is One**

**Location: ?**

I am awake.

I feel myself flying in nothingness, in a space beyond time and place… simply flying… suddenly someone pulls me into a vortex and I am in a lab.

A scientist with blond hair has arrived to interview me, she has many questions.
“We have found you from the future. We know how to use technology to communicate with the dead. We have questions for you. You managed to save yourself (and your world) but the external world soon entered mass war. As your friend Mark predicted in his book, “The Age of the Rose,” we entered a period of peace after World War Three. Some of your books were burned during that time but we found parts of “The Lover,” one of your later works you wrote after you healed and moved to Istanbul from Scotland. You are one of a few we are trying to re-connect to, because you mention wise ones in the works you have written before your death. The world has entered a crises, it has become a very dangerous place to live as a whole yet again. Very few humans exist. In fact we are searching for the last humans. We wanted to know if you could help us safely find them on Earth.”

I am in emptiness—beyond time and space—I am one with all, all is me. I am silent, I feel nothing.

I look at her and say, “Heaven, Hell, Peace and Suffering, The Earth and the Stars, Everything is an Illusion, a Dream you Create. If there is no ‘you,’ there is no hell or heaven in truth…you can find everyone within you…and you do not need this machine to fly.”
I place my hand on her helmet and command “FLY!”

With that, I am off again, flying in empty nothingness…

**Title: The Near Future, Date Unknown**

**Location: Unknown Lab**

The young blond scientist pants drenched in sweat, desperately trying to reconfigure the connection.
Her partner looks confused, “what happened I don’t understand.”
She takes her helmet off and stares at it, “we lost connection.”
He stops and stands still, “what did she say?”

She sadly looks at the metal in her hands and responds, “Elif said we do not need machines to fly. Then she made me fly in nothingness, in what felt like the space-time continuum. That’s when we lost connection.”

Jonathan sadly sits back down next to Fiona.
They hold hands, staring at their helmets, from their helmets to the mechanical room, from the room to the space ship, from the space ships to the stars, and the image of the Earth, a small glowing dot in the distance…
They are unaware of the hopeful and strange trail of gold dust and feathers
Title: The Present
Location: Istanbul

It is the early hours of the morning. Elif and Zu hold hands and watch the calm and still Bosphorous strait from the top of the Yellow Mountain.

Elif: I made it Zu.
Zu: Smiles. Yes. Though you couldn’t see me, I was with you every step of the way. You no longer need me now, besides I have others to visit...
Elif: laughs. I know you can be many places at once.
Zu: his laughter tinkles. Yes, just as I am always with you, here. He touches her head with a finger. He then points at her wrists, and the copper bands disappear.
Elif: startled. Hey! I still need to conquer my fear to stop the burning.
Zu: You don’t need this. You have everything within remember? You have created your own protection, in your mind.

They smile at each other and Zu squeezes her hand, lets go and pixels out in a whirl of gold. One gold feather falls, to be found much later by another young girl, but that is another story...

Elif: Whispers. See you Zu....

As Elif watches the sunrise, she hears the mature voice of a woman, that sounds like an older version of herself, whisper in her mind,

‘May we wake up, find our true selves and heal, in love, with love,
As
The Lover.”

The End
Of the Beginning...

God says, “…And When I Love (them), I am (their) hearing, (their) sight, (their) hand” (Hadith in Ibnül’ Arabi 2011, 52).

The human will know the Universe to the degree they know themselves (Hulusi 2012b, 101).
Chapter Notes

- We manage to get to day three and end our story within our story in this chapter. Elif pixels into another dream, and finds herself in a garden by a large house. There she meets a wise one, and they have a long pleasant discussion on the porch. They discuss the holographic principle and the world as an illusory dream. They suggest that science points to Unity as truth and Multiplicity as the illusion, the Real and the Magic. As such, if you do not exist except as information, there can be no death in truth, merely transformation. They explore love as the experience of being “self” less, of unconditional acceptance, and that the experience of it, can trigger death (transformation), and help release our conditions, associated judgments and emotions. Elif questions if she can continue as a psychotherapist after internalizing this information. She feels that, if no “self” exists and she believes it, traditional psychotherapy may no longer be the best way for her to heal herself or her clients. She chooses to join the wise one, in desiring to surrender her concept of her self as separate, which pushes her into a dimension of “nothingness.” There she suddenly feels fear, and finds herself in the galaxy, and in the Sun. Her fear “burns” her and she wakes up back in Edinburgh. We fast forward into the future, back to the scientists on the space ship trying to speak to her. The scientists are left alone in space, contemplating what the human is, and how to save humanity. We end our story back with a healed Elif, with a new beginning, with hope.
Chapter Nine

Intermission II: A Conversation
A handful of walnuts: Happy food that’s great for holistic health (Appendix 277).


“The brain creates metaphoric images by decoding wave-based data. These images make up your holographic existence. In fact, you are decoding metaphors with metaphors. So…How close are you to reality? An illusory wave-based existence-Life is but a dream (Hulusi 2020, #1640).”

Coast of Dalaman
Türkiye
August 17th 2022

I am in South Turkey at Sea. I have dialled into Zoom for a PhD meeting with Jonathan my supervisor. He is at home by a desk, bags packed ready to leave on his annual vacation. I am in a dress by a table with wet hair. It is humid, hot; even the sea is warm on this August day.

Another PhD supervisor of mine, Fiona, will meet us at a rescheduled date. We decided to meet now with Jonathan, to discuss the abrupt conclusion in my thesis that contradicted my goal, that if you have believe you have no “self” then repeating the past in traditional therapy, in a way that believes that you do, may no longer be healing.

Elif: Laughing. This perspective doesn’t feel like it exactly works with Roger’s. Jonathan: Laughing. No, I suppose it doesn’t. It feels like there is a loss there.

Elif: Turning serious. There was, that is why I was so reluctant to face the truth, but here and now, I don’t feel it as a loss, just a somewhat nerve wrecking new beginning. One that I am grateful for, because I know the closer I am to my true self, the more at peace I will be …I feel a slight trepidation and a bit lost, but mostly yearning. Like I am getting where I need to go but not quick enough for my liking.

Jonathan: Where does that leave you now? How will therapists that read this thesis proceed?

Elif: I think, well I mean even if my initial goal for myself has changed, there is a lot for people to take should they desire. Others can still integrate elements of this work with person-centred theory, with or without religious or spiritual
beliefs. There is a lot of information that can either be implemented as theory, or which people can utilize on their own as a new perspective. I think as you will see in the conclusion, this is a frequency based holistic outlook, and the Sufi’s use a lot of art, music, dancing, chanting, poetry a lot of different avenues to heal.

**Jonathan**: Yes I can see a movement therapist for example coming and taking something from here.

**Elif**: Exactly, or a music or art therapist and so on. I have written a few examples in detail for psychotherapists to see how they might utilize this paper Appendix (272). So for therapists and clients I have a lot of literature, which they can take and utilize in their own way, but as a method or practice on its own, and its relation to me I am not sure… I know I am not a traditional therapist that is for sure.

I have left **The Room**.

**We are both silent.**

**Jonathan**: Where does that leave you, are you going to practice as a therapist?

**Elif**: I mean…what is a therapist? Is it the method, if so no I am no longer one.

**Jonathan**: Perhaps you see it that way; I personally don’t see it as a method but a way of being.

**Elif**: You are right, I agree with you. If I took you out of your counselling room, you would still very much be a therapist, you would still be Jonathan. It’s a way of being and I think therapists (relatively good ones) have specific qualities and personalities that make them do this job. Interest in others, empathy, good listening skills, desire to connect to another and much more so perhaps we are born as “therapists.” If being a therapist is a way of being (Rogers 1980) that holds healing and development at its heart experienced through the qualities and characteristics you hold, then I will always be one.

**Jonathan**: But will you practice and if so how?

**Elif**: I don’t know I am working through this…

**Jonathan**: We are running out of time but do think about it and I think it will be really good to include it here, for your examiners.

**Elif**: *Her mind full but smiling*. Yes sure! Have a wonderful vacation Jonathan, thank you, and see you soon!

**Jonathan**: *Smiles*. See you when I return.

**We Close the Call.**

*I sit staring into space…contemplating.*
Will I be a psychotherapist? Will my title change? I am not a Sufi master, I am a psychologist trained in therapy who is trying to live as a Sufi. I have decided at this point in time I will continue to research a new perspective on the brain, that is based on a Holistic Sufi Psychology, write about it and teach it. I will continue to write in the field of mental health and therapy as a psychologist. It will be a “do it yourself” approach for clients: one of “self-empowerment” for those who do not desire a coach or therapist but prefer an alternative. Due to the current mental health world crisis, service shortage and high prices, alternatives also need to increase in this field. I might also be involved in or advocate alternative healing centres. Specific fields interest me such as Sufi therapeutic art and poetry, which I might evolve into. Perhaps, I will not see individual clients but may have many students. Or one day I might work as a therapist with infants and children who are too young to work with “talking” and thus require alternative methods of healing. The possible paths are endless.

So am I no longer a therapist? Or am I therapist but not a psychotherapist? Or am I

*A psychotherapist gone rogue?*

Does Western Psychotherapy have claim over the word? What about decolonizing psychotherapy, deconstructing, re-distributing its powers so that it can also look and sound different...so that it can take a different shape and form that fits that particular culture or way of being? In Kashmir (Gilani 2019) where there is widespread mental illness due to political upheaval, psychiatrists give Sufi Music and Poetry to patients in a process that began due to lack of mental health services and continued due to positive results. In Canada (Hunter et al. 2016, 19), though not directly related to this approach, aboriginals have balance and holism at the heart of healing where they use various practices from smudging, drumming, sweat lodges and more.

In China (Ting 2012), it is argued that traditional western psychotherapy and its ethical considerations may not be the best fit, as they have different community and cultural values that might clash such as the need to follow orders, and their practices and stance on mental health is generally holistic where the mind and spirit merge, qigong, music acupuncture, meditation and community activities are focused on. In Turkey, whilst Western mental health is widespread so are endless alternative therapies, for example, hospitals utilize something called Apiterapi (using bee products) for various serious mental and physical health illness (Medipol 2022). I can also speak for myself when I say I have tried everything from energy healing, burning herbs, cupping and much more! The list of alternative therapies, are diverse and widespread across countries and within various regions and tribes within them (JongEun 2016; Aung et al. 2013;
Çiftçi and Öztunç 2015; Shannon 2002) as it has been discussed at the start of this thesis.

Thus, I return to my earlier statement. To what extent does the West own this term? Who is it that will deny this has potential within the field of therapy and why? I am here to claim, that diverse therapeutic endeavours should fall within the same umbrella of mental health, thus I will continue to write within the field of psychotherapy, as I am.

So then, what am I writing as within psychotherapy?

The goal was always to merge the East and the West. However, it appears I have lost the West…or have I? Perhaps I have simply lost a specific Western Way of Being, rather than all Western thought or knowledge.

I will always utilize psychological theory and or knowledge alongside Sufism as it is required, and I do so here. I use physics and biology from the West to depict the brain, and I compare the internalization of objects to secure attachment and the final stages of love actualization. It is here that many concepts can still be utilized and further referred to, however my initial goal of integrating Hulusi’s conditions (the result of the love and death merging) with Rogers approach (1961) may not to flow for the heart is not the same. While the goal was to expand Roger’s concept to transcend the self, we might realize that once we did expand the self, the person-centred self became annihilated as a whole! This will further be explored in the next chapter, where I will compare and contrast Rogers (1961) work with our results.

It is here, at this point that I am left with the words; psychology, healing, research and writing. I will not practice again in the traditional sense that I have been taught and as such, I suppose

I am no longer a psychotherapist.

Well…

That was an interesting conclusion.

How does that make me feel?

Actually what would have at the start of this paper have been difficult, now due to a new way of being feels remarkably easy and in a way-
Good.

Letting go of a label, allowing for actualization and a more authentic version of Elif to unfold, not bad, is it?

Here we go.

**Chapter Notes**

- In this chapter I took a break to reflect on the finding through my auto-ethnographic fiction, that personally, my way of being as a Sufi had solidified throughout my degree and had become an impediment to my practice. If I expanded Roger's approach like I desired, then the method would have to change, and transform in a manner that appears to conflict with traditional psychotherapy, at least at this point in time. As such, I decided to let go of the Westernized claim over the label “psychotherapist” to see what unfolds.
Chapter Ten

Arrivals on Love: Analysis and Conclusion
“You can’t become LOVE without becoming free from the chains of the ego. Your conditionings are like shackles on your feet preventing you from flying (Hulusi 2020, #669).”

A cup of relaxing lavender tea (Appendix 274).


A note to my reader:

I have arrived to a place within, the doorstep of Home where my heart is.
I have knocked on that door and waited.
It opened, and I saw Love.

But how well do I know Love, have we merely had a conversation?

I have only just met, felt moments, glimpses and slithers of what it might be to love or be in love, or be Love.

To be One.

Love to me is truth.
It is a way of being,
A path of hope.
It is the shine of the stars,
The strength of the moon,
The flow of the water,
The song of the bird.

Love is the flowers that bloom,
The sky’s that shake.
The atoms that dance

Yet I can steel feel,
The broken tendrils of my heart, From moments so long ago that I cannot and bare not remember, But which is reflected often In the expressions of pain in my face.

Despite the knowledge given to me, I thirst for more.
More of the divine,
More of the water that Cools the fires of my heart.

I desired to have healed it all And I feel that I have made much Progress
But I still need More-
Much
More.

Give me love instead of wine And let me be lost in it, It is only then
That I can say that my heart
Has flowered and opened like a
Rose,
That I have and am living
As a Lover.

The cracks are shining light, and I feel that it is time

**Arrivals**

In this study, I have found that Love is a challenging experience to describe with words. It can be depicted in endless ways across cultures, religions, and ages; and has been explored in-depth by anthropologists and psychologists, from it being defined as a chemical reaction to an expansion of the self that can be transcendent (Machin 2022; Sternberg and Sternberg 2018). Or, as my ten-year-old niece said yesterday, “Auntie, I think love is a cuddle that never ends.” Je t’aime (French), Te quiero (Spanish), Ich liebe dich (German), Ti amo (Italian), Seni Seviyorum (Turkish), Saranghaeyo (Korean), Wo ai ni (Chinese), I love you, I love you, I love you, the heart says, in endless ways, with words, looks, actions, and silence. We cannot confine the heart to just Elif’s words. Thereby, I am not attempting to formulate a single universal definition but instead, desire to create one more of many. Love is beautiful in its diversity, difference, and presence that goes beyond science and even words. However, I have attempted to explore Ahmed Hulusi’s interpretation of it in this study. As such, it is my interpretation of Hulusi’s interpretation— it cannot be absolute. It is here for readers to take and explore at will for themselves, nothing more but also nothing less. It is here to add to existing definitions and increase diversity in literature, not dominate in any way or form. Upon these words, I will now attempt to clarify my findings by dividing them into categories to ease the reading process.

1. **“A Frequency”**: At the most basic level, I found love to be a frequency-based quantum pull and release (regard page 162) where you end up with those most similar to you. It is here where one might see that though the experience of this type of “love” can be healing and create positive change, if it ends in a state of being unable to be without each other this can be a “dis-ease” or indicative of “insecure attachment.” Here I began to feel that **Home is where your Heart is.** At this point, I suggested the need to progress by integrating external information within. One might be able to do this by understanding and
processing the information that we are, in essence, One in truth (if that is your desire and belief).

2. I suggest that the experience of love itself can be beyond definition, intangible and perhaps impossible to describe with words (regard thesis page 158).

3. “Essential love”: In this exploration, I have found that the human is described as pure consciousness (Hulusi 2013, 17). When their true selves are denied, and they believe they are only material existence, they are deprived from experiencing themselves (ibid), from experiencing love. Thus, if you desire love at its fullest potential, you must experience being “selfless” (regard page 163). Perhaps this can be described as unconditional eternal love, love without expectations, possessive of nothing, beyond boundaries, barriers, and labels. You become The Observer, that which observes itself, the One. With this study I have found that “to love is to become the beloved “(Hulusi 2012c, 43); You are Love.

4. If you are Love, What is Love, What are You? At this point, I explored this by explicating the brain as an essential holonomic structure that creates its dream-like illusory reality in which we observe the world. Here the character that we create with the information in our database is a part of the illusion, just as your brain is a projection of information. The database builds with input from the senses, genes, and environment, forming an illusory sense of self. Truth, in this paper, is that we are the One, experiencing ourselves within the illusion. That one is Love (regard thesis page 222).

5. I have found that love can come with unconditional acceptance, which can be healing (see page 220). This attribute is shared in Carl Rogers, Person Centred Approach (1959). Additionally of note, another source of support for this conclusion is that studies have shown that the experience of love appears to generally activate the brains reward system, and elicit oxytocin, dopamine, serotonin and beta endorphins that help us feel happy and content (Machin 2022, 28), which in itself can be therapeutic.

4. I have concluded that Love as an essence can be experienced through thoughts and prayers, and these thoughts or prayers can also be healing. As such, Love can be expressed through a thought. This leads to a high frequency healing approach, which encompasses
thoughts, meditation, prayers, and other Sufi methods. This is supported by the postulation of the brain and universe through a quantum existence (regard page 211), thus opening a pathway to frequency healing. Examples of these pathways and evidence to support their foundation from existing studies can be found in the Appendix (272).

5. Here I suggest that Love is All (the illusory and eternal creation) and Love is the One. Its particular attributes are endless (Hulusi 2013, 43). Amongst these, one attribute that best suits the description above is depicted as Al-Wadud (pronounced as Vedood): “The creator of quantum attraction. The creator of unconditional and unrequired love. The essence within every beloved!” (Hulusi 2013, 26).

Conclusions on Love

Love, like empathy, is intangible and difficult to study or “prove” scientifically. I believe the reliability of this study’s definitions of Love can be increased with greater qualitative and quantitative studies on Sufi perspectives of Love. Of interest to note, I question if, with technological advancements, the concept of Love as a frequency may soon be able to be measured through frequency devices. I also desire to question whether there needs to be a scientific or unified definition of Love and whether writing through experience and many different lenses is enough.

I have come to see that “If I can say to somebody else, ‘I love you,’ I must be able to say, I love you in you everybody, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself” (Fromm 1957, 36). I suggest that the idea of love as existence might resonate with many spiritual and religious individuals. Atheists or those without a particular belief might also identify with a love of nature and the cosmos. Additionally, Love and or unconditional acceptance is utilized already in some therapeutic perspectives (Fromm 1957, Rogers 1959, Charura and Paul 2018), and Love as the divine is readily believed or experienced by many (Machin 2022, 197). It has been suggested that “Unconditional love corresponds to one of the deepest longing not only of the child but of every being…” (Fromm 1957, 33). Although defined in various ways according to individuals, love is important for many therapists across approaches, with some truly believing that Love is “…incomparably the greatest psychotherapeutic agent…” (Allport 1950, 80).

In respect to the conclusion that love is all, I then reached the postulation that it can be expressed positively (in a healing manner) in the form of frequency, a
thought and through prayer. Today, this can be seen in prayer healing, which is practiced across the world, across religions, with individuals or amongst groups (Randall-May 1999). This is similar to the concept of positive affirmations (Moore 2019), the repetition of a word or statement that reinforces positive information or frequencies.

If Love is all, it involves connecting to information (as willed) and finding it within. Perhaps, one might explore therapy as a form of increasing our internal an external **connection** to each other-is that not what empathy is about? As such, this concept of oneness, unity and connection can be readily utilized in eco-therapy, healing with nature, animals and of course people.

As we know from practice (Dodson 2013) when we think of someone, we connect to their information. This connection allows for information to be exchanged at the minimum and for empathy to be experienced at its maximum. But connection brings me to the **problem of Empathy**.

Rogers (1961, 284) suggested that empathy is the ability to understand another person's experience in the world, as if you were that person as opposed to sympathy that involves understanding that person but from your own perspective. This means that doing this in the long-term with often, deep struggles and traumas of clients, as a full-time career can result in what therapist call “empathy fatigue.” Solutions by some arrived by stating they could take care of themselves by not passing personal boundaries of client numbers. However, whilst all therapeutic encounters are most certainly not negative they more often then not can be difficult, and this in turn can create illness in the therapist and client before they get better: traumas are repeated and that negative information is digested.

Here, I offer an alternative for those who desire by suggesting that empathy can sometimes be a choice to open and close at will and can be utilized for positive learning, with laughter, nature, and positivity, rather than repeating the past. Practices of **organic connection, as opposed to mainly connecting online**, can be done in nature, with animals, and within groups, and open discussions of unconditional acceptance can be had. This could be of particular import for the youth considering the advancements in technology, which depict that overuse of the internet can create a disconnection between themselves and their environment, leading to mental illness and other problems (OECD 2018, 7).

However, it is also amongst the current world wide turbulent political, environmental and technological climate that these questions may hold even
more import: why are we discomforted by Love, why are we not discussing it? What are the barriers to our heart? The idea that acceptance comes with healing is already attributed within therapy in particular the Person-centred approach (Rogers 1961, 283). We appear to have strayed from the word LOVE, despite it being no more material or “real” as empathy. I suggest this is a great area to explore further in the therapeutic field.

The conception of our illusory “self” as information in our database is based on scientific facts and psychological theory, as reliable as they might be (regard page 210). The idea of the holonomic nature of the brain and the world is formed from new theories recently accepted in the field of quantum physics (ibid). These are founded in solid scientific research, but I would of course question always, how reliable is science?

Whilst the perspective of the brain is based on solid grounding, it is the concept of the One from a spiritual perspective that cannot be proven. The fact that all of existence is One unit is believed strongly to be true within the scientific field (ibid), the association of that ONE with spiritual and or religious beliefs is where paths may diverge.

At this point, I have decided to sift my results and provide a pathway to this perspective that can be more readily proven and doesn’t necessitate religion. I will do so by focusing on that which can and is already in some ways shown through evidence-based research: by focusing on how the brain perceives the world, unconditional acceptance, and breaking free from conditions, associated judgments, and emotions. This will be discussed further later in this chapter. For now, we must continue with our results, this time on Death.

**Conclusions on Death**

Perspectives on Death can be as varied as Love, influenced by cultural, social, religious, spiritual, and political factors. However, as I discussed earlier with Love, I desired to understand what it might mean according to Ahmed Hulusi’s interpretation of Sufism to further comprehend its relationship with Love and its relevance to myself as the author. I desired to understand their dynamic and how it might be incorporated into existing person-centred theory. As such, it is here that I present my findings of this thesis. I have found that Death does not exist in a traditional sense; it can be however, explicated in these ways:

1. **Death as transformation**: Death is utilized to describe change. In this sense every second we “die,” continuously being renewed. If we observe reality through the lens of an information packet that constantly
changes every second it receives new data, we are never the same as we were one moment earlier. This describes instantaneous changes in perspective, for you from one minute ago no longer exists (See page 218).

2. **Death as an angelic computation:** According to this Sufi interpretation, Azrael is an angel computation that allows you to transform from the physical body to your spirit body. This happens once and is never repeated, and when you leave your physical body there is no return (I cannot speak for saints and prophets). It is essentially a change in a perceived dimension (frequency) as there is only ONE dimension: we are “naught” so when we die, we don’t “go” anywhere, as every information is ONE, the rest is an illusion, a projection that gives the impression of space and time (see page 214).

3. **To meet Death before dying:** This refers to the death of the sense of “self.” One annihilates the “self” to experience being beyond it. This change of perspective allows for the individual to experience Love without the duality of the “self” and “other,” to live as an Observer (see page 213). This change in perspective is only possible whilst in this physical body, as the material brain that allows you to access the essential source. Thereby the goal of the Sufi is to Die before Death, for the sense of “SELF” to die before physical death. Not everyone will desire to experience this state, but for the Sufi this is the truth, and the desired truth is worthy as it is considered to be true love.

4. **To Die before Death** is nearly impossible with just receiving information because it needs to be lived, it is a way of being. Thus they say the only way to do so is to experience true love, as it is the only thing powerful enough to recalibrate a system created by the senses and conditions of the body, the only way to let go of all, which you have “possessed.” Here, the feeling of true love is for Allah (See page 222). This Love is beyond religion, division, time or space.

**Reflections**

As the fundamental biological nature of the brain is known, we cannot deny that every moment we are renewed and transformed as new information enters our brains every second. That which we call our “self,” in truth, a database we observe, changes forever. While the ultimate transformation “to die before death” cannot be proven, this aspect of this thesis might and can be readily
utilized. With this knowledge, one can argue the irrelevance of the past (other
then as a means of gathering information) and the relevance of the now. With
this perspective, one can state that while the experience of past events may
cause ailment, repeating it might also not be the best way to heal everyone.

To clarify, the cause of current struggles can often be past experiences.
However, the thesis diverges from traditional therapy with the thought that the
past is the past, and we must focus on the now as those events, people, and
everything no longer exists.

If we take it further to an interpretation of quantum physics and Sufism, your
sense of Self never existed other than information. While the physics and Sufi
perspective on this issue can be debated in depth, what we can take and hold
as solid “evidence-based” information is that we truly do not exist in the past
other than as a memory.

What I desired to truly comprehend was that it was mere information of
someone, people, or even the “me” that no longer existed, which
haunted me. As such, it just might be “…good to leave each day behind like
flowing water, free of sadness. Yesterday is gone and its tale told. Today new
seeds are growing” (Rumi 1999, 65). It is at this point that I begin to question
how effective the repetition of the past might be (also in regards to negative
neural pathways being reinforced and strengthened); I began to further ask if it
is the best way to find a way to desensitize ourselves to the past, or to heal it.
At the very least, I questioned whether it was the best way for myself and my
work with clients.

It is here that I felt the need to begin to leave the possessiveness of events,
emotions and the person that I once was. I felt that I must abandon the
emotional upload onto the events that no longer existed, and disallow such an
illusion to determine my present and future. When we practice letting go of our
emotional coding, I do not mean to suggest that we should make them our
enemy. I feel that emotions just as everything else exists to be enjoyed,
without darkness there is no light. But one might do this only so they
understand the illusory world, so they do not get lost in the program and suffer
needlessly.

For example, I described how a shift in perspective might change the mourning
of a loved one, as shown by different mourning traditions of various cultures
(see page 191). This describes how emotions can to be a great extent
learned, it exposes our Learned Emotional Responses. This means we can
decode, or re-wire our brains to elicit much healthier emotional responses to
difficult life events.

Let me expand further. While writing this thesis, I decided to get a divorce to separate from my now ex-husband. We were not married long and do not have children, but of course, it was not an easy choice. In Turkey, the legal procedures to get a divorce can be difficult, time-consuming, and emotionally draining, particularly if both parties do not concur on the allocation of possessions. Luckily, we agreed swiftly and went to court for our trial. I heard from siblings, friends, and cousins that I was "very brave, (they) couldn't do that," and that it would be incredibly life-altering in a horrendous way. There are those in my environment and culture who found this to be very difficult and marriage to be very sacred.

However, I did not see it as such. Yes, it was difficult, but it was a positive forward movement of actualization. Marriage, to me, is merely a legal document that might condition you further to the label or word "wife." I felt that the marriages of the heart are sacred, and those-well those are eternal even if you separate. I do not desire to possess my partner. I believe we are merely visitors on Earth, keeping each other company until our time comes. If I am not married for any reason other than love, a frequency, a feeling that we are helping each other actualize and be at peace, then it's time to move on, perhaps to another partner who is a better fit.

As such, I distanced myself from the thoughts of my environment, and the idea of separating became a real possibility. Was it easy? No. But it was much easier. This was an example of how our socially learned conditions and associated judgments and emotions can create hardship for us and how changing our perspective can make it all that easier. What I found was that the more I distanced myself from my conditions and re-wired them to a perspective congruent to myself, the more I began to find that life could be much easier if we just changed perspective.

I questioned, what if I had been brought up with the perspective that divorce was normal or that marriage didn’t even exist from birth? I liked this postulation. One of the main reasons I created this study was because I had seen the immense benefit of Sufism on my mental health. However, this is not meant to imply that emotions are the enemy, something to be defeated and erased. In fact, I see a world without emotions as a world without colour. This reminds me of Lowry’s (1993) Giver; a town is given a pill that blocks their emotions, creating a world that can only be seen as black and white, missing the eternal spectrum of colour...what a joyless life, akin to eating food without flavour; what a passionless existence that might be, not to be able to
experience any emotions, almost as though one is not dead but barely alive.

Yes, there is a difference. I desired to decode, distance, and observe for a purpose, to participate and “taste” emotions and life but also drift in the vast Ocean, no matter the weather, to find a way not to drown. There is just one life for us, each our own. No one desires the same; each one is unique. But if I found something that worked for me, I felt I was responsible for sharing it in case it might benefit others too. I thus then progressed to thinking about how clients could benefit.

Firstly, mindfulness practices, visual and breath exercises, affirmations, meditation, and much more can be utilized to learn how to stay in the present. Second, we can re-learn how the brain works and try to integrate the information that the past you no longer exists. The brain is timeless and thus lives events in the here now. However, it is also linear. The information you have now, you didn’t then. Therefore you are no longer in the then but in the now. This information can be taught, and activities can be given through movement, art, and intergroup work to integrate a new perspective of yourself and your life. I believe this can be greatly beneficial to those with traumas.

Finally, as the body remembers and holds emotional content that causes illness (Mate 2019) I might also implement a holistic approach here to allow for physical healing. Yes, in essence, we are not our bodies, but while we work on integrating that information into reality, we can receive assistance in healing experiences held in the body according to individual needs. For example, some prefer massages, while others equine-assisted therapy, prayer, and music. The goal would be to re-program our brains with love. Here, I wish to add that many, from infancy to adulthood, have experienced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse (ibid). Such clients may have associated love with abuse. I think, in particular, how these results can be and should be implemented in these cases should be discussed in further writing and done with the utmost sensitivity and ethical considerations.

This is so that we can feel that, in the here and now, even one second ago no longer has relevance. To what extent can we do this? I am not sure. However, I have personally experienced this to be so beneficial that I have written an entire thesis on it. I genuinely believe it’s worth exploring. On one last note, I am not sure how the perspective on Death as an angelic computation is relevant to therapy; it merely needed to be touched upon as a definition in reference to the topic of this study. I will now acknowledge it and separate it from the implementation of my findings.
The Embrace of Love and Death

We have now arrived at conclusions on the relationship between Love and Death in Hulusi’s interpretation of Sufism. I have found that Unconditional Love cannot be experienced without a degree of the *Death of the self*, change, or transformation. Here I found that the more Love is bound with Death, the more conditions of the *false self* are released. At its utmost capacity, I saw that Love triggers the Death of the self-concept, allowing you to experience existence as the Observer. I found Death to be a transformation and us to be the creator and source of that transformation. In this sense, “death” and “love” are lovers in an eternal embrace with the other. I found that to love is to transform and submit. Though very few of us might choose to live as the “Observer,” I wondered if many might choose to transform to their greatest capacity.

Accordingly, I might utilize this formula:

Unconditional Acceptance + (triggers) Death (a function that creates transformation) = Release of conditions of the illusory self. Perhaps, simply illustrated as the diagram below:

**Diagram A: Love and Death**

To simplify: Unconditional Love transforms you, allowing for a reconfiguration of the self that can be both healing and lead to actualization. Here, I suggest that most of us, regardless of our religious and philosophical views, can heal through love, which often also triggers the release of our conditions. I would also like to like to suggest how we might utilize this further regardless of religious and or spiritual perspectives. Firstly, by suggesting that religion ultimately can be defined here as a path to ones “true” self, regardless of religious text. Secondly, by suggesting that even if you do not believe the spirit exists, everyone agrees we are our consciousness. Thereby, we can continue
from this point by explicating the spirit as consciousness without needing to go beyond physical death. We would offer a more inclusive path by doing so. Thus, unconditional love and acceptance triggering the release of conditions is a finding that can be utilized across belief systems. **Perhaps then, the most attention here should be given to working with ones conditions to ease suffering.**

What exactly did I discover about conditions?

My answer begins with understanding the basics of the brain, which we explored throughout the thesis. Science depicts all of existence as mostly empty space, a wave-like structure; the brain is then created by a frequency we call “matter” but in essence is also energy; a configuration of One energetic Unit (see page 212). This is called the holonomic brain as the brain’s essential structure is now being described in scientific circles (ibid). It is here that our brain begins to form its database through collecting information into memory storage (see page 101). It is built of information and some might argue that this information begins from the moment the sperm and egg is conceived, through the parent’s experiences, their genes, astrological effects and more (ibid).

However, here I will focus on environmental information received through our senses, as that is what our results depict. We receive pure information when we are newborns. As we get older, we begin to code the existent information with various labels: conditions, judgments and emotional responses. For an example, this is "blue" becomes, this is blue, it’s a masculine colour, only boys should wear blue, I am distressed because I like blue and I am not a “boy.” How does this occur?

Information from our senses enters our brain and is then distributed through the thalamus, the brain's control center, to the amygdala, for quick, instinctive survival responses, and to the hippocampus for memory storage (Carter 2019, 126). When our emotional reactions to stimuli are not instinctive survival mechanisms of flight or fight (ibid) they are attached to information on which we form an opinion, called judgments. Our emotions are processed initially mainly in the structure involving the limbic system (Carter 2019,126); the amygdala, in particular, is said to be the seat of emotion where memories are filtered and stored (Carter 2019,127), which works in conjunction with what we call the "gut-brain" (Cowen et al. 2013). This might partly be why spiritual paths often involve fasting, as when the gut is cleansed and deprived of food and drink, it has fewer emotional triggers that block the ability to observe the system at its true state (see page 176).
It is also interesting to note here that spirituality and unconditional love has been monitored in brain scans of late, and studies have shown that “Neuroanatomical correlates of altruism and love of neighbour were found to be prospectively protective against the level of symptoms of depression, in people at high familial risk for depression, who otherwise face increased likelihood for recurrence,” with studies advocating altruism and love as a means for protection against depression (Miller et al. 2021). This shows us an avenue for greater evidence-based research that can incorporate MRI studies and statistical study together with qualitative research and also provide solid research for exploring love as a means of healing in therapy.

While we had to begin at the quantum-biological level to build a solid evidence-based foundation and understand these concepts, we can now continue with the topic: Conditions. In this thesis, I offer a proposition for debate with my readers: “to condition is to make a judgment based on bits and pieces of data through comparison construed according to one’s own understanding, and then to confine others to this judgment” (Hulusi 2012f, 30).

As discussed earlier, I have found this definition to be logical and useful in my own healing, but do not claim to offer it as a solution to everyone. I merely wish to explore and offer a way of being that has worked wonders for me. After working through these conditions, I have begun to see an approach that puts a change of perspective at its center through this equation:

**Condition + Value Judgment + Emotion** (Hulusi 2012f, 64).

Example A: You must have a high IQ+ You are unworthy if you do not have a high IQ + Fear, Anxiety, low self-esteem, etc.

Unravelling A: 1: Explain the basics of how the brain works 2: Let go of the possession of emotions alongside a concept of the self, as it is just a database we are meant to observe. 3: Integrate and learn new information.

**Result**

A: These groups believe a high IQ is important + I know that is a social conditioning, and that is not congruent to my perspective on what is important. I also now we are all One, diverse in attribute’s of the ONE and that we are not this body to begin with+ This information does not trigger an emotional response, as it has no value.
Let's try another example

Example B: I am a Woman + I am weak + Fear, anxiety.
Reconfiguration: I believe I am born into a vehicle, which is allocated the sex of a Woman + This body is nothing more than a vehicle that I briefly inhabit. If I give it weights and knowledge of defence it gets strong, if I don’t it gets weak + I have no fear. I am not this body and I can take care of it so that I can use it, as I will to defend myself or be strong.

Here we are observing and distancing our self from the belief of our environment.

Let's try another

Example C: I am a Man + Men don’t cry+ Shame, embarrassment, etc.
Reconfiguration: I am born into a vehicle with male sex organs+ this vehicle can cry when it needs to, as it is a natural and organic response. I also know that it is not bound to any labels or conditions + I have a neutral reaction to men crying or a man crying

Let's try an example this time with a real case:

Example D (where conditions lead to arguments):

A Turkish woman decides to go out on a date with a Scottish man. They are young and flirting. It’s the start of their relationship but its is strong and going serious, the man feels that he is starting to fall in love but also that she is very different to the lasses he is used to. Their food finally arrives. He is starving and almost drools as he digs into to his burger and fries. She is eating an eye catching pasta, but notices that his fries look fantastic and decides to grab some. He is aghast.

He has been taught taking peoples food, especially without asking is extremely rude and poor etiquette. He truly feels affronted.

She has grown up in a culture that finds it normal and expected to share food. An argument ensues.

Here we follow this cognition: The food you order is yours + taking another’s food is unacceptable + hurt, pride, discomfort….

Reconfiguration:
1. Everyone is born with different value judgements and associated emotions that lead to conditions, based on the environment they live in. For one A is
rude, for the other NOT doing A is rude.
2. Just as we do not posses our body, we do not posses our food.
3. I no longer have emotional reactions if someone takes my food.

Let’s use a real example now, where conditions can lead to depression.

Example E (where conditions lead to depression):

A young girl in her early twenties has begun to unravel. She had been dating someone her age and they were very serious even considering marriage, however due to long-distance and cultural differences they decided to end their relationship. This girl only found some happiness in her life and it was through this bond. She feels life has lost meaning.

Here we follow the cognition: Someone (in this case a romantic partner) creates your meaning in life + losing that person results in a meaningless life + despair, depression, anxiety and more.

Reconfiguration:

1. Firstly, as we have discussed in this thesis, frequencies that are alike bond together, and when they change they separate. Thus, if your relationship ends its natures way of allowing you to actualize and find the next frequency most suitable to you. 2. No external source can create meaning for you; you have all you need within. Just as there is no self-concept in truth, just information, it is information that you have integrated and now moved on from, you have not in truth lost anything, as everything is YOU. 3. As I begin to see there is no loss only change, I no longer despair.

In this case the situation is a bit more complicated as the emotions are much stronger. The individual would need to have an open mind and willingness to change. Alternative healing methods discussed later in this chapter may also need to be utilized. For example, before she reconfigures her database she may need to commit to a soothing diet, meditation and healing work with nature so that she is in the state of mind that is willing to transform.

Here, the self could be depicted as such:
Diagram B: A New Self-Concept

Point of Observation

When we put this information into perspective with a diagram, we see that the point of observation always remains at the same single dot, One being. There I open a perspective in my brain that observes the world. The more conditions I have in my database, the greater the barrier to seeing the world as it is, seeing myself as it is, and being incongruent in Rogerian terms (1961 163). The more it releases its conditions, the clearer our sight becomes, and the more congruent or closer we are to perceiving the “truth.” Thereby, one might state that, in a sense, this change in perspective occurs without any external movement in “truth” but rather a cleansing, actualizing, internal progress.

Now that I have a clear definition and hypothesis from my findings, I can focus with greater depth on conditions, exploring the effectiveness of this concept, and how it can better be utilized. I believe the next step after this thesis will be to do so.

However, I feel the need to be clear about how I obtained these results.

I have stated that I have found that Love triggers Death (non-physical), helps one integrate this information and as a result release these conditions.

How though?

Here, I explored the possibility that Love is accompanied with Unconditional
Acceptance. By stimulating an environment of acceptance without conditions, together with a perspective of being beyond the self and the added emotional response of unity, warmth and open heart, individuals receiving the information might be in an environment in which they will much more likely integrate the information they receive into a way of being, rather than just reading it as a philosophy.

When it is integrated, it is hoped that conditions are no longer of relevance and a greater sense of peace is achieved. An overview of this was given through changing perspective of funerals and the concept of death (see page 193), which is one of the most difficult challenges people face in their lifetime. This is one of the strongest conditions one might have as it gives the experience that “we are confined to this body.”

For an example one might think: Death is the end of us+ it’s a loss + I am grieving or afraid, etc.
Here a Sufi perspective might say:
Death is the transformation from a material body to a non-material one +You continue exactly where you are but with those you love within you as information + I might feel occasional sorrow but in general I am at peace.

In this situation, if one were spiritual but not Muslim the same statement of “I am not this body” would apply. If one does not believe a spirit exists, a change in perspective can still be implemented; a positive and joyful outlook can be preferred, as seen in this thesis discussion of different traditions of funerals and loss (see page 192). At the core here we perceive the importance of 1: Changing perspective as we cannot change events 2: From a Sufi-quantum perspective there never is “loss” merely transformation and as this is a part of actualization which is linear, it is always for the best.

At this point, I will note that Carl Rogers (1961, 284) came to similar conclusions by suggesting that by creating an environment of UPR, congruence, and empathy, one can release conditions of worth.
Now that we understand our results, let us make a general comparison with the work of Rogers.

Recap on Rogers Self-Concept: Carl Roger’s (1959;1961) theory of being postulates that the human organism has an inherent tendency towards development from birth in what he terms the actualizing tendency. At the heart of his approach, we find that our most authentic or congruent self can lead to a peaceful life; however, our environment, when conditional, leads to interjected values of being depicted as “conditions of worth,” and we become incongruent
(Rogers 1961, 163). Thus we use unconditional positive regard, empathy, and congruence as core conditions (Rogers 1961, 284) to aid the actualizing process of clients. While love is not greatly discussed in his literature, self-acceptance is, as is, self-development (Rogers 1959; 1961).

Towards the later years of his career, he did find himself more open to and in need of love and closeness (Rogers 1980, 85), stating that he feels most “enriched when (he) can truly prize or care for or love another person and when (he) can let that feeling flow out to that person (Rogers 1980, 20).

The relationship between Love and Death according to literature found in the expansive work of Ahmed Hulusi:

I have explored two concepts that are, in truth, one. Your true self is described as the One, observing itself. The relationship between Love and Death was discovered, where we found that Love helps trigger Death, and as such, conditions and associated value judgments are often released.

Some Similarities

- Both authors suggest one can achieve inner peace by reaching a state of **acceptance** and thus one's truest versions of themselves.
- Both authors suggest one can do so, through an environment of unconditional acceptance.
- Both have the goal to actualize.
- Both explore conditions. Rogers calls these “conditions of worth” whilst Hulusi separates both words and uses them together as conditions, value judgment’s and associated emotional responses.
- Both believe that you have all the answers within.
- Both believe in the importance of Love in achieving a state of wellbeing.

Some Differences

- Rogers suggests there is a self, and thereby helps you develop, actualize that self to be more congruent to its true nature and thus reach a greater sense of peace. Hulusi states, there is no self, and thereby helps you change and annihilate your self-concept. As a result, we see how the past is relevant for one and irrelevant for the other (except as a means of gathering information).
- For Rogers, conditions remain generally within socially learned experiences, for Hulusi conditions go beyond social conditioning and also include the body and even your name, it is the annihilation of all
names or labels of all conditions and learning to be in a state of observation. It says the self-concept and all it contains is a condition.

• Rogers suggests that the therapeutic encounter and core conditions of congruence, empathy and UPR are a way of eliciting positive change. Hulusi believes, if you desire this path you do not need coaching or therapy, you have all you need within to heal. You just need information, and the desire to integrate and live that information. You do not need to be beyond the self completely as that is very rare and difficult to achieve.

Conclusion: Similar concepts can be integrated as a philosophy (see Zapsu 2017) but, in essence is too different. If therapy is a way of being, this way of being might clash with each other. One is possessive; it maintains a conditioned self. The other does not and states that it is not confined to its conditions. I do not wish to discourage Sufi therapists who find their way of being compatible. For example, there is recent literature by a psychodynamic Sufi therapist (Khan 2022) who describes a lot of precious work proving how integrating her way of being and practice can be successful. Let us also not forget that some argue that towards the later years of his life, Carl Rogers (in Sivori 2018, 167, 169) was argued to be an "accidental mystic" who stumbled upon feelings of unity in practice and spent his last years trying to find ways at which he could accept spirituality in science and his work. Thus, here in this thesis, various concepts and aspects can also be integrated as therapists desire for their practice. It is also congruent with alternative therapeutic and healing practices.

For example, as I originally planned, one can expand Roger's concept of conditions of worth by adding a spiritual dimension (unrelated to religion), which would include being beyond all labels. Here we would merely integrate the belief of oneness and being beyond all conditions with Rogers's approach to have person-centred therapy with a Sufi twist; while theoretically, one might follow Roger's way of being but add the spiritual dimension of oneness and being free from conditions and labels, methodologically, one might integrate Sufi methods of healing discussed in the Appendix (273). However, the limitation with the theory here, as I suggest, would be not with the expansion with the idea that the true self is beyond the "ego", but with that, if the goal is to be beyond the self, then the method of healing would not allow for the focus that often occurs, of the past that believes the self exists, the methodology might at times contradict the way of being.

It is here that I put forth my findings, and open it with welcome for debate to my fellow therapists. Nevertheless, I believe there are many paths to healing and
everyone must follow their heart and though I can see that it has worked and can be successful for others, I must follow my heart and stand by the conclusion I have reached, which is that it no longer fits my way of being. **Let's take another final look at the results, at what emerges from this study.**

I have found that love and death can possibly result in the release of **conditions, value judgements, and associated emotions**, and that I am left with a new perspective in psychology that doesn't necessarily only fit Sufism.

A perspective based on the combination of neuropsychology and quantum physics within the creative and reflexive field...

The results of this thesis formulate a specific perspective, which we can simply call, at least for now:

**One Psychology.**

**For Sufi’s all are welcome in the “religion of Love”** (Rumi 2019, 25). When one is beyond all labels and words, and sees all as itself, **religion too disappears**. Thus, in order to fit the heart of this paper, I have decided to make sure that my findings can be utilized by everyone both within and outside of spirituality, anyone, everyone, come, whoever you are, all is welcome in Love (ibid).

This is what I will try to do here.

As far as I am aware “Sufi psychology” and “Quantum Psychology” do not exist as dominant fields across academia. However, they are new concepts with various authors “claiming them” and writing different perspectives (Wolinsky 1993; Tarhan 2017).

As such, perhaps it is best to give a specific name as I cannot claim or rather generalize these terms. **Let’s suggest then, three pathways here:**

1. Sufi Psychology: Exploring Ahmed Hulusi’s interpretation. Implementing this perspective outside of traditional therapy, through education and alternative therapeutic avenues.
2. Person-centred Sufism: Implementing this perspective in PCT, by utilizing Sufi tools in practice, and expanding the concept of conditions of worth to include conditions, value judgments and associated emotions, where the self is beyond the body.
3. Quantum Psychology: The Holonomic Brain. This would merely exclude the spirit and religion for those who desire; it would explain the brain as a holographic structure, and state that changing perspective, and releasing conditions can help the healing process.

How can this way of being be implemented in the field of Health? One psychology (all three pathways) can be implemented by focusing on a Holistic outlook integrated with cognitive work that is involved with the release of conditions and their associated value judgements and emotions. **This would have to come with work of opening the heart, to love and connection.**

**The focus**

1. Information: Learn the basics of how the brain works according to the newest scientific findings.

2. Personal work: Opening up the Heart. Integrating new information. Releasing conditions.

3. Take care of the body (our vehicle) to ease the process of healing. Here are some examples:
   a. Nutrition: fasting, diet, vitamins, detox…
   b. Energy healing and cleaning static energy.
   d. Stretching, yoga.
   e. Meditation, chants, prayer.
   f. Aromatherapy.
   g. Eco therapy.
   h. Music therapy.
   i. Art therapy.
   j. Colour therapy.
   k. Writing therapy.
   l. Laughter therapy and more!

**As a way of being it is congruent with**

- Non-Sufis and Sufis.
- Education, activities and exercises.
- Learning in school or class environments, participating in individual and social discussions and activities.
- Or as Sufi you might prefer releasing conditions with a Sufi Master of your choice.
Once this approach is solidified it can be taught.

Examples of exercises

- Group discussions.
- Practices that illicit unity and oneness, it may combine nature or intergroup relations.
- Electives in choosing from alternative therapies from music therapy to writing therapy.
- Creating a course that helps you understand integrate and live this information.

Individuals involved can take it into everything from dance therapy to equine-assisted therapy. Or they can, in turn, become teachers and teach. They can also only choose to be involved so that they might change their perspective on the world. While love on its own is arguably healing, the perspective of the thesis as a whole would have to entail healing through education. To put simply, a condition is formed from a thought, so this entire thesis is based on the notion of changing perspective, changing our thoughts through positivity and love.

Of interest to note, I have recently come across the work of Dizpenza (2017), a doctor who, after healing his backbone (following a car accident) with daily meditation, dedicated his life to sharing his knowledge of healing and meditation. He also suggests that separation is a holographic illusion, while love, forgiveness, and oneness are healing (Dispenza 2022b). He speaks about the power of daily meditation in healing everything from depression to cancer. He claims meditative practice; thus, positive thoughts can help open the heart (Dispenza 2022, 4:32) and heal the body, and he proves it not only with his work but with countless success stories with patients (Dispenza 2017, 8).

His work supports my findings perfectly. We both have similar perspectives on health and feel that the repetition of the past can cause greater ailments versus being here and now, focusing on love and changing our thoughts into positivity through repetition (Dispenza 2021, 5:48). I also suggest meditative practices in this thesis and heart-opening work. However, I state that the next step of this study would be to further define results clearly and implement them in practice, showing how they can be integrated with greater ease, perhaps with avenues such as mediation, prayer, chanting, and more that I suggested in the Appendix (273).
Some limitations

- Research based evidence is required: more on what conditions are and evidence of their role in health.
- This way of being is only relevant to those who desire to live without the possession of the “self-concept.”
- Our knowledge of the brain, in general science and health may one day be proven wrong. Yesterday the world was flat, today it is a sphere, and tomorrow it may be a completely irregular and unknown shape. What I mean to state is that everything written here, from the way the brain processes information, to the holographic principle, and yes, holistic methods of health and the benefits of certain smells and foods, absolutely everything can be proven wrong, our current information is continuously being updated and revised upon new discoveries and as always there will always be conflicting views within the field of health on almost all areas of interest. As such, one must continuously review, revise and critique these findings.
- Whilst there is a strong consensus on the reliability of the holographic principle within the realm of quantum physics (McCormick 2023) it is a concept that is still being worked on with many questions as to its application to rest of the world. For an example, a blackhole has a certain structure, an event horizon in which one might be able to create calculations, but when we apply this to the Universe that has a potentially infinite expansion this becomes more difficult to explicate (ibid). What I mean to suggest is that there is the varaible of infinite creation to consider when implying an equivalent system between black holes and the Universe. This is a complex theory that can be discussed and argued at depth, however for the purpose of this paper; whether or not the holographic principle is agreed upon or disproved one day, and despite its limitations, we can still use it as a tool to further our understanding of the concept of being and nothingness. Thus we can choose treat it as a reality, and or use it as a metaphor to understand one possible reality. As Magical and Real.
- Though it has three pathways, it is still born from my interpretation of Hulusi’s interpretation of Sufism. Additionally, my interpretations relation to religion and spirituality can be political, and a cause of concern or distress for those who do not view Sufism and Islam in this manner.

Some strength’s
• Offers an alternative to traditional talk therapy on its own and a way for it to be incorporated into any therapeutic field.
• A holistic spiritual approach that blends the East with the West increasing difference and diversity in the field of Health as is required.
• Commits to continuously renew itself by utilizing the newest knowledge on science and technology.
• Allows a safe haven where everyone is welcome regardless of faith or origin.
• Increases positive and empowering literature on Islam, women and the world whilst also providing a way for everyone across belief systems to utilize the results.
• Provides potential for healing.
• Increases literature on difficult and vital topics of love, death, spirituality and religion.
• Increases opportunities for self-healing
• Is innovative, creative, and offers room for dialogue on various topics within the mental health field, from a new concept of the self, view of the world and way of writing and research.
• Potentially empowers therapists and clients to be brave, to be different, to be their true selves.

Final Thoughts

Now that I have discovered that the relationship between love and death results in the release of conditions, I can keep future studies condensed to love, death, or conditions by themselves as single concepts. In particular, as a continuation of this thesis, the next step would be to conduct in-depth research on how we might, with greater ease, release conditions. However, for readers, the possibilities are endless; they can take from this what they like, merge it with their field, and create, as they will, various perspectives of healing beyond the self.

The Importance of our Methodology

As a method, I have discovered that one truly does learn while you write. I have found that one particular difficulty with writing as knowing is that one needs to abandon the need to plan in any detail and allow the current to flow at will, which can lead to a lot of editing, rewriting, and effort to make sense of the creative flow! But as a result, one reaches diverse conclusions and experiences, which, as the author of this study, is the greatest gift to myself. Existing literature was occasionally explored with auto-ethnographic
fiction in order to protect my own personal ethical boundaries of disclosure. Blurring the lines between fiction and non-fiction was a desired effort to show the readers that both can be experienced in the brain as one and the same. That at the core, they both are the results of information that helps create our illusory worlds. The difficulty here was getting accustomed to balancing both creativity and literary analysis without one taking over the other. I suppose this is a skill that can only be refined with practice and over time.

A storytelling technique within auto-ethnic fiction I used was “magical realism.” Though traditionally used and defined in literature in alternative ways I have chosen to interpret and utilize it here in this way so that it helps create the backbone of this thesis so that the pages and words can flow and become. Here magical realism is utilized to create a sense of magic or the surreal in an “real” world but also represents unity and multiplicity; oneness being the “real” which we attempt to experience and the sense of separateness, the universe and all it contains as the Magic, the illusion. Dying before death is understanding the illusion and becoming The Observer, of learning the state of Being in Nothingness. The magical real thus is also used to depict, as Ibn Arabi (Demirli 2018, 403) called it, the “non-existent-existent.” Within this technique, I go on to describe my interpretation of Hulusi’s interpretation of these concepts of Allah, the illusion of the multiplicity through quantum physics and neuropsychology.

Traditionally, magical realism has been used to question the “norms” of crowds and governments in powerful ways which otherwise cannot be achieved (see page 21). It is worth noting here, that we also question norms by calling into question all of our collective conditioning in this thesis. Additionally, it is important to note that we also explored the role of women in Islam within the interview with my mother, and the power struggle that exists within different views of Islam. It is here I must ask for acceptance and understanding. Not all perspectives on Islam will be the same but most certainly we can accept difference and diversity across religious, spiritual, philosophical and psychological stances and beliefs. I might also add, that the politics of Islam and gender roles is a deep and dense topic worth further research though it was not the question of study here.

Finally, I utilized magical realism to explicate that illusory difference, is endless and inevitable, and in truth endless attributes of yourself in different illusory forms. It does not fit into any post-human endeavor that believes or desires a lack of difference. It advocates an alternative definition of the word “HUMAN,” and as a result does not fit anti-humanist endeavors. Theoretically, where this paper would be placed is difficult to say, as it does not fit traditional humanism
or many post-humanist trends, perhaps that is something that can be discussed further. This paper defends the right to live as a human amongst all other non-humans, and is dedicated to being human.

Towards an Ending

During writing this thesis, I entered a tug of war, my left-brain and right, logic and heart, the East and West. While I tried to balance the two, I found no amount of science could describe an experience as words from the heart can. That perhaps, whilst evidence backed knowledge is necessary, what is central here and required from myself, is to speak from my Heart. I found that opening and mastering my heart was and still is the hardest achievement.

I believe another struggle and limitation of this study was the span of the topic. In order to understand the relationship of two concepts we had to explore not just Love but also Death. This came at a cost of having to do twice the research, with somewhat less depth then it would have been otherwise. Yet the goal was to find the result of the relationship, which was the release of our conditionings and as such, I would argue, was most certainly worth it. I must also add, that Love and Death are essentially One topic with two faces (I found that Love and Death are two attributes of yourself), which I attempted to depict by writing them as a projection of myself. Furthermore, the results of this thesis have given me further incentive to now give greater focus on conditions and their relation to mental health. As such, I wouldn’t do it any other way. However, the density, depth and difficulty of adding experience merged with creativity to my writing provided a big challenge.

Perhaps, the most vital point to note is that I cannot claim in anyway to accurately understand my main source, Sufi Scholar Ahmed Hulusi’s work. I ask for forgiveness for my mistakes and offer my endless gratitude to him and my readers.

Despite my many limitations, I have to a degree managed to define love and death and integrated outcomes within a framework, which creates a new psychological perspective that places love and transformation at its heart. I have also discovered that elements of Sufism most definitely can be incorporated into therapeutic methods as a philosophy but on its own it does not belong in traditional therapy. As such, it can also inspire an empowered, “do it yourself” method, particularly useful considering the high demand and low supply within the mental health services. I found that this perspective utilizes a frequency-based perspective on being human, thus we might utilize a
holistic Sufi approach based on frequencies, smells, food, music, dance, meditation and prayer.

Looking back, would I advise an exploration of death as a PhD? For most, I would say no. I find it to be potentially harmful to ones health to do a topic on death in depth for so long. But am I glad that I did it and have I benefited from it?

I have written this during the pandemic. I have dealt with, like others, the real threat of death myself, I have watched a family member and friend pass away from covid, and when darkness invaded my mind, and the fear of death surrounded me, it was connection to the love within that gave me the strength to continue. I have now ended my thesis, with a pilgrimage for Hajj to Mecca, where you go feeling as if you have died and return as a newborn, with a new start at life. I have spent almost four years, contemplating death and I have found that in particular, when one returns from feeling as though they have died, come back from the brink of death or healed a struggle with a chronic or terminal illness; that which used to upset me; if I have children or a partner, if I have a degree or money, what people think or say about me, most things that used to cause suffering or distress suddenly became meaningless, and that to me has been one of the greatest gifts of exploring death before it arrives.

I feel much more ready to let go of my illusory self and all the conditions it contains. I feel that the way to do so might include increasing my capacity for love, healing the heart and finally, letting go. I am no longer afraid to change- to transform and perhaps even more so than death, this transformation was frightening for me.

I suppose it took this long for me to realize and believe that there is nothing to fear for
I have no self to lose.

I am eternally grateful that there have been teachers with me as I worked through a tough topic, and allowed me the opportunity to change my life forever. While I cannot claim accuracy over the things that I write, I can say with certainty that for me, love in any shape and form, is the greatest gift.

Finally, I would like to offer my gratitude to you, for the time you have spent with me, my reader.

Words only have meaning when they are read, else they become letters
formed and released without a LOVER to observe them…

Yours truly,

The Lover.

*If you want to be more alive,*

*Love is the truest health.*

*Rumi in (Barks 2004, 117)*

**Chapter Notes**

- In this chapter, I discuss limitations and strengths of my work, and refer back to the meaning behind my methodology and interpretation of Magical Realism. I suggest that love is hope, it is unconditional acceptance, a way of being, a path of actualization and healing. It triggers death (as transformation), and helps the release of conditions, associated judgments and emotions. I sift through findings and allow for three pathways to possibly emerge and instigate further study: Sufi psychology (non-traditional therapy), Quantum psychology (without spirituality) and Person-centred Sufism (the expansion of Rogers work into the spiritual realm). I personally choose to leave my person-centred self behind and continue on the “Sufi Psychology” path, wherever that might take me. I end with the hope of conquering my fear of death, letting go of my conditions and surrendering to love.
Chapter Eleven

Epilogue: The Lover
“Hac (Hajj), The Pilgrimage  
At the Airport, Mecca, Saudi Arabia  
July 4th, 2022

Take your grandmother with you.

I am back, this time with much more knowledge.

My first Hajj was in my early twenties. Now I am going for my grandmother, for us both.

Hajj, as described at the start of this thesis, is a pilgrimage for Muslims. I feel that it is about being cleansed of your past, the negative frequencies you have obtained, and being “reborn.” It’s about Iman, the belief in no God that is separate from you, but only the source within, and that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was able to live and share this state of being.

It was a second chance, for me. But it was also about letting go of my grandmother.

It is said that after your first Hajji you can do a Hajj for those who could not or cannot do it, even if they have passed. You connect to their information or spirit and they join you on the Hajj journey. Hajj involves a process and rituals. But the most significant part, perhaps, happens on the mountain called Arafat, which is described as having intense frequency, which cleanses the spirit of negative energy.

My mother said,

take your grandmother with you; she didn’t have a chance to go.

So I did.

The flower of my heart,  
My one and only love,  
My HepSen, whose name means Always You.

She was our princess, our angel, and the love of everyone’s life.
Hepsen. Always Only You.

She taught me stories, old ottoman tales about being selfless, about being kind and wise.

She told me to befriend the trees, to speak to them and hug them, that they would cleanse and heal me when I was in pain. What is a tree but a living, breathing, organic being, love expressed as plant life?

She showed me how to connect to the energetic life that is around me, to see how healing it was. Just as her prayers were a form of therapy it was also an expression of love.

But most importantly with her softness, gentleness, naivety, and angelic eyes she showed a lonely and serious child, care and affection. She showed me unconditional acceptance, along with healing that came with the pure emotional expression of that which cannot be described with words, Love.

When I was a small, thin, introspective, child she would say, “Always watching, observing, you are my Bilgi Hatun (Lady of Wisdom),” and when she grew ill with kidney failure and breast cancer, she worried that as I was too young, that I would forget her, she said,

“Don’t forget me, my wise one. Beni Unutma.”

When I was 12 years old, she was gone, too soon at 63 and with that, a heartache that never ends for family and friends began until this day.

None of us were able to let her go. She was and is the light of our eyes, everyone’s angel.

A wound in our family.

HepSen.

Hepsen, thank you for loving me so much that you chose me to send you Home, or did we choose each other?

HepSen, if the trees could speak they would adore you with their whistles in the wind, and the birds would sing you songs of joy that come from the love of the world. Your name is written in clouds, covered in roses of pink and white,
Only You, Always You, HepSen.

The world beats with their devotion to you, my grandmother. My one and only.

HepSen, You will always be in my heart.

Hepsen. I love you.

Hepsen. Thank you for your love.
HepSen,
Goodbye.

So we begin.

**Arafat, Mecca.**
*July 5th 2022.*

*My love for you*
*Has driven me insane.*
*I wander aimlessly*
*The ruins of my life*
*My old self a*
*Stranger to me.*
*Because of your Love*
*I have broken with my past.*
*My longing for you keeps me in this moment.*
*My passion gives me courage.*
*I look for you in my innermost being.*

*Rumi in (Chopra 1998, 51.)*

I have been in Mecca for a few days now. Today is the big day, a day of celebration, for being re-born with a clean slate. I am with a group of people in a tent by a Mountain called Arafat. I lay my head on the old worn couches they have temporarily placed. Next to me on the right, many of the ladies are sleeping, one or two are praying, all covered from head to toe, as is required by the Saudi government. This tour is from Turkey, and most have come with husbands or family members. I am here by myself, which was something I desired but at times, I feel like a small child, lost and alone. Yet I also feel, that I am never alone, my grandmother is with me, with every step I take. Many here are kind, looking out for me and considerate. The men are resting to the
right, some are eating and others are chatting. It is interesting to me. This pilgrimage is about being beyond the body, yet here we are, still today, covered from head to toe in the blistering heat, sitting and praying separately, according to gender.

It is so hot that my phone crashes the instant I attempt to leave to the bathroom. My clothes are white, layered and long, my hair covered in a thin white cloth, as is required. They are sticking onto me with sweat. When I return, I head to the back to rest, the world spinning slightly around me from exhaustion, heat, and illness—we probably all have COVID. The small fans in the corners of the tents turn on bringing a soft breeze. I take out a sweater and place it over my shoulders. They pass a box filled with water bottles, ice, and some fresh dates. I grab some of the ice and place it underneath my socks. The ground is radiating. It feels intense. I cannot describe it but it is like there is a huge vibrating force underneath me like a volcano of energy. We are here for the day, and will continue our journey when the sun sets. With us is over a million others, spread out in tents, some on the mountain without shelter from the sun. Everyone here, at the same time, with the same purpose and same prayers, creating a song that radiates across the ground crashing into us like waves.

I am on the ground curled in a corner. My throat feels sharp and dry as a fever begins to creep. I am badly in need of sleep but do not wish to miss a second at the tent that I can contemplate and think. Hajj is teaching me to erase the past, it is gone. It tells me, do not live repeating that which does not benefit you, that which no longer exists. That person, those events the people you were with, all the way up to before birth, all your experiences are gone, are finished. This was a clean slate, a fresh beginning.

Is that not what we often find ourselves doing within therapy with our clients; attempting to let go of the past so that we can be at greater peace in the present?

At Arafat, there was a goal; to forgive oneself, to forgive others, to let go, and be reborn. Only one instant and one day, and you never look back again. For some like me, there was also one more goal. To live beyond the concept of self, to live as The Lover.

Like lightening, I understand that though I called myself a Muslim, a Sufi, it was not a way of being for me until that moment, that until now, I wasn’t in truth a Muslim. With this surprising thought, I stretch out my feet on the carpet. No, I wasn’t was I?
If I didn’t truly believe it, then perhaps not. How to put it…I believed it but didn’t believe that I believed it…

Thus, it was a desire, a haven or way out of the difficulties in life, a source of meaning and purpose, but a way of life? In some ways yes, but much of it very new information I had just began to read and attempted to understand. It was as such a philosophy of life not a way of one.

Now, here, everything is different.
I feel,
I feel it,
I feel it in my every heartbeat, the words Allah developing more than meaning a motion, movement, wind, wings of change, transforming, breaking apart, crumbling, cracking, changing, opening and flowering, everything flashing before my eyes, in brilliant colour and lack of colour, in warmth, and simply love, love, love what more can I say, it is love. From the small ants on the ground, the beetle wandering around, the endless array of faces smiles and frowns, bright and dark, to the birds and the clouds, and yes, the stars I have watched endlessly as a child, eternal, endless, the planets that seem to chatter with their own unique scent, character and form, our galaxy dancing with its neighbors ignoring our insignificant yet significant forms….

Frightening and endless but yes, it was love and it was me, pulsing within me and I it, and it was Love.

So yes, I felt it, now I feel it and I am starting to know it, I am starting to know myself. Perhaps just a drop, but that drop is enough to create an eternal ocean, it was enough to say, yes now, NOW, I believe.

How can I say I believe what I have not understood as experience? But with that one drop, I declare that I am a Muslim.

I am silent as I digest this. I feel a mix of exhaustion, happiness and also distress at the realization that I have so much more to learn, to live but I must begin with today, where I begin anew.

Today, on Arafat, today, my entire past is gone and forgiven. Incredible…how much I can truly live this as truth I have yet to see, but I feel it makes it all the much easier. I think of therapy, how many yearn to let go and move on! Some spend years, a lifetime trying to do so… I make a firm decision, as a “Sufi Muslim” (without confining myself to the
label), I have decided to live Arafat every day, living in the here and the now, feeling that I am Nothing imagining Something.

With this, I also accept that my practice as a psychotherapist ends. How could I continue discussing a past that was no longer relevant or give it importance? Yes, I had to find ways to allow my body to believe it, but owning my experiences felt counteractive, and I realized it had made me feel more unwell. Love, and the belief that I was not this body or its past, was what was truly healing. Yet I had worked very hard to get to this point, and thus, I supposed letting go of my “self” as a psychotherapist was something I was reluctant to do, which is why it took my finishing this thesis to finally be ready to do so. I changed a lot, and as a result, I lost my person-centred and psychodynamic self but gained my true one. I had found a way of healing, a way of finding myself that required me to transform into a more authentic, actualized Elif. This was a chance to begin again, to transform from a caterpillar to a butterfly and whatever way I go, to never forget the lessons from my grandmother.

That love, energy, oneness, nature, us, you, me, unity and multiplicity is healing, offering endless possibilities, hope, and yes, even miracles.

The miracle of Arafat.
The miracle of the heart, that brought me to Arafat.

It is here I learned of endless hope, of endless gratitude for every second my feet touched the ground, for every moment I had in this body, to stay alive, and digest spiritual knowledge that could help bring me “home.”

Taking my grandmother with me, I learned that to love, means to do everything for your beloved without ever losing hope.

It was time for me to leave the Magical world of storytelling my grandmother first introduced me to and return to the “Real.”

To go Home where my Heart is.

To go to,
Medine,
The Prophet Muhammad’s (SAW) grave to see him.

That is a source in which we can learn of love, a love that drives such endless hope, a hope of being better and seeing better days, of health and peace. That is a place where we can learn about a Love of every breath we take, of
life, of being alive-
of existence-

Of Allah.

Of You.
Of Me.

Perhaps, my fever is making me delirious but I can feel my grandmother’s presence. I feel that she is very happy to be there. I feel her silence, her observation.

What do you think Hepsen, shall we go Home? Let me leave you in the Prophet’s arms, let me leave you in our heart, in eternal Love…

Medine, Saudi Arabia.
July 15th 2022

A Conversation from one mind to another

Hepsen, we have arrived.

Can you feel him?

A brain, like no other I have seen, expanding across the city of Medina and beyond, a darkness, emptiness, softness, so large and angelic almost mechanical, a Universe.

I am both frightened and in Love. In Love? No, not in truth perhaps…not yet, as I have yet to lose all barriers to myself, but I am being pulled strongly by him, to speak to him, the Prophet Muhammed (SAW). To speak to him through his frequency that vibrates through his grave.

It’s an honor to meet you at last. I want to know you, I want the world to know the real you. I have read that to be a follower of the Prophet Muhammed (SAW), “is to not discriminate amongst difference and diversity, it is to love people, it is to act with tolerance…because to be Mohammedan means to see Allah in everyone” (Hulusi, 2014f). Yet the world, they say so many things about you, they use your knowledge in the name of harm, hatred, murder…this is partly why, now more than ever, we need to know you, the world needs to know the real Prophet Muhammed.
Prophet Muhammed (SAW), this is my grandmother. She is the light of my heart, my angel eyes. I would like it if you could help her get to where she belongs…if you can help her reach peace, forever. I don’t know yet how this system works, can you help her?

Hepsen, I leave you at the best place I could find, with a great Lover of Love, my Hepsen. I love you.

Prophet Muhammed (SAW), I have been frightened more than I could have imagined by death. The death of those I love and by my own. I have come to realize that I must let go of my fear, and complete my purpose of being, I must surrender to Love.

I would like to get to know you, to get to know myself.
I have come to surrender to you, to surrender to myself.
I no longer desire anything from the world but myself.

In my mind I begin to hear an orchestra, a rhythm, a song. Please click this link to listen to the song I have written:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfBxv_rXwiPHDDKBOQlcbfsRKrMHOx3I

Lyrics:

Hello my friend, hello friends.
It’s nice to meet you, again.
Lost in the darkness, lost and bleak,
A light shines, begins to speak.

Canım, Can, dostlarım. (Translation: My friends)
Karalinktan kaçmayın. (Don’t run away from the darkness)
Hiçlikten bir güül doğudu, (From nothing a rose is born)
Kokusu bizi buldu. (Its smell has reached us).

Je t’aime
Te quiero
Sagapo
Ti amo, Ti amo.
Mahal Kita,
Saranghaeyo
Wo ai ni
I love you, I love you.

I surrender.
To Love,

Güller dolu bir yoldayım. (I am on a road filled with roses/and smiles)
Gülüm geldi, onunlayım. (My rose has arrived, I am with the rose)
Sevgi coştu, güneş doğdu. (Love expanded with joy, the sun rose)
Kalbimde bir oldu. (I found unity in my heart).

Je t’aime
Te quiero
Sagapo
Ti amo, Ti amo.
Mahal Kita,
Saranghaeyo
Wo ai ni

I love you, I love you.

Hello my friend, Hello friends.
Walk the darkness; it’s not an end.
Listen to your heart, and have no fear. It will show you that hope is near.

Je t’aime
Te quiero
Ti amo, Ti amo, Ti amo.
Saranghaeyo
Wo ai ni
I love you, I love you, I love you.

Aşık oldum, Teslim oldum,
I surrender
To Love,
To Love,
To Love.
How can this be, how? So expansive, so soft and full of love, miraculous, how are you possible? How?

I was a Sufi Philosopher.
I am now a Muslim,
With you as my heart.

I understand now those who cry for and yearn for you.
I am beginning to understand now,
My love,
My lover,
The hologram.
Appendix

Exploring tools for Psychotherapists: A Sufi Way of Healing integrated with Western Knowledge

Here, I offer examples of how one might integrate a Sufi outlook on health, combined with modern research within sessions with clients.

From Essential Oils to Herbal Teas

Aromatherapy is the use of plant oils for “health, well-being and medical treatment” (d’Angelo 2002, 72). Dating back to ancient Egypt, China, and Greece, it has been utilized across cultures and times for health, relaxation, and spirituality (Farrar and Farrar 2020). In Islamic history, one can find many references for scents used for holistic health, in particular to rose, musk, citrus oils, oud, sandalwood, and much more (Sabry and Adarsh 2013). Of interest to note is that Avicenna’s (Ibn Sina) writings record over 800 medicinal plants and essential oils including chamomile and lavender (ibid). I believe Western practices can benefit from exploring eastern “alternative” health care, as it appears others do as aromatherapy has readily been utilized widely in the West (The Aromatherapy Council 2018; National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy 2022). Trained aromatherapy professionals currently use diffusing, applying, and or inhaling essential oils as a method of holistic healing (Connor 2020, 3).

Roses are a deep and historical part of Turkish culture often used for health and beauty, the Ottoman Sultans would offer it brewed as a mild anti-depressant (Baser et al. 2013). Sufis in Turkey also most often use rose oil, which is considered the flower and scent of the Prophet Muhammad (Çelik 2015). Roses have been explored in depth within health, studies suggest its therapeutic, soothing quality particularly in regards to anxiety and depression (Safieh et al. 2017; Hongratanaworakit 2009), though further detailed research would be beneficial to understand the extract impact and the dose required.

In terms of this thesis, as the body is described as a frequency, a scent is then also a frequency that directly impacts brain waves, which if interpreted positively, uplifts one's mood. There is strong consensus on the conclusion that there is a clear link of areas such as the amygdala, orbitofrontal cortex, and hippocampus with odour associated memory and emotion (Walsh 2020) and that certain odours can have the potential in the treatment of mental health such as depression (Walsh 2020; Kadohisa 2013). It is particularly interesting
to note that olfactory bulbs carry the smell straight to the limbic system the
centre of our emotional processing (Carter, Aldridge, Page and Parker 2019,
126). Studies also do exit on the positive and effective use of aromatherapy in
the management of psychiatric disorders (Perry 2006; Malcom 2018) as well
as in psychotherapy (La Toree 2003; Torre 2008). Though much research
(qualitative and quantitative) in its therapeutic intervention would be
appreciated as it is lacking; one particular problem in studies is that the
chemical content of oils can vary giving inconsistent results (d’Angelo 2002,
73). The impact scents have on disorders can be compared and observed
according to illnesses. Limitations and risks would need to be discussed
including allergies, desensitization to smell, and possible negative memory
recall with the observation of client satisfaction.

However, these are some of my personal favourites I have benefited from for
the past ten years (diffusing 4 drops, more if the room is large, of oils in
lukewarm drinking water with an essential oil burner):

**Rose:** For Spiritual growth, anxiety, relaxation (Hongratanaworakit 2009). I also
apply rose oil behind my ears and on the crown of my head.

**Orange/lemon/lime/lemongrass/lemon-balm:** Happy smells, uplifting. Has been
reported (and personally experienced) as improving states in depression and
low mood (Komori et al., 1995; Connor 2020, 23).

**Mint:** Mental clarity, depression, and physical health (Brazier 2022).

**Lavender and Chamomile:** For anxiety, relaxation, and sleep (Connor 2020,
29; 34).

You can also drink these plants for health purposes (Perry and Perry 2018).
Rose, Mint, Lavender, Chamomile and citrus teas are my favourites as anti-
depressants. I find mint and some citrus teas to be stimulating so I prefer rose,
lavender and chamomile for anxiety. I prefer matching the scents with the
teas; drinking rose tea and using rose oil, together for a calm sleep, and
lavender tea with lavender scents. There are a wide range of plants, herbs
and aromas one can explore I have listed the main ones I have utilized for
year, benefitted from and found to be an important part of Sufi and Turkish
Culture. Again, all aromas and herbs, I believe must be approached with
cautions and ideally doctors approval, as misuse can be dangerous and they
can be as potent as medicine.

For clearing the energy on yourself and or in your home you can burn:
Sage: The Ancient practice of burning sage and allowing the smoke to clear “negative energy” and increase holistic health (physical and mental) is a ritual across cultures including Native American, Chinese and Middle Eastern (Watson 2019; Hickey 2021; Çerikan 2020). Negative energy would be generally depicted as the accumulation of frequencies from various causes that can cause one to feel emotionally and or physically unwell. A bundle of leaves are burned, and the smoke is allowed to seep into clothes and the room for a few minutes (ibid).

Sage is only one of many traditional herb-burning options for negative energy. There are plenty others, which include but are not limited to Wild Rue and or Bay Leaf. The benefits of these three herbs on their own have been discussed, for example inhaling sage has been shown by studies as being as an anti-bacterial and anti-depressant (Raypole 2020), wild rue is known for its sedative properties and spiritual awakening (Passos 2016) in fact it is said to have been suggested for its health and spiritual properties by the Prophet Muhammad (Alul Bayt 2022), finally studies suggest bay leaf vapour are known to have a significant impact on lowering anxiety (Whelan 2017). Thus whilst “scientific” research is still difficult to achieve these herbs have been used across time and place for such purposes and do appear to have beneficial holistic health properties worth exploring. Like any scent one must be careful of its overuse (too long and frequent inhalation), allergies and negative associations. How long the effect (positive or negative) it might have needs to be addressed for the individual despite any research-based evidence that could be found, one must try it according to their own desires and medical circumstances, if necessary with a doctor’s permission. Additionally, drinking these plants as tea, for various health purposes for example for anxiety, symptoms of menopause or lowering cholesterol, can be discussed with doctors.

Scents can be explored with clients

They can use it at home, their work place and or during sessions with therapists. Diffusing scents during sessions can be problematic as the scent will stay in the room likely for the whole day and seep into other sessions, however, solutions and or alternatives can be found should both therapist and client desire to do so. For example scents can be utilized in small portable roll-on bottles, they can carry and smell or dap on wrists and temples. In sessions, scents can be utilized as oil on a cotton ball, which the client can inhale in for 10-15 minutes (d’Angelo 2002, 77). Instead of a cotton ball the oil can be dropped into water and inhaled. For detailed examples of its use with clients
one can address sources such as d’Angelo (2002, 73), where the therapist uses aromas in sessions with clients who have various ailments from depression to ADHD; here the author suggests that essential oils can be coupled with visualization mediation relaxation exercises, which after the association solidifies with repetition, will allow the scent alone to offer immediate relief with a much greater impact (d’Angelo 2002, 75).

**Caution:** Smells, just like food and drink can cause allergic reactions. If applying on skin, one must use neutral carrier oils. Otherwise the essences can burn and cause irritation (coconut oil has a scent thus I prefer to use olive oil). Some oils being sold are not organic; there is a possibility of being scammed! Finally, rose oil in particular very difficult to extract in large amounts and thus is generally expensive regardless of which country it is bought from.

**On Nutrition and Fasting**

There are many positive aspects to fasting, though in Islam it is suggested to do so for at least one month a year, not just for the health benefits but to allow for one to turn to their essence with greater ease, by decreasing the stimulation of the body (The Quran in Hulusi 2013, 80) and allowing for greater information to be used by the brain during prayer that normally will be spent digesting food. The health benefits of fasting are also discussed increasingly across professionals, in relation to cleansing the Gut, healing illnesses, losing weight and much more (Mayer 2016; Jensen 2016). There have been studies that suggest autism and schizophrenia even, have been healed after fasting and diet that have been recommended by nutrients that work to heal the gut. Diets can help heal serious mental illnesses like schizophrenia and bipolar Disorder (Naidoo 2020, 197).

Fasting is seen as a common practice across mystical practices and religions from Buddhism to Judaism (Kann 2017) perhaps mostly for the same reason, to realize your essence that is beyond the body, though perspectives on fasting can vary across religions and even within them. So whether you want to stay younger, healthier, and fitter or you wish to increase your spirituality, fasting appears to be a key way to do it across belief systems! Yet, let’s not forget it might not be possible for everyone, for health reasons to fast. Whether or not it is beneficial, it up for the individual to decide for themselves, perhaps alongside their doctors advice.

In terms of mental health, fasting is suggested to have an important role in healing the brain due to the gut-brain connection and what is termed as the “Leaky Gut,” where the gut-wall weakens allowing for bacteria and molecules
to enter the bloodstream and to the brain (Naidoo 2020, 61). A few years ago, I realized I was suffering from a Leaky-Gut syndrome and had been for most my life. With me, this caused a range of symptoms from foggy brain, nervous system disorders to depression. Healing my gut was surprisingly easy, I had to have a relaxed but consistent diet and decrease my stress. What was left was trying to find a way to cleanse and detox the heavy metals. Our Gut-Brain relationship is strong and they work as a unit, research on it has gained recognition in its role in mental and holistic health these past few years and deserves to be explored in depth.

The Sufi way of health says to do what you can to stay in optimum health, thus eat in moderation, fast, stay away from harmful foods and drinks, from smoking and so on. We know how vital the gut-brain relationship is in mental health, in particular with the work of nutritional psychiatrists. For example, research suggests (Naidoo 2020): inflammation and depression are closely linked, probiotics and prebiotics can heal your micro-biome and decrease depression, high carbohydrate foods increase the risk of depression, artificial sweeteners can be toxic to the brain and increase mood disorders, Omega-3’s are central for mental health, saffron and turmeric are effective anti-depressants and much more.

How do we utilize this information?
Anyone can utilize this information by reading, becoming more aware and researching. Therapists do not need to be nutritionists to be able to do basic research and give general guidance to clients.

A diet according to the client’s needs would be suggested. It can be worked on together with client and therapist, with also the guidance of a nutritionist and or doctor. Recent research suggests supplements can be effective in treating even major depression, thus they can be suggested as options instead of anti-depressants, which clients can explore with their doctors.

Generally speaking, some basic information can be given to clients. The can cut out or cut down gluten, sugar and processed foods (Ramnarace 2013). Therapists can be a form of support for clients as they create new habits of healthy living. Here are a few examples out of many options; “happy” hormones inducing foods that can be included in ones lifestyle, written in a random order (Ramnarace 2013; Naidoo 2020; Agrawal 2014).

I. Bananas
II. Bitter chocolate
III. Spice
IV. Blueberry's
V. Turmeric
VI. Yogurt
VII. Coconut
VIII. Broccoli
IX. Salmon
X. Avocado
XI. Green Tea
XII. Walnuts
XIII. Saffron

Water intake can be discussed

As we know, water is vital for health (Naidoo 2020). Some recommend from 2.7 liters a day for women (including water from food and drinks) to 3.7 liters for men but these amounts vary and change according to the individual and their needs (Gunnars 2020). I find that individuals can at times instinctively notice their own limit. Some doctors have recommended 3 liters of water to me daily (this can include mineral water, but not food or other drinks). I have found that drinking up to 2 liters of water, not counting teas or other avenues for liquid, works better for me (unless I am on a detox or I am unwell).

Heavy metals can cause mental and physical illness (Jaishankar et al. 2014), and as such various means and ways for Detox’s can be suggested or explored with their own doctors. In my personal experience I have seen that Western detoxes usually involve powders, pills, drinks, fasting, and recently technological gadgets that give you specific frequencies. In Turkey, I have taken mud baths, used the Hammam (Turkish aroma-therapy steam room ritual) and utilized cupping (blood letting). This is to aid the cleansing of the body and help one is able to achieve greater health and yes, spiritual actualization as it all works as one unit. In this instance, therapists without having to study the Gut-brain can have and offer general information that can offer guidance to holistic health that incorporates the clients own culture and traditions, and should clients desire can work together with their doctors or nutritionists.

On Music as Therapy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EePnCwVD5TQ&list=OLAK5uy_nynkJio mVXZg3jzy0-x_idNIN8zCCwEo&index=15
Music has a large role in Sufi circles, with the Sufis having their own instrument, a flute called the Ney, often referred to as the breath of the Soul (Aydemir 2014). Listening and or playing music is considered to be both a therapeutic and spiritual practice (Isgandarova 2015). As for this thesis and its bases built on frequencies, it is a perfect and vital fit. This is reflected in the frequent use of song throughout my writing. Historically, the Ottoman Empire relied heavily on music as therapy in holistic health (Çifdalöz 2020) and very interestingly recent research in Turkish hospital settings suggests that the playing of instruments such as the Ney can assist healing and mental health (Letsch 2011). Additionally, there are diverse studies within music research that show its efficacy in depression, hence the branch of music therapy (Kamioka et al. 2014). Noteworthy, is a study done with music therapy and psychotherapy with 79 patients who had Major Depression: findings showed a rapid and significant improvement in depressive symptoms with patients who received music therapy together with psychotherapy as compared to psychotherapy alone (Erikkila 2011).

Psychotherapists can share this information with clients who can utilize music as therapy in their own lives without any assistance, or they can choose to integrate or utilize music in sessions, for example listening together or even creating music together. I would argue that one does not need to be a music therapist to integrate diverse range of the arts into sessions, should that be beneficial for the relationship. In my own work I have found that various therapeutic avenues are particularly useful in sessions when words or memories cannot be found.

On Movement

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= h1waylgn8o

In Sufism, dancing can be a method of therapeutic spiritual practice, in particular followers of Rumi can be dervishes who practice a form of dancing called Whirling; where one is in an internal meditative quiet connecting to the source that is All, feeling a state of oneness with all, whilst whirling like the atoms of existence (Rahman 2014). Interesting to note, one psychotherapeutic study in particular with 44 clients, has found that utilizing Rumi’s Whirling as practice has offered profound spiritual and holistic healing (Harel et al. 2021). As we know, in general, daily movement in the form of exercise, walking or
dancing is vital for mental health (Centers for Disease Control 2021). Interesting of note, research has found that running for 15 minutes or walking for an hour reduces the risk of major depression (Karmel et al. 2019). Clients that are physically able can be encouraged to keep their mental health optimal by incorporating movement into their lives, and this can be discussed together in sessions. Walking with therapy can also be preferred at times, if possible. Maybe even dancing, yes even in the counselling room! For those unable to move and with disabilities, connecting to nature and receiving fresh air may still be helpful (Chaudhury 2020).

**Poetry and Art as Therapy**

*In your light I learn how to love.*  
*In your beauty, how to make poems.*  
*You dance inside my chest*  
*Where no one sees you,*  
*But sometimes I do*  
*And that sight becomes this art.*

*Rumi 2004, 7.*

In regards to Art, Sufi’s have long since used the arts as a therapeutic way of expression and connecting to the soul, most notably with Sufi calligraphy work and a Sufi painting technique called Ebru (Teparic 2013; Aslan 2018). Art in general as therapy, is a well-developed field with evidence-based practice (Malchiodi 2011). Art can be suggested as a therapeutic means for clients or can be integrated in sessions if preferred (d’Errico 2017). Poetry interestingly has been a form of expression across time and continents by Sufi saints (Demirli 2018). Rumi’s Sufi poetry is one of the best sellers in the United States, though many may not know he is a Sufi Saint when they read his work (Ciabattari 2014), his poems are also used in some countries as a form of therapy (Anadolu Agency 2019) with authors arguing for its healing attributes (Leedy 1973). Perhaps, poems can be suggested, given or integrated in different ways with sessions with clients including writing; this is also already being utilized by some Psychotherapists (Anderson 1999).

**On Prayer, Chanting, and or Positive affirmations**

Prayer and chanting, is a main practice of Sufis (Geoffroy 2010). Prayer is a way of increasing spirituality and actualizing to ones full potential, living ones essential reality and some believe that the repetition of certain words or prayers a number of times is done in order to open up that positive frequency
in one's brain (Hulusi 2012e, 39). There are also specific prayers for ailments such as addictions, struggles in life and psychological illness for Sufis, and the book I personally have utilized and found to have a great impact is by Ahmed Hulusi (2012e). Discussions can be had about utilizing prayers, one doesn't need to be a Muslim to use the advantages of them as they are for everyone and claim to be beneficial regardless if you believe the words you say, but I am aware Muslims may mostly only be interested in this practice.

In sessions, clients can feel free to integrate their own beliefs into practice. The ethics of this can be discussed and debated in length in supervision. Chanting can also be utilized in the form of positive affirmations, particularly for those who are not religious as an alternative. Positive affirmations, the repetition of words or sentences can be incredibly healing and help rewire the brain to positive thinking, increase self-esteem and well-being and decrease depression (Moore 2019). My favorite is, no surprise here, “I love you.” This can expand to include whatever the client may need, “I am healthy.” “I am beautiful.” It can be a long sentence or short words. This can be created in sessions for clients, with them, for them to take home and integrate into their daily lives should they desire.

**On Meditation and breathing**

Whilst meditation and breathing can be a large part of Sufi practices for some, others from various faiths have also found ways to integrate it for their holistic health (Strouse 2019), and studies have shown their benefits in particular in reference to anxiety and depression (Gul and Syeda 2019). The practice of meditation, where the goal is not just for health but to help you actualize, can be done at all times and is incorporated with other mediums such as art or dancing (Teparic 2013; Aslan 201; Rahman 2015).

The impact meditation has on healing is incredible; recent modern examples come from Dispenza (2017), who has shown how he cured his spinal cord just by meditating, and how his clients have been able to cure cancer and depression just by meditation and turning inwards, connecting to all as One, regardless of faith. I believe the mind truly is a miracle and that it would be remiss of us not to use meditative practices, using the power of the brain to create health in sessions. Modern meditation and mindfulness practices have been found effective for mental and in general holistic health both on its own and as utilized in psychotherapy (Majumdar et al. 2002). I myself have used it with clients and found it particularly powerful with anxiety. One can integrate Eastern and Western meditative practices in sessions with clients or offer it as a possible complementary avenue.
On Giving

I have found in my social work with disadvantaged populations in Türkiye, that amongst many, there is a desire to benefit and help their community and family. It is known, that giving or helping another can increase self-esteem, trigger the brain’s reward system and increase happiness, building greater social networks, very interestingly it has been shown to even help with chronic illnesses like MS and extend ones life expectancy (Suttie and Marsh 2010). Worthy of note, in Islam, giving a certain amount of income monthly, is a religious requirement (Hulusi 2014e, 93), and for the Sufi’s giving is a natural way of being as one aims not posses anything in truth. Giving projects can be explored with clients should that feel, like that is something that arises from the client. Giving comes in many forms, from monetary, to simply time. It might be a great source of empowerment especially for clients that come into sessions.

On Frequency healing and the future of mental health

There are many other noteworthy methods of healing, at times also utilized by Sufis, that are not discussed here, which are worth exploring, that include and are not limited to: color therapy (Ohwovorie 2022), laughter as therapy (Yim 2016) and eco-therapy (Mind 2022). Whilst the current climate shows a future of therapy that includes applications on phones and frequency machines (Butkovic 2022), organic means of frequency healing and health can be explored and utilized with or without technology.
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