

**ENTERING YOUTHWORK THROUGH LOVE'S MANY PATHWAYS:
A POETIC RENDITION**

by

Mahabba Ahmed

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies at
Brock University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Child and Youth Department,
Brock University, St Catharines, ON

© Mahabba Ahmed, 2012

ABSTRACT

Entering Youth work Through Love's Many Pathways is a text that wanders and digresses to places where, through poetic inquiry and a Spinozist and Sufi framework, the concepts of immanence, love and becoming can be explored.

This thesis is framed as a walk through which the researcher / youth worker along with the reader, traverses through five pathways that she considers necessary in cultivating a meaningful relationship with the youth: opening, strength, listening, trust and unconditional compassion. By means of engaging the “self”, this thesis approaches youth work as a field that is relational and socially interconnected.

In this sense, this poetic inquiry seeks to rupture predictable patterns of behaviour. One of the ways I do this is through found poetry. Through this specific form of poetic inquiry, I bring together various voices, an assemblage – Rumi, Rilke, Whitman, Lalla, Mirabai and Song of Songs – in order to find my voice and by extension, to help the youth find *their* voice through a human connection that goes beyond colour, race, gender etc. In other words, my aim is to actualize the experiences of becoming youth worker while being in a field of immanence where similarities are understood and differences respected.

My hope is that this project may offer an example of understanding, celebration, and engagement of our mutual differences, while still being able to relate to one another through the many pathways of love.

DEDICATION

To Allah, for perpetual grace
showered on me moment by moment,
breath by breath.

To my Beloved Mystic Ummi,
whose unwavering, unconditional
love effuses my whole being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all the people who have contributed toward the completion of this thesis.

First and foremost, I offer gratitude to Allah for bringing me this far and for enabling me to undertake and complete this project.

I am grateful to my Beloved Umami for her prayers for me in the early dawn hours. Her open-hearted presence has been a vital source of strength and support.

I thank Amina al Jamal and Anjum Jangda for their loving prayers, light and moral support.

Dr. Hans Skott-Myhre, my supervisor, for allowing me to do what I wanted to do and leaving me to my own intuitive dance. Thank you! I couldn't have done it without your patience.

My committee members, Dr. Donato Tarulli and Dr. David Fancy for wholeheartedly believing in my thesis long before I could, and for their thoughtful feedback on my work. Heartfelt gratitude.

Thanks to Dr. Rebecca Raby who helped me to initiate this project when I wrote an essay for her class.

Thanks to Dr. Christine Tardiff and the caring faculty of Child and Youth Studies.

Thanks to my family.

I am grateful to my friend Christine Schingtin for patiently listening to me talk about my thesis.

Heartfelt gratitude to Joanna Wasiak for so generously sharing *her* understanding of Spinoza, and also gently urging me to trust my voice.

Heartfelt gratitude to Ahava Shira for being the first to write a dissertation on Loving Inquiry, and for our brief, shared journey.

Many thanks to my students at ISNA, and Chisholm Educational Centre, who trusted me to work with them.

I am awed by the beauty of the ninety-nine names and am thankful that I had a small opportunity to explore some of them in this thesis.

Special and heartfelt thanks to my Sufi teachers, Sidi Muhammad al-Jamal, and Sheikh Din al-Dayemi, who continue to open me to love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
DEDICATION	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
PREAMBLE: BISMILLAH: SETTING OUT ON THE JOURNEY	7
BECOMING	
PATHWAY I: AL-FATTAH – OPENING	19
PATHWAY II: AL-AZIM – STRENGTH	35
IMMANENCE	
PATHWAY III: AL-MUJIB – LISTENING	51
LOVE	
PATHWAY IV: AL-WALIYY – FRIENDSHIP	65
PATHWAY V: AR-RAUF – LOVING	82
EPILOGUE: ASH-SHAKUR, INFINITE GRATITUDE	99
POSTSCRIPT	105
REFERENCES	107
APPENDIX: THE POEMS	118

PREAMBLE

A poem, as a manifestation of language and thus essentially a dialogue, can be a message in a bottle, sent out in the – not always greatly hopeful – belief that somewhere and sometime it could wash up on land, on heartland perhaps. Poems in this sense, too, are under way: they are making toward something.¹

I understand the relationship between the poet, the poem, and the reader not as a static entity but as a dynamic unfolding. An emerging sacramental event. A relation between an I and a You. A relational process.²

1 Paul Celan, Quoted in, Hirsch, E. (1999) How to read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry, p. 1

2 Hirsch, E. (1999) p.5

BISMILLAH: SETTING OUT ON THE JOURNEY

“When you are guided to this pathway of the heart,
take a moment to breathe, and begin what you are
about to do wholeheartedly.” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.1)

There is much unknown when we initiate something or embark on a new journey. The process of writing this thesis has been a hard, arduous, yet worthwhile excursion into my self. When I decided to embark on this journey about a year ago, I didn't know what I was getting into. All I knew then was that I wanted to write about love by means of poetic inquiry. How the work would relate to child and youth work, I didn't know, nor did I know how the thesis would finally cohere. In the Sufi tradition, when people begin something, they say *bismillah*, which can be translated poetically:

We begin by remembering
the sound and feeling of the One Being,
the wellspring of love.
We affirm that the next thing we experience
shimmers with the light of the whole universe.³

From this perspective then, anything we venture out to achieve is actually a “reason to bring out our full humanity” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.1). The twelfth-century Sufi poet Saadi asserts:

Every being is born for a certain purpose,
and the light of that purpose is kindled in its soul⁴.

Nonetheless, we are also inextricably connected “to everything in the cosmos” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.2). We cannot do without each other. We are interdependent with one another.

³ Translated by Douglas-Klotz p.1

⁴ Quoted in Douglas-Klotz, p.1

However, the question arises, is it possible to be fully ourselves, and still connect authentically with others? Is it possible to “balance being an individual with being in a relationship?

(Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.2).

Given our inevitable connection to one another, it is interesting how the field of youth work invariably allows for such an interrelation. As Krueger (2007) acknowledges,

Youth work, ... is portrayed as an interpersonal (*among human beings*), intersubjective (*with different viewpoints and feelings*), contextual (*each person, situation and environment unique*) process that occurs in the lived experience, or as it is sometimes referred to as 'the daily living environment', 'the community', or 'the streets'. Further, as a process of human interaction, youth work is enriched and fraught with all the emotions, challenges, struggles and discoveries that are part of being human. Workers try their best and learn from their successes and failures. (p.40)

Coming back to the questions posed above, yes, it is possible to balance being an individual with being in a relationship; yes, it is possible to be ourselves and still connect authentically with others. But it is not always easy. Beginning any relationship is fraught with its own joys and pain, but that doesn't stop us from engaging in, and pursuing relationships. In the preface to *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Robert Hurley (1988) perceptively writes:

The environment is not just a reservoir of information whose circuits await mapping, but also a field of forces whose actions await experiencing. In a human sense, it can be called the unconscious, or at least the ground on which the unconscious is constructed. Which of these actions are we capable of experiencing? What is a walk in the forest (where the tick is waiting to experience us)? And what new individuals do we compose when we “think like a mountain?” For Deleuze (for Spinoza),

Nature itself is an Individual, composed of all modes of interaction. (p.ii)

In a similar way, youth work “is a field of forces whose actions await experiencing”. Of paramount importance, is the relationship the youth worker has with the self. “Workers bring self to the moment and learn from their feelings and insights as they interact with and learn from youth. Workers do their homework ... so they can understand how their histories bias and influence their interactions. They also try to be aware of their feelings of fear, anger, joy, excitement, boredom, sadness etc as they interact. Youth work, in this context, is a process of self in action. Workers use self to inform and be in their interactions” (Krueger, 2007, p.40).

The “self” I’m referring to here in relation to youth work does not refer to the privileged, exclusive, solitary self, but rather, a self that fully engages with “a set of capacities for action that form and unform bodies along trajectories that make and unmake an infinitude of idiosyncratic subjects across the social field” (Skott-Myhre & Tarulli, 2008, p. 75). This is a self constantly in motion, in engagement with other “capacities”. It is not fixed, nor limited to a fixed identity. The “self” is vibrant and in perpetual interaction not only with “our inner community of voices” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.49), but like the tick waits to experience all that it needs to experience in relation to life. The self, from this perspective, is in a process of constant becomings, perpetual collisions where it is continuously made and unmade through a series of collisions. It is this vibrant, ever-alive “self” that the youth worker brings in relation to youth work.

As a youth worker in progress, if I’m to engage in meaningful encounter with the self, and by extension, with the youth, it cannot be from a superficial, academic distance. How can I potentially engage young people if I’m talking to them from an abstract, heavily intellectual perspective? It is impossible. In this thesis, by means of fully immersing into a quest for self-awareness, I hope to simultaneously foster, nurture, cultivate various openings that may

facilitate my interaction with young people. As I see it, the only way to develop meaningful relationships is to “become willing to step into the messiness (Jardine, quoted in Mackenzie, 2009, p.240) of the always shared, personal experience, becoming vulnerable to those emotions that may arise as I begin to live, write, breathe, and move, within the poetic spaces of [my own] be(com)ing” youth worker (Mackenzie, 2009, p.240).

I have been afraid and reluctant to undertake this journey into my-self, a territory inhabited by many voices. I've worn various academic masks in the hope that I may prolong venturing into the unknown terrain of myself, and by extension, into youth work. But who am I fooling? “To be effective, we must be real” (Young, 1999, ¶23). The relationship between the youth and the youth worker is central to the young person's development. “When child care workers fail to cultivate their awareness”, warns Young, “they jeopardize the potential of their relationship with the children in their care” (Young, 1999, ¶10).

This writing, therefore, is fraught with confessions, digressions, meanderings, sharings, all in the attempt to meet young people where they are at; and to engage with them face-to-face, side-by-side. It is not an academic thesis in the sense that I'm looking for a prescriptive application of methodology on data that is passive. No, rather the aim of this project is to integrate intellectual scholarship with a methodology that enhances intellectual research. I hope that by incorporating such a methodology, I can pave the way for further intellectual curiosity, and creativity that will allow for even more openings. I also want to invite the possibility of engaging in an intimate conversation over the course of a walk through various pathways. I invite you into this sojourn, for as Leggo (2008) reminds us, “we need to write personally because we live personally, and our personal living is always braided with other ways of living – professional, academic, administrative, artistic, social, and political” (quoted in Mackenzie, 2009, p.239).

“(O)ne doesn't have to follow [Spinoza's] every proposition, make every connection – the intuitive or affective reading may be more practical anyway. What if one accepted the invitation -- come as you are – and read with a different attitude, which might be more like the way one attends to poetry?”⁵

“Clearly, to engage in poetic inquiry is as much a calling as it is a method; a calling between the 'I' and the 'Other', a call-and-response, a song that is sung, a voice that wills itself to be heard, in many spaces, both private and public, whispered (or shouted) into multiple ears”.⁶

I take Deleuze's advice on reading Spinoza to heart. There is no correct way to read Spinoza's *Ethics*. Similarly, the underlying premise for this thesis is to simply come as we are; to show up in the field of youth work with all of our idiosyncrasies and see what happens when we attend to life the way we would attend to poetry: with intuition and relationality. As Prendergast above points out, engaging poetically implies an oscillating dance whereby the “I and the Other” responds to a multiplicity of voices, both private and public.

Poetic inquiry is the methodology I've used in this thesis. There is nothing that does not serve as occasions for poetry: “the particular motions of an insect, a machine, a muscle or a thought”, all become occasions for poetry if we are “alert, attentive, attuned” (Sullivan, 2009, p.111). Poetry, when used as a research tool, challenges “the fact-fiction dichotomy and offers a form for the evocative presentation of data” (Leavy, 2009, p.63). Poetry opens up a unique space through which researchers become “attentive to multiple meanings and perspectives” (Leavy, 2009, p.63). Poetic inquiry offers an alternative way of presenting data.

5 Deleuze, Spinoza: Practical Philosophy pg. iii

6 Monica Prendergast, in Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences, p.xxxv.

As Leavy (2009) writes,

social scientific poems merge the tenets of qualitative research with the craft and rules of traditional poetry. The representation of the data in poetic form is not simply an alternative way of presenting the same information; rather, it can help the researcher evoke different meanings from the data, work through a different set of issues, and help the audience receive the data differently (Leavy, 2009, p.64).

As research paradigms shift, it becomes essential to develop innovative means of addressing multiple issues. Poetic inquiry allows for multiple layers of meaning implicit not only through the words, but also through poetic spaces, which is “inextricably bound to meaning production” (Leavy, 2009, p.74).

POETRY HONORS MY SOUL⁷

*A strange impulse
rages
within me;*

*Endless unfoldings,
new stories,
breathe
wake
walk
within the body garden.*

*Praise Love!
I'm filled with music--*

*Loving begins again,
words drift,
shapes dissolve--*

every tip of my hair

*makes music,
drums love.*

For the purposes of this thesis, I have used “found poetry” as a way of inquiry into the topics of becoming, immanence and love. “Found poems take existing texts and refashion them, reorder them, and present them as poems. The literary equivalent of a collage, found poetry is often made from newspaper articles, street signs, graffiti, speeches, letters, or even other poems.”⁸ Writing the found poems for this thesis was both challenging and rewarding; for while it was easy to fall back on existing poets for data-material, the challenge was to craft poems that also reflected my specific concerns for this project.

The writing of the found poems has been an intensely creative experience, whereby I have been able to incorporate multiple voices while simultaneously finding my own voice and

⁷ The number after each poem refers to the source of words or phrases for the specific poem. Mirabai p.58; Whitman p.38, 41, 22; Lalla p.31; Rumi p. 267,271,17,18,19,20,25,153.

⁸ From poets.org <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5780>.

space. While the crafting of poems was sometimes agonizing, I felt I did not have to consciously work on structuring the poems according to a set format; in fact, the poems emerged in accordance to their own rhythm, to their own tune. The poems that infiltrate this project is an assemblage of different voices – Rumi, Rilke, Whitman, Mirabai, Lalla, and Song of Songs – while synthesizing a Sufi-Spinozist perspective. Tim Molnar (2010), in describing his poetic process, writes, “the crafting of found poems seemed less a matter of technique and more a matter of acting on one's judgment; where there was no right or wrong way to proceed or present, just levels of sufficiency in sharing the intended meaning of a poem and prompting readers' engagement” (Molnar, 2010, p.167). The notion of “no right or wrong way” liberated me from trying to control the poems; instead, I let go and allowed the poems to emerge in sync to their own dance.

Corrine Glesne (2010) writes that, “writing poetry was as difficult as writing academic papers”, but once she got into the process, the writing allowed her to probe “unexplored parts” of herself, as well as engage her imagination, “and emerge in some unpredictable place” (Glesne, 2010, p.29). Sheila Steward (2010) states that poetic inquiry is about “listening in and through language” (p.85). I attempt a dialogue between the poems and prose so I can “know myself, ... speak and be heard by another” (Steward, 2010, p.90). Through the writing of the found poems I hope to draw the reader in so s/he may create his/her own experience by abiding in complexity, paradox and occasional imaginative leaps. I hope the poems will provide “WOW moments” of connectivity, and “that they create experiences that *transport, awaken, transform*...spaces for wondrous things to happen” (Guiney, 2010, p.86). In writing the commentary to the poems, it is not my intention to provide complete answers, but rather tentative and partial moments of entry into a topic that is constantly changing, evolving, becoming.

FALLING AWAY⁹

*I breathe in
the cosmos*

*taste the space
before life.*

*Unaccustomed to
that vast call
fluid love
indescribable...*

*A lover
kneeling
gently*

at her window.

“Metaphor”, writes Lakoff and Johnson, “is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness” (quoted in Mackenzie, 2009, p.241). “Experience itself”, writes Mackenzie, “is in a sense beyond comprehension: poetry offers the space to be present to what may or may not be known with /in the experience” (Mackenzie, 2009, p.241). In this thesis, I use poetic inquiry as a way of unravelling, understanding, and coming to grips with the topics of becoming, immanence and love, in relation to myself and youth work. The philosophical concepts that underpin this project are derived from both the Sufi tradition and from the 17th century philosopher, Baruch Spinoza's opus, *The Ethics*.

Sufism, like the esoteric aspects of all spiritual traditions, is difficult to pin down in concrete terms, especially when there are various definitions for this mystical path which has its origins in Islam. Kabir Helminski, a Shaykh of the Mevlevi Order of Sufism, defines Sufism as “a way of life in which a deeper identity is discovered and lived....This identity, or essential

9 Rilke p.335,325, 307,299,293,291,287,285,283; Song of Songs p.113.

self, has abilities of awareness, action, creativity and love that are far beyond the abilities of the superficial personality”.¹⁰

“Whatever is is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God” (Iprop15).

For Spinoza, everything is intricately connected to God, but Spinoza's God is not the traditional Judeo-Christian omnipotent, transcendent being. Instead, in Spinoza's philosophy, “God, the world and the human mind here enter new and unorthodox relations” (Lloyd, 1999, p.31). In her discussion of Spinoza, Clare Carlisle writes that for Spinoza, “God and the world are not two different entities ... but two *different aspects* of a single reality” (Carlisle, 2009, ¶4). Spinoza's God, or Substance, has various attributes, but he is still perfectly unified. As Lloyd (1996) indicates, Spinoza's God “is a union – not a mere aggregation – of attributes. There is a 'substantial union'; even though the attributes are many and varied, “they are necessarily united” (Lloyd, 1996, p.36).

In Sufism, according to a Prophetic tradition, God has ninety-nine names. The names “have no independent existence of their own. They only exist as differentiated aspects of Allah” (Meyer et al., 2011, p1). While gathering material for my thesis, there have been moments where I have been inexplicably drawn to exploring specific names, or “pathways”.¹¹ In many ways, this project is about my becoming, my unravelling into my potential. The pathways “evoke relationships that reveal God's presence. They describe ... the lover's relationship with the beloved. It is a relationship between two individuated aspects of a single whole, not a connection between two fundamentally or intrinsically separate things” (Meyer et al., 2011, p.8). In the Sufi tradition, as Douglas-Klotz muses,

the whole creation came into existence to express the unlimited, sacred qualities through all beings. In particular, God created the human being as a mirror capable

10 The Threshold Society <http://sufism.org/lineage/sufism>

11 Douglas-Klotz, p.xx

of holding and expressing the totality of the divine reflection, including the whole consciousness of nature and the universe. This is what, in the Sufi view, being fully human means. In this sense, as Bawa Muhaiyaddeen notes, we already have all the pathways of the heart within us. (p.xxii)

Similarly, Spinoza asserts, that “whatever is is in God”. What does it mean to say that everything exists in God and that nothing is separate from the divine presence? And how can that insight be applied to the field of youth work?

The exploration of this question – what it means to assert that everything exists in God and nothing is separate from this presence -- in relation to youth work is the prime focus of my thesis. Intimately connected to this concern, are the integral concepts of becoming and love. I don't assume to know all the answers, nor is it my intention to provide conclusive explanations. In fact, I write with the understanding that readers “will question, analyze and critique” what I have written here “in relationship to their own experiences” (Krueger, 2007, p. xii). Since youth work is essentially “a way of being, in which workers and youth create new moments”, (Krueger, 2007, p.55) I write so I may discover these epiphanies in myself and concurrently, discover them in others. This thesis is a small offering in that direction.

FALLING AWAY¹²

*I breathe in
the cosmos*

*taste the space
before life.*

*Unaccustomed to
that vast call
fluid love
indescribable...*

*A lover
kneeling
gently*

at her window.

There are five pathways or portals through which the youth worker moves in this thesis. The first, Al-Fattah, opens doors; the second, Al-Azim, sheds light on our innate capacity to come into our potential; the third, Al-Mujib, encourages attentive listening; the fourth, Al-Wali, fosters trust; and the fifth, Ar-Rauf, invites compassionate loving. In the sixth pathway, Ash-Shakur, we are reminded that the journey is not over; in fact, it has just begun. This last pathway, is a resting bench so that we may “allow what we have discovered to 'cook' inside us” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.270). So dear reader, let's take a moment now to “*breathe in / the cosmos / taste the space / before life ... / that vast call / fluid love/ indescribable*” as we prepare to enter youth work through love's many pathways.

12 Rilke p.335,325, 307,299,293,291,287,285,283; Song of Songs p.113.

PATHWAY I: AL-FATTAH OPENINGS

“When you are guided to this pathway, take the opportunity to experience the Sacred Unity opening you to your destiny”. (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.49)

It is said in the Sufi tradition that if a seeker takes a step on the path, God takes ten steps toward her:

If they remember me in their heart,

I remember them within my heart.

If they come toward me walking,

I come toward them running.¹³

However, to begin anything new, to take a step towards the unknown can be a daunting challenge. It is difficult to let go of fear and trust the unknown, for this is what happens whenever we find ourselves opening to a different perspective of ourself, of others, or simply undertaking a different and unique project.

After more than five years of teaching English to high school students, I decided to return back to school in order to become a youth worker. In the process of shifting career gears, I have had to leave my job, do away with most of my possessions and move to a place where I knew no one. It wasn't easy, but it has been a journey fraught with opportunities for growth and change. As I sit now in front of the computer trying to write my thesis, I'm engulfed once more with fear and doubt. Where do I begin? Do I dare to leap into the unknown, or will I allow fear to cripple me, and to rob me of my voice? It is a visceral fear in the face of the unknown, but if I'm to become a youth worker, I cannot stay crippled by fear. As Rumi says, “what is there to be afraid of?” Plenty, but not enough to stop me from moving forward. In relation to the pathway of Al-Fattah, “God opens doors”. Through invocation of

¹³ Prophetic tradition, quoted in Douglas-Klotz, p.49.

this name, a person's heart is unlocked and s/he is given the courage and strength to face the unknown with all its complexities (Meyer et al., 2011, p.286). For a while, as I grappled with this name, it hit me suddenly that I was searching for openings with a closed attitude. During the course of writing my thesis, I invoked this name many times in the hope that words may come so I could move forward in a linear manner. But growth does not happen in a linear way, nor in the way we want it to. I first had to let go of my notions of what a thesis should look like, and let it take its own course. I realized that the opening I was looking for is within me: I had to stop, breathe and let go.

“There are still spiritual revolutionaries among us who wish to explore the capacities of that force we call life in all its mad edges and open frontiers”.¹⁴

DON'T CONDEMN MY NAKEDNESS¹⁵

*dive naked
a thousand times
dive naked*

*Go naked
dance
to your death
strip away
what is known
become undisguised,
with nothing on;*

*dance to sweetness
that comes from
grief.*

*Dive naked
a thousand times.*

This poem is an invitation to dive into the *mad edges* and *open frontiers* of life. What does that mean? Dive into the self; forget inhibitions, fears, doubts, forget everything, and

¹⁴ Skott-Myhre (2007) “Spiritual Crisis and Youth Work: Interrogating Holism”.

¹⁵ Whitman p.61, 21. Lalla p. 63, 29, 17, 24. Rumi p. 17, 20.

plunge into the waters of life. It is not easy getting rid of rigid parameters of identity; it is easier to resort to fixed tendencies than change stagnant ones for new habits. In the poem, “Don't Condemn my Nakedness”, the invitation is to develop increasing self-awareness, which naturally entails a degree of risk-taking. In any new undertaking, I have been concerned about what people will think of me, and how I will come across to them. Garfat (2001) points that in the first phase of a youth worker's interaction with the youth the worker is primarily concerned with “doing for” (Garfat, 2001, ¶ 13), in an attempt to be perceived as likeable by the young client. But why? Why can't the worker trust her intuition and move forward? Easier said than done, because we are at a stage where others' approval of us is important in terms of moving forward.

Go naked

*dance
to your death
strip away
what is known
become undisguised,
with nothing on.*

There is an important Sufi precept: “die before you die”. Symbolically, this means a total letting go of all previously accumulated identities and standing before Oneself in a state of utter nakedness. “Dying before we die” means that we try to absolve ourselves of all illusions and notions of who we think we are and become who we really are. But who are we really? And how do we become, or come into a sense of our essential reality? By means of alchemical purification, by willingly immersing ourselves into the “fire”.

I ASCEND FROM THE NIGHT¹⁶

*Troubles,
afflictions,
pain,
burning--
will bring you
to the
Unknowable,
to God.*

*Move into death,
pass your nearer being
through the night,
through the surging chaos--
The Door will open.*

*Feel the unsayable absence,
the beauty of separation,
the midnight light*

*pulsing
no time or distance.*

*Move into pain,
into death,*

The Door will open.

16 Rilke p.339,323,319,299,297; Mirabai p.24,25,26,28,64; Whitman p.66,56; Lalla p.19; Rumi p.320,321,289,290,282,16,150,158.

IN THE FIRE WITH ABRAHAM¹⁷

*Somewhere
in the changing light*

I gaze into you.

*Somewhere
lions still roam
unmindful of fear.*

*You too
can find a pure
carved-out
strip of
fertile soil*

*terrifying in its beauty,
beautiful in its terror.*

*I offer God
that broken
open
place
unashamed
inner majesty--*

*no fear
only celebration
crazy
like Abraham
sitting
in the fire.*

Through the poems, “I Ascend from the Night” and “In the Fire with Abraham”, I am suggesting that in order for one to mature, to ripen one needs to experience moments of disease and uncertainty. This means confronting our fears of inadequacy and uncertainty and sitting through the pain long enough to experience the inherent blessings such a situation has to offer. In these poems, I also want to offer hope. It is alright. We are never alone.

17 Rilke p.303, 295,291,283; Mirabai p.60; Lalla p. 28,29; Rumi p.312,315,287,279,266,18,22,25.

Kruegger (2000) states that “coming from (our) center” (Krueger, 2000, ¶ 12) is an essential theme in the youth worker's relationship with the youth. By staying focused on our “center”, we too,

*can find a pure
carved-out
strip of
fertile soil*

*terrifying in its beauty,
beautiful in its terror.*

What is this “center”? How can one reclaim that space? For the Sufi mystic, Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), this “center”, is epitomized by embracing our highest potential which is achieved when one comes into an attunement with the presence of God within oneself. This divine presence is a “current that flows through the whole cosmos” (Gruber, 2006, ¶7), which is at once knowable and unknowable. In Ibn Arabi's philosophy, God both reveals and veils Him/Herself.¹⁸ When God created the human prototype, Adam¹⁹, all the divine qualities were imbued in his, and by extension, the human family's innermost interior, the heart, or the “qulb”. According to the Sufis, and Ibn Arabi in particular, the heart is the point of convergence where human and divine intersect, interconnect, and interpenetrate. Yet this is not the conical organ of flesh located on the left side of the chest; rather “the Heart of the theomorphic, fully realized human being is understood as the locus of every conceivable form and dimension of human experience, of all the infinite, ever-renewed divine Signs or theophanies that constitute the ever-renewed creation” (Morris, 2005, p.33).

18 Of course, God is beyond fe/male identity, but I like to envision the divine presence as an immensely loving Mother energy.

19 This concept ties in to a more conventional, traditional notions of God that is iconically related to the human being. It may seem that the Sufi view anthropomorphizes God, by giving Adam all the godly traits of God, but in actuality, God is incomparable to anything in existence.

BURN YOUR STUBBORNESS²⁰

*Burn your stubbornness,
loosen the layers of ego dirt,*

*hear the music:
gold being hammered,
gold
and
God.*

*Visible happiness
reveals itself
when we
glisten with genesis.*

*A touch
quivering me
to new identity:*

*body turns
spirit.*

It is the Heart that must be excavated from the social debris that veils it in various layers. Becoming is an internal journey into this pivotal centre of existence; becoming is about polishing the heart so that it reflects the presence of the One, who is filled with an ever pervasive longing to be known. According to a divine tradition, God was a hidden treasure which longed to be known, and so, “moved by the yearning of the Divine Names to be known and revealed” (Gruber, 2006, ¶7), humanity came into being. God created us in absolute perfection, in a state of pristine purity, or “fitrah”, which “lies at the very core of our being awaiting our remembrance” (Gruber, 2006, ¶9). As Angela Gruber expresses so eloquently,

We have in the teaching of the Hidden Treasure, the dance of love between the Hidden God and the Revealed God, with the Divine Names within the Hidden God yearning to be known, and the Revealed God, embodied in the creature, longing

20 Rilke p.323,321; Whitman p. 42; Rumi p.313, 20,144, 155, 253.

for return to its state of Unity....God and the individual are in constant relationship.

However, God experiences this as unity, while we experience this as duality....

God is waiting, longing for our ... awakening to Unity by turning towards our inherent divinity and making ourselves capable of God (Gruber, 2006, ¶10).

Becoming, for Ibn Arabi, then, is about “making ourselves capable of God” and the only way to do this is by knowing who we are beyond our earthly existence. It is by “*burn(ing) our stubbornness, / by loosen(ing) the layers of ego dirt*”, that one is able to “*hear the music: / gold being hammered, / gold/ and / God*”. It is by knowing ourselves in this way that we come to know God. Toshihiko Izutsu comments on this knowing by saying that the one who has “become conscious” of oneself “as a form of the Divine self-manifestation is in a position to go further into the very secret of the Divine life as it pulsates in every part of the Universe” (Izutsu, 39, as quoted by Gruber). It is by distilling the heart of its socially and culturally acquired impurities, that God can be revealed to oneself. This refinement of the heart involves the constant process of alchemical purification so that the “gold that is our original disposition” can be reclaimed. In Sufi terms, this is the experience of *fana* and *baqa*, annihilation of the limited ego self into a higher state of consciousness, or coagulation (Gruber, 2006, ¶12).

With regard to youth work, it is important for a youth worker to cultivate a sense of awareness by undergoing an evaluation that entails an honest assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses. As a youth worker, I need to be mindful of the conversation that takes place between the various voices of self “in order to prevent these influences from adversely affecting” (Young, 1999, ¶12) my interaction with the youth. I can claim to be “non-judgmental”, but as Markey (2002) prudently points out, this is not “a state we can really achieve” (Markey, 2002, ¶3). Nonetheless, one can be accepting. In other words, yes, I have

certain flaws that prevent me from being a “perfect youth worker”, if there is such a thing, but that should not prevent me from truly connecting with the child or youth. I must be able to free myself “from preconceived notions of what is, and is not”, and be willing to suspend disbelief “so that ... other possible connections (may) emerge” (Garfat, 2003, ¶15). Here, I'm reminded of the serenity prayer:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference.

And so, as a youth worker one should not enter into this field with the mindset of trying to bring young people to a “different way of being or thinking”, but instead, to “approach them as we would any other developing relationship ... with openness and acceptance”. We have to remember “that we want this person to let us into their world, not drag them into ours. After all it is getting a picture of how they see or experience the world around them that will allow us to truly connect. It is through this connection that we get a feel for where they are with the world and where they may go forward into it” (Markey, 2002, ¶2).

As a youth worker, I need to also ensure that there is a level of “objectivity in relationships” (Young, 1999, ¶13). That is, how can I maintain a “professional distance” in my work with children and young people where they don't become “over-dependent” on me? Enabling a child or youth to meet his / her own needs is essential, rather than doing for the child what s/he is capable of achieving by herself. Otherwise, there is a possibility of limiting “the child's ability to reach (her) fullest potential” (Young, 1999, ¶14).

Finally, as a youth worker, I must be clear of the implications of my role. A proficient youth worker takes on the role of a provider, protector, friend and teacher. It is important that I understand my role, as the clearer I am, “the more secure (I will) feel in responding to the children and the more accurate (my) judgment (will be) of the most therapeutic way ... meet

each child's needs" (Young, 1999, ¶19).

SOUL WITHIN SOUL²¹

*lovers' pure movement:
souls bringing flowers
in the cool daybreak.*

*Listen to spirits'
passionate murmur
greening*

*into
soul
within
soul
within
you.*

According to the 9th-century Sufi mystic, Hakim at Tirmidhi, the heart has four layers: the breast, the heart, the inner heart and the innermost heart, which “fit within each other like nested concentric spheres” (Frager, 1999, p.25). Within each layer there exists a light. The breast epitomizes eternal aspects of a religion; faith resides within the heart, while the inner heart houses the light of gnosis; and finally, the light of unity resides in the innermost heart (Frager, 1999, p.26). Each layer of the heart is also connected with various spiritual levels of soul progression or movements of the *nafs* (lower self).

Sufi psychology outlines seven stations a traveller must pass through.²² The first stage is the station of dark inclinations, the self that commands towards evil; the second stage is called the blaming self; the third stage is the station of the inspired self; the fourth is the station of completion and perfection; the fifth stage is connection or reunion where the soul

²¹ Rilke p.287; Whitman p. 40; Lalla p. 67, 29; Rumi p. 315, 287, 283, 260, 21.

²² From Music of the Soul: Sufi Teachings, by Shaykh Muhammad al Jamal, who has rendered Ibn Arabi's ideas in simple language.

becomes contented; the sixth stage is the station of epiphanies of Divine action where the soul is called the pleased self; and the final stage is complete arrival.

The practice of Sufism, like the practice of any spiritual path, “is a practice of unity, possibility and compassion” (Mackenzie, 2009, p.242); however, like the work of becoming youth worker, Sufism is a practice fraught with both struggle as one tries to move beyond the voices of the lower self, and joy as she gradually moves in proximity to her center. Just as the traveler's journey on the path is initiated by an “interactional relationship” (Garfat, 2001, ¶12) with God, and follows a process of progression, so too, the youth worker's relationship with the youth develops in four stages. Garfat outlines four phases of “interactional relationship” (Garfat, 2001, ¶12) between the youth worker and the young person.

In the first phase, the youth worker is “often insecure, frequently confused and overwhelmed” (Garfat, 2001, ¶13), but has a strong inclination “to do” for the youth, what s/he is capable of doing by herself. The worker's main concern is to ensure that the youth has “a sense of being cared for and appreciated” (Garfat, 2001, ¶13). The worker is essentially concerned that the youth “experience success rather than failure” (Garfat, 2001, ¶13). The worker then over identifies with the youth's experience without worrying too much about “boundaries between self and other” (Garfat, 2001, ¶13). In this way, even though the youth worker's “interactions are driven by basic personal definitions of caring ... sympathy, rather than empathy, characterizes the worker's interactions with the youth and saviour fantasies play a large part in the worker's motivation” (Garfat, 2001, ¶13). Similarly, “the breast”, the first layer of the heart, often sways back and forth between positive and negative inclinations (Frager, 1999, p.26). Sometimes, it is filled with light, and other times, it “becomes hardened” (Frager, 1999, p.27). The breast and the first phase of the youth worker's journey with the youth is linked by this sense of inconsistency and uncertainty. Both are unsure of what to

expect and how to be.

The next phase of the youth worker's interactional relationship with the youth involves "doing to". At this stage, the youth worker believes "that it is necessary for youth to have certain experiences" (Garfat, 2001, ¶14), but this understanding is based on the worker's interpretation of what she thinks the youth needs. "The worker needs for the youth to manifest change in order for the worker to feel confirmed" (Garfat, 2001, ¶14). The boundaries between the two are still opaque, and "the worker's position in relation to the young person evolves from either intense personalization, frustration or an unsatisfied need to be helpful" (Garfat, 2001, ¶14).

From a Sufi perspective, the heart, the second station, once it is opened, begins "to perceive beyond superficial externals to what is hidden within" (Frager, 1999, p.29). Frager reminds us that an "essential element in the knowledge of the heart is the *practice* of what we know. Heart knowledge is deepened by experience" (Frager, 1999, p.29). In order for one to move forward, "both the inward knowledge of the heart and the outward knowledge of the mind (or breast) are necessary" (Frager, 1999, p.30). In relation to the second phase of the youth worker's relationship with the youth, while the worker is able to intuitively grasp that the youth needs to have certain experiences, it must not be because s/he wants to feel validated, or affirmed.

In the third phase of the worker's interaction with the youth, s/he "becomes more concerned for interventions that involve 'doing with' youth" (Garfat, 2001, ¶15). Now, she adopts the role of a facilitator and seeks to actively engage the youth in their process of decision making, setting goals and routines. The youth worker's efforts are "directed towards helping the youth develop a fuller perspective of self" (Garfat, 2001, ¶15), while maintaining clear boundaries between self and other. In this phase, "process has started to become more

important than outcome” (Garfat, 2001, ¶15), and the youth worker is able to pay attention to what impedes or assists that process.

The third stage of the heart, the inner heart, “is the place of inner vision and the locus of ... inner wisdom, or knowledge of spiritual truth” (Frager, 1999, p.33). There is an intricate connection between the heart and the inner heart: while “the heart knows, ... the inner heart sees” (Frager, 1999, p.33). They enrich one another, “just as knowledge and vision complement each other. If knowledge and vision are combined, the unseen becomes seen, and we become certain in our faith” (Frager, 1999, p.33). Likewise, the second and third phase of the youth worker's interaction with the youth co relate and complement one another. The worker knows that the youth need to undergo certain experiences, and in the third phase, she not only knows this, but works towards implementing and cultivating “a fuller perspective of self” for the youth without feeling the need to be validated by them.

Finally, in the fourth phase, the worker is primarily concerned with “co-structuring the interactive therapeutic experience with the youth towards an outcome more in keeping with the youth's experience of self in the context within which interactions occur” (Garfat, 2001, ¶16). In other words, the youth worker is able to intervene according to “an individualized, youth-centred contextual analysis” (Garfat, 2001, ¶16). She is able to work in the interest of the youth without allowing failure to get in the way. This paves the way for “reflective learning and transformational experiences” (Garfat, 2001, ¶16) which become more significant than “behavioural outcomes” (Garfat, 2001, ¶16).

This phase is marked by “intense creativity and intellectual activity” (Garfat, 2001, ¶18) for both the worker and the youth. The interactional boundaries between the two “are managed flexibly ... and modified according to the perceived therapeutic value for the young person” (Garfat, 2001, ¶18). In essence, the “worker functions in rhythmic harmony with the

youth in their joint context. Self, other, context and intervention are intricately entwined for the benefit of the young person” (Garfat, 2001, ¶18).

The final layer of the heart, the innermost heart, “is infinite in its scope and radiance. It is like a great axis that remains stable as everything else revolves around it” (Frager, 1999, p.35). “The innermost heart”, as Frager notes, “is irrigated with the water of God's kindness, and its roots are filled with the lights of certainty. God cultivates the innermost heart directly, without any intermediary” (Frager, 1999, p.35). Just as the youth worker is concerned with selflessly developing and working with the youth, so too, in this stage of the heart, one enters “the realm of the infinite (which) is beyond words, theories, and thoughts” (Frager, 1999, p.42). The concerns and proclivities of the lower self are selflessly abandoned in place for over all soundness.

*There is an opening that is beyond thought.
In Rumi's poetry it is often associated with spring.
It is the soul's life, that natural opening where we stay
fresh and young. When we act out of
mean-spiritedness, the closing up of the ego,
we feel locked out of life....We must not
be led by the mind, but by a spontaneity
in the heart-centre, the soul, which is
always starting out, beginning again.
It cannot be said with words.
Music and song do better.*

(Barks, 2010, p.15)

I began this chapter by exploring the implication of Al-Fattah in relation to my own journey, as a student on the Sufi path and as an evolving youth worker. Perhaps, there are aspects to myself that I'm not entirely comfortable revealing to others. There are still moments of fear where I'm confronted by a sense of personal inadequacy and uncertainty. I have just begun my journey but now that I have started, there is no way I can go back to what

I was before. I only need to keep moving forward and only in this forward motion can I continue to engage in moments of becoming. Instead of fearing the various openings I want to “*exult in flowering*”, in the blossoming that happens when the “*heart (is) / flung into brightness*”. This full immersion in life with its moments of despair and joy is necessary. The openings that one experiences in this regard are perpetual and continuous (Meyer et al., 2011, p.286). There is no end to how far we can go, and to what extent we are willing to engage with others, for “even in the midst of despair” Al-Fattah opens us “up to love and ecstasy” (Meyer et al., 2011, p.286).

In the second pathway, Al-Azim, I will explore the implications of what happens when the “*heart / grows new leaves*”. In other words, is it possible to actually come into, to embody our own light regardless of the circumstances that shape us? In the next chapter, we will delve further into notions of becoming, but, first, here is an offering, “Exulting in Flowering”. Before we proceed to the next pathway, let's stop for a moment and enjoy the “*glowing / fullness*” of our hearts.

EXULTING IN FLOWERING²³

*Heart
unsheathed
flung into brightness.*

*Glowing
fullness.*

*That place--
shimmering green--
I carry in my heart.*

*Our collective heart
speaks the Beloved's Name
like lilies that blossom
under the full moon's light.*

*From within
a human space
that great heart
grows new leaves.*

23 Rilke p.321, 317, 313, 299, 297, 295; Mirabai p. 9, 30, 50, 63; Whitman p. 21; Lalla p. 51; Rumi p. 321, 310, 152.

PATHWAY II: AL-AZIM STRENGTH

“When you are guided to this pathway, take the opportunity to feel a flexible strength that can adapt to any situation and yet remain rooted in, and moving toward, the purpose of your life”. (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.87)

“This pathway”, writes Douglas-Klotz, “provides a reservoir of resolution and flexibility, which allows us to overcome despair at the way things have gone, or are going, in the outer drama of our lives” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.87). After walking through the first pathway, what does one do with the various “openings” of oneself? The openings can be insight or moments of epiphanies where one gets an inkling of understanding of different relational dimensions. As mentioned in the last chapter, perhaps there are openings that I’m not ready to confront yet; perhaps, there are regrets I’m not willing to let go; perhaps I feel emotionally exhausted coming face to face with the voices of my self and thus feel unable to move forward. This pathway nudges us to move forward and to keep going.

Maybe life is calling me “to find a place ... that reflects this divine audacity and strength in the face of all odds” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.87). But is it really possible? Sometimes it is hard to believe that I have the capacity and potential to move forward against all odds. And then there is the fear of encountering the light within me. What am I to do with that? How can I use my light to help young people come into their *light*? Marianne Williamson, renowned author of *A Return to Love*, insightfully writes:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually,

who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others. (Williamson, 190-191)

The first pathway, Al-Fattah opens us to to various aspects of the self. We may not completely like what we see there, but we are not seeing the complete truth; we are not completely open to our own light. We may bravely leap into the unknown but forget entirely that the energy that keeps us moving forward is actually the embodiment of this second pathway, Al-Azim, within us.

INFINITE OVERFLOWING²⁴

*Abundant Existence
swirls
in my heart*

*Living
blissfully
in my eyes;*

*secretly
reaching out
into the invisible
flowing
over
infinitely.*

The poems in this pathway revolve around the notion of outwardly reflecting our

²⁴ Rilke p. 337, 335, 331, 329, 323, 305.

internal light. There is a sense of affirmation, of abiding in the notion that who we are is essentially beautiful and whole, with all our imperfections. Here, the parallel between this sense of affirmation and Spinoza's concept of *conatus* – “the 'striving' through which a thing endeavours to stay in being” -- is worth noting. As Lloyd indicates in her illuminating discussion on Spinoza, *conatus* “is not confined to animate things. Here physics and biology come together.... Spinoza's concept of *conatus* ... is grounded in the physics of motion” (Lloyd, 1999, p.8-9). The notion of affirmation under discussion here is intricately linked to motion and to striving for that which preserves our sense of self. “Self-preservation”, Lloyd continues, “becomes for Spinoza the foundation and end of virtue” (Lloyd, 1999, p.9). It is important to notice that Spinoza's notion of “striving” does not correspond to the Stoic notion of denying the passions, but rather, “transforming them into active, rational emotions. It is not by shunning the passions, but by accepting their necessity and attempting to understand their operations, that we become virtuous and free” (Lloyd, 1999, p.10).

MOVE INTO SPIRIT²⁵

*Begin with love
and grace;
become a green tree
with new fruit.*

*Begin at dawn;
travel that road
yourself
to meet the Friend.*

*Long searching
will bring you
to Love.*

25 Rumi p.26,150,264; Lalla p.24; Whitman p.63; Mirabai p.66

What are the implications of this kind of striving toward “the highest good” for a youth worker? At the end of *Ethics*' Book V Spinoza discusses the notion of *blessedness*, which is the understanding of ourselves as eternal, knowing that we are in God and are conceived through God. The more we understand ourselves in this manner, the more we are conscious of our selves and of God, the more “perfect and blessed” (VP31S) we become. But this 'becoming' is illusory, as the “mind does not really pass from a state of unknown eternal being to a state of recognition of its own eternity” (Lloyd, 1999, p.124). There is no transcending imagination in order to soar off into a realm of invincible dimensions, nor is it a transcending of body. It is simply understanding the individuality of finite modes, or as Deleuze aptly puts it, coming into possession of “our power of acting” (Deleuze, 1970, p.70-1).

Within the context of immanent framework, this coming into “our power of acting”-- “*becom (ing) a green tree / with new fruit*”, is synonymous with moving beyond dominant hegemonic thought that insists on seeing us as separate and unequal. “*Long searching / will bring you / to Love*”. This search is about coming into our creative potential, into the raw capacity to affect and be affected. It involves an uprooting, or annihilation of what we thought ourselves to be. It is perpetually transmuting into various “rhizomatic”²⁶ points that shoot off into nomadic movements beyond engraved fixations or neurosis. The concept of the rhizome is fascinating as it allows for “multiple entry points and ... change” (Krueger, 2008, ¶3). There is motion and flux and we are not bound to fixed time, situation or place. In this context, blessedness suggests coming into our innate creative capacities, to think and act beyond segmented lines of identity. Blessedness, as Skott-Myhre and Tarulli (2008) write, is “a movement of transformation in which ... molar identities²⁷ ... are abandoned in the interest of

26 A phenomenon found in the work of French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari as “an underground root system, a dynamic open, decentralized system that branches out to all sides unpredictably and horizontally” (Krueger, in *Poems and Rhizomes*, 2008, ¶2).

27 “Molar” implies fixed, static, unmoving identities, where nothing changes,

the infinite variation associated with the creative capacity to act” (Skott-Myhre/Tarulli, 2008, p.78). In this sense, blessedness or “rhizomatic thinking supports the notion that relational child and youth care practice is a way of being in the world with youth that is best defined in prepositions and verbs ... rather than absolutes ... that ultimately become stereotypes for relationships and development” (Krueger, 2008, ¶5).

I EXIST AS I AM²⁸

*I am dark
beautiful
divine.*

*In this flowering
godhead
I feel the pulsing
clarity
of eternity*

*releasing
links of light*

*moistening
the roots
of all that
grows in life.*

28 Rilke p. 321, 317, 291, 287; Song of Songs p. 47; Whitman p. 35, 37, 39, 40.

ETERNITY IN MY EYES²⁹

*Come
live
inside
eternity;*

*come
live
inside
my eyes.*

Spinoza's ethics of joy suggests that in order for others to affirm their being, it is essential that one first preserves and affirms one's own existence, which then can strengthen the desire for others to affirm their becoming. "*I am dark / beautiful / divine*". In Spinoza's plane of immanence, there is no ultimate goal; rather what is involved is the laying out of a common plane of immanence, "eternity", on which all bodies, all minds, and all individuals are situated (Deleuze, 1988, p.122). Echoing Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we do not begin as fixed subjects living in a fixed world. Rather, "all life is a series of foldings. Every cell, every organism (and the human body) are folds of the milieu of life. Our bodies are the becoming-actual of aspects of our virtual possibility" (Hickey-Moody, 2009, p.69). Becoming, therefore, involves perpetual movement through which bodies continuously evolve in relation to greater or lesser bodies.

²⁹ Mirabai p.3,14; Rumi p.268.

THE SONG OF ME RISING³⁰

*The song of me rising
pierces numbness,
stuns space;*

*Pure Passion
singing
leaping
dancing--*

*infatuation
with your*

*precious
body:*

surrendered union.

*The Energy
breathes
songs--*

*me rising
the universe.*

Spinoza's philosophy is a conscious attempt "to overcome the limitations of Cartesian dualism and to radically re-think conceptions of power, including juridical power" (Gatens, 2000, p.60). He operates on what Deleuze termed "the plane of immanence" where "Spinoza rejects all notions of transcendent being, including god as a transient cause" (Gatens, 2000, p.60). Moreover, for Spinoza, as Gatens suggests,

there is one immanent substance, and human being is a mode of the attributes of nature – thought and extension. Knowledge, or the power of thought, is our most powerful affect, and everything that exists strives to persevere in its being: one's power of being does not affect but is *expressed* through one's power of thinking and vice versa. Thus, a Spinozistic philosophy offers a novel way to

30 Rilke p.297, 291, 289, 283; Song of Songs p.61; Mirabai p.50, 60; Whitman p.21, 31, 34; Lalla p.64,43,54.

of nature and the body, a way that thinks beyond a mind/body or nature/culture dualism. Human being is conceived as part of a dynamic and interconnected whole, distinguishable from other bodies only by means of the speed and slowness, motion and rest, of the parts which compose it. The human body is understood by Spinoza to be a complex individual, made up of a number of other bodies. Its identity can never be viewed as final or finished entity, as in the case of the Cartesian automaton, since it is a body that is in constant interchange with its environment. Spinoza understands the body as a nexus of variable interconnections, a multiplicity (Gatens, 2000, p.60-1).

As mentioned above in relation to “rhizomatic” (Krueger, 2008, ¶4) encounters between youth and youth worker, the notion of “body” is multidimensional. It is not static, nor bound by rigid guidelines. Instead, it is characterized by collisions, and by “constant interchange with its environment” (Gatens, 2000, p.60-1). In other words, the body is relational, “a nexus of variable interconnections”. Specifically in relation to youth work, if a body is composed of other bodies, then this means that there really is no difference between youth worker and the youth; both are involved in perpetual change and interconnections, a multiplicity that is not restricted to time, place and situation.

WITH YOUR LIGHT³¹

*you are
lover child
lost in the quiet,
in the unknown
experience of God.*

*Your face
new again
continuous amazement.*

*You get
younger
and
younger*

*wise gentleness
inside,
your whole childhood
crowds into
God's destiny.*

*If you kiss
my lips
like this,*

*you'll know
Jesus raised the dead*

with your light.

Within the context of my topic, the notion of “blessedness” is intricately linked to creativity as “corporeal becomings” (Hickey-Moody, 2009, p.xi). More precisely, in relation to youth work, *becoming* is not defined in terms of lack, but rather in terms of what bodies can do, a “reterritorialisation”³² which builds on new connections, where each moment morphs into

31 Rilke p.335, 327, 323, 319, 307; Whitman p. 24; Lalla p. 50; Rumi p. 321, 322, 324, 314, 263, 155.

32 This term refers to a process of change which suggests the restructuring of a place or territory that has undergone deterritorialisation – the weakening of connections between culture and place. Both of these terms have been employed by Deleuze and Guattari in their philosophical writings.

new moments, into intersecting lines of flight where we, child and adult, youth and youth worker, come into our power of acting, in order to move beyond molar, rigid definitions of being. In other words, becoming is simply a shift in positioning that takes place, a movement that resists traditional patterns of power and powerlessness. At the root of all human discourse is the profound longing to be recognized, to be seen not in terms of good or bad, child or adult, male or female, but as one truly is – a human being in process of becoming. Becoming, or the state of blessedness is opening up-to an “involutionary” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.238) space that lies within. It parallels what Skott-Myhre (2005) suggests as “a minoritarian psychology of immanence as a way in –not a way out” (Skott-Myhre, 2005, p.49). This is a wide “landscape” without borders; it is “sheer affirmation” (Skott-Myhre, 2005, p.55).

*you are
lover child
lost in the quiet,
in the unknown
experience of God.*

...

*You get
younger
and
younger

wise gentleness
inside,
your whole childhood
crowds into
God's destiny.*

Becoming suggests understanding the various ways both children and adults are formed and unformed. As Skott-Myhre and Tarulli (2008) indicate, the child is no longer bound as a fixed biological entity constrained by chronological time

and measured according to the norms of group development. Rather, child becomes a set of capacities for action that form and unform bodies along trajectories that make and unmake an infinitude of idiosyncratic subjects across the social field. (Skott-Myhre & Tarulli, 2008, p.75)

The “child” is a creative expression of uncharted possibilities both within the child and the adult. It is not limited to a certain identity or age. In this manner, becoming reestablishes and reconstructs lines that defy clearly identifiable boundaries.

In this vein, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggest three lines that are of particular relevance: a) molar lines, which “create territories and boundaries through the binary production of either / or. This is the line that creates the binaries of man / woman, public / private, adult / child, and so forth. This kind of binary logic is foundational for producing modern identities such as the self, which is always in a binary relation to the other”³³ (Skott-Myhre & Tarulli, 2008, p.75); b) molecular lines, which introduce instability by creating pathways through which it becomes possible to go beyond the either / or to an inclusive both /and dynamic; and c) lines of flight, which are “forces of deterritorialization, mutation, and release”, where it becomes imaginable to resist in political and creative change (Skott-Myhre & Tarulli, 2008, p.75). For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) then, lines of flight suggest “the ongoing, creative, inescapably local and situated struggle to become other than what one might otherwise, and statically be” (Skott-Mhyre & Tarulli, 2008, p.76).

Far from being a distinctive category of separation, and far from being relegated to fixed identities, becoming for Deleuze and Guattari, is re-conceptualized for both children and adults not in terms of becoming something, or moving from one point to another, but rather “in

33 It is essential to remember that the notion of self that is discussed in this thesis, is not limited to molar identities. Essentially, it is concerned with “immanent becoming”; it does this through “forming relations and connections that go beyond the either / or logic of the binary into the both /and logic of multiple possibilities. As such it maps the potential for movement, destabilization, and transformation. In another term, it opens the frontiers that extend the boundaries of the molar line” (Skott-Myhre & Tarulli, 2008, p.75).

the force of change and movement itself, in the raw capacity to affect and be affected” (Skott-Myhre & Tarulli, 2008 p.77). Becoming or becoming child, in short, means to come into our innate creative capacities, to think and act beyond segmented lines of identity. It is “for both adult and child a movement of transformation in which the molar identities of 'adult' and 'child' are abandoned in the interest of the infinite variation associated with the creative capacity to act” (Skott-Myhre & Tarulli, 2008, p.78).

Deleuze and Guattari “rewrite binary thinking” (Goodley, 2007, p.146), and “stand in general opposition to any social practice that threatens to territorialize the mind, self and body with the conditions of oppression” (Goodley, 2007, p.147). This is a very significant move towards dynamic thinking, one that is in constant flux, ever-ready to embrace the now without being stuck in a specific mode of thinking or behaviour.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987), as stated above, emphasize *becoming* not in terms of getting from one point to another, but rather and most importantly, as “the raw capacity to affect and be affected” (Skott-Myhre & Tarulli, 2008 p.77). This notion of becoming has far reaching implications for a youth worker. What does it mean to “affect” and to be “affected”?

MOVE INTO SPIRIT

*Begin with love
and grace;
become a green tree
with new fruit.*

*Begin at dawn;
travel that road
yourself
to meet the Friend.*

*Long searching
will bring you
to Love.*

Skott-Myhre (2006) in his article “Beyond good and evil: Towards an a-moral youth work practice” succinctly outlines the theorist, Niklas Luhmann's thinking concerning morality. For Luhmann, “ethics do not provide a suitable description of the function of morality in our present society” (quoted in Skott-Myhre, 2006, ¶2). In other words, following Spinoza's footsteps, Luhmann views “ethics as a field of practical action” (Skott-Myhre, 2006, ¶2). This sphere of practicality does not imply an ethics of good versus bad, but rather, suggests not knowing in advance the consequences of our behaviour. “The most ethical behaviour”, he suggests, “is to only act in direct accordance with what is required in every circumstance” (Skott-Myhre, 2006, ¶4).

“*Long searching / will bring you / to Love*”. Skott-Myhre rightly points out that it isn't that “young people have no morals” (Skott-Myhre, 2006, ¶21); indeed, “they have many moral codes of conduct that regulate relationships between themselves and the adults in their lives. Many of these codes are at odds with more traditional codes of morality” (Skott-Myhre, 2006, ¶21). As a youth worker, this means that I facilitate space for young people to undertake their own search without imposing my set of moral precepts on them, for to do so, Skott-Myhre

warns, “is a fascist and totalitarian exercise of power” (Skott-Myhre, 2006, ¶21). In this way, young people are able to “*travel ... the road*” themselves “*to meet the Friend*”, whatever that may mean for them. Such a praxis “calls for a basis of practice that goes beyond good and evil to a new praxis premised in the realm of action and non-action” (Skott-Myhre, 2006, ¶23).

Another aspect of *becoming*, as mentioned above, is opening up-to an “involutionary” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.238) space that lies within. This space, as Skott-Myhre proposes is a wide “landscape” without borders; it is “sheer affirmation” (Skott-Myhre, 2005, p.55). I would say that this sense of sheer affirmation has to do with affirming one's sense of self, or cultivating positive self-esteem. The pathway of Al-Azim or flexible strength is reflected in the way both youth workers and youth uniquely approach life's challenges. Despite all odds, there is a sense of hope: “*In this flowering / godhead / I feel the pulsing / clarity / of eternity / releasing links of light*”. Once again, there is an implicit suggestion of the capacity to affect and be affected.

In his article, “Violent parenting, violent children”, Father Pantin (2002) poses that one of the ways we inflict damage to children and young people is by depriving them of the sensory qualities of touching, feeling, smelling and tasting. Very bluntly, he tells us that when children,

pull down tablecloths
eat grass and dirt
play with their genitals

“we correct them, slap them, tell them 'don't touch' and in so doing ... we very often end up confusing them, making them unsure of themselves and suspicious and afraid of the world” (Pantin, 2002, ¶10). This “cultural arrogance” (Pantin, 2002, ¶24), Father Pantin posits, can

only be remedied through “attentive listening” and “respectful intervening” (Pantin, 2002, ¶25-26). In attentive listening, before a youth worker seeks to help a youth, s/he must, Father Pantin points out, must “listen to them for days, for months, for years; always convinced that what they have to say about themselves is just as important as the brilliant insights and innovative solutions buzzing in our busy little brains” (Pantin, 2002, ¶25). It is only when we have rid ourselves of “cultural arrogance” that we can use the second vaccine, “respectful intervening”. If I’m called to interpose in others’ lives, then I have to do so with integrity, with respect, keeping in mind that I’m not an expert and know-all, nor are the youth ignorant and know-nothings.

Helping youth to come into their power entails attentive listening, a theme that will be explored in the next chapter. For now, it is important to remember that helping young people to come into their power means we allow them the full expression of their unique voice. It is about holding “uncensored, truly open meetings with young people in which they can say anything they like without repercussion or sanction” (Skott-Myhre, 2007, ¶18). It is encouraging young people to engage in “spontaneous interactions with the community that surrounds them” (Skott-Myhre, 2007, ¶18).

Truth is, it is not only the youth who must come into their power. “If we are to transform reality”, we need to “simultaneously (transform) ourselves” (Basaglia, quoted in Skott-Myhre, 2007, ¶25). We need to have the courage to face ourselves. Al-Azim, flexible strength, is that courage, that space that enables us to move beyond a fear based perspective. Al-Azim is the strength that allows us “to face squarely the contradictions of our roles and the way in which our cynicism is built out of our own sense of limits” (Skott-Myhre, 2007, ¶24). It is through bluntly confronting our contradictions, that we are able to shape our own becoming and the becoming of those in our care. We become attentive to an inner strength and passion that

knows no bounds -- "*singing / leaping / dancing*", we sing our "*song .../ rising the universe*".

THE SONG OF ME RISING

*The song of me rising
pierces numbness,
stuns space;*

*Pure Passion
singing
leaping
dancing--*

*infatuation
with your
precious
body:*

surrendered union.

*The Energy
breathes
songs--
me rising
the universe.*

Father Pantin suggests "that every programme must be built on a foundation of years of listening and that this listening must continue even when, or ... especially when, you seem to have come up with a 'successful project'" (Pantin, 2002, ¶32). The first pathway included openings, an awareness of our potential, while the second pathway brought our attention to our innate strength or power. In the third pathway, Al-Mujib, we will delve further into the creative language of silence so that we may practice attentive listening.

PATHWAY III: AL-MUJIB LISTENING

“When you are guided to this pathway, take the opportunity to practice listening with presence. Feel as though you are a full moon reflecting the light of the sun”.
(Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.119)

“Sufis have experimented for at least a thousand years with what they call sema, deep listening. All day and night there are changing musical modes. Give your life to this listening. It is the knack of how spirit breathes into us. We are learning a new sense, earsight. Every moment has a music Absence is the ocean we swim. The grave is a wormhole into this. And it may be, in the next stage of existence, that we move into beyond death, that language plays no part at all.
(Barks, 2010, p.286)

What does it mean “to practice listening with presence”? To be a “full moon reflecting” the sun's light? Krueger (2007) alludes to the essential importance of empathy and listening. “Empathy,” he writes, “isn't about putting yourself in someone else's shoes because you never can. It's about being curious and wanting to understand the other person's story. If we value our own unique experiences, then this should open us to being curious about and valuing the experience of the other” (Krueger, 2007, p.42). Interrelated with this curiosity “is listening, or the ability to hear what youth say. More than anything else, perhaps, youth want to be heard. Not just listened to, but heard and understood”. Both empathy and listening “are central ... to creating moments of connection, discovery, and empowerment and making meaning with youth” (Krueger, 2007, p.42).

In the Sufi tradition, the pathway of Al-Mujib, “sacred listening” is developed “from

strengthening the heart and making it a conscious container for what enters it. The training of the heart also allows one to empty the container, so to speak, so that it can receive more and not hold on to what has been received” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.119). This leads one into what the twentieth-century Sufi, Inayat Khan, referred as the “silent life”, or “the original creative silence that began the universe. Touching this type of silence can give one hope, because in touching the mystery of original creation, all things are possible” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.119).

After being opened by Al-Fattah, and having glimpsed a sense of my becoming, through Al-Azim, how can I practice listening so essential to youth work? Perhaps, if I were to listen attentively, I may discover that there is no outer or interior; that what I am hearing externally is actually a reflection of own interior sounds. Perhaps, if I listen long enough, I may just be able to tap into my “original creative silence”, and by doing so, open to “the mystery of original creation”. Through the third pathway, Al-Mujib, I invite you to enter into the field of immanence, into “a *common plane of immanence* on which all bodies, all minds, and all individuals are situated” (Deleuze, 1988, p.122).

The whole in its multiplicity, and apart from the personal.
 The glorious mundane. A murmur of conversation
 floating on silence. We are dressed in friendship. This is
 the infinite present where everything happens,
 where we know the value of every moment.
 We keep time as we dance here in this music,
 not in spirit, where there is no time.
 We live inside each other. Things change overnight.
 Any ending is possible, as
 polisher melts into mirror.

(Barks, 2010, p.325)

Spinoza insists that there is only one substance, and nothing can be outside or separate from this reality; we are inextricably linked to one another (*Ethics*, BkIP15, P18, P33). Like Spinoza, Ibn Arabi also declares that there is “only one unique Being which

reveals itself in a multiplicity and infinity of its own forms” (Coates, 2002, p.3). There is no ontological duality between the creator and the created. In fact, outward nature is the realm where the One Being manifests itself in various colours; yet there is no separation between inner and outer. The fragmentation is only perceived. We as finite individuals may feel that “the cosmos is inhabited by separate individual consciousness” but that is because “reality appears as a plurality of particulars” due to our own limited cognition and consciousness (Coates, 2002, p.8). It is because our finite minds cannot grasp the whole as whole that we see it as multiplicity. But what we are actually encountering “is not many separate things or individuals but the infinite manifestations of the One and Only Being” (Coates, 2002, p.9). In other words, immanence is not defined by concrete space, by an outside or inside. As Skott-Myhre (2005), poetically states,

It is a space of surface and plane composed of lines, edges, latitudes and longitudes, speeds and intensities. It is a landscape that coils and uncoils, tangles and straightens and produces a multiplicitous and infinitely mobile heterogeneity of form that plays across the surface in fractal patterns.... On the plane of immanence, the production of self becomes ... a series of collisions and interpenetrations, coming apart and falling back together. It consists of the constant movements of particles as they speed between and slow into form, accelerate again into line and decelerate into bodies. (p.51)

“On the plane of immanence, the production of self becomes ... a series of collisions and interpenetrations, coming apart and falling back together.” In other words, the experience of the “One” implies a “rhythmicity”, (Mair, 2004, ¶1) an oscillating dance back and forth in the plane of immanence defined by “a series of collisions and interpenetrations”.

THIS DANCE³⁴

*tells one story,
inward music
we rarely hear.*

*The Friend
loosens
my deafness
to spirit song*

*scattering
gold leaves
dancing sunlight--*

*every moment
joy particles
dance
to a new song.*

*I honour this
moment's grace,*

*bless
sing
this music*

*that
spreads like
existence
rhythmic
dance.*

There is an intricate connection between imagination and reason in Spinoza's philosophy. The body, an extension of the human mind, is capable of receiving many stimulants and impressions simultaneously. According to Spinoza, "bodies communicate motion to each other; and their synchronization – the union of bodies – is what makes an individual" (Lloyd, 1999, p.55). The human body is thus a combination of various bodies;

34 Lalla p.19, 23; Rumi p. 296, 287, 288, 289, 291, 292, 262, 265,19,22, 159.

each individual body intersects with other bodies, and each in turn is influenced by others. “Sensation” is an important concept in relation to the movement of bodies, and is explained by Spinoza “as changes of the surface of the body by the impingement of other bodies (Lloyd, 1999, p.55). As he indicates in the appendix to *Ethics*, Part I, how we perceive other bodies reflects how we view our own. What now arises is the limited aspects of our perception. Our bodies carry the memory of the impressions brought about through the collision of other bodies. The mind therefore, regards past bodies as present, even though they are no longer there. These impressions are, according to Spinoza, “images”, and the mind's viewing of bodies in this manner as “imaginings”. For Spinoza, “the connection of images through the affections of individual human bodies” (Lloyd, 1999, p.56) is considered an insignificant aspect of knowing.

Since the mind is an extension of the body, it lacks awareness of itself. The first kind of knowledge (imagination) is associated with the duration of bodies, which depends on “the common order of Nature and the constitution of things” (IIP30D). Imagination however, is an inefficient means of providing us the knowledge we need to know regarding our bodies as well as other bodies. The second type of knowledge, reason, a truer form of knowledge than imagination, allows for a less distorted perception of ourselves. When the mind knows according to reason, it is “determined internally, from the fact that it regards a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions” (IIP29S). Both ways of knowing are embedded “in the fluidity which allows it to be affected by other bodies and to retain the traces of their impingement” (Lloyd, 1999, p.57). This bodily ability to remember impressions is the point of entry for common notions of reason, but it is also the source of distorted perceptions of the imagination. Both ways of knowing have their roots in the complexity of bodily structure. Yet, there is no duality between knowledge grasped

through imagination and that conceived through reason. Spinoza is not urging us to bypass the falsity of the imagination in order to see correctly through reason. “*Every moment / joy particles / dance / to a new song*”. Imagination can serve as a useful friend to reason when it engages in constructive “feigning” or fictions. Fictions are necessary as they “offer a surrogate knowledge, inherently improvable through the critical reflections of reason” (Lloyd, 1999, p.62). Fictions are important, because though different from the clarity of reason, they allow for the possibility of incorrect ideas to be reworked into more authentic representations.

*I honour this
moment's grace,*

*bless
sing
this music*

*that
spreads like
existence
rhythmic
dance.*

In *The Savage Anomaly* (1991), Antonio Negri reinterprets the importance of imagination as a means of providing entry into the realities of the social world. Rather than exerting the importance of reason to the exclusion of the imagination, in Negri's interpretation both reason and imagination take on a wholistic totality. Reason draws upon the “savage power” of the imagination, which now plays an integral role in conveying relevant objects of rational reflection. In this way, imagination takes on a certain creativity in the construction of reality. So, while Spinoza acknowledges the finite nature of imagination, he also “has a healthy respect for the 'savage power' it lends to reason” (Lloyd, 1999, p.63).

Listen / to your heart / the way saints / listen / to wind /breathing³⁵.

There is yet another source of adequate knowledge which is different from reason, a knowing Spinoza calls “intuitive”. This knowing flows “from an adequate idea of the essence of attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things” (Lloyd, 1999, p.67). It is a knowing that is both adequate and able to grasp “the essences of singular things in relation to God's essence” (Lloyd, 1999, p.70). In this knowing, lies the “greatest freedom”, the knowledge of God (Lloyd, 1999, p.69).

IN THAT VOID, SILENCE³⁶

Listen to the angel's song

rapturous

*kindled in heightening silence
by your own
passionate heart cry.*

*Listen
to your heart
the way saints
listen
to wind
breathing.*

*Silence,
my worship, my love song
warmed
wakened*

by my own fire.

*I'll listen to your
unbroken voice
vibrating
in my heart's
solace.*

³⁵ Poem, “In that Void, Silence”

³⁶ Rilke p.333, 321, 299, 289, 285, 283; Mirabai p. 24, 40; Whitman p. 41; Lalla p. 45, 31.

From a Sufi paradigm “Knowledge begins with God (the Absolute) and it is everlasting and infinite” (Adonis, 2005, p.30), but this knowledge cannot be attained while one is still aware of one's own ego-self. In fact, the ego is a hindrance as it creates barriers that prevent the knower from truly knowing the known. *Fana* (annihilation) is the state in which the conscious self disappears. In this sense, fana becomes “the finest and richest state of permanence in existence” (Adonis, 2005, p.30). In this stage, all mundane concerns fall away and one returns, as it were, to a state of utter limitlessness. Fana is an internal experience, as well as “an experience of being It reveals through the experience of discovery and disclosure” (Adonis, 2005, p.31).

There are three stages of fana: uncovering, revelation and perception of God (Adonis, 2005, p.31-2). *Uncovering* means that God is veiled by things and remains hidden until these veils disappear. For this to happen, human beings must exert rigorous physical and mental effort in order to obliterate everything that creates barriers between herself and God. Revelation, the next level, comes either through reflection or as a result of God's grace. Finally, perception of God entails that all veils that conceal the divine presence within should dissolve and that the spirit be illuminated with revelation and nothing should separate from that vision. This is direct knowing of the divine.

THE MIND'S IMAGINING³⁷

*as mind dissolves
song begins.*

*No worse torture
than
staying in the mind.*

TWO BREATHINGS³⁸

*all is breath
pure
unguarded
channels
of meaning.*

In the Sufi perspective, God is revealed through two ways: the apparent and the hidden. The apparent is clear, logical, while the hidden is intuitive, heartfelt. Yet, there is no disparate disunity between the two, just as there is no separation between the sea and the wave. According to the Sufis, real illumination comes from the heart, as the heart is the point of convergence where human and divine intersect, interconnect and interpenetrate. The knowing, “*unguarded / channels / of meaning*”, that resides in the heart can only be accessed by emptying the heart of rational, and discursive thought -- “as mind dissolves / song begins”. From a Sufi lens, intuition is “a source of illumination” (Adonis, 2005, p.50) that seeks to liberate the heart, the faculty where true knowing resides. Intuition cannot be conveyed through reason; it comes directly from God and it results in a feeling of intimacy between the individual and God (Zwanzig, 2008, p.20).

37 Rilke p.339; Lalla p. 73, 29, 31; Rumi p. 323, 282, 283, 267.

38 Rilke p.329, 327; Lalla p.69,49, 27.

Listen

*to your heart
the way saints
listen
to wind
breathing.*

...

*I'll do nothing
but listen to your
unbroken voice
vibrating
in my heart's void,
solace.*

The imagination offers another entry point into knowing. It connects the known and unknown worlds, which Ibn Arabi calls *barzakh* or the intermediate world. According to Ibn Arabi, the world consists of two worlds, the world of the absent, which is the world of reason, and the world of presences, the world of the senses. A third world, *Al-jabrut*, connects the two and is the world of imagination (Adonis, 2005, p.63).

In this third world, meanings take on images. Ibn Arabi calls this world “the confluence of the two seas”, as it brings together the sea of the abstract and the sea of the senses. Imagination comes from within and does not result from external influences. For Ibn Arabi, “imagination is the largest of beings and the most perfect of created things, although it is in constant motion, existing-non-existing, known-unknown, negative-positive at the same time” (Adonis, 2005, p.63). Imagination, is the most encompassing state because God reveals itself in images. Imagination makes believable what reason deems unbelievable. For Ibn Arabi, imagination “is one of the mysteries of the divine name – it was created to make manifest the union between the two opposites. For such a union is impossible through feeling or rationality, but it is not impossible with imagination” (Adonis, 2005, p.65). Imagination

understands divine revelations, whereas reason errors and judges.

THIS ELOQUENT INTELLIGENCE³⁹

*I say no words.
You move inside
like a flower.*

*I dissolve in You,
in Your silent
eloquence.*

*You say nothing
yet my soul
grows quiet.*

*My spirit
mixes fully
with Your's;*

*In this listening
branches
grow new leaves.*

*Your burning
silence
heals.*

*I have no words
to articulate
the grace,*

*the eloquent intelligence
of being lost in
You.*

In youth work, “rhythmic interactions” (Mair, 2004, ¶12) between youth worker and youth function like “a series of collisions and interpenetrations, coming apart and falling back together. It consists of the constant movements of particles as they speed between and slow

39 Rumi p. 324, 296, 311, 312, 313, 289, 290, 291, 293, 278, 267, 270, 23, 21.

into form” (Skott-Myhre, 2005, p.51). In the plane of immanence, this series of oscillating movements between worker and youth create “bonding and a sense of unity” (Mair, 2004, ¶1). In his article, “Rhythmicity: A powerful force for experiencing unity and personal connections”, Mair (2004) perceptively highlights the essential importance of rhythmic interactions. The youth worker through her interaction with the youth, engages in a simultaneous dance with her multiple selves and with the youth: “While rhythmicity can be a powerful force for linking people together, it can also be a vital force in the search for internal togetherness” (Mair, 2004, ¶3).

THIS DANCE

*tells one story,
inward music
we rarely hear.*

*The friend
loosens
my deafness
to spirit-song*

*scattering
gold leaves
dancing sunlight--*

*every moment
joy particles
dance
to a new song.*

“When two people talk to each other their movements are synchronized” (Edward Hall, quoted in Mair, 2004, ¶5). When they relate to one another, they engage in a rhythmic movement “like the regularity of the heartbeat or the alteration between night and day” (Mair, 2004, ¶4). Dancing with the “friend” reflects “the whole in its multiplicity ... the infinite present where everything happens” (Barks, 2010, p.325). But don't get me wrong; this is not a plane

where differences suddenly disappear and one melts into the other person's reality. No; within the plane of immanence, the oscillating dance between youth worker and youth is not about achieving “a single hierarchical superstructure for human existence” (Mair, 2004, ¶7), but rather, it is aimed at moving “us toward the diversity of life with each person's multi-potentials” (Mair, 2004, ¶7).

The importance of “rhythmicity” cannot be underestimated in youth work. Fostering *rhythmicity* is a movement within the field of immanence, that flows in and out, through contours and edges into the heart of unity. This flight or trajectory, “is not a line which runs towards the centre, nor the middle, nor the space between”, but it “runs in-(to) the constantly receding horizon of infinite production that Spinoza calls God” (Skott-Myhre, 2005, p.50). Mair, in sync with this notion of immanent movement writes:

This new understanding *of* the impact of rhythmicity ... requires, in care practice, the progression from mere sensitivity to purposeful enmeshment with the individuals served.... the adult and youngster have to fall into 'the rhythm of relationship'. In other words, it is not merely the content of the phrases exchanged nor the nature of the activities in which they are engaged. Significantly, it is also the give-and-take with clear cycles of approach and withdrawals, continuously maintaining each other's rhythm, that create meaningful relationship.... In care work, being in each other's presence, sitting comfortably together, and in particular having ample leisure time for constructive loafing are vital moments of 'flow' for living and developing together. The natural evolvement of being in synchrony is worthwhile in itself (Mair, 2004, ¶11).

“In a sense all rhythm is drama, is dance, is play”⁴⁰

*I say no words.
You move inside
like a flower.*

...

*You say nothing
yet my soul
grows quiet.*

*My spirit
mixes fully
with Your's;*

*In this listening
branches
grow new leaves.*

...

*I have no words
to articulate
the grace,*

*the eloquent intelligence
of being lost in
You.⁴¹*

We are now midway into our journey. The first two pathways, Al-Fattah and Al-Azim, explored notions of becoming, while in this third pathway, Al-Mujib, we enter into a field of immanence, where different bodies – reason, imagination, intuition, youth worker, youth – all collide in “a series of collisions and interpenetrations, coming apart and falling back together” (Skott-Myhre, 2005, p.51). For this rhythmic dance to take place, there must be an element of trust, a space where mutual trust between the youth worker and youth can be fostered and cultivated. Without further ado, let's move into this protective space, into the next pathway, Al-Wali.

40 Clark Moustakes, quoted in Mair (2004)

41 Poem segments from, “This Eloquent Intelligence”

PATHWAY IV: AL-WA'LI FRIENDSHIP

“When you are guided to this pathway,
take the opportunity to reflect on
friendship in your life, or to befriend a
voice of your self's inner community”.
(Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.150)

“Love is the whole. It is more than human,
more than imagination, more than relationship.
It leads into nonexistence, absence. A
flowering, a rose underfoot, roses under
all our feet, the absurdity no image
can contain. Candleflame become moth. The
pearl diver does not know how to swim.
Pearls are brought to him where he sits on
the beach. The sun is completely
generous with its light. The parts and the whole
are equals”.

(Barks, 2010, p.309)

“Love is both a state of being and an internal
disposition....Love is more than mere affection,
physical attraction, or focused longing. Love is the
consummate willingness to forego one's
own desires and goals for the welfare and benefit
of another....In short, love is the
foundation of integrity and the cornerstone
of our basic sense of justice and
goodness in this world”.

(Emerick, 2008, p.116)

The essence of the Sufi path, according to the Sufi Inayat Khan, “is to have a tendency to friendship; this is expressed in the form of tolerance and forgiveness, in the form of love and trust” (quoted in Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.150). Seeking friendships has not always been easy for me. Too often, I have been in relationships where my trust in myself, in others, has

been shattered beyond repair, or so I think. We as human beings, consciously seek out others with whom we have some rapport and connection. We are creatures in need of others. Even though we often fail in love, that doesn't prevent us we from constantly seeking it. "The story of love", writes Leggo (2009)

is always a tangled story because desire knows no boundaries, has forgotten the beginning of the story, and can never find the end. The story of love is a story that we can never get right because every right turn remembers every left turn, all the turns left, traced indelibly in desire and memory and hope. (p.147)

As a youth worker, if I don't feel tolerance or compassion for the various dimensions that constitute the self, with all its flaws and imperfections, how can I feel compassion for the youth in my care? As a youth worker, if I can't create a safe niche where the self can blossom unhindered, how can I offer a protective space to the youth?

After traversing through the pathways of *Al-Fattah*, *Al-Azim*, and *Al-Mujib*, we now come upon the fourth pathway, *Al-Wali*. *Al-Wali* has a "pearl-like substance" to it (Meyer et al., 2011, p.177). Children who experience this pathway feel "embodied in worldly existence and grounded in their own bodies" (Meyer et al., 2011, p.177). This pathway alludes to a sense of fullness; here, youth worker and youth, both are able to grow together within a safe space epitomized by trust and protection. Let's dive in to this pathway and see what hidden treasures lie buried awaiting our discovery.

no security
except
among lovers.

pull me close
touch my lips
to yours;
lay my head
at your feet.

no way into
secret presence
*except through love*⁴²

“Ethology” writes Deleuze, “is first of all the study of the relations of speed and slowness, of the capacities for affecting and being affected that characterize each thing” (Deleuze, 1988, p.125). In other words, contrasted to “a rule-based morality as one which addresses itself to molar subjects, then ethology may be understood as offering an ethics of the molecular, a micropolitics concerned with the 'in-between' of subjects, with that which passes between them and manifests the range of their possible becomings” (Gatens, 2000, p.62). An ethological perspective is non-discriminative. It does not distinguish between “artifice and nature, human and non-human” (Gatens, 2000, p.62). Ethology does not pretend to know in advance a body's capacities. It discerns “in terms of a body's powers of affecting and being affected”. It is concerned with what a body is capable of doing, its “relations with other bodies” and its particular powers (Gatens, 2000, p.64). Furthermore, as Gatens indicates,

42 From poem, “Making Love with the Dark One”. See Appendix for complete version.

ethology does not impose a plane of organization but rather posits a plane of experimentation, a mapping of extensive relations and intensive capacities that are mobile and dynamic.... Bodies of all sorts are in constant relation with other bodies. Some of these relations are compatible and give rise to joyful affects that may in turn increase the intensive capacity of a body; others are incompatible relations that give rise to sad or debilitating affects, which at their worst may entirely destroy a body's integrity. (Gatens, 2000, p.64)

For Spinoza, “each individual seeks out that which it imagines or thinks will increase its power of preserving itself” (Gatens, 2000, p.65). In other words, there is a certain freedom or experimentation that is involved in human beings becoming sociable. Spinoza argues that “it is those bodies which are like are own that will be most useful to us, most composable with our own, and most enhancing in our endeavour to maximize good affects” (*Ethics*, BkIV, Appendix IX). Thus, as Gatens, indicates,

human bodies are always parts of more complex bodies... Such highly composite bodies invariably attempt to organize the plane of immanence into a captured and stable form of interrelation. From the point of view of the individual, such composites may be harmonious and joyful or conflictual and sad. When two or more bodies combine, harmony assumes that the kinetic particularity of each body is respected and that the new composite leads to an enhancement of the powers of each. (Gatens, 2000, p.66)

*The Dark One
whispers into my ears:
mingle my light
with yours.*

*I feel the pull
long yearning
sit trembling
feeling*

the space in your face.

In their article, “Radical youth work: love and community”, Skott-Myhre and Skott-Myhre (2007) talk about the notion of “political love”, a force that liberates or permits for the maximal blossoming of our unique potential as human beings. Love, as they define it, is synonymous with “the field of struggle where we fight for the capacity to become” (Myhre & Myhre, 2007, p.53). The three forms of love known in Western tradition –eros, phillia and agape – are “problematic”, because they are inherent power dynamics, which subjects one to the rule of another. “Political love” on the other hand, is associated with becoming. It is not concerned with offering of oneself as a subject, as much as it is concerned with “creative force”. It is about becoming “the most creative fearless becoming” that is possible within us. Love is “the act of giving fully and completely of oneself without the worry that one would run out of oneself; with the knowledge that (we) are infinite in (our) creative capacity to produce (ourselves)” (Myhre & Myhre, 2007, p.55). Love is the cataclysmic force behind innovative potential. “Love is genealogical” (Myhre & Myhre, 2007, p.55); it doesn't simply arise in isolation, but is interlinked to past generations that enable us to re-create ourselves.

This love is motivated by what people hold in common, the capacity to regenerate ourselves as “radically different” (Myhre & Myhre, 2007, p.55). It is this intricate connection of similarity in variation that paves the way for the highest form of political love:

*love's pathways
filled with strangeness;*

*lovers meeting boundaries
each in the other.⁴³*

Love as a political force can only be unleashed fully through our differences and when we step away from aspects of love that are subservient to the other and encounter them instead “as fully creative force” (Myhre & Myhre, 2007, p.55). Any meaningful encounter between youth and adults can mutually take place through “tremendous political potential”. In other words, one becomes free to “live life as it is without ..., subordination, or domination”. Life then becomes a creative collision of bodies, “*joy / ... / urging lovers / to ecstasy*”.

In a similar vein, Hardt and Negri (2009) state that “(l)ove ... marks a rupture with what exists and the creation of the new” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.181). Echoing Spinoza, they remark that “we constitute being actively through love” which according to Spinoza, is joy, “the increase of our power to act and think, together with the recognition of an external cause” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.181). Love is the impetus that allows us to seek powerful collisions in order to expand our joy. For Spinoza, as Hardt and Negri illustrate, “love is a production of the common that constantly aims upward, seeking to create more with ever more power, up to the point of engaging in the love of God, that is, the love of nature as a whole, the common in its most expansive figure” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.181). But love, as Hardt and Negri point out, can also be corrupted, when it is shifted from the “common to the same” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.182). “Identitarian love”, love of similar, is a corrupt form of love as it is based on a limited precept to “love thy neighbour”. A more expansive approach would be to see *neighbour* implying not just someone most like us, but “everything”, “the world”, in other

43 From the poem, “Making Love with the Dark One”.

words, in loving the neighbour, we are really loving the other, loving differences (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.181).

Love becomes “a bio political event”: “not only does it mark rupture with the existent and creation of the new, but also it is the production of singularities and the composition of singularities in a common relationship” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.183). A form of corrupted love involves “making the many into one, making the different into the same” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.183). In a very important sense, Hardt and Negri are arguing for the mutability between the common and multiplicity; simply put, “if we did not share a common world, then we would not be able to communicate with one another or engage one another's needs and desires; and if we were not multiple singularities, then we would have no need to communicate and interact” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.184). “Politics”, as Hannah Arendt points out, is “the interaction and composition of singularities in a common world” (quoted in Hardt and Negri, 2009, p.184). A process of unification can thus be contended by “promoting the encounters of singularities in the common” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.184). When love is defined in this manner, “through encounters and experimentation of singularities in the common”, it then produces new encounters. In a political sense, what is stressed is love as a “power of composition” rather than “constitution” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.184). “Love composes singularities, like themes in a musical score, not in unity but as a network of social relations” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.184). Evil, on the other hand, “is love gone bad, love corrupted in such a way that it obstructs the functioning of love. Consider ignorance, fear, and superstition, then, not just as the lack of intelligence but as the power of intelligence turned against itself, and equally the power of the body distorted and blocked” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.193). “...the overflowing force that embodies the relationship between self and others, is the basis of every social institution” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.194).

*joy
in my lover's gaze
womb is all secret*

*urging lovers
to ecstasy.⁴⁴*

Spinoza would perhaps term “ecstasy” as the joy that results from “conatus” or striving to persist. “Love is thus not only an ontological motor, which produces the common and consolidates it in society, but also an open field of battle. When we think of the power of love, we need constantly to keep in mind that there are no guarantees; there is nothing automatic about its functioning and results. Love can go bad, blocking and destroying the process. The struggle to combat evil thus involves a training or education on love” (Hardt & Negri, 2009, p.195).

44 From the poem, “Making Love with the Dark One”.

TAKE US DOWN TO THE RIVER⁴⁵

*flowing
moving
surging.*

Let the water live

*inside you
surging praise.*

*Dive into the Lord
sacred existence
rivering liquid of life.*

*Reach light
through immersion
in torrential rivers
pregnant with mystery.*

The poem, “Take Us Down to the River”, sets the intention of diving into the ocean of one's self⁴⁶. Gerry Fewster, in his article, “Going there from Being Here”, points out that “the essence of life is the experience and expression for Self” (Fewster, 2001, ¶2). I take that to mean that before I can experience other people, I must encounter and confront the fears, the potential that lies dormant within my own self. Too often, we are more fixated on curing others, without actually taking the time to look inward. “*Reach light / through immersion / in torrential rivers / pregnant with mystery*”, is an invitation to willingly step into “the unknown” (Fewster, 2001, ¶7) where “we must be prepared to confront our fears, dismantle the pretences and step boldly into the black hole of uncertainty” (Fewster, 2001, ¶7).

In order to be an effective youth worker, it is essential to know oneself⁴⁷. “*Let the*

45 Rumi p.16, 26, 142, 143, 145, 155, 261, 264, 272, 283, 284; Lalla p.31, 45, 49; Whitman p.58; Mirabai p.64; Rilke p.139.

46 Again, the self that is under discussion here, is not the limited, isolated, privileged self. Rather, it is a self in relationship with everything. As Lloyd (1999) indicates, “the borders of a Spinozistic self seem much more fluid than those of the more familiar Cartesian self, aligned with the distinction between mind and matter.... In Spinoza's philosophy that predicament of selfhood disappears. There is for him no room for real doubt about the existence of the world – no possibility of scepticism of the kind that Descartes played with and thought he resolved.... Self-consciousness now arises within a world of which the self is undoubtedly a part – a world whose existence can never be in real doubt” (Lloyd, 1999, p.96). This inclusive, fluid self is the self that is referred here.

47 See fn 33, p.45 fn 46. Knowledge of “oneself” does not preclude everything else; rather, it incorporates a “multiplicity

water live / inside you / surging praise / Dive into the Lord", echoes the Sufi Shaykh, Sidi al Jamal's words: "you must begin to know yourself because everything that matters is inside you, not outside. All the secrets are inside you and you are the holy secret. If you know yourself, then you can touch the secret with your hand" (Al-Jamal, 2002, p.110).

THERE IS *THAT* ⁴⁸

The Energy
perpetually flows;

This Mystery
contains all faces
in a leaf of grass.

The Dancing Energy
waits in all things,

without Name;

The universe
wears God's colours.

Fewster points to the implicit importance of our interdependence with all things: "all that we are, and all that we will ever be, stems from our relationships with others all of our struggles are born in relationships and can only be resolved through relationships of one form or another" (Fewster, 2001, ¶3). Since the basis of this thesis is premised on Spinoza's assertion, "Whatever is is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God" (IProp15), from a Sufi perspective, the part contains the whole. In other words, the relationship with God or Substance cannot be meaningfully cultivated without relating to creation, to people. In the poem, "There is *That*", awareness of the Energy infuses a connectivity whereby all elements in nature are interconnected; where "*The universe / wears God's colours*". Does that suggest

of selfhood" (Lloyd, 1999, 97).

48 Rilke p.293; Mirabai p.3, 60; Whitman p. 67, 56, 40, 42, 43, 44, 22, 35; Lalla p. 46, 40; Rumi p. 312.

a certain sameness? I would argue to the contrary; even though we are all operating from within a plane of immanence, what we are actually encountering “is not many separate things or individuals but the infinite manifestations of the One and only Being⁴⁹” (Coates, 2002, p.9). Outward nature is the realm where the One Being manifests Itself in various colours.

The next poem, “In This Garden”, revolves around letting go. Once there is the recognition of a Substance flowing through the universe, the youth worker's relationship with the youth is no longer based on controlling or taking care of. There is now a “mutuality” (Fewster, 2001, ¶6), where youth workers are concerned “more about communion than communication” (Fewster, 2001, ¶6).

IN THIS GARDEN...⁵⁰

I let mind concerns go.

I do not hold back love.

I face everything in God.

*All trying,
shame,
contemplation,
dignity,*

dissolved

in the Beloved's river.

*Love surges to kiss
my spirit,
mind dissolves--
annihilating grace.*

Burns (2002) writes that “Rapport is the name given to the magic that emerges when

49 See fn46. There is no separation. For Spinoza, “the mind is the idea of a body which is what it is, and does what it does, by virtue of being part of a wider wholes reaching up to the totality of the material world” (Lloyd, 1999, p.96).

50 Mirabai p.7,19,66; Whitman p.35; Lalla p.52,55,28,30,25; Rumi p.320,285,289,278,280,275,17.

two people interact to form positive or primarily positive impressions or attitudes toward one another. It is a feeling of sameness and accord threaded with a sense of basic trust” (Burns, 2002, ¶2). Al-Wali, the divine pathway that begins this chapter, embodies a strong sense of intimacy and protection. For Burns, aside from cultivating self awareness, “an awareness of children both in groups and as individuals is essential in efficient relationship building” (Burns, 2002, ¶4). A youth worker’s capacity to foresee behaviours, and respond to children’s physical and emotional growth, “makes the task of building trust and comfort into a relationship much easier” (Burns, 2002, ¶4). In other words, in cultivating rapport with children or young people it is essential to have an understanding of their various developmental levels and to meet them where they are, while also considering their individual differences.

In the poem, “In this Garden”, my concern as a youth worker is to highlight certain techniques that are central for establishing rapport. Surrender is important. I do not know all the answers; “I face everything in God”. In other words, to reiterate the words of Sidi al-Jamal, this means to “wash with the water of the truth” (Al-Jamal, 2002, p.18). Let everything that is trivial, non-essential, go. “Put the name of God in every picture” (Al-Jamal, 2002, p.19) and become “free” by dying in God. Simply put, by letting go of ego concerns – that which revolves around “all trying”-- the spiritual aspirant / worker is able to be in the moment, in the now. By simply being, there is “Pure Peace”; the “mind dissolves”, and there is a sense of “annihilating grace”, a sigh of relief that comes when one realizes, “I’m not in charge. God is”.

With this sense of surrender, the youth worker can begin to relate to the youth simply as s/he is⁵¹, without imposing unrealistic expectations. Burns mentions three techniques that

51 Of course, that doesn’t mean that the youth operates from a molar, fixed identity. There is constant change and flux and the youth worker is aware and present to those moments of change and responds to whatever is presented in the now, without trying to fix anything.

are integral for establishing meaningful connection: a) reflecting, or mirroring; b) effective language, i.e. what we say, how it is said, when it is said and why, is important when communicating with children and young people, as “Communication patterns that are non-threatening and non-directive will most often produce honest and genuine responses” (Burns, 2002, ¶26); and c) appropriate physical contact. Touch, when done properly, can be a positive experience; in fact, it may well “be the most meaningful method of communicating feelings of acceptance and caring” (Burns, 2002, ¶27). As laudable as these techniques are, I feel that the concept of “mirroring” can have adverse implications when it comes to building trust between youth worker and youth. Immanence is an important concept in this thesis, yet, “mirroring” implies one thing duplicating another without there being any interaction or communication. How can one talk about proximity, or the possibility of an encounter with the youth when there is an implicit sense of replication rather than originality? We are concerned with what bodies can do and what their capacities are and how it affects and is affected by other bodies. “Mirroring” suggests structured, rather than experimental modes of behaviour.

TO BE WITH YOU⁵²

*I'm drunk
in constant conversation
with love;*

*your beauty
is wine,
poetry
of my existence*

*fermenting in a mystic's
breast.*

⁵² Song of Songs p.81; Mirabai p.39, 52; Lalla p.65, 71; Rumi p.22, 277, 319.

JOYS⁵³

*My sweet beloved
You're in my blood
heavy with fruit
majestic
as the stars in their courses.*

*Something conscious
reaches out;*

*Your energy
leaps
in my hands;*

*I live in a field of lilies,
your pure permanence.*

Once there is a certain trust and rapport, the youth worker is able to move onto the next stage of this journey: to begin to see the divine in all things, and come face to face with Love. The poems, “To be With You” and “Joys” suggest the pervasive presence of the beloved not simply “up there” in some remote heavenly realm, but most importantly, as being present in all things. The “Energy” dances in accordance to its own rhythmic movement but it is tangible, visceral in its manifestation. It can be felt in one's blood; and is evident “as the stars in their courses”. “*I live in a field of lilies, / your pure permanence*”, does not suggest a Utopian, idealistic world, devoid of challenges. In fact, there are many challenges to be faced and to be overcome in relation to nurturing a positive relationship with young people; though results may not be immediately apparent, there is nonetheless a sense of satisfaction simply being with young people without overtly looking to end results.

As a high school teacher working one on one with developmentally challenged youth, I have experienced this satisfaction many times. I worked with students who were behind their

53 Rilke p.313, 299, 293, 291; Song of Songs p. 93, 87, 79, 77, 65; Mirabai p. 3.

actual capacity, but who exuded such grace and joy, that at the end of the day, I felt I was the one who had been most impacted by this encounter. They were able to be where they were, without being unnerved by their lack of academic capacity. They revelled in the “*field of lilies*”, establishing themselves with “*pure permanence*”.

“The story of love is always a tangled story” (Leggo, 2009, p.147) . There are no neat lines to love. Love is messy, and often, relentless. Often times, it is difficult for a youth worker and the youth to abide in “*pure permanence*”, for while it may be possible to achieve that state momentarily, it is impossible to cling to that state. Love, the 13th century Sufi poet, Rumi points out, sometimes involves pain:

Unless a mother is overwhelmed in pain, how can the child be born? ... pain is a prerequisite, for pain makes a way for the child to be born (In Emerick, 2008, p.120).

Rumi's lines hint at the intricate connection between pain and love. The birth of a child serves as a beautiful metaphor; in order for a child to be born, the mother must necessarily experience pain. Skott-Myhre (2008) also writes of the necessity of experiencing pain in relation to youth work:

Pain requires that you allow it to transform you. You have to open your heart.

The temptation in youth work, of course, is to close off the heart in order to protect it from any further assault. This interferes in the development of any kind of actual collaboration between youth and adults, because if you have closed off your heart or even restricted it, then you cannot feel; and if you cannot feel, you cannot know the world in its actual formation and destruction. You become senseless and your reality is thoroughly ideological and unrelated to the material conditions of the world in which you live. If we are to develop a radical youth work that is a viable liberative force in the streets, the jails, the schools, in our communities, our homes,

our families, and our relationships, this will be the work. We must become fearless in the face of pain and suffering; we must become dangerous in our love. (Skott-Myhre, 2008, p.166)

In relation to youth work, it is essential for the youth worker to experience pain in her relationship with the youth. This doesn't mean that I should go out of my way to create such encounters; it means rather, that sometimes, love will go awry. Relationships will simply die out. For instance, as a youth worker, I may have a strained relationship with a youth, despite my best efforts to connect with him. Occasionally, he may not speak to me, and when he would, he would swear viciously. At this point, I would be beyond understanding, so completely frustrated and no one would be able to help. What to do in this situation?

Gompf (2003), suggests that we follow little Ruth May's advice in Barbara Kingsolver's novel *The Poisonwood Bible*:

Sometimes you just want to lay down and look at the whole world sideways.

Mama and I do. It feels nice. If I put my head on her, the sideways world moves up and down. She goes hhh-huh, hhh-huh. She's soft on her tummy and the bosoms part. When Father and Leah went away on the airplane we just needed to lay on down awhile. (quoted in Gompf, 2003, ¶4)

“The sideways world”, insists Gompf, “helps us to make sense of the upright world”. This sideways perspective helps us to slow down and view our relationships from a different angle.

“We breathe slowly and evenly and connect with the 'hhh-huh, hhh-huh' real or imagined” (Gompf, 2003, ¶5). This perspective enables us to “more clearly see the boundaries so important for the development of healthy relationships and to respect those of others as well as our own” (Gompf, 2003, ¶5).

*a green-winged longing
 opens my chest--
 walk with me
 move inside;*

*no security
 except
 among lovers.*

*pull me close
 touch my lips
 to yours;
 lay my head
 at your feet.*

*no way into
 secret presence
 except through love*

*what you search for
 is full of form
 waiting for you.⁵⁴*

From a Sufi lens, “the only way to understand love is to love. The only way to experience friendship is to be a friend. If this creates pain, that's better than allowing the heart to shrink” (Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.129). By becoming a youth worker, I am being called to take on the responsibility of becoming a *friend* to a youth, and by doing so, I am consciously providing a safe space where s/he can grow, evolve into his / her being. Am I ready to take on this responsibility? Do I dare? In this pathway, we have just started to swim in the vast ocean of love. In the next pathway, Ar-Rauf, we will plunge into unconditional, intimately compassionate love.

54 From the poem, “Making Love with the Dark One”.

PATHWAY V: AR-RAUF LOVING

“When you are guided to this pathway,
take the opportunity to experience and express the
compassionate, regenerative power of the
One reconnecting your heart to Unity”.
(Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.228)

“If you want to be free of self,
haunt the tavern of love.
In this sanctuary, egotism is heresy.
Only lovers who have no fear can enter.
Only here the bird of your breath can
nest and rest in the
palm of the Beloved's hand”.

(Sufi poet, Shabistari, in Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.228)

This pathway, Ar-Rauf, “is an innovation of quiet, gentle, profound love” (Meyer et al., 2011, p.93). It is a pathway that affirms “a ... penetration into the core of being, into essence.... Such love moves right into the essence of what could be called divine placelessness” (Meyer et al., 2011, p.93). This pathway also alludes to calm amidst trials and tribulations. Through this quality, people become equipped with composure, especially when everyone around them is terror-stricken.

Most importantly, this pathway highlights the importance of “rooting ourselves in inward compassion while turning outward toward the people who are really suffering” (Meyer et al., 2011, p.94). Through this pathway, one is able to confront those who make life difficult, and consciously turn towards them with love, rather than “maintaining one's own state” (Meyer et al., 2011, p.94). Ar-Rauf empowers an individual to “face the very worst ... with loving compassion, with ... gentle indwelling love” (Meyer et al., 2011, p.94). Through this pathway, a person is able to calmly convey love from the “deepest place ... right into the depth” of the one inflicting hostility and aggression (Meyer et al., 2011, p.94).

Perhaps, in some mysterious way, I'm being called to experience the changing universe. Perhaps, as a youth worker, the way to do this is to connect with the youth in such a manner that I'm not personally attached to an outcome of their responses to me. While writing about this pathway, I was especially moved by its ability to empower an individual to "face the very worst with loving compassion" (Meyer et al., 2011, p.94). It is not easy to turn the other cheek, so to speak, but as a youth worker, as an aspirant on a spiritual path, it is a quality worth nurturing.

We are nearing the end of our journey. Soon, we will be resting on the last pathway, reflecting on everything we have explored together. For now, let's linger a while longer in the open, wide field of love; let's bathe in the healing, nurturing waters of Ar-Rauf, and feel its gentleness wash over us as we relax and continue to explore the world from a "sideways" perspective (Gompf, 2003, ¶4).

GODDESS MOTHER AWAKENS ME⁵⁵

*Your embracing light sun
where every
One
shines;*

*You
in every object,
integral awareness,
Pure Substance.*

*Only You
can carry me
in heart,
give joy to the
fallen.*

⁵⁵ Mirabai p.14, 38, 56; Whitman p. 67, 48, 61, 66, 37, 23; Lalla p. 26, 27, 17.

In this last pathway, I want to explore the notion of the *feminine* in relation to immanence and love. By “feminine” I don't mean a molar⁵⁶ understanding of woman, but rather, the part of ourselves that we have “rejected, misunderstood, and mistreated” (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.xvii). These feminine qualities -- “the importance of listening, receptivity, and sacred space that is needed for ... living the longing of the soul” (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.xvii) are not exclusive to women only, but concern both men and women, as “they draw us into the depths within us, into the mysteries of the soul whose wisdom is called Sophia” (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.xvii). Further, “in the realm of the feminine”, Vaughan-Lee notes, “everything is connected, nothing is excluded” (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.xx). For the Sufi aspirant on the path, “it is love's feminine quality of longing” that pulls the traveler back to the Beloved God. “The mystic lover waits in a ... space of feminine receptivity” for God to reveal Herself. For a youth worker, this quality of mindful receptivity is essential, as she patiently waits for the youth to reveal him/herself. As a youth worker working with young people, if I want to truly foster a relationship with them, then I need to cultivate the qualities of waiting, listening and receptivity. By doing so, I am remembering “the wholeness that is within (me), the wholeness that unites spirit and matter (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.5).

*Your embracing light sun
where every
One
shines;*

*you
in every object,
integral awareness,
Pure Substance.⁵⁷*

The feminine is not just an elusive concept, but “a living presence within us” (Vaughan-Lee,

⁵⁶ That line which creates either / or binaries.

⁵⁷ From the poem, “Goddess Mother Awakens Me”

2009, p.6). In order “to fully encounter the divine feminine, the creative principle of life” (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.7), then we must be “prepared for her anger, the pain that has come from her abuse” (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.7). In order to do this, it is important to understand that we are not alone; that “everything is part of the whole, even in its mistakes and disasters” (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.9). Moreover, through the acceptance of the *feminine*, we are being invited “to be part of a shared mystery” (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.10). In our illusion of separation, we have become alienated from one another; by reclaiming the *feminine* within us, we are being called to respond affirmatively to the light of oneness awakening within us. As Vaughan poetically elaborates,

The light of oneness is a reflection of the divine oneness of life.... And this oneness is not a metaphysical idea but something so simple and ordinary. It is in every breath, in the wing-beat of every butterfly, in every piece of garbage left on city streets....

This oneness is the heartbeat of life. It is creation's recognition of its Creator (Vaughan-Lee, 2009, p.10-11).

We are being called to reclaim the “creative principle of life” by letting go of our illusions of separation. There is no duality between us and them; in our mutual differences, we are interconnected.

Spinozist philosophy offers an alternative way of thinking about the body and its connection to the mind. There is no diametrical division between nature/culture in Spinoza. As Moira Gatens points out in an interview with Susan James (2000),

one of the tasks of men and women today who want to enjoy a hetero-sociability, rather than a homo-sociability which excludes women from the social sphere, is to imagine a different way of relating to each other, not based on the relations between husband and wife, not based on authority, but based on what Spinoza calls

'friendship'. (Gatens, 2000, p.54)

In other words, since we are all interconnected to one another, then the way we relate to each other needs to take into consideration our differences. In this regard, Bracha Ettinger's radical notions of matrixial borderspace can shed some light on what it means to consider our differences in our relationship with one another.

The matrixial desire suggests a "linking with the unknown and bounding with unknown others in the process of becoming" (Ettinger, 2006, p.106.7). Within the matrixial stratum, several I and non-I fragments that mutually do not apprehend one another, nonetheless associate with one another through a hybridized borderspace of central differences. Within the matrixial borderspace, interaction with the other happens in a besiderness without completely rejecting or denying the other. The matrix is a vital borderspace of active/passive togetherness ebbing in/out the unknown other. Here, the rhythmic within/without oscillations are continuously re harmonized by metramorphosis actualized by, and further actualizing "relations-without-relating" (Ettinger, 2006, p.109.0) on the borders of presence/absence.

*Between
stone and stream,
the morning dew,
the surge;*

*out streamed
spaces of being--
beauty,
an inscription
echoed within;*

*You
abide in my dreams
inside me;*

*God
in the faces of wo/men
unchecked
rapture,
ecstasy --
eternal life.⁵⁸*

The matrixial metramorphosis is similar to “creative potentiality” whereby singular encounters between I and non-I become “witnesses of others-becoming-ours” (Ettinger, 2006, p.109.0). Within the phallic, dominant, hegemonic system, each other to which the I relates is either assimilated or banished; in the matrixial paradigm, the other is neither assimilated nor rejected. In relation to metramorphosis, the others and I appropriate a space where each of us is imperfect and connected “between being and nothingness” (Ettinger, 2006, p.110.1).

Metramorphosis is a process of intrapsychic and interpsychic interchange; of growth and emotive dialogue between / with-in many. In this interlaced exchange, assumed borderlines diffuse to become new boundaries; forms are violated; border links are eclipsed and changed to new thresholds. “Contingent transgressive border links and a borderspace of swerve and encounter emerge ... as a creative process that engraves traces revealed /

58 From the poem, “Mothers Within US”. See appendix for complete version.

invented in wit(h)ness-in-differentiation” (Ettinger, 2006, p.143.4). Metramorphic relation is neither Oedipal nor even pre-Oedipal. “It is a non-phallic erotic co-response-ability: a Eurydician tuning of the erotic aerials of the psyche, always in dangerous proximity to Thanatos” (Ettinger, 2006, p.143.4).

Psychoanalytic discourse expresses a specific form of human sociability in terms of oppositional binaries: male / female; child / adult; nature / civilization. It comprehends sexual differences in antithetical terms: phallic / castrated; active / passive; masculine /feminine. (Gatens, 2000, p.67). Psychoanalytic thought views sexual difference in terms of molarities expressed within established guidelines (Gatens, 2000, p.68). Though a molar perspective may be necessary, it is not sufficient to deal with complex modern issues. Sexual norms need to be engaged from both a “macropolitical” and “micropolitical” domains. “We need to address both the plane which organizes our possibilities into molar political realities and experiment with micropolitical possibilities that may be created on the plane of immanence” (Gatens, 2000, p.68).

For Ibn Arabi, as Henry Corbin (1997) points out, “it is the Image of the Creative Feminine that contemplation can apprehend the highest manifestation of God” (Corbin, 1997, p.159). It is the woman who conceals “the secret of the compassionate God” (Corbin, 1997, p.159). From Ibn Arabi's perspective, “the Feminine is not opposed to the Masculine ... but encompasses and combines the two aspects, receptive and active, whereas the Masculine possesses only one of the two” (Corbin, 1997, p.160). This insight is aptly expressed by the 13th century mystic poet, Jalaluddin Rumi:

Woman is a beam of the divine Light,

She is not the being whom sensual desire takes as its object,

She is Creator, it should be said. She is not a Creature.⁵⁹

Moreover, this perception of the feminine as “Creator” is not merely theoretical; but can be experienced through the oft-quoted Prophetic tradition, “He who knows himself knows his Lord”. This “knowing” revolves around knowing the divine presence imprinted within one's soul, “since”, as Corbin points out, “each concrete being has his origin in the particular divine Name which leaves its trace in him and his particular Lord” (Corbin, 1997, p.160). It is this original knowledge that one seeks in knowing oneself, and consequently knowing God.

For Ibn Arabi, “Adam is a divine exemplification”, which is why a man's love for a woman is actually his love for God (Corbin, 1997, p.161). Corbin further points out:

Just as Adam is the mirror in which God contemplates His own Image, the Form capable of revealing all His Names, the Names ... so Woman is the mirror, ... in which man contemplates his own Image, the Image that was his hidden being, the Self which he had to gain knowledge of in order to know his own Lord.

(Corbin, 1997, p.161)

The Energy

*animates the universe
enters each living marrow
bone by bone;*

*Light Essence
inside love,
circling galaxy;*

*every
face
is Friend.*

*Glorious Joy,
beyond guessing;⁶⁰*

According to a *hadith qudsi*⁶¹, “I (God) was a Hidden Treasure and desired (out of love) to be

⁵⁹ Quoted in Corbin (1997) p.160.

⁶⁰ From the poem, “The Soul Light in My Eyes”

⁶¹ “A hadith qudsi (divine report or saying) in which God is depicted as speaking in the first person, but which is not found in the Quran and which is generally understood to be divine logia in the spoken idiom of the Prophet” (Almirzahan,

recognized, so I created the creatures and introduced myself to them, and thus they recognized me” (quoted in Almirzanah, 2011, p.85-6). For Ibn Arabi, everything that exists in the world is a manifestation of the Divine; God comes to be known through the creation. God is actualized through the created world which is Its mirror, and through human creation who are “the polishers of that mirror”. Thus, the universe is God's reflection and through this, God knows and introduces His / Her face to both Him/Herself and to the world. According to Ibn Arabi, “The whole cosmos is the locus within which God's Names become manifest”, and “there is nothing in existence but God's Names” (quoted in Almirzanah, p2011, p.87).

In the divine saying quoted above, God's desire to be known is synonymous with love. God's primary motivation for creation, according to Ibn Arabi, is “to be in relationship with others” (Almirzanah, 2011, p.87-8). Ibn Arabi affirms that when God spoke the word “Be” (*kun*),⁶² it was out of an appreciation for the “hidden treasure”, an exhalation of the “Breath of the All-Merciful” which breathed creation into existence. Thus, love is the primal energy of the cosmos:

*The universe
flowing
over.*

*Mystery
impregnating
oceans
creating anew
continuous
beginnings.⁶³*

God loves to be appreciated, so God loves the creation through whom God comes to be apprehended. By Him/Herself, God is the hidden, unknown treasure. It is through the

p.85)

62 From the Quran: “And when He has decreed a matter, He but says to it, 'Be' and it is” (Q 2:117, 3:47, 19:35 and 40:68).

63 From the poem, “Prolific and Vital”.

breath of divine love that the universe manifests itself and has its meaning. William Chittick insists that, “the universe as a totality, in its full spatial and temporal extension, displays the properties of the whole array of Divine Names and Attributes in an infinite deployment” (quoted in Almirzanah, 2011, p.88). In this manner, the universe is both similar to and the channel for God's self-manifestation. Ibn Arabi notes that since God never ceases in His/Her desire to be known, creation “is in a constant state of becoming and unbecoming, coming into existence and passing out of existence” (Almirzanah, 2011, p.89). Creation is God's inspiration. By means of the phenomenal world, it becomes possible to orchestrate a link between “God's uncreated Self and the created world” (Almirzanah, 2011, p. 89). In a sense, as Ibn Arabi suggests, God is both dependent on us and also independent from us. S/He is reliant on us since S/He can be known only through our recognition of Her/Him. In the words of Muhammad Iqbal, the South Asian poet, God “is like us, a prisoner of Desire”.⁶⁴ S/He is also independent as S/He is not completely known or manifest. The “Hidden Treasure” motif also implies “that there is something infinite in the Real in its state of being *in potentia* which eagerly tries to find an outlet or a vessel” (Almirzanah, 2011, p. 90). For Ibn Arabi, the “Hidden Treasure” or Al-Haqq⁶⁵ (the Real) as he likes to call God, is always elusive and will never be fully grasped. God can only be known through the divine attributes, and only as much as God chooses to reveal of Him/Herself. Every event in creation embodies some revealed aspect of the divine. According to Ibn Arabi, “there is nothing in existence but God. Though we also exist, our existence is through God. But he who exists through something other than Godself is, in fact, nonexistent” (quoted in Almirzanah, 2011, p.92). In other words, we borrow our existence from God, as in of ourselves, we are nonexistent. But this does not mean that the created world of multiplicity is illusory, as much as it is “relational”.

64 Quoted in Almirzanah, p.90. Muhammad Iqbal, *Zabur-i-ajam*, trans A.J Arberry, as Persian Psalms.

65 One of the divine names of God.

For Ibn Arabi, the relationship between God and creation is like the “inseparable relationship between the 'shadow' and its source. The world is a shadow (zill) of the Absolute” (Almirzanah, 2011, p.92):

As everyone knows, while the shadow simply would not exist without the combination of the light and the object casting the shadow, the shadow is by no means intrinsic to the object which casts it. In this respect, every constituent element of the phenomenal world is a 'shadow' of the 'immutable essences'-- not in the sense that they are 'aspects' of the Absolute, but rather in the sense that they are *effects* of the Absolute. (Almirzanah, 2011, p.93)

Another metaphor that Ibn Arabi uses to convey his teaching on the self disclosure of God is the metaphor of the “Breath of the Merciful”. In this sense, the cosmos comes into existence through the “inhalation” and “exhalation” of God's breath (Almirzanah, 2011, p.94). This metaphor is connected to the hidden treasure motif in the sense that after God's desire to be known, the next step is the divine “exhalation”, the breath which carries the divine command, “Be”, which brings the phenomenal world into existence. This exhalation is then followed by an “inhalation”-- a desire in the created for the Creator. And finally, exhalation again “in a dynamic of breathing-- of becoming and un-becoming—*ad infinitum*” (Almirzanah, 2011, p.94). The “breath of all the merciful” is equivalent to the gift of life itself. According to Ibn Arabi, if anything (“immutable essences”) is not expressed through manifestation and existence, it is in “distress” as its potentiality remains hidden. The breath of the merciful brings relief and healing to the essences who “hunger to exist” (Almirzanah, 2011, p.95). Life is an expression of potentiality. One of the most important implication of the “breath of the merciful” metaphor “is that the act of creation never ceases” (Almirzanah, 2011, p.96). In this

manner, creation perpetually renews itself. In every moment the creation undergoes a new existence without any repetition. “Each day God is upon some task” (Q55: 29). Ibn Arabi explains this by stating “God has new tasks each day which constantly cause new changes within the cosmos” (Almirzanah, 2011, p.97).

I often imagine God as a loving mother whose love is intimately unconditional and merciful. I prefer to use the word *Allah*, rather than the masculine God, though God has no gender. In my self created fantasies, I imagine Allah, elegantly dressed in a green silk robe, take my hand the way a loving mother would, and guide me through life, through its unbearable thresholds, all the while smiling patiently and tenderly at all my mistakes. Nothing I do, or don't do, will take this unconditional love away from me, for Allah loves me unconditionally. In this knowledge, I feel strengthened. I feel encouraged. I feel seen and accepted. If I long for this unconditional love, then imagine how much more a youth wants to be seen and loved unconditionally. As a traveler on the spiritual path, and an aspiring youth worker, this is what I need to do for others. I need to reflect loving compassion that excludes judgement, bias, prejudice. As a youth worker, it is not my calling to serve others, while rejecting those who are “too difficult to handle”. I can't make that distinction. Love is not about making distinctions; it is about loving the whole, the messy and unmessy parts of an individual.

WINGED PURPOSES⁶⁶

*I celebrate
the morning mist;*

*I celebrate
the Sun's energy
in you.*

*I am dust
but every moment
Your
magnificence
thrills me*

with joy.

*I celebrate Your
self-lighting
light.*

*In Your sunlight
I become
more and
more
awake*

*and still
myself.*

In the article, “Poststructuralist theory in practice: working with 'behaviourally disturbed' children” (2000), there is a moment that resonated with me; I will use that point in the article as a point of departure and connecting thread:

Robert (an 11 year old) was on the roof today – calling out that he hates all of us – that he's going to burn the school down – that we're all stuffed. He's screaming about some injustice that happened to Paul (a younger boy with whom he travels to school).

⁶⁶ Whitman p.21, 23, 29; Lalla p. 60, 41, 23; Rumi p. 310,280, 275, 136, 157.

He has not been to regular school for two years and I know that the Police won't go around to his home without taking two cars. I wonder what I will do as I know that if he really goes off he could do some damage.

Cath: Be careful up there, it can get slippery.

Robert: Get fucked. You're all bastards.

I have some choices about what to say next – to ask what happened – to enter negotiations, to talk about consequences and making good or bad choices about behaviour. Instead I tried to reflect on the discourse in which he was operating. To look at this rebel, wronged, positioned against the always right, in control teacher.

Cath: I didn't know this about you.

Robert: Fucking what?

Cath: I didn't know that you had such a strong sense of justice and will do just about anything if you thought a friend had been wronged.

Silence. He comes down from the roof, picks up his bag and goes to class. Later I went over to see what's happening and he was sitting down, just doing his work.

(Laws, 2000, p.218)

In this moment, Robert is heard. As principal, Cath might have called his parents, or gathered staff to force Robert to come down, which would further force “both of them into patterns of power and powerlessness” (Laws, 2000, p.218), or she might have shunned him, but instead, she first tells him to be careful. Then she tries to comprehend the framework from which he is

operating. “This switch actually makes him hearable as someone who is in protest about wrongs, a rebel with a cause” (Laws, 2000, p.218). When Robert is reminded of this quality, a sense of justice, he comes down without further ado. This narrative point in the article resonated with me because it did what most spiritual /transpersonal psychologies attempt to achieve: the recognition of an individual's highest self even when the individual is unaware of it. There is “a shift in positioning” (Laws, 2000, p.218) that takes place, a movement that resists traditional patterns of power and powerlessness. “A different space” opened up for both the child Robert and the adult researcher, Cath once they both re-shifted their culturally inscribed positions. At the root of all human discourse, is the profound longing to be recognized, to be seen not in molar terms of good or bad, child or adult, male or female, but as a human being in motion.

The universe

*flowing
over.*

*Mystery
impregnating
oceans
creating anew
continuous
beginning.⁶⁷*

*Whirling
and
whirling*

*something of God
effuses through me.⁶⁸*

As a youth worker, one has to be in constant motion. “Motion, action and thinking are

67 From the poem, “Prolific and Vital”

68 From the poem, “Mothers within Us”.

connected in some way”, writes Krueger (Krueger, 2007, p.105). “Knowing how to move and where to be in relationship to the youth is a major skill in the work” (Krueger, 2007, p.106). Motion is essential to youth work, as “rhythmic interactions forge human connections As in modern dance, we line up and pass through, close or far” (Krueger, 2007, p.106):

*between
stone and stream,
the morning dew,
the surge;*

*out streamed
spaces of being--⁶⁹*

In his article, “The Sacred Moment and its Pain”, Pithers (2006) writes, “love is not a quiet or serene activity. It is disturbing and disruptive, it is unpredictable and furious, it is irreducible to specific emotions” (Pithers, 2006, ¶4). “*The surge / out streamed*” implies unconstrained, unrestricted movement; love does not adhere to a particular set of standards, nor is it neat and tidy. “Love”, reflects Pithers, “is essential to the lively and uncertain processes of growth. The disturbed child is not one that is going off in the wrong direction but one that is not moving at all” (Pithers, 2006, ¶8).

In the pathway of Ar-Rauf, we are called “to give more than we can ever regain” (Pithers, 2006, ¶10). This means, Pithers points out, “relinquishing certainty and accepting confusion; it means letting go of defence and becoming vulnerable; it means abandoning security and embracing fear” (Pithers, 2006, ¶10). How many of us are actually willing to embrace fear and the uncertainties that come with it? How many of us are prepared to dive headlong into the murky waters of confusion and vulnerability?

69 From the poem, “Mothers Deep Within Us”.

*Love
your springs
reflect The Open--
the ineffable point
the pure space between
the Rose,
the dawn wind--*

*passionate
oneness.⁷⁰*

“Love is often expressed as a form of madness” (Pithers, 2006, ¶11). I whole-heartedly agree: love is a form of madness, but a kind of madness that instills meaning to an otherwise barren life. We cannot escape loving or being loved. We ought to, insists Pithers, make loving “our profession a way of life” (Pithers, 2006, ¶15).

*every moment
your
magnificence
thrills me
with joy.

I celebrate your
self-lighting
light.
In your sunlight
I become more and more awake
and still myself.⁷¹*

This final pathway, Ar-Rauf, celebrates and calls for unconditional loving of those in our care. It is not easy, but as Ranahan writes, “loving is a way of being, an expression of our Self that can be realized even in the face of the challenges of our work” (Ranahan, 2007, Part II, ¶7). But this requires gratitude, Ash-Shakur, our final pathway.

⁷⁰ From the poem, “Mothers Within Us”.

⁷¹ From the poem, “Winged Purposes”.

EPILOGUE: ASH-SHAKUR INFINITE GRATITUDE

“When you are drawn to this pathway,
take the opportunity to feel simple gratitude
and follow all the divine light you have
received back to its source”.

(Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.95)

“What we most want comes through how we fail and
get humbled. Then there is an herb garden with
many delicate and pungent plants.... Gratitude
... wells up. It wants me to be more careful,
more diligent, not impeccable, never claiming
that. There is one who is made of all these
qualities. It is *you*, the one unable
to describe itself. Be grateful for
that.

(Barks, 2010, p.135)

We now come to the last pathway in our journey, the pathway of gratitude. The journey through the various pathways – Al-Fattah, Al-Azim, Al-Mujib, Al-Wali and Ar-Rauf – has not been easy, but it has been a fulfilling and nourishing experience for me. I thank Allah for guiding me through the pathways, for shedding light on the qualities of openness, strength, listening, trust and loving within me. I still have ways to go before I can actualize these potentialities in my self. In this thesis, I may not have provided all the answers; I may not have delved completely into the pathways. But that is alright. I'm still on the journey of life, and as long as there is the movement of life within me, I continue to be a student of life, I continue learning. And so, I offer no conclusion, no endings, for there are none.

After being so intensely invested in this thesis, the time has come for me to release it, to let it fly where ever it needs to fly, for I have learnt what I needed to learn from this project:

nothing lasts, that our definitions and notions of what *is*, are constantly in a flux, and the more one tries to be in control of these ideas, the more one is *not* in control. I don't understand everything about the pathways. I have only touched the surface of the power inherent in these divine pathways. The journey has just begun. I take a breath and release my fears, doubts and constrictions I've had while writing this thesis. I've come this far and I'm grateful for the gifts freely given along the way. As the Sufi poet, Shabistari, writes:

In the Secret Rose Garden,
roses bloom that reveal
the mysteries of the human heart.
Lilies sing and the narcissus
sees everything perfectly.
To enter this garden,
see with your heart's eyes and
gaze gently on these blossoms.
All your doubts will fade away.
Don't look for mistakes:
The roses may turn to thorns.
Ingratitude reveals ignorance,
and the friends of truth are truly thankful.

(quoted in Douglas-Klotz, 2005, p.95)

As imperfect my thesis may be, I'm thankful for the dance, for the rhythmic in-between movements with my self it has allowed me to engage in. And this is one of the many joys of youth work, for it is a field where we are invited to bring our selves and to engage wholeheartedly with them so that we may engage with the youth with openness, strength, attentive listening, trust and unconditional compassion. The work is interconnected, infusing and ebbing in and out through the transparent boundaries of our selves. For that I'm grateful.

“He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.”⁷²

72 From Samuel T Coleridge's poem, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”.

Al-Fattah, openings, allows me to understand that immanence isn't simply a theological concept; for no matter how hard we try to grasp it, we won't. By the grace of Al-Fattah, I realize it is much richer. Immanence is the thread of interconnectivity that is interwoven through every fibre of the universe, from the smallest to the largest object, we are interlinked. The breath of the Divine infuses through us all. To leap into the portal of Al-Fattah, I had to acknowledge my fears and then to release them so I could move forward. Yet, there are spaces in Al-Fattah that seem like black holes to me, and I'm afraid of straying away too far. I have yet to discover what it is exactly I'm afraid of, for our fears, despite their illusory magnificence are just that, illusory and unreal. Nonetheless, as I continue in my journey towards becoming youth worker, I hope to meet the youth in the middle, without imposing on them my notions of where they need to be or *ought* to be.

Al-Azim, strength, permits me to feel the small, dim flicker of light within me. Though the light is tiny, it persists to remind me of its presence, even as I am surrounded by despair, emptiness, and nothingness. As it persists in its presence, the tiny light grows stronger, brilliant, expansive. I realize that, no matter how tiny my flame feels, this light can never be extinguished. I realize that this is the divine spark within me, within all of us. Question is, how will I grow my light? How will you grow *your* light?

Al-Mujib, reflective listening. I need to slow down and listen, really listen to my heartbeat, and to the universal heartbeat that pulses through the world. I need to listen to my breath as it flows in and out cleansing, purifying, strengthening the force of life within me. If I were to sit still for a while, what would I hear? Would I hear your joyous sounds, would I listen to the rhythmic movements of your breath in sync with mine, mine in sync with yours? If I sit still long enough, would I hear the music of my soul, of your soul?

Al-Wali, friendship, teaches me to balance loving others, while granting them the space

they need to grow. It is painful, this realization, for I want to hold on, to possess the hearts of those I love, but I know this is crazy madness, for love cannot be pinned down, cannot be possessed. It is a free-flowing river, always in motion.

Finally, Ar-Rauf, loving. I have loved dwelling in this pathway. Of all the pathways we have explored, this one is my favourite. It touches tender spaces in my heart, spaces I thought were hardened. It fills my eyes with tears of gratitude and it fills my heart with love, with compassion for myself. I need now to turn outward and reflect this tenderness to those who are suffering, who have been hurt by life's unrelenting blows. I open my heart to them, and though it is not easy to dismantle hard walls of defensive armour, I hope through this pathway, I can love "from the deepest place ... right into the depths" (Meyer et al, 2011, p.94) of their hearts. No strings attached, for this is the essence of Ar-Rauf.

Skott-Myhre (2008) in his book, *Youth and Subculture as Creative Force*, insightfully writes,

Both youth work and pedagogy are, in the end, an encounter; an encounter that involves youth and adults. What kind of an encounter is engaged in this praxis of teaching and youth work? Perhaps we could say it is an encounter of potential; that is to say, a tentative, provisional encounter

There is no safety in such an encounter. It is unstable and decentered. Finally there is no one there. Finally we all become everyone (p. 184-5).

This is the experience of youth work, where both worker and youth encounter the potential in each other, finally encountering their own selves, and ultimately disappearing in the wide open field of immanence. This is where they take wings and fly:

LOVERS OPEN THEIR WINGS AND FLY⁷³

*The dead
move among
the living.*

*I fly the flight
of the fluid soul*

*wings out-stretched
moving dream-like--
God's light.*

*All streams
stream
toward the ocean.*

*Ending
beginning
flying
forward.*

This thesis operates within the framework of a walk through the different pathways. While it is endless, it culminates at the point “where the two seas meet” (Quran, chapter 18, verse 60). This is the point where both worker and youth not only encounter each other, but most importantly, encounter the latent potential within their own selves. Youth work, like walking on a spiritual path, is a rigorous, uphill climb. Sometimes, there are moments of joy, moments of pain, but one keeps moving forward nonetheless. An introspective, spiritual journey “guides us from our periphery, the body, to the center of our being, the soul. The aim is to integrate the various layers so that the inner divinity shines out through clear glass” (Iyengar, quoted in Mackenzie, 2009, p.248).

Across the space of this poetic inquiry, my aim has been to be in relationship with you,

73 Rilke p.287; Mirabai p.48; Whitman p.45, 48; Lalla p. 18, 24; Rumi p.317, 323, 284 279, 260, 266,157.

with my self and with the youth by traversing five different pathways. The found poems I write “exist as postures that move us forward in awareness, and as facets that may fuse to the echoes of the stories of another” (Mackenzie, 2009, p.256). As we journey through the pathways within the “crevices and cracks” of ourselves, it is my hope that we may “enter with united awareness ... that lead to new understanding –that exists not in the single story, but in a collective, ever emerging, ever changing story of the private and social self” (Mackenzie, 2009, p.256). With gratitude, for journeying with me on this endless journey of self, I leave you with this final offering:

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT⁷⁴

*My heart
cries to You
in prostration,*

*praising Your beauty,
Your Kindness.*

*What could I
possibly bring You?*

*Tears
stream down my face;*

*Your praise
makes me radiant:
unceasing mysteries,
generous spaces.*

*Wherever I go,
the way is
blessed.*

*Love
arrives
without my asking.*

74 Rilke, p.339, 335, 325, 287; Lalla p.60, 48; Rumi p.21, 268, 137

POSTSCRIPT...

My thesis has been defended and I can finally say its over.

In retrospective, as I ponder over my committee's feedback to my work, I realize that there are still some loose threads to my project. Maybe that is a good thing, since nothing can be entirely finished, especially since the main premise for my thesis involves ongoing becomings. I want to pinpoint some of the challenges that have been central to my work without necessarily trying to resolve them, for it is these moments that will create possibilities and precipitate potentialities for further work in the field of Sufism, Immanence and youth work.

One of the main issues I faced was that of language. In other words, despite my aim to work from within an immanent perspective, there are still binary tensions that language cannot entirely absolve. These tensions include depth-surface, good-bad, light-dark in my work. In using these terms, it seems that I am inadvertently suggesting a hierarchical, evaluative perspective that operates in contradistinction to immanent thought. Of- course, despite well meaning intentions to use language mindfully, these kind of binary tensions nonetheless creep into one's work. Perhaps, it would be interesting to explore these tensions within a relational, juxtapositional context, rather than simply reverting to linear habits of incorporating thought into language.

Another challenge was that of the "self". What kind of a "self" does the youth worker bring in relation to youth work? The privileged, fixed, humanist self, or the creative, dynamic self that is in constant flux? I would like to believe that only one kind of self is operating in my work, that of the dynamic one, but that would be inaccurate. There are two variants of the *self* that function within my thesis and they occasionally fall in-and-out-of-step with one another. It is not easy to do away with the personal self. I have had to grapple with this self

few times during the course of my writing, until I could find some middle ground where the personal self and the creative public self can operate in some sort of rhythmic dance. This is especially important as within the field of immanence, there is no clear separation between outer and inner, personal and non-personal. Nonetheless, this distinction cannot be abruptly blurred; it is processional and incremental. The self is both complex and simple, yet, as Spinoza points out, the essential self is the one that is in relation with other bodies, not the one that exists on its own.

Finally, my main challenge has been incorporating Sufi-Spinozist philosophy to youth work. Both perspectives can be theoretical and philosophical, whereas, youth work, especially in the way I discuss it in my thesis is very practical. Youth work is about participating in life with life, not simply grasping philosophical precepts. This especially has been challenging because I had to find a space where I could talk about God without getting or becoming solipsistic. I had to keep reminding myself that this was not a project I was writing for myself, or an exercise into understanding spirituality, but rather, a work for the youth, where I was trying to explore practical ways of connecting to them, of building relationship, of understanding them through their differences. And perhaps in this, I'm being somewhat idealistic because perfect relationships don't happen. Only messy imperfect relationships that force one to be in the now, in the moment rather than apply specific standards of set behaviours.

Not all issues inherent in this thesis have been neatly resolved, nor should they be, because as Deleuze points out, it is failed revolutions that hold most scope for further movements. I wouldn't say my thesis is a failed event, but rather, there are still moments that need to ripen and allow for further rhizomatic connections to emerge. And that will be the challenge for future work.

REFERENCES

- Adonis. (2005). Judith Cumberbatch (trans). *Sufism and Surrealism*. London: Saqi.
- Al-Jamal, M. (2002) *Music of the Soul: Sufi Teachings*. Petaluma: Sidi Muhammad Press.
- Al-Jamal, M. (2001). *The Meaning of the Names of Our Lord*. Petaluma, CA: Sidi Muhammad Press.
- Alexander, D. Found Poetry: What can it do for you? Online version of workshop given by Dorothy Alexander for Dumfries & Galloway Arts Association at Crichton Campus, Dumfries, February 2006. www.dgaa.net.
- Almirzanah, S. (2011). *When Mystic Masters Meet: Towards a New Matrix for Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. New York: Blue Dome.
- Barks, C. (2010). *Rumi: The Big Red Book*. New York: Harper One.
- Baugh, M. (1996). Ways Within Each Other. *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal* Vol 15 (3): 35-49.
- Bayman, H. (2001). *The Station of No Station: Open Secrets of the Sufis*. Berkley: North Atlantic Books.
- Burns, M (2002). Rapport and relationships: The Basis of Child Care. *CYC-Online*: 37 Retrieved April 28, 2012, <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0202-burns.html>.
- Cahnmann, M. (2003) The Craft, Practice, and Possibility of Poetry in Educational Research. *Qualitative Inquiry* 16 (1) 29-48.
- Carlisle, C. (Feb 7, 2011). Spinoza Part 1: Philosophy as a way of life. *The Guardian*. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2011/feb/07>
- Chittick, W. (2005). *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*. Indiana: World Wisdom.
- Chittick, W. (1995). The Divine Roots of Human Love. *The Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, Vol 17.

- Chittick, W. (1993). The Spiritual Path of Love in Ibn al-Arabi and Rumi. *Mystics Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 1 pp 4-16.
- Clark, Jane. (2001). Fulfilling Our Potential: Ibn Arabi's Understanding of Man in a Contemporary Context. Retrieved November 20, 2010 www.wiserearth.org/article
- Coates, P. (2002). *Ibn Arabi and Modern Thought: The History of Taking Metaphysics Seriously*. Oxford: Anqa Publishing.
- Colebrook, C. (2000). From Radical Representations to Corporeal Becomings: The Feminist Philosophy of Lloyd, Grosz, and Gatens. *Hypatia* Vol 15 (2): 76-93.
- Corbin, H. (1969) *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Damasio, A. (2003). *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain*. Orlando: Harcourt Books.
- Dark, K (2009). Examining Praise from the Audience: What does it mean to be a 'successful' poet-researcher? In Prendergast, M; Carl Leggo & Pauline Sameshima (Eds.) *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. 171-185 Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Deleuze, G and Felix Guattari. (1994) Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (trans). *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1988). *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Robert Hurley (tran). San Francisco: City Lights Books.
- Deleuze, G and Felix Guattari. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (B. Masumi, trans). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Denton, D. (2005). Toward a Sacred Discourse: Reconceptualizing the Heart Through Metaphor. *Qualitative Inquiry* Vol 11 (5): 752-770.
- Dobson, Margaret L. (2010). The Poetics of Self-Study: Getting to the Heart of the Matter.

Learning Landscapes Vol 4 (1): 131-142.

Douglas-Klotz, N. (2005). *The Sufi Book of Life*. New York: Penguin Compass.

Emerick, Y. (2008). *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Rumi Meditations*. New York: Alpha Books.

Ettinger, B. (2006). *The Matrixial Borderspace*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Faulkner, S.L. (2009). Only Through Poetry. *Educational Insights*, 13(3): 1-9. Retrieved April 28, 2012

<http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v13n03/articles/norman/index.html>

Fewster, G. (1991). The paradoxical journey: some thoughts on relating to children. *Journal of Child and Youth Care*, Vol 6 (4).

Fewster, G. (2001). Going There from Being Here. *CYC-Online*: 25 Retrieved April 28, 2012

<file:///C:/DOCUME~1/student/LOCALS~1/Temp/NAWOR7JJ.htm>

Fragar, R. (1999). *Heart, Self, & Soul*. Illinois: Quest Books.

Furman, R (a). 2004. Exploring Friendship Loss Through Poetry. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 9: 181-187.

Furman, R (b). 2004. Using Poetry and Narrative as Qualitative Data: Exploring a Father's Cancer Through Poetry. *Families, Systems and Health* Volume 22 (2): 162-170.

Furman, R; Kathryn Collins; Carol Langer and Elisabeth A. Bruce. 2006. Inside a provider's perspective: Using practitioner poetry to explore the treatment of persons with mental illness. *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 33: 331-342.

Gallardo, Heather L; Rich Furman and Shanti Kulkarni. (2009). Explorations of Depression: Poetry and Narrative in Autoethnographic Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Social Work*, Vol 8 (3): 287-304.

Garfat, T. (2003). Four Parts Magic: The Anatomy of a Child and Youth Care Intervention. *CYC-Online*: 50 Retrieved April 28, 2012

<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol0303-thom.html>

Garrison, J. (2000). Spiritual Education as Poetic Creation in Dewey's Religious Humanism.

Educational Change: 1-12.

Gatens, M. (2000). Feminism as 'Password': Rethinking the 'Possible' with Spinoza and

Deleuze *Hypatia*, (15) 2: 59-75.

Gharabaghi, K. (2008). The Relationship Trap. *CYC-Online*: 117 Retrieved April 28, 2012

<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cyconline-nov2008-gharabaghi.html>.

Glesne, C. (1997). That rare feeling: re-presenting research through poetic transcription.

Qualitative Inquiry, 3: 202-222.

Glesne, C. (2010). Disappearing Into Another's Words Through Poetry in Research and

Education. *Learning Landscapes* Vol 4 (1): 29-37.

Gompf, K (2003). Relationships: A Sideways View. *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*,

16.4, p.74. Retrieved April 28, 2012,

<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0609-gompf.htm>.

Goodley, D. (2007). Becoming rhizomatic parents: Deleuze, Guattari and disabled babies.

Disability & Society, 22 (2): 145-160

Gruber, Angela. (2006). The Unveiling of the Heart: The Application of Ibn Arabi's Teachings

in Transpersonal Psychotherapy. Retrieved Nov 20, 2010 from

www.transformations-uk.org

Guiney Yallop, J.J. (2010). *Of Place and Memory: A Poetic Journey*. Nova Scotia: Backalong

Books.

Halligan, Fredrica. (2001). The Creative Imagination of the Sufi Mystic, Ibn Arabi. *Journal of*

Religion and Health, Vol.40, No.2, pp 275-287.

Hardt, M and Antonio Negri. (2009) *Commonwealth*. Harvard: The Belknap of Harvard

University Press.

Hart, T. (2004). The Mystical Child: Glimpsing the Spiritual World of Children. *Encounter* Vol 17 (2): 38-49.

Hickey-Moody, Anna C. (2009) *Unimaginable Bodies: Intellectual Disability, Performance and Becomings*. Sydney: Sense Publishers.

Hliboki, J. (2011) *The Breath of God: Thirty-Three Invitations to Embody Holy Wisdom*. Transilient Publishing.

Hirsch, E. (1999). *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry*. San Diego: Harcourt Inc.

Hixon, L. (1993). *Atom from the Sun of Knowledge*. Westport: Pir Publications.

Izutsu, T. 1983. *Sufism and Taoism*. California: University of California Press.

James, S. (2000) The Power of Spinoza: Feminist Conjunctions (interview). *Hypatia* Vol 15 (2): 40-58.

Jarrett, C. (2007). *Spinoza: A Guide for the Perplexed*. England: MPG Books, Ltd.

Julia Boni, L. (2010) *The Sufi Journey Towards NonDual Realization*. (Masters thesis). University of Lethbridge. Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10133/2528>.

Krueger, M. (2000). Central Themes in child and youth care. *CYC-Online*: 12 Retrieved April 28, 2012 <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0100-krueger.html>

Krueger, M. (2007). *Sketching Youth, Self, and Youth Work*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Krueger, M. (2008). Poems and Rhizomes. *CYC-Online*: 116. Retrieved April 28, 2012, <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cyconline-oct2008-krueger.html>

Lalla. (1992) Coleman Barks (trans). *Naked Song*. Athens, GA: Maypop Books.

Laursen, Erik K. (2003). Seven Habits of Reclaiming Relationships. *CYC-Online*: 53.

Retrieved April 28, 2012 <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0603-sevenhabits.html>

Laws, C and Davies Bronwyn. 2000. Poststructuralist theory in practice: working with 'behaviourally disturbed' children. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13: 3, 205-221.

Leavy, P. 2009. *Method Meets Art*. New York: Guilford Press.

Leggo, C (2009). Living Love Stories: Fissures, Fragments, Fringes in Prendergast, M; Carl Leggo & Pauline Sameshima (Eds.) *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. 147-168 Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Leggo, C (2010). Lifewriting: A Poet's Cautionary Tale. *Learning Landscapes* Vol 4 (1): 67-84.

Leung, D and Jennifer Lapum. 2005. A Poetical Journey: The Evolution of a Research Question. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 4 (3): 1-17.

Lloyd, G. (1996). *Spinoza and the Ethics*. New York: Routledge.

Poindexter, Cynthia Cannon. (2002). Research as Poetry: A Couple Experiences HIV. *Qualitative Inquiry*, Volume 8 (6): 707-714.

Luc-Nancy, J. (2011) Sarah Clift (trans). *God, Justice, Love, Beauty: Four Little Dialogues*. NY: Fordham University Press.

Lutfi, H. (1985). The Feminine Element in Ibn Arabi's Mystical Philosophy. *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, (5): 7-19.

Mair, H. (2004). Rhythmicity: A Powerful force for experiencing unity and personal connections. *CYC-Online*: 66 Retrieved April 28, 2012
<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0704-rhythmicity.html>.

Mackenzie, S (2009). Fragmented Oms: A Poetic (Re)fusing of Teacher in Prendergast, M; Carl Leggo & Pauline Sameshima (Eds.) *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences* 239-257. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

- Maclean, K. (2004). Resilience: What it is and how children and young people can be helped to develop it. *CYC-Online*: 62 Retrieved April 28, 2012, from <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0304-resilience.html>
- Mandrona, A. (2010). Children's Poetic Voices. *Learning Landscapes*. Vol 4(1):143-154.
- Mirabai. (2004) Robert Bly and Jane Hirshfield (interpreters) *Ecstatic Poems*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Meyer, Wali Ali, et al. (2011) *Physicians of the Heart: A Sufi View of the Ninety-Nine Names of Allah*. California: Sufi Ruhaniat International.
- Molnar, T. (2010). Hospitality and the Hote: Revealing Responsibility Through Found Poetry. *Learning Landscapes* Vol 4 (1): 157-173.
- Morris, J. (2005). *The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn Arabi's Meccan Illuminations*. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae.
- Needleman, Jacob. (2005) *The Wisdom of Love: Toward a Shared Inner Life*. Sandpoint, ID: Morning Light Press.
- Negri, A. (1991). Michael Hardt (trans). *The Savage Anomaly*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Norman, R. (2009). Only Through Poetry. *Educational Insights*, 13 (3).
- Ozelsel, M. (1996). *Forty Days: The Diary of a Traditional Solitary Sufi Retreat*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.
- Pantin, Father G. (2002). Violent parenting, violent children. *CYC-Online*: 44 Retrieved April 28, 2012 <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0902-trinidad.html>
- Phelan, Jack. (2008). Living with Complexity and Simplicity. *CYC-Online*: 109 Retrieved April 28, 2012 <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0308-phelan.html>
- Pithers, D. (2006). The Sacred Moment and its Pain. *CYC-Online*: 88 Retrieved April 28, 2012

<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0506-pithers.html>

Prendergast, M. (2004). 'Shaped Like a Question Mark': Found Poetry from Herbert Blau's *The Audience*. *Research in Drama Education*. Vol 9 (1): 73-92.

Prendergast, M. (2006) Found Poetry as Literature Review. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 12 (2): 369-388.

Prendergast, M & Carl Leggo. (2007) Astonishing Wonder: Spirituality and Poetry in Educational Research in L. Bresler (Ed.). *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education*, 1459-1478.

Prendergast, M (2009). Introduction: The Phenomena of Poetry in Research in Prendergast, M; Carl Leggo & Pauline Sameshima (Eds.) *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. xix-xli Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Prendergast, M; Carl Leggo & Pauline Sameshima (Eds.) (2009). *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

RainGruber, B (2009). AsilOmar in Prendergast, M; Carl Leggo & Pauline Sameshima (Eds.) *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. 259-272 Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Ranahan, Patti.(2007). Reaching Beyond Caring to Loving in Child and Youth Care Practice I & II. *CYC-Online*: 97 Retrieved April 2012,
<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0207-ranahan.html>

Richo, David. (2009). *Being True to Life: Poetic Paths to Personal Growth*. Boston & London: Shambhala.

Schipper, L. (1993). *Spinoza's Ethics: The View From Within*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Schroeder, C. S. (1995) *In the Womb of God: Creative Nurturing for the Soul*. Missouri:

Triumph Books.

Shapiro, Johanna. (2004). Can Poetry Be Data? Potential Relationships Between Poetry and Research. *Families, Systems and Health* Volume 22 (2): 171-177.

Shira, A. (2010). Through the Gates of Loving Inquiry: Where the Heart Opens into Relationship. (Ph.D dissertation). University of British Columbia, Canada.
https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/.../ubc_spring_2010_Shira_ahava.pdf.

Skott-Myhre, H. (2005). Towards a Minoritarian Psychology of Immanence and a Psychotherapy of Flight: Political Meditations on the Society of Control. *Parallax*, 2 (2):44-59.

Skott-Myhre, H. (2006a). Radical Youth Work: Becoming Visible. *Child Youth Care Forum*, 35:219-229. DOI 10.1007/s10566-006-9010-2.

Skott-Myhre, H (2006b). Beyond good and evil: Towards an a-moral youth work practice. *CYC-Online*: 95 Retrieved April 28, 2012
<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0612-skottmyhre.html>

Skott-Myhre, H (2007a). Spiritual Crisis and Youth Work: Interrogating Holism. *CYC-Online*: 98. Retrieved April 28, 2012,
<http://www.cyc.net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0307-scottmyhre.html>

Skott-Myhre, H (2007b). Anti-Psychiatry: Re-tuning the field of Child and Youth Care. *CYC-Online*: 100 Retrieved April 28, 2012
<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0507-skott-myhre.html>.

Skott-Myhre, H. (2008). *Youth and subculture as creative force: Creating new spaces for radical youth work*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Skott-Myhre, H and Kathy Skott-Myhre. (2007). Radical youth work: Love and community. *Relational Child and Youth Care Practice*, Volume 20 (3): 48-57.

- Skott-Myhre, Hans and Donato Tarulli. 2008. *Becoming-Child: Ontology, Immanence, and the Production of Child and Youth Rights*. In O'Neill, Tom & Dawn Zinga, (eds.), *Children's Rights: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Participation and Protection*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Smith, M. (2006). Love Tenderly. *CYC-Online*: 95 Retrieved April 28, 2012, <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0612-smith.html>.
- Smith, M. (2007). Letting go in Love. *CYC-Online*: 99 Retrieved April 28, 2012, <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0407-smith.html>.
- Spinoza, B. (1996) Edwin Curly (tran). *Ethics*. USA: Penguin Books.
- Starr, M. *God of Love*. New York: Monkfish Publishing Company.
- Stewart, S. (2010). The Grief Beneath Your Mothertongue: Listening Through Poetic Inquiry. *Learning Landscapes Vol 4 (1)*: 85-104.
- Sullivan, Anne Mccrary (2009). On Poetic Occasion in Inquiry: Concreteness, Voice, Ambiguity, and Associative Logic in Prendergast, M; Carl Leggo & Pauline Sameshima (Eds.) *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. 111-126. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Sviri, S (1997). *The Taste of Hidden Things*. California: The Golden Sufi Center.
- Vaughan-Lee, L. (2009) *The Return of the Feminine and the World Soul*. California: The Golden Sufi Center.
- Wasiak, Joanna. (2011). *Bringing Zombies Back to Life: An Auto ethnographic Exploration of Alienation and Political Dis/engagement in Emerging Adulthood within Late-stage Capitalism*. (Master's Thesis). Brock University. St Catharines, Ontario, Canada.
- Weems, M (2009). The E in Poetry Stands for Empathy in Prendergast, M; Carl Leggo & Pauline Sameshima (Eds.) *Poetic Inquiry: Vibrant Voices in the Social Sciences*. 133-

144. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Wiebe, Peter Sean. (2008) *What I Meant to Say About Love: A Poetic Inquiry of Un/Authorized Autobiography*. (Ph.D Thesis). University of British Columbia, Vancouver. https://circle.ubc.ca/.../ubc_2008_spring_wiebe_peter_sean.pdf.

Williamson, M. (1992) *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of a course in Miracles*. Harper Collins.

Whitman, Walt. (2007). *Leaves of Grass. The Original 1855 Edition*. New York: Dover Publications.

Wolff, Sula.(2002). Treatment of Deprived Children: Part I & II. *CYC-Online*: 41. Retrieved April 28, 2012 from <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0602-wolff.html>.

Young, Steve. (1999). Self-Awareness in the child care worker. *CYC-Online*: 11 Retrieved April 28, 2012 from <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-1299-self-awareness.html>.

Zwanzig, R. (2008). *An Analysis of Ibn al Arabi's al Insan al Kamil, the Perfect Individual, with a Brief Comparison to the Thought of Sir Muhammad Iqbal* (Master's thesis). Brock University. St Catharines, Ontario, Canada.

Appendix: The Found Poems

BISMILLAH

POETRY HONORS MY SOUL

*a strange impulse
rages
within me;*

*Endless unfoldings,
new stories
breathe
wake-walk
within the body garden.*

*Praise Love!
I'm filled with music --*

*Loving begins again,
words drift,
shapes dissolve --*

*every tip of my hair
makes music
drums love.*

FALLING AWAY

*I breathe in
the cosmos*

*taste the space
before life;*

*unaccustomed to that vast
call, fluid love
indescribable.*

*A lover
kneeling
gently
at her window.*

PATHWAY I: AL-FATTAH

DON'T CONDEMN MY NAKEDNESS

*dive naked
a thousand times
dive naked.*

*Go naked
dance
to your death
strip away
what is known
become undisguised,
with nothing on;*

*dance to sweetness
that comes from
grief.*

*Dive naked
a thousand times.*

I ASCEND FROM THE NIGHT

*Troubles,
afflictions,
pain,
burning--
will bring you*

to God.

*Move into death,
pass your nearer being
through the night,
through the surging chaos--
The Door will open.*

*Feel the unsayable absence,
the beauty of separation,
the midnight light*

*pulsing
no time or distance.*

*Move into pain,
into death,*

The Door will open.

IN THE FIRE WITH ABRAHAM

*Somewhere
in the changing light*

I gaze into you.

*Somewhere
lions still roam
unmindful of fear.*

*You too
can find a pure
carved-out
strip of
fertile soil*

*terrifying in its beauty,
beautiful in its terror.*

*I offer God
that broken
open
place
unashamed
inner majesty--*

*no fear
only celebration
crazy
like Abraham
sitting
in the fire.*

BURN YOUR STUBBORNNESS

*Burn your stubbornness,
loosen the layers of ego dirt,*

*hear the music:
gold being hammered,
gold
and
God.*

*Visible happiness
reveals itself
when we
glisten with genesis.*

*A touch
quivering me
to new identity:*

*body turns
spirit.*

SOUL WITHIN SOUL

*lovers' pure movement:
souls bringing flowers
in the cool daybreak.*

*Listen to spirits'
passionate murmur
greening*

*into
soul
within
soul
within
you.*

EXULTING IN FLOWERING

*Heart
unsheathed
flung into brightness.*

*Glowing
fullness.*

*That place--
shimmering green--
I carry in my heart.*

*Our collective heart
speaks the Beloved's Name
like lilies that blossom
under the full moon's light.*

*From within
a human space
that great heart
grows new leaves.*

PATHWAY II – AL-AZIM

INFINITE OVERFLOWING

*Abundant Existence
swirls
in my heart*

*Living
blissfully
in my eyes;*

*secretly
reaching out
into the invisible
flowing
over
infinitely.*

THE MOVE INTO SPIRIT

*Begin with love
and grace;
become a green tree
with new fruit.*

*Begin at dawn;
travel that road
yourself
to meet the Friend.*

*Long searching
will bring you
to Love.*

I EXIST AS I AM

*I am dark
beautiful
divine.*

*In this flowering
godhead
I feel the pulsing
clarity
of eternity*

*releasing
links of light*

*moistening
the roots
of all that
grows in life.*

ETERNITY IN MY EYES

*Come
live
inside
eternity;*

*come
live
inside
my eyes.*

THE SONG OF ME RISING

*The song of me rising
pierces numbness,
stuns space;*

*Pure Passion
singing
leaping
dancing--*

*Mad infatuation
with your
precious
body:*

surrendered union.

*The Energy
breathes
songs--*

*me rising
the universe.*

WITH YOUR LIGHT

*you are
lover-child
lost in the quiet,
in the unknown
experience of God.*

*Your face
new again
continuous amazement.*

*You get
younger
and
younger*

*wise gentleness
inside,
your whole childhood
crowds into
God's destiny.*

*If you kiss
my lips
like this,*

*you'll know
Jesus raised the dead*

with your light.

PATHWAY III – AL-MUJIB

THIS DANCE

*tells one story,
inward music
we rarely hear.*

*The Friend
loosens
my deafness
to spirit song*

*scattering
gold leaves
dancing sunlight--*

*every moment
joy particles
dance
to a new song.*

*I honour this
moment's grace,*

*bless
sing
this music*

*that
spreads like
existence
rhythmic
dance.*

IN THAT VOID, SILENCE

*Listen
to the angel's song
rapturous
kindled
in heightening silence
by your own
passionate
heart cry.*

*Listen
to your heart
the way saints
listen
to wind
breathing.*

*Silence
is my worship;
my love song
warmed
wakened*

by my own fire.

*I'll do nothing
but listen to Your
unbroken
voice
vibrating
in the solace
of my heart.*

THE MIND'S IMAGINING

*as mind dissolves
song begins.*

*No worse torture
than
staying in the mind.*

TWO BREATHINGS

*all is breath
pure
unguarded
channels
of meaning.*

THIS ELOQUENT INTELLIGENCE

*I say no words.
You move inside
like a flower.*

*I dissolve in You,
in Your silent
eloquence.*

*You say nothing
yet my soul
grows quiet.*

*My spirit
mixes fully
with Yours;*

*In this listening
branches
grow new leaves.*

*Your burning
silence
heals.*

*I have no words
to articulate
the grace,*

*the eloquent intelligence
of being lost in
You.*

PATHWAY IV: AL-WALI

MAKING LOVE WITH THE DARK ONE

*a green-winged longing
opens my chest--
walk with me
move inside;*

*no security
except
among lovers.*

*pull me close
touch my lips
to yours;
lay my head
at your feet.*

*no way into
secret presence
except through love*

*what you search for
is full of form
waiting for you.*

*The Dark One
whispers into my ears:
mingle my light
with yours.*

*I feel the pull
long yearning
sit trembling feeling
the space in your face;
love's pathways
filled with strangeness;*

*lovers meeting boundaries
each in the other.*

*joy
in my lover's gaze
womb is all secret*

urging lovers to ecstasy.

TAKE US DOWN TO THE RIVER

*flowing
moving
surging.*

*Let the water live
inside you
surging praise.*

*Dive into the Lord
sacred existence
rivering liquid of life.*

*Reach light
through immersion
in torrential rivers
pregnant with mystery.*

THERE IS THAT

*The Energy
perpetually flows;*

*This Mystery
contains all faces
in a leaf of grass.*

*The Dancing Energy
waits in all things,*

without Name;

*The universe
wears God's colours.*

IN THIS GARDEN...

I let mind concerns go.

I do not hold back love.

I face everything in God.

*All trying,
shame,
contemplation,
dignity,*

dissolved

in the Beloved's river.

*Love surges to kiss
my spirit,
mind dissolves--
annihilating grace.*

*The human being
turns to dust--
all that I am,*

*I offer
the One*

*who takes
no fear,
no absence.*

Peace.

TO BE WITH YOU

*I'm drunk:
in constant conversation
with love;*

*your beauty
is wine
poetry
of my existence*

*fermenting
in a mystic's breast.*

JOYS

*My sweet beloved
you ravish my heart.*

*You're in my blood
heavy with fruit
majestic
as the stars in their courses.*

*Something conscious
reaches out;*

*Your energy
leaps
in my hands;*

*I live in a field of lilies,
your pure permanence.*

PATHWAY V: AR- RAUF

GODDESS MOTHER AWAKENS ME

*Your embracing light sun
where every
One
shines;*

*You
in every object,
integral awareness,
Pure Substance.*

*Only You
can carry me
in heart,
give joy to the
fallen.*

MOTHERS WITHIN US

Love
 your springs
 reflect The Open--
 the ineffable point
 the pure space between
 the Rose,
 the dawn wind--
 passionate
 oneness:

Whole soundless landscape
 intermeshed
 into eternity;
 between stone and stream,
 the morning dew,
 the surge;

out streamed
 spaces of being--
 beauty,
 an inscription
 echoed deep within.

You
 abide in my dreams
 inside me;

God
 in the faces of wo-men
 unchecked
 rapture,
 ecstasy--
 Eternal life.

I grow
 from the beauty
 I love;

Contain multitudes,
 bequeath my flesh
 to the dirt-grass--
 the blind,
 the lame--
 divine.

*Whirling
and
whirling*

*something of God
effuses
through me.*

*the Lord
woke inside me
a lotus opening
in clear green seas.*

*The old
young,
brothers
sisters,
all my lovers
One reality*

*suffusing heaven
bright light.*

*Myself
and the Absolute
merge
melt
to one
flowing
moon sky;*

*soaring
beauty
freedom--*

Everything is You.

*The door to love's sanctuary
inside
the lover's heart,
the rose,
the meaning of names;
no separating distances:
the inward sky
swan-beauty
makes my face yours.*

THE SOUL LIGHT IN MY EYES

*The Energy
animates the universe
enters each living marrow
bone by bone;*

*Light Essence
inside love,
circling galaxy;*

*every
face
is Friend.*

*Glorious Joy,
beyond guessing;*

*You change grief to
gold
light.*

*You are the soul
animating
my eyes.*

PROLIFIC AND VITAL

*The universe
flowing
over.*

*Mystery
impregnating
oceans
creating anew
continuous
beginning.*

*Inside,
flowers sprout.
Strangers come
together:*

*you grow
alive.*

*Birds
with elegant
coloured wings*

*birth the dead
to life.*

WINGED PURPOSES

*I celebrate
the morning mist;*

*I celebrate
the Sun's energy
in you.*

*I am dust
but every moment
Your
magnificence
thrills me*

with joy.

*I celebrate Your
self-lighting
light.*

*In Your sunlight
I become
more and
more
awake*

*and still
myself.*

ASH-SHAKUR

LOVERS OPEN THEIR WINGS AND FLY

*The dead
move among
the living.*

*I fly the flight
of the fluid soul*

*wings out-stretched
moving dream-like
God's light.*

*All streams
stream
toward the ocean.*

*Ending
beginning
flying
forward.*

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

*My heart
cries to you
in prostration,*

*praising your beauty,
your kindness.*

*What could I
possibly bring you?*

*Tears
stream
down my face;*

*your praise
makes me radiant:
unceasing mysteries,
generous spaces.*

*Wherever I go,
the way
is blessed.*

*Love
arrives
without my asking.*