

THE JOURNEY TO RADICAL LOVE IN SHAFAK'S *THE FORTY RULES OF LOVE*,
HAMID'S *HOW TO GET FILTHY RICH IN RISING ASIA*,
AND MAHFOUZ'S *ARABIAN NIGHTS AND DAYS*

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This thesis explores the idea that the influences of Sufism and the poetry of Rumi in contemporary literature challenge perspectives concerning the Islamic representation in the world today by specifically urging for a universal and borderless love between Eastern and Western cultures. Despite being older forms of teaching, the philosophy of Sufism and the poetry of Rumi are still beneficial and relatable to the modern world, essentially urging individuals to find radical love within themselves and, in turn, to find unity with humanity. This radical Love is a transforming force, offering spiritual rebirth, as it surpasses labels, borders, economic globalization, and political corruption as evident in the novels discussed in this thesis. This thesis explores the relationship of Rumi and Sufism to the universe and the individual journey to love by specifically analyzing the journeys of the characters in Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*, Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, and Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days*.

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I argue that the characters in Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*, Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, and Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* embark on individual journeys, driven by the teachings of Sufism and poetry of Rumi, of self-reflection and spiritual reformation in the midst of good versus evil, essentially challenging the representations of Islamic and American cultures, or the boundaries between the East and West. The authors of the novels each reflect the Sufi's unifying and transforming power of Love through their characters' narratives. This radical love is a love with God and with humanity; it is a love which transcends borders, definitions, stereotypes, corruption, and limitations. Once one finds love with God, Divine Love, and with humanity, one is able to find their Self and identity within the world. To develop the relationship between Sufism and Rumi's poetry with the transforming power of Love, I analyze the journey of radical love in each of the novels in relation to the teachings and philosophies of Sufism and Rumi. I begin with a general discussion of Rumi and Sufism and then discuss the relationship to Love as a spiritual rebirth and transforming force, surpassing evil, economic globalization, borders, and political corruption.

In Chapter 1, "The Borderless and Limitless Rumi and Philosophy of Sufism," I discuss the beginnings of the widely known poet Rumi and draw on the connections between Rumi's poetry and the teachings of Sufism. Essentially, Sufism is a philosophy of radical love, offered and available to each person. William C. Chittick defines a Sufi as someone who "transcends his own individual self and reaches God" (9). To be a Sufi, one must embark on an individual journey to find a radical love and union with God

and with humanity. This radical love is a transformative and redemptive love that one finds on the journey in search of Divine Love, also referred to as God. Divine Love, God, is the attainable goal; when one attains a union with Divine Love, he or she can express a radical love to the world. Sufism urges for a universal love and unity among all of humanity. There are no limitations, definitions, labels, or borders to the Sufi philosophy. Shafak, Hamid, and Mahfouz each reflect the teachings of Rumi and Sufism in their novels, challenging readers to seek and find this universal love in our modern world of corruption and borders.

For Chapter 2, “The Transforming Power of a Universal Love Without Labels or Definitions,” I turn to Elif Shafak’s *The Forty Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi*, a transnational novel that parallels the 13th and 21st centuries through the characters’ relationships and narratives in the novel. The narratives woven together present love as a binding and transforming force as it binds the East and the West and the past and present. I specifically focus on the relationships of Rumi and Shams in relation to Aziz and Ella—through which Shafak presents a love that can transcend all cultures, religions, ethnicities, and borders.

Chapter 3, “A Debranded Love That Surpasses Economic Globalization and Bridges Eastern and Western Cultures,” focuses on Mohsin Hamid’s *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, a novel of nameless characters and settings. A claimed self-help book, the nameless main character, “you,” desiring a good position economically and socially, embarks on an individual journey of radical love and spiritual reformation amid the economic globalization. Leaving his desire to achieve a high position economically

and socially, “you” is able to find his Self and radical love as represented through the metaphorical love with “the pretty girl.”

I turn to Naguib Mahfouz’s *Arabian Nights and Days*, an adaptation of *One Thousand and One Nights*, in Chapter 4: “Spiritual Rebirth and Redemption Amid Political Corruption and Instability.” I focus on the characters’ decisions in a world of corruption and desire for power. Each of the characters embark on an individual journey in which they must choose either love and goodness or corruption. Reflecting Rumi’s poetry and Sufism, Mahfouz urges for a love for God, justice, and humanity amid corruption and evil. When the characters choose to find a radical love, they are able to find redemption and spiritual rebirth, showing that this Love is available to all who are willing to embark on the journey.

Each of the contemporary novels discussed in Chapters 2 through 4 explore the transforming power of radical love, a reflection of both Sufi teachings and Rumi’s poetry, amid the evil, corruption, and divisions in today’s world. Despite the teachings of Sufism and Rumi being from centuries ago, the message is still relatable and significant to our world today. The authors present a Love that is universal and borderless, challenging and confronting the perspectives of readers concerning the divisions and borders between the East and West. There is a oneness to religion and spirituality, to Love. To find one’s identity, one must embark on an individual journey to find radical love, to find love with God and with humanity. Each of the authors leave behind definitions of *Other*, of cultures, and of ethnicities and locations. The authors urge individuals to find unity and coexistence in the world amid the corruption and chaos through the narratives of their characters. Each of the beautifully written novels discussed in this thesis are more

than just for entertaining readers; rather the novels confront the limitations, borders, and boundaries that no longer need to separate the Eastern and Western cultures and the past and present.

CHAPTER 1: THE BORDERLESS AND LIMITLESS RUMI AND PHILOSOPHY OF SUFISM

“Their dance is our dance.”

--Jalal ad-Din Rumi

Jalal al-Din Rumi, widely known as Rumi, was a thirteenth-century Persian poet who reflected the Sufi philosophy through his reflection of Divine Love. As William C. Chittick states in his *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi*, Rumi was “one of the greatest spiritual masters of Islam” (1) and is well-known and studied by Orientalists today. Rumi’s father, Baha al-Din Vialad, a Sufi, and the mystic Shams Tabrizi both greatly influenced Rumi to become a Sufi and reflect the ideas and teachings of Sufism in his poetry. In “Rumi: A Cosmopolitan Counter-Narrative to Islamaphobia,” Ehsan Akbari discusses Rumi’s childhood, a period when Rumi and his family moved around because of the “advancements of Genghis Khan’s Mongolian army,” (53) in relationship with Rumi’s representation of diversity and the Sufi philosophy in his poetry. Rumi and his family encountered many different cultures, races, and social classes as they moved from place to place. This “openness to different cultures was inspired by Sufi philosophy, which views all humans as belonging to one human community regardless of race, culture, class, or creed” (Akbari 54). As evident in Rumi’s poetry and authors’ reflections of Rumi’s teachings and the Sufi philosophy, Sufism embodies an openness toward unity and radical love among all peoples.

In “Mevlana Jalāl-ad-Dīn Rumi and Mindfulness,” Gretty Mirdal calls Rumi an ““eminent philosopher and mystical poem of Islam who advocated tolerance, reason, and access to knowledge through love. His mystical relationship to Islam produced

masterpieces that well beyond the borders of Turkey have marked Islamic culture and devotion” (1203). Mirdal argues that Rumi changed the way of “spiritual assumptions of his day,” (1203) challenging for a more redemptive journey of love and universal spirituality. Rumi advocated a radical and extreme love on the individual path to God, obvious throughout his poetry. Rumi represents the need for a “marriage” or unity with God in his poem “This Marriage”:

May these vows and this marriage be blessed.
May it be sweet milk,
this marriage, like wine and halvah.
May this marriage offer fruit and shade
like the date palm.
May this marriage be full of laughter,
our every day a day in paradise.
May this marriage be a sign of compassion,
a seal of happiness here and hereafter.
May this marriage have a fair face and a good name,
an omen as welcomes the moon in a clear blue sky.
I am out of words to describe
how spirit mingles in this marriage. (Poems by Rumi)

Rumi uses the language, diction, and imagery in his poems to describe his love for God, his “marriage” to God. Rumi believes this “marriage” with God is accessible for all and is a necessity to love and one’s ability to find identity in the world. The marriage reference is not a marriage between a couple, but rather the allegorical “marriage” between Rumi

and God—Rumi believed a marriage with God and a love for God to be a “sweet milk.” Another poem of Rumi’s, “The True Sufi,” truly expresses the essence of Sufism and the individual journey to radical love:

What makes the Sufi? Purity of heart;
Not the patched mantle and the lust perverse
Of those vile earth-bound men who steal his name.
He in all dregs discerns the essence pure:
In hardship ease, in tribulation joy.
The phantom sentries, who with batons drawn
Guard Beauty's place-gate and curtained bower,
Give way before him, unafraid he passes,
And showing the King's arrow, enters in. (Poems by Rumi)

Essentially, one must be pure of heart, rid themselves of evil, and suffer with joy during tribulations to be a Sufi. It is when one is able to find purity, leave behind evil, and suffer with joy that they may find unity with God, may find radical love through God on their journey.

Sufism is a philosophy of a radical love, of unity and peace among all peoples and cultures. It is a radical love found through the unity with the Divine, with God. However, in “Rumi, the Poet of Universal Love: The Politics of Rumi’s Appropriation in the West,” Fatma B. Cihan-Artun argues that “no definition can actually cover the exact sense of the term because, as modern studies on Sufism indicate, no single, monolithic, homogenous doctrine or philosophy of Sufism exists” (19). Sufism is a universal philosophy, a way of life, and even a religion for people of all different cultures and

locations. There is no labeling of specific religion, philosophy, or culture with Sufism.

Rumi reflects this Sufi ideal of openness and unity among all peoples of different races, cultures, classes in his poem “Only Breath”:

Not Christian or Jew or Muslim

Not Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi, or Zen

Not any religion or cultural system.

I am not from the East or the West

Not out of the ocean, or up from the ground

Not natural or ethereal

Not composed of elements at all

I do not exist.

I am not an entity in this world or the next

Did not descend from Adam or Eve

or any origin story.

My place is the placeless

A trace of the traceless

Neither body nor soul

I belong to the beloved

have seen the two worlds as one

and that one called to, and known

first, last, outer, inner

only that breath breathing human being. (Poems by Rumi)

The Sufi is not defined by place, culture, or religion; rather, the Sufi must find unity with the world, become one with the world and with the people of the world on his or her individual journey toward radical love with the Beloved, with God. This idea of being placeless, without name and identity, on one's individual journey to find radical love and unity within the world is evident in the characters' journeys in the three novels discussed in this study.

Akbari believes Sufism is centered on its openness to all cultures and peoples. Akbari defines Sufism as a "mystical subset of Islam" (54) driven by the "key philosophical belief...that the individual has a direct connection with the divine" (54). For the Sufi, this individual connection with the Divine is possible for everyone, regardless of culture, race, class, or background. As evident in the teachings of Sufism, Rumi's poetry, and the works discussed in this study, love is universal, nameless, and borderless. This radical love can be obtained by anyone who takes the individual journey and finds love with God, the Divine Love, and with humanity. There are no limitations to this divine and radical love.

When thinking about Sufism being a "mystical subset of Islam," as Akbari states, many seem to assume that Sufism is solely focused on the mystical; however, that is not necessarily true. As noted, there is not one definition or sole focus of Sufism. Paul Heck discusses this in his "Sufism—What is it Exactly," arguing, "It is not right to call all Sufism mysticism, although the mystical experience constitutes one important aspect of Sufism" (148). This is evident in Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* when the characters encounter the mystical along their individual journeys. Sufism, with a basis on the Qur'an, is about the "relation of the soul to the other (i.e. nonmaterial) world"

(Heck 149). Sufism is about letting go of the “Self” and separation from the world and from one’s identity in the world.

As Heck continues, “The role of Sufism [is] reinvigorating Muslim society with the values of Islam and spirit of the prophecy,” (151). Heck continues by arguing that “Sufism has been a very effective agent for religious renewal,” bringing attention to the corruption of the world as the Sufi followers “act as a facilitating link between society and government” (150). This is where the characters are within the novels—what are they going to choose on their journeys of renewal and redemption toward Divine Love: good or evil; unity among peoples or continued separation and hate among peoples; corruption or the love of God and the accompanying separation from the world?

As this connection to Divine Love, to God, is without limitations, so should the love for all people be without limitations. It is a universal love, offering connections to one another and to the Divine. The teachings of Sufism and the words of Rumi have had a “widespread appeal audiences in both the East and the West [and] has meant that a key legacy of Rumi in our contemporary world is in creating bridges among cultures” (Akbari 57). Using the philosophies of Rumi and Sufism, the authors of this study specifically challenge contemporary readers to create a bridge between the East and the West, to challenge the Islamic and American representations and overcome the “Islamaphobia” in the world today. These characters in these contemporary novels, in search of a radical love with the Divine, are able bridge cultures, to overcome preconceived notions and boundaries among peoples and cultures. It is when these bridges are created that one will find radical love and one’s identity within the world.

Rumi's poetry, a true embodiment of the Sufi philosophy, presents a Love that is universal and redemptive. It is a Love that is available to anyone willing to embark on the individual journey in search of God and a radical love. As evident in the three contemporary novels discussed in this study, the Love of the Sufi is a transforming force, surpassing labels, borders, economic globalization, and political corruption as it unifies humanity and offers a spiritual rebirth. There are no limitations and restrictions to the Love being offered to all. The contemporary novels weave together the past and present, representing the relevance of Sufism and Rumi's poetry to our world today. The influences of Rumi's poetry and Sufism in the novels advocate for a unification and universal Love that is needed in the world today, specifically concerning the Islamic and American representations in the world. To be a Sufi or to exemplify the Love in Rumi's poetry, one must simply make the decision to embark on the individual journey of spiritual reformation, redemption, and Love.

CHAPTER 2: THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF A UNIVERSAL LOVE WITHOUT LABELS OR DEFINITIONS

“We are not hundreds and thousands of different beings. We are all One.”

--Elif Shafak

A transnational and bestselling female author in Turkey, Elif Shafak, author of *The Forty Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi*, was born in Strasburg, “raised in Turkey...by her mother (a westernized, rationalist person) and her grandmother (a very smart traditionalist, still believing in the power of fairy tales and old remedies,” then to Spain, and then to America (Chira 77). Shafak is known for challenging perspectives and borders of past and present and of the East and West in her literature. Shafak does exactly this in her *The Forty Rules of Love*, essentially a story within in a story, as she parallels the 13th and 21st centuries through the relationships of Rumi, the poet, and Shams, the mystic; and Ella, a housewife, and Aziz, a writer. The characters’ narratives woven together in the novel present love as a universal binding and healing force between the East and the West, between the past and the present, and among all humanity and with God.

Shafak’s *The Forty Rules of Love* has been well-received and a best-seller. In Alev Adil’s book review of *The Forty Rules of Love*, Adil argues that Shafak’s “engaging vision of a gentle non-judgmental Sufis path to Islam that rejects religious fundamentalism and is accessible to all,” (Independent) is what made the novel a bestseller. Despite the novel being controversial, Shafak, as a Turkish female author, found a way to speak to each and every reader of her transnational novel. *The Forty Rules of Love* begins with Ella’s narrative as an unfulfilled housewife, who recently took

on a side job to read a manuscript titled *Sweet Blasphemy* by A.Z. Zahara, or Aziz. The manuscript reflects the relationship between the poet Rumi and the mystic Shams in the 13th century Anatolia. In a memo, Aziz argues, “In many ways the twenty-first century is not that different from the thirteenth century. Both will be recorded in history as times of unprecedented religious clashes, cultural misunderstandings, and a general sense of insecurity and fear of the Other. At times like this, the need for love is greater than ever” (Shafak 15). As Ella reads Aziz’s manuscript, a story of borderless and limitless love, she begins to embark on her own journey for this radical love. As Rumi finds love with humanity and with God because of his relationship with Shams, Ella begins to find love in the same way through her relationship with Aziz. As Aziz states, “Almost eight hundred years later, the spirits of Shams and Rumi are still alive today, whirling amid us somewhere...” (Shafak 20).

The Forty Rules of Love quickly shifts between the narratives of the characters of both the 13th and 21st centuries. Shams, a Sufi mystic who “had sworn to protect life and do no harm,” (Shafak 31) is always in search of God’s radical love amid the corruption, violence, and hate of the 13th century. In the paralleled narrative, Ella is living in her own chaos and unhappiness as “deep inside she longed for love” (Shafak 37). Despite having her husband and children and her housewife duties, Ella feels that she is missing something, which she realizes through her correspondence with Aziz. As the story moves back to 1242, we learn that Shams is a wandering dervish and has traveled through many different places and cultures. As he traveled among the many different peoples and cultures, Shams created “a list that wasn’t written down in any book, only inscribed in [his] soul,” (Shafak 40) known as “The Forty Rules of the

Religion of Love.” These forty rules of love are integrated throughout Shafak’s novel as Shams uses the forty rules to challenge and encourage the characters in the 13th century to find love-- a love that can exist among and beyond all cultures and boundaries.

Part of the first rule recounted by Shams in his narrative is “*Knowing your self will lead you to the knowledge of God*” (Shafak 40). As Shams encourages Rumi to find his self, Aziz’s manuscript encourages Ella to find her Self. Finding one’s self leads to the knowledge of God, leads to Divine Love. As Ella begins the manuscript, she boldly writes in an email to Aziz: “It seems like you believe that love is the essence of life and that nothing else matters...Suffice it to say that I do not completely agree” (Shafak 44). At this point of the novel, Ella is unaware of the individual journey of love she is soon to embark on. In his email response to Ella, Aziz emphasizes the need for Love in all aspects of life. As evident over the course of the characters’ narratives, love is a driving and binding force.

As the novel shifts back to Shams’s narrative, Shams begins his journey in search for Rumi, stating one of his rules to Baba Zaman: “*You can study God through everything and everyone in the universe, because God is not confined in a mosque, synagogue, or church. But if you are still in need of knowing where exactly His abode is, there is only one place to look for Him: in the heart of a true love*” (Shafak 58). In their “The Sufi Phenomenon: The Case of Elif Shafak’s *The Forty Rules of Love*,” Fatima Anjum and Muhammed Ramzan claim that “Shafak has pictured Sufism as a Universal Spirituality devoid of any religious and social restraint. Anyone who has a pure heart teeming with Love for God and humanity is a Sufi” (1). Love with the Divine, with God

and humanity is possible for all cultures, religions, locations, and mores. Divine Love extends beyond boundaries, perspectives, and stereotypes, essentially binding humanity together. Anjum and Ramzan continue by arguing, “Religions are like rivers. They all flow in the same sea...All religions are only one religion” (1). In her novel, Shafak represents this universal idea of religion, a true basis of Sufism, throughout her novel as her characters try to find Divine Love.

As Ella continues in her personal search for Love, influenced by Aziz and his manuscript, she begins to realize she must let go of her sole identity as a housewife. She also realizes things will turn out as they should when she learns to stop wanting and interfering, (Shafak 79) a goal of the Sufi. Shifting back to the narrative of Shams, he begins his journey to find Rumi realizing he “had embarked on an inner journey of Love...It was [Sham’s] tenth rule: *East, west, south, or north makes little difference. No matter what your destination, just be sure to make every journey a journey within. If you travel within, you’ll travel the whole wide world and beyond*” (Shafak 86). As Shams accepts his inner journey and reflection of within and of his self, Ella realizes she, too, must embark on her inner journey of Love, of within and of her Self. As evident in the journey of Shams and Ella, when on a quest for Divine Love, change within takes place: “*There is no seeker among those who search for Love who has not matured on the way. The moment you start looking for Love, you start to change within and without*” (Shafak 87). It is when one finds this Love that one can change and find a new Self, becoming one who is able to change and represent a universal love.

As Shams enters the town where he will encounter Rumi, we read Shams’s perspective about the thirteenth century city:

Having thus settled down, I roamed the streets, amazed at the mixture of religions, customs, and languages permeating the air. I ran into Gypsy musicians, Arab travelers, Christian pilgrims, Jewish merchants, Buddhist priests, Frankish troubadours, Persian artists, Chinese acrobats, Indian snake charmers, Zoroastrian magicians, and Greek philosophers.... I heard people speak Venetian, Hebrew, and several other dialects I couldn't even distinguish. Despite their seemingly endless differences, all of these people gave off a similar air of incompleteness, of the works in progress that they were, each an unfinished masterwork. (Shafak 109).

Shafak presents the idea that it is possible to find Love, peace, and unity in such chaos and in the corruption of this city. One of the first characters Shams encounters on his journey to find Rumi is Desert Rose, a prostitute in a brothel. Shams believes each person can change when searching for and discovering Love amid corruption and suffering. As Anjum and Ramzan argue, "Love is a great transformational force. It leaves its print on its seeker. This quest of love is not a passive one; it changes the seeker" (2). Love is the changing force and is possible for any person willing to embark on the journey.

It is not long after Shams makes his visit at the brothel that Desert Rose has a desire to hear Rumi preach. Desert Rose had been taken by a gang leader when it was discovered that she was still a virgin, and she had served the needs of many as a prostitute since. She is now "in another world altogether—a world of malice, rape, brutality and disease. [She] had successive abortions until [she] was damaged so badly that [she] stopped having periods and could no longer deceive" (Shafak 120). Yet,

Shams promised redemption and revival when one is in search of Divine Love. As Desert Rose is sitting in the mosque full of men, listening to Rumi, she is recognized by Baybars the Warrior who runs her out of the mosque because of her “hypocrisy.” Yet, it should be mentioned that Baybars the Warrior regularly visits the brothel himself, yet still considers himself “better” or justified. Anjum and Ramzan observe that “Desert Rose is a harlot; her body is tormented by lust-seekers like those of Baybars but so far her heart has a place for Love she is considered pure by Sufi like Shams” (3). Desert Rose then runs into Shams who reminds her, “Because there is no such thing as ‘them’, just as there is no ‘I’. All you need to do is keep in mind how everything and everyone in this universe is interconnected. We are not hundreds and thousands of different beings. We are all One” (Shafak 135). Sufism is centered around the idea of all being one, all being connected. There are no distinctions among peoples and culture for the Sufi. Desert Rose is able to see this through her encounter with Shams, as she chooses to find radical love outside of her corrupt past.

Shafak also represents the Sufi belief of Oneness through the love relationship of Ella and Aziz, the relationship of Kerra and Rumi, and even the relationship of Rumi and Shams over the course of the novel. In her “The ‘Rumi Phenomenon’ Between Orientalism and Cosmopolitanism: The Case of Elif Shafak’s *The Forty Rules of Love*,” Elena Furlanetto argues that Shafak parallels “the relationship of mystical love that binds Rumi and Shams of Tabriz and the extra-marital relationship between the American housewife Ella and the Sufi adept Aziz-Zahara” (205). After Ella sends a picture of herself, an American housewife with days consisting of the same tasks, to Aziz and receives a picture of Aziz in return, Ella sees him “dressed in a black shirt and

black trousers, he had a lean build, a sharp nose, high cheekbones, and long, dark, wavy hairy falling to his shoulders” (Shafak 185). As Ella desires the man in the photo, she realizes he resembles Shams from *Sweet Blasphemy*. This is where a connection between Rumi and Ella is even evident in Shafak’s novel, as both Ella and Rumi are “rigidly disciplined characters, living lives with no margins for unpredictably, until they both encounter their ‘Shams’ and undergo a spiritual transformation” (Furlanetto 205). Both Ella and Rumi are able to find Love through their unpredicted and unexpected relationships, full of a mystical love.

The relationship of Kerra and Rumi is also an unpredicted and unexpected relationship in Shafak’s novel. As Kerra struggles with the arrival of Shams and the corresponding absence of her husband Rumi, she “recall[s] the old days—especially the time when Rumi stood by [her] despite all odds” (Shafak 178). As Kerra was a Christian, and Rumi a wandering dervish, Shafak represents a Oneness of religions through their marriage. Kerra clearly believes in the philosophy of Oneness as represented in her thoughts concerning her marriage with Rumi:

Anatolia is made up of a mixture of religions, peoples, and cuisines. If we can eat the same food, sing the same sad songs, believe in the same superstitions, and dream the same dreams at night, why shouldn’t we be able to live together? I have known Christian babies with Muslim names and Muslim babies fed by Christian milk mothers. Ours is an ever-liquid world where everything flows and mixes. If there is a frontier between Christianity and Islam, it has to be more flexible than scholars on both sides think it is...They make it sound as if the two religions are a world

apart. But if you ask me, when it comes to the basics, ordinary Christians and ordinary Muslims have more in common with each other than with their own scholars. (Shafak 179)

Through Kerra and Rumi's marriage, a mixing of Christianity and Islam, Shafak pushes readers to address and simply see the Oneness of religions and the unity of humanity and Love.

This Oneness of religions and humanity is also represented in the relationship between Ella and Aziz, when Ella is forced to think about her own thoughts concerning religions. Ella believed that "the major problem consuming the world today, just as in the past, was religion. With their unparalleled arrogance and self-proclaimed belief in the supremacy of their ways, religious people got on her nerves" (Shafak 159). Of course, Aziz pushes her to think differently about the separations of religions. Ella realizes that Aziz was spiritual but "stayed away from all contemporary politics," (Shafak 159) focusing on Divine Love and the world amid corruption and hate in the modern world. There is a Love that is possible between all religions, beliefs, cultures, and peoples.

Through the characters' narratives and relationships in her novel, Shafak presents the argument that there is a sameness among all of us, when people focus on the basics of humanity and Love. As represented through the relationships in the novel, Shafak presents an argument that "peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims is possible once the limitations of doctrine have been transcended" (Furlanetto 206). Through the perspectives of Ella and even Kerra, readers are challenged to address their personal perspectives concerning Islam and those of the Middle East. As Anatolia is full of many diverse peoples, ethnicities, religions, and cultures, through Rumi's

poetry and the universal themes of Sufism, *“The Forty Rules of Love...facilitates the identification of the American reader with Middle Eastern characters and settings”* (Furlanetto 207). Our contemporary world is also full of diverse peoples, ethnicities, religions, and cultures. There is a universal love that can coexist among the diverse peoples, ethnicities, religions, and cultures, specifically between the East and the West. However, one must address his or her own Self and identity in their individual search for Divine Love to find this universal love.

As Shams and Rumi continue to work together and embark on a journey of love, Rumi realizes and understand that “he is neither of the East nor of the West. He belongs to the Kingdom of Love. He belongs to the Beloved” (Shafak 183). Shams has pushed Rumi to find Divine Love through Rumi’s poetry and Shams’s forty rules of love. Love is the end goal, and it is a love than transcends all boundaries and borders. One of Shams’s forty rules of love is *“the universe is one being. Everything and everyone is interconnected through an invisible web of stories. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are all in a silent conversation”* (Shafak 207). Shafak represents this interconnection of stories through the paralleled narratives in *The Forty Rules of Love*. Boundaries are erased when Love covers all things. Even Desert the Rose leaves behind her defined life of prostitution to search for the Divine Love, to find her Self as she leaves behind the filth to find love, peace, and purity.

As Ella continues to correspond with Aziz, she realizes she has found Love, both literally and metaphorically, which she informs her husband of at dinner one evening, when he accuses her of having an affair: “I didn’t go out and seek love...Rumi says we don’t need to hunt for love outside ourselves. All we need to do is to eliminate the

barriers that keep up away from love” (Shafak 250). As Ella continues to find this Love through her emails with Aziz, she grows further and further away from her husband.

Finding this universal Love is part of the Sufi’s elimination of borders and boundaries.

Anjum and Ramzan argue:

Love is a common denominator for mankind. It dissolves all digressions and divergences. It has such a power which can bind opposing entities together and patch up all clashes. That is what happened to Aziz and Ella when they fall in a spiritual relationship despite of geographical, religious, and social manacles (4).

To find Divine Love and one’s Self, one must understand that there is a Oneness of humanity that is and can only be based on a universal Love. The marriage of Rumi and Kerra represents this Love, as does the relationship of Aziz and Ella. Through the forty rules of love of Shams, Rumi learns about and finds this universal Love. Paralleled, Aziz uses Shams’s forty rules of love in his manuscript to reach his readers, essentially Ella, who like Rumi learns about and finds this universal Love.

After learning from Shams the true essence of Divine Love, Rumi “embraced people of all faiths. He was kind toward not only Muslims but also Christians, Jews, and even pagans...his circle of love became so vast it included even the most fallen of society—prostitutes, drunks, and beggars, the scum of the scum” (Shafak 388). This Divine Love is without limitations, boundaries, and divisions. It is a Love that covers all of humanity. Anjum and Ramzan claim that “it is easy to love a perfect God, but real spirituality lies in loving humans replete with faults and blemishes” (4). To find Divine Love individually, one must love humanity, as we are all One and interconnected. As

evident in the characters' narratives, love transforms. The religion of a Sufi is simply the "religion of love. And we are all connected in a chain of hearts" (Shafak 344). Ella chose to leave her husband and family for Love and Aziz, yet Aziz ends up dying at the end of the novel. However, through this journey of Love and relationship with Aziz, Ella was able to learn the true power of love as she quotes the final rule of the forty rules of love to her daughter: *"A life without love is of no account. Don't ask yourself what kind of love you should seek, spiritual or material, divine or mundane, Eastern or Western... Divisions only lead to more divisions. Love has no labels, no definitions. It is what it is, pure and simple. Love is the water of life"* (Shafak 350). Through the paralleled narratives of Ella and Rumi, Shafak pushes readers to address the unifying power of a borderless and limitless love.

CHAPTER 3: A DEBRANDED LOVE THAT SURPASSES
ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION
AND BRIDGES EASTERN AND WESTERN CULTURES

“and so may you, may I, may we, so may all of us confront the end.”

--Mohsin Hamid

Known for his novels *Moth Smoke*, *Exit West*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, Mohsin Hamid's works have been widely acclaimed by most critics. Hamid challenges the reader's perspective of the developing world and inequality and “reaffirms his place as one of his generation's most inventive and gifted writers” (*The Guardian*). Hamid is known for his use of the second-person address in his novels, which has received more praise than criticism. Even though his most recent novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* takes on the form of a self-help book amid economic globalization and violence, Hamid still employs the second-person address in the journey of love in which he continues to reflect the teachings of Sufism and Rumi, evident in his contemporary novels.

The unnamed setting, possibly resembling Lahore, of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* becomes a place of ambiguity, calling into question “global knowledge of Pakistan” (A True Lahori). In addition to the ambiguous setting, Hamid's characters in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* are also unnamed. In “A True Lahori: Mohsin Hamid and the Problem of Place in Pakistani Fiction,” Ulka Anjaria sums up Hamid's role in his literature: “Hamid is part of a trend in postcolonial writing toward the reconsideration of place in the context of new transnational paradigms, emerging from the globalization of capital, and the new experiences for the postcolonial elite that have

accompanied it” (4). Hamid is known for his ambiguity and second-person address, which challenge his readers’ perspectives concerning the world. Readers are encouraged to think about the effects of the economic globalization in relation to *place*. Readers see the globalization through a different set of eyes-- “you” from the novel. In her “Beyond Economic Globalization in Mohsin Hamid’s *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*: The False Promise of Self-Help and Possibilities through Reading with a Creative Mind,” Liliana M. Naydan discusses the debranding and ambiguity in the novel. Bringing attention to the globalization taking place in Pakistan in the novel, Naydan states that “globalization brings with it ‘mass displacement, wars, terrorism, unchecked financial capitalism, inequality, xenophobia, [and] climate change’” (3). Throughout the novel, Hamid represents what globalization produces, challenging readers to reflect upon the system and its effects.

The two main characters in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* are “you” and the “pretty girl.” In his book review, Steve Inskeep discusses the second-person address in the novel: “Hamid returns to the second person in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, but this time it’s in the form of a self-help book – a particularly sly one” (NPR). There have been many discussions concerning Hamid’s use of second person in all three of his novels, however, the consensus tends to revolve around the same idea: “you” is essentially referencing the reader, directly challenging the perspective of the reader. As Inskeep states, “Hamid is telling ‘you’ how your life will unfold” (NPR). However, it appears that there is more to the second address “you” than just the idea of challenging the perspective of the reader. Naydan argues that “without names, the fictional world of Hamid’s novel emerges at least in part as fresh. It exists as relatively

free of the drawbacks of globalization as Hamid at times discussed them” (3). By debranding names and places, readers can see that “you” could be anyone and the setting could be any *place*. Readers can also see that the Love in the novel is available to anyone.

Not only has Hamid used the second person address in most of his novels, but there are also strong connections to Sufism or Sufi poetry in each of his novels. In an interview with Inskeep, Hamid discusses the connections to Sufism in his novels, “There’s a form a poetry, Sufi poetry, which is Islamic mystic poetry, as a secular Sufi poem. Contrary to what you often hear about [other brands of] Islam and its representations in America, this is a form that really says the way to relate to the universe – to God, to the divine, to mortality, to life – is through creating a sense of love” (Inskeep). Love is central to Rumi’s writing; it is a love that is an intimate relationship on a journey to God, or Divine Love. Love is a crucial part of the individual journey of the reader, of “you.” This journey to Divine Love, this agony of wanting more, is evident in Hamid’s writing.

The main character, “you,” is on a journey in a self-help narrative. Reflecting on the journey of love in Hamid’s latest novel, Inskeep observes, “The main character’s encounters with the ‘pretty girl’ are among the novel’s most memorable. Maybe this is the ‘help’ that the author of the self-help book is offering ‘you’: a reminder of the importance, as Hamid says, of ‘having a love for something other than yourself’” (NPR). This idea of the self-help advice pushing “you” toward some Love other than yourself reflects Sufi poetry and teachings of Rumi.

A journey toward Divine Love, inward and outward reflections, and the second-person address are also weaved throughout Hamid's novels. In "Helping the novel: Neoliberalism, Self-Help, and the Narrating of the Self in Mohsin Hamid's *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*," Angela Poon discusses Hamid's connection of the second person address to a reflection of the "self" in Hamid's novels, in which she observes, "The self as the constant object of surveillance, whether by mechanical devices or the naked eye in the urban modernity the characters inhabit, offers one instance where a change in perspective and a change in self are explicitly linked" (7). Her essay continues to discuss how Hamid's use of "you" challenges the reader's perspective, but also challenges the reader's understanding of "self." Despite the few criticisms concerning Hamid's second-person address in his novels, it seems that Hamid's challenges to his readers would not have sufficiently affected the reader without the use of "you" in the way Hamid intended.

As the novel begins, the reader is quickly informed that they are reading a self-help book: "This book is a self-help book. Its objective, as it says on the cover, is to show you how to get filthy rich in rising Asia" (Hamid 4). To achieve the status of "filthy rich," the main character, "you," must complete 12 steps involving economics and social class. "You" must essentially "climb the ladder" of success. Before "you" begins his journey, the reader learns about his current situation of hepatitis E-- "its typical mode of transmission is fecal oral" (Hamid 4). Naydan claims that Hamid is representing the "sewage system gone wrong and one that arguably parodies globalization as a toxic economic system gone wrong" (5). At the end of the first chapter of Hamid's novel, "you" accomplishes the first step of moving to the city. He then becomes a DVD delivery boy

and falls in love with the also nameless “pretty girl,” who is also trying to climb the social ladder to success.

After a sexual encounter between “you” and the “pretty girl,” “you” sees the girl on a billboard, modeling clothes (Hamid 61). “You” realizes that the “pretty girl” has moved up the social class ladder as she “has finally succeeded in securing a place of her own” and makes a “modest living off print and runway work” (Hamid 62). “You” realizes that the “pretty girl” has made a name for herself in the industry, leaving “you” behind. Naydan states, “Like the nameless protagonist but to a greater degree, the pretty girl buys into the capitalist system and the dream of upward mobility as globalization propagates it,” (5) and surpasses her social class in the process. Yet, over the course of the novel, the “pretty girl” ends up where she began, when her “forty-year affair with her adopted metropolis comes to an end,” (Hamid 196) and she must sell her shop and face reality. While the “pretty girl” has made moves to surpass her social class, “you” has decided to become his own boss, as “you” sells bottled-water during the city’s lack of clean water. To achieve his goal as a successful businessman, “you” and his employees “affix tamper-resistant caps and transparent safety wrapping atop your fraudulent product,” (Hamid 100) essentially providing “clean” water that is not actually clean. Becoming his own boss with a focus on only himself, “you” is unaware of those impacted by his decisions and actions in the process—allegorically representing the negative effects of the economic globalization taking place.

As Hamid shows throughout the course of *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, the advice offered throughout the chapters brings attention to the negative effects that

come along with one's advancement amid globalization. Naydan also discusses these negative effects, arguing:

Put another way, becoming filthy rich requires the exploitation of others. It requires treating others as less than human or altogether inhuman—as existing for the sole purpose of serving an inevitably self-serving boss and a system of global capitalism that aims to only perpetuate itself to the benefit of the elite who run the system. (7)

Through the nameless protagonist's exploitation of others, Hamid is representing the exploitation that accompanies globalization and capitalism which brings with it violence. As "you" tries to move up the social and economic ladder, he experiences violence throughout his journey to get filthy rich in rising Asia. As "you" follows the advice to get an education, he finds himself faced with violence for being one of the smartest students, as his teacher uses sand to "grip [him] by the ear, the sand adding abrasion to the enormous pressure [the teacher] applies. So that [his] earlobe is not only crushed but also made raw and slightly bloody" (Hamid 23). However, this is only the beginning of the violence accompanying the protagonist's journey to become filthy rich amid the economic globalization and corruption.

In the seventh chapter "BE PREPARED TO USE VIOLENCE," we read, "Distasteful though it may be, it was inevitable, in a self-help book such as this, that we would eventually find ourselves broaching the topic of violence. Becoming filthy rich requires a degree of unsqueamishness, whether in rising Asia or anywhere else" (Hamid 119). Hamid is arguing that with wealth, capitalism, and globalization, there will

be violence, greed, hatred, and negative effects as everyone is fighting for themselves.

Hamid presents a picture of the violence in the seventh chapter:

At this moment, smoke and tear gas coil in the air above a commercial boulevard. A vinegar-soaked scarf hangs at your neck as you drive, ready to serve as a makeshift filter against the fumes. The riot is not ongoing, but neither is it entirely over, with packs of police hunting stragglers. Around you broken glass and bits of rubble rest like five o'clock shadow on the city's smooth concrete.

The building at the address you seek has been hit with petrol bombs, its whitewashed colonial facade blackened by smoke. (120-1)

Violence becomes a way to obtain wealth and power in this city quenched with a desire for greed and wealth. With this violence, Hamid represents the problems of globalization: "violence serves as clear evidence of the problem with the toxic system that produces a majority of have-nots and perhaps constitutes the very problem itself" (Naydan 6). "You" now must be protected by a body guard with a gun. Fears of terrorism and desires for greed and wealth have brought about more violence in the city. In the face of violence and globalization, on his journey to becoming filthy rich, "you" loses an inner love and an understanding of "self."

As the protagonist's business prospers and violence increases, "you" realizes he has lost his connection with his family, specifically his wife. "You" is more focused on his worldly desires and has become unconnected from his wife. "You" has not only lost his connection to his wife, but also to his "self." As Hamid directly addresses the topics of social instability, violence, and economic growth, "you" is on a journey to find his

identity, to find his “self.” However, “you” struggles with his focus solely being on his economic growth and wealth. “You” even begins to “compensate materially,” (Hamid 135) trying to buy gifts for his wife to demonstrate his love, but their distance continues to grow. As “you” and the love for his wife disappears, so is his love for the world, humanity, and his “self” disappearing. As there is an agony of wanting more, “you” tries to fill that agony with personal wants, worldly possessions, economic growth, and wealth. Yet, that is not where the inner love and peace is found.

As the novel provides tips to becoming filthy rich, “you” and the “pretty girl” continue to encounter one another as they are each on their individual journeys to fill the gap and desire for more. “Pretty girl” has become the “archetypal woman” (Hamid 135) for “you,” constantly being reminded of “pretty girl” in his failing relationship with his wife. It is important to note that “you” and “pretty girl” met before they each began their journeys in search of economic growth amid globalization and capitalism, and they end their journeys together, after their searches for wealth and worldly possessions have ended. As mentioned, there is a “reminder of the important, as Hamid says, of ‘having a love for something other than yourself’” (Inskeep). “You” was unable to love his wife in his quest for wealth and prosperity, but “you” finds that he can now love the “pretty girl.” As their discovery of Love, a love that is more than just physical, but also spiritual and emotional, took the entire course of the novel, essentially the timespan of their lives, Hamid represents the idea that “love only emerges between them when they open themselves to allowing it to supplant their capitalist impulses as Hamid hopes love will supplant capitalist impulses for his readers “(Naydan 12). They each had to find their

“self” and an inner Love as they let go of their capitalist and selfish desires and wants on their individual journey.

The “pretty girl,” essentially representing an inner and deeper love, becomes the “possible solution to the violence that global capitalism creates,” (Naydan 12) as she brings about spiritual reform. She represents the innocent love before the economic globalization and violence; she essentially represents the inner journey of love, the journey toward God. It is a love with one’s “self,” with God, with humanity, and with the universe. After the “pretty girl” has died because of cancer, “you” also finds himself on his deathbed. As his ex-wife and son are physically present, “you” reflects:

She is here. And she comes to you, and she does not speak, and the others do not notice her, and she takes your hand, and you are ready yourself to die, eyes open, aware this is all an illusion, a last aroma cast up by the chemical stew that is your brain, which will soon cease to function, and there will be nothing, and you are ready, ready to die well, ready to die like a man, like a woman, like a human, for despite all else you have loved, you have loved your father and your mother and your bother and your sister and your son and, yes, your ex-wife, and you have loved the pretty girl, you have been beyond yourself, and so you have courage, and you have dignity, and you have calmness in the face of terror, and awe, and the pretty girl holds your hand, and you contain her, and this book, and me writing it, and I too contain you, who may not yet even be born, you inside me inside you, though not in a creepy way, and so may you, may I, so may all of us confront the end. (Hamid 228)

As “you” nears his death, he realizes he has found love; he has found peace, calmness, and awe. Most importantly, he also realizes that there is a sameness, a oneness, among humanity. Naydan argues that Hamid clearly represents “the pervasive and utterly transcendent sense of love that the nameless protagonist experiences at his life’s end—love that multinational corporation that propagates economic globalization could never foster” (13). Rather, through a spiritual reform and his relationship with “pretty girl,” “you” is able to find Love, to find “self,” and to find unity and harmony with humanity and the world.

Hamid presents a love without name, a love that surpasses boundaries and survives globalization, capitalism, and violence. Through Sufi ideas and the spiritual journey of “you,” Hamid examines the human’s role in a world of globalization. Naydan quotes Hamid’s statement that the Sufi poem is “‘where a love is used as the prism for relating to the universe’” (11). Love was the sole focus and driving force of “you”’s individual journey throughout the novel. Akbari claims that writers of Sufism and Rumi use “human love as allegorical to the love of the divine” (54). The human love of “you” and “the girl” represents the allegorical love and intimate connection with the divine. The love throughout *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* is a “love that initially manifests itself toward other humans and eventually manifests itself as love for the divine...to replace capitalism as a globalizing force” (Naydan 11). As “you” is facing death at the end of the novel, he is able to feel Love and see Love in his past, to see Love with everyone who was part of his journey-- a Love that is nameless and able to be achieved by anyone.

Presenting a universal and nameless love in a nameless city, as represented

between “you” and “pretty girl,” Hamid challenges representations of the Other, of love and unity with the Other. Through the character “you,” specifically addressing the reader, and the nameless characters and setting, Hamid individually challenges the reader, “invit[ing] readers to bridge the distance between themselves and their apparent Others in the same way in which Hamid as author bridges the distance between the protagonist of his novel--the unnamed you-- and the novel’s reader” (Naydan 10). Hamid reflects Rumi’s poetry and the teachings of Sufism by bridging Western and Islamic cultures. In the words of Rumi:

The minute I heard my first love story

I started looking for you, not knowing

how blind that was.

Lovers don’t meet somewhere.

They’re in each other all along. (Akbari 52)

“You” could see this Love at the end of his journey as he had felt the Love and connection with the Divine. By encouraging a nameless and borderless love, a reflection of Sufism and the teachings of Rumi, Hamid challenges readers to address the stereotypical representations of Islam and the Other.

CHAPTER 4: SPIRITUAL REBIRTH AND REDEMPTION AMID POLITICAL CORRUPTION AND INSTABILITY

“The door opened easily, giving out a magical sound, releasing a delightful fragrance.”

--Naguib Mahfouz

In his satirical adaptation of the renowned *One Thousand and One Nights*, Naguib Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* continues the narratives of the original characters with a slight twist. In *Arabian Nights and Days*, each of the characters is faced with a decision: to use corruption to overcome corruption or to choose love and goodness in the midst of the corruption and temptations in the confusion and instability of the world. Along their individual journeys, the characters encounter genies and Sheikh Abdullah al-Balkhi whose “complete devotion was no more than a prologue, for he was a Sheikh of the Way, having attained a high plane in the spiritual station of love and contentment” (Mahfouz 5). Influenced by the Sheikh's love for and contentment in God amid the corruption and evil, the characters embark on their own personal journeys to find radical love.

Through his retelling and continuation of the individual narratives, Mahfouz, a renowned novelist, reflects the ideals of Rumi and Sufism, urging a love for God, justice, and humanity. Mahfouz also brings attention to the political issues, problems with social justice, and corruption of those in positions of power. With his attention to some of these issues, the critical opinion of Mahfouz has varied. In his “Islamic Fundamentalism and the Intellectuals: The Case of Naguib Mahfouz,” Fauzi M. Najjar the reception of Mahfouz's literature. Najjar claims that most support Mahfouz's literature as they see his literature as “art, and not a theological treatise,” but the “metaphysical (religious)

framework within which issues of social justice, science, and socialism are discussed remains most problematic and controversial...and draws attention, therefore, to the understanding of the role of religion in human affairs" (139). Yet, his focus on these human affairs within his novel allows Mahfouz to bring attention to the struggle of good versus evil and the universal love and spiritual redemption that is available to all. Amid the corruption and the struggle of good versus evil, the characters of *Arabian Nights and Days* embark on individual journeys of self-reflection and reformation driven by Sufism and the mystical.

Referencing Rumi's poem, "The True Sufi," to be a Sufi, one must be pure of heart, rid themselves of evil, and suffer with joy during tribulations. It is then that one will be in a truly beautiful marriage with God-- the attainable goal of a Sufi. As evident in both *Arabian Nights and Days* and Rumi's poetry, Mirdal states that the concepts of Sufism are "acceptance and acknowledgment of both positive and negative experiences: unlearning of old habits and looking at the world with new eyes: decentering, changing one's focus from Self to Other: and attunement of body and mind through meditation, music and dance" (1206). The characters in *Arabian Nights and Days* experience these key concepts of Sufism on their individual journeys. Mirdal also claims it is imperative that "one ceases to identify with one's thoughts, feelings, and images" (1208). During corruption and through their encounters with the Sheikh and the genies, the characters in *Arabian Nights and Days* each embark on this journey of suffering, acceptance, and a new focus and understanding of identity to find their marriage or unity with God, thus finding unity with the world.

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, the characters' decisions between good and evil, their encounters with genies, and their transformations over the course of the novel are fascinating with Mahfouz intertwining each of the individual narratives into a universal message. The novel opens with the vizier Dandan meeting with the sultan Shahriyar. As Dandan stands before Shahriyar, Dandan feels "an inner fear for a man whose history has been filled with harshness, cruelty, and the spilling of innocent blood" (Mahfouz 1-2). Shahrzad sacrificed herself "in order to stem the torrent of blood" (Mahfouz 4). Shahrzad begins the novel with her powerful statement in response to the justifications of the sultan's atrocious acts: "But a crime is a crime. How many virgins has he killed! How many pious and God-fearing people has he wiped out! Only hypocrites are left in the kingdom" (Mahfouz 4). In their "The Jinn: An Equivalent to Evil in 20th Century *Arabian Nights and Days*," Ismail and Ramadan observe that the world of Shahrzad is "portrayed as a corrupt world where innocent people lose their heads for protesting against the shedding of blood (as a clear indication of contradicting the unjust ruler)" (4). Interestingly, the sultan Shahriyar is one of the most transformed characters over the course of the novel. As the novel begins, it is only through the love for God of the Sufi that can change the remaining "hypocrites." People in the kingdom "have been martyred for saying the truth in protest of the shedding of blood and the plundering of property... 'Noble and God-fearing people have been martyred'" (Mahfouz 6-7). The novel quickly moves through the following characters' narratives representing the true corruption that the characters must overcome to achieve a true and radical love with God and to find redemption.

After Sanaan is encountered by the genie or jinn, Qumqam, Sanaan “felt a desire to destroy everything that existed,” (Mahfouz 15) as the genie ““makes use of [Sanaan] in accomplishing purposes that [his] conscience does not approve of” (Mahfouz 13). There are a few different critical opinions concerning the role and representation of the genies or the jinn in *Arabian Nights and Days*. In his “The Nature and Uses of the Fantastic in the Fictional World of Naguib Mahfouz,” Nedal al-Mousa describes the genies as being the ““personification of desire”” (44). Similarly, in “Metamorphoses of Scheherazade,” Wen-Chin Ouyang claims that the genies or jinn represent the “personification of desire,” and the genie and “fantastic is equated with evil in the novel” (408). Contradicting both Al-Mousa and Ouyang, Ismail and Ramadan argue that the genies “have the power to suggest evil to humans but it is up to the human to do what they propose or not” (9). The characters in *Arabian Nights and Days* do encounter genies, and the characters must make a decision: ignore and overcome the suggested evil of the genie or succumb to the genie’s ability to encourage the darkest desires or evils within man.

Continuing with Sanaan’s desire to destroy everything that existed because of his encounter with Qumqam, Sanaan disturbingly raped and murdered a young girl, acting on his darkest desires. As “he felt himself moving in a vacuum in an intensely silent world,” (Mahfouz 19) Sanaan realizes he has become “another person; the killer-violator was another person. His soul had begotten wild beings of which he had no experience” (Mahfouz 19). Sanaan finds himself alone in his decisions between good and evil as he is faced with temptations and confusion and influences of the genie. As his narrative continues, Sanaan is aware that “he was the guilty one, of this there was

no doubt, and yet he was going about free and at large, being treated with esteem” (Mahfouz 21). Knysh’s discusses Mahouz’s representation of the corruption in *Arabian Nights and Days*, claiming that this “... ‘new age’ version of Islamic mysticism, this ‘austere and militant Sufism became a convenient vehicle for the renewal and reform of Muslim societies in the face of Western colonial expansion and the rampant corruption of Islamic values at the hands of unscrupulous rulers” (142-3). Those committing the corrupt acts are acting freely, without repercussion. It can be argued that the corruption of the individual characters is in response to the corruption of the leaders-- allegorically representing the Muslim societies’ loss of values brought about by Western colonial expansion and corrupt politics.

Not long after “being treated with esteem,” Sanaan then murdered the governor. As he desperately begs the genie to save him, the genie tells Sanaan, “I was eager to free myself from the evil of black magic, so I chose you because of your faith, despite the way you fluctuated between good and evil” (Mahfouz 27). Unable to change his focus amidst the genie’s temptations, Sanaan chose darkness and corruption resulting in his death. The following characters of Mahfouz’s narratives are forced to address their values and principles as they face the political corruption, each influenced by the ideals of Rumi: justice and love.

The journeys of the sultan and of Gamasa al-Bulti, the chief of police, stand out the most with their encounters with the genies and the mystical. Both the sultan and Gamasa al-Bulti experience a transformation influenced by Sufism. As Gamasa al-Bulti “realize[s] that he was in the presence of a genie that had been freed from a bottle,” the genie challenges Gamasa’s ideas of good and evil, right and wrong. The following is an

eye-opening conversation between the genie and Gamasa, bringing attention to the corruption of the leaders in the narratives:

“‘Mercy is for him who deserves mercy,’” said the genie sternly.

‘God’s vastnesses are spread with the opportunities granted to those who have adhered to wisdom. Thus mercy is due only to those who strive, otherwise offensive smells would spoil the purity of air illuminated by divine light, so don’t make corruption an excuse for corruption.’

‘We believe in mercy even when we are chopping necks and cropping heads.’

‘What a hypocrite you are! What’s your job?’

‘Chief of police.’

‘What titles! Do you perform your duty in a manner that pleases God?’

‘My duty is to carry out orders,’ said Gamasa apprehensively.

‘A slogan suitable for covering up all sorts of evils.’

‘I am in no position to do anything about that.’

‘If you are called upon to do good, you claim you are incapable and if you are called upon to do evil, you set about it in the name of duty.’”

(Mahfouz 33-34)

Gamasa continues to struggle with his decisions of good versus evil throughout the novel. What is right? What is wrong, necessarily? Is it wrong to use corruption to end corruption? After murdering another governor and being arrested himself, Gamasa “expected death, yet he passed it by and went off,” (Mahfouz 50) as he experienced a

transformation and watched himself being executed. Gamasa took on the “slim Ethiopian with crimped hair and a light beard” (Mahfouz 51) and became Abdullah the porter. This is just the beginning of his redemptive journey as he has lost his worldly identity.

After more corruption, Gamasa again becomes a new and transformed person: “It was neither the face of Gamasa al-Bulti nor that of Abdullah. It was a wheat-colored face with a clear complexion, a flowing black beard and thick hair with a parting that fell down to his shoulders,” (Mahfouz 74). He realized “he was without identity, without name, filled with worries and striving toward piety... ‘A being without identity, his goal is beyond the cosmos, but remember and ponder, for release from suffering has not come to you without reason’” (Mahfouz 93). This is where the transformed Gamasa embraces his journey to love and God which he is aware will include suffering and a change of focus amid corruption and temptations. Gamasa realizes his identity is in and with God. According to al-Mousa, Gamasa’s “disintegrated self is the product of the chaotic, turbulent socio-political conditions in modern Egypt” (46) and represents the spiritual rebirth of the Sufis. There is a loss of one’s Self and identity in the face of the political corruption. It is in this emptiness and loss that one can redeem himself, find radical love in God: “‘We suffer yearnings without number that they may lead us finally to the yearning after which there is no yearning, so love God and He will make everything superfluous for you’” (Mahfouz 95). In the end, Gamasa was able to recover his Self and his identity as he was faced with decisions of good versus evil on his individual journey to find redemptive love.

In his *Sufism in the Contemporary Arabic Novel*, Ziad Elmarsafy argues that the final chapter of *Arabian Nights and Days* “narrates the becoming-saint of the Sultan,” (41) portraying that “even a bloodthirsty sultan like Shahriyar, has the capacity to embark on the mystical path and become a saint” (40) and has the capacity to redeem himself and find marriage or unity with God. At the end of one journey and the beginning of another mystical and spiritual journey, the Sultan realizes that this path to radical love, to God is:

“an indication of truth's jealousy that it has not made for anyone a path to it, and that it has not deprived anyone of the hope of attaining it, and it has left people running in the deserts of perplexity and drowning in the seas of doubt; and he who thinks that he has attained it, it dissociates itself from, and he who thinks that he has dissociated himself from it has lost his way. Thus there is no attaining it and no avoiding it— it is inescapable.”
(Mahfouz 228)

Through the corruption, the new understanding of good versus evil, and the encounters with the mystical and the influence of the Sheikh, the characters are able to redeem and transform themselves, to rid themselves of Self, and to choose love over corruption and evil, to find radical love. Even the bloodthirsty Sultan is able to find this redemptive love despite his own corruption.

Firat claims that Mahfouz’s *Arabian Nights and Days*, “explores the relationship between social justice and mysticism...with his love of Sufism” (195). As Heck discusses, through the characters’ encounters with the Sheikh, the “long years of ascetical discipline, withdrawal to the desert, solitude with God, gradually gave way to

spirituality via community” (157). Ouyang argues that the characters’ struggles amid chaos and corruption is an “allegory of political reality in the Arab world,” (408). As the characters each embark on a spiritual journey, Mahfouz encourages and reflects the ideals of Rumi and Sufism. The genie even tells Sanaan: “Life gives opportunities for reflection and repentance” (23). The characters must each decide whether to continue in the pattern of corruption or to take advantage of the reflection and repentance found on a journey to love. As the characters experience times of reflection and repentance in the novel on their journeys to radical love, they realize their journeys must embrace suffering. It is through these yearnings and sufferings that push the characters to find radical love and to find their identities in God.

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, Mahfouz allegorically represents the reality of those experiencing the political and moral corruption taking place in the Arab world. Yet, alongside the political and moral corruption, Mahfouz emphasizes the need for and the possibility of spiritual rebirth, redemption, and social justice in a corrupt and instable world. Rather than using corruption as a response to fight or overcome corruption, Mahfouz encourages individuals to find their individual identity and love in God through spiritual rebirth. He encourages a love for all of humanity, a picture of hope and renewal, and forgiveness, all ideals and teachings of Sufism. As al Mousa notes, “Closely related to the function of the genii in the novel is the theme of the power struggle, a characteristic feature of modern Arab society, and one of the chief targets investigated through the medium of fantasy” (43) in Mahfouz’s novel. So, the genie may represent humans’ darkest desires, but the relationships between the genies and the characters in the novel also represent the more current power struggle in the modern

Arab society. Mahfouz brings attention to the power struggle by specifically focusing on the corruption of the leaders and the responses of those impacted by the decisions of the leaders. Rather than steeping to the evil corruption and darkness of the world, Mahfouz encourages a new response — a response of love, unity, a loss of worldly identity, and forgiveness. Even the Sultan experiences this redemptive love and loss of worldly identity.

In *Arabian Nights and Days*, Mahfouz contrasts the life of spiritual rebirth and redemption against the ‘age marked with fervent pursuit of materialistic interests, confusion, and an overwhelming sense of instability” (al Mousa 46). Mahfouz emphasizes the need for individual spiritual rebirth in the middle of confusion and instability to further encourage a universal unity of humanity. The confusion and instability could be argued to represent the “human helplessness and sense of loss in Modern Egypt,” (al Mousa 46) as Mahfouz grasps aspects of reality for those impacted by this corruption. The confusion and instability in *Arabian Nights and Days* represents the current confusion and instability for those in the Arab world. One must simply open the door and smell the fragrance or radical love and take the offered opportunity for love and freedom. By showing that the Sultan can find redemption and radical love after his corrupt acts of darkness, Mahfouz makes a plea for all to do the same — to embark on an individual journey of radical love, to choose goodness in a corrupt love, and to love humankind.

CHAPTER 5: RUMI IN OUR CONTEMPORARY WORLD

“This love [is] the force that binds the universe,”

--Ehsan Akbari

Despite the poetry of Rumi tracing back to the thirteenth century, Rumi's words and teachings of Sufism can still be applied to our contemporary world. As evident in the discussion, the three works show the influence of Rumi on contemporary transnational literature. Akbari argues that Rumi is a “global phenomenon” today (58), with his poetry still being applied to contemporary art, literature, and scholarship. Akbari continues, “Rumi's poetry embodies a cosmopolitan spirit that transcends cultural and religious boundaries in our contemporary world” (57). Even though the cultural and religious boundaries of the thirteenth century were different than the conflicts, violence, and corruption in the world today, the same message of Rumi's poetry can be applied to our world today. Rumi's poetry, reflecting the Sufi philosophy, are “‘placeless’ and ‘timeless’” (Akbari 56). As Rumi's poetry was applied to the literature discussed in this thesis, with a plea to surpass labels, borders, corruption, and globalization, the poetry surpasses times and places, with an application to the modern world through the contemporary transnational literature.

Rumi's poetry and Sufism are based on the critical component of one experiencing a radical love with God. Once finding this radical love with God, a Sufi will then give back to the world with love, peace, and selflessness. As the three novels express, the message of Rumi's poetry and Sufism is universal—anyone can be a Sufi if there is a desire and search for a radical love and unity. It is an individual journey and search for a Love that is universal and without limitations and borders. Rumi's poetry

and Sufism reflect a spirituality rather than a distinct religion—it is a spirituality of love with God and with the world. It is not a religion of rules or regulations; rather, it is a way of life and thinking that is available to anyone who is willing to search and find the radical love with God. Because of its universality, the ideals of Sufism, as reflected in Rumi's poetry, extends past the borders of religions and cultures. As Rumi's poetry urges for a unity among cultures, a bridging of cultures, the three works in this thesis do the same in their application of Rumi.

In *The Forty Rules of Love*, Shafak clearly presents a bridging of cultures as she weaves the past and present and the East and the West in the characters' paralleled narratives. Shafak presents an allegorical love that can transcend cultures, religions, and ethnicities as a Christian and Sufi mystic are married and as a housewife virtually falls in love with a Middle Eastern. Love is pictured as a transforming force, able to overcome the boundaries between cultures and religions. Beyond the transformative love seen throughout the various narratives in the novel, Shafak literally applies the teachings of Rumi in her transnational novel, as Aziz and Ella are finding the Love embodied in the teachings of Shams and Rumi. Shafak brings the 13th century words of Rumi to the 21st century relationship of Ella and Aziz, a relationship of love that surpasses borders and limitations.

In *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, Hamid presents a Love that is ambiguous. It is a Love that is borderless and nameless. Like Shafak, Hamid presents a Love that bridges cultures in a world consumed with capitalism and economic globalization. Hamid wanted to present his readers with the possible "opportunities for spiritual wealth as Sufis might conceptualize it," (Naydan 2) in a world of social status

and material wealth. Through the allegorical love between “you” and “the pretty girl,” Hamid presents a love that extends beyond names, limitations, brands and provides a spiritual redemption amid the negative impacts of economic globalization. The reflection of Rumi’s poetry and Sufism in the novel “might function as a reminder to Westerners in particular that Islam is not a monolith...It might remind Westerners that thinking as globalizers of the corporate world do, and seeking monolithic global systems as globalizers seek them, creates more harm than good” (Naydan 11). As “you” struggled to find his place and identity until he found Love through his relationship with “the pretty girl,” Hamid urges for the contemporary world to find the radical Love of Sufism and Rumi’s poetry amid our 21st century corruption, violence, and hatred. This nameless Love is universal that offers a bridge and unity among cultures, still very applicable to our contemporary world.

Mahfouz’s *Arabian Nights and Days* really delves into the Love that offers a spiritual rebirth amid political corruption. Mahfouz presents characters who must choose goodness or corruption in their world, a decision that still must be made by readers today. As there were innocent people dying because of the corruption in the novels, there are innocent people dying today as a result of the corruption in the contemporary world. Rapes and murders are still occurring in our world. The evidence of Rumi’s poetry and the teachings of Sufism integrated throughout the narratives in the novel “offer links to the past that allow for new way of thinking about the present without losing touch with the past” (Firat 194). It can be argued that the three contemporary novels use ideals of Sufism and words of Rumi’s poetry to connect the past and present, crossing boundaries and borders. Mahfouz shows that even the most corrupted can experience a

spiritual rebirth and find radical Love. As the world in *Arabian Nights and Days* needed a spiritual rebirth, redemption, and social justice, so does the contemporary world we live in today.

Rumi used his poetry to transcend borders and boundaries, to specifically represent a universal love that is available to all cultures and religions. It is a Love offered to all of humanity without definitions or limitations. It is a beautiful and restorative Love, offering redemption and rebirth to those willing to seek it. Keeping in mind the historical context of Sufism and Rumi's poetry, both Sufism and Rumi's poetry are applicable to the modern world and influencing the contemporary transnational literature. Sufism and Rumi's poetry can be applied to our world in many ways, specifically the current political situations taking place: "Rather than viewing refugees with fear and suspicion because they are Muslim, a cosmopolitan [Rumi] would recognize the basic humanity of these individuals in spite of the differences in their cultures, religions, and belief systems" (Akbari 59). Shafak, Hamid, and Mahfouz present this universal Love in their contemporary novels, a love that surpasses boundaries, limitations, cultures, religions, and social status. It is Love that is offered to all, even the most corrupted; it is available to anyone willing to embark on the individual journey to radical love

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