



## Appropriation of the Subliminal and Alchemical Elements of Waiting in Rumi: A Metaphysical Perspective

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### Abstract

*Rumi's works have been characterized by a profound philosophical thrust. Widely translated, Rumi happens to be the most sought after poet in the English language. Coleman Barks, R. A. Nicholson, A.J. Arberry and Annemarie Schimmel have contributed to the enduring presence of Rumi in the English literary canon through their meticulous translations. Nevit O. Ergin and Will Johnson's translation, *The Rubais of Rumi* stands out by treating Rumi's evocative metrical composition, Rubai; a four-line stanza with literary dexterity. The prolific works of Rumi; whether the 23-volume magnum opus titled 'Divan-i-Kabir, the 1700 Rubais, or the Mathnawi which has been referred to as a divine scripture in Persian language have opened new vistas of critical inquiry into the field of hermeneutics. The succinct, anaphoric and at times epigrammatic style belies the unfathomable depth that lies within the verses. Hence the vast diametrical stretches of his works embrace existential matters at one level; and the esoteric ones as spiritual dynamism and jurisprudence at another level.*

**Keywords:** Hermeneutics, anaphoric, recurrent, interpretation, juxtaposition

*Mathnawi* alone comprises 25, 700 couplets instructing through the medium of parables and anecdotes with a pronounced didactic appeal whereas the *Diwan* lends voice to ecstatic rhapsodies.<sup>1</sup> The transition from the didactic to the ecstatic is also recurrent in his third monumental work *Fihi ma Fihi* which emerges as a compendium of Rumi's sermons and scholastic discourse compiled by his disciples.

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Chittick, *The Sufi doctrine of Rumi* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2005), 4.

*Mathnawi* is a voluminous work, likened to *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, also in terms of its length. However the comparison inadequately reflects on the length of *Mathnawi* since each verse carries twenty two syllables; the hexameter at times reaches up to seventeen while the terza meter (as in Spenserian stanza) entails only about ten or eleven in each verse.<sup>2</sup> Thus the *Mathnawi* is far more unfathomable.<sup>3</sup>

In this article we shall dwell on the role of 'waiting' in the hermeneutics of metaphysics as expounded by Rumi. Hermeneutics as a science of interpretation was earlier designated with the role of interpreting divine words; or the word of God to put it laconically. Later it assumed the role of interpreting the 'word of mouth', employed by people in different contexts.<sup>4</sup> In "Ask the Rose about the Rose", Rumi delves deeper into the mechanics of hermeneutics and says:

*The interpretation of a sacred text is true/if it inspires you to hope, activity and awe...The three elements i.e. 'hope', 'activity' and 'awe' coalesce into the organic whole of 'waiting'; which is preceded by hope ushering into active dynamism in preparation for the awaited. As waiting on the temporal plane draws close to the awaited, 'awe' quickens the alchemical strain.*

Waiting in Rumi assumes a subliminal property precipitating into the 'threshold' that demarcates a liminal space elapsing between disparate courses; as various as an anticipation of spiritual consummation with the beloved or the temporal space fraught with innumerable possibilities of spiritual metamorphosis. This is evident in the following lines:

Like owls they return to the wilderness,  
...waiting, with one eye open and one eye closed,  
for some prey to appear.  
If they have to wait too long,  
they wonder was it something real or not?

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> R.A Nicholson, *The Mathnawi of Jalaludin Rumi* available in PDF at <http://www.tbm100.org/Lib/Rum11.pdf>, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Ian Ahmed, "The Meaning of Infinity in Sufi and Deconstructive Hermeneutics: When Is an Empty Text an Infinite One?" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* no. 72(1), 97.

The best course would be to rest a while and gather...<sup>5</sup>

Waiting with one eye ‘open’ and one eye ‘closed’ is a careful juxtaposition of the pragmatic and the epiphanic; lending it a subliminal air where the two opposites have been yoked together seamlessly. The transition from the subliminal to the alchemical is expressly manifest from the subjective, nuanced frame of one-eyed waiting to the concrete expectation of an impending ‘prey’ much like in Ted Hughes’ *Thought Fox*.<sup>6</sup> Thus in Rumi, as in Hughes’ *Thought Fox*; waiting also becomes metaphor of the creative pursuit where the inward eye is in a queer interface with the outer eye, bringing the surreal and real on the plane of creation. Rest and motion, real and surreal are brought together in a carefully contrived marriage of conceits steering into an avenue where waiting fades from being a concrete active agency to an ephemeral state; ‘rest a while and gather’.

Across clearings, an eye,  
A widening deepening greenness,  
Brilliantly, concentratedly,  
Coming about its own business

Till, with a sudden sharp hot stink of fox  
It enters the dark hole of the head.<sup>7</sup>

The title *The Thought Fox* brings together the subliminal quickening of ‘thought’ with the alchemical rendering of ‘waiting’; precipitating into a fox, overpowering the mind in the creative enterprise. Looking at *The Thought Fox* in tandem with Rumi’s lines generates a contrast; if *The Thought Fox* is a consummation of the creative process, waiting in Rumi becomes a primordial phase; not vying for the consummation as much as accentuating ‘quickening’ embedded in ‘gathering’ strength in order to set forth anew. Hence waiting leads to meta-waiting, where waiting in one frame of reality puts to question reality itself and leads to another form of waiting!

<sup>5</sup> Jelaluddin Rumi, *The Rumi Collection: An Anthology of Translations of Mevlana Rumi* (), 233.

<sup>6</sup> Ted Hughes *Collected Poems of Ted Hughes*, ebook ( London: Faber and Faber, 2011), 77, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://pk1lib.org/book/4693100/42e1c8>

<sup>7</sup> Ted Hughes *Collected Poems of Ted Hughes*, ebook ( London: Faber and Faber, 2011), 77, accessed March 10, 2021, <https://pk1lib.org/book/4693100/42e1c8>

Each biographical account of Rumi is deficient without the mention of the great archetype of the mystic sage, Shams, literally meaning 'sun' in Arabic. His reverence for Shams has been a subject of critical discourse which Huston Smith likens to Dante's love for Beatrice.<sup>8</sup> Rumi's enthralling encounter with Shams Tabriz becomes a prototype of an enduring mentor-disciple bonding unveiling another facet of 'waiting' unto the enigmatic spiritual master who makes a brief dramatic debut in his spiritual life to be followed by a long conspicuous absence. The 'waiting' which interludes and elapses between the unschooled or uninitiated Rumi to the Rumi who has been 'quickened' to the sun of untapped mystical energies becomes a space of infinite possibilities. Rumi carefully employs *Shams* as a figurative and allegorical device, indicative of the profound energy of love. The peripatetic nature of this chance encounter tends to transform Rumi for the rest of his life as a muse of unrelenting power. Just as the sun is pivotal to life, *Shams* becomes a powerhouse indispensable for Rumi's spiritual metamorphosis. The sun, signifying Shams, is poised at an insurmountable mileage, but casts a felt presence on all facets of his life.<sup>9</sup> Rumi alludes to this metaphorical function of Shams in the famous couplet:

The fruit of my life is no more than three words----  
I was raw, I was cooked, I was burned.<sup>10</sup>

Shams ignites, sparks and initiates Rumi into the cosmic order of individuation. Once Rumi has undergone the trials of individuation; he needs to be 'burned'! To lose oneself within the infinite reality and become one with reality! Therefore Shams' sojourn offers the opportunity to burn and transmogrify into an indivisible whole, recognizing the limitless prowess that is generated in the process of burning. Therefore pangs of waiting are akin to the flames of fire that allow the earthly self to grow out of limits.

Hence 'waiting' to be in unison with *Shams*, becomes a recurrent motif in Rumi's works; achievable on the plane of artistic consummation; where the alchemy of art renders Rumi as *Shams*, becoming 'one' as suggested by

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<sup>8</sup> Me & Rumi: The Autobiography of Shams-i Tabriz, trans. William C. Chittick (Fons Vitae: Kentucky, 2004), XI.

<sup>9</sup> Franklin Lewis, *Rumi-----Past and Present, East and West* (London: Oneworld publications, 2000), 135.

<sup>10</sup> *Me & Rumi: The Autobiography of Shams-i Tabriz*, trans. William C. Chittick (Fons Vitae: Kentucky, 2004), XIV

Fatemeh Keshavarz. She lays down that employing Shams as his own pen name, Rumi has bridged the distance between his master and himself; no longer existing as a separate being.<sup>11</sup> The distinction of ‘lover’ and ‘beloved’ is no more lop-sided in the favour of the sought-after beloved, rather the alchemical rendition of love renders these demarcations ephemeral. Thus the lover-beloved equation is not divisible; rather reversible where the role of teacher and student assumes a liminal identity. Lover-beloved, teacher-student relationship is a kind of unfolding of the reversed, sequential order.<sup>12</sup>

Waiting becomes a ‘threshold’ which faces two temporal states with equal affinity. The subliminal where the self is poised to transcend and the alchemical where the self anticipates to reach by traversing the threshold of ‘waiting’ and achieving the golden unity with the beloved. As long as the vantage point is self, duality ensues in the shape of self and the other. To attain a holistic, unity of self, it must transcend dichotomies. Alluding to a primal motif in the text of Zen, transcendental self is defined as a liminal entity sans eyes, ears, nose, tongue, eluding even the rigid compartmentalization of body, mind and consciousness. This is a state resembling Thanatos, but differs in that it is triggered only when one dies before one is to die!<sup>13</sup> Waiting to die is preceded by ‘death’ reverberating in the words of *Hadeeth*; “die before you die”.<sup>14</sup> This has been explained by William C. Chittick as an act of man dying to self, burning the attributes of selfhood, ‘hair by hair’. Just as alchemy aims at turning base metal into gold, self transmogrifies and achieves a transcendence in unison with the divine beloved.<sup>15</sup> Rumi has been quoted as saying: “Such a non-existent one who has gone from himself (becomes selfless) is the best of beings.....In passing away he really hath the life everlasting.”<sup>16</sup>

The equation is subverted when the parables are related from the vantage point of Shams and Rumi becomes the subject. Thus it is not merely taking upon an appellation as a means of paying tribute, but achieving a proximity

<sup>11</sup> Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Reading Mystical Lyric* (California: University of Southern California Press, 1998), 39.

<sup>12</sup> Jelal al-Din Rumi, *Rumi: The Book of Love, Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*, trans. Coleman Barks, (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), xix.

<sup>13</sup> Jelal al-Din Rumi, *Rumi: The Book of Love, Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*, trans. Coleman Barks, (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), xix.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> William C. Chittick, *The Sufi doctrine of Rumi* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2005), 73.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

with the beloved that in the latter years Rumi's disciples figure a stark difference between the didactic approach of Rumi to the latter more inclusive and all-embracing intellectual penchant. The unison is absorbed and appropriated in a manner that the very title *Diwan Shams Tabriz* misleads a cursory reader to think of it as Shams' brainchild! William C. Chittick cites: "The Divine Love is the Sun of perfection: the (Divine) World is light, the creatures are as shadows".<sup>17</sup>

In the chapter titled "Profit and loss of study", Rumi likens intellect to a threshold: "Intellect takes you to the threshold, but it doesn't take you inside the house. There intellect is a veil, the heart a veil, the secret heart a veil."<sup>18</sup> Crossing the threshold of waiting transports one to a singular, monochromatic frame of reality, obliterating the infinite possibilities attached to the threshold itself. Thus reaching a certain intellectual vantage point becomes a veil, but poised at the threshold not only opens avenues of possibilities on the horizontal plane but also enables one to transcend the hierarchical gradations of fixed notions. Thus, the transition is from *Tahqiq* to *Haqq*, striving for truth to becoming one with Truth. The transition is by degrees, beginning with *Taqlid*; imitation, paving way for *tahqiq* or an interface with an orchestra of scattered truths and finally reaching God, the embodiment of Truth. Imitation is a preliminary step, until one can wait for the truth to uncover and unveil itself. Therefore, when the self realizes the existence of truth by ultimately becoming one with truth, does not necessarily mean negating the truth imbibed through 'imitation', but to locate truth within oneself.<sup>19</sup> That is how Rumi becomes Shams in the *Diwan*. The notion of universal man, who travels from plurality to unity has been delineated in Rumi:

The owner of the Heart (Universal Man) becomes a six-faced mirror: through him God looks upon (all) the six directions. Whosoever hath his dwelling place in (the world of) the six directions, God doth not look upon him except through the mediation of him (the owner of the Heart)... Without him God does not bestow bounty on any one<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2005), 73.

<sup>18</sup> *Me & Rumi: The Autobiography of Shams-i Tabriz*, trans. William C. Chittick (Fons Vitae: Kentucky, 2004), 39.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, XVI

<sup>20</sup> William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2005), 62.

Ibn Arabi builds an analogy of a universal man: “Universal Man is to the Absolute as the pupil of the eye to the eye, through which vision takes place...Through him God looks at His creatures and bestows mercy upon them.”<sup>21</sup> The notion of an absolute man in Rumi and his predecessor, Ibn Arabi seem to point in the direction of a man of transcendental genius possessing divine qualities of head and heart. The man who traverses the distance from ‘imitation’ to ‘realization’; and waits to become one with Truth, remains in awe of the universal man who becomes one with God and mirrors His divine attributes. Ibn Arabi or Sadr al-Din Qunyawi for that matter directly address metaphysical questions whereas Rumi resorts to contriving artistic forms such as parables replete with metaphors and literary devices to answer gnostic inquiries.<sup>22</sup> However the impact of Ibn Arabi is deep-seated as *Mathnawi* has been often referred to as *Futuh al-Makiyyah* in versified Persian.

Ibn Arabi dilates how ‘before’ and ‘after’ can be impertinent to the transcendental realm, functioning in a logical rather than temporal context. All phenomena exist in a simultaneity of ‘eternal present’ where nothing is prior or subsequent.<sup>23</sup> Thus waiting assumes a fluid, choric and semiotic space allowing infinite possibilities. According to Ibn Arabi in the *Discourses*, the origins of primordial existence of man can be traced back to the substance of ‘water’. When Adam was sent to the world from heavens, earth and other colours entered the water. Thus when man ascends from imitation to ‘realization’; he realizes that the soul was unsullied in the beginning and the earthly colours are but effects of his actions.<sup>24</sup> Rumi makes an insightful allusion to the ‘fluid’ nature of existence:

our eyes are darkened though we are in clear water.  
Asleep in the body’s skiff, we float,  
unaware of the Water of the water.  
The water has a Water that is driving it;  
the spirit has a Spirit that is calling it.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, vii

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>24</sup> William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2005), 65.

<sup>25</sup> Kabir Helminski, ed., *The Rumi Collection* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998), 74.

Waiting assumes multifarious connotations in tandem with states of consciousness. At a conscious level, waiting can enter a rigid, compartmentalization of the 'here' and 'now', while at a psychical level, it can be more ephemeral, allowing a free flow into multifarious domains of experiential reality. Waiting to be 'here' can be remarkably distinct from waiting 'to be', that triggers 'ambivalence' by tethering tentacles of intellectual inquiry with a striking simultaneity. When waiting is transcendental and extra-terrestrial it towers above the temporal fixity of 'here' and 'now' in search of limitless possibilities. Rumi expounds the shifting parameters of meaning in the following lines:

Rise up nimbly and go on your strange journey  
to the ocean of meanings where you become one of those.  
From one terrace to another through clay banks,  
washing your wings with watery silt,  
follow your friends. The pitcher breaks.  
You're in the moving river. Living Water....<sup>26</sup>

The flight from the terrestrial to the extra-terrestrial, or from the earthly to the transcendental results in breaking the 'pitcher' or for that matter, all material dichotomies which take to circumscribing and restricting schemata until a liberating fluidity is achieved. The locomotion is neither inwardly or extrinsically bound.

At the summation of this poem, Rumi alludes to the sun as the reason for existence. The 'Sun' spelt with a capital is the prerogative of the translator, bringing the celestial body at par with the sun of Rumi's ecstatic wanderings; Shams. "The torrent knows it can't stay on this mountain/ Leave and don't look away from the Sun as you go. / Through him you are sometimes crescent, sometimes full."<sup>27</sup> Just like Shams brings Rumi to a culmination, sun has the power to render an animate being complete or crescent.

Infinitude signifies negation of a singular possibility. Thus waiting is based on affirmation through negation. In terms of esoteric rendition of infinitude, God cannot be constricted to the limits of the earthly existence, thus as long as one is tied to the personal four walls of selfhood, one will remain an imitator at best; an effort at breaking the shackles of selfhood will allow

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<sup>26</sup> Kabir Hekminski, ed., *The Rumi Collection* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998), 37.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.



him/her to experience the multitude of opportunities culminating in self-elevation; until one is elevated to becoming one with Truth, the paragon of infinitude, defying all prospects of demarcation and delimitation of His existence.<sup>28</sup> This is a rich apophatic space where God's existence is affirmed through negation of all attempts having to circumscribe His otherwise limitless existence.

The lamps are different,  
But the Light is the same....  
Concentrate on essence, concentrate on Light...  
The Light streams towards you from all things.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the presumed formality of finitude in contrast to a non-dialectical rendition of alteration, iterability and numeric infinitude in Rumi, drives home Derrida's discourse on deconstruction and de-centring. The process of de-centring subverts the celebration of a conventional singular centre and comes to redefine the centre from the vantage point of the over-arching, all-inclusive periphery. Derrida calls it iterability; the repetition that defies the idealization of a singular experience. Therefore it does not correlate with a circumscribed, restrictive repetitiveness of 'waiting' as an active agency and 'awaited' as a lived experience, but with wide-spread and larger manifestations of shifting displacements within schematic paradigms, for periphery itself is averse to binary or even hierarchical divisions.

Iterability in terms of waiting is faced with a host of possibilities, without demarcating 'waiting for' and 'awaited' as disparate experiential realities. Iterability thus holds within its folds the infinitude of the finite or an attempt at unfixing the fixations. Rumi's allegiance to multiple belongings is achieved through negation of a unitary belonging, or a singular centre: "I am neither of the West nor of the East, nor of the land, nor of the sea.../My place is Placeless."<sup>30</sup> This affirms the Quranic explication of the sacred Olive Tree, which is neither of the East, nor of the West (24:35). Instead of being restricted to a localized reality it is universal and transcendental.

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<sup>28</sup> William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi* (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2005), 33.

<sup>29</sup> Kabir Helminski, ed., *The Rumi Collection* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998), 112.

<sup>30</sup> Sam Wills, "Desire for the Impossible in Rumi and Derrida", available at: [https://www.academia.edu/6062951/Desire\\_For\\_The\\_Impossible\\_On\\_Rumi\\_and\\_Derrida](https://www.academia.edu/6062951/Desire_For_The_Impossible_On_Rumi_and_Derrida)

The defiance to be pinned to a single root promises free mobility along the spatial-temporal continuum, emanating a cosmopolitan spirit. In essence cosmopolitanism as an institutionalized, literary canon came to be recognized much later whereas literature itself becomes a metaphor for a locomotion defying territorial divisions, making the world of art and literature porous, without visas and borders. Rumi's raging popularity among western readership exemplifies the cosmopolitan spirit, directing away from frontiers, boundaries and divisions, heralding the making of a transnational consciousness marked by diverse streams of waiting; some waiting to be relocated while some vehemently wait to be entrenched within the status quo. This multiplicity further translates into multiplicity of visions in a seeker whose consciousness elapses beyond the diametrical stretches of ordinary perception. The capacity to conjure up multiple visions widens the scope of perception beyond the normal dimension and offers the much needed impetus for a vision of a higher order. This cosmopolitan multiplicity is an exercise at self-effacement; thus not antithetical to the rational but a leap into the higher order of perception. This presents a strange interlocking of the multiple in the favour of the unitary. The energy derived from self-effacement in the face of an overwhelming multiplicity liberates the consciousness. The freedom drawn from embracing divergence transports to a higher order of perception open only to those without a modicum of self-love.

Having laid the case of plurality, multiplicity and diversity, interestingly there is a steady progression from the multifarious to the unitary. The notion of iterability which is so strongly etched in the celebration of multiplicity points in the direction of a transcendental unitary order. Multiplicity on the peripheral level is entrenched as a means of abrogating divisions and celebration of the various at a terrestrial level. Yet, on a transcendental plane of existence, multiplicity is treated as a veil, which once reckoned with, unravels the ultimate, unitary reality that the seeker has been waiting for.

In a profound treatise on 'The Only One' in *Fihi Ma Fihi*, Rumi explicates how love and longing of sorts is but a veil, likened to the fleeting desire in wait for sumptuous 'food'.<sup>31</sup> Once this desire is overcome, the veil rips apart to uncover the Light of God. According to Rumi, these veils are instrumental in quickening the wait for ultimate reality. The Light of God has been likened

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<sup>31</sup> Kabir Helminski, ed., *The Rumi Collection* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998), 103.

to a sun which is indispensable for the sustenance of life. It is a light that brightens the world and its warmth benefits creatural life at all levels. Yet if the sun faced the earth without distancing itself, the result would be total annihilation of the world. Hence the convergence of different hues of waiting along the periphery is a veil to sieve only the conducive factors for furtherance such as the liberating aura which is experienced only through a powerful encounter with plurality.

In Rumi, the celebration of coexistence is not a means of achieving a coercive convergence calling out for the loss of individual identity. It is rather a congenial marriage of conceits, where each element is delivered its requisite place and prestige. When the elements are looked at from the periphery, the difference is no more a cause for dispute. In “The Elusive Ones”, Rumi expounds:

They’re lovers again: sugar dissolving in milk  
Day and night, no difference. The sun *is* the moon:  
An amalgam. Their gold and silver melt together.  
This is the season when the dead branch and the green  
branch are the same branch.<sup>32</sup>

The search for ‘sameness’ can override any aleatory, chance happening giving in to the over-arching law of homogeneity which takes everything in its stride. The innovative spirit, the penchant for novelty and invention be it in public or private domains, even civil and military spheres, is overpowered by the assimilatory tendency of homogeneity, neutralizing the impulse for novelty as much for anything aleatory.<sup>33</sup>

Edward Said unravels the ramifications surrounding ‘beginning’; a temporal framework seen in tandem with ‘waiting’ or ‘waiting to begin anew’. Beginning is situated in an innate will to ‘reverse’ whether one wills to begin ‘anew’ or begin ‘now’; beginning implies a sense of ‘rupture’ in the status quo.<sup>34</sup> Beginning anew also calls for improvising the existing paraphernalia for the better as is the case with Noah’s ark. The ark carries relics of the old

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<sup>32</sup> Kabir Helminski, ed., *The Rumi Collection* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998), 111.

<sup>33</sup> Jacques Derrida: *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (California: Stanford University Press, 2007), 40.

<sup>34</sup> Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (London: Granta Books, 1975), 34.

world, becoming indispensable to begin the new world.<sup>35</sup> In “Sudden Wholeness”, Rumi alludes to the ontological beginning of wholeness sought in the humdrum dissonance of daily life. The wholeness is sudden and epiphanic, sought in an ‘auspicious beginning’. The unison with the beloved is a harbinger of a new beginning, delineating artful creativity. Once the elements fall in congruity, the insight grows in magnitude and enters the realm of revelation. Coleman Barks further highlights in the following lines:

Here is the auspicious beginning. Kindness stands in the door. You walk out together like the Zen master Basho moving around Kyoto, pining for Kyoto. The phenomenal and the numinous grow identical. The world you see, together with the poem, both are intensely alive inside each other with revelation and suchness. That’s the feeling in this region: continuous seasonal epiphany, grief, elation, whimsy<sup>36</sup>

In Rumi pursuit of ‘wholeness’ leads to a state of enraptured ecstasy as illustrated by Coleman Barks in the commentary. The question remains whether rapture or ecstasy is the end of waiting for wholeness or is it ‘waiting’ itself which becomes the end and a means to achieving the end. Barks explains that it is the state of ‘rapture’ that Rumi holds in esteem, achieved in a rare togetherness with the divine.<sup>37</sup> Ecstasy is thus a rare, epiphanic state of mind that negates correspondence with the ordinary. The divine glimpse where one finds oneself in unison with the divine, is a rare state of self-annulment or suspension of a consciousness conditioned by the humdrum and mundane. Intoxication as a recurrent motif does not function as a metaphor for loss of sanity but expresses a conviction to grow out of mundane sensibility. The notion of ‘wholeness’ is further accentuated in following lines by Rumi in which the multifarious paths leading to half-baked love is forsaken in the favour of one ‘whole’ heart brimming with complete love:

A thousand half-loves  
must be forsaken to take

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Jelal al-Din Rumi, *Rumi: The Book of Love, Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*, trans. Coleman Barks, (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 25.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 18.

one whole heart home.<sup>38</sup>

Rumi elucidates ‘...like birdsong beginning inside the egg,/ like this universe coming into existence..’. We can draw a parallel with Derek Walcott and Seamus Heaney’s search for ‘wholeness. The quest for wholeness resonates with a renewed energy of *Omeros* in Derek Walcott or *Omphalos* in Seamus Heaney<sup>39</sup>. Heaney’s preoccupation with the ‘autochthonous’ or ‘natural’ identity is evident in his alliterative reiteration of the word *omphalos*, *omphalos*, *omphalos* signifying the ‘centre of the world’.<sup>40</sup> In Rumi the curious waiting that spans between the centre and the periphery, eyeing the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ with an exotic relish is done away with, in in the favour of a close correspondence that defies barriers and walls.

The clear bead at the center changes everything.  
There are no edges to my loving now.  
I’ve heard it said there’s a window that opens  
from one mind to another,  
but if there’s no wall, there’s no need  
for fitting the window, or the latch.

Waiting enters a psychical frame when Rumi subverts the equation to look at waiting from the vantage point of God: “The Ruler of all hearts is waiting for a heart filled with goodness”.<sup>41</sup> The transition is based on a series of metamorphosis beginning from the earlier exercises in embarking on the spiritual odyssey known as *ahwal*, ushering into a higher spiritual station, *maqam* and finally achieving gnosis *ma’rifa*.<sup>42</sup>

The saints stand waiting to bring them to their own station  
and make them like themselves.  
The devils also lie in wait to pull them down to their level at  
the lowest depth.  
When the assistance of God shall come,...<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Jelal al-Din Rumi, *Rumi: The Book of Love, Poems of Ecstasy and Longing*, trans. Coleman Barks, (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 30.

<sup>39</sup> Seamus Heaney, “A Sense of the Place”, in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose* (London: Faber, 1980), 17.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Kabir Helminski, ed., *The Rumi Collection* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998), 164.

<sup>42</sup> Fatima B. Cihan-Artun, “Rumi, the Poet of Universal Love: The politics of Rumi’s Appropriation in the West”, (PhD Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2016), 21 available at: [https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1625&context=dissertations\\_2](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1625&context=dissertations_2)

<sup>43</sup> Kabir Helminski, ed., *The Rumi Collection* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998), 80.