سیمرغ

Simorgh: A Sufi-Hermeneutic Horizon to Essential Existential Understanding of L2 Metaphors

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A Thesis Submitted to the University of Ottawa
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
In Education

Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

به نام خداوند بخشنده مهربان

In the Name of God

The Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Hearken to the Reed … (Molana)

هو

I tender thanks to God Almighty, for He, despite the contending situations, the compounding tribulations, the obtruding peregrinations, and the conflicting alterations, will not leave me without a spark, will revive my heart, and steady my step. Him I praise for whatever helps or harms, hurts or cheers.

(Ibn Sina, after the pillage of his precious books in 425/1034)
"A letter to an Anonymous", in Gustas' "Personal texts by Avicenna and his disciples" (2014)

To the pure soil of my beloved cradleland, the ever great land of Persia, Iran.

[1]

My love letter to Iran and a tribute to my dear family and my strong ancestors:

from a remorseful child to a beloved motherland

whose happiness is the beat of her heart

To read this work, stay fully present in your heart, your soul, and your mind.
Be patient and read with your thinking heart. Time does not exist.

This dissertation is completed through hard, long, and sincere work. ANY use of the contents, ideas, and ways of doing without referencing will be subject to legal and ethical pursuit.

[1] https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A8%DB%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA_%D9%88_%D9%87%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%85%DB%8C%D9%86_%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%87_%D8%AC%D8%B4%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87_%D8%A8%DB%8C%D9%86%E2%80%8C%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%84%D9%84%DB%8C_%D9%81%DB%8C%D9%84%D9%85_%D9%81%D8%AC%D8%B1
Bidaghi, 2009

Acknowledgement

My first acknowledgement is to God, my greatest Saviour, One who always gave me the persistence, strength, tolerance, and courage to stand up stronger after each fall, to survive all the difficulties, away from my loved ones in my beloved homeland.

My greatest gratitude to my long-awaiting family, my dearest parents without whom I am nothing. For my mother who taught me honest love and compassion and my father who taught me hard working and looking beyond the horizon. For my siblings who supported me with their sincere love, prayers and helps from afar.

I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to my wise, patient, and caring supervisor, dear Professor Ruth G. Kane, for her kind support of my PhD program.

I would like to offer my sincere appreciation to Professor Richard Barwell for his support of my PhD program.

I sincerely appreciate Professor David W. Jardine whose honest, inspiring *text* became the turning point in my research journey, awakened the great power of my ancestors within me and made my homecoming in my research a true love journey.

I appreciate my committee members Raymond Leblanc, Francis Bangou, and dear Dr. Diane Watt, for their kind support, insightful comments and questions which pushed my thinking in productive ways.

I thank Professor Sima Paribakht who was a source of hope in my dark moments and Professor Rustom who helped me here and afar.

I am thankful to my participants, my dear birds, who passionately opened their hearts to me. I already feel them as parts of my Self in my thesis story and actual life. I wish the best on their roads to Self-perfection.

I thank those colleagues and friends here and back home who cared for me, supported me in discouraging moments, and made me feel hopeful.

I feel indebted to my Persian culture rooted in an ancient, deep, and divine civilization and land, an ancient cradle of knowledge and education.

I feel indebted to my religion Islam, the strong and perfected religion[2] which enriched Persian culture and civilization, a religion as precise and complex as the nature of human being, which considered all our human needs as elevated beings. I feel valued in my religion as a human of perfect being and infinite capacities much beyond my corporal form and limited understanding, a sophisticated religion with its very first message to human being as to "read[3]", to seek knowledge and to reflect; the religion which directs humans to their most meaningful and purposeful life journey. My road would be a dark dead end without my religion.

I feel indebted to the Holy book Qor'an, my undoubtedly greatest source of knowledge and deep understanding, a precise book full of deep wisdom and firm reason which trained me to appreciate Others as full humans before my Self, to be caring, precise and reflective. An elevated book for those who reflect and seek perfection.

I feel indebted to Persian language which is a rich language replete with wisdom and profound meanings, the fruit of an ancient and divine civilization, a language rarely matched with any other language. I feel indebted to Ferdowsi, the great poet who revived and protected Persian language, without him Persian language would be extinct.

I deeply thank all the great philosophers whose deep insights enlightened my soul and my mind.

I feel indebted to my first educators, my dearest parents, who always favored me with their wholehearted love and training, to my other educators since kindergarten in different lands of no border, those who taught me the alphabets of knowledge with love and sincerity.

Finally, I thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for partial funding of my research project.

[2]E. g., Hiester (2016)), Turner (1976). Main source: Surah Maidah, ayah 3 (5:3): This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion.

[3]"Read, in the name of thy Lord who created, Created man from a clot of blood. Recite, for thy Lord is most Beneficent; Who taught by the pen, Taught man what he knew not." [Angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (then illiterate) in Mount Hira, 610 A.D.; Surah al-Alaq, verse 96]

Dedication

To my Sublime Creator and **Saviour**, without Him I would not exist.

To a hidden sun of the east and the west, Shekhor rais ***Abu Ali Sina***.

To my beloved country **Iran**- a God-favored land and ancient seat of culture and civilization- a country which spends another phase of hardship, in a world of injustice and untruth, to stand stronger than before.

And,

To my dearest **family** and my ancient, strong **ancestors** who inspired the greatest strength and confidence in accomplishing my research. They made me feel home, away from HOME.

Abstract

This contemplative, artistic writing is a snapshot of international students' understandings of metaphors situated in their transition journeys. It is informed by my life-long Self-exploration journey and existential understandings essential to human beings, directing me to a critical perspective of *metaphor understanding* and *human understanding* as represented in dominant cognitive literature on L2 metaphor understanding and human relations inside and outside my academic context. The inadequacy of systematic cognitive approaches to capture the myriad, emergent ways that metaphors are experienced by individuals moved me to explore Gadamer's hermeneutic-existential approach to address the issue and help with learners' understanding challenges. I integrate hermeneutics with Persian Islamic tradition to recontextualize metaphor/language understanding within human understanding, revive understanding in its original whole human sense, and attend to both *diversity* and *unity* aspects of understanding.

This research is conducted through a deep and detailed analysis of international students' Self-understandings before and after transition to Canada. Using in-depth, individual interviews and think aloud techniques, it examines the understanding journeys of thirteen students from twelve different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, studying various disciplines at University of Ottawa. Within the Sufi view of *Simorgh,* participants' understandings of linguistic metaphors in the poem *The Road Not Taken* are examined within their collective Self-exploration and essential journeys with Others. Participants' diverse interpretations of metaphors, reflecting their pre-transition (EFL) and post-transition (ESL) experiences and understandings, were entwined with their common humane understandings. The multiplicity and varied depth of interpretations reveal the individuality, historicity and complexity of participants' understandings.

Tracing kinship between Islamic philosophy and hermeneutics, integrated and applied to L2 metaphor understanding, I highlight intercultural, inter-traditional, and interdisciplinary approaches for multicultural research and education.

This dialogic work is deemed as my obligation and a step for inter-traditional thinking and awareness to create inclusive and peaceful linguistic and academic contexts.

Keywords: Metaphor Understanding; Self-understanding; Second Language Education; Self-Other; Transition; Simorgh; Existentialism; Essentialism; Self-exploration; Unity; Sufi-hermeneutic reconciliation; Bildung; Self-Perfection; In betweenness; Home, away from home; Love; Light.

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Chapter 1: Prologue (*Introduction*)

The professor reads the names of a few students before my name. They were mainly common Western names that he was happy to pronounce, in a welcoming tone. He reaches my name, looks at it and cannot pronounce it. Looking at me, he does not ask for help, suggests a prompt, unsound nickname out of his inability or unwillingness to experience beyond his familiar names. I had to accept his name for that session, there was no choice, but I rejected his course and that faculty for that professor. That class missed the basics for human education. I was taken away from my 'being' in that class from the very start. That day, everyone in class watched indifferently. There was only one person who was moved by his act.

My initial, upsetting experience of academic life as an international, Muslim PhD student in Canada made me see the whole picture of my forthcoming life in a Western country: violence and indifference, what I experienced many times since that class in my academic context. I withdrew from my program, but it was very late … My class experience became a Turning Point in my life journey and my research in second language education.

My Road: From Cognitive Metaphors to *Simorgh*:

As a second language educator and a researcher of linguistic metaphors, I could not ignore the connections between the language used by the professor in addressing and introducing me and my way of being and understanding the texts in that context. I decided to live my Self[4] by leaving that class and look for research approaches which considered individual Selves, with Others, and not divided or indifferent Selves. That class experience became a key reflection point for me, a reflection point which expanded and diversified in other contexts throughout my PhD program and made me re-think my research journey.

I had started my research on metaphor understanding mainly with dominant cognitive theorists and scholars of metaphor (e. g. Kövecses, 2015/2008; Lakoff & Johnson,1980) and metaphor understanding in second language education (e. g., Lai & Chen, 2019; Picken, 2005/2007; Shirazi & Talebinezhad, 2013). They highlighted systematic, and sometimes constant and universal, ways of understanding metaphors. Understanding metaphors within cognitive approaches revived in

[4] Self and Other are capitalized for the existential aspect of the work and the emphasis on the being of the individuals

me, as a free individual and a second language user of English, the sense of living another's perspective, living another's name, way of seeing, thinking and being, as was projected by the professor in my first class. The formulaic structures developed in the cognitive approach did not seem to fully represent the nature of humans' understanding and the students' emergent understandings of metaphors. The instruction of cognitive structures to L2 learners did not sound as a basic or comprehensive way to help with their understanding challenges. Rather, it would prevent learners of various backgrounds from seeing things anew for themselves and being present in their own understandings. My observation of mainly formulaic and superficial individual relations at academic-societal level, mostly devoid of human exchange of energy or a sense of human intimacy- if not accompanied with some self-centered mistreatments- made me think more deeply about 'understanding' itself and 'how it is viewed' by educators, scholars, or individuals in general. I could see a similar disconnection, a 'fragmentation', between different individuals in research and real life. The systematic way that humans were viewed in cognitive approaches was close to the way that humans were treated in reality. Individuals many times looked like rational, detached beings, without attention to their other human faculties[5], potentials and their needs as emotional, spiritual, mutually responsible and caring beings. Sometimes, the intimacy between humans and animals seemed even much stronger than in between humans.

I looked inside for my own understanding of 'understanding'. I could see it not coming just from my mind separate from my heart, my emotions, my soul and spirit, but from my whole being, my whole existence and my free Self. I could feel that the mind has a key role but is not separate from all other parts of my being. I could 'feel' understanding, I could 'intuit' it. I could feel the flow in my whole being. In interaction with some of my closest connections in Canada, I noticed that the way that I view and treat my connections as full humans of mind, heart, and soul was very much different from the way they considered and treated me in a highly rational manner. Our understandings of our Selves and Others in our relations (linguistic and non-linguistic) seemed very different and it vastly impacted the way that we interacted with each other in academic and social contexts.

My reflections on my academic experiences and cognitive approaches to metaphor understanding led to fundamental questions on how *metaphor understanding* is related to *human*

[5] Inherent powers and capacities

understanding[6]? Are they two separate understanding phenomena? How does a theorist or an educator's way of understanding humans and others impact his theorizing and his way of practice in class? And above all, what learnings and effects do the language and thinking of educators and theorists generate for students? Appreciating the close connection between language and human understanding in my academic experiences since my initial class experience, I decided to revive and highlight this often ignored, yet fundamental, connection through my research. To accomplish this purpose, I embarked on a multi-layered research and writing with understanding linguistic metaphors at the core and as part of the fuller human understanding phenomenon.

I departed from cognitive theories in search of a beyond cognitive approach to understanding. I looked for a humane approach which considered beyond the linguistic dimensions of understanding and education; or more properly, which re-contextualized language and metaphor understanding in its human perspective and basis by attending to Others and observing the place and perspectives of others in using language and in theorizing understanding. I sought an approach which moved beyond human mind and common rationality to highlight other sides of understanding and ways of connecting with Others in our understandings. In my exploration, I chose hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1989/2006) for care and respect for the Other, for defining understanding as interpretation (Moules, 2002) and as *Self-understanding* occurring through the fusion of Self with the Other (Gadamer, 1975, 2004), so for involving the space for the horizons and perspectives of both Self and the Other (Gadamer, 1993). In response to the lost bond that I experienced in between humans and traditions in academic contexts and texts, I adopted an intercultural approach to my research in including an ignored Other tradition, the Persian Islamic philosophy. I integrated the essential, existential, intuitive and spiritual aspects of understanding from Islamic philosophy with hermeneutics, the aspects which were echoed in my readings of hermeneutics. I chose the masterpiece *Simorgh* (Attar, 1177), a well-known Sufi story, to frame my intercultural approach and the whole writing within a Selfless frame of love for the Other, a Self-understanding, Self-cultivation/*Bildung* (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014), and Self-perfection frame for the telos of education and human life journey as approaching Others and uniting together. I relied on "in-betweenness" in human understanding as theorized in hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1989) and Persian tradition (Rumi in Dehghan et al., 2013 &Nasr, 2007)

[6] Key terms are italicized: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/italics-quotations/italics
https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/apa/other/italics

in conceptualizing understanding, involving human' existential understandings, as happening in between his Self and the Other, his Self and the text, and in between his worldly and divine Self.

Simorgh[7]- or *The Language/Conference of the Birds*- by Attar (1145-1221) involves a humanistic approach which assigns prime importance to the divine and to humans as various shades of the divine and as belonging to each other as the rays of one Sun. In this humanistic perspective, humans of various Selves share One common Self so that each Self belongs to the Others as members of the same body and One Self. This Sufi humanistic approach, as a philanthropist approach, recalls the *common* source of humans and human understandings and values universally humane understandings which involve care and love for Others as parts of One Self. Within this Sufi perspective, the inner understandings and spiritual growth along with linguistic understandings find significance in human understandings with Others.

Simorgh of Attar represents the interrelations between humans of diverse languages (ways of thinking and being) and characters within a symbolic story of a large number of birds, the birds of various types and songs who are in a collective flight and journey towards their lost peace and unity. The birds seek peace in finding their original Self with Others at the end of their long and arduous journey. Within this mystic story- which is the story of human beings in their collective journey towards their lost Self- I am a bird flying with other birds, here my participants. The birds in this research are my participants- thirteen international students from twelve different countries of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds: Afghanistan, Albania, Brazil, China, Colombia, Jordan, Iran, Mali, Portugal, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. This research captures the understanding journeys of international students through a deep and detailed analysis of their transitioning Self-understanding journeys before and after transition to Canada. Reviving metaphor and language understanding in its original, ideal, whole human sense, my study looks at 'how' international students' recognition and interpretations of metaphors in the poem *The Road Not Taken* (Frost, 1916) reflect their (transitioning) Self-understandings, and how their new understandings contribute to their understandings of metaphors in their Self-perfection journeys with Others. Within the framework of *Simorgh*, I consider my participants as 'my birds', as parts[8] of my Self and our common Self (essential aspect), the birds which accompanied me throughout my research journey, together we knew more of our Self, and developed an intimate relation in

[7] The universal, timeless story for all ages
[8] The mystic view ingrained in my cultural background

our collective journey. I investigate my birds' transitioning self-understandings in their transfer from various EFL contexts into ESL context of Canada. The impacts of students' transitioning Self-understandings (existential aspect) are investigated through their diverse understandings of metaphors in the metaphorical poem. To investigate the participants' understandings, I draw upon the existential and essential aspects of understanding conceptualized within the philosophical schools of Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra (Oriental perspectives) in dialogue with Gadamerian existential hermeneutics[9]. I use the Sufi story of *Simorgh* as an overall framework for students' understandings of metaphors. The students' understandings are re-viewed within Mulla Sadra's *substantial theory of existence*[10] as situated within the incessant, substantial understanding motion of their beings, including my being, in an essentially *unifying* motion towards their Perfect Self (One Self). The rationale for inclusion of this demanding, essentially *unifying* journey has been to evoke unity in common humanistic experiences of participants in understanding their transitioning Selves in relation to Others as a reminder of the key aspect of "Unity in Multiplicity" of human existence (Attar, 1177) and to re-situate language and metaphor understanding in its interdisciplinary basis and divine core. This step is taken in response to the existing tensions in human relations in life and study contexts of research participants, including myself, the tensions which emerged in our understandings of our Selves, and so metaphors.

Objectives

This research writing is a multilayered text and an attempt to pursue some key objectives. At initial level, it examines metaphor understandings of international students who have transitioned from various EFL backgrounds into ESL context of Canada. It specifically focuses on their transition and Self-understandings and the reflections in their interpretations of metaphors. Besides investigating metaphor understanding within existential and Sufi-hermeneutic perspectives, international students' transitioning views of English (in relation to home, home language, Self and Others) are examined. Self-understanding is investigated in students' understandings of both English and metaphors. At a broader level, in investigating and presenting the students' understandings - as a response to human-decontextualized linguistic texts and contexts- the study attempts to recontextualize metaphor understanding and language education in

[9] Still, it was for the 'interiority' of interpreter, requiring probing the deeper recesses of human being (Moosa, 2005), that I was attracted to hermeneutics.
[10] Humans' essence as subsisting in an incessant understanding motion (Mulla Sadra's Substantial Theory of Existence)

its humanity basis. It addresses the necessity of beyond cognitive and rational approaches to capture human understanding more fully and justifies the rationale and significance for peaceful and caring human relations. To do so, the writing adopts an interdisciplinary perspective of language, philosophy and theology to present and revive the picture of language and metaphor understanding in its original interdisciplinary nature in order to embrace various rational and spiritual aspects of human (language) understanding. It traces the philosophical underpinnings to language and metaphor understanding and delves into the theological roots of applied philosophical perspectives to metaphor and language understanding in order to reveal and revive the interwoven connections between language, philosophy, and theology (and spirituality) in understanding linguistic metaphors.

L2 metaphor understanding in this layered text is thus situated within the literature on metaphor, literary understanding and L2 metaphor understanding at initial level. It is expanded through the literature on sociocultural, linguistic, individual and emotional challenges and adaptation of participant transitioning students- as connections to their understandings of metaphors are explored. The writing is presented within an intercultural Sufi-hermeneutic perspective of interdisciplinary nature which imparts additional layers for investigating metaphor understanding within human understanding.

Throughout this research journey, as part of my since-childhood Self-understanding journey, I narrate and share my own deep, sad and exciting experiences of understanding- which were also critical in directing me to my research perspectives. I narrate my *bildungsroman*: the story of my personal growth, my own deep existential understandings, my Self-understandings, Self-discoveries, and Self-education with Others (Hodges, 1985; Maynard, 2002). I relate the story of my Self-formation and growth as adjusting my Self, like my participants, to a new social context of cultural clash (Maynard, 2002). At an overall personal layer, this text is situated in my *bildungsroman* and understanding story. It narrates the story of my philosophical and spiritual *Bildungsroman* which is the historical story of my essential and existential reflections on my Self, my Self-exploration, Self-understandings, and Self formation since childhood (Maynard, 2002), entwined with my birds' transition journeys. This contemplative research writing captures part of my lifelong Self-transition and moral and spiritual growth before and after transition from Iran to Canada. It captures the pinnacle of my *Bildungsroman* and Self growth journey at this stage of my life with my diverse participants representing various birds of my Self (si-morgh: thirty birds),

together making one Self (*Simorgh*: one bird), in our collective transition and Self-exploration journey. In this essential-existential journey, our diverse linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds and transitioning experiences serve as key assets in our Self-cultivation journeys and our Self-understanding flight with Others towards our perfect Self[11] (Attar, 1177), which is our Selfless Self in finding its full existence in, and with, Others.

Various goals and interrelated layers of my writing serve the final goal of reconceptualizing and re-contextualizing metaphor and language understanding within human understanding. This end goal involves exploring how understanding originates from our whole being- from our mind, heart, our soul and spirit- and how our full understanding of our Selves impacts our ways of relating with others, inside the linguistic and academic contexts and beyond. In my attempt to incorporate and address the whole being of humans, I appeal to art and poetry- the two universal human languages- including the poems by celebrated poets Attar and Molana (Rumi). Works of art are proven to leave important impacts on humans and shape our understanding of our Selves. They speak to us, captivate us, and call to change our life (Wiercinski, 2019a). Works of art help us understand the human being in its complexity and totality without "losing the perspective of the essential fragmentariness and incompletion of any human insight and cognition" (ibid, page 354).

Using the language of art and poetry in my writing, I aim to create and motivate a peaceful atmosphere in communicating universal messages while reconciling two seemingly opposing traditions at this critical era of great local and global tensions.

Overview of Study

In order to meet the objectives of this Sufi-hermeneutic research study and understanding journey, I present my writing in ten chapters. After this introductory Chapter One, I introduce the inspirations- related to the sociocultural, political, global, research and academic aspects of my understanding experiences- at the beginning of Chapter Two called '*On Writing Simorgh'*. Research questions, participants, data collection methods, and some general key points about the writing itself are introduced in this chapter among other things. The core metaphor topic of the research is fully elaborated in Chapter Three on the literature review entitled '*Metaphors WE give*

[11] Perfect Self referring to the Source of beings as One Being when used in capitals; it also refers to human being per se when perfect is not capitalized while still is the same as Original Self. This relates to ambiguity of human being of human and divine aspects

life to'. This chapter reviews the literature on metaphor and metaphor understanding in second language followed by my suggested approaches for research. It finally situates my research on a metaphorical poem as a literary text within the studies on literary interpretation. Metaphor as a linguistic device is further examined within the context of the participant students' transition from EFL to ESL contexts. A subsequent section in the same chapter reviews international students' transition, their various linguistic, sociocultural and individual and psychological challenges and the impacts on their Selves and their learning and use of language and their academic success. The section provides further grounds to examine metaphor understanding within the lens of the students' challenges and the impacts on their Selves and language learning and understanding in transition from EFL contexts into ESL context of Canada. This section also entertains the nature of my existential research and the research questions on students' Self-understandings in their transition journey and the representations in their understandings of linguistic metaphors.
Chapter Four presents the theoretical framework, '*Home, away from HOME'* and introduces the philosophical approaches that I applied to my research. The first section presents my initial choice of the Occidental philosophical approach of German hermeneutics (primarily Gadamer) to study metaphor understanding, the spiritual and existential overtones of hermeneutics related to my own existential understandings, and my turn to my home philosophical schools of Persian, Islamic tradition. The hermeneutic section speaks to the key concepts related to understanding (of Self and Other/text), language, metaphor and metaphor understanding, *Bildung* and Self-education. The reasons and goals for integration of Islamic philosophies with hermeneutics are elaborated. In the second section of chapter four, the second tradition, the Persian Islamic tradition involving the schools of Illumination (Suhrawardi), or the essential existentialism, and Primacy of being (Mulla Sadra) are presented. The Oriental schools in this study entertain the spiritual and intuitive aspects of understanding in completion of the linguistic-existential aspects addressed by hermeneutic tradition. Different dimensions of understanding are chosen from the two traditions to complement and enlighten one another for reconciliatory and unity purposes. The Islamic schools attend to the *essential* core of our human existential understandings- or the essentiality of human existential understandings- reflecting the "systematic ambiguity of being/existence" (tashkik al-wujud) (Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, p. 35). The integrated, intercultural theoretical framework jointly address the diversity and unity aspects of human understanding involved in metaphor/language understanding. "*Unity in multiplicity*" (Attar, 1177) of human beings of diverse traditions,

cultures, languages, and ways of thinking, involving the key notion of 'Unity of Existence' (Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*), is addressed through *essential existentialism* of the dialogue of the Oriental and Occidental perspectives (with *Simorgh* imparting the same notions to the whole writing). The last section of this theoretical chapter discusses the complementary dimensions of the two philosophical traditions.

The next three Chapters Five, Six, and Seven narrate the stories of the students' various understandings of their Selves and metaphors in their transition journey. Each story chapter serves a different purpose and examines different dimensions of students' understandings.

Chapter Five, *Si-morgh stories*, the first set of the birds' stories, narrates the stories of the linguistic, sociocultural (home), and existential transitioning of the students. This chapter is mainly about the individual students' *existential* understandings of their home and home languages connected to their transitioning Self-understandings in their relations with Others in new sociocultural, ESL context of Canada. This story chapter mainly addresses the first research question on students' dislocation to Canada and their transitioning Self-understandings in a new sociocultural and linguistic context.

Chapter Six, *Simorgh story: Seven Valleys of Love: Illumination/ Understanding*, narrates the stories of the birds' Self-transitioning, their inner and spiritual transitioning and understandings in their relocation to Canada and in face of different Others in their Self-understanding journey. This chapter explores the interhuman and beyond linguistic understandings of the participants in their transition journey. It examines their Self-understandings and growth with Others and responds, mainly, to the last two research questions on metaphor understanding, Self-transitioning and Self-cultivations journeys of the birds, including myself, with Others. The students in this chapter are viewed as spiritual humans, with the birds representing their spiritual beings within the Sufi perspective of *Simorgh*. This chapter is framed in an essential existentialist perspective of the story of *Simorgh* to explore human *unifying* experiences in multiplicity of the students' understandings. Hermeneutic concepts are integrated with Sufism and used in examining and narrating the students' understandings in this chapter. The students' different spiritual and universal humanistic experiences are presented as their passage through different stages or valleys of understanding. Attar's Seven Valleys of Illumination/Understanding are used metaphorically for the students' various ways and stages of inner transitioning and spiritual growth as they approach the perfect version of their Self through their gradual Self-effacement and the

illuminating unity with Others in their transition and Self-understanding journey. A key purpose of this chapter and the whole thesis is to invite my readers to move beyond their habitual ways of seeing and considering 'understanding', including language understanding, as a mere rational phenomenon, and to also attend to the intuitive capacity of our reason, and the spiritual and human unifying aspects of understanding in both research and practice. This story set, and the final discussions and reflections, are hence composed in a combined pragmatic (rational), imaginal and intuitive approach of mystic contemplation to encompass beyond rational being of humans and the multiplicity (کثرت) and unity (وحدت) aspects of human understanding. This ambiguity and multifaceted nature of human being and understanding is also conveyed by the key running theme of 'fate and choice', or 'fate in will', in metaphorical poem *The Road Not Taken* (Frost, 1916) on life roads, which is interpreted by the participants and narrated in Chapter seven.
Chapter Seven, *Roads Not Taken: The Birds' Metaphor Understanding Stories*, involves the third set of the stories on the students' Roads Not Taken which address the second and third research questions on the students' metaphor understandings. This chapter mainly serves as a pragmatic representation of the students' *existential* understandings of the metaphoric poem *The Road Not Taken*, representing all the differences in students' understandings and interpretations of metaphors. The focus in this set of stories is chiefly on the students' existential understanding journeys of metaphors (the arrangement of the stories follows the essential-existentialist approach of the overall story of *Simorgh*). While the existential aspect is chosen to investigate *diversity* in students' understandings of themselves and metaphors in this chapter, the essential-existential aspect investigated in the previous chapter explores *unity* in humanistic understanding experiences of the participants in their Self-transitioning journeys with Others. The study of both diversity and unity aspects of understanding was intended to address the gap for research on unifying understanding experiences in the mainstream diversity studies in humanities, besides its reconciliatory implications for fragmenting academic and social contexts.
Chapter Eight, *Birds/Students' essential-existential understandings (Self & Metaphor),*
discusses the findings in three story sets in light of the research questions. The discussions presented in this chapter are based on the students' understandings of themselves and metaphors in their transition journeys. The students' interrelated experiences in understanding L2 metaphors revealed as highly multifarious, individual, existential and experiential. They involved diverse and unifying experiences and were highly temporal and multifaceted.

Chapter Nine involves reflections on the contributions of this study, the pedagogical implications for research, theory and practice, and limitations and suggestions for further research. I unfold my own Not Taken Road at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Ten, *Epilogue*, summarizes my *Bildungsroman* and my transition and understanding journey with the birds in this research. This chapter responds to the last research question on my lifetime Self-exploration and transition journey with Others. Various students in this study and their diverse understanding journeys are related to different stages of my Self-transitioning journey.

Thinking with Ricoeur's "Hermeneutics of Testimony" (Wiercinski, 2019a), my personal journey of Self-understanding and my *bildungsroman* involves my testimony of faith which is narrated within the horizon of my understandings as a believer of God. For narrating my participants' understanding journeys and findings, though, I "read from" their stories (Wiercinski, 2019b). I listened to the participants' stories to discover what they had to say and let their stories get shaped by their own words and meanings. Listening to the words addressed to me, with a willingness to understand what is actually said, I attempted to practice the "hermeneutics of hospitality" toward my participants (ibid).

In a Nutshell,

In addressing metaphor understanding, this research traces the deep kinship between the two Oriental and Occidental philosophical traditions of hermeneutics and Persian Islamic tradition including Sufism. It traces connections between the key, framing concepts of the two philosophies, ontologically and epistemologically, and integrates and applies them to metaphor and language understanding. Posing deep, essential and humane questions in integrating the two traditions, this research seeks to highlight and inform its readers of the universal basis of all traditions, philosophies of thinking and human understanding. It applies the integrated Sufi-hermeneutic approach to metaphor and language understanding and attends to both rational and spiritual aspects of human understanding, in an attempt to re-contextualize language understanding in full human understanding.

This study seeks to highlight the philosophical roots of language and human understanding and reveal the theological and spiritual basis of the applied philosophical traditions to recontextualize

human and language understanding in its interdisciplinary basis. The goal for this inter-traditional and interdisciplinary endeavour is to stress the significance of both *diversity* and *unity* aspects of human understandings. Attention to varied and universal humane understanding experiences in language or metaphor understanding- as part of the broader human understandings- is deemed as required for sustainable and peaceful education and human relations.

This contemplative and dialogic work is deemed as a step for inter-traditional thinking and awareness and an obligation to help with existing tensions at academic and socio-global contexts. It is a call for humane, intercultural and interdisciplinary approaches in multicultural (language) education and research to transform misled ways of thinking and practice, create more peaceful human relations and promote justice in linguistic texts and contexts.

I hope that this work could fulfill its humane goal and responsibility.

Chapter 2: On Writing Simorgh (The Methods)

In a World of Injustice and Untruth

Figure 1. Artistic Writing. Mahmoud Farshchian, Isfahan, Iran.

> *When I started writing this work, I did not think of it as a thesis, I never thought of it just as a thesis …. I considered it as a piece of writing to heal the hearts of those who felt hurt in a world of injustice and untruth … where the self violates others, forgets the Other … forgets his/her True Self … what I found common in our world … in our academia*[12] *…*

This chapter starts with introducing the inspirations for my research at different levels. I continue with presenting my research questions and a short layout of the research interviews. In the following section, the participants (birds) are introduced and the methods for listening to the birds (data collection methods) are described. The rationale for the choice of a poem as the experimenting tool in my research is elaborated in the next section. Afterwards, I explain my exposure and motives for choosing Gadamer as an initial approach and later in fusion with *Simorgh* and Persian Wisdom as the overall framework of my research. I end the whole chapter by some final points on the writing methods.

[12] My personal reflections/narratives appear in italics throughout this text.

I present the methods for writing other chapters including the literature review, theoretical framework, and research stories at the beginning of each chapter. Data analysis methods are also introduced before each set of stories.

This methods chapter is followed by the next chapters on the literature review: "*Metaphors WE give life to*", theoretical frameworks: "*Home, away from HOME"*, three story sets, discussions, final reflections and epilogue.

Inspiration

They took my inner peace; I tried to recompose myself … and so others

Several simultaneous academic, linguistic, research, social, global and political understanding experiences moved me to look for a comprehensive and humanistic[13] approach for a research of human language understanding. The dominant approach in my research field, metaphor understanding in second language, was primarily a cognitive, 'generalising' approach which highlighted universal experiences, constancy and/or systematicity in understanding. I viewed cognitive approaches as top-down approaches for systematizing human understanding which did not consider the temporality and dynamicity of understanding. They ignored the different 'in motion' beings of individuals (Mulla Sadra, *Al-Afsar,* 1999) in their transitioning understandings, and so, seemed insufficient approaches to capture language understanding as part of human understanding. My transition from Iran to Canada and my observation of the differences in our understandings and behaviours made me 're-understand' the cognitive approach in my new setting. When I used the cognitive approach for my Masters' research in Iran (Salehi, K., 2008; 2010), I did not find great differences in individuals' understandings; I was not moved to look for the connection between dominant research approaches and individuals' ways of behaving. My transition, however, made me see the understanding phenomenon in a wider perspective. Many times, at social and academic levels, I could not see any space for my self, for my voice. I faced many contradictions, many supressing voices and behaviours which ultimately made me stronger to create my own space, to create my own road in research, and to 'disarm'[14] guarded voices/acts in actual academic context. My exposure to people who were used to always seeing within the norm and framework- guarded individuals

[13] Humanistic in a Sufi approach as described in Introduction is meant here and throughout this writing.

[14] I took the word 'disarm' from an always guarded colleague who would address me as 'disarming' each time she misbehaved me with some mysterious inner rage

that difference would horrify them as facing a hindrance rather than a chance for learning beyond their routine perspective- was another main motivation for me to choose a human-linguistic research with a bottom-up approach of no norm to capture the diversity in human understanding, and to reconceptualize language understanding within higher human understanding. Notice of my different way of understanding compared to other students of the mainstream linguistic and cultural background and the entailed sense of isolation for their frequent reluctance to include my myself or my viewpoint was an additional drive. I started to notice the connection[15] between dominant systematizing philosophical thoughts in research and the individuals' actual excluding, self-centered and fragmenting behaviours and the societal tagging and framing of individuals. I could see a similar rooted 'bias' in both which took the voice from different others, in research and actual life.

Having come from a collective, Islamic, WE (rather than I) society which considers all humans, regardless of all 'modern' self-made tags of colors and so on, as parts of the same body, in face of my research, academic, and societal challenges, also the global political tensions for no right understanding of Islamic principles, and the overall unjust treatment of Muslims and Muslim countries on the top of all, I became determined to aim at a research which can capture all these interconnections. I aimed at a research oriented by an integrated approach which involves the higher understanding of respect for the Muslim world as 'shared' ancestors and basic contributors to the current philosophical thoughts and world knowledge (e. g., Jardine, 2012).

As a child of Iran, Persia, the ancient cradle of civilization, I found less humanistic representation in a world which is named as modern and civilized. Suspended at American border for attending a top conference in my field, AAAL[16] early in my PhD, I was reminded of the great Gate to the All Nations, 2500 years ago in the astonishing mansion of Persepolis

Figure 2. The Remaining of the Gate of All Nations, Persepolis, Iran[17]

[15] My understandings influenced other fields in the faculty: https://www.migration-and-mathematics.com/researchers
[16] 2017
[17] https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g790393-d318256-i307221382-Persepolis-Persepolis_Fars_Province.html

where Cyrus the Great[18], The Father of Iran, was visited with gifts by his people from all over the world for his respect to all cultures and religions, for his liberation of Jewish from Babylonian captivity and his support for their return to their homelands. Cyrus' the first global empire on the model of peace and tolerance and his cylinder, the first charter of human rights, seemed much more modern than what I observed and experienced in our era. I could see another Alexandrian seizure[20] of power through brutal force and violence shattering the world's multicultural and multifaith unity.

Figure 3. World representatives carrying gifts for the king of Persepolis in Nowruz[19]

Figure 4. Tribute Bearers Covered in Ash after Alexander's Violent Vandalism[21]

The Greeks who then claimed as 'founders' of civilization and called Persians and other civilizations as 'barbarians' (Rowan, 2004)[22] committed a gross vandalism (Bloedow & Loube, 1997) and destroyed the melting pot of cultures, Persepolis, and ruined the multifaith and multicultural integrity of the era. Today, the American[23] nations, who once founded their constitution after Cyrus the Great[24] use

[18] 'The Great' is used here, as in Persian culture, for his great character rather than his great empire; king Xerxes, for example, is not reminded as The Great.
The king Cyrus is praised in the Holy books of Torah, Bible, and Qor'an; he ruled the world with peace and justice and no war
[19] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knTzxMAYiV4 Bloedow & Loube (1997); Flower (2007).
https://religion.wikia.org/wiki/Zoroastrians_in_Iran
[20] Alexander's reign of power through violence is compared to Cyrus' rule without violence or brutality
https://www.ted.com/talks/neil_macgregor_2600_years_of_history_in_one_object?language=en#t-558159
[21] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knTzxMAYiV4 Bloedow & Loube (1997)
https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/darius-palace.html
[22] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knTzxMAYiV4
[23] American is used for American-wise countries, America and other nations of similar violence and brutality to Iran and the Muslim world, terrorizing them and calling them terrorists
[24] It refers to the book "*Cyropaedia*" written by Xenophon on how to rule an empire like a model ruler, Cyrus The Great, which was read and modeled by founding fathers of America and some other nations

brutal force, call Iranians, and Muslims, 'terrorists', and gain power by brutal force and modern looting of their homelands. Their seizure of Cyrus' cylinder and his first declaration of human rights did not uplift their practice. I could see how the basis for the current scientifically advanced world, let us just highlight the scientific to the devalue of the human aspects, were once coded in old books from Khayam, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Razi, Biruni, Farabi among all other scholars of ancient Islamic world. The great time lapse between the ancient world and the new land somehow justified the naïve treatments of the ruler.

The political situation of the world, involving the unfair threats and bans of a new leader, has been a source of double exile, and resistance, for me and my people born and raised in an ancient civilization living inside or forced outside their homeland, Iran.

All these challenging complexities made me persistent to present my research in a less practiced approach in schools, society, and the world, in a more global and humanistic perspective fusing the hidden roots from my homeland. While aimed at expanding the view of understanding as envisioned in dominant cognitive approaches, concerned with certain biased behaviours, sadly occasionally coming from some mislead countrymen inside or outside academia, I wanted to show a true[25] picture of Islamic philosophy as rooted in a strong, perfected religion (e. g., Hiester, 2016; Turner, 1976) [26] of love for others, and away from all misconceptions and misrepresentations, and to show the basic connections of Persian wisdom and theosophy to the mainstream philosophical schools, including hermeneutics.

I assume my research as a reminder of an old journey, with us as its current travellers, the migrating birds of different kinds and backgrounds, who are dependent on each other to know their road and understand themselves at this temporary stop in their eternal journey towards Perfection. The birds' Perfection and Perfect Self in my writing is conceptualized and applied in a Sufi perspective (Attar, 1177) as referring to the Self in an essential motion towards the Other who is his Origin and Perfection (God). In this perspective, approaching the Other (God) is attained through approaching Other humans and understanding them as parts of his Self, all as One Self, which is becoming a Perfect Self in *Bildung* or cultivating God in himself (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014).

[25] It is true in the sense that it is in line with Qor'anic words used in my philosophies.

[26] Main source: Surah Maidah, verse 3 (5:3): This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion.

Research Questions

To meet various objectives of my research, I situate my research on L2 metaphor understanding in my own transition story and Bildungsroman which is the story of my existential and spiritual transition and growth. My questions, thus, are related to metaphor understanding at existential and essential levels. They include my participants', including my own, understanding experiences. To investigate the nature of L2 learners' understanding of metaphors as embedded in their life journeys (And not just as LIFE IS A JOURNEY as is universalized/systematized in a cognitive approach), I looked at the sociocultural, existential and linguistic dimensions of students' understanding experiences. In line with the applied Sufi-hermeneutic approach to my research, I examined the students' experiences of their being (Self) in their transition into a new sociocultural environment as manifested in their understanding of metaphors. More specifically, I investigated how students' transitioning self-understandings in their transition to Canada, at existential and essential levels, are reflected in their interpretations of metaphors in a poem. My research questions involved:

- How does learners' transition from their native home and an EFL context to a new home, the ESL context of Canada (sociocultural dimension), influence their Self-understanding (existential dimension)?
- How do learners' Self-understandings in a different sociocultural setting- ESL context- manifest in their interpretations of linguistic metaphors in a poem? (existential, sociocultural, and linguistic dimensions)
- How do the learners' transition journeys of their Selves and their inner transitioning, presented as the birds of the Sufi story of *Simorgh*, contribute to their understandings of Others and metaphors?
- How does my essential-existential understanding journey with the birds in this research contribute to my *Bildungsroman* and my long-life Self-exploration journey with Others?

To answer my research questions, I conducted individual interviews. I interviewed graduate or senior undergraduate students who had experienced transition challenges. I opened a separate file, later multiplied, for each bird and included all the highlights on language, Self, home, and from the poem. Later, I used my notes in writing their individual stories. All the time, I paid attention to

the connections between the birds' journeys and my own journey. Here is more details on the birds (after my choice of *Simorgh*, the participants became the birds of my story) and the interviews:

Participants (The Birds)

To meet the purpose of my study, I recruited thirteen students at the University of Ottawa who volunteered for my research. I specifically focused on seven[27] participants (Fatima, Ali and Saád, Neo, Alexa, Leila, and Shadi) with the most diverse life experiences and metaphor interpretation experiences. I started with the participants who volunteered first and before others. After seven participants, I also reached the stage of saturation where the remaining birds seemed to have very much in common in their stories. For the remaining six birds (Carolina, Jane, Qazal, Madina, Camila, Zahra), I shortly referred to other different, distinguishing aspects from their life and understanding experiences. I included a snapshot of the six remaining birds in one story under "Other birds". Out of responsibility, I devoted the required time for deep and meaningful reflection and analysis for all the thirteen birds before focusing on seven birds for full description. I did similarly for writing their metaphor road stories. All participants were ESL students who have studied English as a foreign language (EFL) in their native country and had studied in Canada for at least three years. I chose a minimum of three years of transition for participants to have a sense of transition in their Self-understanding. Participants were students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds studying different disciplines in the humanities including Communications, Criminology, Language and Science Education, Law, and Sociology. They chose their pseudonyms as: Shadi, Alexa, Leila, Neo and Jane, Camila, Ali, Qazal, Fatima, Carolina, Madina, Zahra, and Saád coming from twelve different countries of Afghanistan, Albania, Brazil, China, Colombia, Jordan, Iran, Mali, Portugal, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan respectively. Participants were recruited voluntarily via an invitation letter which was posted at different departments of the University of Ottawa. They attended individual interviews and were contacted later during transcription or writing, whenever any information was missing or needed clarification.

[27] Seven is considered as the number of perfection in Persian culture, which happened to become the number of my focused participants. It also coincides with Attar's Seven Valley of Love/Illumination.

Listening to The Students'/Birds' Understandings

To answer my questions, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews. Semi-structured interviews provided an open space for the students to be themselves and change the flow of conversations if they needed. The interviews lasted 90 to 240 minutes. They were originally aimed at 90-120 minutes, but the participants seemed interested to talk about their Self-transitioning experiences when I asked them relevant questions and when they reflected on the poem *The Road Not Taken* (Frost, 1916). The poem made them truly re-examine their own journey and look into themselves before and after transition to Canada. They, gratefully, found the interview a 'good pause to think' about their Self journeys and a 'refreshing stop sign' on their life roads (Zahra, Fatima, Neo). During individual interviews, participants were first asked to interpret the key metaphor of understanding: 'Home, away from home' (from Hegel in Gadamer & Silverman, 1991). They next were asked a set of questions about their transition to Canada, the way that they used to understand and were understanding themselves (Self-understanding), and also their views of home, home language and English language knowledge before and after transition to Canada (see Appendix I for interview questions). These questions examined the impact of transition to a new sociocultural setting on the learners' evolving self-understanding and language knowledge. After the questions and a short break, participants were asked to individually think aloud on the meanings of the metaphorical poem, *The Road Not Taken* (see Appendix III for the poem). The poem was new to all participants except Jane who had read it years before in a literature class in China. Think aloud techniques provided a detailed picture of the interpretation processes (Sorm & Steen, 2013) which emerged through the hermeneutic dialogue between the participants and the poem (Koch, 1999). Think aloud facilitated the investigation of the aimed dimensions of understanding which required a nuanced analysis of the participants' interpretations. The form of the interviews sometimes changed depending on the participants' interpretations and the flow of topics in the conversation. Sometimes, supplementary questions (see Appendix II) were used when the participants did not address the researched concepts in their interpretations of metaphors. After each interview, I took immediate notes of the striking points and my initial interpretations of the participants' replies and interpretations. Interviews took place in study rooms at university library. They were scheduled at participants' convenience during a period of approximately one month. During the interviews, I attempted to provide a relaxing atmosphere for my participants- by talking about myself, my transition and my research at the

beginning, by providing food, breaks, and creating a happy environment; and more importantly, by listening attentively to their answers- to ensure that they felt at home in opening their hearts and talking about their most inner feelings, private concerns and their most emotional moments in their individual life journeys. The conversations created a *reciprocally Self-transforming relation* between us which moved us from our unfamiliar worlds into a deeply familiar one. All participants' conversations were audio recorded and transcribed. I started each conversation by thanking my participants for their contribution, introducing myself and sharing the purpose of my research. Some participants asked further questions about my research or myself and I patiently replied to all their questions. I also explained about my research road journey in order to make them feel comfortable to talk about their own roads. I got involved with each participant during the whole conversation. Most of the times, the participants were prompted to talk for a long time on each question. Questions made them reflect on themselves. They were excited for their findings as they reflected. For transcribing the interviews, I transcribed each participant's conversation in a separate file and included all sections involving my own turns. Sometimes, when I had to stop, I recorded the time. Other times, I recorded certain times for the significant or unclear parts that I wanted to listen again later. While transcribing, I underlined certain parts that were key to my research. Sometimes, I highlighted the parts that seemed noteworthy or unique to each participant. I used different colors for different points significant for my research questions. I marked pauses and hesitations and the vague parts with dots in parentheses. I also put their emotional states, such as laughing, sad, or excited states, in parentheses. I stored the interviews on a password protected laptop. For learners' confidentiality, I used pseudonyms of their own choices in my research. The interview scripts became my source of reference for writing the birds' stories, their metaphor interpretation stories, and Seven Valleys on their essential understandings. I looked back many times in writing these sections for quoting the actual sentences, words or the clues to my raised points in the stories.

This experiment itself was an exciting part of my thesis. I found it very hard to end. I stopped interviewing when I still had some volunteer participants willing to attend. Later I found it extremely hard to stop reading on my topics and it seemed even much harder to stop writing about all the process.

On Choice of Poetry

Reading a poem entails a particularly rich existential feeling which I personally enjoy experiencing it. This feeling existed even if I read the same poem each time. This experience inspired me to use poetry as the experimenting tool for my existential study. Here is what I next found on Self-presenting and timeless language of 'readable' poetry which further encouraged me to use a poem in my existential study on metaphor understanding:

Unlike most non-literary texts which mainly involve normative understanding, literary texts 'emerge' and find meaning as they are read[28]. As an 'eminent' text of literature, poetry becomes present and originates in itself in being read. In other words, language 'self-presents' in a poem. When read, sonorous sounds "re-interweaves" the threads of meaning and literary words become present and gain a rich meaning beyond the context of their speaking (Palmer, 2001). Written in a 'readable' way, poetry overcomes the abstractness of its literary words and becomes 'intelligible' in its meaning when it is read. The play of meaning relations, enhanced sentence volume (for play of sounds and multiplicity of meanings), and the whole discourse makes the reader listen for more. Demand for repetition of words in an original power of sounds prompts a 'new speaking' and manifestation of Self in reading (Palmer, 2007). As the densest form of speculative thinking (as opposed to propositional thinking), literary texts entail a multiplicity of meanings. Speculative thinking originates from 'speculative' dimension of language holding that things are shown *through* rather than *in* language (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014). Understanding poetry, involving great word play (poetics of poetry)- such as repetition, imagery, rhyme, rhythm, personification, alliteration and metaphor- and high literary volume, demands understanding higher reflective meanings (Palmer, 2007). Relevantly, reading poetry involves the reader's many pauses and re-readings, his 'getting into" the text, each time finding new meaning and sound[29] relationships. This pausing and "tarrying" is what makes a poem more diverse and richer (Palmer, 2001).

In understanding poetry, the being of the reader is addressed. Understanding a poem involves a moment of "hermeneutic transcendence" (what I call *life of understanding*) when the reader is "moved on" (Davey, 2006, p. 6). It is a moment that the reader experiences *transforming* through

[28] There are different degrees of existentialism present in understanding different texts. The maximum is in understanding poetry (literature). There is space for research on other types of text.

[29] Sound for his existential understanding and his different context of understanding

knowing, seeing, thinking and feeling differently (ibid). This speculative knowledge and understanding, or the "selfication of the self" (Iser, in Davey, 2006, p. 233), entails a new self-understanding for the reader. The "structure" [*Gebilde*] of poetry is thus understood through being developed from 'within' and grasped by further formation [*Bildung*]. This gives the poem a 'temporal' and 'timeless' character of no end-meaning. Understanding poetry thus involves *formation* of interpreter's self through speculative understanding (Davey, 2006) (which I found truly aligned with my existential research approach and the overall theme of my research story). Within the circle of understanding, the traditionary and historical poem re-emerges into being by addressing the hearer/reader. The reader/hearer understands the poem through connecting it to his own worldview. He constantly makes interpretive conjectures and revises them. This endless dialectical movement of interpretation terminates in the words that temporally fit the meaning of the poem but allows for an infinity of meaning which is embedded in a finite verbal form. This *experiential meaning* and "detachment of the words from any subjective opinion" of the hearer/reader forms the reality of the poem (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014, p. 485). For its *connection to being,* poetic language does not refer to one existing reality. A poem reveals unexpected dimensions of meaning and the transforming role of language in understanding (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014).

As the essence and vital principle of poetry, metaphor is in intimate relationship with poetry (Yang, 2015). Understanding metaphor is considered as an "epitome of maximal subjective involvement" (Steen, 1994, p. 241). In a poem, metaphor is highly connected with the multilayered play of sounds, word meanings, and discourse meaning. Understanding metaphor thus is not interpreting something already 'constructed' or finished. It happens through the changing relations of sound and meaning, and also through the readiness of the reader in receiving and 'assimilating' the text, in being "all ears" to what a poem speaks (Palmer, 2007). Considering all these, I found reading poetry as a particularly rich understanding phenomenon which involved the critical moments to address the issue of transitioning self involved in understanding as was aimed in my study.

The inexplicitness of metaphors in poetry (Goatly, 1997) helped me reconsider what is conventionally considered as metaphor to what is 'recognized" differently as metaphor by various readers.

On Discovery and Choice of Gadamer[30]

My choice of the theoretical frameworks and my integrated research methodology was entirely discovery-based. Coming from language background, with no study background in philosophy, I was moved to think about the role of the researcher in a PhD course on qualitative research. In a reading paper[31] on 'theoretical perspectives' with a table on different roles of researcher such as 'to describe', 'to construct', 'to deconstruct', 'to combine', 'to rebuild', 'to transform', etcetera, I was attracted by the word for the role of the researcher as an 'interpreter' (Koro-Ljungberg et. al., 2009). Since then, the researcher as an 'interpreter' became a key concept for me. I knew I will examine my participants' interpretations, and I will interpret their interpretations. There will not be any way for me as a researcher to avoid my personal worldview in my study. The 'interpreter' role led me to philosophical hermeneutics as a theoretical perspective, and hermeneutics became my 'chosen' research approach with Gadamer as the one who defined understanding as 'interpretation' in hermeneutics. Understanding as interpretation was how I appreciated understanding metaphors before as an EFL undergraduate student in English literature and later as a PhD student in ESL classes with individuals of different linguistic and cultural perspectives. My transition to Canada made me see a key role for my L1 world and experiences in understanding L2 texts. Although I could see the role of my own experiences and perspective as an international student in my classes, I hardly could find a space to project myself into my own understandings, and if I could, I hardly felt welcomed. This made me even more persistent to delve into hermeneutics, as finding my Self, my voice, in its familiar terms of understanding.

In favouring a hermeneutic approach, I found the use of process-based research methods such as semi-structured interviews and think aloud techniques, as well as the inclusive view of language as a medium for disclosing both the individual and contextual aspects of understanding as helpful strengths for my research.

The existential aspect of hermeneutic philosophy made it a closer match to my inner lifelong understandings and existential feelings. Finally, an integrated Sufi-hermeneutic philosophy

[30] A reason for inclusion of my theoretical exploration journey is to encourage other emerging researchers to explore their own research theories and original research roads rather than following what is typically used which is what I found common in my context.

[31] (E) pistemological awareness, instantiation of methods, and uninformed methodological ambiguity in qualitative research projects (Koro-Ljungberg et. al., 2009)

seemed a more thorough humanistic philosophy which could bring us together in our vast differences in academic and everyday contexts.

Gadamer's texts dimly revived key humane principles of my Islamic tradition, and the mystic, literary and artistic works inspired by Persian theosophy which made me feel and re-experience God in my research: my research became my love and I became my road.

Final Points on My Writing

In my writing, in some places, I have used long sentences, stating the main theme near the end, or, I might have used other methods which might seem as deviating from 'standard' English, but are not grammatically wrong. I valued this deviation for preserving the cultural side of my writing identity. I found it most meaningful not to present them in many short, interrupted, or 'cut' sentences which would despoil my flow of thought and the meaning and feeling that I wished to convey. In these situations, writing other than my cultural style would make me feel a stranger to my own writing, I wanted to be myself in my writing with my Persian style which might seem 'non-standard', while there is no standard.

Throughout my writing I used italics, according to APA style[32], for key terms or technical terms or phrases, foreign phrases common in English, and the titles of books, reports, webpages, and other stand-alone works. I also used italics for *reflective* sections including my own reflections- at the beginning, in between, or at the end of each text- and for quotes from participants, or reflective quotes from scholars or poets, where the beauty of thinking moved me to italicize the reflective quote. I referenced the italic, reflective quotes, other than my own, at the end of each quote. Titles of chapters are italicized for the poetic and reflective mood of the whole text. This is a cultural way of expressing emotions in words.

There are significant footnotes, including relevant documentaries, throughout my writing which are crucial for both understanding and documenting my text.

I used the terms "Eastern", "Oriental", "Western", and/or "Occidental" in my writing. My perspective in seeing the world as two poles of East and West is the way that the world is pictured in Holy Qor'an, in the famous Light Verse which I introduce in the last story of the birds on their metaphor understanding roads. In this sacred perspective, the whole world, no matter of what geographical position of East or West, is included.

[32] https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/italics-quotations/italics https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/apa/other/italics

Self and Other are capitalized throughout my text for the existential aspect of the work wherever there is an emphasis on the being of the individuals. The terms students, birds and participants are used interchangeably in my writing. This is for the combined rational, spiritual, and symbolic spirit of my research which aligns the rational-spiritual nature of human itself. Finally, my writing involves art including paintings, pictures and poetry. Through its multimodal nature of verbal and visual features, my writing addresses the whole being of its participants and readers.

Last Notes

My main research tool throughout my writing has been my 'thinking heart' which is my emotional brain, our emotional brain, a brain which can capture my human gifts: my divine soul and essence, my emotions, my imagination, my reason, my old memories and dreams, my connection to my God, my ancestors, family, and other human and nonhuman beings. I found my 'thinking heart' of greater understanding than my mere rational brain.

To present and picture the common, unifying understanding experiences of my transiting participants concurring with their diverse, existential understandings of metaphors, I integrated Oriental and Occidental perspectives in my writing. I appealed to a combination of rational, intuitive, spiritual, and symbolic representation of my stories and findings through my integrated and intercultural approach. I follow Attar in appealing to the transformative power of imagination (Corbin, 2013) through story, poetry and also art. Doing so, I aim at capturing both the rationalistic and intuitive[33] aspects of human understanding and knowledge (elaborated in the theoretical chapter). In my research, I consider understanding in its full scope as both a rational and spiritual and humanistic phenomenon- the way that it is described through the mystic-hermeneutic notions of excursion and reunion of the Self with the Other. So, I view language understanding in its full human roots. My integration of the Oriental and Occidental perspectives of Sufism and hermeneutics is for considering various capacities of our human reason (with love for the Other at highest level) and various modes of our perception and understanding. It is to create a more fully picture of who we are as humans and in relation to Other humans. My multimodal research writing, so, calls my readers to move beyond their pragmatic comfort zones and live other modes and capacities of their being and human understanding, to touch and re-experience understanding deep layers of their being in relation to Other humans.

[33] Immediate grasp or inner understanding, what is referred to as the inner eye in comparison with the eye of head (Rumi, Masnavi Manavi, 167)

The writing of my thesis lasted long. The reason was the numerous things that I had accumulated in my mind after my extensive readings and passionate, endless reflections on my Self and my interviews. My writing was highly individual, highly global; highly metaphysical, highly humane, highly divine; and, highly linguistic and sociocultural involving key concepts of home and tradition, all of extreme significance and deep interest to me. I imagined myself in between a very big and complex puzzle of many smaller, complex mazes. All complexity created a most challenging but enjoyable and rewarding road for me.

My surrounding situation moved me to a certain way of writing which could not happen without my transition to Canada. My writing was very reflective, slow, deep, exciting, and painful. Sometimes, it looked like what self-understanding seemed in Sufism. I could not and did not want to move on with the rush of time that I was surrounded with. I could see great moral and human values being swept away by the rush of time; rush of time had entailed self-centered, cold human relations, created robotic, superficial, and less meaningful and honest human relations. My frame of story also made a big difference in terms of timing and in understanding time in my different context. I found that time runs much faster in this 'modern' world, in this side of the world, that it mainly harms humans more than it benefits; I found that people run after time, and time owns humans. To do this writing, I needed a timeless atmosphere, a special space and focus which was not always possible. I needed to connect to my deep inner side, to listen to myself; I needed to listen to the voice of silence, the voice of no one, to become one in everyone, to melt in time and flow in the space.

To be able to write, I had to collect my whole self, all my inner self; I had to be able to rule the time, to erase it with my inner power. This was not easy many times, or even possible. To reach the stage of inner writing, I had to ignore many things, many self-centered behaviours around me and around the world; I had to calm down my soul in a battlefield of injustice. My writing became my healing art.

I consider my writing as a piece of art, a calming art, which its craft needed great patience, focus, and my whole focused Self. Being fully present in my writing, I addressed the whole being of my readers- their hearts, souls, and minds- through using art, poetry, theology, philosophy, and language, the interconnected aspects of our whole human being, our whole lingual being.

To write my work, I needed special places, timeless places in nature, places of absolute silence, where I could listen to myself and unite myself with the air, when I could flow with the wind, with water, and air. Many times, when I found it hard to gather my whole self, sitting in the mosque or by the river, listening to the wind or water could help harmonize my Self.

Figure 5. My writing Mood. Mahmoud Farshchian, Isfahan, Iran.

I consider my writing a piece of Sufi art, which ignoring time made it get crafted and polished. A piece of art which is worth spending my whole life on refining it, and so, deepening my Self-understanding …

Chapter 3:
Metaphors WE Give Life to
(Literature Review)

On Writing Metaphors WE give life to

For writing 'Metaphors WE give life' I started with a cognitive approach (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which was later contextualized in a still systematic way by Kövecses (2008, 2009, 2015), and in a less systematic way by Cameron (2010). I found my way in between two contextual approaches to metaphor in an existential way which encompassed the contextual aspect in both cognitive and discourse dynamic approaches. The dialogical aspect and the absence of any norm, system or pattern in the use of metaphors finally ensured an interpretive, existential approach as an apt approach to investigate metaphor understanding in a more natural perspective as an emergent phenomenon.

Contextualizing the cognitive approach in an existential view and approaching the metaphysical reality of understanding made writing feel easier. Writing became attuned to my lifelong existential feelings and metaphysical nature of (my) understandings. It became even joyful when I could contextualize the existential approach in its original divine and essentialist version. The joy of final harmony with other sections moved me to add the picture of the birds to celebrate my divine feelings.

Writing the second part on international students' transition was rooted in my own and my participants' experiences. Sometimes it revived some painful experiences at school and societal levels which made me completely stop writing. The difficulty of completing the section moved me to think of practical solutions to help with international students' transition challenges. The literature included on international students' transition follow an existential evolution, starting from non-existential to fully existential studies.

Metaphors WE give life to

Through Echoing the Linguistic Existence

Our words are the echoes of the language of existence
As mountains, we echo the linguistic existence.
We are possessed by the language of existence, the infinity of (hidden) meaning and voice which animates our words **(***Ebrahimi Dinani on Ibn Sina)*

We are parrots reflecting our inner echo (Rumi)

Being that can be understood is language …
being which is not exhausted by language (Gadamer, 2012, p. 10). *We are endeavoring to approach the mystery of language by beginning with the conversation that we are (Gadamer 1989a, 378; 1990, 383)*

When I was first asked to explain the meanings of an English poem in a literature class, the only strategy that I would do was to look for the meanings of the words in the dictionary and choose the definitions and synonyms that would best match the meanings of the neighboring words. A further step was to consider the meanings of different lines, making sure that the lines make sense altogether. Word-for-word (literal) translation in search for the referential (denotative) meaning, and the 'intended meaning' of the author was the only strategy that I used to understand metaphorical language.

Later, for my MA research on EFL learners' understanding of metaphors, I read a great number of studies on metaphor understanding which mainly used a cognitive framework (Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Viewing metaphors in terms of a set of conceptual domains seemed interesting and helped me in understanding metaphors, but I was again guided by a dictionary, a new one with a set of domains instead of terms to imagine and understand metaphors. The approach did not give me the space to imagine and see the meanings afresh, from my own perspective.

Exploring hermeneutic philosophy later for my PhD research, I found the existential view to understanding as representing my 'own' way of understanding, an approach which let me move beyond the author's meaning (Gadamer, 2004), which made me feel the space for my own being, my own perspective and my world in my understanding of metaphors, and language. Existential approach made understanding metaphors feel much less challenging[34]*,*

[34] My personal experience became a learning for others to see how to approach multilingual research/education

also enjoyable …. but it was the Original existentialism with Divine core which illuminated the essential infinity of understanding and helped with all understanding challenges …

Introduction

Metaphors we live by, the famous book by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), points to the metaphorical nature of our conceptual system in terms of which we think and act in our everyday life. The book highlights the metaphorical concepts that we "live by". Lakoff and Johnson introduce a conceptual, metaphorical approach to understanding which is called Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). CMT, or the cognitive metaphor theory, refers to understanding of one idea, or *conceptual* domain, in terms of another. Cognitive theory focuses on the 'systematicity' of metaphorical concepts- the cognition of metaphors or metaphors in the mind- the systematic connection of metaphorical expressions to metaphorical concepts. In conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, for example, expressions such as 'Your claims are *indefensible*' or 'I *demolished* his argument' (Murphy,1996) form a systematic way of talking about the battling aspects of arguing.

Conceptual metaphors are grounded in our experiences in the world and are likely to be found widely across different languages and cultures (Lakoff, 1993). Conceptual metaphors are grounded in our *constant* interaction with our physical, social, and cultural environment (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Cognitive theory, thus, predominantly captures the *constancy* and *systematicity* of metaphor understanding based on some preconceived concepts. This tendency towards *uniformity* of understanding ignores the *ongoing* process of concept formation, the momentary 'transition' in understanding, and the dynamicity of human understanding. Understanding metaphors, or conceptual interpretation, involves the interpreter who brings his own concepts into understanding or the hermeneutic experience (Gadamer, 2013). Understanding metaphors involves an element of *application* which produces an ongoing process of concept formation. There is a dynamic, transitional aspect to understanding which happens through the interaction between each interpreter and the metaphorical text: "the interpreter does not use the words and concepts like a craftsman who picks up his tools and then puts them away" (p. 421), all understanding is interwoven with new concept formation. Like conversation, understanding is a circle closed by the dialectic of question and answer between the interpreter and the text. Framing understanding within CMT, thus, delimits understanding to a finished process. This is specifically problematic when it comes to understanding metaphors in a

second/foreign language, when meaning making involves learners' process of translating the metaphorical text into their first language which involves a whole complex of possible meanings.

Considering this main limitation of the dominant cognitive approach to *dynamic* metaphor understanding, in what follows, I present two parts. I the first part, I present: an introduction to metaphor; the cognitive approach to metaphor understanding; the strengths and shortfalls; a revised, contextual version of CMT (Kövecses, 2008); a discourse dynamic approach to metaphor; cultural linguistics and intercultural variation; a sociocultural perspective, followed by the literature on metaphor in second language learning and teaching and L2 learners' challenges in understanding metaphors, and finally my suggested research approach. At the end of this metaphor section, I shortly introduce the literature on L2 learners' experiential understanding of literature to highlight the overall interpretive nature of literary works, beyond poetry and metaphorical poems, and also to pinpoint the contribution of my research to the existing research on L2 literary understanding and interpretation besides its contribution to studies on metaphor and L2 metaphor understanding.

In the second part of this chapter, I include a section on international students' transition and their challenges, and the negative and positive sides of transition for relevance to my research. Finally, I introduce an existential-hermeneutic approach, integrated with Oriental perspectives, as an approach which captures various dimensions of the students' challenges- the existential/individual, linguistic and sociocultural dimensions- and reveals the students' self-understandings and their self-cultivation journeys in their understandings of metaphors.

Metaphor

The standard dictionary definition of metaphor is a word or phrase called 'topic' which is applied to an object or concept called 'vehicle' that it does not literally denote in order to suggest comparison with another object or concept (Ortony, 1979). Richards (1936) calls the topic as the 'tenor' or 'principal subject' and the vehicle as the 'subsidiary' subject. In the famous metaphor "All the world is a stage[35]", thus, 'All the world' is the principal subject or the topic and 'a stage' the 'subsidiary' subject or the vehicle. In my research poem, *The Road Not Taken,* the word 'road' is used to represent the concept of 'choice' (Orr, 2015). Road, and its collocations such as 'grass', 'worn', and 'bent', is used as an extended metaphor throughout the poem.

[35] Shakespeare's *As you Like It*

Within the cognitive linguistic approach, (CMT, Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), metaphor is defined as not just a matter of language but 'first and foremost' as a matter of thought. Metaphor is defined as the mechanism to understand abstract concepts via more concrete entities. Conceptual metaphors involve an "A is B" structure (Littlemore & Low, 2006b), which represent understanding one thing, the 'target', or one conceptual domain, such as IDEAS, in terms of something else, the 'source', or another, more concrete conceptual domain, such as FOOD (Steen, 2009). In a metaphor such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE is understood in terms of a JOURNEY: the target domain LIFE takes its structure from the source domain JOURNEY: there is a source-to-target domain correspondence between destination (s) and purpose(s) of life (Kövecses, 2010). Metaphor understanding is thus viewed as the 'mapping' or transfer of features from the source domain onto the target domain. Linguistic expressions such as *Two roads diverged* and *I took the one [road] less traveled by* are instantiation of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, or the 'mapping' of conceptual domains LIFE and JOURNEY. The mappings are based on the bodily, physical, and cultural experiences that we live in the world (Gibbs, 1994; Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

There are two key features of CMT discussed by Lakoff and Johnson that are relevant to this study: the *systematicity* and *constancy* of metaphors and the *cultural specificity* of metaphors. In TIME IS MONEY example, Lakoff and Johnson explain how the ways that people in the Western culture talk about time is 'consistent' because of the ways in which Western culture conceive of the concept of time. Other given examples of systematicity and consistency are HAPPY IS UP and SAD IS DOWN, again because people of Western culture do not use expressions such as 'feeling up' when they are unhappy, or vice versa. The other main discussed feature of CMT is how conceptual metaphors are culture-specific. Lakoff and Johnson explain how TIME IS MONEY metaphor develop from the concept of work in Western society and their customs of work payment and other things in increments of time, such as wages per hour, the practices which seems (to them) as "relatively new in the history of human race"[36] and do not exist in all cultures (p. 8). They also refer to different ways of conceptualizing time in Western culture and other cultures, such as Maori and Ancient Greek (cited in Kövecses, 2005) which see the future in the back rather than front (ahead of us) as Westerns see. Lakoff and Johnson

[36] They did not seem to know that these exchanges of money for daily work or use of tablets as credit cards were practiced in other non-Western places thousands of years ago, such as the time of Cyrus The Great. Time is Gold is what existed in Ancient Persian as now TIMES IS MONEY, in a non-systematizing way.

conclude that the values demonstrated in metaphoric expressions are consistent and deeply embedded in Western culture.

Strengths of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Research on metaphor understanding has found a number of advantages for using the cognitive approach (CMT). Picken (2005) finds the positive impact of awareness-raising of conceptual metaphors on EFL learners' ability to interpret metaphors in literary texts. Detailed instruction of conceptual metaphors produced high rates of metaphorical readings. The positive impact of raising learners' awareness of conceptual metaphors on their vocabulary learning has been investigated by Boers (2000b). Boers shows that raising language learners' awareness of conceptual metaphors is a useful channel for vocabulary acquisition and retention. Similarly, the comparison of common conceptual metaphors in Polish and English by Deignan et al. (1997) helped learners in becoming more autonomous in vocabulary learning.

Examining metaphoric units in L1 and L2 and learners' understandings of L2 metaphors, Charteris-Black (2002) suggests a pedagogic strategy for L2 conceptual metaphors which differ from their counterparts in L1. The benefits of teaching conceptual metaphors in a foreign language classroom have been supported by a number of other studies (e. g., Boers 2000 a, b; Khoshniyat and Dowlatabadi, 2014; Kömür and Çimen, 2009; Littlemore and Low, 2006) (Further benefits will be given in the section on second language). There have been suggestions for conceptual syllabi that raise metaphoric awareness and approach metaphors through conceptual domains (Andreou & Galantomos, 2008; Hoang, 2014). Andreou and Galantomos, for instance, drafted a detailed proposal on teaching metaphor in a product-oriented conceptual syllabus involving specific goals for the development of L2 learners' metaphorical competence. There have been different views for the teaching of conceptual metaphors. Danesi (2008) stressed the explicit teaching of conceptual metaphors to L2 learners in order to gain metaphorical competence (MC) (Littlemore & Low, 2006a)- to be able to understand and produce metaphors in L2- and avoid using metaphors with their L1 conceptual system in mind. For teaching metaphoric expressions of the emotion anger, Boers (2000a) suggests that due to the *universal* aspects of embodied experiences of the emotions, teaching correlates of metaphoric expressions in physical experiences can improve learners' in-depth comprehension of metaphors. Other studies, such as Kövecses (2000b), Littlemore and Low (2006), and Musolff (2006), suggest the instruction of conceptual metaphors as helpful in cases that learners encounter

linguistic expressions with conceptual metaphors which are different from or absent in L1. Still other studies, Kövecses (2005) and Sharifian et al. (2008), which consider metaphors as both universal and culturally specific, suggest explicit teaching of conceptual metaphors for helping with understanding universal metaphors, and not 'of much help' for understanding other than universal metaphors. The influence of learners' L1 knowledge and culture on their metaphoric processing in the L2 is highlighted in these studies and others including Boers (2003), Kövecses (2004), Sharifian (2007), and Yu (2007).

In spite of the advantages of using the cognitive approach for the research and teaching of metaphor to L2 learners, there are a number of basic problems with using this approach. In the following, the main problems including: delimiting, highly generalized and abstract conceptual domains, prioritizing thought over language, linguistic variation of different conceptual domains, confusion caused by conceptual metaphors with the same source domain, and the problem with teaching L2 conceptual system for avoiding L1 conceptual system are discussed among others.

Shortfalls of CMT

One of the key problems of the cognitive approach is delimiting domains. As Deignan (2010) mentions, while the notion of a domain is strong, it is not always easy to operationalize. For instance, when cancer is described as galloping, a mapping from animal (horse) onto cancer is suggested. This domain shift from the movement domain to an animal one may seem over-interpretation (Semino et al., 2004). The same problem exists when temperature metaphors are used for emotions, for instance EMOTIONS ARE TEMPERATURE or ANGER IS HEAT-, that is the source domain, is described at increasing levels of specificity (Deignan, 2010). Conceptual domains are criticized as being highly generalized and abstract, pre-existing the actual use of metaphors in language (Cameron, 2010).

There is a strong criticism against CMT in stressing the embodied[37] and conceptual aspects of metaphor and downplaying the linguistic aspect. Steen (2007), for instance, criticizes the attempt to define and demarcate conceptual domains without considering its relation to language. Cameron (2010) also views CMT as prioritizing thought over language with language merely as the surface manifestation of more important (conceptual) phenomena without accounting for language in use (Deignan, 2010). Downplaying language in its focus on thought, and disputing

[37] Linkage between brain mappings and body (e. g., conceptualization of time in relation to body)

the role of culture (Cameron, 2010), a cognitive approach deemphasizes the interconnection of language, thought, and culture.

Linguistic variation of different conceptual domains across different languages is one of the most researched problems of a cognitive approach. Chen and Lai (2014) refer to the culturally specific concepts that *anger* instantiates in English and Chinese. While in English, *anger* is conceptualized as a hot fluid within a closed container (i.e., the human body), in Chinese, *anger* is conceptualized as a hot gas. The metaphoric concept THE ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER, therefore, is instantiated differently in the two different cultures. Studying Chinese EFL learners' understanding of English texts with metaphoric expression of the emotion *anger*, Chen and Lai found that learners had difficulty in interpreting metaphoric expressions that involved distinct conceptual metaphors in English and Chinese. The studies by Deignan et al. (1997) and Charteris-Black (2002) similarly suggested learners' difficulty in interpreting metaphors with different conceptual bases in L1 and L2, in their cases, Polish and Malay as L1 and English as L2.

The confusion caused by conceptual metaphors involving the same source domain is another noteworthy problem with a cognitive approach. Picken (2005/2007) investigated the challenges that L2 Japanese learners faced in understanding linguistically 'invisible' metaphors in the literature. To help with the learners' difficulties, the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY and examples of conventional linguistic metaphors related to this conceptual metaphor, such as LOVE IS A JOURNEY, were instructed to the learners. Although awareness of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY helped learners in metaphorical reading of metaphors, the similarity of the source domain, JOURNEY, created confusion.

A large number of scholars (e. g., Cameron 2003, 2007; Clausner and Croft, 1997; Deignan, 1999, 2005; Gevaert, 2001, 2005; Rakova, 2002; Ritchie, 2003; Steen, 1999; Zinken, 2007) have criticized CMT for ignoring the study of metaphors in real and natural contexts. The linguistic metaphors which are used to exemplify conceptual metaphors have often been criticized as being invented and decontextualized (Cameron & Deignan, 2003; Deignan, 2005, 2008a, 2008b; Haser, 2005; Hoàng, 2015; Murphy, 1997; Shen & Balaban, 1999), and as ignoring some essential aspects of metaphor which accounts for real discourse investigation of metaphor

(Kövecses, 2015). Findings of discourse and corpus approaches[38] to metaphor also support the inadequacy of CMT for natural metaphor use (e.g., Musolff & Zinken, 2009; Zanotto et al., 2008). Investigating metaphor as a situated, multi-faceted, and emergent phenomenon in naturally occurring discourse, these approaches have considered the linguistic as well as cognitive, sociocultural and affective dimensions of metaphors (Cameron et al., 2009; Cameron & Deignan, 2006; Charteris-Black, 2004; Deignan, 2010). Key assumptions of CMT, including the categorization of metaphor into image and conceptual (Caballero, 2003; Deignan, 2007; Hoàng, 2015; Zinken, 2007), and the claimed universality of metaphor understanding (Hoàng, 2015; Zinken, 2007) were questioned through these discourse and corpus approaches which drew attention to the unique, contextual aspects of metaphor understanding, instead of relying on some limiting conceptual domains and downplaying the linguistic aspect.

Gibbs (2011) refers to both negative and positive reactions to CMT. While Gibbs refers to hostile reactions from metaphor scholars to CMT as being fundamentally conceptual and embodied and discarding the traditional idea of metaphors in *creating* new meanings, he also argues in favor of CMT for showing the way that people's experiential knowledge shapes their understanding. The experiential basis of traditional CMT is criticized by other scholars, such as Kövecses (2008), as being grounded in universal bodily experiences and cultural values (for instance, 'The future will be better' for THE FUTURE IS UP as claimed by Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Bodily experiences and cultural values are used differently across different languages and cultures and among various people attuned to different aspects of their bodily functioning (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The aforementioned reasons indicate that conceptual metaphors which are deeply embedded in Western culture, more specifically in American culture, do not represent the thought frames of all other cultures. The cognitive approach to metaphor is missing the linguistic and social aspects, and the fluidity and complexity of a natural discourse of metaphor use. Strategies to teach conceptual metaphors to students in order to avoid their L1 conceptual system do not provide natural discourses for the use of metaphor. The inducted strategies further take power from the students in being critical and creative in their own understandings.

There has been a *social turn* in cognitive linguistics reflected in metaphor data sampling and identification (Harder, 2010; Hoàng, 2015). Detailed analysis of metaphor in discourse resulted

[38] Discourse research which used corpus data

in a shift from systematicity and universalization to *contextualization* of metaphor use (Hoàng, 2015; Zanotto et al., 2008b). In the next sections, a contextualized version of CMT, and the discourse dynamic framework and cultural linguistics are introduced before the section on second language literature.

Contextualizing CMT: Universality and Variation in CMT

Overemphasizing the universality of metaphorical structures and ignoring the many cases of nonuniversality in metaphorical conceptualization (Fernandez, 1991), CMT was subject to criticism and revision. An updated version of CMT to justify both universality and variation in schematized metaphorical thought was suggested by Kövecses (2008). Kövecses refers to cases of cross-cultural variation in conceptual metaphors, which he calls as *congruence* between a generic-level metaphor and several specific level ones. The metaphor THE ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER, for instance, which is a near-universal metaphor (Kövecses, 2000a), functions at a very general level without specifying many aspects such as the kind of container or the consequences of explosion. This generic-level conceptual metaphor is instantiated in different culture-specific (or lower-level) metaphors in diverse languages such as Japanese (ANGER IS (IN THE) HARA (belly), Chinese (Anger as a gas rather than fluid) and Zulu (ANGER IS IN THE HEART), all congruent with the generic-level metaphor (Kövecses, 2008). This updated version also involves within-culture variation. Kövecses uses the concept of *differential experience* as the cause for metaphor variation because of various social, regional, cultural, stylistic, and individual dimensions. These dimensions play a principal role in the way that learners of a foreign language create metaphors that diverge from the conventional metaphorical patterns used by native speakers. Metaphor variation in foreign language teaching is considered as a special case of regional variation: "metaphor variation *may* [*italicized*] occur when learners of a foreign language rely on their first language and the physical environment in which that language emerged" (Kövecses, 2008, p. 93). Examples are American and British variants of English expressions used for the conceptual metaphor THE ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER, meaning *have a cow* in American English and *have kittens* in British use, which reveals the impact of physical environment including geographic region of dialects or varieties of a language on metaphor variation. Creative metaphors used by individuals such as writers, poets, or ordinary people, when their experiences do not conform to the conventional patterns of conceptual metaphors, reveal the individual dimension of metaphors.

The individual dimension, highly different from one individual to another, reveals the ability of individuals to extend the range of target domains. An example of target domain used creatively by the poets is "Life" which is used with novel source domains beyond the conventional ones, such as war and journey. Emily Dickinson's life metaphor "My life has stood- A Loaded Gun/In Corners" or the unique use of the metaphor DEPRESSSION IS A CAPTOR by people with depression are examples of creative metaphors used by individuals (Kövecses, 2008).

Affirming metaphor comprehension as contextual, Kövecses views conceptual metaphors as "further aspects of the context" (2015, p.11). Unlike CMT (Kövecses, 2002/2010a, 2006; Lakoff & Johnson 1980) which uses primary metaphors such as HAPPY IS UP as "embodied" or grounded in correlations with universal bodily experience, the contextual version also involves nonuniversal aspects which are connected to various ways in which primary metaphors are combined to form "complex metaphors" in different cultures (Kövecses, 2015).

The contextual factors are further classified as our body, physical environment (landscape, dwellings, and other people), social context (gender, class, education, social structure) and cultural context (involving values and religious beliefs) (Kövecses, 2008). Contextual factors also include: differential memory or history involving the national and personal history or memory of events; distinctive concerns and interests including the specific language and way of thinking; and, immediate communicative situation such as knowledge of the major discourse entities including the speaker, hearer or addressee, topic, personal concerns and interests of the speakers, and the linguistic context (cotext) (Kövecses, 2008). These contexts are viewed more generally as situational, linguistic, bodily, and conceptual-cognitive contexts, or the experiential content of mind (the conventional conceptual metaphors stored in our long-term memory), with body as one of the main contexts impacting the use of metaphors (Kövecses, 2015). Inspired by Clark's (1996) thesis of language use as a joint action based on common ground or shared knowledge (physical, social, cultural, linguistic, etc.), Kövecses adds situational and linguistic contexts to the embodied and conceptual, or "conceptual-cognitive" (Kövecses, 2015), contexts theorized in CMT (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This updated view of CMT departs from the traditional, uniformed contextual view of metaphor.

In composition of poetry, the context of creating poetry, involving the physical, biological, mental, emotional, social and cultural condition of a poet is shown to impact the way that the poet composes a metaphorical poem. In *Medusa*, for instance, traces of the immediate context,

involving the addressee, and the broader context of the topic has influenced Sylvia Plath's choice of metaphors. The negative aspect of Plath's relationship to her mother, for instance, is echoed in the metaphor ("your unnerving head"), which tracks back to Greek mythology, the broader cultural context of Plath's poem (Kövecses, 2009).

In this contextual theory of conceptual metaphors, the producer is viewed in the context that he/she chooses to use a metaphor. So, it is the *context* that prompts the producer to come up with the appropriate metaphor in the situation. The producer uses established conceptual metaphors as primary, root metaphors stored in his memory just as one of the four context types, and these other types (situational, linguistic, and bodily) as more important than the conceptual-cognitive context in many situations (personal conversation with Kövecses, June 2017).

This updated contextual version of CMT considers the individual as one of the contextual aspects of metaphor use and metaphor variation in foreign language teaching as a special case of regional variation involving learners' physical environment and native language. This version thus encompasses variation in systematized metaphors involving diversified branches and combinations of the root, primary conceptual metaphors among various cultures and individuals. Founded on conceptual domains and a cognitive framework, this updated version views individual as one of the contextual dimensions of metaphor use.

Schematic data involving the stored information in memory which Lakoff and Johnson (1980) considered as the sole context of metaphor is viewed as one of main contexts for Kövecses (2008, 2009, 2015), called as the conceptual-cognitive context. Considering Kövecses' updated view of CMT and his consideration of individual as one of four general contexts of metaphor use, my research highlights the *individuality*, *transition* and *temporality* in understanding and use of metaphors.

To highlight the *individuality* of understanding and move beyond the conceptual context of metaphor use, I suggest teaching conceptual metaphors after L2 learners reflected and decided on the meaning of English metaphors. I propose highlighting the existential and individuality aspect of understanding by allowing students to express their own understanding and interpretations of metaphors and considering the teaching of conceptual metaphors for the end, after students have expressed their own self-understandings. This method provides learners with the required space to project their own selves: including their worldviews and background knowledge into their own understandings. Within this method, based on my personal and

teaching experience, students would not develop the habit of looking through fixed pre-constructed metaphors. The possibility that knowing about the conceptual metaphors would direct students in their next interpretations makes it reasonable to teach conceptual metaphors for cases which involve cultural differences between learners' understandings and L2 metaphors. This still does not suggest memorization of conceptual metaphors by students to help with their next exposure to similar metaphors. It points to the need for familiarization of students with the cultural differences between their first and second languages to encourage them move beyond "fixed" ways of seeing metaphors or looking for an "intended" meaning.

Considering all these goals in my research, I look at how understanding without knowing about the conceptual metaphors looks like among second language learners, and to see if understanding metaphorical texts also involves creation of metaphors?

Theoretically, in an existential view of metaphor understanding, any act of using language involving reading includes creation of metaphors which varies among different individual language readers. For practical exploration, I embarked on this research study.

Discourse Dynamic Framework and Metaphor Research

Investigating metaphor in discourse context, rather than in isolated sentences, Cameron and Maslen (2010) considered discourse as the site of metaphor use. They introduced the *discourse dynamic framework* for metaphor analysis. Though informed by the cognitive approach (CMT), the framework discards its formulation of metaphor in terms of pre-existing conceptual domains. Drawing on the cognitive approach, Vygotskyan sociocultural theory, and discourse analysis, discourse dynamic framework applies to metaphor use in social interaction. The underpinning assumption of the framework is the interconnectedness of the linguistic, cognitive, affective, and cultural dimensions of metaphor in use. To describe the connections between discourse context and metaphor use, the discourse dynamic framework investigates the patterns of metaphor use across a discourse event. Using ideas from complexity/dynamic systems, discourse dynamic framework addresses the interconnectedness of the metaphors used in a particular discourse event with the metaphors used more widely in society and over time.

Within discourse dynamic framework, metaphor is viewed as an activity, rather than a tool, which is "emergent" and open to change (Cameron et al., 2009, p. 97). Criticizing CMT for downplaying the influence of language on metaphor, and the importance of the specifics of the

language-using situation in which metaphor occurs (Cameron et. al., 2009), discourse dynamic approach no longer views the connection between linguistic and conceptual metaphor as just from thought to language, or top-down 'instantiation' (Kövecses, 2005), rather as one of interaction between language and thinking: "what is said both reflects and affects thinking" (Cameron et al., 2009, p. 11). Discourse dynamic framework views CMT as being more concerned with "metaphor at the conceptual level across whole speech communities than with the complex dynamics of real-world language use in social situations, and thus of limited help in understanding the specifics of social issues" (Cameron et al., 2009, p. 64).

According to the dynamic perspective, the words that people speak are fluid and tentative verbalizations of ideas which may be of the same dynamic and provisional nature. Ideas and attitudes are affected by the circumstances of the discourse of the speaker, including other participants and the language being used (Cameron, 2003, 2004; Slobin, 1996; Spivey, 2007). Attending to the interconnectedness of the linguistic, cognitive, affective, and cultural dimensions of metaphor use, and the circumstances of the speaker, discourse dynamic framework provides another contextual approach to conceptual metaphor use. Although attending to the fluidity and emergence of patterns of metaphor use in speech, discourse dynamic framework does not address the interactions between the interpreter and the metaphorical text during the reading and understanding event. Viewing metaphor understanding as an interpretive and existential event, my research looks at the interconnectedness of self experiences and metaphor understanding. While attending to the discourse, it highlights the interactions between the interpreter and the text, and so the key role of the individual in understanding metaphors. My study also considers the temporality and provisional aspect of individuals' existential and experiential understandings without exploring certain patterns of metaphor use. Within an interpretive, existential approach, the immediacy of transitional metaphors rather than patterns of metaphor use is my focus[39].

Cultural Linguistics and Intercultural Variation

Another approach to metaphor use is based on Cultural Linguistics. Cultural Linguistics, as a "sub-branch of Linguistics, explores the relationship among language, culture and conceptualization" (Sharifian, 2014, p. 118). Cultural linguistics explores the cultural basis of the

[39] Next, after introducing the essential existentialism, I will also look at essential, universal human experiences in students' existential understandings of metaphors.

conceptual metaphor. In cultural linguistics, cognitive schemas and the meanings of many lexical items are constituted by our knowledge of our various cultural experiences (Sharifian, 2014). Within the context of Australian English, Sharifian identifies the intercultural miscommunication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators due to lack of recognition of the conceptual system of Aboriginal English by non-Aboriginal educators. He investigates *creative* cultural metaphors in Aboriginal Australian English, such as 'foot Falcon' meaning 'travel on foot especially long distance', which are not seen as metaphor by non-aboriginal speakers. Sharifian also refers to other cultural, rather than universal, metaphors in Aboriginal Australian English, sometimes called "worldview metaphors" (Feyaerts, 2003), such as THE LAND AS CLOSE KIN, which do not qualify as metaphoric from the *emic* perspective. To aboriginal speakers, these metaphors are real and indisputable beliefs about the world and life which are understood as literal rather than metaphorical statements (Sharifian, 2017).

Attending to the cultural basis of conceptual metaphors, cultural linguistics identifies the intercultural variation and *creative* cultural metaphors in the use of conceptual metaphors. In this dissertation, I am interested and focused on creative metaphors and the impacts of individual experiences and culture on metaphor understanding, rather than the use of conceptual metaphors- and systematicity in understanding diversity among individuals or cultures.

Metaphor and Second Language Learning and Teaching

As a pervasive device in everyday language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and academic discourse, metaphor has been the subject of numerous studies in second language (e. g., Dong, 2004; Littlemore et al., 2011; Picken, 2007). As stated by Littlemore and Low (2006): "metaphor is involved in any area that language learners need to use, understand or learn..." (p.64, cited in Aleshtar & Dowlatabadi, 2014). Metaphor is viewed as a tool of communication and thought which facilitates learners' acquisition (Cameron & Low, 2004) and comprehension of knowledge, and deepens their understanding of learning content (Hoàng, 2015; Sticht, 1993). Metaphor also helps learners in retention and future recall of information (Cameron, 2003).

A considerable volume of research conducted in the field of second language education has investigated learners' understanding of metaphors through using the cognitive approach (CMT) (e. g., Boers, 2000; Boroditsky, 2001; Charteris-Black, 2002; Chen & Lai, 2014; Danesi, 1994; Deignan et al., 1997; Picken, 2005/2007; Quinn, 1991/2005; Shirazi & Talebinezhad, 2013). In

fact, many studies have avoided discussion or theorization of their approach to metaphor understanding.

Hoffman (1983) remarked the significance of metaphor for comprehension and acquisition of vocabulary (Aleshtar & Dowlatabadi, 2014). Raising language learners' awareness of conceptual metaphors has proved a useful channel for acquisition and retention of vocabulary (examples are given in the section on the strength of CMT). To raise learners' metaphor awareness, Kalyuga and Kalyuga (2008) suggested presenting vocabulary in metaphorical chunks (Hoàng, 2015). Research also shows the positive impact of metaphor on learners' development of reading skills (e. g., Carter and McCarthy, 1988) and critical literacy skills (Hoàng, 2015). As shown by Picken (2005, 2007), metaphor awareness can also help L2 learners in reading literature. In translation classes, metaphor awareness activities enhanced learners' cross-linguistic awareness, their metaphoric and translation competence, autonomy, interactive learning and critical thinking (Sacristán, 2009).

Although the usefulness of teaching and using CMT in L2 classes has been confirmed by various other studies (e. g., Csábi, 2004; Kömür & Çimen; Kövecses & Szabó's, 1996; Yasuda, 2010; 2009), it is not clear whether the encouraging findings are due to the theory itself or other factors, such as the temporary contextual factors involved in the learning process (Hoàng, 2015).

A Sociocultural Perspective

Within sociocultural theory, metaphor is seen as both a cognitive and social phenomenon (Littlemore and Low, 2006b), and language is viewed as one of several tools for expressing metaphor. Accordingly, metaphor acts as a mediational tool so that individuals' interpretations of metaphors, from various accounts in specific social environments, are constructed through language (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, cited in Wan et al., 2011). Within sociocultural theory, metaphors are mainly utilized for "reflection and consciousness raising among students and teachers, for shaping classroom practices (Tobin, 1990), for mediating understanding of teachers' and students' beliefs about teaching (and learning), and for predicting behaviours likely to follow from their beliefs" (de Guerrero and Villamil, 2002, p. 405).

In a study on a group of Chinese university teachers and their English major students, Wan et al. (2011) investigated the effects of metaphor use on teachers' practices. Metaphor helped in gaining insight into students' and teachers' beliefs, resolving their belief conflicts, and instigating change in their practice.

Kim & Lantolf (2012) investigated the sociocultural zone of proximal development and metaphorical competence of international Korean students. Metaphor driven L2 pedagogy proved positive at the conceptual and practical levels. Metaphorical invention encouraged cross-linguistic, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary discussions and worked as an effective tool for analytical reading. It provided the participants with a conceptual and textual mediational tool and empowered them to transform their literacy activities and develop metaphorical competence.
Sociocultural theory was used by de Guerrero and Villamil (2001) as a framework to explain metaphorical conceptualizations of L2 and FL[40] teachers and to examine the extent that teachers appropriated metaphors and used them for constructing their belief systems. The findings revealed a complex process of transformation, teachers' appropriation of the conventional metaphors and varying differences in their individual conceptualizations. The process reflected differences in individuals' mappings across conceptual domains and the impact of both various social voices and personal experiences in conceptual mapping. The findings attested to the usefulness of metaphor as a Self-reflecting tool among L2 and FL teachers.
Similarly, in the study of Villamil & de Guerrero (2005), sociocultural theory- based on the works of Vygotsky (1986, 1978), Lantolf (2000), Wells (1999) and Wertsch (1991)- provided a theoretical framework for metaphorical intervention in L2 writing. The intervention of metaphorical conceptualization proved useful in various ways. It fostered reflection and changes at the theoretical level and created a deep understanding of the social context of learning. Metaphorical intervention also helped in examining the beliefs and practices, the appropriation and internalization of socially shared concepts of writing, and formulation of teachers' roles and plans of action.
As revealed in preceding studies, sociocultural studies on metaphor in second language are mainly focused on the use of metaphor as an intervention tool for transforming and improving the pedagogical practice in second language, as a Self-reflecting tool for the teachers, their Self-transformation, or for empowering multicultural learners. Using metaphor as a mediational tool, sociocultural studies have highlighted the impact of the social voices and personal experiences in conceptualization of metaphors. These studies have resulted in deep thinking and better understanding and transformation of the learning contexts. However, none of these sociocultural studies on L2 conceptualization of metaphors have investigated metaphor understanding of

[40] Stands for Foreign Language

multicultural learners who have transitioned from various EFL contexts into an ESL context, or have taken a detailed and existential perspective to the comprehension process of the transitioning learners or a close investigation of the "how" of their understanding process. Most importantly, none of the sociocultural studies have taken an existentially experiential perspective to L2 metaphor understanding. Even if some of them, like the study by de Guerrero and Villamil (2001), have examined the experiential perspective by examining the role of past experiences of the teachers- and not learners- in their conceptualization of metaphors, they have not investigated the connection of the being and the Self transitioning experiences of the learners to their understandings of metaphors. In my research study, at one stage, I have taken an existential perspective to metaphor understanding of transitioning international students of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds for a deep and detailed investigation of their metaphor understanding experiences as related to and manifesting their previous and current Self-transitioning experiences and Self-understandings in their transition to a new sociocultural context, or the ESL context of Canada.

Metaphor as Challenges Second Language Learners

Research on L2 metaphor understanding has shown that understanding metaphors, especially literary ones, is often challenging for second language learners (Littlemore, 2001; Littlemore et al., 2011; Picken, 2005/2007). Unlike L1 learners who acquire the linguistic and cultural competence in metaphorical language as raised in the mainstream English culture, L2 learners mainly acquire English in their adolescence without having any cultural references or natural immersion. L2 learners often learn the basic knowledge of language within a few years which is barely enough for learning culturally-loaded metaphors in second language (Dong, 2004). From the cognitive linguistic point of view, in order to process a metaphor, L2 learners need to activate the knowledge of the source and target domains. This involves transfer of features between the source and target domains of the second language while activating and/or suppressing features of the source and target domains of the first language. Low (1988) hypothesises that learners may have difficulties with the transfer of features between the target and the source. According to Littlemore and Low (2006a), L2 learners may have difficulty with metaphorical language because they lack "native speaker competence" (p. 3), which includes awareness of cultural conventions and connotations (Hoang, 2014). Learners' problem in acquiring the conceptual system of the target language results in high degree of literality (Danesi,

1993; Hashemian & Nezhad, 2007). Danesi (2008) calls this 'conceptual error', which occurs for learners' activation of the wrong source domain of a metaphor due to the interference of their L1. But, is there any real right or wrong source domain to be activated for understanding metaphors? This is a question my research aims to investigate.

Conceptual and Linguistic Metaphors and Cross-Cultural Challenges

The centrality of metaphors to the structuring of our thought and language is proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Accordingly, to think and talk about one semantic area, we use the concepts and lexis from other areas. Therefore, two levels of metaphor are distinguished: conceptual metaphors and linguistic metaphors. 'Conceptual metaphor' (CM) refers to a connection between two semantic areas at the level of thought. An example is the metaphorical connection considered by speakers of many languages between anger and fire (Lakoff, 1987). The spoken or written realizations of a conceptual metaphor is called 'linguistic metaphor'. Examples of linguistic metaphors in conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT, for instance, include 'I grew hot under the collar' and 'She's got a fiery temper' (Deignan et al., 1997). For both universal and cultural aspects of metaphor (Kövecses, 2005; Sharifian et al., 2008), a number of forms of relationship (for examples, look at Deignan et al. (1997) in the following) may happen between conceptual and linguistic metaphors in two languages (Boers, 2003; Deignan et al., 1997; Kövecses, 2003). Cultural and ideological differences in two languages may lead to different linguistic instantiations of the same conceptual metaphor in two languages (Kövecses, 2003).

Research on L2 metaphor comprehension suggests that learners' Metaphor Competence (MC) in L1 correlates with their MC in L2 (Littlemore, 2010). Learners' L1 knowledge and culture can affect their way of conceptualizing (Sharifian, 2007; Yu, 2007) and processing metaphors (Boers, 2003; Kövecses, 2004) in L2.

To find out about the cross-linguistic differences between conceptual metaphors and their linguistic variations and its relevance to learners' difficulties in understanding English metaphors Deignan et al. (1997) examined the comprehension of English metaphors by a group of Polish university students. In students' translation of English metaphors into Polish ones, four types of cross-linguistic differences between conceptual metaphors and their linguistic variations were identified:

1. Same conceptual metaphor + equivalent linguistic expression;

2. Same conceptual metaphor + different linguistic expressions;
3. Different conceptual metaphors used in the two languages;
4. Words and expressions with the same literal meanings but different metaphoric meanings

While students did not face major difficulties in translating the first and second types, due to common conceptual metaphors, for the third type they used different expressions related to their different L1 conceptual metaphors. Students faced difficulty for expressions which had no direct or even semantically similar equivalents in Polish. The salience of different features of the words in different cultures increased the chances of metaphorical transfer or use (Gyori, 2000).

A number of other studies have investigated cross-linguistic variations in L2 teaching. Charteris-Black (2002) found that Malay English learners performed best with figurative expressions that have an equivalent conceptual basis and linguistic form between the two languages. The most difficult figurative expressions for students, again, were those with an equivalent linguistic form but a different conceptual basis, and those with a different conceptual basis and a different linguistic form. The same pattern applies to Chinese learners in Chen and Lai's study (2013). In the case of the Bangladeshi participants in Littlemore's studies (2001c, 2003b), cultural differences caused learners to misinterpret metaphors used by their British lecturers, and so misunderstand the main points of the lecture.

Gao and Meng (2010) suggest discussing and comparing metaphors in first and target language to improve learners' L2 metaphor comprehension. A further approach is introducing students to 'conceptual metaphors' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) within a context of a particular discipline (for example, in psychology, the human brain is often likened to a computer) and encouraging students to reflect on the ideologies behind and implications of using these metaphors as a conceptual framework (Littlemore, 2001).

Cultural Reasoning: In spite of the suggested metaphor-awareness proposals, L2 learners may still have problems in understanding metaphorical discourses that include culture-specific words. Learners' tendency to decode 'culture-connoted' words with their native cultural schemata[41] is associated to *cultural reasoning* (Chang, 2002). As investigated by Chang, some L2 learners are constrained by their schematic stereotypes when they encounter novel metaphoric analogies. For instance, in interpreting 'I'm a riddle in nine syllables' as part of the Plath's poem 'Metaphors',

[41] A cognitive framework or concept that helps organize and interpret information/ an organized pattern of thought or behavior that organizes categories of information and the relationships among them.

Chinese students faced considerable difficulty and referred to the cultural connotations of 'nine' as 'the biggest number' or the 'supremacy'. This cultural feature of the figure was 'more remarkable' (salient) for these students than the idiomatic saying 'Nine months for pregnancy'. Only after the students were provided with a cue, their cultural schematic understanding was directed to a new contextual understanding of the poem and they could see the possibility of time as a connotation of 'nine' (Chang, 2002).

Chang finds that Chinese education methods has formed students' ways of understanding metaphors. The dominant Grammar Translation Method (GTM) which involves prescriptive and product-based and teacher-oriented learning approaches in ELT requires students to memorize word dictionary meanings without considering the context. The students thus form a limited reading schema which is mainly dominated by their native linguistic and cultural schemata and their competence in understanding metaphors is thus confined (McRae, 2000). Accustomed to wait for the teacher's explanations, after provided with cues, students began to think beyond referential meanings and interpret the poem metaphorically.

Cultural Differences: Students' use of different cultural references when attempting to interpret metaphors is a main reason for their difficulties in understanding metaphors and their various interpretations of metaphors. Students' different understandings of metaphors reflect their different cultural backgrounds. Lack of shared cultural background between writer or speaker and reader or listener and associating different connotations to the source domains of metaphors (JOURNEY in conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, for instance) can cause confusion (e. g., Trompennars, 1993). Littlemore (2003) investigated how cultural differences of Bangladeshi students at a British university were manifest in their interpretations of metaphors used by their lecturers. Students interpreted metaphors according to their own value systems and schemata, which involved their mental representations of the world (Cook, 1997). Students' different cultural backgrounds made them notice and use different clues in the context of metaphors. They faced problems when contextual clues were not clear, and metaphors reflected conflicting values. To help with students' cross-cultural challenges, suggestions were made, such as: encouraging students' attention to details for capturing the information which does not exist in their schemata, reflection on their own value systems and learning about lecturers' value systems, providing learners of various cultures with helpful contextual clues, and discussing the confusing sections

from the lectures with the students to explore together common and different cultural values involved in metaphors.

In the context of Chinese and English, Chang (2002) investigated interpretations for conceptual metaphors such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY by Chinese students at a British university. He used two Chinese ('Leaving the White Emperor Town for Jiangling', by Li Bai) and one English poem ('Metaphors', by Sylvia Plath) with the common theme of journey. While students did not have many difficulties in understanding the Li Bai's poem, because of their familiarity with its Chinese cultural background, they faced many difficulties in understanding Plath's poem which even involved a few new words. To interpret new words, students used their native cultural schemata and the referential rather than representational meanings of the words (Carter,1998; McRae 2000). Chang proposes the use of a process-based approach for understanding metaphorical discourses, in which words are thought, processed and decoded for implications. This approach allows for negotiation of the plurality of meaning and the interpretability of representational language. Similarly, the inclusion of cultural values in English texts and higher order questions which require students' own interpretations and world experiences (Carter & Long, 1991) are recommended for students to develop the required cultural schemata (McRae, 2000).

Different Metaphorical Scope: Another source of challenge for L2 learners is relevant to another cultural aspect of the learners' metaphorical understanding. As Goatly (1997) points out, metaphors range from single words and phrases to clauses or sentences or even the whole discourses and texts. This means that metaphor can be formed on the lexical, sentential and discoursal basis. Different cultures view metaphor at different levels. In some cultures, such as the Chinese culture, metaphors are only viewed as individual words or phrases. Similar to the traditional view of metaphor, Chinese books on metaphor consider metaphor as a linguistic trope or figure of speech that is formed on the basis of a word or an expression (Wang, 1995). Their concepts about metaphor are not as extensive or conceptual as other theories (such as Gibbs, 1994; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989 & Steen, 1994) (Chang, 2002) which regard metaphor as 'a matter of thought and action and only derivatively as a matter of language' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 153). Therefore, as the study by Chang (2002) shows, learners mainly look for the metaphors within the individual words or phrases rather than the whole sentence or contextual text which can be a source of challenge in their understanding.

Metaphor Explicitness: Another linguistic dimension of the L2 learners' metaphor comprehension challenges is attributed to inexplicit linguistic form of metaphors in literature. In his genre-based corpus of metaphor, Goatly (1997, p. 318) refers to "lack of marking" of metaphor in modern literature. This metaphor inexplicitness- or metaphor invisibility (Stockwell, 2000)- often makes it more difficult for L2 readers of literature, and even for L1 readers, to decide on the literal or non-literal (metaphorical) aspect of language. Considering Steen's view of understanding metaphor in literature as an "epitome of maximal subjective involvement" (Steen, 1994, p. 241), Picken (2005, 2007) investigates the problems that Japanese students face in processing metaphors in literary texts. To examine the effect of linguistic explicitness on the processing, two versions of the same story, 'Carpathia,' were provided to students. The key difference between the two versions was the metaphorical penultimate sentence: 'She was drowning' in the first, and 'In her heart, she was drowning' in the second version. This small difference in the form of the metaphor had a significant effect on participants' neglect or identification of metaphors, which in turn had a major impact on their interpretations of events in the story. Picken thus found linguistic cue (grammatical marker) as a most effective contextual cue to trigger metaphor processing: in cases of linguistic markedness, a significantly greater number of metaphorical readings was observed.

This finding suggests the strong connection between the linguistic form of a metaphor and learners' metaphorical or literal reading of a text.

Use of conceptual metaphor awareness-raising techniques could help with metaphorical reading of 'invisible', less explicit, metaphors, although it led to confusion in cases of conceptual metaphors with identical source domains (Picken, 2005).

Metaphors WE Give Life to: An Existential View of Metaphor

Different contextual factors including bodily, situational, intercultural, and individual were considered in the use of metaphors. My existential research looks at different linguistic, emotional, situational, and sociocultural dimensions as various contextual aspects of the existential understanding of an individual. Priming the *being* of an understander, with understander as an echo of the linguistic existence and the key in shaping[42] all the contextual

[42] Allusion to God as moulding human by His hands and blowing His breath into his body (verse: 3:49), and human as caliph of God (Surah Al-Baqara, 2: 30) extending the bestowed life to inanimate frames of words

aspects into meanings, my research looks at the individual as a whole being who possesses higher[43] human understanding capacity which encompasses all the stated contextual aspects. In this view, individual students are considered the centre of understanding who give meaning to all other contextual elements including their personal transitioning experiences which are involved in their understanding of metaphors.

To address understanding difficulties in second language learners, a number of suggestions, such as awareness raising of the conceptual metaphors and discussion with students on cross cultural differences in understanding conceptual metaphors, have been made. My research approach suggests a dialogic, interpretive approach of negotiating with the students engaged in dialogue with the metaphorical text and considering their different worldviews in understanding metaphors, without using any specific conceptual metaphor. This is specifically a key in literature, involving poetry, because of the close relation between literary texts and metaphors, where students produce creative and novel metaphors, and *creatively* animate metaphors meaningful. As Littlemore (2004) finds, metaphoric processing is a highly *personalized* phenomenon which requires teachers to give students the space to develop their own analogical reasoning and images, away from pre-conceived conceptual metaphors.

The mentioned problematic factors including cultural reasoning, cultural differences, different scopes, and metaphor inexplicitness as potential sources for students' understanding difficulties are examined in the context of presuming certain predetermined metaphors. My research, however, does not start with any specific metaphor and does not follow any top-down approach or systematicity as CMT or contextual CMT to classify metaphors. It does not seek patterns in metaphor use as the discourse dynamic framework does, nor specifically focus on the cultural dimension of understanding as cultural linguistics. My research is not focused on metaphor as an intervention tool for investigating or improving pedagogical aspects the way that a research on metaphor approached by a sociocultural theory would typically do. My research involves a bottom-up approach of no norm that is focused on the individual itself involved in the understanding process. Attending to the interconnectedness of the linguistic, cognitive, affective and cultural dimensions of metaphor use as highlighted in discourse dynamic framework, my

[43] Metaphysical dimension of human understanding

research investigates metaphor as being temporally understood, recognized or created by individual L2 students in reading a poem.

As reviewed, there has been a great number of studies investigating cross-cultural differences in producing and interpreting metaphors. Some of these studies highlight the significance of the cultural and personal experiences in creating different images of the same entities. An example is the study on different images of the animal *turtle* as "a slow person" in Persian, and the "capsizing of a boat" in English (Talebinejad and Dastjerdi, 2005). However, as far as I know, there has not been any study on the individual metaphor understanding experiences of transitioning ESL students using a hermeneutic-existential perspective. In Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy, understanding is considered as a 'historically effected event'. Individual is considered a historical being who understands metaphors in light of the conditions of the present, within his own horizon, and differently from the author who had composed them in light of a different historical situation. Accordingly, when a text is written, it becomes part of history and continues to have its effect in history (Gadamer, 1960). When an individual interprets and understands metaphors anew, he is already subject to the effects of the metaphorical text in the course of its history and comprehends the text partly through the conditions presented by the text itself. In this sense, "[u]nderstanding is, essentially, a [temporal] historically effected event" which happens through a dialogue between the (present) interpreter and the historical, metaphorical text (p. 305). This is what understanding metaphorical texts is called a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 1989), or a historical dialogue between readers' worldviews and language-worlds, which addresses another key problem with CMT in disregarding the language in use (Deignan, 2010). My study investigates the impact of various transitioning experiences of students, involving the linguistic, individual, and sociocultural experiences (with home and home language as parts of sociocultural and linguistic aspects), on their existential understanding of metaphors. My research involves an in-depth analysis of the students' interpretation experiences. Delving into the students' past and current understandings of their sociocultural and linguistic contexts and of themselves, my research attempts to provide a detailed picture of the context of existential understanding as experienced by a variety of transitioning ESL students. As Indurkhya (2007) has criticized, the focus of most of the existing research of metaphor is on the "commonality" of interpretations, so a close study on individual readers' unique ways of understanding metaphors was required (I will provide my participants'

individual understandings of metaphors in the poem in chapter Seven. However, I will move further to examine their common, inner, humane experiences as they understand themselves in their transition (Chapter 6) and as appears in their interpretations of metaphors (Discussions and Reflections) for the sake of Sufi-humanistic goals of my research, beyond its linguistic aims, which situate metaphor understanding in its original humanity perspective with the sublime goal of re-covering human relations in highlighting the underlying *unity in diversity* of individuals' understandings. The integrated essential-Sufi perspective reveals the latent Self-transition involved in existential understanding of metaphors).

Through examining the students' experiences of metaphor understanding, this research also re-examines the basic definition of metaphor provided in the concise Oxford dictionary as the application of a name or descriptive term to an object to which it is not literally applicable. Within an existential view of metaphor (Vedder, 2002), metaphor is not simply a mere embellishment of speech, but a bearer of new information. This aligns with the traditional view of metaphor as creating new meanings (Gibbs, 2011). The hermeneutic-existential view of metaphor understanding as interpretation and an ongoing, situated negotiation between the interpreter and metaphor, of different sociohistorical contexts, envisions a constant process of concept formation rather than a finished process as pictured in CMT. Considering understanding as metaphorical similar to CMT (further discussed in the next theory chapter), the hermeneutic perspective also attends to the temporality and transitioning aspect of understanding, concurring the involved self-understanding, through individual engagement with metaphors (Gadamer, 1993). Metaphor is thus an awakening of the dormant capacity of being and metaphorizing the discovery of the linguistic existence and the linguistic being of human individuals. Within these existential-interpretive aspects of understanding, my research reconceives metaphor as related to transition and dynamicity in human understanding, mirroring the key 'in motion' existence and the in-transition beings of humans, with transitioning international students as best picturing these fundamental traits of human being and the whole existence.

L2 Experiential Interpretation of Literature

In the previous sections of this chapter on metaphor, I reviewed the literature on metaphor and metaphor understanding in second language with metaphor as one key literary figure of speech which is commonly used in academic and real-life contexts, also as a most challenging linguistic

device for second language learners. I concluded the previous sections with the contribution of my chosen hermeneutic-existential approach which attends to L2 learners' interpretations of metaphors and the role of their individual existential experiences before and after transition among other things. Here, I further situate my study on metaphor within literary studies which have attended to the role of students' backgrounds and experiences in their understanding and interpretations of literary texts in general, and not specifically metaphors. In the following, I shortly review some of these experiential studies on L2 literary texts and finally I explain the contribution of my study to the literary field as well.

Aimed at creating critical and inclusive educational spaces for multilingual immigrant and refugee youth, Lemon (2013), at Simon Fraser University (SFU), used different approaches of reader response theory, critical literacy and theories engaging difference and power such as coalition politics theory and critical race theory to investigate the students' engagement with poetry and short stories. Multiple approaches created safe spaces in which immigrants and refugee students, mainly post-secondary ones, could mobilize their various languages and identities. Concerned with "interpreting the relationships among history, memory, culture, geography, language and identity" (Sumara, 2002, p.73), students' literary engagements were enriched by juxtaposing literary texts with historical, philosophical and theoretical intertextual resources. Literary works authenticated the students' respective experiences and inspired deep and meaningful literary engagements of the participants. Interweaving different multiliteracies of language, history, geography, culture and religion enriched the analysis and the interpretive process and entailed real consequences for making new meanings in participants' lives.

Using constructivist theories of reading and theories of identity, Shin and Riazantseva (2015) explored how three Korean adult speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL) constructed the meaning of the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*. They examined how learners' identities mediated their understanding process. The participants' multiple identities, at individual and group levels, emerged in their meanings for the novel. L2 readers' reading and understanding process proved as the site of their multiple identities. Multiple concepts of the world coexisted in participants' meanings, transformed, and created narratives across cultures, contexts and individuals. The intersection of the novel's and participants' cultural narratives, and the participants' related personal and aesthetic experiences (Kintsch, 2004; Rosenblatt, 1978) created their meanings for the literary piece.

Kim (2010) investigated how Korean/Korean American adolescents interpret literary stories. Reading literature inspired the participants to reflect on their own experiences connected to the stories, expand their worldviews and experience Self transition. Participants' individual experiences, their cultural backgrounds and understandings and literary text helped them in understanding the texts.

At high school level, to facilitate the demanding teaching of literature, multimodal (visual and verbal) approach was used by Early and Marshall (2008). To engage multilingual high school students of limited English proficiency in rich interpretations of literary works, students' L1, cooperative group work and multimodal approach was used by the teacher. Visual symbolic representation of the contents helped adolescent ESL students' interpretation and appreciation of English literature. Multimodal approach of verbal and visual, along with transmediation[44] across written, visual, and oral modes, created a 'deep reading' of the literary text and involved the cultural, social, and intellectual capital of multicultural students.

Schoeman (2011) also used multimodal (verbal-visual) transmediation to engage South African ESL learners in rich interpretation of a literary text. Multimodal interpretation stirred learners' deep reading, scaffolded their comprehension of the literary text and made them grow in their understandings of English literature. Again, using the social, cultural and intellectual capital of multicultural students helped in addressing their understanding challenges in face of demanding complex and figurative language.

The experiment by Vizcaíno (2002), however, revealed that the process of interpreting literature could be complex and changeable. Vizcaíno explored the cultural, social and linguistic factors influencing the literary interpretations of three Spanish-speaking women in an ESL class. In constructing meaning for short stories and poems, the participants resorted to their background knowledge, culture and their personal experiences. Participants' personal experience, cultural, social and affective factors sometimes facilitated their construction of meanings for literary texts. Other times, these factors impeded their development of literary meanings. Background knowledge thus played a dual role in learners' interpretation process.

The summarized studies on literary interpretation of readers, monolingual or multilingual learners, were not focused on students' existential understandings of the literary devices.

[44] Use of an idea in one symbol system (such as images) to cross into the other symbol system (verbal texts), and that the first mediates the second (Schoeman, 2011, p. 37)

Investigating learners' interpretations of literary texts in a general way, some of these studies ignored the Self-understanding and Self-transitioning aspect involved in interpretation process. Other studies which considered transition in learners' Self, did not involve multilingual learners and examined learners of the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds (e. g., Kim, 2010), or their investigation of Self-transition was rather superficial. None of the literary studies involved a deep and detailed analysis of multilingual learners' understanding of literary texts within a hermeneutic and existential perspective. They also did not examine the impact of sociocultural transition on students' transitioning Self-understanding and the manifestation in their interpretations of metaphors or literature.

My research thus takes a new, hermeneutic-existential perspective, complemented with a Sufi-humanistic approach, in investigating a metaphorical poem as a literary text. It does a deep and detailed existential analysis of multilingual university students' transitioning understandings of themselves and metaphors. In my research study the 'being' and self-experiences of the transitioning learners stand as key creators of meaning for the literary poem. While students' previous experiences play a role in my research as well, unlike most literary studies, in my study the experiential aspect of my learners' understandings refers to their transitioning Self-experiences which are affected by their current and past life experiences and backgrounds and which affect their interpretations for metaphors.

Interweaving different multiliteracies of language, history, culture, philosophy, and theology including mysticism, my research aims at presenting an enriched analysis of the participants' understandings and reveal the growth and Self cultivation of my participants through an existential hermeneutic perspective integrated with Sufism.

After the review of the literature on metaphor and L2 metaphor and literary understanding, in the next section of this chapter I summarize the literature on international students' transition, their challenges and the positive and negative sides of their transition. I will use this section for the answer to the first research questions which is related to the second research question.

Transition (International Students)

According to Statistics Canada (2012-2013) 1,283,229 ESL students are enrolled in Canadian universities. Many of these students are international students, students who "have crossed a national or territorial border for the purposes of education and are enrolled outside their country of origin" (UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS), 1999, cited in Choudaha & Chang, 2012, p. 3). Great number of international students have made a transition from learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in their non-English speaking home countries to studying in English as a second language (ESL) at universities in Canada. The world-wide number of international students in higher education is over 4 million, representing 2 in 100 students globally (UIS 2013, cited in Schartner and Young, 2016). This number is expected to reach 5.8 by 2020 (Bohm et al., 2004, cited in Grayson, 2008) and 7.2 million in 2025 (Knight, 2005). International students are motivated to pursue higher education abroad for a variety of reasons. One key reason for their transition to other countries is 'push-pull' (Cowley & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2018; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). The 'push' involves political, economic, and social factors in students' native countries which motivate students to make a transition to other countries. 'Pull' refers to the motivating destination factors such as the reputation of the higher education institutions and employment opportunities (Brooks & Waters, 2011; Cowley & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2018), or the introduction of new cultures and ideas (Cowley & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2018). The presence of international students at host universities changes the culture of academic programs (Dey & Hurtado, 2000; Sato & Hodge, 2009). International students are untapped resources (Bond 2003a) that can raise the understandings of all students and add intellectual, ethnic and cultural richness to the academy (McCubbin & Dunn, 2000). Economically also, evidently, international students make a great contribution to the Higher Education (Ryan & Carroll, 2005). However, international students in various universities in Australia (Ryan & Viete, 2009), New Zealand (Campbell & Li, 2008), Singapore (McClure, 2007), America (Wang, 2009) and Canada (e. g., Guo and Chase, 2011) face a number of challenges including isolation, alienation, marginalisation and low self-esteem. International students are often expected to "overcome their own discomfort and integrate into the host society" (Lee & Rice, 2007, p. 388).

The transition process experienced by international students involves different stages which are described as a U-shaped curve (Lysgaard, 1955). Lysgaard ascribed four stages for transition and acculturation of international students: the honeymoon stage, culture shock, adjustment, and

mastery (Rabia, 2017). Accordingly, students start with an ‘easy’ adjustment which is followed by a "crisis", when they feel less adjusted, isolated, and unhappy. Adjustment stage involves students’ questioning of their primary culture norms and their resocialization which is unlearning their old ways of thinking and behaving and replacing them with new social patterns (Brown & Brown, 2009). Eventually, after a period of uncertainty and normlessness, students feel adjusted and more integrated (Lysgaard, 1955).

International students face challenges in their adjusting to a new education system and a new level of study (Schartner and Young, 2016). Understanding the adjustment experiences of international students is required for universities in order to provide a high quality and equitable teaching and learning experience for both international and domestic students. Schartner and Young propose “three adjustment domains” for international students: psychological adjustment which involves affective response to the new environment; sociocultural adjustment which involves cognitive and behavioural factors associated with effective performance in the host country, the ability to fit in and interact successfully with others; and academic adjustment, which is adjustment to the specific demands of academic study including the styles of teaching and learning at the host university (Ryan, 2005; Schartner and Young, 2016, p. 374-375). These three domains are found to be the most challenging especially at the early sojourn stage of international students.

A number of ‘pre-sojourn’ and ‘in-sojourn’ factors are recognized as contributing to international students’ adjustment. ‘Pre-sojourn’ factors involve dispositional factors such as knowledge about the host country, host language ability, previous abroad experience, autonomy in their decision to study abroad, and intercultural competence, the factors which are integrated under ‘preparedness for change’ (Kim, 2001). Students’ intercultural competence involves their ability to “get along with, work, and learn with people from diverse cultures” (HEA, 2013, cited in Schartner and Young, 2016, p. 380). This involves “cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability, and flexibility” (Van Oudenhoven and Van der zee (2002) cited in Schartner and Young, 2016 p. 380). ‘In-sojourn’ factors involve social contact and social support by host nationals and other international students. There is a significant relationship between social support and students’ academic achievement and sociocultural adaptation (Schartner and Young, 2016). Also, a complex set of shifting relations exist between language confidence, social interaction, and the personal development and academic outcomes of students

(Gu et al., 2010). Pre-arrival support such as emphasis on more applied communicative language (Lewthwaite, 1996), rather than focus on mere high score on a standardized language test, and intercultural training are suggested to help with some of adjustment challenges of transitioning students (Schartner and Young, 2016).

A three-stage adjustment model is suggested by Major (2005) which involves entry, dissonance, and adjustment, with each composed of intrapersonal (individual), sociocultural, and academic dimensions. The focus of this section is mainly on after honeymoon (entry) phases- the dissonance and adjustment phases- which involves students' various challenges in their multifaceted transition in face of unfamiliar aspects of their new life and study contexts. A complex transition process which ultimately lead to a new, elevated understanding of themselves with others.

Away from Home Transition (Linguistic, Sociocultural, Existential)

International students' transition to a life and study in a foreign country including their transition from an EFL context to an ESL context involves different dimensions of individual (existential), linguistic, and sociocultural transition. Students' multidimensional transitioning entails multifarious challenges. These transition challenges involve academic, linguistic, sociocultural, political, psychological, and financial ones. Many studies have investigated international students' transition process as a stressful, passive, or painful experience (e. g., Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1998; Yeh & Inose, 2003), for a variety of reasons such as language barriers, conflict between cultures and values, discrimination, loss of leisure, loneliness, and difficulty in building relations with domestic students (Wang, 2012; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). In this section, I briefly look at international students' challenges most relevant to my study. The search for relevant literature directed me to students of various nationalities at different universities worldwide. I found this relevant to my multicultural study, but also indicating lack of enough and relevant studies conducted in Canada.

Transition Challenges

A main source of challenge for international students is cultural differences. Cultural differences involve different forms of learning. Many international students, especially non-Western ones, are not familiar with the way that they are expected to learn in a Western learning environment

(Johnson & Kumar, 2010). Students' acculturation, a process that international students undergo in response to their new environment, can create conflict, frustration and personal struggle (Harvey et al., 2017; Magnusdottir, 2005). Lack of understanding by peers or professors about their cultural differences, and insensitivity to their differences can create a more frustrating situation for international students. International students' cultural and linguistic differences with domestic students create difficulty in building social relationship with peers. This creates a social distance which is aggravated by peers' unfriendly, marginalizing, and discriminatory treatment, as well as limited opportunity for intercultural contact within their programs (Sato & Hodge, 2009; Spurling, 2006).

Yan & Pei (2018) show the overall impact of sociocultural and political challenges on international students' sense of belonging in their new community, culture, and education in an American university. They highlight the confusing messages received by international students: while they are heavily recruited by universities for various advantages, they experience discrimination, bias, harassment, exclusion, and questioning of their academic credibility in their host country (Lee & Rice, 2007; Leong & Chou, 1996; Yan & Pei, 2018). In academic settings, international students face difficulty adjusting to interactive, participatory and competitive classroom methods (Ramsay et al., 1999; Tran, 2008; Zhao et al., 2005; Yan & Pei, 2018). They experience negative perception of social integration on campus and lower levels of sense of community than domestic students (Van Horne et al., 2018). Considering these, Yan and Pei examined international students' perceptions of the difficult and negative sides of their transition experiences. Students expressed feeling "powerless and invisible", or "ignored" in interacting with domestic students. Outside campus, they were sometimes the subject of harassment in different public places. Suffering from bias and discrimination in their host community and missing the required interactions with other students (Van Horne et al., 2018), international students lacked the sense of belonging in their new community and culture and education. Feeling unaccepted by their host community, international students face psychological problems, such as stress or depression (Yeh & Wang, 2000) and withdraw from the environment (Kim, 2012). To survive these problems, international students often turn to non-domestic citizens who share similar experience of being treated as outsiders and attempt to identify themselves with their home rather than host country (Schmitt et al., 2003).

Harvey et al. (2017) refer to the "hidden world" of international students, their great psychological and emotional challenges including the feeling of loneliness, self-questioning, isolation, alienation, and being different which negatively affect their transition experiences. Living in emotional turmoil- for being away from family- the need for feeling accepted by others, the pressure to cope and succeed mark the transition experiences of international students in Australia (Harvey et al., 2017). Difficulty in establishing new supportive and social relationships and loss of social support (Zhang, 2012) often affects the psychological well-being of international students. As Yeh and Inose (2003) mention, lack of social support and English fluency, dissatisfaction, and social disconnectedness are predictors of students' acculturative stress. This required a "necessary sacrifice" on the part of international students to tolerate the ongoing worry and emotional challenges. Sometimes it came at the expense of avoiding or minimizing socialization with others for greater focus on their studies and securing a better life quality after their move away from family and home to study abroad (Harvey et al., 2017). Harvey et al. encourage education providers to 'open dialogue' with the students involved in such circumstances for timely support.

Cowley and Hyams-Ssekasi (2018) investigated the academic and non-academic challenges of international students within the context of the United Kingdom, the second most popular destination for international students after the United States (Baskerville et al., 2013). Students' non-academic challenges had an impact on their academic development and success (Cowley & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2018). Students' non-academic challenges involved accommodation, finance, travel, homesickness, and isolation. Students' non-academic challenges could very seriously impact the wellbeing and confidence of students, making them distract, withdraw, or sidetrack from their studies. The key academic issue faced by international students was language. As a multifaceted problem, language overlapped with other facets of their challenge, including understanding, assessment, communication, technical language, and academic writing. Numerous other studies have examined the influence of language on academic achievement and social adaptation of international students (e. g., Li et al., 2018; Light et al., 1987; Liu, 2001; Spinks & Ho, 1984; Zhou et al., 2011). It is shown that high level of English language fluency can improve the academic performance of international students (Li et al., 2018). Language challenges, such as difficulty in understanding new vocabularies or engaging in fast talk with professors and colleagues, or strong accent can impact academic and social life of these students.

The resultant academic stress impacts international students' psychosocial adjustment to life (Liao & Wei, 2014) and their ability to develop a support system in their new environment (Berger, 2008; Wang, 2012).

The influence of sociopolitical factors and former learning contexts on academic challenges of international Sudanese students in Australia is investigated by Gately et al. (2017). Students' multiple transitions after crisis of war in Sudan to different countries and educational systems before their migration to Australia disrupted their academic progress. The interplay of students' personal challenges such as loss of family members, global social factors related to trauma of war, and disrupted education resulted in their learning difficulties, lower grades, and failure.

Fong (2014) studied the impact of a new educational system on learners' academic success. He examined how Chinese international students' competence and confidence in English learning is affected by various transitions in their transfer from the Traditional Chinese Culture of Learning (TCCL) to the ESL context of Singapore. In their new learning context, students reshaped their beliefs and developed and adapted their learning strategies to achieve their goals. They transitioned from their "Ought-to Self" working to succeed in a real community to their "Ideal L2 Self" aspiring a future, imagined community.

For the highest proportion of Chinese international students worldwide, 17% of the world's international students in 2013 (UNESCO, Su & Harrison, 2016), a great number of studies are on Chinese students studying abroad. Chinese students consider the United States as number one destination. They compose 31.5% of all international students in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2016) (Lyken-Segosebe, 2017). Differences between Chinese and American political and sociocultural values, lifestyles, education systems and the impact on Chinese students' personality and their transition challenges at American universities are reported by Tung (2016). China's One Child Policy, for example, is considered one factor affecting the students' self-perception. Receiving complete care and attention of family, Chinese students develop a dependent character and self-centered mentality in their homelands. Parental and educators' emphasis on hard work and endurance through extremely rigorous curricula without athletic or community events, also Chinese students' habit of accepting decisions from parents and authorities without being involved in decision-making (Chen et al., 2011) result in students' lack of life skills and more challenging adjustment to independent life of American universities. In education context, reliance on lectures and notes in Chinese universities, instead

of creativity, initiative and independent thinking highlighted by American education, creates another great difference and source of challenge for Chinese students at American universities. The differences between Chinese and American cultures make relations between Chinese and domestic students challenging. Chinese lifestyle of staying in one place for a whole life and American culture of mobility and adventure leads to different understandings of relations and connection making in Chinese and American cultures. Different lifestyle cultures cause Chinese students take a longer period of time to connect with others and develop new perceptions of friendship and closeness. Chinese perception of what is perceived as privacy, but as 'disengagement' by Americans, their different conception of human relations as collectivism and harmony, whereas American's appreciation of individualism, self-expression and assertiveness, create miscommunication and take confidence from Chinese students to communicate with domestic students (Sims et al., 2015). Additionally, Chinese students' habit of hierarchical human relations involving respect to elders and authority figures such as professors or advisors, aligned with their cultural emphasis to maintain harmony in society and school, makes them more reserved and discourage them to interact in classroom settings. This contradicts the American expectation to take initiative in conversations which creates additional challenges (Chu & Walters, 2013). Similar experience of teacher-centered and exam-based pedagogy, contrasting American student-centred educational approach (Ho, 2010), creates another source of challenge in classroom for international students. After all, language barrier, related to the technique-based nature of students' language education for preparation for TOEFL or IELTS tests rather than learning about the content (Sims et al., 2015), creates the biggest challenge for international Chinese students (Tung, 2016). Students' lack of English language proficiency and the distance between their Eastern collective society and Western individualist society creates socio-cultural challenges for them in the States. Yao (2016) reveals the direct influence of students' English language skills on their sense of belonging. Briguglio and Smith (2012) show the negative impact of students' English language issues on their social interactions with domestic students and the larger university community in Australia.

Besides lifestyle, educational, sociocultural, and language differences which create a 'culture-shock' for Chinese international students, Chinese students experience a 'double' culture shock for the big difference between their expectation of American metropolitan lifestyle as pictured through the media and their actual experience of American lifestyle at school. This discrepancy

makes their adjustment even more challenging and cause homesickness upon their arrival (Tung, 2016).

Abu Rabia (2017) reports similar key causes of challenge for international students from seven Arab countries in America- the second largest group of international students after Chinese in the States- as culture, language, religion and geography. Different teaching styles and social relations minimize the interaction between international Arab students and native students inside and outside classes.

Research at four Canadian universities: University of British Columbia (UBC), York University, McGill University, and Dalhousie University also revealed international students' lack of social and particularly academic support enjoyed by domestic students and the direct relation between academic experiences and social or campus experiences of international students (Grayson, 2008).

The brief overview of the challenges experienced by international students studying away from home in various host countries displays the negative aspects of their transition. In the next part, I focus on the less discussed, positive side of the students' challenging transition experience.

The Bright Side

The prevalence of inequitable or marginalized treatments in schools and social groups of international students (Dyson, 2005; Wang, 2012) has made the focus of the majority of studies on the students' life and study challenges and stressors (Wang, 2012). As Hsieh (2007) points out, the positive side of the transformative process of transition is mainly overlooked. There is, however, another line of research which investigates the concurrent positive and negative aspects of international students' transition experiences. Elliot, et. al (2016), for instance, adopt an ecological point of view to investigate the growth and transformative effects of students' transition experiences which were considered by Jones (2013) as lifetime effects. They find out the "unchartered" psychological dimensions in international students' lives which involve mixed experiences of friendship, estrangement (Schweisfurth and Gu, 2009), and acculturative stress (Yeh and Inose, 2003). Students' multifarious experiences result in their growth, resilience and greater ability to overcome transition challenges and become open to diverse people of various cultures (Elliot et. al, 2016). Students' positive transformation however was accompanied by their confusion and ambiguity at various personal, societal, and academic levels in a new

ecological system. Elliot, et. al (2016) consider students' 'openness' to the new system (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) as the key for their successful transition through effective adjustment of their old and new systems. Students' success demanded their reflection and critical analysis of the positive and negative aspects of the familiar and old contexts for resolving the challenges in their unfamiliar environment. This transformative process required courage on the part of international students to forsake their 'comfort zones', build new relations and explore new learning opportunities (Elliot et. al, 2016).

Costello (2015) finds that establishing connections with the locals as the biggest challenge experienced by international students at a Canadian university. He also finds the advantages of studying abroad as an international student involved: the development of critical reflection and deeper understanding of oneself (self-awareness), enhanced academic commitment, cultural growth including enlightened international knowledge, changing opinions about home country and other countries, in-depth exposure to other cultures, students' enhanced intercultural competence, and deeper global and international competence.

International students' exposure to various elements of cultural diversity, including geographical, historical, climatic, religious, political, and linguistic diversity (Goodfellow & Lamy, 2009), entailed personal growth and social development (Van Horne et al., 2018) and expansion of their feelings of tolerance, respect, empathy, and flexibility. Finally, the life-long impact of transition on students' lives involves their desire to seek intercultural experience everywhere both outside and inside home (Costello, 2015).

- **Transition as an Existential Migration, a Catalyst for Self-Exploration and Change**

International students' distance from their native culture and exposure to a new culture can act as a catalyst for becoming more culturally aware, independent, confident and assertive individuals (Brown & Graham, 2009). To investigate students' transition to England as an opportunity for their transformation and new understanding of themselves, Brown and Graham used Adler's (1975) view of sojourn as a journey of self-discovery through confrontation with a new culture and distance from the comfort of the familiar (Berry, 1994; Kim, 1998). They found out that students' experience of transformation for surviving and relief from stress and anxiety (Taylor, 1994) required a change of perspective to accommodate their new experience. Students experienced a shift of perspective from a mononational into a *multinational* one. Exposure to

other cultures developed tolerance and acceptance of new values, and cultural relativism: students learned that no single culture has the absolute criteria for judging another culture (Hofstede, 1991). Reflecting on their past, students noticed life-changing developments in their behaviour and perspectives. Their "perspective transformation"- a term used by Taylor (1994) to refer to change in cultural outlook- ensued from their change of personal and professional attitudes. After their initial hardship and stress, students made a shift from reliance on others to self-direction and self-belief. Students' anxiety stirred their exploration and reconstruction of their selves. They could develop self-confidence in their academic and social roles. Away from parental control at home, students developed independence in their freedom in the UK. Their resolution of internal stress resulted in their greater capacity to overcome other external stressors.

Giddens (1991) also refers to students' self-actualization, personal growth and internal strength in exchange for personal cost and a debilitating and painful life. Students' distance from their former life gave them an objective and less biased view to revisit their life priorities. Their freedom of choice in individualist society, contrasting their ingroup demands of their previous collective societies, made them question their own past lives. This could lead to students' fundamental shift in prioritising individual over the group and abandoning their former obedience norms in their collective societies (Hofstede, 1991). In case of female married students, equality in gender roles in communication and other relationships in their new societies made them desert their national norms and move away from their traditional selves towards a self-mastery with no willingness to return to their previous stricter societies. Students' new self-understandings was the result of their fundamental existential and transcultural transition (Todres, 2002).

Considering the fundamental, existential question intertwined with transition: 'what constitutes self?' Brown & Brown (2009) take an existential approach to study transition of international students of various nationalities at a university in England and the effected changes in their self-understandings. Despite students' initial high stress and anxiety, freedom from their cultural expectations helped them to discover themselves and become their desired selves (Hayes, 2007). Taking international sojourn as a temporary between-society contact (Ward et al., 2001) of transformative power, and as a 'voluntary migration' (Madison, 2006) for self-actualization, cross-cultural understanding (Adler, 1975), and living an authentic life, Brown & Brown view

international students as becoming mediators between cultures (Bochner, 1981, 1986) in their transition. International sojourners' confrontation with a new culture involved a concurrent encounter with their selves (Adler, 1975). With increased intercultural competence, students became involved in a 'reflexive project' of self (Giddens, 1992). They continually negotiated their selves and developed a nonethnocentric value system in interaction with new cultures which made them become mediators between cultures (Brown & Brown, 2009).

Students' immersion in a new culture and life aroused new feelings about their self-image. Considering self as "the essential core of the individual, the part that calls itself I, the part that feels, thinks and originates action" (Becker, 1968, p. 194), Brown and Brown relate students' sense of estrangement and alienation after their migration to the core human existential experience of anxiety (Hayes, 2007). Students' disequilibrium after their migration acted as a catalyst for greater self-understanding (Taylor, 1994). In exchange for the distance from their original culture, their geographical and emotional home, students found their 'authentic self'. The liberating effect of transition gave rise to their self-sufficiency, self-belief and confidence. Students' self-threatening experience of stress and anxiety strengthened their selves and boosted their resilience and coping capabilities. Transition experience thus proved as both undermining and building their character: students' temporary disintegration of the personality ended in their personal growth (Gudykunst, 1998). Their fear and excitement of transitioning from collective societies to an individualist and multicultural one, the clash of their original culture, ingrained habits and their altered self, and the interface of their internal and external transition experiences ended in their new self-understandings and enhanced their intercultural competence (Kohut, 1977; Winnicott, 1958). As Magnusdottir (2005) states, the fine line between the self-threatening and self-strengthening experiences of students provided opportunities for their cross-cultural engagement and self-discovery (Harvey et al., 2017).

The study of transition experiences of Asian international students enrolled in graduate programs at two American universities showed self-awareness as emerging out of the challenges faced by transitioning students (Sato and Hodge, 2009). Facing academic challenges, mainly related to language and cultural differences and stressors such as time demands, international students develop a greater self-awareness and appreciate their own native language and culture. Following Siu (1952) in using the term sojourner, Sato and Hodge found Asian international students as clinging to their cultural heritage and psychologically unwilling to be considered as a

permanent resident. While cultural and language differences created the feeling of being an outsider, a silent spectator marginalized in graduate programs, hierarchical relationship with peers, social distance, and adverse effect on students' academic success, it made international students become more *self-aware*. In their sojourn, especially as they felt isolated and marginalized by others, international students "gained a greater respect and appreciation of their cultural identity, values, languages, and religious beliefs" as Asians (p. 143). In some cases, such as holding on to religious beliefs, their deeper understanding of their values as Asians even helped them survive their academic plight. While students assimilated various strategies of English language and culture to meet academic requirements- at times at the expense of compromising their native language and customs- they did not acculturate English language and cultural norms outside academic context. Outside university, they turned to their own native language, traditional customs and practices into their everyday life.

The impact of international students' self-transitioning on their way of thinking and academic performance is investigated among Chinese students attending Canadian universities by Wang (2012). Considering the frequency of studies on Chinese international students' transition adjustments, such as adjusting their learning styles (Lee, 1995), or their self-confidence (Noles et al., 1996), Wang looked at the less examined subject of students' understanding of their self-transformation. Students' sense of self changed as a result of academic, personal, and professional adjustments. Wang found that rebuilding their sense of self in their transition, students developed a strong sense of human agency, confidence and self-determination. Taking a holistic view, Wang also investigated the interconnection of students' off-campus and on-campus experiences with their new self-understanding. Students' turn to 'self-governing' studying skills, and self-determined and research-oriented learning styles were among the most significant transition aspects of their on-campus transition. Students' on-campus learnings and understandings of textbooks on real-life matters helped in their off-campus adjustments in social and communication skills. Concurrently, students' work experience bridged their language skills and their understanding of Canadian culture. Students' new life and study experience in Canada changed their lifestyle from one focused on academic and career goal to a more balanced personal and academic lifestyle. Students' interaction with the local culture removed their stress and made them appreciative, caring, independent, and open to other individuals. Students' transition obstacles and failures prepared them intellectually and psychologically for next

unforeseen challenges. This cognitive and affective development of students within the context of cultural diversity (Pandian et al., 2016), was the result of both institutional and individual environmental experiences of students (Astin, 1993).

Considering the transition experiences of international students, including myself, studying at various universities worldwide and insufficient research on transitioning students at Canadian universities, I conducted my research on a multiplicity of students from various nationalities at Canadian University of Ottawa. I investigated students' various challenges within three broad existential-individual, linguistic and sociocultural dimensions. Students' self-discoveries and new self-understandings, and their higher self-cultivation in their existential journey, are revealed in their stories and their interpretations of metaphors, the stories of their 'roads not taken'.

In the next chapter, I will introduce my theoretical perspectives of hermeneutic, existential philosophy integrated with Oriental schools to present a more thorough picture of L2 learners' essential-existential understandings of themselves and metaphors.

And students find themselves anew in metaphors, in language …
Is language apart from their being? …. Is their being a language?
Is their being other than existence? ….. Is existence other than language??
Where is the end of existence, language, and understanding?

والسلام …

Chapter 4:

Home, Away From HOME:

(Theoretical Framework)

Figure 6. Naqshe-Jahan-Square (View of the World/Half of the World Square), Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
https://www.itto.org/iran/attraction/Naghsh-e-Jahan-Square/

On Writing Home, Away From HOME, Theoretical Framework

Home, away from HOME, the heart of my whole writing, forms the base and miniature of the whole thesis. It basically started with my choice of hermeneutics followed by my fundamental questions and echoes and traces that I could intuit from my Persian, Islamic tradition within the hermeneutic texts. The underlying mystic basis of hermeneutic texts evoked a spiritual and aesthetic sense in its core definitions and images of understanding (such as 'circle of understanding' or 'fusion of horizons') which moved me back to my HOME tradition. Although hermeneutics is based on Christian mysticism and tradition, I decided to use the hermeneutic concepts on language and understanding and draw on Islamic mystic tradition to entertain the spiritual side of hermeneutics. I aimed at exploring the potential and possibility of reconciling the two Oriental and Occidental traditions. My understanding of the common basis of all traditions and my comfort in using Persian and Islamic tradition as a Persian Muslim who has lived and raised in a mystic culture (mysticism is spread through Persian art, literature and architecture among the others) encouraged me to use hermeneutics in dialogue with Persian Sufism and Islamic tradition. A strong motivation for integrating the two (presently) Eastern and Western traditions was the existing tensions and misunderstandings of Islamic tradition. I became resolute to show deep connections and old kinship between the two worldviews, the way that I had intuited and read (Jardine & Naqvi, 2008) as a step for theoretical reconciliation, and hopefully, for real life manifestations and impacts.

I wrote the section on Islamic tradition in parts at various times for its significance and sensitivity. It gave me enough time to read vastly and notice the huge discrepancy between the texts written on Persian Wisdom by scholars trained inside and outside Iran. The difference made me write the whole section anew based on the version closest to my lived experience, the version which was written by scholars trained by Persian philosophers. A big challenge of writing this chapter was reuniting my Eastern feelings, beliefs and thoughts in a Western language. Although I could see a common base for both traditions, distance from the divine core in most mainstream hermeneutic texts in education has made the language of one tradition feel different from the other. Moving in between two different worlds of tradition, I found writing about them in parallel challenging, a challenge which gradually was overcome during different phases of my writing. Another big challenge was the 'Home' mood, and the serenity and 'homelikeness' feeling that I needed to be able to write on the home section, and almost the whole writing which was rooted in HOME.

Many times, I was missing this required feeling. After a while, my writing felt HOME and it saved me at many times of cold isolation. And of course, Home itself was emotionally very overwhelming and would affect my writing process. The profound meanings and the richness that I felt and lived in reading and writing on ancient texts and in reviewing great ancient history could hardly find any external embodiment in our current world, and this made my writing process, and my switch to real life each time, extremely painful.

This theoretical chapter involves five key pictures which are content-related and meaningful. The chapter's first opening picture (Figure 6) from the famous square, Naqshe-Jahan-Square (View of the World or Half of the World) for 'home, away from HOME' shows a faraway perspective of the whole square from one focused point of view which is home but also away from home (my hometown Isfahan). This picture also shows how an understanding phenomenon, or scene, might look differently, or mean differently, from different standpoints, and in different eyes. This is most tangible if we compare it with the fourth picture from the same famous square, Naqshe-Jahan-Square (Figure 9), which shows the square from a different angle, displaying the magnitude of the square. The second picture (Figure 7) is from the famous bridge- Sio se pol River (Thirty-three Bridges), in Isfahan. It shows the reflection of the bridge in the river which for me evokes the concept of 'home, away from home' with the metaphorical meaning away from literal meaning (or more accurately literal meaning away from metaphorical meaning or Home of being). It also pictures my shift to ancient home philosophy, to home tradition and history, as the mirror image of the bridge in the water reflects: past as the root and key to the present, and present reflecting tradition- similar to what I felt and traced from my tradition in Western hermeneutics. The third picture (Figure 8) is Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque from Naqshe-Jahan-Square. The sun beams illuminating the art, spiritual colors, and the words of the interior resonate the Illuminationist tradition presented in the section. The fourth picture of the Naqshe-Jahan-Square (Figure 9), the key place in Isfahan represents Isfahan for its relation to the School of Isfahan presented in the same section.

The fifth picture of 'The grand entrance to Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque' (Figure 10), from the same square, is deliberately chosen to represent the innovation, complexity and magnitude of Mulla Sadra's comprehensive philosophy, which was the result of his study of thousands of years of Theosophy, back to Ibn Sina and earlier ancient Iran. The last picture (Figure 11) from the inner space of the same mosque represents the interiority of meaning and understanding, a feature of

both hermeneutics and Sufism as I intuited. It also illustrates 'home, away from HOME' from a different inner perspective.
The pictures also retell my own home emotions, a way to recall home by reviving my hidden ancestors, Persian Wisdom, and our "shared ancestors", in my research.
To end this chapter, I offer practical clues based on presented philosophical schools for Self-understanding and language and Self education.

A Note on Home, Away From HOME

The master metaphor '*Home, away from HOME'* is the understanding metaphor which is used at different, interrelated levels in my writing. It is used for key noticeable dimensions of understanding most relevant to my research questions. *Home, away from HOME* is used in its original existential sense of understanding as self-understanding- through the excursion of Self to the Other and its reunion as a more fully, transformed Self (as an alienated spirit, taken from Hegel in Gadamer & Silverman, 1991). This existential, spiritual sense is very close to the inner way that understanding is viewed in *Simorgh* (next chapter) and the included Persian Wisdoms of Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra. This sense helped in capturing the inner understandings that my participants experienced in their sociocultural and linguistic transition with Others and affected their understandings of themselves and of metaphors.
Home, away from HOME is also used metaphorically for the physical home, away from HOME, involving the participants' sociocultural transition from their homelands into Canada.
At linguistic level, *Home, away from HOME* is applied to the students' homecoming: their metaphorical (HOME) understandings (recognition and interpretations) of the words or expressions (literal or home).
At personal level, I used *Home, away from HOME* for my own 'homecoming' in my research, and so in my new context, through reviving my forgotten ancestors and by recognizing their contribution to current wisdoms and state of knowledge.
Language understanding in this chapter and in the whole thesis is viewed and contextualized within overall human understanding, as one feature representing human being as an understanding being, a being of higher understanding among other beings.

Home, Away From HOME:
My Heart-Felt Epistemological Transition

The first time that my mother took me to the kindergarten, at the time of farewell, I had a very strange feeling. For the first time, I was finding part of my being away from my HOME and I was missing my other part at HOME. It was a strange and profound feeling ... so sad and so exciting[45]*. The feeling grew in me as I grew up. It changed as I transitioned to different levels, academically and professionally, but it always had the same impact: it made me restless. I could never feel totally at home; I was always looking for my other parts. I could not see all parts of my being together, in one place. I found different parts of my being in different places at different times at HOME ... but some parts of my being were always obscure… missing … invisible. Learning a new language made me even more aware of my invisible parts ... I had to move, again, but this time, a big move. I needed a big transition. I couldn't see those parts at HOME …*

Home, away from Home, the theoretical chapter, involves two parts. The first part introduces hermeneutics, mainly Gadamer's philosophy. The key concepts in hermeneutic philosophy relevant to my research are presented. The concept of understanding from various existential perspectives and the similarity between metaphor and the metaphorical aspect of understanding are discussed. In a last presented view of understanding as in-betweenness, the Persian mystic view of in-betweenness is included for its relevance to the next part on Persian Wisdom. This part ends with a section on self-education, for its significance as the main task of education in Gadamer's philosophy, also for its relevance to the Persian Wisdom introduced in the next part. The second part introduces Persian Wisdom, my Home philosophy. This part explains Persian theosophy within my epistemological transition and fusion of Western and Eastern philosophies. The part starts with an introduction on how I turned to my Persian, Islamic background. I introduce two major schools in Persian theosophy which were deeply echoed in my reading of German philosophy. The end of this philosophical chapter is about home, away from HOME after my philosophical, existential journey which is rooted in my old feelings and matched (turned out to match) the way that understanding is conceptualized in hermeneutic philosophy, my philosophical transition from Western to Eastern (Home) philosophy, and unbelievably, my final, blissful land in my own Home, Iran, with my Persian ancestors, and incredibly in my own

[45] The first memorable experience of existential understanding as joyous and frightening (Gadamer, 2007a).

Hometown, Isfahan, the splendid home of art and philosophy, all a partial, temporal realization of an old understanding of Home, away from HOME (initial reflection). Finally, answers to the fundamental questions that I faced in reading Western philosophy are presented. The whole chapter terminates with my own reflections on my long-time existential, philosophical journey of understanding.

What is Hermeneutics?

The term 'hermeneutics' originates from the Greek term *hermeneus* which refers to Hermes, the legendary Greek messenger who carried messages between the gods and mortals. To translate and communicate messages to the mortal subjects, Hermes had to first understand and interpret the meanings for himself (Mueller-Vollmer, 1986). Hermeneutics was associated with interpretation of texts, particularly biblical texts, in the 17th century. In 1977, Friedrich Schleiermacher- the acknowledged founder of modern hermeneutics (Grondin, 1995; Palmer, 1969)- extended hermeneutic studies beyond biblical texts to human understanding (Crotty, 1998). Hermeneutics then was developed as the theory and practice of interpretation of meaning and understanding in human contexts (Chesla, 1995; Moules, 2002). As a "discipline of thought", hermeneutics aims at uncovering the "unsaid life of our discourse" (Grondin, 1995, p. x; Moules, 2002) through language. Hermeneutics "peers behind" language (Moules, 2002, p. 3) in revealing the "contextual world of a word", involving what is said and what is unsaid (Grondin, 1995, in Moules, 2002, p. 3). Hermeneutics attends to language, and recognizes its forgetfulness (Gadamer, 1984; Moules, 2002). Hermeneutic interpretation recognizes a familiarity, a kinship in language. It recognizes something new in language by working through relations between ourselves, others, and the world (Moules, 2002). Hermeneutics disrupts "the clear narrative" and questions assumptions. It embraces the *instance* and *particular*, rather than the general (Jardine, 1992, 1998, 2000). Hermeneutic inquiry recognizes the particular and ordinary, with its history, legacies, and relationships (Moules, 2002). Hermeneutics tends to *human meaning*, how humans make sense of their lives, how they find and lose themselves in their understandings (Smith, 1991). Hermeneutics is founded on the premise of the world as an interpretable text (Moules, 2002) and meanings and intentions as being, in a sense, "*hidden* in the text[46]" (Crotty, 1998, p. 91) and co-created by the interpreter and author of the text (Murphy, 1989). Understanding the text in

[46] Text, including the linguistic text, refers to any object of interpretation

hermeneutics requires *difference*. It involves "revelatory moments of realization" when the reader and author of a text have different understandings of a text (Davey, 2006, p. 5). Recognising difference in the other *transforms* the interpreter of the text and changes his self. Understanding then, involving a dialectic of shared experience and co-creation of meaning, ends in a refined sense of the communal and an expanded version of self. Engagement with the text in encounter with the other brings a new understanding which helps the self to integrate with the world beyond itself (Davey, 2006).

Contemporary hermeneutics is impacted by a number of ancient theologians and philosophers. Augustine (354-430) recognized the place of tradition in language and the inexpressibility of the contents of inner speech among others (Grondin, 1994; Palmer, 1969). Schleiermacher (1768-1834) developed the themes of creativity in interpretation, the role of language in understanding, and the movement between part and whole in the process of interpretation which was later called as the *hermeneutic circle* (Coltman, 1998; Palmer, 1969; Smith, 1991). Wilhem Dilthey (1833-1911) introduced the concept of *Da-sein,* which conveys the idea of understanding as a fundamental structure in human being and had a great influence on Heidegger and Gadamer (Grondin, 1994). Dilthey initiated the search for an existential, or interpretive, rethinking of hermeneutics. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), built on previous scholars, gave rise to hermeneutics (Caputo, 1987; Grondin, 1995). As the principal founder of phenomenology, Husserl embraces the notion of *experience*. His notion of intentionality highlights that all experience is of something, and that our thinking and interpreting is about the world (Moules, 2002). In his phenomenology, while providing a rich description of the phenomenon, Husserl *essentializes* "what is" without considering "sensuous immediacy" and "powerful contingencies" (Jardine, 1992, 1994). Husserl's notion of "essentializing" human experience and bracketing presuppositions and prejudices were challenged by Gadamer (1989) and Heidegger (1996) who accentuated understanding as rooted in people's experiences in their lifeworld involving their self/being, history, prejudices, experiences, and ancestors. In their hermeneutic philosophy, Gadamer and Heidegger did not consider objects as fixed or given, but as contingent entities which are interpreted by the subjects.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Husserl's student, brought the lifeworld back into their experience of things (Caputo, 1987; Jardine, 1994; Moules, 2002). For Heidegger, people and their experiences are already situated in and constituted by their world. Heidegger identifies *Da-sein* or being-in-the-world as the "thereness" of situated and self-reflecting being (Moules, 2002).

According to Heidegger, our past experiences create the forestructure for understanding new things in the present moment (Smith, 1999). Gadamer (1900-2002), a student of Husserl and Heidegger, extended Heidegger's existential hermeneutic philosophy. A summary of Gadamer's philosophy, which is a main framework for this research, is presented in the next sections.

Gadamer's Hermeneutic, Existential Philosophy

Gadamer (1989) viewed understanding as interpretation; as the interpreter's self-application to his current situation (Madison, 1988). Accordingly, one who understands can exercise a practical skill. The German phrase that Gadamer, after Heidegger, draws on (sich verstehen) implies understanding as involving self-understanding. This means that it is always "me" who understands, a *being* of understanding. This is what is called "interpretation". Understanding, to Gadamer, is being able to apply a certain meaning to our life situations. This notion of practical understanding refers back to Aristotle's notion of practical understanding (Bauman, 2016). Gadamer (1989) also considers understanding as historical and temporal. We as understanders *are* historical beings who belong to history. This understanding of our temporal nature is called "effective historical consciousness" by Gadamer. The temporality of our understanding is best revealed in language. The language we are born in and speak carries the structure of its own evolution. It reflects all the sociopolitical and cultural changes in the personal and collective lives of our ancestors. The structure of language is transformed by past lives and is transformable in the face of new lived realities (Smith, 1999), which related to the contingent nature of our understanding situated in our lives, relationships, context, and histories (Moules, 2002). Unlike Husserl's bracketing notion, Gadamer (1989) highlighted the "prejudices" as being inseparable from the understanding and interpretation phenomena. Adopting the Heideggerian connection between being and language, Gadamer considers language as the universal medium in which self-understanding occurs (Gadamer, 2012). In Gadamer's words *"all such understanding is ultimately self-understanding* (*Sichverstehen:* knowing one's way around) ... in every case that a person who understands, understands himself*,* projecting himself upon his possibilities" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 260). Similar to Heidegger, Gadamer considers the text as a "derivation from existence"***:*** *Our understanding of the text originates with our understanding of existence.* In the event of understanding, the interpreter revives the *invisible existence* which is hidden in the text (Wiercinski, 2009).

Several key concepts are involved in Gadamer's hermeneutic philosophy. I present the most relevant to my research in the following sections.

Linguality and Historicity of (Existential) Understanding

Understanding in hermeneutics is considered a participation in meaning. It is considered a historical event which is embedded in language. Learning a language thus involves inheriting a past that becomes part of our past. Language is a medium of inheriting history, the medium of the hermeneutic experience. It is a place of 'mediation' and also of transformation. Hermeneutic understanding is a continuous dialogue of mediation of meaning between past and present through words, words which transform the people involved in conversation. The sentence "Being that can be understood is language" involves the existential understanding that "being is experienced where what is happening can merely be understood" (Gadamer, 2006, xxxii.). The linguistic dialogue mirrors life experience and *being is experienced in an event of understanding* (Wiercinski, 2009). In other words, linguistic understanding involves existential understanding. They coexist. Language 'discloses' individual life experiences. To be precise, "being is what can never be completely understood" (Palmer, 2007, p. 162); being is that which is represented by language and is always taken *as* something (ibid). *To be* thus means *to exist* in language and the object of understanding is always determined by its lingual nature. Every lingual expression is grounded in totality of meaning. The statement "Being that can be understood is language" might be interpreted as "participation in that totality of meaning, and not as lingual idealism" (Wiercinski, 2019a, page 62). Being, thinking, and language constitute the unity of Being and thinking in language in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. What is thought is experienced as a lingual being and is expressed in language. Thinking and language are united (ibid).

Stressing the historicity of our existence, Gadamer emphasizes that in our "trial to understand a text we do not try to *recapture* the author's attitude of mind" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 299). Because we are historical beings and cannot completely escape our history and put ourselves completely in the place of another person, our understanding of another person or text is different from the way they understand themselves, or the way that the text is intended.

Understanding involves a fusion between the interpreter and the linguistic formulation. Language, thus, in Gadamer's philosophy, is the key medium of our understanding. Learning a foreign language, hence, involves openness to a different way of expressing and understanding, an

exposure to a different culture which expands our previous perspective (Grondin in Fairfield, 2011).

Understanding as a Passage From Being to Being in Language

'Being at home' is the metaphor used by Gadamer for our human situation in language. The metaphor reflects our permanent liminal state of being in the world. Within this metaphor, language is considered as "the locus of belonging, as a home, where subject and object, thought and world meet" (Weinsheimer, 1990, p. 99). Being at home implies stability but also movement. It suggests literal meaning and also divergence from literal meaning. Being at home implies both feeling 'at home' and 'away from home' (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991).

The sentence "Being that can be understood is language" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 432) describes the existential centrality of language in philosophical hermeneutics. While language is considered a key medium of understanding and identifying and defining being, it cannot fully represent being: "being …. is not exhausted by language" (Gadamer, 2012, p. 10). Hence, the totality of meaning as 'language-world' which is implied in linguistic words ends in infinite interpretations. In interpretation of linguistic expressions different language-worlds emerge refuting the notion of meaning as a fixed totality of linguistic expressions (Davey, 2006).

Stressing the finitude of language for self-understanding, Gadamer differentiates between language and linguality. He uses linguality for the 'not-yet-said' and the 'not-yet-understood' of linguistic texts which are understood in the *temporal context* of interpretation (Gadamer, 2012). Understanding and interpretation thus involve 'unexpected' notice of ignored aspects of a subject matter. It is a transforming notice and understanding which is experienced from the word play: interpreters as players are involved in a game which runs against their expectancies and are moved to think differently. They leave the game while keeping it open for the next players. This 'language vitality' makes understanding 'meaningful' in hermeneutics (Davey, 2006).

Dialogue: Understanding as a Dialogical Phenomenon

Heidegger's proposal that there is something beyond language was extended by Gadamer. Gadamer addressed the 'inner dialogue' of the speaker (Moules, 2002). Dialogical engagement between question and answer is a distinctive aspect of Gadamer's (1975/1981) hermeneutic philosophy. In Gadamer's dialogical philosophy, understanding happens through dialogue and

meaning emerges through a hermeneutic conversation between the interpreter (Self) and the text (Other) (Koch, 1999). Dialogical understanding involves the reader's or understander's constant return to the text, each time with an increased understanding (Packer, 1985). The interpreter's dialogue with the text involves reaching an agreement through language that highlights the linguistic dimension of understanding: "to understand is to put something in words" (p. 8). Understanding in Gadamer's view involves articulating meanings into the words, the words which are mine and also of others. The limits of our language in communicating our Selves confirm the universality of language as the medium of understanding. Our understanding, involving our self-understandings, is our self-implying "response" to the others' words (Bauman, 2016; Dostal, 2002).

Fusion of Horizons

The notion of fusion of horizons is a metaphor used by Gadamer to describe understanding. Interpretation always happens through the fusion of horizons. The horizon of understanding involves the range of vision including "everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (Gadamer, 1993, p.302). It includes the sum of the person's understanding and knowledge of the world and everything that defines her character, including the background knowledge, prejudices, emotional states, beliefs, values and personal history (Murphy, 1989). Individuals' horizons are temporal and change in interaction with others' horizons (Gadamer, 1996). The fusion of horizons is an integration of different points of view. It requires a willingness to open ourselves to the viewpoints of others. Understanding "requires the interpreter to *reconcile* his own and the other's views on the subject matter" (Gadamer 1960, p. 180). Fusion of horizons is understanding ourselves through integrating with the other: "Self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self, and includes the unity and integrity of the other" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 83).

Fusion of horizons shows how *shared* understanding occurs through dialogic negotiation between the interpreter (Self) and the Other/text (Koch, 1999): "the task of hermeneutics is to clarify this miracle of understanding, which is not a mysterious communion of souls, but a sharing in a common meaning" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 292). Fusion of horizons happens when the interpreter can make sense of what is alienating in the text; it happens when the tension between the interpreter

and the text's horizons is resolved (Palmer, 2007), after an unpredictable encounter between different linguistic and cultural horizons (Davey, 2006).

Gadamer views understanding as an event or fusion of horizons. Each individual is a finite, historical being of a unique horizon of understanding. Our understanding is not irrespective of our Selves, it is contextualized by our prejudgments, or prejudices, and our nurturing traditions. That is the reason Gadamer finds reproducing texts as improbable for we are always conditioned by our history and not able to capture the author's intentions (Bauman, 2016). The process of our understanding, however, "always involves the attainment of a higher *universality* that overcomes not only our own particularity, but also that of the other" *[italicized]* (Gadamer, 1975, p. 272).

At a higher level, Gadamer considers education as our encounter with tradition and learning as a fusion of horizons of the present and past. A fusion which happens in encounter of the interpreter (*interpretans*) and the text (the subject of understanding or *interpretandum*), or what is transmitted from the past for our use (Grondin in Fairfield, 2011).

Prejudice

A related concept to understanding in Gadamer's hermeneutics is 'prejudice'. Gadamer uses the term 'tradition' to refer to Heidegger's notions of background and preconceptions. Being already conditioned by our tradition, our understanding is always affected by our prejudices. Prejudice is a product of our culture. As the forestructures or conditions of knowledge, our prejudices determine what we understand in each context (Gadamer, 1976).

Gadamer takes a positive view of prejudice as a need of hermeneutic 'rehabilitation' (Gadamer, 1976). He views prejudice as a (initial) way to have access to the world and as "the biases of our openness to the world" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 9). Prejudices, though, merely constitute the conditions in which we encounter and experience the world (Kock, 1996), they are "where we [as interpreters] can *start*" (Gadamer, 1976, p. 46). To understand, the key point is our awareness of our own prejudices as interpreters of the text and acceptance of the 'other' text presented to us (Gadamer, 1976). Our understanding of the meaning of the text/Other requires our 'openness' to the meaning of the text/Other, which involves seeing our prejudices in a wider perspective to build a common ground for creating new meanings (Gadamer, 1993).

Circle of Understanding

The hermeneutic circle is another metaphorical way of conceptualizing understanding and the process of interpretation in which we participate and are situated. It was Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who first suggested the movement between part and whole in the process of interpretation. Following Heidegger, Gadamer later used the metaphor of the hermeneutic circle to describe the experience of understanding as "moving dialectically between the parts and the whole" text (Koch, 1996, p. 176), a process during which the reader becomes part of the ongoing understanding circle. Moving repeatedly between interpretations of parts and interpretations of the whole of the text, the reader comes to an emerging understanding of the text (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). The concept and practice of the hermeneutic circle implies *contextual* understanding of the texts or objects of understanding (Crotty, 1998). The interpreter who enters the hermeneutic circle, is always carrying her own culture, understandings, prejudices, experiences and expectations which define and determine what she takes and what she brings forth in her understanding (Maturana & Varela, 1992, cited in Moules, 2002).

Understanding as Homecoming

- **Bildung**

Bildung, with the root word Bild, "form", "image" (Grondin, 2011), is a term used by Gadamer to describe the nature of hermeneutic understanding. *Bildung* was used in a spiritual sense by Hegel as referring to the "alienated spirit" (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014): "At the beginning, spirit is not at home in its own home" (Ciaramelli, 1994, p. 17). *Bildung* has the circular structure of *excursion* and *reunion.* It involves *excursion* from home, from familiarity, into the strange and unfamiliar and *reunion* in becoming home in the alien. This circular movement of understanding in becoming home in the alien[47] entails identifying a new, *unrecognized possibility* of the spirit in the alien (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991; Weinsheimer & Marshal, 2014); this is the "fundamental movement of spirit whose being is only return to itself from being otherwise" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 15).

[47] Alien and strange are used interchangeably for unfamiliarity

Whihelm von Humbolt[48] used *Bildung* to refer to something higher and more inward. Dating back to the ancient mystical tradition, *Bildung* refers to the man who carries the image of God in his soul, is shaped after God, and must cultivate Him in himself (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014). In this conception, *Bildung* involves the process of *self-formation* and *becoming* educated (Grondin, 2011) and moving towards a perfect version of one's self: "*Bildung* is 'the highest and most harmonious development of [Man's] powers to a complete and consistent whole (Humboldt, 1791-1792/1993,10, cited in Bohlinm 2013). *Bildung*, as the process of 'elevation of personality' (Bohlin, 2013) is a process of Self education involving cultural, individual, and social formation which requires constant, inner formation and cultivation of self (Davey in Fairfield, 2011). In our constant understandings, *Bildung* involves the formative power that we gain in our profound experience of encounter with others/text. *Bildung* is an endless dialectical and formative process of reconciliation between the individual and his environment (Davey, 2011). *Bildung*, or rising to the universal, requires the individual's openness to others' views (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014). This human task of universality requires devotion of self through sacrificing the individuality, moving beyond the rational side and alienating oneself from immediate desires and personal needs and interests (Hegel's *Propedeutic*, *T & M*, 2014).

In embracing the cultivation of soul and education of self, *Bildung* entails multiplicity and plurality (Grondin, 2011). Breaking with the particularity of immediate acceptance and rejection of other viewpoints and respecting other than personal expectations and preferences in looking beyond his perspective (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014), the person develops the 'spirit of dialogical openness'. His developed openness and dialogue with others of different ways of thinking, feeling and acting, makes the person question his habitual ways of thinking and acting (Bohlin, 2013). Affirming his difference and reconciling himself with alien others, the person sees commonality in differences. In his dialogical integration with others, the individual re-cognizes himself (with initially alien others) and develops a universal point of view and feeling home to difference and plurality (*Propaedeutic*, cited in Gadamer, 2014).

Bildung carries theological undertones of humans as beings "in motion", creatures whose essence resides in ceaseless negotiation and transformation (Gadamer, 1989, p. xxx). Humans are considered beings in constant, transforming challenge with others which extend their horizons as individual and collective beings (Davey in Fairfield, 2011). The re-cognition of the self in relation

[48] Gesammelte Schriften, Akadamie ed., VII, part 1, 30.

to others sometimes suggests the nothingness of the Self and its 'no essence' apart from its affiliations and relations with others (Davey, 2006.)

Bildung as the many-sided cultivation of human virtues and capabilities require *freedom* as a main condition. *Bildung* can be hindered by a one-sided cultivation of some special faculty at the expense of others (Humboldt 1791-1792/1993, 10).

Bildung leads to this sublime understanding "*that the other might be right*" (Gadamer, 1993, p. 109), it is about becoming educated in becoming aware of our own ignorance. *Bildung* is adopting a position of detachment from our Selves in coming to this understanding that others think differently and that there is no definite way of understanding, hence no one can see everything (Grondin, 2011).

- **Home, Away From Home**

The hermeneutic, metaphoric conception of understanding as a circular interplay between familiarity and strangeness (Kerdeman, 1998), pictured as the interpreter's *excursion* from familiarity (home) into the alien (away from home) in quest of the familiar and *reunion* at home as a different self, is well articulated in the metaphor *home, away from home* (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991). The master metaphor *home, away from home* was already used by Derrida to define metaphor. According to Derrida, metaphor suggests "being-away-from-home" but still in a home of self re-cognition and discovery. For Gadamer, metaphor implies an "exodus" from homeland, involving alienation, difference and divergence from the literal. For both Derrida and Gadamer, and also for Aristotle as identified in his *Poetics* under *epiphora,* transposition or transference, 'movement' is a key feature of metaphor. Gadamer views movement in the context of Hegel's view of *Bildung* involving the *home, away from home* movement of the self's excursion to the other and reunion with its self in finding itself differently. Gadamer uses *Bildung* to explain the nature of understanding and also the structure of metaphor, and hence, the metaphoricity of understanding. Metaphor and metaphorical understanding both entail a "joyous and frightening shock[49]" (Gadamer, 2007a, p. 131, cited in Seidel & Jardine, 2014a) due to their circular structure of the Self's departure and its homecoming and becoming home with its Self differently, in a new but familiar home. Understanding as 'homecoming' thus involves a 'reversal' from the initial

[49] A reminder of my childhood profound experience of my first farewell with my mother at the time of getting away from home to the kindergarten (my second home)

alienness into familiarity, when the understander feels at home and identifies a new possibility of himself in the alien/other (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991), when he discovers that what seemed to be home was in fact merely a *way-station* (Chenari, 2008).

Metaphor is considered as the linguistic correlate of the *Bildung* of spirit featuring similar transference or movement from the literal to metaphorical. This is metaphorically known as the release of the literal into the metaphorical (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991). The movement from the literal reveals the insufficiency of the previous literal as a determinate meaning to change and expand into the metaphorical (Chenari, 2008), which implies that there is always more to be said (Davey, 2006). Gadamer describes metaphorical understanding as construal of something *as* something. In using 'as', Gadamer considers the tension between similarity and difference. It is through alienation from familiarity that the literal or original expands into the metaphorical[50] (Chenari, 2008).

- **Metaphor and Metaphorical Understanding**

Metaphor is viewed by Gadamer as a 'fusion of horizons', a transference from the past to the present and from present to the past, a movement between our pre-understandings and assumptions to new understandings. Metaphor thus involves the interaction and dialectic of two spheres of discourse. In terms of time, it is an interaction between past and present discourse. In terms of subject, it is a dialectic between two subject discourses. This is in line with the interaction theory of metaphor proposed by Black (1962). Black defines metaphor as consisting of two distinct subjects: a 'principal' subject- the tenor in Richards' terms (1936)- for example, 'All the world' in the famous metaphor "All the world is a stage"[51]. The second subject is a 'subsidiary' subject -the vehicle in Richards' definition- such as 'a stage' in the same example "All the world is a stage". Metaphor works by selecting certain features of the tenor that normally apply to the vehicle, such as 'men and women' applied to 'the players', and suppressing other features, such as 'animals'. In Black's interactive view, a model of 'reciprocal application', both the tenor and the

[50] The hermeneutic definition of metaphor and the interpretive aspect of understanding.
[51] Shakespeare's *As you Like It*

vehicle are *modified*[52] after interaction and the application of certain features of the tenor to the vehicle (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991).

This interaction and reciprocal application of Black's theory resembles the understanding phenomenon as elaborated by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (Weinsheimer, 1991). Hermeneutic understanding, similar to Black's definition of metaphor of two subjects, is defined as consisting of two distinct subjects; it construes something *as* something, one subject as another subject- which is also in line with Gadamer's suggestion of language signs as existing (be alive) when applied by language users and suggesting "other" than themselves (Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014). The tenor is the text to be understood and the vehicle is the medium of understanding the text involving prejudices, assumptions and all that compose the horizon of the interpreter's language. The difference between the horizon and the context of the interacting text and interpreter makes understanding happen. The temporal prejudices of the interpreter provide a provisional horizon which acts as the vehicle and medium for selecting and highlighting certain features of the text and hence a temporary understanding of the text. Metaphor and understanding involve similar interaction and 'reciprocal' application. Both metaphor and understanding involve transference of meaning from one discourse into another, from past to the present and from present to the past. The vehicle transfers meaning to the tenor and the interpreter transfers his world-knowledge to the text. This reciprocal application of past and present entails changes for both the horizons of the interpreter and the text. The interpreter changes after knowing about the text and the text is different from the first encounter. Selecting and supressing certain features of the unfamiliar text modifies it into a new, familiarized text. This shift involves 'moments of *Bildung*' for the interpreter himself who is *altered* in understanding the text. His new self-understanding entails self-alienation and detachment from his familiar Self which enable him to understand the alien and unfamiliar text and turn into a more fully Self (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991).

> *What I most enjoy in knowing about hermeneutics is its orientation towards a perfectionist way of understanding our Selves by knowing more and more about Others, with Others, and through Others. This is the strongest and the most delicate resemblance I found with Persian mysticism and my Islamic background.*

[52] Lexical *narrowing* and *broadening*, lexical pragmatic adjustment: Arriving at an optimally relevant interpretation after processing a subset of encyclopaedic information associated to the concept results in the formation of a new ad hoc concept which is 'narrower' than the encoded concept in that it does not denote a set of entities and 'broader' than the encoded concept in that it denotes a set of entities which typically fall outside its definition (Vega Moreno, 2004).

Understanding: A Tension Between Familiar and Strange: Our On-going Liminal Experience

Difference and distance are the keys to understanding, the reversal of the alien into the familiar. Understanding is accompanied by the challenge between 'the whole' familiar that we already know about and the 'new parts' that we are understanding. This tension gives rise to the 'hermeneutic circle' (Kerdeman, 1998) which is a continuous interplay between the whole and parts, familiarity and strangeness. Familiarity and strangeness coexist in human life. Familiarity and strangeness are the modes of our human existence as we experience both feeling 'at home' and 'disoriented' or confused in the world, in our different interpretive situations:

"Pulled between familiarity and strangeness, we find ourselves in the middle of an on-going liminal experience, not quite at home in the world, yet not entirely estranged from it" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 306).

Our understandings happen in our liminal state and our existential tension for our contradictory feelings of home and exile (ibid). Our experiences of disorientation and alienation are the conditions of our understanding. Our understanding experience involves the experience of the difference in our encounter with the unfamiliar which involves the defamiliarization of the familiar into the strange (Davey, 2006). Our encounter with the unfamiliar thus changes our familiar understanding and our understanding changes the initially unfamiliar object of understanding, or the text we aim at understanding (Wiercinski, 2011).

Hermeneutics is thus about polarity of familiarity and strangeness (Gadamer, 1989). It is about our vague familiarity, the tension which exists between the familiar and strange texts, between our being as belonging to and as alienated from tradition (Wiercinski, 2011). The hermeneutic task is about bringing out this tension through the hermeneutic circle, the constant interchange between our pre-understandings and new understandings. The task involves questioning our pre-understandings through the dialectic of question and answer. It involves questioning and critical address of our prior knowledge which both conditions and is conditioned/transformed by our new understanding (Wiercinski, 2011). The in-between, contrast-unveiling space that generates the event of understanding is a space of transformative power which emerges through the engagement of the individual with the unfamiliar text (Davey, 2006).

In-betweenness is the key in hermeneutic understanding highlighted by Gadamer and other philosophers. Gadamer refers to in-betweenness as the true locus of understanding: "The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-betweenness" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 295). Hermes in hermeneutics is known as a "go between" the gods and humanity, between one text and another. This is the two-way work of hermeneutics, what Gadamer (1989, p. 103) called a "to and fro movement" and "play" "that takes place in-between" (p. 109). Heidegger used the German term "*unheimlichkeit"* (1962, p. 233) for the human liminal sense of feeling in between – in this world. Unheimlichkeit which means "*un-home-likeness*" and implies an uncanny sense of wandering in the world.

In Betweenness in Persian Mysticism

The human liminal state and sense of in-betweenness or exile in this world deemed as a yearning and nostalgia for return to the Origin is also a key theme in Persian mysticism. According to the mystics, represented by the eminent figures of Persian mystical poetry such as Sanaei, Attar and Mowlavi (known as Rumi) (Dehghan et al., 2013), human soul is imprisoned in this world and yearns its return to its origin. Molana (Rumi) (1207-73) especially talks of pain of separation from home in his poetry:

Before that there were garden, wine and grapes in this world
We were drunken by eternal wine
We were beating drum of spirituality
Before creation of human
We were pleasing in tavern of reality
(Mowlavi, 1999: 266)

In Attar's view, together with human beings all creatures are originated from one source and all are eager to return to their origin:

Everything seeks its origin
And all creatures are in travel for their desire
Since whole world has one origin
It deserves to see whole world from one observer viewpoint (Attar, 1996: 677).

Attar uses many metaphors to picture the Origin and the universal dream for the Origin, such as use of the 'sun' for the Origin (as we will see in *Simorgh*), 'falcon' for human flying towards the Origin, or a lover butterfly's adoring turn around the candle. Attar advises the lovers to be

homeless since the beloved does not come home. Mowlavi (Rumi) refers to the gloomy voice of a flute cut from the reed bed as the complaints of the human being for his exile from home (Dehghan et al., 2013; Nasr, 2007). Nasr (2007) refers to our current lost condition in this world, as being lost in a "centerless circle" (p. 6), in a world of an intermediate realm (al-barzakh) between the physical world and the world of "purely angelic" or "intelligible substances" (Nasr, 1996, p. 653).

Education as Self-education

The last worthy notion from Gadamer's hermeneutics for this thesis is about "Education as Self-education". Education in hermeneutics is not about the accumulation of knowledge and experience. It is about learning about ourselves and others in relation with others. It is about learning about and sharing the concerns of others (Wiercinski, 2011). The aim of education in hermeneutics is to understand the nature of human being through understanding and making others understand (Hahn. Ed., 1997). Education is a 'call for self-transformation' through practicing an openness towards the other. It is about living diversity by embracing others, living with differences and unfamiliarity. Education involves assisting students in learning as a main task of how to develop self-understanding, how to develop an openness to misunderstandings and to what is unexpected. Education involves learning about liberating ourselves and thus others through controlling our prejudices and developing a new self which is not egoistic. Teachers' duty is enhancing the ethical intelligence of students through assisting them in transformation of the self and better living of life. Considering the significant connection between understanding the text and our Selves, Gadamer's perspective on education helps us in becoming more human through developing self-knowledge. Like learning a foreign language, through dialogical connection with others, education aims to develop an understanding of the alien other and ourselves (Wiercinski, 2011).

Self-education involves *protest against indifference* as the highest task of education. This involves understanding and sharing with others the experience of transforming the world. Self-education involves a 'call for dialogue', listening, and self-criticism in listening to different perspectives (Wiercinski, 2011). Education as self-education involves recognizing ourselves in re-meeting the other in language, art, religion, and history (Gadamer, *On Education, Poetry, and History*, 235).

Education as self-education is a call for becoming engaged in the tension of self-transformation through self-acceptance and self-questioning, familiarity and disorientation, feeling at home and away from home, a practice of openness towards others through critical examination of our selves. Hermeneutic education, thus, reverberating the mystic undertones of a spiritual journey of the self, involves an existential task of self-cultivation for building a culture of participation with others which can contribute to transformation of the world (Wiercinski, 2011).

> *Long before I read these essential-existential sections in western philosophical texts, I felt myself, I heard my ingrained culture and Home in the initial sounds of hermeneutics. I passionately looked back and lovingly dug into my ancestral treasures to enrich my insatiable road of self-exploration with deep, ancient, Persian Islamic paintings …*

Figure 7. Sio se pol River (Thirty-three Bridges), Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
https://iranianholiday.com/top-most-beautiful-bridges-in-iran/

Isfahan, Away From Isfahan: My Home Forefathers of the Hermeneutic, Existential Philosophy: an evidence for my intuition and heart-felt emotions

- **My Epistemological Fusion: Transition to My Ancestral, Persian Islamic treasures**

Reading on Western hermeneutic, existential philosophy, I was captivated by sections on human liminal state in this world, the infinitude of human understanding and interpretation (Gadamer, 1975) and human' constant feeling of un-home-likeness, or "*unheimlichkeit"* (Heidegger, 1962, p. 233). The existential sections on our transformation and self-understanding through excursion toward others and reunion with ourselves as more fully selves (Weinsheimer, 1991, on Gadamer's philosophy), and understanding as something that "happens to us over and above our wanting and doing" (Gadamer, 1986, xvi) highly resonated with my lifelong feelings of not being fully at home and my deep, intimate feelings for Others as parts of one self- an understanding ingrained in my culture- and echoed the big, ever present existential mysteries in my mind. Facing other quotes on humans, however, as having no essence, such as Davey's note on our new self-understandings as 'moving on': "precisely because we have no essence that we must endeavor to move on" (Davey, 2006, p. 57), I could see things somehow contradictory. Reading on hermeneutics, I was haunted by two fundamental questions. The first question enquired the reason for our constant feeling of *unheimlichkeit,* or in my lifelong understanding, the feeling of homelessness. What was that feeling for? And what was the reason for the infinitude of our understanding? My second question was how does excursion to Others, who are different from us, illuminate our Selves to ourselves?

how our encounter with Others and knowing about Others can improve, perfect, complement our Selves[53]? Or, in Gadamer's metaphor, how does our 'fusion of horizons' bring about a more "fully" Self, which is both new and familiar? and how could it be (fundamentally) possible if there would be no essence to our Selves?

Reading hermeneutics many times I was reminded of some main Islamic principles that I had read and lived with in Iran and I was tortured for their absence many times after my transition from Iran: the great emphasis on the Other as the one realizing our Self-understanding, Others as external lights to our being and inner side, distance and detachment from our all dominant Self and accepting Others as illuminating our Selves, what I highly relished exploring in hermeneutic texts but was disappointed to find in society oftentimes. Also, the beauty and poetic style of the existential texts of hermeneutic philosophy which dimly echoed Persian literature, art, philosophy and mysticism deep-rooted in my cradle city, Isfahan, and in Iran made me more restless to dig into my own tradition. I aspired to connect two vastly far-apart world perspectives in my research. Hermeneutics seemed like a *humane* approach which considered the Other as significant. Islamic philosophy, including mysticism as the fruit of Islamic philosophy (Nasr, 1975), with its delicate and beautiful imprints on Persian culture, art, literature and philosophy, places a special emphasis on the Other. In Islam, the Other is considered even before the Self and emphasis on Self and "I"ness, or self-centeredness, is considered a 'fault' of humanity and a sign of being far from a true human. Humans, as beautifully put in the great masterpiece *Bani Adam* by the wise Persian poet Sa'di Shirazi (1210-1292), are considered as parts of the same body who belong to each other and share the same pains and happiness: "*Adam's sons are body limbs, to say; For they're created of the same clay"* (*Golestan*, 1258 AD, chapter 1, story 10). One Self, or a body member, separate from Others, has no real existence or meaning. That is the way human beings, and the whole beings in the universe, are pictured in Persian philosophy. Self-sacrifice is another key in Islamic philosophy which reveals the high status of the Other and the significance of brotherhood and unity in this sacred tradition.

Later, reading an amazing book entitled *Pedagogy Left in Peace* (Jardine, 2012), I became more inclined and even felt responsible to delve back into the Persian, Islamic sources of my upbringing in order to proceed with my PhD exploration. The tenth chapter of the book, entitled "Learning Not to Speak in Tongues", points to the ancient ancestors of current Western philosophy, the

[53] Selves and other reflexive pronouns are separated and capitalized for the significance of 'being' in this research.

'hidden', 'silenced', 'tabooed', even 'hated' forefathers to current modern science and philosophy. The chapter involves an introduction of an allegorical, true story of *The Librarian of Basra*, Alia, who took 30, 000 books, including ancient books involving the seven hundred years old biography of prophet Mohammad (s), from the library in Basra, Iraq, to her 'home' and 'heart', her friends' homes at the time of the invasion of Iraq by America. The story is followed by a review of the Dark ages in the West roughly between 476-1000 CE when the great wisdoms of ancient Greece, Persia and Rome were lost in the West and Muslim countries were spending The Golden Age of intellectual growth. The chapter refers to Islamic heritage as "our *shared* Islamic past" (p. 205)- a truly adorable and humane sentence- while referring to the great Islamic scholars including the Persian sages, their contribution to knowledge in the Dark Ages, and their influence on Christian scholarship. The chapter recalls Persian sages such as Farabi (c. 870-950), or "the Second Master" after Aristotle, Ibn Sina (L. Avicenna) (c. 980-1037), the celebrated polymath, and my since-childhood hero and the father of modern medicine, and Ghazali (1058-1111) whose impact on Vico (1668-1744) for his work on imagination and *sapientia poetica* [poetic wisdom, Vico, 1984, Book Two] as a source of knowledge creation later affected Gadamer's formulation of philosophical hermeneutics (Jardine, 2006d, 2012). *What a magnificent moment*! I could follow the thread of my passion for hermeneutics in my own ancient Persian ancestors (similar to my notice of the traces of some Persian art in Roman historical sights). What I could intuit in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics was the echoes of the divine doctrines original to the philosophy of Ancient Iran, Zoroaster, Greek philosophy- such as Aristotle's doctrine of 'emanation' (Jardine, 2006d)- and Islamic philosophy. I found another secret for my gravitation to Gadamer's philosophy.

Jardine (2012) reminds us of ALL[54] of our past ancestors, Greek and Muslim, and their contribution to current state of knowledge. It describes the "mutuality" within which East and West became what they are (e. g., Smith 2006b), and views our current tradition as existing in the "multifariousness" of all our voices (Gadamer, 1989, p. 284). Jardine refers to the mass pillage of over 170,000 items from the Iraq museum by American troops in 2003 which somehow reveals the inhuman transfer of knowledge from Persia to America, a recurring pillage of Persia since ancient times[55]. The picture of Islam depicted by the chapter and the book is a true image of

[54] Ancient Iran was still missing ….

[55]Reminding of historical looting and fires of the Persian libraries during the wars with Greeks, Moghuls, …

Islamic tradition which does not match the popular, televised image known- and many times followed blindly- in the West.

Finding the reasons for my intuitive understanding of the closeness of Gadamer's philosophy to my Persian, Islamic tradition, and the chain of the connections between my chosen research philosophy and my ancestors' philosophical orientation, the absence of key Muslim philosophers and scholars in most current scientific and philosophical texts, and more importantly, my suffering by some school and societal tensions and global clashes with the Muslims and the Muslim world, I deemed it my duty to delve down into my own background, my past and our Collective Self, for my research, and for my conscience, to reconcile the two far apart father[56]-and-son traditions in my research world.

Here is the summary of part of a 'shadowed' treasure that I explored for my research:

[56] I am more oriented to say mother-and-son traditions while it is not common, but seems more true

Figure 8. Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Naqshe-Jahan-Square (View of the World), Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
https://www.persiaadvisor.travel/attraction/sheikh-lotfollah-lotf-allah-mosque/

- **Illuminationist Tradition: Suhrawardi and the Doctrine of the Primacy of Essence**

Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (1154-1191), known as Shaikh al-Ishraq or the master of illumination, revived the hidden, ancient Iranian wisdom or theosophy, much of which was destroyed during the invasion of ancient Iran by Alexander[57], Mogul, and others (Nasr, 1964). Suhrawardi largely replaced Ishraq for the peripatetic[58] philosophy, which was already criticized by Ghazali.

Suhrawardi's works have not been translated into the Western world until recent times by a few scholars including Henry Corbin. The school of Ishraq, hence, has remained almost unknown outside Iran. Suhrawardi's masterpieces include *The Theosophy of the Orient of Light* and *Hikmat al-Ishraq* with Ishraqi doctrines in Arabic and *Partaw-nameh* (Treatise on Illumination) in Persian. The term Ishraq itself is an Arabic term associated with both the East and the world of light, or illumination. Following Avicenna, Suhrawardi uses the sacred geographical base of Ishraqi doctrine and its inherent symbolism of direction with horizontal dimension of Orient-

[57] In Persian culture Greatness does not stand for power gained through violence, looting or suppressing others, but for power gained through modesty, respect and tolerance for Others. So, unlike Cyrus The Great, Alexander is not called as The Great, the way Xeroxes is not considered as Great.

[58] The Peripatetic school was a school of philosophy in Ancient Greece. Its teachings derived from its founder, Aristotle, and peripatetic is an adjective ascribed to his followers

Occident converted into a vertical one. Orient is thus used to refer to the world of pure lights or archangels devoid of matter and darkness and invisible to mortal eyes beyond the visible sky. Middle occident refers to visible astronomical heavens where light is combined with darkness, and Occident to the earthly existence, or the world of matter or darkness. It is within this geographic symbolism that the language of Suhrawardi can be understood in his visionary narratives. In his *Tale of the Occidental Exile*, a spiritual vision adopted from Avecinna's Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, the exile of the man in the West (the terrestrial prison) is visioned as his fall into a bottomless well, the dark abode of ignorance, which is located in the far West. The man, seeker of Truth, embarks on his vertical trip to the celestial abode, aspiring his ascension from the shadows of the well, the dogma of the contingent world, to the sight of the Sun in his original home, the Orient of Lights (Nasr, 1996, 1964).

The basic tenets of Ishraqi school are mentioned in Hikmat al-ishraq (532-1186), a book of remarkable literary style which begins with logic and reasoning and ends with spiritual union and ecstasy. Unlike Avicenna and the Aristotelians who assumed essence as dependent on primary existence, Suhrawardi considered the essence as primary and existence as an accident added to the essence. His view of the principality of essence (isalat al-mahiyat) was later criticized by Mulla Sadra who again substituted a metaphysics of existence for Suhrawardi's metaphysics of essence. Surawardi criticized Aristotle for not following "Platonic ideas" and the belief in the world of archetypes and higher orders of being (Nasr, 1964). Similar to Avicenna, Mulla Sadra, and Plato under the influence of the wisdom of ancient Iran (Hikmat Khosravani), Suhrawardi sees *intuition* as a divine gate to the unseen and the things that reason is not able to achieve. He calls inner intuition as Ishraq, complementing the rational wisdom. Ishraq is about a sudden understanding of facts without reasoning (Ebrahimi Dinani, n. d.).

Suhrawardi's angelology, concerning the angelic substances between this shadowy world and the Supreme Light, plays a key part in Ishraqi doctrine. Human being has his guardian angel who resides in the angelic world. Suhrawardi considers a previous existence for each soul in the angelic world before man descends in the domain of the body. Upon descending in the domain of body, the soul of man, which is immortal and of angelic core, is divided into two parts, one remaining in heaven and the other descended into the dungeon of the body. This is the reason for the human soul which is always sad in this world and is looking for its celestial "alter ego" in order to become united with its angelic half in its celestial abode. Man's distance from his real "Self", his

[whole] spiritual Self in the celestial domain makes him wander as a lost child in the complex labyrinth of his terrestrial abode (Nasr, 1964).

The Ishraq school is the treasure house of Islamic wisdom, comprising symbols from many traditions including Zoroastrianism, Pythagoreanism and Platonism (influenced by Zoroastrianism and ancient Persian Wisdom), and Hermeticism added to Islamic symbols and Qor'anic evidences. Suhrawardi draws upon Sufism, especially the writings of Hallaj and Ghazali whose Mishkat al-anwar had a direct effect upon the relation between light and imam (Nasr, 1964). Ishraq is also affected by Muslim Peripatetic and the Ishraq philosophy of Avicenna (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.). Suhrawardi highly turned to the wisdom of ancient Persia whose sages were direct inheritors of the wisdom revealed to Hermes. In his symbolism of light, Suhrawardi relies on Zoroastrianism while not following the esoteric teachings of the Zoroastrians. He identified himself as a reviver of the hidden tradition in the Zoroastrian community who believed in the Divine Principle. Through the universality of Islamic philosophy, Suhrawardi integrated many diverse elements from different forms of traditional wisdom, revealing the transcendent unity underlying different versions of Truth. As Massignon suggests, through the wisdom of Suhrawardi "Iran [re]contemplated the visible universe through the illuminated prism of its ancient myths" (Nasr, 1964, p. 79).

Suhrawardi considered himself as the unifier of Divine ancient Wisdom. He believed that Divine Wisdom is universal and perennial and existed in different forms among the ancient Persians, Hindus, Babylonians, and among the Greeks up to the time of Aristotle who put an end to this tradition by limiting philosophy to its rationalistic dimension. According to Surawardi, like many other medieval authors, wisdom, or theosophy, was revealed to man by Hermes, or Idris the father of philosophy, who was known as the founder of philosophy and science in the Middle ages. Hermes' Wisdom was divided into two branches, one came to Persia and the other to Egypt, and then from Egypt into Greece. Finally, the wisdom from Persia and Greece entered into Islamic civilization. Suhrawardi considered the early Sufis as his most immediate predecessors in the Islamic world. The master of Ishraq unified the wisdom of Zoroaster and Plato which were inter-rooted and once issued forth from the same source (Nasr, 1964; Dinani, n.d.).

Dating back to pre-Aristotelian period when intellectual intuition existed and philosophy was not all rationalized, Ishraq offers an assembly of discursive reasoning and intellectual intuition (Nasr,

1964), a philosophy which synthesizes rational intuition with intuitional reason (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.) and considers both as the two required eyes for elevated positions in society (Kamal, 2006).

The Light of lights and Ontology

In Suhrawardi's school, light, in various degrees of intensity, composes all reality. Everything is made evident by light and nothing is more clear and evident than light (Nasr, 1964). Light for Surawardi is not just the sensible and physical light. Light in Suhrawardi's experiential philosophy implies "to see, to experience and to know" (Kamal, 2016, p. 17); light is imagination, perception; light is any new understanding, and mind is the highest light before the Light of lights who is the pure light that illuminates all other lights. The greatest manifestation of light wisdom is in the Holy Qor'an with highest recommendation and emphasis on human reasoning and contemplation. Reasoning and reflection are considered as the key to understanding the existence and Being in Holy Qor'an (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.).

The pure light is the *Light of lights* (nur al-anwar) in Suhrawardi's terms, whose intensity blinds the eyes, is the Divine Essence. The universe merely consists of degrees of light and darkness with the Supreme Light as the source of all existence. The ontological status of all beings, then, depends on their degree of proximity to the Supreme Light, or their illumination (Nasr, 1964). All beings are an outflow in a descending order of waning intensity from their Origin which is not affected by their multiplicity and gradation of light (Kamal, 2006). The signs of the Light of lights, or His 'vice-regents', are manifested in every domain, the Sun in the sky, fire (as a form of light) among the elements, and the lordly or *signeural* light (al-nur al-ispahbadi) in the soul of man (Nasr, 1964).

The soul of man, whatever the degree of perfection, is "seeking the Supreme Light at each moment of his life" even if he is not aware of the goal of his own search (Nasr, 1964, p. 76). Illumination or the rise of man to the sight of "Light" involves reducing the distance between the self and the Light of lights (Other). This proximity of lights or the essences to the Essence or the 'Light of lights' entails 'knowledge by presence' (ilm al-huduri) which is an immediate and intuitive mode of cognition and understanding (Kamal, 2006).

- **Echoes of 'Fusion of Horizons' and Understanding as Self-understanding**

The illuminationist's method of understanding is based on intuitive knowledge with an immediate grasp of the object (of understanding) by the subject (what is called *agkhinoia* by Aristotle, Nasr, 1996). This involves a special mode of perception, with the psychological state of the subject- the man's mood of being- as a key determinant in obtaining the intuitive knowledge. This mode of understanding thus involves the unity of knowing and being, with the light of knowing *transforming* the being of the man (Nasr, 1996, V. I).

The view of knowledge as "the form of the thing in the mind" which is the same as its form in sense perception (Suhrawardi, Opera II, 73-4), is a fundamental principle in the philosophy of illumination (Nasr, 1996, V. I). The illuminiationist's method of obtaining knowledge through the unity between the subject and object (Self and Other) involves Self-realization. Self-realization in knowing an object and obtaining knowledge, "the unification of the knower and the known and the mind", is a central concept highlighted by Suhrawardi and also the main figures of the School of Isfahan including Mulla Sadra, being introduced next (Nasr, 1996, V. I, p. 639).

Figure 9. Naqshe-Jahan-Square (View of the World), Isfahan, Iran, Persia.

https://www.iranroute.com/sights/452/naqsh-e-jahan-square

School of Isfahan

The School of Illumination, advocating the primacy of essence, greatly thrived in Persia, especially in Isfahan during the Safawid dynasty (1501-1736). The combined philosophical (mystical) and rational orientation of Safavid sages- including Mir Damad, entitled the 'Third Teacher' following Aristotle and Farabi, Mir Findiriski, and Shaykh Baha'i- marks the intellectual tradition of the School of Isfahan[59] (Nasr, 1996, Vol. I). The three sages considered intuitive knowledge as superior to discursive or rationalistic knowledge[60] (Kamal, 2006; Nasr, 1996), the way that the great poet Molana (Rumi) saw doomed the battle of eyes of the head with the inner eyes of human:

The eyes of the head with the eyes of the inner secret quarrelled.
No need to prove that the eyes of the inner secret became victorious.

چشم سر با چشم سر در جنگ بود غالب آمد چشم سر جت نمود

[59] A fresco in the ruins of Safvid royal building in Isfahan nicely reveals the three forms of discourse in a story on friendship of the three thinkers

[60] Ghazali and thinking heart, as an organ for both discursive and intuitive knowledge (Moosa, 2005)

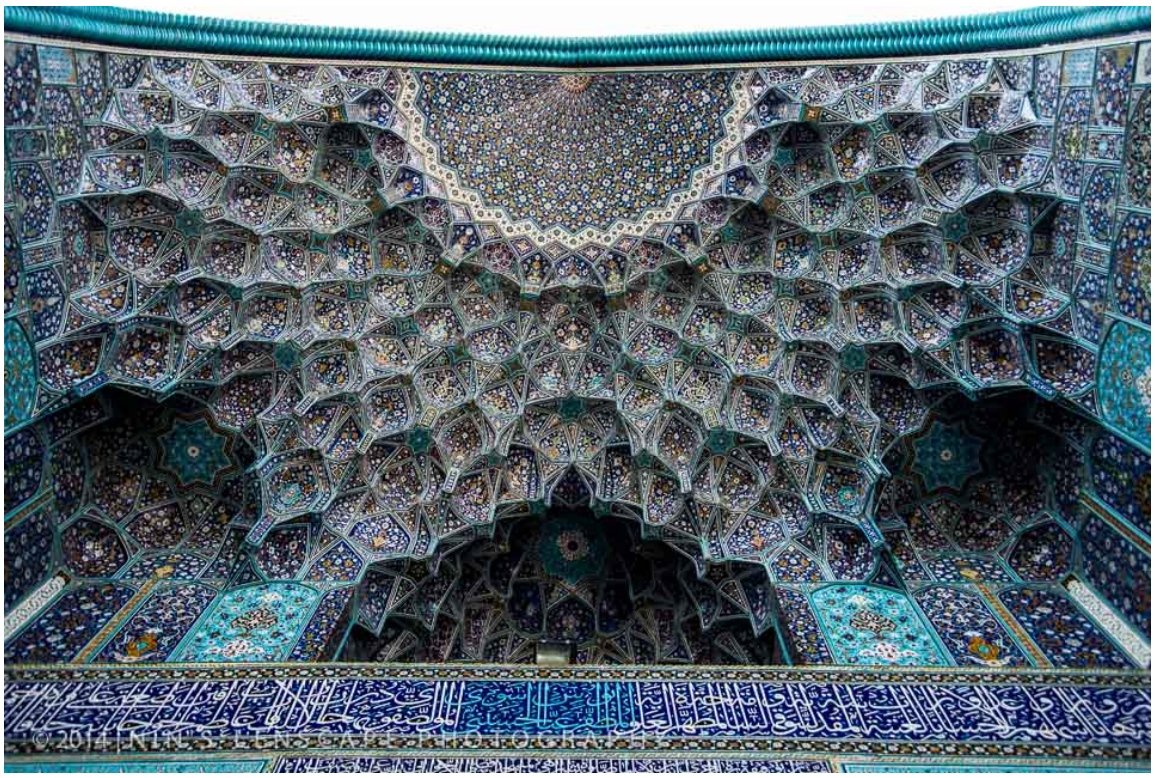

Figure 10. The Grand Entrance to Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Isfahan, Iran, Persia.
https://www.iranasia.com/sheikh-lotfollah-mosque/

- Mulla Sadra: The Doctrine of the Primacy of Being

Sadr al-Din Shirazi or Mulla Sadra (1572-1640) is the foremost, celebrated philosopher of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy and Safavid Persia (1501-1722). Mulla Sadra represents the full maturity of Islamic philosophy (Nasr, 2014). Mulla Sadra's philosophical school, called Transcendent Wisdom or Theosophy (al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah: higher Wisdom) introduced a number of new concepts and formulations, some of which were considered revolutionary and highly innovative, within the broad Islamic tradition. His most significant contribution to Islamic philosophy is the study of Wujud (existence) and its applications in different fields. Mulla Sadra epitomizes a "paradigm shift from the metaphysics of fixed substances proposed by Aristotle (which created numerous problems for Muslim Peripatetics) to the analysis of existence as the ultimate ground and dynamic source of all things" (Nasr & Kalin, 2014, p. xvii). Wujud in Mulla Sadra's philosophy composes the reality and truth of beings and a key for a proper philosophical analysis to begin and end with. Mulla Sadra defines Wujud as a dynamic and multifaceted reality. By reality (*haghighat*) of existence, he does not mean its concept (*mafhum*) which is the mental representation of existence, but the reality by which all things come to exist, an existence beyond

mental representation, one which is "dynamic, continuous, self-renewing, and self-effusing" (Nasr & Kalin, 2014, p. xviii). Existence involves three different modalities: intellectual, of soul, and of dark with no perception. All modalities involve hierarchies, from One to the many, with one single reality travelling through the whole existence, leaving infinite shades and modes, named as "unity in plurality" (*al-wahdah fi al-kathrah*) by Ibn Arabi. Wujud for Mulla Sadra is the fundamental reality that composes all the things (Nasr, 2014).

Mulla Sadra rationalized and perfected existentialism in Islamic philosophy. As man is already existing and situated in existence, defining and talking about being and existence seems unnecessary for Mulla Sadra. We know existence by our presence as we are already present in existence. As the miniature of other beings, man is considered as the door to knowing other beings: upon man's creation the Source of Being praised Himself as the best of creators: "Blessed is God the best of creators" (Holy Qor'an, 23: 14). Beings reach perfection in human existence as the highest form of Being in the realm of multiplicity beneath the realm of unity (*Al-Asfar*, 1999, Trans.). Man's involvement with the beings has many times distracted him from his sublime status among all other beings and from the Source of his existence (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.).

Mulla Sadra proposes a dynamic cosmology of gradational ontology. Conceptualizing the world as a living being, Mulla Sadra's wisdom differed from Aristotle's metaphysics which was based on a static world and fixed substances. Mulla Sadra used his novel, well-known concept of 'substantial motion' (*al-harakat al-jawhariyyah*) which considers all existing beings including substances are in constant change towards their ultimate goal or telos (ghayah) (Nasr, 2014). In this perspective: Every moment, human being is changed into a new Self (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.):

After thousands of "I"s and "we"s I'm surprised at who I am!! (Rumi)

Mulla Sadra defined changing substances in terms of 'degrees of existentiating' and of various levels and planes of wujud (existence). Mulla Sadra's "cosmological vitalism" is based on his understanding of existence as the creative Act of God. Accordingly, all that exists shares the "vital qualities" of existence: life, intelligence, volition and goodness, in a hierarchical order:

"The abode of existence is one, and the whole universe is a big living being. Its dimensions are conjoined with one another … All existence, from its highest to the lowest and from its lowest to the highest, … all things are united in spite of their external diversity …*the whole universe is one*

single animate being ("*hayawan wahid"*) just like a single soul" (*Al-Asfar*, 2.2, p. 342-50, cited in Nasr, 2014).

Wujud (existence) for Mulla Sadra is the most manifest of all evident things through presence (Nasr, 2014). The Necessary Being who is present and evident makes other beings evident (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.). The Necessary Being is perfect and emanates upon all other beings or contingent and deficient essences- existences whose wujud (existence) depend upon the Necessary Being as their origin and end (Nasr, 2014). The Necessary Being is hidden for its pervasive presence but is seen through the contingent beings which are illuminated by His light[61] (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.). All beings are contingent essences of different grades of perfection and deficiency which find their full completion with Necessary Being. The relation between Necessary Being and contingent beings is similar to the relation between the rays of the sun which are dark in themselves and become illuminated by the sun. The contingent beings, different in their proximity and distance from the Necessary Being, are all unified in proceeding from the Necessary Being (Nasr, 2014). Similar to the rays of the sun, contingent beings are not Being but at the same time are nothing but being. Being and its multiple modalities belong together. Unity and multiplicity are two different aspects of the same reality. Mulla Sadra refers to this identity between Being and beings as "*tashkik al-wujud"* (*Al-Asfar*, p. 35) or the systematic ambiguity of Being. All beings are of the same essence, light, also are multiple and represent different shades of light in their proximity to the Sun. Every being is thus both identical and different, eternal and temporal (Kamal, 2006).

The Temporal Origination of the World: Process of Perfection of Essences as Substantial Motions

Inspired by several Qor'anic verses such as: "Thou seest the mountains and thinkest them to be firmly fixed; but they shall pass away as clouds pass away" ("al-Naml", Q. 27:88), or, "If He so will, He can remove you and put [in your place] a new creation" ("Ibrahim", Q. 14:19], Mulla Sadra suggests the key theory of *substantial motion and incessant renewal of the world*. In Mulla Sadra's theosophy, the whole world including all corporeal things-celestial or elemental, body or

[61]Mulla Sadra considers Being as possessing letters which are the keys to the invisible world, from their combinations results "the book of existence" (kitab al-wujud) (Nasr, V. I, 1996). Similarly, the whole world is viewed in Ibn Sina's works as a sacred text (Jardine, 2012) which is written and given existence by the Necessary Being.

soul- have temporal and renewable existence (Nasr, 2014). The world (Jahan in Persian meaning jumping and moving forward) is always restless and in motion. There are stops for temporary rest in the world for a faster motion but no place to stay in permanently (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.). Human as a being among all other existences is in "a permanent state of change, flow, renewal, rupture, cessation, and destruction" (Nasr, 2014, p. 69). It is through this incessant renewal that the temporal and eternal are connected, because the wujud (existence) of nature which is gradual subsists[62] in its generation, and its stability lies its renewal. So, the Being who possesses permanence and stability originated human beings among all other beings whose essence and ipseity[63] are in "incessant renewal" (Nasr, 2014, p. 69). It is through this incessant motion and understanding that man ascends to its original divine status. Understanding, involving mind and soul, involves becoming divine, or homecoming. Unlike other proposals on the evolution of human, such as Darwinism, which focus only on the physical and biological evolution of man as an advanced animal, the theory of "substantial motion" considers human as a being of elevated mind and of a divine soul granting him a sublime status above other creatures (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.).

Mulla Sadra's theory[64] of incessant, substantial motion of the world and the ipseity of man as in motion revives this verse from the Holy Qor'an: "Did We fail in the first creation? But they are in confusion over a new creation" [15:50] which views the ever renewal and creation of man as the act of Supreme Being. Islamic philosophy or theosophy, hence, represents modernity. There is no oldness involved in Islamic philosophy which attests to the incessant creation and the constant renewal of human mind. The world is always new for those who reflect, as advised in Holy Qor'an. In Mulla Sadra's theory, Islam defines modernity. It defines and encourages thinking, innovating, and moving forth. False, modern propaganda on the contradiction between Islam and modernity reveals the common ignorance of the true nature and modern substance of Islam. Mulla Sadra's theory provokes man to learn constantly and to be ready to face new things, in a challenge of reconciling with previous thoughts and understandings. The famous verse "He is the first and

[62]Exists and survives

[63] Ipseity involves selfhood: both nature and self, involving self, identity, nature, and essence all at the same time (L. P. Smith, Merriam Webster)

[64] It is much relevant to the world I am situated in as a Muslim researcher, related to my understanding of what is Islam as modernity and the common false understanding of Islam; how Islam embraces a full version of phenomenology of becoming and the hermeneutic concept of temporal and dynamic understanding and self-understanding.

the last" [57:3] reveals the novelty of Being manifested in each renewal and creation of beings and the timelessness of His presence (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.), as beautifully said by great Rumi:

One deep inside thought of the man would overturn worlds of hundreds

Through constant renewal of wujud origination is realized gradually [through our deep and gradual understandings]. The continual evolutionary change and illumination of man, along all other beings, towards perfection and Light happens by reaching a sublime understanding which glorifies in his passage to the world of Light and the Source of being: "The true life is in the Abode of the Hereafter" (Holy Qor'an, 29:64).

The substantial motion and incessant renewal of wujud is a process of perfection of contingent essences. This world of incessant motion is thus a temporal abode for transferring the contingent essence of human beings through constant motion. It is not a permanent abode or home of fixed substances to stabilize. This world is a station on the man's circular road of understanding and perfection towards his Origin (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.).

The soul of man as a contingent being is created for subsistence and not annihilation. The human soul, as a stranger imprisoned in human's mortal body, subsists in transfer from one abode to another (Nasr, 2014). Having lost his Origin in this world, for his special spiritual status among all other beings, man is wandering in search of his true place of sublimity, a home free of contradiction and plurality, a home of all unity (Ebrahimi Dinani, n.d.). As Molana says in his *Masnavi Manavi* "We were one gem like sunshine", our current soul is dimmed in the jail of our body which is itself entangled in worldly contradictions and multiplicity (Ebrahimi Dinani, n. d.):

We are from above and above we go to,
We are from ocean to ocean we go to.
(Rumi, Divane Shams, Ode 1674)

Figure 11. Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque (Interior), Naqshe-Jahan-Square, Isfahan, Iran, Persia.

Home, Away From HOME **Isfahan, Away From Isfahan**

My sad, curious departure from Home, to a new, wonder land, made me see my Home in a brighter light, made me closer to my Home … my journey unravelled the secret to my mysterious being, my familiar and unknown, restless being, it made me see my restlessness everywhere, in all others, it made me feel the shared pain of homelessness, the common restless motion of all beings … I can better see the HOME for all our restless motions …

The Restless World of Beings "In Motion"

Back from a long, exciting and endless journey of exploration, exploration of my Self, our world, and our beings, I am in extreme joy and appreciation to have found convincing answers to my moving questions after reading my Home philosophy. Reading my Home philosophy gave me a clear picture of my human Self: 'Who I am' and 'Where I am going', the two basic questions whose answers map the way that we exist, feel and understand as human beings.

I am as much enlightened as I am astonished for the connection of our incessant renewal and understanding to the permanent and substantial flow of the whole universe, the connection of the

temporality of our understanding to the temporality of all existence motions, our substantial motions, our abode, and the whole 'in motion' existence, for finding the whole universal beings as one single reality 'in motion'. I am delighted for finding our Selves as parts of this whole restless world, the world of beings 'in motion', seeking our home, our abode of peace and of no contradiction and plurality, an abode of all unity. I am enlightened and delighted for seeing this current abode of ours as just one stop in our eternal motion, for re-finding ourselves in our unifying motion, in re-cognizing our Selves with Others in our substantial motion and our transition into perfect beings.

My journey illuminated me with this deep understanding that we all 'subsist' in our perfecting understanding motion, in our ceaseless Self renewal in our understandings, in our transfer to our original abode of peace with Others. I am enlightened that our contradictions and pluralities make us stronger waves in our collective flow, they speed up our restless understanding motion towards ALL Understanding, towards Light.

I finally appreciated that our restlessness, our insatiable thirst for understanding, and this universal restless motion is nothing but 'love'- love for our lost part, for the Other, for our origin and our haven of peace, that is here and there, hidden and present, which is the source and balm to our deep, old and familiar pain.

And our love for our Origin is nothing than love for all companions, Other travellers in our journey, the illuminating rays to our Selves in our road towards Light and Perfection.

***

Knowing about our understandings in the greater picture of the universal understanding made me see the connection of our ipseity to our way of understanding, the infinitude of our temporal, 'in transition' understandings, the connection to the 'hidden' ness of the meanings in the texts (Crotty, 1998; Wiercinski, 2009), the way that our understandings of the universe and our ipseity make us view and conceptualize our understanding of language or any phenomenon as the function of our dynamic, self-renewing existence in encounter with beings of similar substance, Other parts of our whole 'in motion' human and beyond human existence.

The Wisdom of Suhrawardi directed me to our light essence, our immortal core, which after its descent from the celestial world, could not feel belonging in this terrestrial world anymore. This is the root to our restless, homeless state, to our un-home-likeness, or unheimlichkeit (Heidegger,

1962, p. 233) in our worldly life. Our soul is seeking our Source Light throughout our life, and our common essence and substance suggest unity in our multiplicity.

Looking through the Wisdom of Mulla Sadra, I see our restless motion as part of the universal incessant motion directing us towards Perfection. While Suhrawardi considers our essence as light and our destination as the Light of lights or the source of our essence, Mulla Sadra clarifies the nature of our existence and our collective motion, our ceaseless change and understanding towards Light and Perfect Understanding. Each human being is working his way along the hierarchal continuum of wujud (existence) as moving and unfolding his soul. Every human being is a mode of wujud which displays an essence appropriate to it at each particular moment (Rustom- professor of Islamic Studies- personal conversation). Mulla Sadra pictures the significance of Other rays in our Self-illuminating move, in all our understandings, to Understanding, to Light. The whole picture of the ultimate goal for our incessant renewal moves me to think of ourselves as special beings of high status much beyond we can achieve in the finite worldly life of contradictions. We, as sun rays of the same essence, represent multiplicity in unity. Our excursion to Others makes us see ourselves and approach the Light. *Bildung* in hermeneutics takes a similar view on human becoming, his transformation and ascent through negotiation with Others (Gadamer, 1989). There is an ultimate goal and destination to all our becoming. The ultimate goal is connected to our existential sense of homelessness, to our way of understanding, to our connections and relations with Others. The ultimate goal/telos reveals how our liminal existential feelings are related to the nature of our understandings and what all this could mean for human education, human life, and a peaceful global life in our multiplicity and contradictions. So, my answer to Davey (2006, p. 57) in saying "precisely because we have no essence that we must endeavor to move on", is that precisely we are *substantially*, essentially (in essence) in motion beings, precisely we *subsist* in being in motion and in constant transitioning and understanding. And our essential, substantial motions are related to the ambiguity of our being and the multiplicity and unity aspects of our existence (Mulla Sadra, *Al-Asfar*, 1999).

The connection of Self to Others and even to the whole universe implied in Gadamer's view of education as self-education- the final aim in education- reveals the potential for universal change and education. Self-education and Self-knowledge happen through knowing Others. It is only the knowing human who is able to know and make known all Other beings in the universe, and it is through knowing Other beings that he becomes a more perfect Self (Ebrahimi Dinani, n. d.;

Gadamer & Silverman, 1991). Humans, as letters in the sacred book of existence, give meaning to the whole existence and make sense of the whole book of creation all together.
The answers to the two key questions of 'Who we are' and 'Where are we going' shape the way we define understanding and consider our Selves and Others in our understandings. Ignoring or underestimating these questions entails ignoring vital aspects of our existence as sublime beings in our understandings and leave us helpless in our contradictions. Studying human language without its connection to human existence, existential feelings, and disregarding language as the existential home of being, the locus of understanding, Self-understanding and Self-perfection is ignoring a higher human aspect of understanding, what our students need to know as sublime beings, about themselves and Others. Attending to our higher human aspects of understanding as beings of a common, sublime essence humbles us to reconcile our Selves in our differences as we understand and connect with Others.

My reading of philosophical texts for the purpose of my research and my living experience[65] outside Iran directed me to the connection between the common Source in human thoughts and attending to Others in many understandings in philosophical texts and human relations and behaviours. As long as we are blind to the nature of our being, we cannot have a clear understanding of Others, of the significance of Others in seeing who we are, and thus, how we understand. Our ignorance of our ultimate goal/telos (ghaya) and our interconnected, purposeful motion takes modesty from our understandings in language and otherwise with Others.

> *My excursion towards the Other, the Western philosophy, revealed my older Self, my ancestors, our older Self and Collective Self, the ones who made us who we are. Western philosophical texts made me aware of my Self. I found my Self in fusion of the past with the present, in fusion of philosophies, fusion of logical and intuitive knowledge, reason and heart-soul, the two complementary eyes of our Selves. I found myself in deep-rooted, hidden voice behind the Western words. They revived some old emotions, the same emotions which arise in my passage through the ancient, delicately decorated arched architectures and mansions in my city, Isfahan, the nicely painted architectures integrating the artistic, philosophical, and geometrical minds of the Islamic, scholar architects who were inspired by the depth of the*

[65] Also, my participants' experiences

beauty, harmony and the delicacy of All Beauty. I could feel a deep joy which would never arise without awakening the 'silenced' voice within the Western texts.

Ending with the Divine in my philosophical exploration made me feel more certain, clear, and strong. I feel I have moved from a shallow river to the depth of an endless ocean. The invisibility of Muslim philosophers in current Western philosophy, one big part of the whole chain of philosophy and knowledge, was upsetting to me; philosophers whose influence and undertones moved me to my tradition. In my philosophical adventure, I was reminded of Nasr (2000) referring to profound needs of the permanent inner nature of man and the Western interest in Oriental metaphysics and spirituality, as the big gap in the life of the modern man (1975, p. 47-66). I was reminded of Jardine's (2008) *The sickness of the West*, of Smith (1999) on the dilemma of the West for living without the securities of the old science and the spiritual resources that the old science supplanted, and of William Carroll (2004) who regarded Avicenna's faithfulness to Greek metaphysics (Penrose & Hawking, 1996) and the ancient Iranian Wisdom, and who shared my feeling of clarity in transitioning to traditional texts:

> Contemporary world can learn a great deal from mediaeval analyses of the relationship among physics, metaphysics, and theology. In fact, to go from Stephen Hawking to Avicenna is, in an important sense, to go from confusion to clarity (Carroll, 2004, p. 1)

I perceived a similar interconnection between language, philosophy, metaphysics, and theology; a missing interconnection in academic contexts. I believe that the modern way of studying one discipline apart from the other related fields does not capture our total privileges in understanding as human beings and has impaired human relationships for the attainment of "a higher *universality* [Italicized] that overcomes, not only our own particularity, but also that of the other" (Gadamer, 1975 p. 272).

My strange feeling at the moment of leaving home for the first time and joining kindergarten was my first Self experience of making home in a new place, of making roots in a new place, of making Selves in a different place … This was my second key existential transition after my birth from another world into this world, a profound experience of understanding, a profoundly painful understanding, and tears … and my mother again being with me standing in between my two homes- she, my connecting angel to two worlds each time-

relieving my painful transition, the birth of profound understandings … understandings which did not awake that deep till many years later in re-understanding my Self in transition to an alien land, a third key life transition, a third profound understanding since birth, through existential readings … through knowing unfamiliar Others …
I re-experienced my deep childhood feeling, the strange feeling of excitement and sadness … I lost sight of many parts of my being to see my new parts … I lost valuable parts ... I did not calm down, I became more and more restless … the more I saw outside, the least I felt inside … my world has changed … it has become too far from my origin … too strange to my Self …

I could see my invisible parts through different Others, different languages, cultures …. Seeing my invisible parts illuminated even more invisible parts … it made me feel bottomless … infinite … but I am ***unable to see the end*** *… Where am I connected to? Where I am coming from? Where I am going to? Where is the end of my understandings? I feel helpless … much beyond my understandings …*

Guided by my HOME being, as my road map, I came here: to this new, alien home; this station in my life journey ... I became alien to my HOME being in understanding my new being ... I feel re-united with my original Self at the end … I feel grown up ... I feel differently, see differently ... my current being, my becoming being is making me a new map for my next journey, my next exploration of my Self, my new invisible parts ... to know it anew ... more fully, differently … to calm down my Self in feeling getting closer to my Original Self …

My childhood home is now my beloved homeland …. My beloved Iran … my deep-rooted being …. and my childhood kindergarten, the cradle of education, is now moved to a foreign land … so sad … This is home, away from HOME, it is understanding … painful understanding … I'm educating my Self of my invisible parts … my lost Self, my becoming Self … in my painful and hopeful excursion …. to be back to my deep-rooted being, my dear homeland … wiser, calmer … more responsible, and more grateful … amen.

Santiago followed the omens towards his destiny, to find out his personal legend. He travelled all the deserts to the Pyramids to find his treasure. Learning the *Language of the World,* he found out his treasure back in his home … (*The Alchemist*, Coelho, 1988)
I found mine in an opposite direction ….

Complementary Traditions: Limitations and Accord

In my attempt to integrate and reconcile the Oriental and Occidental traditions of hermeneutics and Islamic philosophy and Sufism, I relied on common basis of all traditions in foregrounding Unity in Islamic tradition as shared with other Abrahamic traditions including Christianity. However, I appreciate that Christian mysticism is/could be defined and considered differently from Islamic tradition. For the integration and fusion of the two far apart traditions, I relied on *common*, fundamental concepts which are significant for theoretical reconciliation and for education of reunion of our divided traditions for the common good.

In my research, hermeneutic and Islamic traditions *complement* each other. Hermeneutics involves the interpretive and linguistic-existential aspects that I applied to my research which is at primary level on L2 metaphor understanding and second language education. I did not seek the linguistic aspect in the Oriental texts that I was using mainly for the spiritual dimension of my research, so the linguistic aspects of hermeneutic philosophy fill this gap. The spiritual aspect of the integrative Sufi-hermeneutic approach was entertained through using the Islamic notions which might differ from the (corresponding) notions, or from conceptualizations of similar spiritual notions in hermeneutic tradition. I appreciated an affinity and kinship between the two traditions in the unity aspect of understanding of Self and Other based on my own life and education experiences in Persian, Islamic culture which I deemed it valuable to use and share with others for deliberate consideration, interpretation and further inter-traditional work and practice in education. The turn to my tradition for the spiritual aspects does not suggest the absence of this core aspect in hermeneutic tradition (it also does not suggest the absence of the linguistic side in my tradition). My deep connection and familiarity with the Islamic schools might not be shared with all my readers, and my concepts and conceptualizations might be less accessible to readers outside my tradition (the way that hermeneutics was less accessible to me early in my readings). Overall, I found it valuable and required to explore the potential of reconciling the two (far apart) traditions and devote myself on uniting them despite the hardship. Shortly speaking, this thesis writing is mainly about the *complementary* contribution of the two traditions in entertaining different aspects of human understanding for peace and unity purposes and education and it is not the place for extended discussions of the relations between the two traditions.

Thesis story

Si-morgh stories (Chapter 5) *Individual birds' sociocultural and linguistic transition journeys*

Simorgh story: Seven Valleys of Love/Illumination/ Understanding (Chapter 6) *The birds' Self-cultivation and inner transitioning in a collective journey/flight*

The Birds' Roads Not Taken (Chapter 7) *Metaphor understanding journeys*

Figure 12. Simorgh of Farid al-Din Attar, Folio 11, Mantiq al-tair (Habiballah, 1600).

Introduction

Thesis story, the participant body of the thesis, involves three chapters of findings on students' stories. The first set of stories in Chapter Five introduces the participants, the birds within *Simorgh* framework, and speaks to their transition from their initial home countries, languages and cultures into the ESL context of Canada (sociocultural and linguistic aspects of transition). This story set is written on the individual stories of the birds as thirteen individual birds (Si-morgh) who re-experience their Selves in their linguistic and sociocultural transition with Others. The second story set in Chapter Six narrates the story of the birds' Self-transitioning in re-finding and understanding themselves as they cultivate deeper connections to other birds in their life journeys. In this story set, within the Sufi story of *Simorgh* which integrates the Sufi-hermeneutic concepts, the birds become Simorgh and one Bird through the hardship of their journey and in re-understanding themselves with Other fellow beings (essential-existential aspect of Self transition). The third story set presented in Chapter Seven involves the stories of the participants' roads of metaphor understanding manifesting transitions in their Self-understanding journeys within a hermeneutic-existential perspective of understanding as interpretation and Self-understanding (Gadamer, 1975; 1989).

In this introductory section, I reflect on my choice of *Simorgh*, the great masterpiece by the esteemed Persian Sufi poet Aṭṭar Neyshaburi (1145-1220). I present a philosophical, Sufi-hermeneutic reflection on *Simorgh* as applied to the rest of the chapters and the whole thesis. Next, I start Chapter Five on the first story set with the methods that I used for writing the chapter, introduce the actual story of *Simorgh* comprising the elements and themes relevant to my research and life experiences, and narrate the individual stories of the participants/birds.

On Choice of *Simorgh*

In my turn to my home philosophy involving mystic-existential texts, I again faced with *Simorgh*, the great, timeless Sufi story deeply rooted in my home culture. *Simorgh*, a masterpiece by Attar Neishaburi (1145-1220), involved the key concepts of hermeneutics (See Chapter Four) which are of great value to my research and life philosophy. In line with Islamic philosophy, *Simorgh* is the story of the quest for knowledge and Self-understanding. *Simorgh* symbolizes human life through the birds' journey, an intellectual flight which ends in One destination; a state of unity in which travellers find themselves and gain a sublime understanding of their selves as one Self.

Re-reflecting on *Simorgh* and somehow inspired by the story style of *The Librarian of Basra* (Jardine & Naqvi, 2008), which finely used a story as an allegory to convey a great fact: *our Shared Islamic past*, in a masterful bricolage of precious traditional and philosophical texts- very much the same way that I was used to hear significant messages through exemplar parables in my Persian culture- I was prompted to use *Simorgh* as the overall frame for my research. I chose Simorgh with this view that by knowing 'who we are' and 'where we all are going', as 'where we all came from', we would rethink our research, teaching and life practices and approaches to Others as unified humans. I found *Simorgh* very much relevant to our age of vast divisions, contradictions and tensions.

In my view, *Simorgh* involves humans' *bildungsroman* recounting their journeys and their Self-perfecting transitions with Others: through exile, excursion and Self-detachment towards Others, ending in Self-forgetfulness in finding their Collective Self with Others. the story of *Simorgh* exists in my participants' Self-exploration journeys of excursion and physical transitioning into Canada, in their poetic Self-exploration journeys through interpreting their roads in my research. Simorgh represents my (and our) spiritual journey as humans, since childhood, involving all my Self transformations and existential understandings.

Simorgh is *The Road Not Taken* with a bright destination. It is the road on which individuals could see beyond the 'bend', together could see the secret of the 'bend'. *Simorgh* represented the many different roads that humans take to their common destination, their different roads of understanding to their highest self-understanding. *Simorgh* represented human multiplicity in their unity, what makes humans grow towards their perfect self. In the very different and detached birds in *Simorgh* as becoming One, I recognize the mystic theme of 'unity in multiplicity'- a concept that I have been raised in and embraced as the ultimate purpose of humanity- dimly echoed in the hermeneutic notion of 'fusion of horizons' of *Self* and *Other*. In *Simorgh*, I recognized the unity in multifariousness of individual voices and multiplicity of human selves, the unity in learners' multiplicity of interpretations of metaphors. I find *Simorgh* relevant to our multicultural society and education: to see ourselves as parts in a collective journey of understanding, transformation, and perfection; as different co-travellers on different roads of understanding ourselves, our life, and our destination.

Simorgh involves the intellectual flight of the birds which requires a dialogue with Others, which requires an inner dialogue, a reminder of the key role of 'dialogue' in our Self-understandings with Others, in our understanding of the world, and also significant in hermeneutic philosophy. *Simorgh* serves to complete the gap that I saw in my research area, school, society, and the world, which is about *universalizing* our attitudes in our diverse understandings.

Simorgh made my writing journey a long, but beautiful and exciting one, where I could find my poetic and spiritual way to frame Eastern and Western philosophies.

Chapter 5: Si-morgh Stories

(The Birds' Individual Stories)

On Writing Si-morgh

Writing to heal
To write the birds' stories, I needed to feel at home. I would sit at a quiet corner and could not start writing till I could feel myself connected to each bird. I should feel myself as the bird. It needed a spiritual feeling that not all the time I could have. After finishing each part, I would feel healed. Writing about each bird made me feel healing a part of myself.
Many times, I could not find myself, I could not connect to myself; then prayer and tears would help. I could feel being transformed by my writing.
I could write when I could make time moving with me, not ahead nor behind,
when I could feel 'timeless' in this senseless rush of time to nowhere
Hope my writing heals other hearts

Si-morgh stories involve the birds' individual transition and life stories and understandings. Writing the birds' stories from their interviews involved the following steps and processes: After finishing transcription of all interviews of about 400 pages with many pages of comments and notes, I was surrounded by the huge sea of my data. To find out a way to use the most and best parts from the data, I had to do different readings focused on various aspects. In hermeneutics, reading and analyzing means interpretation, and interpretation begins with reflection (Gadamer, 1989). It took me a while to reflect and find my best way. To interpret or analyze, careful and detailed reading and rereading of all the data was required. In each re-reading, I listened for whatever could contribute to my understanding of participants' understandings. Hermeneutic-wise, I paid attention to the instances and particularities. I looked for individual interpretations rather than themes which would fracture my data (Moules, 2002). To understand the participants' interpretations, I focused on their word choice, emphasis, emotional states, and the manner in which they responded to my questions. I created my own research journal where I constantly reflected on my own understandings (Francis, 2015). I looked for echoes and manifestations of participants' Self-transitioning in their new contexts and the interconnections with their interpretations of metaphors. My readings of the data were both on screen and paper. Writing on paper reading helped to concretize the connections between my investigated philosophical concepts and the actual words of the participants. As reading and analyzing the data with regards to my research questions, I highlighted the parts that answered my questions while

still adding my notes and comments which later directed my writing. My notes were related to the conceptual frameworks, literature on metaphor understanding and second language, participants' words, and my own experiences as an individual and a second language learner and teacher. Mindful of the conceptual frameworks, I looked at participants' transitioning Self-understanding before and after their transition to Canada, their conceptualization of home and home language, and the interactions of all these concepts in their next interpretations of metaphors. The extracted parts related to my questions and theoretical framework were compiled into a file of 125 pages for all the participants.

After reading each bird, I listed highlights from each participant in a separate file. I looked at my notes after transcription and analysis and compared with the highlights. If my notes were not changed, I would add them to the file and if they were different, I would add my new understanding. To organize my thoughts, I opened separate files for each significant concept. One file for their understanding of home, for example, others for home language, metaphors, Self and related concepts. I read each interview again and wrote all the sentences of the participants that were relevant to each concept. Writing them on paper helped me concretize their differences and see their similarities as well (later I used differences for the existential and similarities for the essential aspects of human understanding). Many times, I added my own reflections from my notebook. After I considered the concepts separately, I opened a new file where I included my whole information for included concepts holistically.

For the next step, I had to find the main features of the key concepts for each participant. I found a diverse range of features for each participant. To write the story of each bird, I read each bird/participant several times to find the best way of starting the story. Each participant moved me to a different mood, highlighting a different aspect of my character and transition stage. To express their state, I imagined myself in participants' situations and tried to perceive their experiences. Oftentimes, I used their own words (in single quotes) or described their situations. Each participant had transitioned from a totally different context. I was drawn to each story and passionately became part of it. I started (and ended) each with a picture, a poem, or a piece of writing, or my own reflection which represented the gist, or the main or recurrent thought of the bird. The inspirational start helped me immerse myself in the story and would lead me till the end. I felt myself deeply in each journey that I found it hard to finish writing their stories. To write the story of each bird, I started with the most distinguishing feature of the bird, what was most

highlighted by each participant throughout the interview: English language (Neo), emotions and awe of the 'unknwon' (Alexa), Otherness (Fatima), respected citizen (Ali and Saád), Self dream (Leila), and Cradle motherland (Shadi). Ali and Saád both have moved to Canada for repossessing their 'taken away' rights. I presented their stories in one story for their similar backgrounds and common motivations and goals for their transition. I focused more on the parts which involved the concerns of each participant involving language, societal issues or individual dreams. I mainly did not mention the names of the participants in opening lines as a cultural way of storytelling to set the scene before introducing the participants and also to draw the attention of the readers to the context, concerns, and key (transition) features of the participants' stories before their names.

The nature of each participant's interview was very different from the others. Each bird was in some way strongly connected to a part of me, some of my views and/or experiences (for example Leila's dreamy trail or Shadi's Cradle Motherland very much resembled my views). I started writing Si-morgh individual stories with the bird that I felt closest to myself and my understanding experiences and to the overall *Simorgh/Bildung* theme of Self cultivation and Self-universalization. Fatima was the one who considered Others beyond her Self, was tortured for her deep thoughts and understandings, and her life purpose was not for her Self-benefit but for all humanity, for healing Others and her Self as part of Others. I started writing with Fatima for her deep inner transitions, and her understanding of her Self and Others which was closest to Sufi perspective and my own understandings. Her journey somehow vibrated my lifelong journey.

The birds' stories seemed like various pieces of a scrambled puzzle which needed organization. They all could make a nice piece together. Despite all their diversity in terms of background, journey, and understanding- which is the existential, hermeneutic aspect of understanding- they all were following a similar purpose: to improve and *better understand themSelves*. I found the mystic poem *Simorgh* as an ideal overall framework to unify the whole diversity. It would communicate their sublime message of 'unity in multiplicity'.

While writing the birds' stories, I continued to add my emerging thoughts in the comment section on the right-hand side of the page. I made comments on relevant literature, the theoretical framework, my experiences, and added my own reflections, or connections to other birds' stories. Sometimes, I inserted quotes from the participants' sentences. I added any picture or piece of literature which could complement their stories. For writing each story, I tried to include the key words used by each bird (in single quotations) and phrased my sentences very much close to the

spirit of their sentences. At the end of each story, I reflected on the connections of the story to the story of *Simorgh*.

After writing on seven birds' stories, I found the bulk of the remaining stories were repetitive. I decided to select striking parts from the six unwritten stories and write on their main differences in their interpretations of the poem and their understanding of themselves, home, or home language which were different from the previous stories. Throughout my writing, I looked for different interpretations of the participants for their recognized metaphors (Gadamer's hermeneutics); I also looked for the ways that their different interpretations matched their existential and home journeys and the universal theme of my overall framework, *Simorgh*. My choice of a mystic story as complementing the hermeneutic framework and as the overall frame for my writing helped me orient all the birds' stories, including my own story. The mystic story placed all participants in their life journeys, towards their same destination: better Self-understanding. I begin below with the story of *Simorgh* as a way into the stories of the participants that follow.

Simorgh: Manitq al-tair Story

> All those who are not completely at home in this world of fleeting
> shadows and who yearn for their origin in the paradisal abode
> belong to the family of birds for their soul possesses wings
> no matter how inexperienced they might be in
> flying towards the space of Divine Presence.
> (Meditations upon Aṭṭar's *Mantiq al-tayr,* Nasr, 1987)

My thesis is the story of *Simorgh,* or *Manitq al-tair* known as *The Conference of the Birds,* a masterpiece by Aṭṭar Neyshaburi (1145-1220), one of the greatest Persian mystic scholars and Sufi poets, on the flight of thirty birds towards Union. *Simorgh* is the story of thirty family of beings with wings which in the human species relates to the seekers (of Truth), many of whom are called but few are chosen (Darbandi & Davis, 1984). *Simorgh* is the story of the flight of human thoughts as birds, the conference of humans' highest intellects; it is the story of ascension of humans' reasons, in union, to the highest stage of understanding their Self which is love for the Other (Dinani on *Mantiq al-tair*, n. d).

Simorgh is a symbolic story with an opening on "Blame of Prejudice" where Attar condemns human bias and pictures the prejudiced as always suffering in hatred. Dealing with the supreme spiritual and mystical experience of *union*, Aṭṭar uses the Ghazzalian[66] theme of *suffering* through which the birds, representing human souls, get rid of the cage of the body, elevate and finally are able to enter the court of the celestial King. The birds pass through the highest station whereby "the self becomes annihilated and rises in subsistence in the Self", a stage where each bird is able to *realize who he is* and knows him-Self" (Nasr, 1987, p. 100), attesting to the words of Blessed Prophet Muhammad (S): "He who knoweth himself, knoweth the Lord[67]".

The language of *Simorgh* is the language of the birds, a language which conveys a secret spiritual message revealed by God to Soloman (Nasr, in Lumbard, 2012). *Simorgh* uses the symbolic language of gnosis, permeated with the fire of Divine Love to that knowledge of Unity which on the highest level is the "Transcendent Unity of Being"[68], a knowledge which is attained by passing through the hardships of the cosmic journey, passing through the gate of *annihilation* and reaching the vision of the Simorgh (Nasr, 1987).

Thirty birds, Si-morgh (si meaning thirty and morgh bird in Persian), gather to select a king, for they believe that they cannot live happily and in harmony and peace without a king. Each bird symbolizes a distinct human type and a particular power of the soul with special qualifications and limiting characteristics. Among birds, the hoopoe[69] rises introducing himself as the ambassador of Solomon. Hoopoe is the messenger (Hermes/herm) between God and the birds, being used symbolically for humans' highest intellect among all other beings, their common inner guide, their reason and vision at highest stage of perfection (Dinani on *Mantiq al-tair*, n. d).

Hoopoe considers Simorgh as the One worthy to be their monarch. He introduces Simorgh as the King who is very near to them, but they are so far from Him[70], as the Origin of all beauty, power and wisdom, with one of His feathers fallen in China turning it into the source of colors and designs- a reminder to the birds of their duty to seek knowledge even if it is in a farthest point like China[71]. The birds become eager to follow the hoopoe as leader in their journey towards Simorgh.

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[66] Referring to Ghazali, a most prominent and influential Muslim philosopher, theologian, jurist, and mystic of Persian origin.

[67] فقد عرفه نفسه فقد عرفه ربه

[68] An allusion to Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom

[69] Symbol of wisdom in Persian literature and philosophy

[70] "I Am Closer to you Than your Jugular Vein" (Holy Qoran, Surah Qaf, 50, verse16)

[71] The famous hadith by Prophet Mohammad (s): "Seek knowledge even if in China", the farthest point, for it is incumbent upon every Muslim to seek knowledge:

اطلبو االعلم ولو بالصين.

Also, another famous hadith on knowledge as the lost key of a Muslim

Starting the journey, the birds find the road long and difficult. Each bird brings up a pretext in order to avoid embarking upon the path and questions the hoopoe about the whereabouts of Simorgh. The hoopoe answers each bird with insight, removes their *doubts,* and finally succeeds in preparing them for the journey to meet Simorgh.

The path of the birds' journey was *empty* as if there were no other birds upon the path. The hoopoe explains that the seeker must be qualified and the qualified are few in number. In response to the birds' complaints for the difficulties of the path and their *doubts* for ever reaching the end, the hoopoe explains that the apparent difficulties are for their souls drowned[72] in the creaturely world of *multiplicity,* and because they are highly diverted by creatures (worldly matters), they are not able to concentrate their minds and souls upon the Creator. The hoopoe, the symbol of spiritual master, asserts that *attachment to houses and mansions is an obstacle to their path* as is the love of external forms which is ephemeral (Darbandi & Davis, 1984; Nasr, 1987).

The birds traverse *seven valleys of understanding,* seven hazardous valleys of the cosmic mountain Qaf[73] (Alborz) on whose peak resides the Celestial Monarch, the abode of the Simorgh. Of thousands of fowls who commence the journey only a few[74], thirty birds, si-morgh, survive and arrive at the court of Simorgh. Most of the birds falter and perish along the way. The few who reach the Divine Majesty *transform inwardly* to such an extent that suddenly their selves realizes their Self. After the birds' "initiatic[75]" *transformation*, they behold Her presence as the mirror in which each bird sees it-Self, "for thirty birds (*Si-morgh*) see the Simorgh at once utterly other than themselves and none other than the Self of their selves" (Nasr, 1987, p. 103). The thirty birds (Si-morgh) realize that they are the Simorgh. Si-morgh and Simorgh were one[76] and the same Simorgh: "I have disappeared in Thee and duality hath perished". There was Simorgh twice, and yet there was only one; one alone, and yet many, *Multiplicity in unity*, and *Unity in multiplicity*. As the birds questioned the Simorgh to unveil the great Mystery, this answer came from Her Majesty: "My sunlike Majesty is a Mirror. He who comes sees himself in that mirror: body and soul, soul and body, he sees himself entirely in it. Since you came as Si-morgh, you appeared as thirty (Si) in that mirror" (Darbandi & Davis, 1984, p. 11). Simorgh that the birds were seeking was none other

[72] Metaphoric view of the soul in this world in Sufism
[73] Reference to God in verse 16, Surah Qaf, of Holy Qor'an "I Am Closer to You Than Your Jugular Vein"
[74] The Road Less taken
[75] Supreme life in annihilation
[76] *Simorgh* was the great message of Cyrus The Great (585-529 BC), the great Iranian emperor who defined The First Declaration of Human Rights. Cyrus is "anointed" in the Bible (Is. 48: 14-15) as a liberator of God's people (Is. 45:15). One whose legacy was the concept of One World and the fusion of Peoples and Cultures into oneness (Richard Frye, Harvard University) https://shekoos.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/the_great_human_rights_declaration_balboa_park.jpg

than themselves[77]: "Soul is trapped within the cage of the body but can, by *looking inward*, recognize its essential affinity with God; the awakened soul can progress along a *way* which leads to *annihilation* in God" (Darbandi & Davis, 1984, p. 12).

Through his incredible poetic art, Aṭṭar depicts that the final goal of human existence is attained only through the actual journey of the bird of the soul from the cage of the body to the peak of the cosmic mountain and beyond (Nasr, 1987).

In mystic philosophy influenced by Qor'anic texts, bird symbolizes human at the perfect level. The journey of birds towards Simogrh is a symbol of mankind's efforts to achieve *perfection*. Attar describes a path which every wayfarer must pass to accomplish his theosophical *duties* and become a *perfect* man (Ghazinoory et al., 2013). Birds are *emanation* or shadows of Simorgh, all flying back towards their Origin (Simorgh), each in their own way. In ancient Persian, Egyptian, Greek, Christian and Islamic traditions, birds, their flight, and their wings are universal symbols of the spirit and spiritual journeying (Nasr, in Lumbard, 2012).

Two overriding themes of *Simorgh* relevant to my thesis are the necessity of destroying the Self (I) as the true idol, and the importance of passionate love for the Other. These two themes are connected: the self is seen as an entity dependent on pride and reputation; there can be no progress until the pilgrim is indifferent to both, and the commonest way of making him indifferent is the experience of overwhelming love for the Other (Darbandi & Davis, 1984).

My (thirteen) participants in my study, with myself, are the flock of birds, a family of human beings of different types, of diverse languages and cultures, all taking the less taken, more difficult road of transition. Flown into a new land, Canada, they pursue the same self-perfecting goal which is derived from their *inner* call for seeking knowledge and knowing their selves. They all pursue the same inner drive for *unity* in this world of *multiplicity* by embarking on a road, less taken. In their spiritual quest, my birds, migrating from various parts of the world to Canada, hope to feel them[78] Selves, their own guide, to fulfil their duty, their dream, to fly freely and in peace, to feel at *home, away from home*[79]. Each bird is singing her own story, a story which seems *different* but also *the same*. Here are the stories of my birds:

[78] Their inner free Self; Self is capitalized for its existential significance in this study

[79] My best moments in PhD journey were the restless moments of awaiting the inter-library books coming from faraway places bringing the best moments of feeling myself in ancient texts ... feeling home in my/our ancestors' words ... in the words of Truth.

Fatima

Becoming Road

It is He - Allah -Who created you from a single being
(A'raf:189)

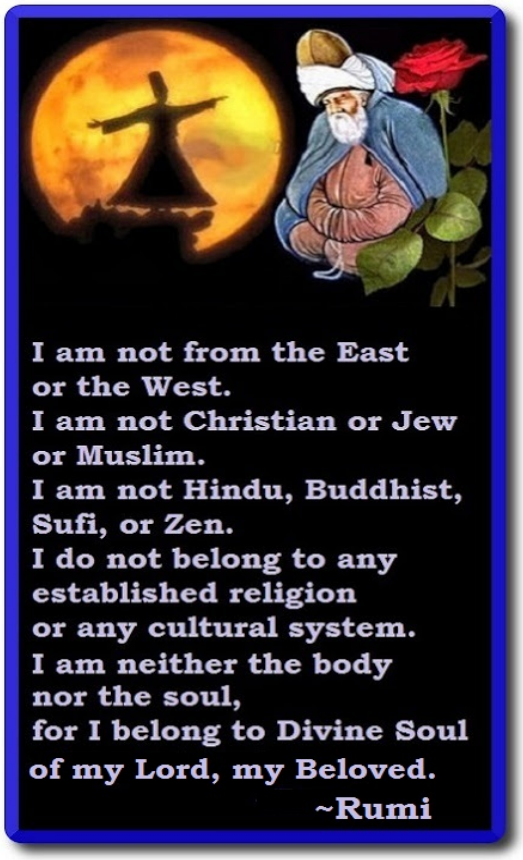

Figure 13. Divan-e Shams, 116,
http://sologak1.blogspot.com/

Figure 14. Bani Adam, Saadi Shirazi, 1258

The sons of Adam are limbs of a whole
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
The other limbs uneasy will remain.
If you've no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain!
[Bani Adam, Translated by M. Aryanpoor]

I'm a bird from the heavenly Gardens of Paradise,
I'm not from this dusty earth.
My body's trapped in this worldly cage
for just two or three days. (Rumi)

She was born in a famous African tribe called Fulah in Mali. Her parents sent her to Canada in 2008, when she was twelve, to get better education and 'open the ways' for her future. She started high school in Montreal where she could further develop her French. After finishing high school, she moved to Ottawa in 2012 to do her undergraduate studies in Criminology at the University of Ottawa.

Fatima was raised in a very traditional and sympathetic lifestyle, away from modern disconnecting 'formalities'. In her society, visiting friends or relatives are welcomed at any time, without setting a meeting time. In Fulah tradition, "society" and others come first. Transition to Canada introduced Fatima to a different way of thinking. She finds the Other[80] in Canada less emphasized than in her culture; she finds the Self many times 'prioritized' over the Other. Fatima accepts this new way of thinking as an 'additional' insight which can help her in some situations:

> I wasn't born really in this occidental thoughts and thinking ... in my country .... tradition is what rules it's the biggest rule, society before yourself ... it's really like *how others feel before how you feel* and here is what you feel before what others feel ... I think you have to mix them, sometimes I prefer thinking about others than myself [...] sometimes I prefer to think about myself before others [...] that's what is beautiful because I have this two sights and have this two beautiful thinking that is both right you know and both wrong at the same time.

Her first contact with 'occidental' thought was in her country, before transition[81] to Canada through learning French language at an early age. Then, Fatima started to notice the difference between her in-born culture and French culture. She found the behaviours, even the way of teaching French, were different. Learning French culture developed a new self which later grew up in Canada.

Transition

Transition to Canada has been a good learning experience for Fatima. Meeting different people has 'opened' her mind and enabled her to accept people of different cultures and languages.

[80] Other and Self are capitalized for its existential significance of this existential study. When referred to Divine God, such as the introduction, essential-existential aspect is highlighted.
[81] Transition in this study is used for both students' physical movement from their homelands (sociocultural dimension) and their existential becoming

Fatima's passion for connecting to other people has moved her to think of changing her major of study to international development, a major that can help her expand her contacts with other people in different parts of the world. Fatima's future plan to return to Africa, after learning the 'good parts' of life in Canada, evokes her parents' self-perfecting goal in sending her to Canada.

Home Language

Home language for Fatima is the language that she feels at home in, the language with which she started her 'being' and her 'beginning', the language that seems a 'meaningful' language to her. Fatima's home language is Bambara, the national language of Mali, her first language, and the main language that she has used since childhood.

French, the second main language of Mali, is the language that Fatima learned as a child. Fatima learned basic English later at school, through a native language teacher. Fatima can express herself better in French than in English. This makes her think of French as her second language, and English as her third language.

Fatima mainly uses French in Canada. French is the language that she feels comfortable using in any context, at home, school, and beyond. English is a language of limited use for Fatima. She uses English just on campus, with English-speaking friends. At home, Fatima uses a mix of French and Bambara, the two languages that she learned in childhood:

> Because we grew up .... learning both you know when we were young, so we used both of them ... because we were colonized by French

English and French do not make Fatima feel at home, unless occasionally when she can 'feel' her emotions in her words, when her words and feelings 'connect' and words come without thinking, or when the topic makes her know 'herself' and 'feel at home', as the interview seemed to reveal:

> The fact that I sit down you question and this is good because it's helping me to get to know myself as well because like the questions you're asking me is something that sometimes I don't reflect on and sitting down and just reflecting on these things ... makes me feel home

One of the most rewarding sentences I heard from my participants which made me feel the ultimate purpose of my research is fulfilled

Using English, Fatima is more careful. She feels depressed many times that she cannot express herself well or finds it difficult to 'put' her emotions into English words. Fatima thinks of

Bambara as her home language, a language that everywhere she can identify herself with it, the language that she can put her emotions in any time:

> When I speak Bambara, I feel like home, l feel like I'm speaking *my* language, my culture, where I am from

Home

Home, for Fatima, is not attachment to one place, but to a 'transient' and 'inner' feeling that now she can hardly experience. Home is a 'comfortable' feeling which she experiences when she feels 'accepted', 'not judged', when she does not feel alone and feels that she 'fits' in society. Fatima feels home whenever the 'place' and her 'feelings' are 'connected', whenever she can feel 'herself', can 'talk to' herself and can feel her heart; Fatima feels home when talking with family and friends about the things that 'touch her heart'. She feels 'disconnected' in the great rush of the 'busy time' when she cannot sit and think, when her feeling of home moves away:

> I feel home when I'm sitting down and thinking oh this ... creation is so beautiful I feel home because at that time time does not exist anymore I just think about that and I feel free ... when I'm reading a book or I'm only in that book at that moment so I travel into that book and I'm thinking of I guess that's when I'm home or when I'm taking a shower ... things that are really simple ... but have meaning for me

Fatima feels home when she feels 'both her parts': one part which is shaped in Africa since her birth and the other that grew up in her after learning the Canadian culture:

> I have two parts in me I have the part that is here like that I grew up here and that I learned this like this culture here and I have my part that is in Africa so I would say that home is somewhere where I can find both of them .... maybe a part of me likes it here, but the feeling of home no.

Fatima's dream home does not reside in a certain place; it is the feeling which is '*created'* together, with the people who share the same feeling, people who are from Canada or anywhere. Fatima feels home with people who understand her 'with not a lot of explanation'. People in Mali who consider her as becoming white or those in Canada who consider her as absolutely African make her feel *away from home*:

> I guess where I don't have to explain myself that's where I feel home

When asked to 'explain' herself, Fatima feels 'not belonging', she feels being 'different', being 'judged' by people, she feels 'in between' her Malian and Canadian self. People's questions make

her feel she has lost part of herself, the part that 'belongs' to the people she has been living with. This makes Fatima feel '*in the middle'*, both her selves being questioned:

> When I go back there I just want to be there and not thinking about anything that is from here ... and not want them to talk about oh you're from there and that that [...] because I wanna be there and just wanna enjoy this African part of me [...] I feel like both of them ... are judging each other and I'm just in the middle of that you know when they say you're white they're judging the whites and when they say oh you are from Africa they are judging the African people so both of them are judging me based on where I come from or where I am.

A mixed sense of 'familiarity' and 'loneliness' in Mali and an overwhelming sense of the 'fast' and 'mechanical', but 'sometimes' 'good', life in Canada makes Fatima 'never' feel completely at home in either places. The overwhelming life of full responsibility in Canada makes her feel 'anxious' and miss the simple life of no GPS and discipline in Mali. 'Loneliness' is a feeling that Fatima experiences in both Mali and Canada:

This feeling of loneliness comes when you realize that you are missing something ... I think *you're always missing something in your heart*, but I think this feeling of loneliness comes when it hits you ... it can be when you're surrounded by people ... It's not special in Mali because I would say that I missed here as well ... I don't know ... how and I know this is really very deep .... we're really not from this world [...] we will all die and then where we're going our real home where we came from and I guess sometimes I just miss a place ... *I miss something everywhere* sometimes.. it does not depend on the place ... it is familiar ..

Every voyage can be said to involve a re-siting of boundaries ... the self that embarks on an undetermined journeying practice, having constantly to negotiate between home and abroad, native culture and adopted culture, or more creatively speaking, between a here, a there, and an elsewhere (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 8)

As a 'sociable' person, Fatima enjoys connecting with other people. When she sees reactions in 'some type of face' which hurts her, she feels 'lonely' and misses her dream home with people who touch her heart; then she misses the mysterious, familiar place. Fatima's future plan to return to Africa after graduation is to end up where she started her life, where she hopes to feel at home again.

Home is where one starts from. As we grow older, the world becomes stranger (T. S. Eliot)

Here, in Canada, I imagine myself in an empty desert, which is very busy but very empty. I can see my previous self in Iran, I can feel my becoming self, what I'm achieving, what I'm missing, what I'm appreciating from my past, through my current life.

Fatima's story reminds me of my isolated becoming after transition to Canada, of deeply painful moments when I could feel a strong, cold border between my Self and Others, when I could feel the hidden suffering of some Others. The less they knew them Selves, the more they distanced from Others, the more pain I could feel, from them, from Others, from the denying parts of my Self.

I feel happy, thankful for my whole transition experience. A hard, but rewarding Self journey, a pilgrimage to calm down my restless soul, or maybe, to make it more restless:

Sighting the Beloved,
your peace forsakes you!
(Saadi, Ode 141, Ganjur)

Foreigners at Home

(Ali and Saád)

Our tale is the tale of the reed, the tale of separation, the heart-rending experience of feeling "cut from the reed-bed" of their true celestial Origins
(Nasr on Rumi, 2007, p. 5/73)

They are coming from Dubai and Sudan, two different Arab countries in the Middle East and Africa. They left everything behind: their 'decent', but temporary jobs, their properties, their closest relatives and friends, their comfortable life, all in exchange for feeling as 'respected' citizens with guaranteed future of growth for themselves and their families.

Ali and Saád have transitioned from similar life experience in Dubai to Canada. Their unhappy experience of being 'outsiders' with no job security and citizen rights moved them to *choose* transitioning to a 'better' place for the second time in their lives.

Ali was born in a Circassian family living in Jordan. During the war in 1860, Ali's grandparents emigrated from Circassia, a Republic in Russia, to Jordan. In Jordan, the popular language was Arabic, but Ali's family kept on using their Circassian language. After grade twelve, Ali made his first main transition to Dubai in order to study at university. He *chose* to transition to the 'great surprise' of everyone in Jordan who considered Emirati people as 'Bedouins'. Ali met with different nationalities in Jordan, including British and American nationalities, which led him to use English most of the time. After his studies, Ali taught English in Dubai for twenty-five years before his transition to Canada. Life in Dubai was very comfortable but very 'unstable'. Ali's well-paid job could be terminated any time. His family (wife and children) and himself were treated as 'outsiders' who could be 'kicked out' of the country at any time. They felt unsafe, dehumanized:

There I was a machine ... in Canada I am a human ... you feel just more human ..

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Saád was born in Sudan. He moved with his family to Dubai as a teenager. After high school, Saád *chose* to transition to Pakistan, to study at university. He chose to study Physics and rejected the offer to study civil engineering in Syria. He decided to study something 'rare' that 'nobody likes'. Thinking of going back to Sudan twenty-eight years ago, Saád did not want to

add another engineer to the workforce and enter into the high competition for jobs in Sudan. After his Masters' degree, Saád joined his family in Dubai and started teaching physics. His decent, but temporary job with no pension did not promise a secure future. Saád decided on a second transition. Sudan also did not promise a secure future. There were basic health, job, education and even physical security problems. Life seemed economically and politically unstable in both Sudan and Dubai. Saád *chose* to transition for a 'brighter' future, to where he can feel he is 'growing', this time to Canada.

Transition

Ali's entrance into Canada as a permanent resident about six years ago was entwined with great feeling of being a 'respected' citizen with all equal 'rights' to work, educate, and have a 'happy' life, making Ali feel 'powerful' and 'thankful' for the caring system. This supreme feeling kept Ali and his family strong in front of all the challenges of transition including the tough weather conditions, his family's poor English proficiency, and more importantly, an open society with early independence and high teenager power.

Saád considers 'system' as the biggest difference between life in Sudan and Canada. He believes that life in Sudan is 'chaotic'. The 'Systematic' life in Canada helps him *'own'* his time and make plans for his days and years, while in Sudan he could not easily decide even for an hour:

> So many differences … the biggest I think the system .... we have a systematic life here there we have a chaotic life … here I can make my plan for the rest of the year ... in Sudan you can't make a plan so that means you do not *own* your time ... the society owns everybody's time ... so people go same ... where the current flows

Saád's sense of 'ownership' over his time and place makes him feel confident. The feeling of 'belonging' to Canada involving 'owning' his own 'voice' creates the feeling of being a real citizen:

> My voice is heard ... I can't tell you how happy I was when I voted last time for the first time ever .... five years ago

Time, place, and self '*ownership*' are the lost keys of Ali and Saád in their previous lands, the keys that seemed worthy for their big transition to an alien land.

Home Language

Ali speaks four languages: Circassian, his native language; Arabic, the language that he studied early at school and knows as a 'native speaker'; English, the language that he studied as his university major and taught for several years; and, French which he learned in Canada for basic communication.

After transition to Canada, Ali feels less confident in English. He finds that there are many words and expressions that he still does not know the meaning unless he asks native speakers. Years of teaching and speaking to non-native speakers of English has made him a 'slow' speaker. Talking with native speakers, Ali understands that his low speed makes them *impatient*. This creates the feeling of being 'behind' and not competent in English. Unlike before, Ali now feels as an 'actor' in English, one who has to think carefully to build his ideas in a 'different' language. Ali does not feel the same in Circassian:

> When I use English I feel I'm an actor ... Because I have to build my ideas in a different language ... so it's not natural ... I have to think about it and relate it to another language to choose the words ... when I speak my Circassian language I feel I am original now and I speak ... yea this is my language ... I speak naturally ... as if words come out my mouth without thinking

Ali uses Circassian at home with his family. Forty-one years of living in the Arab world, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, and Dubai, have made him feel comfortable in Arabic. Using Circassian, though, creates a different feeling of connection to his 'origin'. Unlike 'outside managers', those in his family who married non-Circassian women and have children who never learned Circassian, Ali speaks only in Circassian with his family:

> This is number one ... this is my origin .... this is the language of my ancestors ... my choice to marry a woman who speaks that language ... was intended ... I wanted my children to speak that language [...] sometimes they speak to me in English I reply in Circassian

Talking in Circassian makes Ali feel 'intimate', 'happy', and 'proud'. It makes him feel 'at home' in Circassian.

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Saád knows Arabic, English, Urdu and French. He grew up speaking Sudanese language, used Arabic since he started school in Sudan, learned Urdu in Pakistan and recently French in Canada. Saád is not confident in his mother language. Sometimes he assumes Sudanese as his first language, sometimes Arabic:

> Sudanese language it's not a language but it's a dialect from Arabic ... I speak Sudanese sometimes I say I speak Arabic and I'm really not clear on this concept ... again I can't say Sudanese because there is no one Sudanese language there are a lot of spoken languages in Sudan ... when somebody asks me what's your mother language I'm really get confused

Saád uses Sudanese with his family at home. English is the language that he uses frequently, mainly outside home. Saád does not use Urdu anymore, and uses French occasionally for casual conversations. For social gatherings, he prefers Arabic.

Unlike Ali, Saád does not refer to any one of his known languages as his home language. His definition of home language is related to his definition of home: it is 'dynamic', 'contextual': home language is the language that he can communicate efficiently, depending on where he is:

> Depends on the version of home I'm at ... if I'm here English might be a language that feels home for me but if I go to Sudan for instance and I recall my home as my small family ... then Arabic is the language is my home

Saád's home language is the language which is 'engaging' to his 'speaking community'. Arabic is the language which is most engaging to his family. Speaking English at home, Saád completely isolates himself from his family. Outside the house, English can engage him with people, can make him feel at home. If he speaks Arabic outside his house, he will again isolate himself from his speaking community.

Saád's understanding of English as an *occasional* home language and Ali's as a non-original language evoke their understanding of home.

Home

In Betweenness

Ali lives in between three homes. He has created his 'ideal' home by transitioning to Canada while carrying his own ancestors' language and tradition. Ali assumes Circassian as his 'original' and 'emotional' home, and later Jordan where he was born and spent most of his life. Now Canada, where he *chose* to live, is the 'physical' site of Ali's ideal home. Ali does not see

himself living just in his Canadian home. He feels at home in Canada for feeling 'secure' because of good protection, and for being free to live his own native language, culture, and tradition:

It (Circassian) is part of the home because I still have its culture ... speak the language I have the habits I have ... religion ... the customs I have even the food [...] people are away ... but .. every other thing is not [...] so home is *carried* with me ... it's *not away*

"Homer tells of the landing of Odysseus' comrades at the island of the lotus-eaters. The lotus-eaters devised not death for the intruders but gave them a dish of their lotus flowers; and as each tasted this honeysweet plant, the wish to return grew faint in him: he preferred to dwell forever with the lotus-eating men, feeding upon lotus and letting fade from his mind all longing for home" (Schutz,1976, p. 375)

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Home for Saád implies the feeling of safety, emotional safety which is created when surrounded by people who 'care' for him and for whom he cares. The feeling happens when he is in Sudan with his parents and all his family. Emotional safety is created by a caring system in Canada which makes him feel 'secure'. In Sudan, home is limited to his family's house. Saád does not feel safe in Sudanese society. He does not know about it as there have been many changes over the years since he left it and he does not see a clear future in that society. Saád does not feel 'belonging' to Sudan where he is seen as a foreigner:

> When I go to the embassy asking for entry visa this is ... the beginning of the *discrimination* between being a Sudanese or being a Canadian ... I *believe I have a dual nationality* which is belong to two when you fill up a paper work *non-Sudanese citizen* ... it feels bad ... which is ... the ... system [...] then I don't have a power to raise my voice ... to say no this is wrong

where his wife is treated with discrimination:

> There is very clear discrimination males versus females ... to open an account for my wife they said no you have to open an account for yourself ... and then ... she might be attached to your account

Saád thinks of home as where he has *power* over his place together with *others*, a form of *collective* power which accumulates from individual members. In Canada, Saád feels at home mainly through the 'system's care', a system which makes him feel 'powerful', gives him a sense of 'ownership'. Saád does not feel at home in Canada all the time. He feels at home when he feels that he is 'progressing', when he sees his children are 'learning' and supported by the

system. He feels *away* from home when he is listening to Sudanese music, when he feels 'disconnected' from his parents, when he feels their loosening ties, because of 'distance', because of 'suppression'. Saád lives in between his *native* and *adopted* homes; between his *'native'* home, Sudan, where he was raised and can feel the people's care, and his '*adopted'* home, Canada, where he chose to live *away* from his native home and can feel the care of the system.

Saád's contextual view of home and home language relates to his 'engaged' connection with Others. Feeling connected with *Others* makes the language and the place he is living feel home.

They are coming from being an outsider to becoming an insider, a native, a self like all others; to find their dream home with others, to feel them selves in a dream home with others. They rejoiced in finding the ruler not other than themselves.

They found that here is also not home. They felt themselves here but also missed themselves; they missed others they could not see here. They felt united but also isolated, lost. They chose to see themselves and to stand isolated, as ever strangers.

Inner Self

(Neo)

You are a mirror reflecting a noble face. This universe is not outside of you. Look inside yourself; everything that you want, you are already that (Rumi)

She came to Canada from Beijing, China, as a young woman in August 2006 to do her undergraduate studies in Communication. She started living away from her parents at the age of twelve, when she was admitted into a boarding school. Always intrigued by the idea of experiencing something 'fresh', Neo decided to study abroad after she finished high school in China. Starting her life in Canada within a Canadian family where the language of communication was all English, Neo developed a totally new Self, a new character which was later refined by a change in her major of study. Knowing Mandarin as her first language, Neo started learning English as a foreign language in China at the age of sixteen. Learning English as a mandatory course in class without knowing the culture was hard and not interesting. The 'local way' of learning English through ESL courses in Canada along with 'local' friends of 'English mentality' proved an exciting and effective way of learning English, also, developing a new mentality.

Transition

Neo's transition to Canada and Canadian culture was very smooth. Unlike her Chinese friends who 'just' shared a place and lived together, Neo *chose* to live with a Canadian family from the very beginning:

> They never really came out of their shock, they're still living in the same community as ... it's like they're still living in China

Living with Canadians helped Neo to know the Canadian culture and facilitated her transition. Transition to Canada has given Neo all the time and freedom to think about her past and current Self. Having transitioned at an age of emerging into adulthood, the critical age of asking herself "who she is", and "who I want to be", Neo sometimes seems confused about herself and her transitioning Self:

> I don't know if it is my transition to Canada or it was just growing up

Like other transitioning students, Neo experienced a time when she felt 'lost' and 'isolated'; moments that she wanted to spend away from everyone else; the times when she questioned her transition: was it the right decision? Neo mainly experienced these moments before changing her major to sociology, when she could not see her major 'fulfilling' her life purpose. Her new major sociology provided her with a broader perspective of life that let her see her past and present life in a new light. Neo is coming from a cultural background which is advertised as a communist country. Reading sociology, however, Neo does not think that she comes from a communist society. She finds Canada, rather than China, a communist society where she, like any other Canadian citizen, understands herself as not being economically favored more or less than other society members. Sociology helped Neo find her life priorities: equality and freedom to explore and find herself, values that she could not feel back in China. Learning about sociology comforted Neo. She no longer was confused about her present or was worried for the future. It made her feel closer to her Self. Now, Neo knows herself as someone who wants to learn new things and is willing to transition further to find her dream society, to see more of her Self.

English as Saviour

Besides her first and second language, Mandarin and English, Neo also knows French and Japanese. She started learning French and Japanese after her transition to Canada. Neo believes that knowing more languages makes her 'world road' 'bigger'. She knows basic French through class instruction and can use it for simple conversations. The similarity between Mandarin and Japanese motivated her to learn Japanese, mainly through watching videos. Neo likes the Japanese language, especially because of its culture. She finds Japanese culture close to the older, less biased, and more 'civilized' version of Chinese culture, which she finds closer to her current Self. Neo is surprised to see how the Chinese language has been changing rapidly and distancing itself from its original version. Each time she receives messages from her friends in China, she is surprised to see new vocabulary and expressions that she does not recognize. This creates a more comfortable feeling in using English.

Neo's experience of English in Canada is very different from her experience in China. Her free and 'local' way of absorbing English language and culture, compared to her 'guided' learning of English language through formal and text-based instruction in China, has developed a new Self in her, deeply connected and unified with English. Using English to adjust to her new society,

Neo understands English as 'part' of herself. Her close connection to English saved her from the loneliness and cultural shock that all of her friends experienced. Making friends and interacting with people through English all the time, Neo understands English as her 'emotional saviour', one that saved her from the emotional problems that she would encounter without her English learning experience in Canada:

Here is this language is helping me to adjusting to the society ... and it become part of me ... I feel English kind of saves me ... the fact that I could interact with other people better, I never experienced loneliness or anything, so I have that emotional connection with English

"The "foreign" suddenly and unexpectedly enters the protagonist's comfortable world at home and forces her to *rediscover* her own identity, to analyze her family's *past*, and hence to *reoriented* herself thoroughly, whereby she ultimately finds herself and also gains the *inner strength*" (Classen, 2012, p. 370)

Using English, Neo is both cautious and confident. While she is careful all the time not to make any mistakes, she feels completely comfortable using English. Neo feels more of her self when she uses English. She finds English a very straightforward and logical language, very close to her 'inner personality'. Neo finds Chinese culture, unlike English, and similar to Japanese and Korean cultures, as less straightforward and more 'inwards'. In Chinese, Neo could never be certain with words or she could be considered as 'arrogant', what Neo attributes to both the 'culture' and 'long history' of the Chinese language. Finding her Self closer to English culture, Neo *feels more at home* in English than in Chinese:

> I feel more at home in English because I'm ... comfortable with this culture ... actually English is very ... straightforward and logical and ... I feel more myself, it's more towards my .. inner personality
> (I) understand myself better when I speak English ... when I speak Mandarin I never think about this kind of thing

Using English, Neo is more conscious of her Self. She finds herself a 'self-centered' person in English. In Mandarin, she is not very conscious of her Self. Although it is her mother language, Mandarin serves as a 'tool' which is not very connected to her Self. Neo believes that Mandarin was not her *choice*; it was a language that was 'given' to her. English was the language that she *chose* to learn and used most of the time in Canada. She 'built' her life anew using English in Canada. Neo believes that she 'conquered' English, that English *belongs* to her:

> I build a life here myself and majority of time I'm speaking English ... Mandarin ... I feel like something other people give me it wasn't I wanted ... but English is something I conquered I learned I chose to learn ... so that's why I feel ... it belongs to me.

Neo is aware that her transition and independent life in Canada has changed her view of English. She could not feel such a deep connection with English before in China.

Home Everywhere, Home Nowhere: Mysterious Home

Home for Neo is 'anywhere' she can feel comfortable and be herself without any worry. Neo feels at home in Canada where she can feel herself and can feel 'connected' to others. Neo still does not consider Canada as her home, nor China:

Once I go out of my ... apartment, I don't feel anything feel like at home or anything, I don't feel at home when I'm in China I don't feel at home when I'm here.

Home means one thing to the man who never left it, another thing to the man who dwells far from it, and still another to him who returns (Schuetz, 1976, p. 370).

Unlike before, China does not feel home anymore. Neo does not feel that she is connected or belonging to China. Each time she visits China, she experiences a 'reverse culture shock': things do not seem familiar anymore and people seem to have views very different from her. The only thing that connects Neo to China is her parents:

I feel like tied up when I'm there because too many people that you can't really have a comfortable conversation because ... almost six years ago, I had all those similarity with that I enjoyed things we talked about but right now it's like ... you went to somewhere and you see different things you're trying to explain to them but no one care about it and you have this different ... opinion and no one really understand ... I don't even feel bad and lost .... I don't consider it home or anything.

The home to which he returns is by no means the home he left or the home which he recalled and longed for during his absence (Schuetz, 1976, p. 375)

When the soldier returns and starts to speak- if he starts to speak at all- he is bewildered to see that his listeners, even the sympathetic ones, do not understand the uniqueness of these individual experiences which have rendered him another man (Schutz, 1976, p. 374).

On a more global scale, Neo now feels 'everywhere' as her home. She considers herself as one single person as all other persons living on earth, without considering all human-made borders. Thinking this way, Canada seems one place similar to all other places on earth. Although Neo

feels mentally more connected to Canadian people, she does not feel that she belongs to Canada or to any other specific place:

I don't feel Canada is my home either and although sometimes I might have more similar thoughts and opinion with people here but still, I don't have that sense of belonging or anything and I'm not even looking for that sense of belonging [...] I just feel like comfortable but back in China I'm not comfortable.

I am a stranger to myself and a stranger now in a strange land…Sometimes I see my country people as complete strangers. But their country is my country… Here too, Their country is My country. (Trinh, 2011, p. 34)

Neo's global view of home as 'everywhere' and her independence from the sense of belonging is another result of studying sociology. Her new major created this understanding that in the modern world there is no need to think of boundaries between the countries.

Assigned and Selected Home

Similar to Ali, *choice* plays a key role in defining home for Neo. Neo does not consider China as her home not only because she does not feel as comfortable and connected as she did before transition, but also because she never *chose* to live there. Having born and grown in China, Neo thinks of China as her 'assigned' home, where she feels emotionally connected but mentally 'disconnected' from its people, whose beliefs and values she does not share anymore. Neo believes that she 'builds' her home where she *chooses* to live.

Transition experience to Canada has awakened a new Self in Neo, a Self which is demanding her to move 'further' to other places, this time Switzerland, to explore her home, her Self.

Two Selves in One, Individual Fragmentation

Societal transition introduced Neo to new people of different types of relationships. Friendship in Canada seemed very different from China. Neo could not feel the closeness and intimacy that she could feel with her friends in China. She felt a 'distance' between 'friends' which made her uncomfortable. Neo found that people in Canada wished a 'boundary' and 'privacy' which seemed unusual to her. She needed to adapt her Self to interact with new people and to 'survive'.

Neo developed a new Self; she 'doubled' her Self to be able to interact with different people in both close and distant ways:

> It's all depends on the other person what is your way if you're really that kind of close relationship I can really be that way, but if you really want that boundary and respect each other I can be that way too .... I value this ... it's kind of a gift that I'm from two different cultural background ....

In China, Neo understands her Self as limited, as more 'modest' and 'quiet', as a 'follower' who is not free to know and be her desired Self. Neo experiences another form of fragmentation in China which is not between people in the society but between the Chinese way of thinking and other ways of thinking. She does not feel the freedom to *choose* her own way of thinking. She feels 'handcuffed' in China:

> These websites are banned and blogged in China so when I'm there, I'm just feel handcuffed I can't do anything ... it limited my mind as well and I don't feel free to do things, to learn things and that's why I disconnect from China ... in Canada it's really free and people have different opinion

Neo notices the same difference in universities. Coming from a study environment of many regulations with teachers always guiding the students, Neo found the independent context of the Canadian university very 'loose' and hard to fit in at the beginning. She experienced a long period of feeling 'lost' before she could adapt to the independent system and find it a chance to learn 'boundlessly'.

Neo's experience of both Chinese intimate and dependent life and Canadian private and free life has given her a broad perspective and adaptability to live 'in between' the two lifestyles. Her different life experience in Canada has given her a clear picture of her past and current Self. Her new major sociology illuminated her life priorities and goals, find 'meaning' in her new life. Neo now aims at making sense of the world, of the societies: to explore how societies are shaped, how they are deviated into different systems; to find the place that she can best feel her Self, feel at home, maybe next in Sweden.

> *Finding her Self in her new place, her new language, and major, Neo could feel at home .... connecting my Self to my ancestors in my research .. I made my dream home ... by evoking my ancient, strong ancestors, by recalling our very first, strongest Ancestor, I could feel at home in my research ...*

Scared Survivor

(Alexa)

I feel I'm grabbing to a life vest and I feel I have to grab it very hard because I'm in the middle of an ocean I'm alone I feel I am on a very small boat with a life vest and I'm trying to navigate this ocean you know because it's very unknown I don't know what will come next
It's the unknown that makes me fearful (Alexa, my scared bird)

She has come from a small land into a 'huge' and 'unfamiliar' ocean with her life vest on, armed for 'unexpected' waves, wandering in her small boat. She came to experience the fear and joy of fighting and living with giant waves. She departed from the 'limiting' familiarity of her land to face the 'curse' and 'blessing' of learning in the 'unknown'. Feeling lost among the huge, 'cold' ocean, she thinks of moving back to her calm, sunny land.

Her name is Alexa. She came from Albania in 2010 to do her PhD studies in Canada. Originated in an emotionally strong background, Alexa finds that being emotional does not 'pay off' very well in Canada. She decides to become 'rational' to connect to people, to 'survive', and not feel 'hurt' by their 'cold' reactions. She finds that to live in a different society, she has to 'unlearn' her long-lived ways of communicating. Communication with people of different 'types' has been Alexa's main challenge and her greatest learning in Canada. Considering her emotional 'capacity', Alexa finds her transition emotionally and intellectually rewarding.

Language Background

Alexa comes from Albania, a country highly influenced by Italian language and culture. The great ties between the two countries has made Alexa and other Albanians fluent speakers of Italian, even though they have never been to Italy. In Canada, Alexa only rarely uses Italian, or her mother language Albanian, to speak with a few Albanian friends. For thinking, though, Alexa always uses Albanian, even when she is speaking in English:

> Albanian ... is just non-existent at this point I think in Albanian or when I talk to myself in my head yea my thoughts are Albanian thoughts.

English is the language which composes 'part of her life' in Canada. English gives her a 'window' or a 'second chance' to communicate with so many people of different cultures.

Speaking English with native speakers, Alexa does not feel comfortable. Her different accent creates 'immediate' 'startled' facial expressions which 'intimidate' her. These immediate reactions provoke the feeling of alienation and being 'judged' by her listeners:

> If I'm speaking with a person whose first language is English, if I ... misspell or mispronounce word I see it in their eyes that they will not understand what I'm saying and at that very moment I feel alienated I feel I ... made mistake ... the expression of being startled the facial expression of the other person you clearly see that they are not understanding ... the facial expression and the body language shows ....like you are talking gibberish basically ...

Alexa has never felt alienated talking with non-native speakers of English. She can 'comfortably' communicate her message without regard for her accent or accuracy. Alexa feels 'at home' talking with second language users.

Although English is the language in which Alexa has been living her everyday life since her transition, home seems a 'big word' to be used for English. Alexa still has her own 'reservations', and 'fears' in English; she does not feel fully free to express herself. Albanian is the language that Alexa knows as her home language, a language that she feels 'fearless' to use for any purpose.

English and Self-understanding

Speaking English, Alexa understands herself differently. She finds not her Self, but a 'copy' of her Self, a 'secondary' Self which is related but different from her original Self.

Using English, Alexa understands herself more 'open-minded'. She feels 'free' to do things that she does not do in Albanian. Alexa understands that her feelings and emotions change in English. English makes her feelings and emotions less 'intense' than in Albanian. While in Albanian, Alexa feels comfortable expressing her emotions in many different ways. In English; however, Alexa feels 'limited' to articulate her emotions; she finds herself to be very 'superficial' and her emotions seem less 'meaningful' than in Albanian.

Mobile Home

Having transitioned from Albania to Cyprus and later to Canada to pursue her university studies, Alexa considers home as being associated with the 'people' living in a place, rather than the geographical location. She feels fully at home in Albania where every little thing retells her childhood memories, where she can get 'love' and 'energy' from the people inside and outside

her house, in everyday greetings with the people on the street. Alexa considers Albania as her main 'conventional' home and the other places where she can feel the 'energy' as 'copies' of her home. In Canada, Alexa feels her private space as the 'copy' of her 'conventional' home. She also has a 'mobile' home which is 'wherever' she is with her partner. Outside her space, Alexa does not feel at home. She does not feel the exchange of energy that she could feel in Albanian society. This makes her feel 'disconnected' from the rest of Canadian society.

A 'part' of Alexa can never feel at home anywhere outside Albania. A part that she cannot 'transport' into the 'English-speaking world': her 'little' childhood, her memories, and her interactions with her parents and relatives, the memories that will always stay Albanian, in Velor, the Mediterranean city of her birth, where she wants to keep them away from her new grown-up life:

> I cannot think of my childhood memories in English .... they don't make any sense in English ... those memories will always be there ... I want to keep it away from this other new life of grown up life

Roller Coaster Self

Six years of living in Canada has been a good 'chunk' of time to have changed Alexa in different ways. Alexa feels 'grown', as one who has seen many places and people of different cultures. Alexa finds herself a less emotional person than before. Communicating with 'new' people, she understands that her strong emotional Self often does seem 'improper' or 'rude'. Coming from a very emotional background, living the habit of 'putting so much emotion' into her conversations, Alexa noticed that using the same habit 'hurts' her Self; her transition 'cost' her a high 'emotional price': it took her through a very difficult process to adopt a new 'forced' way of communicating, which did not even seem 'natural' to her:

It comes with the ... emotional price for you as a person you have to unlearn how you used to communicate ... you have to start learning a new way of communication .. it's forced it does not come natural to me to be very rational

What I was resisting; I found hermeneutics closer to myself and the world beyond and different from a mere rational, and excluding world

Changing into a less emotional person, Alexa finds herself as a less 'outgoing' and caring person; a new Self which seems 'puzzling' and unknown to her:

> I don't know even myself ... I am a bit *colder* here more ... how to say ... *rational* and a little bit less emotional and colder in general towards people I keep my *distance* here

In her new society of 'speed' and 'productivity', Alexa finds it difficult to adapt without feeling the emotional energy in her environment.

My similar understanding of rush of time and my reaction to stop wearing the watch. Not feeling the moving energy to rush, it was my self-guard mechanism to survive and keep strong in a different time space. I noticed that here we run after time and time rules our life, while before, not being obsessed by time as here, I could feel ruling the time ... in a warm environment

Alexa's 'unfamiliar' and 'distressing' life of no family 'support' in Canada and the more difficult way of achieving her goals has created a 'pessimistic' picture of the future. She 'questions' her Self and 'doubts' her once strong capacities for the greater amount of time and energy that she has to spend to realize her goals in Canada. Alexa constantly thinks and analyzes her Self after any encounter with an 'unfamiliar' Other. Alexa finds her Self 'fluctuating' each time. At times, she is confident of knowing herself very well, before something 'unexpected' happens and 'confuses' her again. Alexa views her fluctuating Self as a graph of deep ups and downs rooted in her constant feeling of 'not belonging':

> I would visualize it, it would be one of those graphs that goes up and down very big fluctuation you know ... I think there is this feeling of not belonging like I feel that all the time

Alexa assumes her constant Self-questioning as a 'Self-defence mechanism', or a kind of 'survival mode' which helps her in 'developing' and 'perfecting' her Self. Alexa finds herself a 'survivor' who is 'painfully' transforming into a 'strong' version of her Self.
Learning to live the giant, cold waves, Alexa is thinking of her smaller, familiar land. Though her old enthusiasm for the big, unknown places seems lost, Alexa dreams of living her calm, 'sunny', mother land on a cold and unknown ocean .....

> *Disconnected from Others, she loses her Self each day, each time that she faces the unfamiliar, that she questions her Self. Knowing that she needs Others for her Self recovery, for her Self accomplishment, she strives for her previous strong Self with Others ...*

It is Thou

(Leila)

When I look into your eyes, I do not see you. I see me. Am I seeing you when I look at you? Or, am I seeing myself? What is the boundary between you and not/you, between me and not/me? Searching for a trace of others, it seems, is complicated. In seeking others, we locate ourselves.

Sumara, 1997, in Watt, 2011, p. 110

She came to Canada with her family to experience life in 'English', to have the experience of living abroad as a language teacher and student. She transitioned for a 'better' life 'quality' and 'equality', for an opportunity to explore and work on her strengths.

Leila comes from Brazil, a country that she calls the 'country of bubbles'; where there is a great economic and social 'gap' between 'different' people. Leila has lived many transitions. She finds her transition to Canada a 'humble' one. She moved out of her 'comfort zone', her previous, 'established' situation with 'strong' social network. Leila views her transition as a 'shock', but also, as a 'becoming', and 'learning' process, as an 'exercise' of 'patience' in living an 'unfamiliar' place and culture.

Although missing certain things from Brazil, the 'horrible' economic and political situation of Brazil pleases Leila for her 'hard' transition from Brazil. Leila enjoys studying in Canada. She is studying something 'new', other than her major, English:

> I love the opportunity that I'm having to do something which is not ... my focus ... I just love the fact that I'm learning so much more about math teaching that I ever expected ... that was kind of ... one of *those desires* ... when I started teaching at regular schools in Brazil ... I wanted to be able teach them other stuff besides English

Leila understands her Self 'better', 'differently', in Canada through a different field of study, a different Self.

Home, Away from Home

Leila grew up with Portuguese as her mother language, the language that she feels comfortable using with her Brazilian friends and family in Canada. English is the language that Leila has been learning since she was a teenager, studied as her undergraduate major and taught for several

years before her transition to Canada. Living her academic and private life in English in Canada, Leila has noticed significant progress in her English competency. She also has developed French and Spanish since her transition.

Leila feels at home in both English and Portuguese. Using English, though, Leila sometimes feels that the 'cultural references' of many words are 'unknown' to her, or she finds that Portuguese does not allow her to see certain things in English. These prevent the feeling of home in English all the time.

Speaking Portuguese revives the 'taste' of Brazil for Leila, a nice feeling that reappears when she reads English songs:

> Feeling at home is the warm nice feeling ... the warm feeling is only for Portuguese or for songs in either languages

Leila does not remember experiencing this 'warm' feeling for Portuguese songs before her transition to Canada. She calls her new feeling as '*home*, *away from home*':

> I don't remember having that feeling before moving to Canada ... with Brazilian song ... that's home away from home ... it's that feeling I have here

Home Everywhere ... Collective Self

> Home is where I am ... and it doesn't have to feel like home at first ... maybe I feel at home here more than I feel I in Brazil ... but I honestly could feel at home in Brazil too and I could feel at home in Australia and I could feel at home maybe that are some places in the world where I could feel at home.

Leila does not feel an attachment to any specific place. Home for Leila is 'wherever' she is 'at the moment'. She creates her home by finding friends and creating her own 'support circle'. Leila's 'support circle' in Canada is different from Brazil. In Canada, she 'includes' people that she would not in Brazil. Leila is happy for having 'revisited' her 'prejudices' after transition. She feels 'grown'. Including people whose life 'decisions' and 'values' are 'very different' from hers, helps her to 'learn' a different life perspective, 'learn' to know people before 'assuming' them. Having grown in a 'bubble' with the idea of 'that's all me' in Brazil, Leila had developed a 'personal culture' which excluded many 'different' others from her social circle:

I grew up with the idea that ... *that's all me*... because culture is personal ... and it's sometimes not the same culture as my mom ... I honestly had prejudices against people

The foreign and the self must come together in order to free the individual from its self-imposed imprisonment and to return to life, accepting it in all of its chaotic yet also beautiful conditions (Classen, 2012, p. 375)

Making her home in Canada, Leila has developed her ‘personal’ Self into a ‘collective’ Self, one which makes her feel at *home,* with others *away from* Brazil.

In fact, identity develops only fully when the outside is allowed to enter the inside and when both then merge with each other (Classen, 2012, p. 375)

On her return to Brazil, Leila does not feel at home anymore. Her place has changed since she left for Canada three years ago and does not look as home anymore. Living with her Canadian fiancé, Leila feels ‘at home’ in Canada, while listening to Brazilian music or meeting a Brazilian friend makes her feel at *‘home, away from home’.*

The longing for re-establishing the old intimacy-not only with persons but also with things-is the main feature of what is called "homesickness (Schutz, 1976, p. 373).

Dream Self

The multicultural environment and great variety of life in Canada has provided a great opportunity for Leila to learn about many things that she could not ‘see’ in Brazil. She has learned how to ‘rebuild’ herself into a ‘whole new persona’:

> Being able to learn about lots of things that I didn't have the chance to see in Brazil ... learning how to *rebuild* myself because ... I had to find a whole *new persona* for myself ... that's also the beauty of moving to another country you get an opportunity to ... be someone else

Many simple decisions in her life, such as giving up smoking, which seemed impossible in her previous environment, and lots of small changes in her everyday habits, have entailed a different lifestyle and new Self that Leila once wished for in Brazil:

The thing is the tiny little differences in your schedule in your waking up time in your going to bed time they actually make a big difference in who you are and how you live

To travel can consist in operating a profoundly unsettling inversion of one’s identity: I become me via an other (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 22)

Leila has developed a new Self, a more responsible, patient, relaxed, direct, and confident Self. Unlike before, she does not feel ‘desperate’ doing things by herself. The independent, ‘Self’-oriented system of her new society, including her university, have allowed her to find and develop

her own 'personal' interests. Feeling her Self with Others, out of her Self 'bubble', Leila enjoys her life transition.

> *Coming out of her Self-made bubble of ME, of I, "that's all me", she finds her Self at home with different, unknown Others, rejected Others, Ones who make her SEE her dream Self, her "within" world. Her "untaken" journey with strange Others became the key to knowing her Self, to perfecting her Self.*

It is Thou
A certain man came and knocked at a friend's door.
His friend asked, "Who is there?"
He answered, "I."
The friend said, "Go away, it's not the time.
There is no place for the raw at this table".
What will cook the raw one
except for the fire of absence and separation?
What else will deliver him from hypocrisy?

The wretched man went away,

and for a year he *traveled*-- in *separation*
from his friend he burned with sparks of fire.
That burned one was slowly cooked,
Until he returned and again paced back and forth
Before the house of his friend.
With mindful shyness he knocked at the door,
So no word of disrespect might escape from his lips.
"Who is at the door?" his friend called,
"It is *thou*, O charmer of hearts", he answered.
"Now," said the friend, "since thou art I, come in, O myself.
There was never room in this house for two I's"
(Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi, Book I, p. 3056-3063[82])

[82]https://books.google.ca/books?id=GvvRtJHJkKEC&pg=PA100&lpg=PA100&dq=Now,%E2%80%9D+said+the+friend,+%E2%80%9Csince+thou+art+I,+come+in,+O+myself:+there+is+not+room+in+the+house+for+two+I%27s&source=bl&ots=WYG560mRKX&sig=0ONoAvcd_doCHEqZbfbS2wWPFto&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjQ3YzGg9fTAhWq6YMKHZCTAPMQ6AEIJTAB#v=onepage&q=Now%2C%E2%80%9D%20said%20the%20friend%2C%20%E2%80%9Csince%20thou%20art%20I%2C%20come%20in%2C%20O%20myself%3A%20there%20is%20not%20room%20in%20the%20house%20for%20two%20I%27s&f=false

Figure 15. It Is Thou, Mahmoud Farshchian, Isfahan, Iran.

آن یکی آمد در یاری بمزد — یار گفتش کیستی ای معتمد ؟

گفت: من ، گفتش برو هنگام نیست — بهر چنین خوانی مقام خام نیست

خام را جز آتش هجر و فراق — کی پزد کی وارهاند از نفاق

رفت آن مسکین و سالی در سفر — در فراق یار سوزید از شرر

پخته شد آن سوخته پس بازگشت — بهاز گرد خانه انباز گشت

حلقه بر در زد به صد بیم و ادب — تا که نجهد بی ادب لفظی ز لب

یار پرسیدش که بهر در کیست آن — گفت بر در هم تویی ای مهربان

گفت : اکنون چون منی ای من در آ — نیست گنجایی دو من را در سرا

مثنوی معنوی ، دفتر اول ، ابیات : 3056 - 3063

(Persian translation of ‘It Is Thou’ (Rumi)

Cradle Motherland

(Shadi)

'You' and 'I' are the terrains out of which 'we' work and shape our shared existence

David Smith, 2003, p. xvii

The strike of war did not allow her to finish her studies in medicine in her own motherland, Afghanistan. She had to leave her country with her family to a safer place. They lived three years in Pakistan before immigrating to Canada in 1996, where she could support her family.

After transition to Canada, Shadi did not follow her previous studies in medicine. She studied a new major, international development. She worked for international organizations in her country Afghanistan, in Nepal, and Canada for several years. Shadi found her transition difficult. Finding a job, accommodation, and establishing her family were her tough, initial concerns. The different culture and language was a further obstacle. The gap between her 'indigenous' culture and Canadian culture moved her to create a 'third phase' where she could *choose* aspects from each culture which would fit her. Choosing between her habits and preferences was an 'emotionally difficult' process which ultimately made life easier for her.

Facing practical obstacles in her motherland- from lack of the basics of life such as water or heat to lack of security and freedom as a 'limited' woman to attend in public- Shadi feels privileged living in Canada. She feels grateful for her opportunity to study her chosen major, to travel the world, and to have independence as a woman living her preferred lifestyle. Shadi is still deeply committed to her motherland, the country for which she feels sorry each morning and night, reading horrible news on its failing condition.

Integrating EFL and ESL Learning

Shadi has experienced different language learning processes in Canada and Afghanistan. In Canada, she was not required to buy a dictionary or a grammar book. As a 'responsible' student, Shadi was left to herself to find an appropriate dictionary and grammar book, something she found really challenging as a new student. Shadi believes that her ESL teachers in Canada, who have not gone through similar second language learning process, could not see her learning difficulties:

> For those who haven't gone through the process they don't actually know how to teach ... no professor would here recommend that oh you have to ... let me check your dictionary what is the right dictionary ... if I'm teaching a language I ... make sure that the student has a good grammar book

Shadi found her ESL teachers in Canada less interactive with the students. Students were mainly left to themselves to explore their reading materials. Learning English in Canadian society, though, seems more fun and subconscious, contrary to learning English in Afghanistan, which was more conscious and exclusively 'book-based', 'grammar-based', and 'class-based'. Teachers in Afghanistan mainly 'translated' the texts without having actual conversations with the students. Shadi took advantage of both her EFL and ESL contexts. Her 'grammar-based' learning of English in Afghanistan helped her 'conversational' learning in Canadian society.

Home

- **Baby Home**

Home for Shadi is a permanent 'place' at the back of her head, a place which is always with her while she is walking around, constantly thinking about it. Home is the 'baby' at the back of her mind, a baby she is watching all the time while cooking and working around her place. It is the baby that she is always concerned about her friends, her education, and her safety. That baby is not Canada. It is Afghanistan, her 'cradle motherland', the place where she was born and grown:

> Canada is not in that state but Afghanistan is the place ... that baby is Afghanistan ... this is where I was born ... so cradle my motherland (*in a reflective tone*)
> I'm that mother that carries that thought around ... in Canada I have convenience and appreciation for what I have been given in Afghanistan I have my heart and mind ...

- **Transitional Home: From Motherland to Nowhere, Everywhere**

In 1996, when Shadi left 'home', she promised to go back and contribute to her country. In 2004, Shadi was an Afghan proud of maintaining her culture in Canada. In Afghanistan, Shadi found herself very 'different' from the people living there. She did not find her Self 'fit' in her country anymore.

Back in Canada, Shadi considered Canada as her new 'home', while left with a deep 'nostalgia' for her motherland. The choice of international development as her field of study and multiple trips to Afghanistan between 2004 and 2015 were the remedies that Shadi used to soothe her nostalgia. Her last hopes for home were fully disappointed when she last visited Afghanistan in

2015. Years of corruption have eroded all possibilities for a good future. People in Afghanistan were facing all kinds of challenges so that making a 'nation' in the near future seemed not 'foreseeable'. Shadi left Afghanistan in 2015 with acute nostalgia for her past life in Afghanistan. She did not feel any urge to go back to Afghanistan in the near future. Back to Canada, Shadi experienced a 'new' perception of home. Home did not mean Afghanistan or Canada anymore. Shadi did not feel that she fits 'anywhere'. She did not see any reason to fit anywhere. Borders have disappeared from her map of countries. She did not see any difference between her previous and current place.

Home for Shadi becomes a 'transitional' feeling. It is not a perfect place of no 'discomfort'. Home is Afghanistan for her emotions and memories despite all the practical challenges; home is Canada for her 'convenient' life despite her nostalgia for her motherland. Canada feels like home when there is conflict in Afghanistan and Afghanistan feels home at times of victory in Afghanistan.

Travelling back and forth between home and abroad becomes a mode of dwelling (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 14).

Shadi finds her 'inconsistent' view of home as a 'fluid' concept dependent on her 'momentary' needs: when she needs security in her office in Kabul, Canada feels home; when she feels bored of her long stay in a 'static mechanical lifestyle', the simple, less structured life of no 'bills' and less pressure of Afghanistan feels home.

Shadi's inconsistent, fluid view of home finds home as an 'irrelevant' concept. Unlike before, she considers 'wherever' she is as her home; she does not feel the need to 'belong' to specific place anymore:

> WHAT is home? like ... Why do we need a home?!
> I think okay maybe it's irrelevant ... wherever I go that's where home is

Shadi considers her home country as being carried with her to wherever she goes. She perceives a 'responsibility', a 'beloved connection' between herself and her 'baby' home:

> I haven't left my country ... I have taken my country with me ... it's that perception that I explained that you have your country behind your back ... It's the beloved connection that you have ... the responsibility you don't need to be necessarily be in a country.

Home Language: Contextual, Transitioning

Persian Dari is Shadi's first language, her first home language; it is the language of her family and community, inside Afghanistan and Canada. Pashtu is the other language that Shadi learned in Afghanistan from her father's family and the teachers at school. Shadi learned Urdu and French later in Nepal where she worked and lived with her sister for four years.

Shadi's experience with English started in grade four in Afghanistan. Her long history of learning English as a foreign and later as a second language has made English an alternative home language. Shadi's home language is 'contextual'. Persian Dari is the language that she has used day to day since she was a child until she left Afghanistan at the age of twenty-two. It is the language in which she feels 'articulate' and can best express her emotions. English is the language in which Shadi can best express her 'formal' and 'technical' knowledge, the knowledge that she has learned through English. Shadi feels at home in both Persian and English for her greater ease of 'Self-expression' in Persian and her 'analysis' ability in English.

Shadi feels that her level of Persian has declined since her transition to Canada. It takes her a longer time to make a conversation in Persian than in English. Before expressing words in Persian, she needs to translate words from English into Persian in her mind. Expressing her translated words in Persian does not create a sense of home in Persian as before.

Liberating Transition

In Canada, Shadi has become aware of her 'constant change', of her becoming 'open' to others, which she finds 'liberating'. Her 'becoming' experience opens her eyes to the problem of many people in being 'shaped' and not open to others:

> One of the problems I see many people have is that they think that they have been shaped and they don't want to let it go and be open and accept because it hurts their ego and pride ... but for me ... changing my mind and being open to others is something I think I learned here through going different phases of change myself.

Understanding her Self as a more 'reserved' person who spends greater time with herself, both in Canada and Afghanistan, current Shadi is mainly silent, 'compromising' about her 'values' in Canada. She understands her experience of living in an 'individualist' society as a positive one. While on some occasions she finds the very steps of her 'structured' life very 'mechanical' and

'boring', Shadi appreciates the individualist aspect of Canadian life that 'takes away' the right to 'judge' others, a habit that she disapproves of most of the people in her native country.
In her more 'structured' life, Shadi understands her Self becoming more 'emotional'. Unlike before, now Shadi values emotions more than logic:

> So I was very logical and would question the logic behind everything but now I realize that there are emotions ... I always overlooked

> *My similar experience of becoming more emotional, one feeling entrapped in many structures which do not let her see her Self. Becoming emotional was part of my survival strategy, a way to write and forget the cold frame around me.*

Shadi finds her transition to Canada 'spiritually' positive. Coming from a cultural background of high tension and racial discrimination among different ethnic groups, in Canada Shadi has gained greater appreciation for individual differences. She changed her family name from a very privileged name to a regular one and became active for the rights of the oppressed in her motherland.

> *She transitioned from war, fight, from extreme disconnection between her countrymen and foreign men; from discrimination, extreme disconnection between her countrymen. She came for peace, for care, for connection, for unity with Others in her land in a foreign land. She united with her countrymen away from them, with Others, through Others in the foreign land. She came from fight to fight, from fight of others to her fight for Others.*
>
> *Shadi found peace in blurring the boundaries between lands. She made her Self feel at home, away from home, with Others who made her become her Self away from her motherland.*

Other Birds

The hoopoe said: attachment to houses and mansions is an obstacle
to the path as is the love of external forms which perish ...
(Manitq al-tair, Attar Neishabouri, 1177)

Carolina moved from a Portuguese-speaking country to Canada to 'explore' the world, 'test' her Self, and actualize her ever dream of 'inventing' something. Carolina has understood herself a 'visitor' since childhood. Her experience of discrimination in Switzerland, where she grew up as an immigrant, and her subsequent migrations to different countries over thirty-one years have created a 'lonely' feeling in her, a feeling that she experiences it as a 'foreigner' everywhere:

I have been there a foreigner, I think
all my life I have been a foreigner,
everywhere.

If it's hard to be a stranger, it is even more so to stop being one (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 12)

Carolina's various journeys- to Switzerland, Portugal, Czech Republic, France, Brazil and Canada- and her meetings with diverse people have given her a new understanding of her Self. She knows her Self very different but also "the same" as Others.

Home Everywhere, Nowhere

Home Language None

Carolina's home is everywhere; she has 'homeS' everywhere; she has 'roots' wherever she has stopped to live for a while. Her homeS are all the places that made her 'who she is' today; her home is wherever SHE is, it came in a 'luggage' with her:

> My home as you asked came with me in one luggage
> My home for me is nowhere ... it's where organizing my things it's where I'm a ME right? it's where I show who I am it's where I produce my work but there is always something missing around me here in Canada.

Carolina's home language is 'no' language. Having grown up with multiple languages in her head, Portuguese and French and later English and Spanish, Carolina feels 'exhausted' using all her languages. Carolina does not see herself 'competent' in English. Using English 'frustrates' her. Her mistakes in pronouncing English words are followed by 'weird' facial expressions which alienates her from English:

> I have this episode where people look weird and kind of they made weird things with the nose and the mouth like looking like I was stupid.

> Well if I was ashamed because I was not good and I could not pronounce it so it was my first contact I was kind of alone with English and the world

Feeling 'confused' amid different languages, Carolina is afraid of forgetting them. She feels that by learning a new language, she 'loses' the previous ones.

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Jane, 'so sick' of the Chinese educational system, travels to Canada to have the experience of 'Western' education. Unlike most other Chinese students who depend on their parents' income in Canada, Jane works and studies in Canada. Her independence creates a 'distance' between her and other Chinese students. Even when back in China, Jane does not feel close to her parents. She cannot accept all aspects of her Chinese culture. Living with a local family in Canada and her attempts to 'become white' did not create a sense of 'belonging' to Canada or being a 'Canadian'. Jane considers herself 'in the middle', in a 'third world' between Chinese and Canadian cultures:

> I just don't agree ... some of the Chinese culture so like sometimes I just judge myself whether I'm still a Chinese but I don't think I'm a Canadian either at all and I'm still an international student and then I just feel I'm a middle person like in the third world that I build myself.

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Qazal, with a 'smooth' transition from Iran to Canada with her family, feels 'accepted' in Canadian society and does not feel the need to 'change' or 'explain' herself. She is comforted by the 'multicultural' context of Canada. Qazal lives in Canada but is nostalgic of Iran. Living with her past memories, she deems of 'time' as the key in making Canada her next home:

> Still soon to say ... but it's capable of being home, I'm trying my best to make it my home.

Qazal finds that relations in her new world are 'superficial'; she finds people less generous in sharing their emotions than in her birth country. Qazal finds relations somehow 'selfish', highly focused on individuals' personal purpose:

> (here) people are not very deep in their relations it's more of superficial ... I feel as selfish ... in some societies people share their feelings in a more generous way ... they (here) focus on the purpose ... everything happens based on rational mind.

- **Homelessness**

Qazal recognizes her gradual transition from Iran as her 'bold' home in the first year of her transition, to a 'pale' home in subsequent years, as she established her home in Canada. Now, after

five years, she feels being in the ‘middle’, a state of being ‘homeless’ where she is losing her previous home in Iran and making her new home in Canada. Qazal imagines her Self as a ‘cursed’ person. One who, like all others who left their native countries, cannot experience her original feelings anymore. Finding her Self differently in Canada, Qazal finds it hard to keep her original Self from Iran.

The homecomer hopes in vain to re-establish the old intimate we-relations with the homegroup ... the homecomer as well as the welcome has changed”. He believes himself to be a stranger among strangers (Schutz, 1976, p. 369)

Having transitioned from a very ‘conservative’ and ‘introvert’ person to an ‘open’ and ‘extrovert’ one in order to be able to ‘live actively’ and ‘happily’ in Canada, Qazal finds her new Self ‘distant’ from her family in Iran. Many things which used to interest her before in Iran do not attract her anymore. To feel her Self close to her family and remove the gap, Qazal tries to switch back to her previous Self, which makes her behaviour seem ‘artificial’ and even widens the distance between herself and her family.

Accepted Guest

Qazal knows Persian as her first and English as her second language. She views English as a ‘tool’ which helped her to relate herself to her new ‘living context’. Qazal imagines herself an ‘accepted guest’ in English, a member who is ‘good enough’ to use the language. She views English as a good friend which satisfies her interactional needs, also as a ‘monitor’ which controls her usage of language. Unlike Persian, Qazal does not see English as a part of herself, but as an ‘external’ monitor which helps her to know and function in her new world

Through education in Canada, Qazal communicates effectively with the people and has ‘improved’ herself. Knowing herself and others through education and language, Qazal feels ‘disarmed’ and secure in Canada.

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Madina, coming from Russia to complete education in Canada, feels home, away from her home. Far from Russia, she started to appreciate Russia as her home, where she feels strong connections. Its familiar life seems much easier than her new life.

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Camila, tired of her 'routine' life in Colombia, transitions to Canada to do her PhD and explore her different Self in a 'multicultural' community. Camila enjoys learning about the world in its 'complexity'. Seeing the same people and places all the time and doing the same things each day in Colombia have made her feel living in a 'bubble'. After knowing about so many people from different cultures and countries in Canada, Camila's view of the world has changed, has 'enlarged'. Her 'different road' has shown her a different Self, one which is more 'humble', 'independent' and 'open' to different understandings of the world:

> At least for me has changed the way I understand myself ...this (transition) ... teach you so much in terms of like for example what you see ... as normal and what society is.

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Zahra, a Traveller Learner

From Saudi Arabia, she views home as the end of her road, when she becomes an 'experienced' person. Zahra does not see various 'stops' on her road as her homes. Canada is her current 'stop'. They are temporary stops in her long travel to her destination. Zahra considers herself a traveller 'learner'. She enjoys learning in a multicultural context where she learns to become 'open' to different cultures and languages.

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Breaking Self Bubble

Far from their Selfs, they are moving back to their Selves altogether.
They became strangers to themselves, strangers to all familiar selves,
They became familiar to strange selves;
They came out of their bubbles and found themselfs none;
They became homeless, and found their home
Far from home, away from home;

They embraced hardship and became their craved Selves
They came to explore themselfs, they found themSelves, in forsaking themselfs.
They found themSelves beyond their bubbles ... in becoming Selfless
Breaking their bubbles, each found themSelfs beyond a drop:
A sea of drops flowing together towards Infinity ...

سیمرغ

Simorgh

Si (thirty) Morgh (birds)

Chapter 6: Simorgh Story
Seven Valleys of
Love/Illumination/ Understanding

This chapter involves the second story set on the birds' inner transitioning and Self-understandings. The story narrates the birds' re-understandings of their Selves as they cultivate their deeper connections to Other birds in their transition journey. The birds' inner transitioning and deeper Self-understandings are presented as their passage through the Sufi Valleys of Self exploration and Illumination, leading to their new understanding of themSelves as One self, as Simorgh, with Other fellow beings. The focus of this chapter is thus on the evolutionary interhuman understandings of the participants: their Self growth in relation to Others involving their initial challenges of transition with unfamiliar Others, to accepting, approaching and finding peace with Others at final stages.

The chapter opens up with an introduction to Sufism as rooted in *Simorgh*, the framing story of my writing, and as related to this chapter on Seven Valleys of Sufi Illumination and Understanding. The Sufi dimensions of Oriental philosophical schools of Illumination (Suhrawardi) and Primacy of being (Mulla Sadra) are re-viewed under the Sufi story of *Simorgh*. These schools are applied to the Self-understanding stages of the birds through the Valleys. After the Sufi introduction, I describe the methods used for writing this Sufi-hermeneutic chapter on the birds' inner transitioning and Sufi-existential understandings. Finally, I present the story of Seven Valleys of Illumination with my participants as the birds in their Sufi-existential journey of achieving higher understandings of their Selves in relation to Other birds (humans) in their transition journeys.

The story of Seven Valleys is based on Attar's story of *Simorgh*. The Sufi notions and elements from Attar's illumination stages resonated and complemented with those from Suhrawardi's Illumination and Mulla Sadra's existential philosophical schools are applied to the birds' transition Self-understandings. The story, similar to the whole thesis writing, fuses common Sufi-hermeneutic concepts in narrating and applying to the birds' understanding experiences. Some key Sufi-hermeneutic concepts used in this chapter involve: *Bildung* and Self-perfection or becoming *Simorgh*, illumination and Self-education, circle of understanding of Self and Other

(*Sama* in Sufism), understanding or 'home, away from home', Self-understanding, in betweenness, and unity in multiplicity.

Sufism and Seven Valleys of Illumination

- **Sufism and Attar**

Sufism or mysticism refers back to the world of pre-Islamic Persia with Zoroastrianism as a mystic origin (Zarrinkoob, 1970). Sufism experienced a major growth in the twelfth century across the Islamic world and specifically in Iran (Elias, 1998). Similar to Zoroastrianism, Muslim mystics, including Attar, maintained that existence begins as a duality (of good and evil in Zoroastrian and self and Other in Mysticism) and ends in a unity. Attar, Sana'i and Rumi constitute the summit of Persian/Iranian mysticism (Zarrinkoob, 1970). Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (d. 1154-1191) the founder of the school of illumination (discussed in the theoretical chapter) was another principal Sufi figure who left independent, permanent marks on Sufism. Farid al-Din Attar (d. 618/1221), the Persian poet of the mystical parable *Simorgh* (*Mantiq al-tayr*, 1177) was a key Sufi who began writing as a pharmacist in Nishapur in Iran until his death during the Mongol destruction of his hometown. Both Attar and Suhrawardi "summate the educational, practical, institutional, and speculative aspects of Sufism" as they had evolved in Persia including Iran, Iraq, and Anatolia by their time (Elias, 1998, p. 600).

Mysticism is an attempt to attain direct communication and unite with the Other. It is a way of knowledge through inner and intuitive experience of the ultimate rather than by reasoning and logic. Mystical experience is thus as old as humanity and is not restricted to any individual (Zarrinkoob, 1970). For Attar, as is masterfully depicted in his *Simorgh* (*Manṭiq-uṭ-Ṭayr,* or *The Conference or Language of the Birds,* 1177), his allegorical poem of some 4,600 couplets, the unity with the Other is attainable through the unity of the self with other humans. In Attar's Sufi allegory, the unity of a group of birds of various types, of various colors and songs, who were seeking a king for their peace and harmony was achieved at the end of their most challenging Self exploration journey together. The birds' ultimate understanding of their selves as one Self and not other than Simorgh, the sovereign that they were seeking, featured the end of their collective journey of Self perfection.

As a protest against a disturbed society, its traditionalism and strict rationalism, Sufism advocated the attainment of a knowledge which is not traditional nor could be attained as a

mental acquisition through observation and reasoning. Sufism advocated an *enlightenment* and *intuitive* knowledge which is attained through Self-effacement and the illuminating unity with the Other; a knowledge which is beyond physical senses and the reach of reason and which is accessible only to the heart, that is a window onto the realm of the "unseen" (Zarrinkoob, 1970, p. 202) and the hidden realms of human being. While advocating for unity with the Other, Sufism holds the firm belief that the ways leading to Perfection are as abundant as human souls and beings. The key to self-mortification and humans' *inner light* is believed by the Sufis to be the *purity of heart* and access to the heart's hidden innermost aspects (Zarrinkoob, 1970). In Attar's view in *Simorgh*, being wholly present in God in Sufi practice and becoming lost to oneself, or self-annihilation, accords with knowing oneself not apart from other humans and becoming united with other humans; as humans and the universe mirror the existence of God (the way that thirty birds at the end of their journey saw Simorgh being mirrored in the water and reflecting their own images). Access to the innermost aspects of the heart in this perspective is the door to the Other (after the birds purified their hearts in their most challenging journey, their hearts became as clear as the lake which mirrored their images as their inner selves, as One self and not other than Simorgh, the king they that were seeking for peace).

Sufism is thus associated with the spiritual path which entails the transformation of human's entire being (Nasr, 1992). Sufism proposes a number of stages for human quest of perfection through love for the Other which is the annihilation of the self in the ultimate Being (the Sufi doctrine of Fanaa'). The stages of the Sufi path of love involve stations (maqaamaat) and states (ahvaal) that would lead the soul to its higher stages. Through passage of the stages, the individual state of "I-ness" turns into a state of "one-ness" and his egoistic perspective grows into an *altruistic* one as his self grows into a perfect self (Nilchian, 2011).

Sufism reveals the fact that an all rational education and the world cannot help humans whose hearts are the doorways to their peace and survival. The knowledge achieved and understood through human minds needs higher degrees of understanding of being contemplated and intuited by the heart and being experienced (by human souls) to get realized and can fully help humankind.

- **Sufism, Suhrawardi (Illumination), Mulla Sadra (Primacy of Being) and Simorgh**

The Sufi stages of self-perfection, Attar's Seven Valleys of Illumination, are enlightened by Suhrawardi's philosophy of Illumination (Ishraq) and Mulla Sadra's existentialism and doctrine of primacy of being.

Suhrawardi's (inner) experiential philosophy of Illumination (Ishraq) proposes the essence of human as being of light and his perfection attained in his ascension to the Light of lights. Human's approach to his Origin, or the Light of Lights and his celestial abode entails an experiential knowledge which is both intuitive and rational. The union of the knower (Self: traveller human), the known (the Other or the Light of lights) and the mind entails illumination, a self-realization which is the light: the ability to see, to experience, and to know (Kamal, 2016), when being and knowing get united.

Sufism and Suhrawardi's illumination are translated into Mulla Sadra's existential philosophy. Despite the transition from essentialism to existentialism in proposing that existence precedes essence, Mulla Sadra (1572-1640) views human beings as contingent essences, contingent beings or the rays which are *illuminated* by the sun or the Necessary Being. Humans as contingent beings represent different shades of light in their proximity to the sun and Origin of their being. The Sufi path towards a perfect Self is evoked in Mulla Sadra's existential theory of the *substantial motion* and *incessant renewal* of contingent beings in their flow towards the Necessary Being, their ultimate goal and Source of emanation. The birds in Attar's Sufi story, after a challenging collective journey, gain proximity to the Supreme light; their inner light gives insight to their inner self, to Simorgh and the king that they were looking for; all illuminate in their selves as One Self.

Suhrawardi and Mulla Sadra's metaphysics of essence (as light) and metaphysics of existence (beings in ascension to the Light of lights)- based on the Qor'anic verses with the Light verse on top of all (al-Nur, 24/35)- mark various light intensity and gradation of beings similar to Attar's various stages of self illumination in human ascension and flight to the Universal self and Unity. The essential existentialism of Attar's Sufi story of *Simorgh* evokes Mulla Sadra's deliberate notions of involving the autonomous unity between essence and existence (Mulla Sadra, 1988) and the "*systematic ambiguity of Being"* (*tashkik al-wujud*) (*Al-Asfar*, p. 35) suggesting the multiplicity and unity aspects of the whole existence. Human beings, as essentially contingent beings, are parts of the whole existence as one single animate being (*hayawan wahid*) (*Al-Asfar*,

2.2, p. 342-50). Unity and multiplicity are two different aspects of human existence as beings and as One Being in union.

On Writing Seven Valleys of Illumination

The idea of writing on Seven Valleys of Understanding came late in August 2017, when I was thinking of a comprehensive framework to fuse the key philosophical notions from both Islamic and hermeneutic (Oriental and Occidental) philosophies in order to encompass various aspects of my research findings for linguistic and humanistic purposes. The understanding experiences of my participants/birds involved varied and common experiences. Their common experiences were related to universal humane experiences which resonated with the Sufi story of *Simorgh*. I aimed at including and highlighting their universalistic interhuman understanding experiences as well for their significance for beyond linguistic inspirations and goals of my research (research inspirations are cited in chapter two). The students' common humanistic understandings also emerged in their interpretations of the metaphorical poem *The Road Not Taken* (Next chapter). So, I decided to present metaphor understanding phenomenon in all its reality within a Sufi-hermeneutic perspective with diversity and individuality rooted in an essentialist *unifying* understanding motion (towards Self-perfection with Others), a motion directing the beings and diverse understandings of my participants, as typical human beings. While the previous chapter summarized the birds' transitioning experiences of their Selves, language and home in their new sociocultural context, this chapter mainly focuses on the birds' *unifying* Self-understanding experiences in relation to Others within the framework of *Simorgh*.

Attar's Seven Sufi Valleys of Understanding/Illumination are used metaphorically in this chapter to represent the birds' different stages of inner transitioning and ways of approaching Others as they move towards a Self-less perspective of seeing their Selves (deeply) connected with Others. This chapter thus provides a *snapshot* of the process of spiritual growth of the birds, their *Bildung,* which is the process of their Self cultivation, inner transition and formation and Self universalization in their relations with Others, the key overall Sufi-hermeneutic goal of this research. Although in presenting the birds' various stages of Self-transitioning and approaching the Other, I have remained loyal to the original story of *Simorgh*, the linear presentation of the Valleys of Understanding for the students does not imply their similar precision and same linearity in their passage through the stages, as a Sufi, in approaching the Other. The students

approached different mystic stages in different ways and in various degrees, probably not to the intensity of a Sufi practice, but in their own individual ways, diversity, and different degrees of inner transitioning (as different experiences of different birds are used to illustrate various stages and transitioning experiences related to each valley). This story chapter is thus composed of the words from different participants: it is a composite text in the same way that *Simorgh* is composed of birds of various character types. While interpreting metaphors in the poem, the students unfolded similar inner understanding experiences which resonated with Sufi experiences and revealed the *essentially unifying* human experiences, humans' common Self-understanding experiences which needed attention and reflection for recovering our lost Unity[83]. The Valleys in this chapter are thus about the spiritual knowledge and understanding (ma'rifa) that the birds attain along with their linguistic understandings and knowledge in their transition and Self-understanding journey. More precisely, as suggested in hermeneutics, it is about the spiritual basis and structure of human's understanding involving language and metaphor understanding. The hermeneutic conceptualization of metaphor and understanding is pictured as excursion of the spirit to the Other and reunion with its Self differently (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991). This conceptualization involves Gadamer's adoption of Hegel's view of *Bildung* to explain the nature of understanding. The structure of metaphor in hermeneutics is also viewed as the Self's excursion from home and familiarity into the strange and unfamiliar Other and its reunion in becoming home in the alien (understanding as *homecoming, or Home, away from home*) entailing a new, unrecognized possibility of the Self in fusion with the Other (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991). These all resonate with the *spiritual* source of human understanding and the metaphysical nature of understanding held in Sufism and the story of *Simorgh.* The hoopoe in *Simorgh* represents the highest, enlightened level of human understanding, in between his human and divine existence, as the Hermes, or "go in between" God and humans, stands in hermeneutics.

The Sufi, poetic story advocates the inner and *intuitive* experience and knowledge that the birds (humans as spiritual beings) attain as they approach the perfect version of their Self through their gradual Self effacement and the illuminating unity with Others. In this story, I consider myself a close companion of other birds in our spiritual journey, a journey closely tied to my long-life, deep understandings of *Who we are as humans* and *How we are connected to Others* in our life

[83] The students' actual quotes for each stage are included to support the similarity.

journey from our Origin towards our Destination. Looking inwards, we could come out of our Self bubbles in re-finding our essential affinities with Others.

- **Writing Seven Valleys of Illumination**

To use Attar' Seven Valleys of Understandings/Illumination, I had to read about the valleys first to see how the great poet Attar used each valley to convey significant universal messages to fellow humans. I started reading the original version of *Simorgh* (*Mantiq al-tayr*) and some related texts first in Persian and then in English. It pictured the full *circle of Self-understanding*, from human to divine, Self to Other, through unity with Others.

Writing the text on Seven Valleys was a truly demanding process. The original poem of *Simorgh* was a long Sufi poem of 160 pages (4,600 couplets) which needed special concentration to grasp/approach its deep meanings. In writing the Valleys, I had to pay attention to several things at the same time, such as the connection of Persian and English versions of the poem *Simorgh* itself, the connection of *Simorgh* to the participants' stories, the connection of *Simorgh* and participants' stories to the research questions, the connections of the applied Oriental philosophical schools to the story of *Simorgh*, and the connection of *Simorgh* to hermeneutics and also to the overall unifying and ***reconciling*** aim of my research in uniting the two traditions and an invitation for Self-reflection, spiritual growth and unity with fellow humans.

For writing Seven Valleys, I was not able to start writing until I could get into the mood of each valley. I had to read the poem of each valley several times, to immerse myself into the meanings of the poem. I needed to feel released from worldly concerns and close to the soul of the poem. Then, I would select the parts from the participants' words which matched the Sufi state in each valley. For each bird and valley, I looked throughout the data to find the corresponding parts. I reviewed the complementary Persian/Islamic philosophies (Illumination and Primacy of being in chapter four) which also matched the concepts that I had used from hermeneutics. Sometimes, I had to review the data or the valleys in Attar's poem or the hermeneutic philosophy to find out the best matches. This was a very demanding step which required a huge amount of time and focus.

Attar's great poems on the valleys[84] involved profound wisdom, many times uninterpretable into English. I had to spend many hours on each piece of poetry to find the closest meaning in English. The more I reflected and became aware of the depth of the meanings, the less I could find words to express the profundity of meanings. Words were not truly enough to convey the majesty of the profound, *divine* meanings. The poem would move me to the boundless world of great mystic meanings. Facing the depth and spectrum of meanings of the mystic contents, I felt helpless to express them rightly through my limited words. My limited human language even seemed much more limited when it was not in Persian. Using pictures and colors, choosing the closest English equivalents, or staying poetic in retelling the words helped my translation get closer to the original meanings and the soul of the Sufi poem.

The font for this Sufi section is different from the font for the body of writing. It is Calibri instead of Times New Roman. The reason for choosing this font, which happened unconsciously, is to signify the different nature of writing, a different journey, an inner, essential-existential, divine and spiritual journey that the birds, including all humans, undergo in various degrees in their lives with Others in approaching the ultimate goal of Self-Perfection.

Writing Valleys involved living and immersing in a different world, which was very hard to approach, and very hard to leave. Leaving the space in between the lines smaller than the rest of the text (1 instead of 1.5) for this section also helped me in staying more focused and intense in feeling and approaching the soul of Attar's poem, and in re-vocalizing it in my best attempt through different terms.

- **Pictures**

Reading the valleys, I was prompted to use pictures to illustrate different stages of understanding. I chose pictures which involved the birds and humans. Birds symbolize human perfection in mysticism and the combination of human and bird represent human flight and rise towards perfection in his life journey. The pictures are arranged based on this symbolism starting with singular, half human birds in the beginning valleys of Quest and Love, to a full bird in the Valley of Knowledge, and a free human in the Valley of Detachment, to a group of fellow traveller birds in the Valley of Unity, which merge into one bird in the next two Valleys of Amazement and Bewilderment, and the final Valley of Self-effacement. The Valleys start with

[84] These details set the context for a Sufi poem; the reader needs to stay patient to be able to get into the mood of the Valleys

the theme of suffering and end in happiness and the spiritual dance of perfection: tolerance and love for the Other. There is an *evolutionary* trend towards perfection, from human to bird, and from bird to a group of birds moving collectively towards Light; *Light*, which is the key and the core of the School of Illumination and Mysticism. There is a progression of *love* in the story, from love for Self to love for the Other, from human love to divine love, which connects all humans from inside, from their common inner side. At the beginning of the last valley, there is the picture of *Sama*, the whirling Sufis drowned in Light, Light of Illumination and Understanding. The picture of *Sama* shows the fusion and inseparability of human and divine love, the Self-effacement of human in Other and his Self-illumination. Finally, there is the picture of the birds as perfect humans at the highest mountain of perfection (mountain Qaf), together approaching Light, All Perfection. While the beginning picture of *Simorgh* clearly shows distinct thirty birds (Si-morgh) as all being connected and united in the *form* of one bird (Simorgh), the ending picture shows Simorgh at the climax of the valleys flying separately but together, connected and re-united *internally* and intellectually[85]. The pictures represent the two sophisticated framing mystic themes of the poem: "Unity in Multiplicity" (وحدت در کثرت), and "Multiplicity in Unity" (کثرت در وحدت)- what our 'modern' world and research and education desperately need.

The pictures were mainly selected from among the Persian miniature paintings. The painter, master Farshchian, has given the honor to include his masterly paintings in my writing.

- **Titles**

The titles for the Seven Valleys are composed of two or three parts. The first part is the original name of the valleys in Persian with the closest English translation. Some of the English translations such as Bewilderment, Fanaa' or Self-effacement are the closest translations that I was able to determine. The Persian equivalents were mystic terms of profound meanings for which I hardly could find any English translation. In these cases, I tried to convey the meanings through illustrations. Each title is followed by one or two subtitles. The subtitles are taken from hermeneutic philosophy- the choice of subtitles was itself a demanding process which required a close focus on key, *common* Sufi-hermeneutic concepts and themes. Subtitles involve the key existential concepts for understanding which I found shared in both philosophies- one at surface

[85] Soul and mind

and the other at deep, eternal levels. Some concepts included: 'Circle of understanding', involving excursion from self to reunion with the self (with the Other), 'Homecoming', or in my reinterpretation, 'Home, away from home', which involves understanding as feeling home, with different interpretations of home by various birds; understanding as Self-understanding and Self-education, which again involves understanding Others in our diversity; understanding as becoming/feeling 'homeless'; understanding as 'in between-ness', and 'nothingness'; all ending in human Self-denying modesty and love for the Other, and so, Self-Perfection.

- **Seven Valleys**

For this section, and the whole script, I used Attar's seven valleys of understanding metaphorically to analyse my birds' transitioning, evolving understanding of themselves in relation to Others, as a reminder of our human base and essence no other than the divine love, which is love for human Others.

To start the section, I felt responsible to include a picture of the tomb of the celebrated Sufi poet Attar (R[86]) in the very first page. I also included the gist of the whole poem which includes the Seven Valleys in Persian/Farsi. I decided to present the poem in its original language for its profound literariness and meanings. After the picture of Simorgh as thirty birds united, I included the first Valley. For writing the Valleys, after the titles, in both Persian and English, I included relevant pictures and poetic sections from *Simorgh*, conveying the gist of each valley in original language at the beginning of each valley. I also included short, noteworthy poems or quotes by other key poets, writers and scholars whom I found relevant to each poetic section.

> *The idea of beautifying my work came when I shifted to Persian poetry with all involved wisdom, to Attar, Rumi, mysticism and the deep, delicate, and sweet atmosphere of Persian literature and calligraphy. I wanted to concretize it, to express my emotions when writing those texts, and to share the joy with Others. Other times, I used art when I felt excited to have done delicate philosophical connections, after a long, joyful digging of ancient texts, when I felt I could tie two seemingly opposing traditions; when I could revive an ancient, forgotten, hidden, even hated tradition, a misrepresented, misunderstood treasure, a strong root and a mother[87]to current traditions, current knowledge; when I could feel at*

[86] Stands for rest in peace
[87] Past as a mother to the present

home, feel connected with my buried roots in our seemingly alive and cruel world ... the moments that made me revive my strongest self with their reunion …

For the main body of each valley, I had to deeply reflect on the beginning poem. I borrowed the English translations of Attar's original poem from Ghazinoory et al. (2013). I carefully reflected on the key concepts of the poem, tried to find key philosophical concepts related to the main ideas of the poem, see connections between mystic philosophical concepts and the hermeneutic philosophy, and then decide on how to read my data for the purpose of the valley. After reading and a new understanding of the research data, I described each valley based on all the connections that I could find between the poem, philosophies, and my data. I then went through my data, reviewed the story of each bird, all thirteen birds, separately, while keeping in mind the key philosophical concepts in both traditions and the highlights of the poem. To do this, sometimes, I had to review the story of each bird (each interview of 20 to 50 pages) several times. I also selected key, relevant parts from each participant, inserted them in the valley with the name of the participant in parentheses at the end of the quote to document and integrate my description. I indented each quote to separate it from my own words. I modified, expanded, or adapted the description sections after inserting the quotes, and used related words or expressions from the participants in the description parts. I marked words or expressions taken from my participants in single quotes. I double-checked all included quoted scripts and the terms in single quotes to ensure that the description of each valley includes the relevant experiences of all the birds, each in a different way. I followed this process for each valley separately. Sometimes, different quotes from various participants seemed relevant to the sections. In these cases, I would include them all if they were short or of adjustable[88] size. If they seemed too long, I would choose the most comprehensive, and representative quote. At the end of each valley, I wrote a small, summarizing piece which connected the two adjoining valleys. In a few cases, I used green color for distinguishing poems of key meaning central to the writing.

In my writing, I preferred not to use 'and' for connecting the words, phrases, or sentences. I used comma and semicolon almost all the time. Comma connotes 'stop', or 'pause', in my reflective writing. I replaced 'and' in many places with comma to pause after each part and reflect, and to

[88] I had to write in two columns for the sections that I added quotes and pictures

invite my readers to reflect, to read it patiently, and wholeheartedly, to really immerse themselves in the text.

Occasionally, I added pictures in between the texts to signify noteworthy themes and ideas. I also included some philosophical quotes relevant to the participants' quotes or my own descriptions of the valleys. I used pictures of mini Simorgh birds, similar to those I included in the birds' stories, to distinguish the philosophical insertions. I ended each valley with pictures of Simorgh birds with the names of Seven Valleys printed on their bodies.

In writing the valleys, I constantly faced a *basic* challenge. The basic challenge involved adapting and conjoining two different worlds. While *Simorgh* is a Sufi masterpiece which shows how seemingly worldly humans are the same in being divine in essence and inner side and can again become pure and united through their inner journey and transition and connecting to themSelves and all pure Other, and so to Other humans, my data was on how students felt at home (understood) in themSelves, within their society with Others and approached Others in a worldly space of a materialistic nature and earthly universe. These two spheres (divine and worldly/materialistic[89]) were somehow relevant, but vastly different. Choosing the right terminologies to convey both worldly and divine concepts at the same time was one of the most *challenging* aspects of writing Seven Valleys. I had to bridge the terrestrial and celestial worlds through near-appropriate vocabularies. I could truly experience what Fatima, one of participants, described in understanding her Self in an 'in between' situation after she had read about the Strangers. On day of her interview, it was hard to imagine that later I will face a similar dilemma in my writing:

> They (Strangers) live in this world with their bodies but their souls are attached to heavenly matters, they are the ambassadors of Allah in His lands ... I want that road (excited) but at the same time, I'm here and I'm going with this life and worldly matters and stuff you know so I'm kind of between both (excited) (Fatima)

So, I looked for the words, their different synonyms, and antonyms in various dictionaries. I had to be careful to choose the words which were not too far from their original mystic concepts, but at the same time would fit our worldly context. A great part of writing time for the valleys was

[89] Materialistic perspective views existence only in material terms, with no accounting of spirit or metaphysical/ consciousness

spent in between the worlds, words, and different dictionaries. Writing the Seven Valleys was a really challenging and rewarding process.

Involving both the *existential* and *essential* aspects of our being and understanding, Seven Valleys of *Simorgh* are included here to attend to the essential *unifying* understanding journey involved in the birds'/students' varied understanding journeys. Seven Valleys evoke the simultaneous ambiguity of the whole existence and our being, finely proposed in Mulla Sadra's notion of *tashkik al-wujud* (*Al-Asfar*, p. 35), or the *systematic ambiguity of Being*.

هفت وادی عشق

Seven Valleys of Love/Illumination/understanding: Self and Other Homecoming

Figure 16. The Tomb of Attar Neyshabouri, Neyshabour, Iran[90]

[90] The motif of repeated geometric shapes common to Islamic art of the twelfth century, as a symbol long was used to represent an inner journey or the path of a person's life; it emphasizes the overall theme of self-discovery crucial to this story.

While we may feel ourselves far from God, He is Near
God is Nearer than our Jugular Vein (Holy Qoran, Surah Qaf, Verse: 15)

گفت ما را ہفت وادی در رہ است — چون گذشتی ہفت وادی، درگہ است

ہست وادی طلب آغاز کار — وادی عشق است از آن پس، بی کنار

پس سیم وادی است آن معرفت — پس چہارم وادی استغنا صفت

ہست پنجم وادی توحید پاک — پس ششم وادی حیرت صعب ناک

ہفتمین وادی فقر است و فنا — بعد از این روی روش نبود تو را

در کشش افتی، روش گم گرددت — گر بود یک قطرہ قلزم گرددت

عطار نیشابوری

Attar's Seven Valleys of Illumination in Persian

The long journey of thousands of birds towards Mount Qaf, the highest peak in the world, terminated in success of only thirty birds of strong resolution and purpose. The birds' metaphor understanding experiences are situated in their long, life journeys. Their interpretations for metaphors are a short snapshot of their present understandings of themselves after their transition in time, place, and self. The birds' passage through the demanding valleys has shown them a different self, a desired self, a dreamed one, a self that they could only experience after their travel to a *new* land, after departure from their *familiar* land, from their familiar*, unexplored* self. Here are the birds in their passage through life valleys, the valleys of love, their transition, and the echo in their understanding of themSelves, Others, and next metaphors:

The Valley of Quest: وادی طلب

Pain of Excursion, Away from Home

Figure 17. The Valley of Quest,
Mahmoud Farshchian, Isfahan, Iran.

"When you *descend* into the valley of quest[91]
A hundred *difficulties*[92] will assail you in that empire;
Here for *years* you must *endeavour*, you must try
Because in this field elements *inverted* lie …" (Attar, 1177)

In *Masnavi,* Rumi has mentioned the 'Quest' as a prerequisite for moving toward *perfection*. He says that:

"Whatever you have from chattel and vocation
It was a *quest* and a thought at the *beginning*"

[91] Opening poems for seven valleys are translations from Attar's original poem (a few lines from the long poem), borrowed from Ghazinoory et al. (2013).
[92] All words in Attar's work are italicized in this story set of Valleys

The first, longest, and hardest valley traversed by the birds is the Valley of Quest. The valley of quest was the valley of *suffering*, the valley of making decision: the big decision to leave all their belongings, forsaking their 'loved'[93] ones, their 'caring' relatives and friends, their jobs, properties, and all their familiar life in their mother land. The hard decision of making a 'humble' journey from their 'comfort zones'[94], an exercise of 'patience' of living an 'unfamiliar' life, sometimes at an early age, in quest of their desired self, their 'different' self, their 'taken away', 'respected' self, their 'silenced', 'lost' voice, their 'strengths'; in quest of a fair ruler, a world of 'justice' to forget injustice, a 'caring system' in a 'better' land, a 'safer' land where they can explore their wishes, their power, their selves; where they can 'test' themselves, 'invent', and enjoy a 'better' life, a free life of being 'free' humans, men or women.

The birds entered an unfamiliar land, they restarted a new life full of *challenges,* an 'inverted' life in a new society of a different language, culture, people, and weather. They lost their strong ties: their families, relatives, close friends, or all; they felt 'isolated' and 'distanced' from their home language, culture, their ties, and their selves. They started to live with a 'nostalgia' of their home, to relieve their 'suffering' with a sense of a 'carried' home, by reviving the food, music, customs, clothes, and language, of home and its 'carried' sweet memories, by switching to a major making them feel home, or merely by meeting a countryman who might make them feel home away from home:

> My nostalgia for my country (Afghanistan) nonetheless continued and that's why I chose international development ... that's why I went back and forth multiple times (Shadi)
> I didn't really appreciate home that much when I was in just at home but now .... kind of back and forth … (Madina)

The birds nurtured the constant feeling of a 'stranger' everywhere. Living in a language with many 'unknown', many not 'feeling home', 'unhomelikely' words; the challenge of living as an 'accepted guest' in a new language, a 'monitor' language, a language and society in which they could not see themselves, they could not place themselves. The birds faced challenge in finding a job, accommodation as a 'foreigner'. They faced the greatest challenge of feeling 'away from home', of living *home, away from home*. They tried to create home by making strong connections with new others, by 'marrying' and 'living' with them. The feeling of being 'cursed', of losing their 'original' feelings for their home, their 'original' self and language, alas, still stayed with them:

> when I'm back from .. home (Iran) from your main home and experience a different world you are *cursed* because you will never never can have the original feeling that you had at home (Qazal)

[93] Words in single quotes are taken from the birds' exact terms, each from a different bird so that all are included for a relevant aspect in each Valley.

[94] All the words in single quotations are taken from the participants' words. Comfort zone here is used to refer to the previous, 'established' situation, and 'strong' social network of the birds (as described by Leila and mentioned by other birds in different ways). Leila who has even transitioned with her parents views her transition as a 'shock', and also a 'becoming', and 'learning' process, as an 'exercise' of 'patience' of living in an 'unfamiliar' place and culture

The birds felt 'disconnected' from their families. They broke some 'boundaries' which connected to their desired selves but disconnected them from their close others. They felt a 'gap' between themselves and their families. Their new selves could not connect to their families anymore, they were 'questioned' by their families, and their switch to their past selves would make them feel even 'lost'. The birds had to live their 'estrangement' with their ties. They sought their dream selves by distancing from others, but they became ever strangers to others, and themselves. It seemed a costly self-exploration journey, a costly risk. The birds had to develop a 'tolerant' self, tolerant for their becoming, for their 'differences', for their own questioning, for others' questioning, for losing their 'secure' feelings, their sense of 'belonging':

> Tolerance .... when I came here, I used to judge a lot .... but now ... I distance myself from that a little bit .... I know that there is a reason and I see this reason before judging that person and that's a really beautiful thing in my changing process because coming here has opened my eyes to the fact that there are different people, there are different ways of living .... there's not one right path and the others are wrong .. no there is different paths and they can all be right (Fatima)

The birds experienced the challenge of 'unlearning' their learned ways of living in encounter with the 'unfamiliar', with 'multicultural', diversity, multiplicity and complexity; the challenge of adopting and adapting to a 'new mentality'. They re-explored their ways of connecting with different people, the ways which did not seem natural and easy to adopt.
The travel of the birds involved 'self-sacrifice', self-sacrifice for their own goals, and their families:

> Canada is tough for an immigrant or new Canadian ... especially when you're breadwinner of family .... the reason I choose that (not to break certain boundaries) was not myself I sacrificed for my family members (Shadi)

The birds started to 're-build' their selves to the ones 'acceptable' to others, but 'unknown' to themselves. They became 'puzzled', 'distant' from their Self, 'armed' for the 'unexpected', ready to switch to their previous selves any moment. Their hesitance, their fears, their challenges, made them strive, made them delve down into their selves, into others, to explore and 'improve' themselves.
The birds' journey involved hard moments of adapting, adapting to the 'busy' time of 'systematic' life; difficult times of 'feeling' and 'finding' themselves in the 'rush' of time. They spent arduous times of practicing an 'independent' life, education, of freeing themselves from 'routine', of getting 'disarmed' in face of 'novelty':

> I **had no idea** how the university here is and it was just overwhelming so much that I had **hard time** to understand what professor was saying, also had two professors which don't use any power point slides and don't write anything on the chalkboard and I was oh my God my English not ready for this at all (Neo)
> I'm resisting ... it might be some internal resistance to .. to the new environment ... to accept the fact that I am here that I will be here for a long time it's very hard (Alexa)

The birds experienced challenging times of deserting their departing feelings, their 'discouraging' feelings, of nurturing encouraging dreams of returning home, of building their home country, in their disappointment:

> When I left my home in 96 for good .. at least that time I thought that's for good ... I .. promised myself that I will come back and contribute (Shadi)

The birds struggled to *survive* difficulties. They started 'creating' a new path, against the 'routine,' against the 'current', their own path. They involved in 'self-compromise', 'self-battle' to defeat the 'unfamiliar', the 'unknown', the 'fearful', to 'know' and 'prove' themselves. They started exploring themselves with others, with 'different' others in a world with all its 'complexity'. The birds felt 'terrified' but hoped in 'satisfaction'. They fought hard to survive their long 'self-combat' of questioning, rebuilding and reassuring their selves, a combat that was showing them their strong self 'capable' of achieving the far possible.

The birds resisted all the difficulties of living their 'inverted' world of great distance and 'alienation' from their relatives, connections, their countries and their Selves, for becoming 'better' persons with different others. They transitioned to explore their dreamed selves, to, maybe, feel at home, away from home.

The Valley of Love: وادی عشق

Self-Education {through, with, and for Others}

Figure 18. The Valley of Love, Mahmoud Farshchian, Isfahan, Iran.

In a Persian dictionary (Dehkhoda) love means "*adhesion* to something". In his *Symposium*, Plato argues that love is the progeny of need. Lovers *need* to attain what they want or *protect* what they have (Ghazinoory et al., 2013). Likewise, Attar believes that a lover only thinks about his love and may not care about anything else.

Attar says:

"Next the *tempting* valley of love displays itself

Whoever enters that field *burns* in the furnace;
A true lover stakes his *cash* and his *head*
For *union* with his beloved and his mate;
:
:
:
Others are content with another day's promise to wait
But the *lover* finds his *beloved* here ..."

The Valley of Love is a valley of higher investment, a phase of higher risk, higher suffering; a valley tightly connected to the birds' ambitions, their goal, their need for transition, their dream self.

The birds' higher aim of travelling was 'learning', self-perfection: learning about the world, so of themselves, 'better education', better 'understanding' for a 'better' self. The birds found learning and self-improvement a duty, a 'responsibility' to be met:

> I just want to make sense of the world .. learn as much as I can (Neo)

> I'm working on myself now ... I feel there is a kind of responsibility put on my shoulders and I have to ... meet that responsibility (Ali)

The birds' sublime aim of self-understanding and self-perfection enabled them to beat all uncertainties, unfamiliarity, ambiguities, and difficulties to learn about themselves, through the other, the unfamiliar other. Their love for their higher purpose strengthened them to stand the disturbing 'types of face', manners, or behaviours which made them feel 'away from home', which created a lonely feeling, of a 'distant' Other:

> When they [people] react with me in some type of face that I don't really like that hurts me a lot and the fact that hurts in me develops that sense of loneliness I'm missing that home where I won't feel that loneliness (Fatima)

The birds' love of learning with others, learning about themselves and their new context with Others, moved them to sacrifice their own passions, to adapt their habits to their aims. They 'distanced' from their Selves, their native language and culture, to 'rediscover' themSelves[95], with Others, and to satiate their need for learning:

> To learn ... here .. you have to be like open, careful ... because you don't want your culture, your language to get as a barrier between you and other people (Zahra)

The birds learned that changing and adjusting their minds and becoming open to others were the keys to their self-betterment; the things that they needed to learn by going through different phases of learning.
The birds' learning about themselves with different others involved learning about Others, learning about their language, their mentality:

> lf thinking in English like I eventually I do think in English It has become a part of my everyday life now my *mentality* has changed (Alexa)

The birds' learning involved *spiritual* learning through knowing others' different cultures, through re-learning about their own cultures, gaining 'deeper' understanding of their own religions through others:

> This transition has left a lot of things in my life .... I have learned a lot not only by going to school, but I also I could see *spiritually* because I have been meeting people after learning

[95] Self and Other is capitalized throughout the text wherever there is an emphasis on the being of the individuals. Leaving their habits and distancing from their selves is in line with definition of circle understanding/self-understanding

about like different *cultures*, different people ... when I came here, I didn't know a lot about my religion ... it really impressed me to see people like wearing hijab and it was modest and something about it was truthful .... the way they used to conduct, it was really touched me you know something was part of it ... that I liked I guess so it pushed me to learn a lot about my religion (Fatima)

The birds' *spiritual* learning involved reflecting and learning about their past behaviours, about 'inappropriateness' of certain behaviours, 'racial discrimination' in their own birth countries. They learned that mere silence as an 'assumed' privileged member in sight of discrimination was not enough, that they need to change, to correct (themselves), they need to act against injustice, to feel responsible for others' pains, and use their power to relieve others' pains:

Racial discrimination is very high in my culture and when I came here I learned that that was so so fundamentally wrong .. I don't have any ... biases ... if I have anything that would be more understanding and appreciation to what they have gone through people from racial backgrounds that have been suppressed historically ... so I would say that experience (transition) spiritually has been positive and ... I confirmed a privileged ethnic group ... I always was silent ... now I'm more outspoken about the rights of others back home (Shadi)

The birds learned about the things that they were always deprived from learning by excluding certain others in their past lives. Including others of different values in their lives made them grow in new ways. The birds learned how different-seeming individuals would teach them, improve, and revisit their own prejudices:

I included some people that I might not have included in Brazil .... People who made life decisions that were very different from my life decisions ..... that allows me to grow .. to revisit certain prejudices ... (Leila)

To learn more about themselves with others, the birds felt the need to know about the world around them. They re-oriented their studies to the areas which gave them a better understanding of the world, other people and cultures, and *themselves*, majors which gave them a broader perspective to their past and present, further know their selves:

When I did communication in the beginning I wanted to do advertising in the future, and after I took sociology course, I thought that's not something I wanted, it doesn't *really fulfill my life purpose*, so I started uh sociology as my major .... It helps you to see what really matters in life .... every time I take the course, I just feel that I'm closer to *myself* .... (Neo)

The birds started to know themselves in a more *global* scale. Recognizing the place of others and the world around them in their own self-understanding, they became concerned about the things happening around them, beyond their temporal locale:

Before we just .. localize with the .. school where I was and not open towards the global .. characterization so we just ... we do whatever we have to do without paying attention to what's going on around us (Saád)

Others are content with another day's promise to wait, But the *lover* finds his *beloved* here ... (Attar, Manitq al-tair)

The birds
grew in their isolation and
detachment from their past ties.
The 'free' valley gave them the chance,
the space to learn about their own potentials
to pursue their road of perfection. The
'melting pot' of diverse life provided a
rich atmosphere where the birds
could choose their best ways to
restructure their lives, after
better knowing of
themselves.

Figure 19. Life in Full Bloom, Mahmoud Farshchian, Isfahan, Iran.

I appreciate the fact that I was at this university, because I was learning sociology and philosophy and it offered me a chance, like alternative to see this perspective of the world in my life and it wasn't like for example if I was still in china, I only have one view, I don't even have the choice to choose (Neo)

In my country it was more the fact that I was born in Muslim and I have to be Muslim but when I came here it was more the fact that you choose to be Muslim (Fatima)

In the Valley of Love, the birds found 'learning' as their *new passion,* a lifelong passion which was worth all the challenges:

I love being student ... I love to learn ... this is like my interest in life (Zahra)

The birds had entered the Valley of Love with the higher aim of 'learning' and 'self-perfection'. They hoped to find their dream self, understand themSelves, and feel at home. They did not see their Selves fitting into the Valley after a while. Finding travelling self-enlightening, the

birds decided to move up towards the next, deeper valley of greater understanding, the Valley of Knowledge:

> When I came here, I had the intention of just staying in Canada and have a life here and find a job and have a family but right now I don't see myself staying in Canada, I still want to go to other place and the goals constantly changing and I think as I *learn* more it might be different even tomorrow (Neo)

The birds left the Valley of Love, each with their own different learnings, different understandings of themselves, of others and the world. Their travel from their Selves, was making them feel closer to themSelves.

The Valley of Knowledge: وادی معرفت

Recognition of BeingS

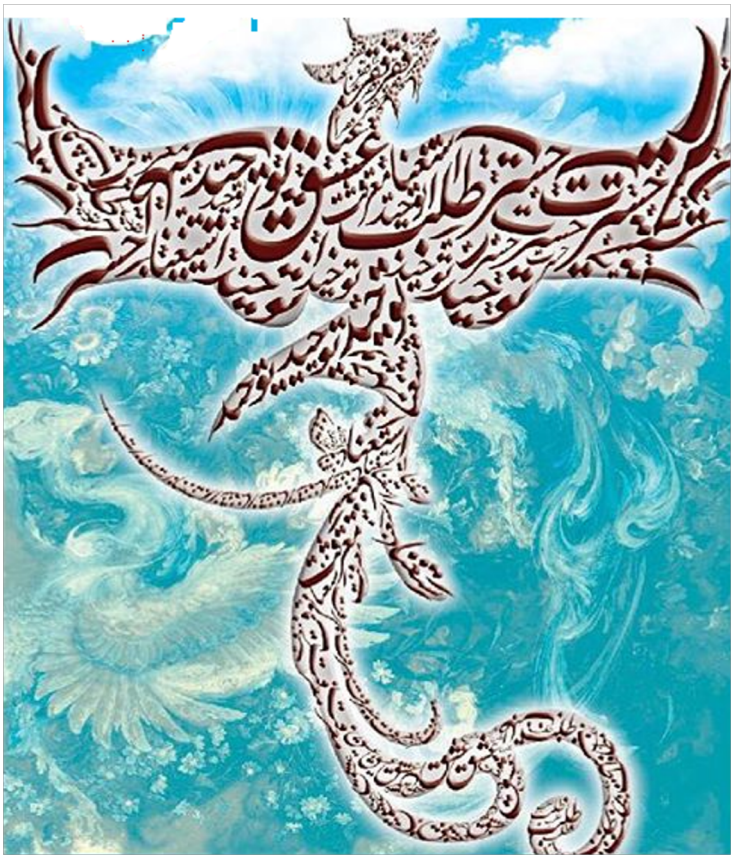


Figure 20. The Valley of Knowledge
(Simorgh with Persian names of Seven Valleys on its body)
http://www.shabestan.ir/detail/News/516116

Paths in the valley of knowledge are *abundant*, therefore every wayfarer can gain knowledge based on his *capacity*. No path is similar to another path, hence there could be a *total difference* between the pathways of *different* wayfarers (Ghazinoory et al., 2013).

Attar says:
"No one can find a fixed road in this place
Because there are *many roads* and *different destinations*;
And since many paths the wanderer sees
Each rise as his *wisdom* guides or foresees;
Each person *marches* till he attains his own *perfection*
Yet *moods dictate* friendship and one's action ..."

After passage of the Valley of Love, the birds entered the Valley of knowledge. The Valley of Knowledge was the valley of deep reflection, the valley of higher self-understanding. Here the birds 're-explored' themselves with others. The birds' adhesion to their goal in this valley, their higher aim of perfection, ended in greater understanding, greater insight, co-created insight.

In the Valley of Knowledge, the birds found 'new meanings' for their habits, cultures, and beliefs. They saw them in a wider perspective. They surpassed their previous horizons. Living with other 'different' beings made them aware of the existence of other ways of thinking, knowing, other horizons, other ways of being. With the knowledge of all diversity and multiplicity around them, the birds revisited their 'biases' and became 'modest'. They understood that the key to learn more and grow higher is to become 'open' to others, to be 'tolerant' of others' different ways of thinking, being.

In the Valley of Knowledge, the birds learned about 'multiplicity'. Multiplicity in their understandings, in their self-understandings. The birds' transition to their place taught them new ways of living with others, new ways of understanding, and being:

> I had to change the city to another city like I was in Montreal and change to come here ... we all know that French people and English people don't have the same way of thinking ... it changed my life from inside out because the way I used to feel inside I don't feel the same and the way I used to dress as well .... it has *completely* changed me (Fatima)

The birds found multiplicity in their different ways of living their lives. The birds found all others living their lives differently, taking their own new, 'untaken' roads of life. This modest understanding revealed the significance of all their different roads as 'making a difference'. They did not see themselves on one sole, superior, 'difference-making' road of life:

> I think the road not taken can be roadS
> I think every road will make a difference ... this one I am taking yea it's making a difference ... the other ones I could have taken they would have made other difference ..... I just don't think any road is any better than the other (Leila)

The birds appreciated multiplicity, multicultural diversity, they appreciated 'alien' others as the key for rebuilding themselves to a better self, as a bridge to their dream self, to their inner self:

> Multicultural ..... the biggest change in my life is being able to have all these variety ... being able to learn about lots of things that I didn't have the chance to see in Brazil .. and .. learning how to rebuild myself (Leila)

The birds noticed how their different transition experiences were distinguishing them from most other birds who did not take their long journey:

> I took the roads that others other women in my generation don't take .... and I came back as a different person (Shadi)

In the Valley of knowledge, the birds became aware of 'temporality', of the 'transitional' nature of their understandings, of the 'mood' of their understandings. They found that understanding is 'iridescent', that the road of understanding is a long, endless road with no point on which they can feel fully understood:

> It's like the color that is iridescent when you look at different angle it's different color (Neo)
> One day I feel like oh I know myself so well and I know what to do next I am very confident but when something happens unexpected ..... then I'm all again confused how should I act .... I see it (understanding) as a process like I don't see it as a finished thing ... (Alexa)

In the world of multiplicity, each bird came to understand herself differently, different from her past understanding in a different time and space. The birds found their new world differently. They found their new world liberating, giving them the space to break rules, to take risks, to develop a 'risk taker' personality, a new personality, a new way of being, different from their previous selves:

> I think I'm not naturally and personally a risk taker ... if I was in Afghanistan I would have had a very traditional life .. the reason became more ... like a risk taker .. was because I came to this culture .. and my deviation from my culture and breaking the rules traditions was possible only because I came to Canada (Shadi)

The birds felt unshackled in their new world, freed of their forced tags, of forced borders around them in their new world. They appreciated their 'respected' new life which gave back their entitled human rights. While feeling in between their homes and nationalities, they felt confident in the future of their roads:

> (In Dubai) Outsiders are like machines ... they don't have rights they don't have anything except that salary which is less than half of what they pay for their citizens ... this kind of racism and discrimination is not in Canada (Ali)
> (Here) it's pretty much stable .. we're not going in ups and downs .. I don't have any problems or worries about future ... (Saád)

The birds felt unshackled by learning through cultural diversity; diverse contexts gave them a rich opportunity to learn and re-understand themselves in the world with its 'complexity', in interaction with people of multiple cultures, of different ways of thinking, to grow as a person:

> I think ...it's really important to be able to understand the world in its complexity .... to grow as a person (Camila)
> Understanding something new with having my own knowledge about things beforehand from my own culture so like accepting new ways of life in here … it makes me more accepting (Madina)

The birds saw their multicultural context as an opportunity to learn about things that were 'unknown' to them, as their 'dream' land to explore their 'unknown' capabilities, their dream selves:

I got to meet people from all over the world and learn about things that were so unknown to me (Leila)

Figure 21. Joy of Diversity, M. Farshchian, Isfahan, Iran.

The migrating birds found their new world replete with ways of 'being'. They found their own ways of being as their 'chosen' way of 'living' which was different from others' many ways of being. They could see different ways of living as different paths, with no path being right or wrong. The birds viewed life road as one road which is 'lived' differently, in multiple ways, by different individuals:

> Coming here has opened my eyes in [to] the fact that there are different people, there are different ways of living and they can both (all) be right .... there is not one right path and the others are wrong no there is different paths and they can all be right (Fatima)

Away from their motherlands, the birds understood an ''inconsistent' view in bordering and uniting lands, a contradictory, self-availing positioning that they all took towards their lived and living countries and homes, seeing them both as separate and connected. They felt a similar inconsistency and multiplicity in their own understanding of home, of their selves:

> We contradict ourselves we say borders are artificial ... but at the same time we want to draw border so that we can call somewhere home ... we are not consistent in our preferences ... (Shadi)
> There are times that I think oh Afghanistan and if there is war and conflict if people die ... or cricket players win international award ... I consider Afghanistan more as my home .... but when I'm in Canada and I came right away from Afghanistan after like facing threat or abuse ... I think I'm so glad that this is my home (Shadi)

The birds started to explore the ways to connect, to live-with-one-another, to be-with-one-another in their great differences, in their multiplicity.

Being and Living-with-one-another in Diversity

In their new land, the birds developed the ways to be and live-with-one-another in their multiplicity. They formed 'double parts', 'double consciousness', 'double persona', a 'double self' to 'survive' their transition from their past selves, to open a space for their evolving self, for other selves in their new world.

Initially surprised by the 'border' they felt in between many selves, a 'privacy'-called boundary which distanced the selves, surprised by self-fragmentation, the birds developed a 'double' self, one close to their past and the other close to their present self, to approach and feel connected to both 'intimate' and 'private' selves:

> When I came here it was really very different from back in China, because back in China even if you just make a new friend, everyone seems so close together ... but here in Canada people seems to have more distance with each other .. they want to have a boundary, they want to have a privacy even if you guys are best friends and that was .. uncomfortable for me .. I wasn't used to it, but right now I feel okay, understand that .. I could still interact with people in both ways ... (Neo)

The birds understood themselves in between their emotional and logical selves, in between their native and new language, defining, and expressing their different selves, in living with other different selves. The birds found their native language expressing their emotional selves and their new language their logical selves. They found themselves moving in between their different selves, different languages, to connect, to be and live with other selves:

> I have become less emotional more rational ... so I learned that it's best to sort of keep emotions on side and be rational ... you have to learn to communicate differently with people here and that's what I have learned during these five years (Alexa)

The birds 'revisited' their prejudices, developed an 'inclusive' persona to be able to be and live-with-others. Leaving their past 'bubbles', they learned by 'including' and living-with-others, those whom they used to exclude from their 'circles', those they could never imagine how they can change their views:

> I included people who ... valued different things than the ones I valued .... they are ... helping me learn about .. how life can be different ... how cannot I assume things about people .. before getting to know them (Leila)

The travelling birds surpassed the illusory borders in being and living-with-others: they re-connected with their far away relatives through their majors, and their jobs. They lived with their distant relatives through keeping their culture, language and tradition, through observing and supporting their rights afar. The birds lived with others beyond their land, cared for and paid attention to what was happening beyond in global context:

> In terms of the global context ... internationally ... before we just .. localize with the .. school where I was and not open towards the global ... we do whatever we have to do without paying attention to what's going on around us (Saád)

The birds' practice of being and living-with-others entailed this higher understanding that: in spite of all the distance in their places, times and their selves, their different life roads will somehow connect at the end, that:

> Way leads on to way .... because taking this one road at the beginning will take you to other road ... (Leila)

The birds learned about their 'power' and 'freedom' to beat the road challenges; they knew themselves as 'capable' to 'create' their own paths. They also learned of their own weakness, their inability to control their road ends:

> You never know where things take you (Leila)

The birds appreciated the great impact of their learnings in this valley on their self-accomplishment as becoming more human: more open and respectful to others:

> The more you learn the more tolerant you are .. the more respectful you are (Camila)

The migrant birds understood themselves as 'traveller learners', taking the endless road of experiencing and learning:

> I think that if you are a traveller, and *scanner* who look for new things ... Scanner who always looks for different things for *learning* new stuff (Zahra).

The Valley of Knowledge culminated in greater freedom. In greater knowledge and learning about their power and inability. The learning birds flied higher and higher to the next valley, the deeper Valley of Detachment, to explore, learn, and understand more of themSelves, all together.

The Valley of Detachment: وادی استغنا

Becoming Homeless, the Way to Becoming the Other

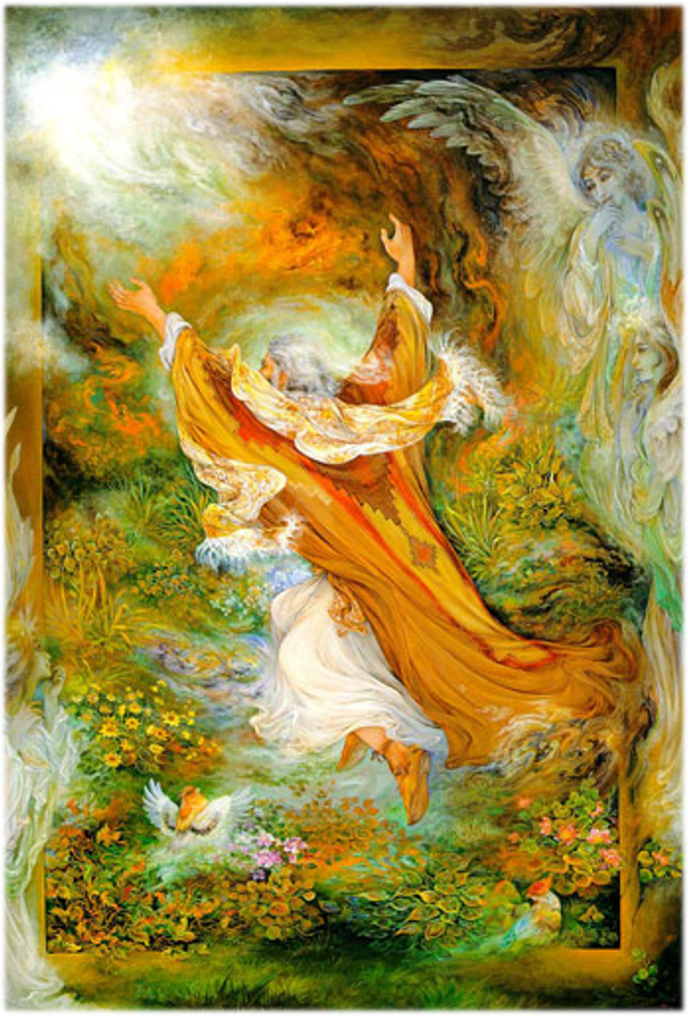


Figure 22. The Valley of Detachment, M. Farshchian, Isfahan, Iran.

After passing previous valleys, when the wayfarer comes to this valley, he feels free from everything and everybody, but
Light
In his point of view, the world and its components
are very small compared to the endless magnificence
of his beloved (Ghazinoory et al., 2013).

Attar says:
"Seven oceans here in one breath turn into a pool
Seven burning globes turn here to a fire ball, the whole;
If a part or the whole system perish here

It seems that a *straw* is lost in the sphere …"

In the Valley of Detachment, the birds become free from attachments, home, ties, from their temporary time and place. They get freed of whatever diverted them from their higher aim of learning and self-perfection, from whatever created a temporary, illusive sense of 'belonging', from whatever deterred achievement of their aim:

> I changed my family name from a very privileged name (Shadi, after transition to Canada)

The birds' higher self-understanding in the Valley of Knowledge enabled them to see the impermanence of all their ties, their attachments to their selves, others, places, homes. Everything seems 'transient', trivial, 'nothing', compared to their higher aim. The birds broke their self-made 'shell', 'bubbles', all the 'boundaries' which were surrounding them, which veiled their supreme goal.

The birds' detachment from their ties involved 'purification', purification from 'self-doubts', 'questioning', 'guards', 'assumptions' to see their goal. To get 'purified', the birds had to sacrifice all their belongings, human and non-human ties:

> There is a state where you have to be purified, if you know that ... you see ... the goal .... the kinds of persons that ... could give away whatever they have for something better but if they have a great goal they could sacrifice I think it's the sacrificing part that when you're able to sacrifice you can engage with that road ... (Fatima)

The birds became detached from their 'conventional' homes, their 'motherland', their 'bold' homes, the people who revived their home (feelings) in their new places. Return to their previous places did not make them feel home anymore, they had changed, their people had changed, their places had changed. The previously 'familiar' place of 'similar' people felt surprisingly 'different', giving them a 'reverse culture shock':

> Now when I go back home I have this reverse feeling culture shock each time and things are not really familiar (Neo)

The travelling birds created 'mobile' home, 'copies' of their 'true' home, with new people, in new places. They found their homes in the 'moment', in their 'present' place, with 'present' people. They understood home as a 'transient' feeling, a feeling which was present whenever they felt 'fit', 'connected', whenever they could be themselves, a feeling which was missing when they felt 'judged', 'disconnected'. The birds forsook their attachment to their previous home(s), to ONE home; home as a place did not seem relevant anymore:

> It becomes more and more irrelevant question for me .. in the past I needed to have a home I needed to belong to a place but now I think .. it's no longer that relevant it becomes more and more irrelevant question for me .. (Shadi)

> Back in China I'm not comfortable .... Canada is also I don't feel really at home ... I don't have that sense of belonging or anything and I'm not even looking for that sense of belonging ... feeling of I have to belong to somewhere I don't feel the necessity (Neo)
> I feel at home anywhere (Leila)

The birds started to feel home in not having any home, any physical home, in freeing themselves from belonging to a bordered land, in choosing the whole world as their home, in becoming 'homeless', in finding their home 'in between' themselves through 'love', through 'care' for each other, through 'sharing', in creating 'familiarity':

> Home is a place which is very related to memories, with the feelings of love, care, familiarity (Alexa)

Losing their previous homes, the birds 'created' their homes 'here and there', regardless of place, through connecting with others. They considered their current place not a home but a temporary stop in their long journey of learning and becoming 'experienced', the long journey of 'feeling home' in learning:

> It's your home when you have all the experience all the learning and you got enough ... you want just to use what you have learned ... when you ... just use what you have learned ... that is home .. so .. you are not travelling ... you are staying in that one place .. for me in Canada or in Europe I'm still a traveller .. I'm still learning ... (Zahra)

The birds went through a 'gradual' process of detachment from place, from borders, they experienced the process of becoming homeless; detachment from their native 'familiar' country as their 'ever' home to Canada as their 'built' home to 'nowhere' and 'everywhere' as their home:

> If we don't believe in borders anymore that means anywhere could be your home (Shadi)
> My home is kind of nowhere and everywhere at the same time (Carolina)
> I think anywhere could be your home ... it just depends on if you have that connection or not .... common belief and ... shared value .... a sense of community (Neo)
> In Canada is also I don't feel really at home ..... I know this say sounds cliché but I feel everywhere is my home (Neo)
> I have my roots a little bit everywhere (Carolina)

The birds started to find themselves in other languages, learning with other people of different languages; they started to feel themselves, to feel home in others' languages, in 'alien' languages; they started to become 'homeless' in language, they made home in 'other' than their native language, in Language of no border. Their 'home language' became other's language, their own native language, they felt home in both, in none, in either, they no more felt alienation in other's language:

> I defined home is more comfortable, then I feel more comfortable with English for now …. I feel more at home in English because I'm .... comfortable with this culture … English is very ….. straightforward and logical and .. I feel more myself, it's more towards my .. inner personality .. (Neo)
> In this context (Canada)... English ... depends on my definition of home .... we communicate very well .. in Arabic .. if I decided to speak in English ... in my house I will completely isolate myself .... the language (home language) that I can use it freely without being challenged to no matter what this language is (Saád)
> I feel comfortable speaking in English but of course not same level as when I speak Cantonese this for sure because I cannot understand most of the jokes ... I'm a super funny person when I speak Cantonese I make everybody laugh but in English no it's super hard for me to say a joke ... when I talk to some Chinese people, sometimes I feel at home speaking in English because sometimes .. I find a little bit difficulty of speaking Mandarin ... I feel home speaking English as well when I talk ... with a group of English speakers .... *it's hard to say* ... it's not like English but ... probably English (Jane)
> I feel at home with both languages (Spanish and English) (Camila)
> None of them (English, Portuguese, French) (Carolina)

The birds noticed their self-cultivation in using others' language; they felt a language other than their own language was changing them, making them grow, moving them closer to their aim:

> When I speak in English I do try to promote myself, show like oh I am confident stuff, so that kind of change my personality as well yea and I do value it as a positive way positive change (Neo)

Feeling home in others' language, their 'emotional connection' with the language, the birds survived the 'shock', survived the difficulties of an 'unfamiliar', 'intimidating' language; their emotional connection alleviated their sufferings in the valley, helped them adjust to others and feel their language as 'part of' themselves; the 'alien' language was becoming part of them, it was revealing their selves, making them known the others:

> Here is this language is helping me to adjusting to the society .. yea and it becomes part of me ... the fact that I could interact with other people better, I never experienced loneliness or anything, so I have that emotional connection with English (Neo)
> (I) understand myself better when I speak English but .. I think ... when I speak Mandarin I never think about this kind of thing (Neo)
> With English the time that I'm really learning this language is the time that I start to trying to understand myself trying to discover who I am (Neo)

The migrant birds started to feel their homes, their home languages, close to their 'inner' selves, their 'hidden' selves, their 'dream' selves, 'dream' homes, close to their 'voice'. They felt happy for their big migration towards their selves. They found themselves happy in not being 'attached' to any place anymore, in having developed a *transnational* self:

I love Brazil .. I really like lots of things about Canada .. I would love lots of things about Australia .. and I would love lots of thigs about ... like Germany I have no idea but I don't feel like I need to be in one place to be happy (Leila)

In all their happiness, the birds constantly experienced the feeling of being homeless, missing home:

A part of me never feels at home it will never feel (Alexa)
I miss something everywhere sometimes .. it does not depend on the place (Fatima)

The birds' greater understandings of themselves, of others, in the Valley of Detachment made them further aware of their 'limited' knowledge about the whole multifarious world, of the 'nothingness' of their understandings of the world, of the 'limitless' road of knowing. The more they learned about different views, different cultures and languages, about different others, the more they doubted their certainty in knowing the world, in knowing themselves and others, the more they learned about their ignorance, of their long journey to learning, the more hence they became 'modest' in viewing their knowledge:

I used to feel I knew things and now I feel like I don't know anything I felt everything was ... round .. the way that I thought and that was the ultimate rule and then I came here and I realize that I know nothing and I'm in the process of learning and I would never know enough (Fatima)
Just being able to talk with people I know for so many different cultures and countries ... in general I think I know nothing about the world .... I have so much to learn (Camila)

The birds found their way to learning long, wide open; they chose to heighten their flight, their 'free' flight, towards the next valley, another stop to see more of themSelves with Others ..... perhaps to feel at home ...

The Valley of Unity: وادی توحید

Unity in Multiplicity

Figure 23. The Valley of Unity
http://rahrovanehaghighat.ir/2017/12/664464/

In the Valley of Unity everything comes into one,
everything is a phenomenon of the beloved
(Ghazinoory et al., 2013)

Attar says:

"When faces are turned to this desert and wake
All heads are raised from a *single* neck;
If many you behold or few in the valley
They are all but *one*, they are *one wholly* …"

The Valley of Unity, is the valley of 'convergence', of weness, 'shared identity'. In the Valley of Unity the birds realize that everything is connected, that there is unity in all their multiplicity. The birds realize that their different ways of taking their roads of learning and self-perfection

'connect', converge, that 'ways lead to way', that their individual transitioning and self-improvement is 'beyond' themselves, affects others, affects everyone, unifies everyone:

We're ONE ... people think that the fact that people's moral does not affect them but it's not true it affects all of us like when he is becoming a good person and he is making a difference and he sacrifices he sacrifices for everyone (Fatima)

A Butterfly's flapping wings in Brazil could set off a tornado in Texas, a call to act with humility (Lorenz, 1972)

In the Valley of Unity, the birds realize that to achieve their goals, their goals of self-perfection, learning about themselves, they need to approach Others. They understand that to realize their Self-dreams, to experience their dream Self, to gain peace and feel belonging to their new land, to new people, and to grow and feel fulfilled, they need to know Others well, they need to unite. The birds realize that they need to converge to attain their goals, each in a different way of approaching Others:

> You don't want your culture, your language to get as a barrier between you and other people (Zahra)

The travelling birds become aware of the illusion of their self-made 'bondage': their imagined borders between their coming lands, between their 'ethnic groups', between individuals. Breaking their self-made boundaries, the birds developed their personal selves into a 'collective' self, they saw others as belonging to themselves, as 'similar' to them in all their differences, as all being on the same journey, following a similar goal:

> I'm learning from them that they are much more similar to me that I would have expected ... that they have desires which are similar to the ones I have (Leila)

> It's whole about finding within you what you want ... going to something unknown and finding within you whatever you feel like you need (Leila)

The birds' choice of a field of study closer to themselves and others made them see everyone as the same, all being the same in their different countries; it made them not see the necessity of assuming borders in this modern world, of having different countries, or belonging to a bordered land:

> [In] sociology ... it's like in the beginning .... there is no country or nation divided, it's only because of monarchy those kind of system that you want to have a land that belong to you and a king and queen rule that land, but right now they want to democracy or anything so there is no king or ... queen, but there is a government and that's only region that made you feel oh this country is my country ... but actually when you think about what makes you and me different, we're **the same** ... why would I call myself Chinese and you're

> Iranian, what's the difference? ... I don't see the drive to see that sense of belonging ... that's not something matters to me (Neo)

The birds find others in all their differences and similarities as the key to their own transitioning, to their learning in their journey, in their inner journey:

> The more access you have to different cultures ... to different way of thinking ... of all that changed the perspective . .. or make you think different about yourself or learn more (Camila)

Their learnings provoked the birds to think about and care for those 'across' borders: some tried to re-connect and 'unite' people across borders, unite people in their native lands and other lands with people in their current land [96]. Some tried to unite people in protecting human values[97], in respecting 'human rights', equal human rights[98], their various 'ethnicities', various 'accents', 'cultures', their various 'ostensible' features[99], for not knowing themselves by 'nationalities'[100]; some 'reacted' to 'discrimination' anywhere[101], to individual fragmentation worldwide, all over their expanded home 'everywhere'. Some other birds learned to unite themselves with 'bordered', fragmented individuals inside their current land[102]; they learned to move across others' self borders, enter their 'bubbles', dissolve their borders together to see their old connection, their kinship[103]. The birds became united together in achieving a 'borderless' view of life, each in their own way, in living and learning with diverse selves, in knowing all as the same, as the same humans:

> I found that we can be so different but so the same .. at the same time, you know I'm not much different from someone in India or China or Brazil (Carolina)

The birds feel possessing 'power', a 'shared power', created through dialogue and unity with others, they see themselves powerful in 'being' with others in their place, on their road, in making all feel owning home, feeling at home in their place:

> It sounds .... selfish but home for me is .... where you feel .. safety .. where you have a power over your place ... power doesn't mean ..... a coup .. on your place or to be .... a dictatorship ..... no .... it's to share with others .... it's to be with others .. it's to be able to negotiate with others .... and we all own that place as a collective agreement ..... even at home .... a one man power could make children kids or wives feel stranger .. in their own homes ... (Saád)

[96] Shadi, Leila
[97] Fatima, Zahra, Neo
[98] Ali, Saád, Shadi
[99] Carolina, Neo, Fatima
[100] Neo, Fatima, Leila, Saád
[101] Shadi, Saád, Leila
[102] Alexa, Fatima, Jane
[103] Leila, Shadi

In their higher understanding in the Valley of Unity, the birds felt unified with their life road. They felt unified with others on the same road**.** They saw themselves in the middle of an ancient chain of learning, an old road where they, as other passengers, pass teachings from previous travellers to the next ones. The birds found themselves favoured, 'gifted', to be on this eternal road, to becoming immortal on the eternal road of learning:

> He (traveller) knows that if he takes this road, he is going forever because maybe it's the role of teachings and when it teaches you you have to teach back to leave it ... so maybe it is a gift and then you have to take it for yourself you learn then you teach it so you can live forever so maybe the road will live forever you'll die but of course the world will continue forever ... (Fatima)

The birds know that to achieve their higher goal they need to 'engage' with their road, to 'give away' all their belongings, to become the eternal road:

> It's the sacrificing part that when you're able to sacrifice you can engage with that road (Fatima)

The ascending birds found themselves approaching their 'dream' selves; many small changes in their connections with other birds was making them closer to their wished self, to whom they once wanted to be:

> The beauty of moving to another country you get an opportunity to .. be someone else ..... small small things add out and you become somebody else and sometimes you become somebody else that you already wanted to be (Leila)

The birds recognized 'tolerance' as the golden key to all their growth, their understandings of themselves, with different others, as the key to their understanding of their power with others, as a key to love and care for others, to unify with others and appreciate themSelves, and approach their sublime goal:

> Tolerance yea, tolerance, I think that's one of the most beautiful things that I have learned and I think that's one of the most beautiful things that human being can have..... because tolerance is .. you learn to love people by tolerance (Fatima)

And the birds felt stronger, powerful, together; they felt closer to their dreams, they were creating their dreams, their dream land ... What the birds have been striving for, each in their long journeys, in their separate roads, was getting actualized in their unity on the same road ...

The Valley of Astonishment and Bewilderment (Awe-some) **وادی حیرت**

In Betweenness:

Figure 24. The Valley of Astonishment, Saeed Abasi, Isfahan, Iran.

In the valley of bewilderment, the
wayfarer imagines that he is in a new world. After
experiencing previous valleys and gaining divine
wisdom, he discovers that so far, he did not know
anything.

In this valley, the wayfarer experiences pain and regret.
When he enters this valley, it is like a new world for him where he
is wondered and bewildered (Ghazinoory et al., 2013)

Attar says:

"Behold! The next is the valley of *bewilderment*
Here pain and regret ever rave and thunder;
When the pilgrim in this *vortex* descends
He loses the path in *amazement* and *awe*;
He will say 'I *know nothing* of such *riddle*
I know not this or that, I'm *blank* in
the middle' …"

Sa´adi characterizes the bewilderment valley as:

"I am not silent because I forget you
It's because I am bewildered from your thought"

In the Valley of Astonishment and Bewilderment, the sixth valley of venture and transitioning, the sixth valley of self-exploration and self-perfection, the birds re-understand themselves more fully. Having gained a higher understanding and wisdom after the traverse of five difficult valleys, after their empowering, varied unification in the fifth valley, the birds rethink their past, re-view themselves, their knowledge, their understandings of themselves, and the world. From their higher horizon, the birds could see the shallowness of their understandings, the triviality of their knowledge, the narrowness of their individual horizons. They could see their deep ignorance. The birds could see the 'bend' of their road, of their Not Taken Road, yet, were unable to see beyond the bend; they remained 'silent', 'helpless', in awe, of a secret majesty, an unlimited *Wisdom*.

In their new understanding, the birds re-experience familiarized as 'novel', as 'unknown'. They find themselves 'perplexed' in a new world, a world, again, full of 'unfamiliar'. The birds' encounter with all the diversity and complexity and their self-transitioning and growth within the five previous valleys have opened their eyes to the infinitude, to the endless majesty of the complex world. The birds felt 'confused', 'scared', small, and smaller re-viewing the huge wonder of their new world:

> I am avoiding the place here ... it's so huge and so unfamiliar like I have *started* to become scared of these big places so that's due to me staying five years here (Alexa)

In their greater view in the Valley of Astonishment and Bewilderment, the birds felt amazed, they were astonished at 're-unfamiliarity' of familiarized unknowns. Looking through their wider, deeper horizon, the birds found the world mysterious, unravelled, unknown. All the 'strange' which became 'familiar' in their growing understanding in previous valleys, looked completely unfamiliar in their new sight, in their expanded view of the world, in their greater understanding.

Life is a strange
feeling experienced
by a migrating bird
(Sohrab Sepehri)

In sight of the world in all its massive magnitude and complexity, the birds felt powerless, limited; they 'doubted' their knowledge, their whole understandings. The birds felt 'lost', 'in between'; they felt 'in-between' *knowing and not knowing,* they understood themselves 'in-between' their place, home, language:

It's a kind of mystery .. when you leave your home for forty years and you come again you will be stranger (Ali)

The one named a 'stranger' will never really fit in (Trinh, 2011)

> The thing is wherever I am if I'm in Mali, I'm not totally a Malian, and if I'm here, I would never totally be a Canadian .. yea and so that transition made me who I am (Fatima)

> When I talk to people there (China), we're interesting different things we have **so** many different views (Neo)

> I feel I have too much languages in my head and I live ... with this fear that I'm going to kind of forget ... I'm talking to someone and after feeling I'm going to forget the language because ... it seems like my head isn't big enough to be perfect to know all languages (Carolina)

> I'm in the middle .. It seems like you have two half homes here and there (Qazal)

The birds were bewildered, astonished at how their vast transitioning and deeper understanding still has left them blank, has left them 'scared', in pain of living 'in between', in the 'stormy' vortex of 'unknown' life:

> I feel I am on a very small boat with a life vest and I'm trying to navigate this ocean ... because it's very unknown so unknown I don't know what will come next it's the unknown that makes me fearful (Alexa)

The birds were surprised at the contradiction between their superficial thinking on their journey and the actual living and experience of their journey; at the depth and greatness that they could see only in experiencing it, in their new 'light', their brighter light, their new understanding. The birds found themselves still as beginners on their road, their road seemed much deeper than what they could imagine:

> When you make a decision and you start doubting yourself .... have I made the right choice? Have I thought this through? Is this going to work as I thought it would? Like there is that amount of hesitation all the time there ... when you are not still too *deep* into the road into that action when you are not too deep when you are just *beginning* just as you start walking in that path (Alexa)

In their greater understanding, the birds recognized aspects of their current self rooted in past time, belonging to their past places they lived in, past people they lived with. They identified other aspects belonging to their present time, present people, present place. The birds understood themselves 'torn' 'in-between' places, times, and people; they felt 'in-between':

> If you press me hard and hard and ask me for one (place) .. I will be torn between Afghanistan and Canada (Shadi)
>
> Wherever I am I have to say no I'm not I'm not white stop saying like that or oh no I'm not that really African I'm still from here (Fatima)
>
> I don't know I feel good .. sometimes I feel overwhelmed ..... it's too fast always you have to do this you have to do that and sometimes I feel overwhelmed but .. I feel also good too sometimes (Fatima)

Despite their astonishment for still feeling as 'strangers', still in a 'wonderland' of surprise after their long journey of learning and exploration, the birds were in joy for learning to live the 'unknown' life, living the 'unexpected' in their wonder. Living the difficulties of the unknown, the birds became astonished at the 'enlightening' power of the 'unknown', the enriching power of living the 'unknown', of how it made them become 'stronger' human beings, and feel 'accomplished', 'satisfied', but also scared, 'stressed'. The birds were surprised at how their living of the unfamiliar taught them to live 'in-between', in between joy and fear:

> The unknown has so many things to offer .. things that I could not have predicted ... things are happening and ... they are very rich ..... and it's a blessing and curse at the same time I am happy that I was able to see the world and to meet so many different people and to have so many different experiences even though those experiences have been stressful at times but then I have learned to live with it I have learned that life is unknown is unexpected ... it has made me stronger as a human being and sort of stretched my capacities like I feel I am capable of experiencing so many different emotions now I feel richer emotionally and intellectually (Alexa)
>
> You go into the unknown and in fact if you actually do it you feel such a satisfaction within yourself that having tried something that is unfamiliar that is very different ... some people can experience it in a terrifying way but some other people feel accomplished or feel like they are grown or they have opened the door to completely different level that they are in a different level now they feel more accomplished (Alexa)

In their amazement at the great magnitude of the world and their understanding of their limited knowledge at the sight of the vast diversity and complexity outside, the birds became aware of the vast capability, complexity and the depth inside themselves. They found the key to all strange, outside wonders in their own hidden inside power:

> (The) courage of going to something unknown and finding *within* you whatever you feel like you need .. it's kind of you are more powerful than you think .. in being in this unknown situation brings it out ... and you are capable of doing things you have never dreamed of (Leila)
> I like the fact that all those things that we go on this new road and we end up finding .. *within* us the ability to survive new challenges (Leila)

The birds found their life more 'meaningful' than before. The arduous experience of their journey had changed them, had changed their goals. They did not see their past life as meaningful. They felt cheerful in all their bewilderment, and were 'impressed' at their persistence, at their power in taking another difficult, 'unknown' valley:

> I think that life becomes more interesting if you do something which is challenging if you actually do something that is unusual, unconventional and .. it is stressful experience ... sometimes I feel depressed ... but at the end of the day ..... within myself .. I have this small feeling of pride that I do tell myself bravo I'm impressed .... it makes me happy ... (Alexa)
> In my current life I feel I'm really doing meaningful stuff ..... from my past mentality I also was doing meaningful stuff but right now, when I see it, because I have completely different goal, and I don't see the past life was really meaningful (Neo)

In their in-between status at the Valley of Astonishment, in all their doubts, helplessness, their fear and joy of experiencing the novel and ambiguous, the birds knew themselves better than before, they knew about their great but limited power, the infinitude of their within; they became persistent in attaining their goal, in further knowing and perfecting their Selves. The birds flew much higher to the last, highest valley, The Valley of Fanaa' and Self-effacement, to achieve their goal, to fully see themSelves, to feel peace, at HOME .....

The Valley of Fanaa' and Self-Effacement: **وادی فنا و فقر**

Death of the self, Joy of Reunion: Home, Away from Home in becoming Absolute Existence in nonexistence

Figure 25. Sama[104] (Sufi Whirling/Spiritual Concert), Mitra Banejad, Tehran, Iran.
(Circle of Understanding of Self to Other: *Love*, *Tolerance*, and *Openness*)

The seventh valley
is the valley of *mergence* where the wayfarer
loses his previous identity and becomes one part of
a whole. In Attar's words, the wayfarer *drowns* in
absolute sea of bliss and *sees by revelation.*

Attar says:

"He who is *drowned* in the absolute sea of bliss

Forever is lost, forever is in peace;

[104] Sama (Persian, Urdu and Arabic: سَمَاع - samā'un; Turkish: Sema) is a Sufi ceremony performed as dhikr. Sama means "listening", while dhikr means "remembrance". These rituals often include singing, playing instruments, dancing, recitation of poetry and prayers, wearing symbolic attire, and other rituals. It is a particularly popular form of worship in the Chishti order of the Indian subcontinent, known for its emphasis on ***love***, ***tolerance***, and ***openness***.

And if he manages to emerge from the ocean
He will be gifted to see by *revelation* …"

This is the valley in which out of thousands fowls,
only thirty birds arrive at the court of the *Simorgh*.
This is where Si-morgh, thirty (Si) birds (Morgh), become
Simorgh

The birds reach the seventh Valley, the valley number seven (Haft[105]), the valley of perfection, the highest stage. They experienced different stages in different Valleys, in different ways, in different orders, and in different degrees. They experienced isolation, estrangement, deep suffering, perseverance, deep understanding, multiplicity, tolerance, detachment, freedom, unity, bewilderment, in betweenness, and homelessness in six Valleys of Quest, Love, Knowledge, Detachment, Unity, and Bewilderment and Astonishment. In this last station, the birds *approach* their highest level of understanding, their nothingness, modesty and majesty, peace, and satisfaction. Appreciating their greater understanding in their unity and aware of their limited individual understanding, the birds become modest to lose their selves. The birds resume their lost vision in becoming self-less, in becoming nothing without Others:

And out of the mist the hoopoe emerged, the birds' enlightened intellect:

"We all must learn to lose ourselves to be what we must be. You've passed the great and final test and learned humility"

The migrant birds chose to become homeless and detached, to be everywhere and nowhere. They chose to live together as an 'ocean', as drops of a great ocean. They chose to be naught in being with all others. The birds at their highest understanding in this stage, negate their selves, forget their attachments and become present with others on their road, seeing themselves as one part on the vast earth, as one part of the whole globe:

> I'm just one single person on this earth and the fact that countries are divided is just because we divided that way we form the country but actually every single one's just belongs to the earth. (Neo)

The birds who reach this final valley see naught without others, they found others eyes to their vision. These birds feel 'chosen', 'blessed', bestowed with great vision, deep insight:

> The road chooses you for that for your inside and then ... he has travelled and he made a difference because his life was fulfilling and he found the purpose of his life (Fatima)

[105] Seven (haft) is considered as a sacred number and symbol of perfection in Persian culture and civilization http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Culture/haft.htm

The birds feel fulfilled for their Absolute existence in their non-existence, in their Self-effacement, their exit of self-existence, "the negation of something that never truly was…" (Chittick, 2007, p. 44)

Fanaa' or "Annulment of the self": Transcending the subjective self by gaining an in-depth knowledge of the self (Chittick on Sufism, 1983)

The birds
are transitioned into
globalized beings. They no longer
think of their birth countries as their end,
no longer see their native countries as their
eventual destination; their initial thought of
contributing to their home countries is
globalized into contributing to the
world, their 'home' world.

Figure 26. Globalized Being, M. Farshchian, Isfahan, Iran.

The birds see
themselves, their aims,
their self-understandings, their
self-cultivation situated
within the world,
within the
bigger universe.

The birds' goals, their roads, are directed to the benefit of everyone: their individual goals became everyone's goals and their love for their goals are merged with their love for others. Their original plan for transition for 'better education', better self-understanding, and self-education, is realized with others, in dialogue with others, and, for others.

Education is self-education (Gadamer, 2001)

The birds find others impacting their selves, their self- education; they find their self-cultivation benefiting others, everyone, beyond themselves, contributing to global education. The birds see their *individual* education spread, pluralized, for everyone:

We're ONE yea like see people think that the fact that people's moral does not affect them but it's not true it affects all of us like when he is becoming a good person and he is making a difference and he sacrifices he sacrifices for everyone ... there is a difference in the world maybe one difference maybe it's one person but that person will influence another person and then it will go on forever (Fatima)

The reciprocal character of self-education (Gadamer, 2001)

If I harm you, somehow my own self requirements are diminished, or at least the context of my life is harmed (Smith, 1999)

The birds in seventh valley see their initial self-chosen road connected to a 'universalized' goal of contributing to the world, making a difference in their 'world' home:

> What is the point of living on this earth if I live without leaving any contribution? (Shadi)

> My goal is ... in whatever age and I'm about to die ... I want to think of one or two things that I have contributed to this world .... I know I would suffer if I think that traces of me is not left in this world (Shadi)

Some birds find their direction towards a 'global' purpose of learning and self-education through their study discipline, a discipline which offered them a better chance to learn about the 'philosophy' of life, to see themselves in a more global way, to see their life purposes in a broader perspective, beyond their self-made boundaries:

> Because I was learning sociology and philosophy and it offered me a chance, like alternative to see this perspective of the world in my life (Neo)

The birds of this valley find themselves in a different phase and state: in a stage different from their previous stages, in a peaceful state that *enable* them to see beyond themselves, to view and use their self-education for the benefit of others:

> I haven't changed my goals ... my goals were to get a PhD ... to live happily in Canada .... and to get *better education* for my children …. In Dubai I felt I'm not relaxed because I might be fired any time ... but now in Canada you don't have that thinking .... you think of some other things ... when people feel relaxed do not think about food do not think about .. protection do not think about home ... start thinking about other things like ... teaching education ... building the country ... helping others ... volunteering ... things like that ... those expressions were not in my dictionary (Ali)

The birds see their self-education, their self-cultivation happening in 'conference' with other birds, in dialogue with different birds worldwide; they understand themselves as students in a 'global' school beyond their limited surrounding, they find themselves as global citizens of the nation of the world with the spirit of *dialogical openness*, with an ability to enter into dialogue with other different birds universally. The birds have *universalized* their selves through annihilating their disconnected selves:

> In terms of the global context ... internationally .... before we just .. localize with the .. school where I was and not open towards the global .. characterization so we just ... we do whatever we have to do without paying attention to what's going on around us ... but now .... become more more open-minded even in professional sense ..... making connections that's another thing .. wouldn't be able to do it here if I'm not here ..... connecting with different groups .. connecting with .. scholars .. (Saád)

The birds feel at home, in dialogue with others, by sharing with others, in being with others:

> Home ..... it's to *share* with others .. it's *to be with others* .. it's to be able to negotiate with others .. discuss with others .... (Saád)

The birds' global picture of themselves besides others gave them a deeper view of their scant knowledge of the world by themselves. They found themselves, their developed global thinking enabled them to make better decisions:

> The fact that you are exposed to different people to different .. cultures to different .... values to different everything .... in general I think I know nothing about the world (Camila)

> Global thinking rather than restrictive thinking .... global thinking I mean ... looking at the bigger picture rather than a situated picture ... that helps me to making good decisions (Saád)

The birds' restless journey of great challenges ended in a better self-understanding. They found peace in exploring and finding their self in journeying with others. They feel closer to their dream self after a long journey, after their long inner spiritual journey with others. The birds explored their dream self in globalizing, in merging with others in their distinct qualifications and limitative characteristics, in losing their individual identities and finding themselves as parts of a whole identity, in finding their collective identity. The birds see themselves as one; *many, but one*, duality had perished (Nasr, 2007). They see their supreme choice, their big decision worthy:

> It has made all the difference in myself ... it has made me who I am (Leila)

The birds feel *home, away from home*, in understanding themselves understood:

> I feel understood when I am understanding I feel at home (Fatima)

I'm really into my own skin ... I know myself (Neo)

And the birds said: We are weak, helpless birds; how can we get to the far-reaching position of Simorgh? We are not of the same rank. He is like Solomon and we as helpless ants.

Hoopoe replied: Do not doubt and fear, this is a love mission and stranger to fear. Whoever becomes a lover, becomes brave and fearless. We birds are the shadow of Simorgh and nothing without Him. If you clear your hearts as a mirror, you will see the Light and the beauty of Simorgh.

Their journey is over, now, at this stage of Self-understanding. The birds found their hoopoe in themselves. They found the road to their Self-perfection with others. It was their inner Light which attached them all together, which freed them from their doubts, worries, fears, and all their self-made bondage, which illuminated them to their Selves. The birds are rewarded for their hard, long journey.
What the birds sought outside, is attained inside. Looking deep inside, the birds could fly and approach the highest peak of peace and majesty. The birds' self-perfecting goal is realized by moving from their selves to the others, by becoming open to others, cultivating differences with others, and fusing and transforming with others (Gadamer, 1960; 1975). Their Self-glorification happened by *effacing* their selves, by growing love for others (Attar, 1177), by moving from 'Iness' to 'otherness', and becoming 'WE' with others. The birds created a "global village" together (Classen, 2012, p. 375), a village of no 'I', of no border between their selves.

The birds traversed seven demanding valleys, in different ways, different degrees. They transitioned from fear of the 'alien' other to 'fusing', loving and 'unifying' with the other, to becoming One with the other. They recognized themselves with others; they understood themselves in understanding others, in understanding others as belonging to their selves, as belonging to the same home, as having no home; they created their Home together. The birds realize that HOME is not beyond themselves, it is within, and in between, them. They find themselves as similar birds on the same journey flying up towards the same Destination. The birds find themselves in a unity, an old-standing unity, of their common inner "I". They realized their oneness in their multiplicity. The birds approach Perfection in becoming homeless, becoming selfless; in becoming one.

Si-morgh freed their selves, they freed their souls from the hard, fragmenting cages of their bodies, they flew together from low terrestrial land up to the peak of the celestial rank, to the top of the elevated mountain Qaf, the highest peak of understanding ... on highest peak of understanding, saved from the world of multiplicity, Si-morgh reunite their selves with others; they become one Voice ... one Language .. one HOME, one Bird ... one Self … one Being …. they become *Simorgh* ... universal, timeless, Eternal.
The birds endangered themselves, sacrificed themselves by alienating from their immediate desires and personal needs and interests (Hegel's *Propedeutic, T & M*, 2014), and they could universalize their selves. The birds' recognition in others, their selves *reconciling* with different others enabled them to re-discover themselves, to understand themSelves in-between their Selves, in between Si-morgh, in between Si-morgh and Simorgh, in between their *Multiplicity* and *Unity*.
After their long excursion from them Selves, the birds who survived all the Valleys reunite with themSelves, with others at the end. They made home in the alien, they made their *HOME, away from home*. The birds approached Light, their inner Light, they realized their Selves in knowing the Other (Nasr, 1996).

Thirty birds out of a huge flock of fowls, battered, with no wings reach the throne of Simorgh. Looking into the lake, they see nothing than themSelves. Simorgh was no one but themSelves. The sovereign and peace they were looking for was not outside themSelves:

Their page is clear,
Gifted with the light of their inner eye
The birds could see the Light of *Simorgh*.

The birds became the mirror to themSelves, they found themselves
in the loving embrace of their true King.

The birds became Simorgh in being si-morgh
The rays of Sun[106] disappeared in Sun:
There was no guide, no follower
only path …

only Light …
only Light …

[106] Mulla Sadra's notion of Being and beings as Sun and rays of the Sun (Unity in Multiplicity)

Figure 27. The Rays of the Sun Illuminating Si-morgh Flying towards Simorgh.
[My characterized image from google]

The linear path turned full circle:

"The end is the beginning, earth and Heavens are wedded, East and West are one. Multiplicity is gone, unity does alone remain, Omega meets the Alpha[107], and path dissolves; it was never there … we have never truly left Eternity" (Nasr, 2007, p. 13)

The circle of understanding is completed. The Self's excursion to the Other, the Sama of Self-understanding, is terminated by the Self's return in full, in loving the Other, fused with the Other, as One; all as One.

[107] Origin of our path

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

(Frost, 1916)

Figure 28. The Road Not Taken
https://thelistenersclub.com/2014/09/12/the-road-not-taken/

On Choice of *The Road Not Taken*

I selected the poem *The Road Not Taken,* by Robert Frost (1916), for multiple reasons. There is a huge literature on this poem among which Orr (2015) is probably the most famous one. Here I provide the main reasons for my choice in line with Orr's views on the poem.

The most important feature of the poem as phrased by Orr is the poet's rejection of the dialectic- good or evil, seriousness versus playfulness- backing the poem, and the poet's view of living this duality as a narrow way of viewing the whole 'spectrum'. This is the poem's conclusion which is a "protest" against conclusions, and the main feature of an existential study on human understanding. The poem's reliance on 'indeterminacy' of language and 'multiplicity' of meaning, like other poems of Frost (Orr, 2015), created a complex 'thaumatrope' which paved the way for a hermeneutic-existential analysis of metaphor understanding. Discerning the temporality of the relationships in metaphors, Orr considers that all metaphors "break down" as they are used in poetry (Phillips, 2008, p. 603).

Several of the poem's themes are relevant to my Sufi-hermeneutic and existential study. In the poem, the poet/narrator is standing at crossroads, the point of divergence, at the wood forks which is the ancient metaphor for lifeline and its troubles, deciding his road. He is "betwixt and between", in a "liminal" stage (Orr, 2015). This theme of life journey and the choice of lifeline, "the more arduous spiritual and personal journey" (p. 134), resembled my participants' choice of travelling to a new country and not staying at home. Crossroads proved a good point to capture participants' feelings in their transitioning situation. It revealed their life and self 'dilemmas', the transitioning 'puzzles', 'challenges', and 'uncertainties' involved in their road of spiritual growth and my own *Bildungsroman,* the story of my personal growth.

The poem's theme of 'choice' (Orr, 2015), in line with participants' choice in deciding their challenging road of transitioning to a new country, and 'freedom' in choosing their own road- matching the speculative knowledge and free thinking required for understanding of the metaphorical poem- is another relevant reason for using this poem in my study.

The poem's theme of *self-discovery* and *self-creation* through life choices: "I need to choose who I want to be", "we are the sum of our choices" (Orr, 2015, p. 137), is another significant reason for the choice of the poem which befit my existential probe of self-understanding and self-exploration inherent in individual participants' reading and understanding of poetry. The poet, as my participants including myself, is a seeker of his self: he explores his desired self, his "inner self"

(p. 43) through reflecting on his life choices. Poet's constant 're-creation' of his self through 'self-constitutive' returns to the past and the forecasts of the future (Phillips, 2008) well matches the existential view of poetry and metaphor held by Gadamer (e.g., Palmer, 2007 and Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014), the interfusion of being and understanding deemed in my integrated research approaches, and the existential aspect of my research reflected in my participants' process of understanding poetry.

The existence of contradictory words in the poem is another reason for the choice of the poem *The Road Not Taken*. Contradictory descriptions of the roads of journey, such as both 'looked the same" and one 'having a better claim', provided a complex ground for participants' diversity of horizons and ways of viewing and interpreting the poem.

The inherent, *liminal* structure of the poem involving transition in the poet's temporary, historical understandings at different stages of his life- past, present, and future-, his returns to his past self, and his forecasts of his self in the dream future (last stanza), align with the existential dimension of my research examining the self, younger and predicted older self, through the existential 'home' metaphor.

This *transitional* structure of the poem, subtly created through contrasting terms, is appropriate for the investigation of the effects of the sociohistorical transition on participants' transitioning self-understanding and the impact on their interpretations of metaphors.

The feeling of *home* created by the language of poetry- which is not normally the case with academic language- and above all, the *metaphoricity* of the poem (as the 'tricky', most misunderstood poem, Orr, 2015) matching the topic of my research and the hermeneutic 'home metaphor' are among other main reasons for choosing this *hermeneutic* poem for a hermeneutic analysis of metaphor understanding.

The *reflective* mood of the poem ("long I stood"), including the choice of destination through observing and mediating in nature, and the *coexistence* of choice (freedom) and destiny (bend of their road), the ambiguity of being[108], also provided the participants an opportunity to meditate and reflect on themselves, their chosen road and their destiny in their transition. The poem's human voice, a civic voice, an intimate, mutually agreed-upon voice with a sense of universality, also suited the overall theme and voice of my research. The man reconfigured on his "path to the

[108] Mulla Sadra' notion of the systematic ambiguity of Being or "*Tashkik al-wujud"* (*Al-Asfar*, p. 35)

truest version of his self" (Orr, 2015, p. 134) is the man re-pictured as the bird (and his spiritual Self) in my thesis story of *Simorgh*.

Finally, my personal interest in the richness of equivocal imagery, meanings and the inherent philosophical thoughts in the poem and the title itself which highly resonated with my own life philosophy were additional reasons to select *The Road Not Taken* for conducting my research as part of my lifelong Self-exploration journey.

Chapter 7: Roads Not Taken:

The Birds' Metaphor Understanding Stories

This chapter narrates the stories of the students' metaphor understanding journeys of the metaphorical poem *The Road Not Taken* (Frost, 1916), entitled as the Birds' Roads Not Taken. The chapter involves the students' diverse understandings (and recognitions) of metaphors in the poem as situated in their individual transition stories and their transitioning Self-understandings. Understanding in this chapter is conceptualized as interpretation and Self-understanding in a hermeneutic-existentialist approach (Gadamer, 1975, 1989). The findings in this chapter are later discussed within a Sufi-hermeneutic, essential-existentialism based on theories of Gadamer, Mulla Sadra, Attar, and Suhrawardi.

I start this chapter by presenting the methods that are used to write the Birds' Roads of metaphor understanding. After the methods, I discuss my analysis of the metaphors in the data as understood by my participants. Finally, I narrate the birds' Roads Not Taken, their journeys of understanding metaphors in the poem *The Road Not Taken* (Frost, 1916), presented earlier with my rationale for choosing it.

While the focus of the previous chapter was on the birds' inner transiting, their Self-understandings and the spiritual knowledge that they gain in re-understanding the deep, *essential* connections of their Selves with Others, connections which unite them in their journeys of their Selves as one Universal Self, this chapter reveals the diversity and *multiplicity* in students' interpretations of metaphors involving their existential, linguistic knowledge and understandings along with self-understanding journeys with Others. The students' concurrent *essential* and *existential* Self-understandings in their interpretations of metaphors are integrated in the next discussions chapter which highlights both the *multiplicity* and *commonality* aspects of the students' understanding experiences of metaphors, which involves the individuality (diversity) and humanistic (unifying) bases of their understanding experiences.

On Writing the Birds' *Roads Not Taken* (Metaphor Interpretation Stories)

The birds' Roads Not Taken involves the stories of the birds' understanding of the metaphorical poem, *The Road Not Taken*. The stories are arranged according to *Simorgh* stages of Self-understanding with Others from early stages of Self reconciliation with Others to Self universalization and unity with Others. After two previous chapters on the stories of the birds involving their individual and collective transition and understandings, this story set combines the birds' transitioning Self understandings in relation with Others as manifested in their recognition and interpretations of metaphors. While attending to *multiplicity* in students' understandings of themSelves and metaphors, this chapter conveys the *Simorgh* theme of *Bildung* (Self cultivation, growth and perfection) in the birds' inner, individual transitioning and collective understandings as reflected in their interpretations of the metaphors.

After writing Seven Valleys of Self understanding, reading the students' interpretations of the *Road Not Taken*, I could trace their transitioning Self-understanding in their interpretations of metaphors. To write on their understanding of metaphors, I wrote on pages of papers all the metaphors that the students had interpreted. I tracked the students' recognized metaphors in their individual understanding journeys. I read each bird's interpretations and reflected on how they were connected to the story of *Simorgh*. Each participant's story resembled a different part of the story on the birds' excuses or questions from the hoopoe on their road to Simorgh. I extracted the sections from the original poem of Attar in Persian and inserted them at the beginning of each bird's road. Then, I translated the inserted poem closest to its original message and included it. Many of the words in the poem involved deep, mystic meanings for which I could hardly find an English equivalent. Examples are:

مرغ جانها and اسرار الست

For these words, I chose the closest English translations, here 'the bird of the souls' and 'eternal secrets' respectively (from right to left as Persian is read).

The poetry chosen from Attar's Simorgh for each bird's road story is relevant to the birds' distinctive life directions and their highlights from the poem and its metaphors. If for two participants Ali and Saád, for instance, seeking a fair life is the key for their transition from Dubai to Canada- as emerged in their interpretations for the colors, title, or the end lines of the poem- for Neo, another participant, the key for transition is Self-awareness; for Leila, it is not regretting the

present and moving with everyone to explore Self and be reassured of a final reconnection and return to the original point. For Alexa, the goal of transition is becoming enriched and accomplished in Self after all her emotional challenges and the pain of Self battle in the unknown world; for Fatima, it is the choice of Others and love of Others for her universal Self perfection aim; and for Shadi, the key is becoming perseverant in gaining her own and others' taken away rights, in fulfilling her Self and Others' aspirations. The depth and beauty of the meanings of Attar's poems moved me towards a nicer font and a flowery margin for beginning each story. Writing on the birds' roads of understanding, the nature of each bird's interpretations many times moved me to other relevant Persian poems, and for Fatima, to the key, relevant Light verse from the Holy Qor'an. I added the verse at the beginning of her section and the poems at the beginning, end, or within the main text. Many times, the birds' interpretations and their roads reminded me of relevant philosophical quotes by Eastern or Western scholars or some complementary sections from literary and scholarly works. I found it apt to include these excerpts in between the main text. I included them on the right side of the main text facing the relevant part of the story. Sometimes, I included my own comments, my on-the-spot ideas, and reflections, all in italics. They seemed very to the point that I would not keep them for the ending. To distinguish these extracts, I decorated them with pictures of birds or flowers.

For the title of each bird's road, I focused on the key distinguishing feature and the overall tone of the bird's interpretations and understanding of metaphors. The beginning of each bird's road, the most difficult part to write, involved an introductory section capturing the whole road story on the bird's Self connection with the poem in general and with the key metaphorical title of the poem. After the introductory section, I wrote on the bird's interpretations of her recognized metaphors (I would like to say *recognized* metaphors because not all of the terms were seen metaphorically by all the birds, which made me rethink the definition of metaphor. In a famous metaphorical expression such as the title, for example, sometimes distinctly different meanings were attributed to certain words by one bird, but not by other birds, because of their different *individual* experiences). To distinguish recognized metaphors, I included the lines from the poem which involved the metaphors and underlined the recognized metaphorical terms. To write on the birds' metaphors, I looked at the connections between the birds' understanding of metaphors and their understandings of themSelves, new society, home, Others, their transitioning understanding of themSelves and Others in their transition to a new context, and their evolving connection with

Others. In between the descriptions on their metaphor interpretations, I added excerpts from the participants which integrated their understandings of metaphor into the larger context of their individual, societal, and global life. Throughout my writing, I capitalized Self/Selves and Other(s) wherever there was an emphasis on their being.

For differentiation, I italicized all inserted lines from *The Road Not Taken*, wrote them in separate lines, or sometimes, in between the text, in parentheses. To distinguish the words taken from the poem from the words quoted from the birds, I used double and single quotation marks respectively. Throughout the text, I italicized the terms highlighting the key ideas mentioned by the birds or key concepts taken from the theoretical frameworks which were crucial to my study. Each bird had chosen and highlighted different terms in different lines as metaphors. While writing the birds' interpretations of their recognized metaphors, I paid attention to their evolutionary Self reconciliation, dialogue, and ideally, their sense of unity with Others in their challenges within their fully unfamiliar world. Writing their interpretations, I added direct quotes from the birds to complete, specify, clarify, or/and document and highlight their understandings. Some quotes from participants seemed long, but due to their significance I kept all their words. To specify the quotes, I used larger indentation for the selected excerpts. I used dots (two, three, or four) when birds paused or thought in their quotes. The number of dots represent the length of their pause. If it was a very short pause (2-5 seconds), I put two dots, if longer three, four or more. As I moved from the first birds to the last bird, Fatima, the number of my reflections and quotes increased. This was for the closer connection that I felt with Fatima and the closeness of her interpretations to my life and research philosophies and the poet's road (based on Orr, 2015). Each bird's road involved subsections with titles based on the overriding concept specific to that bird. In a few places, I was moved to include my own relevant reflections. I specified them in italics. All the time, writing on the birds' stories, I considered including points related to the story of *Simorgh*, research questions and connections to the theoretical framework.

After I wrote the road stories of the seven birds, Alexa, Ali, Saád, Leila, Neo, Shadi, and Fatima, those for whom I had previously written their full stories, I included a snapshot of the distinguishing spots on the roads of the remaining six birds. Following the previous pattern of the birds' stories, for the sake of time, volume, space and novelty, I only included the key distinguishing sections from their understandings of metaphors, and their roads. Again, for these birds, for the sake of the overall *Simorgh*/*Bildung* theme of fusion/perfection of Self and/with

Other, I was keen on their evolving Selves in their connections with Others in their new milieu. The overall order of the birds' road stories is based on the order in Seven Valleys, on the basis of the inner transitioning and evolution in Simorgh, the key concept of *Simorgh* as *Bildung* which is Self-cultivation and perfection in dialogue and integration with Others, or Self Unification- for the Si-morgh to become Simorgh, One, as reflected in the birds' interpretations of metaphors. I looked at the place of the Other in the birds' Self evolution, their standpoint and relations with Others in their Self understanding, to see how their transitioning in Self, place and time has improved their relations with Others, and has been perfecting their Selves. So, I decided to start and end with the birds at two different stages of Self cultivation and universalization. I started with the bird (Alexa) who was mainly living the beginning stage of her Self reconciliation with Others and ended with the one (Fatima) closest to the stage of Self universalization/globalization and unity with Others. In a way, ***I started from confusion and ended with light***. I began with Alexa who was mainly focused on her inner Self combat and emotional challenges with the unfamiliar in her transition to a new world, Canada, and gaining peace in understanding and accepting alien Others, a process which seemed hugely unfamiliar to her and difficult to manage[109]. So, for Alexa, I put all the terminologies related to inner Self transitioning, Self practice, Self lost, and Self combat, etcetera. Alexa's extreme stress was a reminder of my own initial years of transition to Canada. I could feel her pointless Self-doubts, her difficulty and paralysis in talking or moving forward for different kinds of disturbing looks and reactions in her environment. After Alexa, I wrote on Ali and Saád for repossessing their 'taken away' Selves, for their 'in between' situation in their past and current Selves. I found the two birds' backgrounds, motivations and goals for their transition similar in different ways. So, I merged their stories into one story. Ali and Saád were mainly involved in their Self problems for their background issues in their exposure to unfamiliarity/Otherness after their transition to Canada. I wrote down key phrases on 'possessed' and free Self, Self growth after Self possession, Self independence, and freedom from Other possession for these two birds. They were mainly at the stage of re-possessing their Selves with different Others. Saád evolved a higher understanding in reconsidering his Self in a more 'global' view, a borderless look at his

[109] Alexa still possessed high existential understanding of the discrepancy between 'thinking' of 'unknown' and experiencing and 'living' the unknown Other, which points to the key fact that we might many times decide, or 'judge', Others before any actual encounter and living the experience. I chose Alexa and then the other birds for the initial stages JUST because I could not find any explicit, universalist mentioning of Otherness in their words, as I could find in Fatima, Leila, Neo, Shadi or in others' words. My order of presenting their stories is *exclusively* based on the birds' expressed words, while I am unaware of their inner and covert individual or universal states, intentions and understandings, which is hidden to us all as humans

Self developing in a global scale. So, I included further terms on global, boundless Self for his more developed Self. Next, I wrote for Leila who was reconciling her Self with Others and had moved to a higher level of 'including' Others, even previously excluded ones, in her new Self view in her journey of exploring her Self on an unknown road. Leila's road involved key terms on dream Self, Collective and Inclusive Self, and empowered Collective Self. After Leila, I wrote on Neo whose education and transitioning experience has developed her Self into a *transnational* Self. Discarding the fragmenting border between the individuals and the national borders, Neo viewed her Chosen Self the same as Other Selves, with no human border to separate her Self from Others. Next, for Shadi I wrote on her road of Self detachment from Others in her motherland which led to her stronger resolution to build stronger connections with Others here and there and become united with Others in Canada, home, and beyond through her education and job in international development. Ignoring borders and aiming at the universal, in her isolating growth, Shadi aspired for global service and universal Self traces for the benefit of everyone, for the service of all Others. And finally, I wrote on Fatima whose life purpose of Self betterment directed for All, whose universal, Self-effacement life road purpose involved seeking 'light' for *illuminating* her Self for Others, becoming a candle for Others' roads. Fatima's unbelievable hermeneutic existentialist grasp of 'understanding' as "Self-understanding", in line with the main theme of *Simorgh* and *Bildung*, her grasp of understanding as 'feeling home', and her perfectionist view and sublime understanding of Others as parts of her Universal Self, as Si-morgh of *Simorgh*, all as One, all and all created a perfect termination to the birds' road stories and the overall theme of the section and the whole thesis.

> *The evolutionary pattern in the birds' stories echoed the same feeling that I experienced when I started with Western hermeneutics and later was moved back to Islamic/Mystic philosophy, when I found the School of Illumination and Mulla Sadra's existential Doctrine of Primacy of Being somehow similar, the feeling which was later evoked when I heard Fatima's story whose most comprehensive lens (in terms of including all Others and the Source of all) in making sense of the linguistic text, of metaphors, her view of Self and Others as parts of a whole Being, and her view of the linguistic text as situated in her universal, self-effacement purpose evoked my ever feeling of being responsible, my mission as my humane duty ...*

For Fatima, I decided to keep the sequence of her thoughts in understanding the poem the way it was. Her understandings seemed an evolving movie to me, which involved a complex thought progress as she read and reflected on the poem and switched in between the poet and her Self. I

found it valuable to keep it live, to show the dynamic nature, complexity and evolvement of her thoughts. I did the same for other participants, such as Leila or Shadi, whenever I could deeply empathize with their evolving thoughts, experiences, or purposes: whenever our voices became one.

Similar to the other seven birds' roads, I started the second part on the "Roads of Other Birds" in the same section on Birds' Roads Not Taken, after seven birds' stories. For the remaining six birds, I followed the same order as the seven birds, starting with the most fluctuating bird, Jane, who was mainly concerned with her personal Self transitioning, and her inner Self reconciliation with unfamiliar Others in her new world, and ending with Zahra who was concerned for assisting Others. After Jane, I wrote on: Madina who enjoyed her challenging Self exploration in the unknown world; unhappy Carolina and her sorrow for her 'assigned', ever 'given' Self; Camila's happiness for exploring her Self potentials through her 'different' actions and exposure with diverse Others on her challenging road; Qazal's view of living a 'cursed' Self 'in between' her 'original' and 'potential' homes of 'different' Others; and ultimately, Zahra who was looking beyond her own Self growth and benefit and viewed her learning for helping Others. Writing the birds' stories, I continued to add comments on their connections to other birds, my immediate thoughts on their words, connections to theoretical framework, my own experiences and my reflections.

For the poem, I tried to put each bird's interpretation in a narrative form, meaning that I connected their individual interpretations of separate lines and stanzas. So, the majority of the words come directly from the participants. I found value in keeping their distinguishing words.

After I finished the birds' road stories, I was inspired to write down their key existential concepts on a paper. I did different analyses and arrangements of my data for the birds' stories, valleys, and their metaphor stories at different stages of my writing on paper. Writing on paper helped me find my direction in writing and ensured that I had all the pieces that I intended to include in my writing. I also found my data really enormous and somehow overwhelming and writing on paper helped me organize my many thoughts on the whole data. My paper analyses were mainly in English. For this stage of writing the birds' road stories, their recognized metaphors and their understanding of themselves though, I was moved to use Persian. It was because of my cultural background in a deeply mystic literature and my cultural understanding of Self and Otherness

which was deep-rooted in Persian theosophy. I felt more space, comfort, depth, and richness in meaning to write down the key concepts in Persian.

Throughout all stories I was cautious to include participants' answers to my research questions, to see how they were understanding themselves after their transition and how their new understanding emerged in their interpretations of metaphors. In my writing, I was all the time aware that the diversity of my headings and writing for each participant might not seem consistent. I value this as the actual, diverse and *emergent* nature of individual understanding and my writing as my interpretation of my participants' understandings/interpretations.

Metaphor Analysis

To do metaphor analysis, I reviewed the participants' interpretations of the metaphorical poem *The Road Not Taken.* I extracted all the words and phrases that had caught the attention of participants and were seen metaphorically. I used paper and pencil to be able to organize, compare and see the distinctions. After I transferred all my typed metaphors to paper, I started to look for common metaphors such as the title '*The Road Not Taken'*, 'sigh', 'Yellow Wood', etc. For each metaphor, I had to look back at the participant's transition story. I traced the connections between the birds' noticed metaphors and their life experiences before and after transition, their understanding of their transition, their understandings of themselves before and after transition, and their position in language, home, and their goals. I also traced the connections between their transition and life experiences, emotional experiences, language experiences, and their self-understandings, and looked for all connections to their chosen metaphors and their interpretations of those metaphors. I reflected on how and why certain words caught their attention and they included in their life stories or their interpretations for metaphors, and how it was different from one participant to another. If certain words from a phrase were noticed by participants, I would look at their experiences, moods, and background features (such as culture, beliefs, language, childhood hobbies, memory, and dreams). Then, I compared the differences and the reasons for the differences. I looked at my notes on their emotional states to see if they were reflective, happy, or unhappy, etcetera, in their interviews, in order to examine their thoughts on their past or current emotional states and trace the impacts on their interpretations of metaphors. I examined their words to see how they imagined metaphors before their transition and how differently they interpreted them after transition. I investigated the way that they emotionally connected or

detached themselves from the poet in their interpretations and how it was related to their experiences. I also examined how their interpretations were connected to their views towards life. I investigated how they themselves connected their interpretations to their language knowledge, life experiences, culture, beliefs or emotional states.

After writing on common metaphors, I looked for specific words or phrases which were seen metaphorically by one or a few and not all of participants. I examined the specific reasons behind their attention to those metaphors, to see how and why they looked at them metaphorically. I examined if they were seen differently by various participants. I examined how they connected those metaphors to their Selves, their life experiences or emotional states. I also again investigated the past and present cultural, religious, linguistic, and experiential reasons for their interpretations.

After my experiencing of vast diversity within participants' interpretations, I wrote on my understanding of a new definition of metaphor as offered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). I included the diversity and individuality that I observed in their interpretations in the new definition of metaphor. I compared all the metaphors understood by my participants with those referred to in the literature, mainly with the key book on the poem *The Road Not taken* by David Orr (2015). I compared the meanings suggested in the literature with my participants' interpretations, reflected on the differences or similarities and the underlying reasons, and included them all in my analysis.

The analysis of the birds' *recognized* metaphors involved investigating the linguistic aspect of their transition from EFL to ESL for any change of view of English after their transition, for their different understanding of themselves in ESL context, and different feeling of home in an ESL context. I examined the participants' interpretations for all their recognized metaphors starting from the title throughout all stanzas. I investigated their understanding of home and home language and their understanding of themselves, and the relations between these and their transitioning Self-understandings and their interpretations of metaphors, while tracing possible relations between change of home language and understanding of home (using Gadamer's definition of understanding as ultimately Self-understanding).

Examining their interpretations of metaphors, I traced how/if their understanding of themselves changed, how it affected their understanding of metaphors, and their understanding of English in a new society. I investigated the role of English and their experiences in their understanding of themselves, their understanding of the poet and themselves as positioned in similar or different

situations, their imagined interpretations of the poem if they had stayed in their countries, their views on the language of the poem, their transitioning understanding of their previous society, the reasons for their transitioning understanding, and their view of themselves in their native countries after transition. I also investigated the variety of languages that each participant used, the contexts of use for each language, the participants' feelings as they used each language, their experiences of learning and using English in ESL context, their understanding of themselves in using each language, and the role of language in their understanding of themselves and the impacts on their understanding of metaphors.

The Road Not Taken,

The Birds (Transitioning) in Their Passage Along Their Paths of Reconciling with Self, with Others

The Birds in passing along ..... ***The Road Not Taken***

The Road Not Taken[110] is a snapshot of the birds' Not Taken Roads, the birds' understandings of metaphors, echoing their self-transitioning in their passage of the Seven Valleys of Understanding from detached beings towards global beings.

The Road Not Taken retells the birds' Self- transitioning in their new milieu, in their "yellow wood". *The Road Not Taken* pictures the birds, each in a different stage, at a different stop in their self-transitioning road.

The Road Not Taken echoes the birds' story of suffering, their arduous road of 'spiritual growth' (Orr, 2015), taken in their own different ways, different degrees. It is the story of their sacrifice, at different levels and gradation, for the rise to the universal (*Truth & Method*, 2013): the story of their rise from isolated, in-between, homeless strangers *towards* unbiased, tolerant, caring beings, modest traveller learners at home with Others, everywhere.

The Road Not Taken narrates the birds' story of growth from turbulent, worried, hesitant, lost, and detached Selves to their desired, freed Selves, empowered, completed, *enlightened* and universalized Selves, with Others, through Others, through annihilating their illusory Selves in being and living with Others, in loving Others.

Here are the birds' Roads Not Taken in reading *The Road Not Taken* ....

[110] *The Road Not Taken* in italics refers to the poem by Robert Frost. The birds' interpretations of the metaphorical poem are their Roads Not taken, which is not in italics.

The Song of Survival

دیگری گفتش دلم پر آتش است　　زانکه زاد و بوم من جائی خوش است

هیچ عاقل رفته از باغ ارم　　تا گزیند در سفر داغ و الم

A bird said: I love my own heavenly home; it is sorrowful to leave it.
Is it wise to leave such a heaven for a painful journey?

گفت ای دون همت نامرد تو　　سگ نه گلخن چه خواهی کرد تو

قصر تو گر خلد جنت آمده است　　با اجل زندان محنت آمده است

گر نبودی مرگ را بر خلق دست　　لایق اقتادی درین منزل نشست

Hoopoe replied: Your eternal heaven in your palace here ends with death. If there was no death, you would stay unaccomplished in this world.

- **The Road Not Taken**

HEARKEN
to the reed-flute, how it complains,
Lamenting its banishment from its home:
Ever since I was severed from the reed field,
Men and women have lamented in my shrill cries.
I want a heart torn, torn from separation,
so that I may explain the pain of yearning
whoever remained far from his roots,
seeks a return to his time of union

(The Song of the Reed, Rumi, 1260)

Emotions are her ‘True Self’, her ‘tool’ for understanding her Self. Away from her birth home, Albania, Alexa undergoes intense emotional turbulence which reflects in reading on her transition, her *Road Not Taken.*

The Road Not Taken feels a ‘regretful’ story. Alexa ‘regrets’ not having ‘accomplished’ her goal to go back to her own birth land, Albania. Her ‘regret’ on her current road, her ‘curiosity’ for the road that she left behind, direct her view of “Two roads”. “Two roads” sounds as the ‘inner dilemma’, the ‘confusion’ of the poet, as the poet’s ‘regret’ for what he could not achieve in the ‘past’:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, *And sorry I could not travel both*

The ‘confusion’ of the poet, his ‘dilemma’, is manifest in the image of “yellow wood”: a scene expressive of the ‘emotional state’ of the road taker: the ‘perplexed’, ‘yellowish’ ‘face’ of a ‘stressed’ traveller, the reminder of ‘distressed’ times when she was afflicted by certain ‘facial expressions’.
The ‘perplexed’ traveller finds it difficult to choose between the “Two roads”, between his two ‘possibilities’:

And be one traveler, long I stood *And looked down one as far as I could*
To where it bent in the undergrowth

Taking an ‘inside’ view of ‘extensive reflection’ on his ‘possibilities’ (*And looked down one as far as I could*), the poet seems to start ‘over-analysis’ in his perplexity:

He means that he thought about them very very long very very hard.

The perplexed road taker of constant self-analysis is Alexa. She is ‘amazed’ at her own constant self-analysis, at her different views before and after actual experience of her thoughts. She imagines the poet in a similar situation: having made a ‘big’ ‘choice’ in his life, living ‘new’ experiences and going through a ‘big’ ‘transition’ in his life, the poet also seems to be living different views of “Two Roads” before and after taking his chosen road.

- **Thinking and Living an Experience**

Then took the other as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

After his 'big' choice, still 'curious' about his 'Not Taken' road, the road taker 'dreams' of the other road and the 'experiences' that he missed on that road (*Then took the other as just as fair).* Trying his road, the traveller finds things 'different', 'contradictory': the roads which seemed very different at the beginning, one holding much more 'opportunities' than the other (*And having perhaps the better claim)*, now look "the same" (*Had worn them really about the same*). Taking his road, the traveller understands the two roads as 'similar'. The road which initially seemed more 'curious' and 'enticing' as a better 'opportunity', looks "the same" as the other road after trial.

The traveller's different understanding of his chosen road after taking it resembles Alexa's 'change of view' after the actual experience of her thoughts: the way that her pre-thinking and planning 'contradicts' her experience. Alexa relates this to her 'overestimation' and 'over-idealization' of her choices and opportunities before the trial:

> I feel that sometimes we overestimate things .. it has happened to me that when I have to decide about something I over-idealize it or I overestimate and then when I actually try it out and I actually live that experience I feel like well it wasn't that extraordinary as I thought it would be it wasn't that special.

Alexa's thinking process is portrayed into the structure of stanzas. She pictures the first part of the poem as the poets' forethought before making his choice, and the second part as his reflection after the lived experience of his choice:

> This is the first thoughts the first three sentences are the first thoughts and then the last two is what happened after he actually he went down the road

Imagining her own self-analysis within the structure of poem, Alexa explores her own transitioning Self within the lines of the poem.

- **Self-Combat**

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back

The exclamation mark makes her smile. It resounds her ever habit of 'doubting' her choice, her 'hesitation', and 'questioning' her Self soon after any decision. Alexa imagines the poet 'reflecting back' on his 'early stage' of decision making (*And both that morning equally lay)*; the time that he just started on his road, when both roads looked 'untouched', 'still', and 'unknown' (*In leaves no step had trodden black)*. She feels his 'hesitance', he does not seem 'too deep' into his road (*I doubted if I should ever come back)*, like her many times of hesitance and self-questioning, the times of her mind deep into her choice, her emotions unrested on a 'roller coaster':

> It feels like ... the emotions are on a roller coaster .. he feels excited but there is also hesitation, there is self-doubt, there is questioning, self-questioning ....it happens always all the time that you start questioning yourself after having made the decision .... this is not a confusing or a confused state of mind no .. this is a thoughtful state of mind ..... he is thinking very very deeply about his choices I think I laugh because I find myself so much in this ... especially in this last line.

Reading the stanza makes Alexa reflect on her life road as very ‘unconventional’ and ‘outside the norm’: she has travelled so far from her ‘home’ country, has married a person from a totally different culture; she has taken an ‘unpredictable’ pattern through a completely ‘new’ path. She has ‘created’ her own path, has ‘battled’ with her constant doubts, hesitance, her self-questioning, with her Self to “reconcile” her Self with the ‘unfamiliar’, to understand the ‘unknown’:

The voyage out of the (known) self and back into the (unknown) self sometimes takes the wanderer far away to a motley place where everything safe and sound seems to waver (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 23).

Whenever you do something which is *unfamiliar* that is *strange* that is *unknown* it’s always a battle with yourself trying to prove yourself or trying to see how far you can go.

Each homecomer has tasted the magic fruit of strangeness, be it sweet or bitter (Schutz, 1976, p. 375)

I shall be telling this with a <u>sigh</u>
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

A faraway “sigh”, long after all her Self battles, seems ‘painful’, ‘costly’, but ‘worthwhile’. ‘Sigh’ echoes the whole ‘difficult’ process of choosing and transitioning, the high ‘emotional cost’ that the road taker pays for his Not Taken Road, and also the ultimate ‘difference’ to him Self which makes it seem worthwhile:

I took the one less travelled by, *And that had made all the <u>difference</u>*

Battling with her Self to understand the ‘unknown’, she felt ‘terrified’ at the start, but ended in ‘satisfaction’, feeling ‘accomplished’ and ‘grown’ for knowing the ‘challenging’ ‘unfamiliar’. Alexa assumes herself as a ‘survivor’ of her long Self combat, of her ‘demanding’ understanding. Her Self battle, her constant Self doubts and questioning, proved her Self as ‘capable’ of doing things which seemed ‘impossible’. This difference makes Alexa feel ‘impressed’, encouraged to keep questioning and exploring her Self:

> Without an appreciation of the radical *mystery* which confronts us in the face of every *other* person, our theorizing must inexorably become stuck, for then we are no longer available for that which comes to meet us from *beyond* ourselves, having determined in advance the conditions under which any *new* thing will be acceptable, and thereby foreclosing on the possibility of our own *transformation [Italicized]* (Smith, 1999, p. 136)

> I feel that I am a survivor ... I feel like I have understood I have seen that I am *capable* of doing so many things that I never thought I could do ... I do feel proud ... of having gone that unknown path ... but it definitely comes with doubts too like this process of questioning myself will never stop ..... I chose the right path I will always keep thinking keep questioning myself: I have this small feeling of pride that I do tell myself bravo I’m impressed.

Alexa views her transitioning process as a “less travelled” road demanding high ‘emotional capacity’. Her experience of various turbulent emotions made her feel ‘richer inside’, made a ‘big difference’ to her Self. The poet’s similar emotional experience and his final ‘happiness’ makes Alexa feel reassured of her choice, of her constant Self-analysis and her fluctuating emotional reactions:

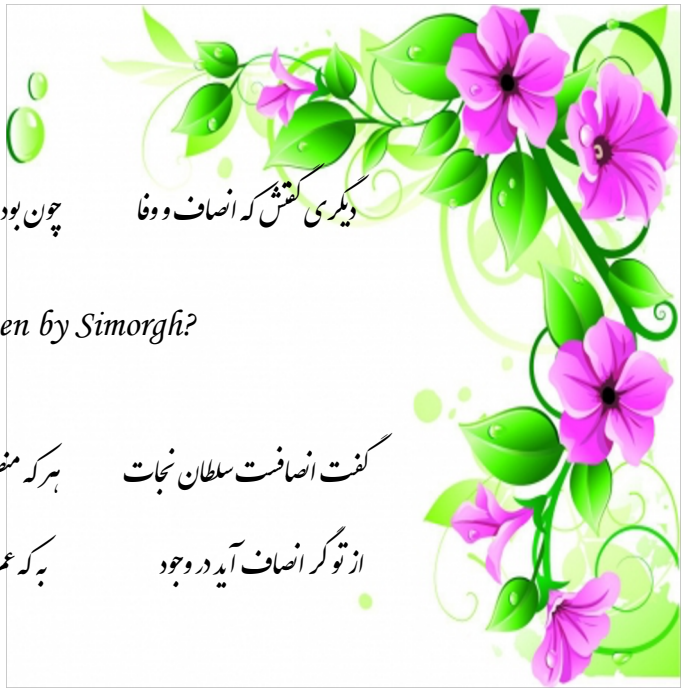
> Before that I was thinking that ... maybe I’m *overthinking* things or maybe I am misjudging this place or maybe I am *overreacting* you know but actually having read this it kind of *proves* my point that these emotions are fine ... it’s okay to have *fluctuating emotions* .... there is always self-doubt, self-criticism, self-questioning and that shows that you are capable of having this emotions and .... absolutely it’s a challenging thing, it’s a tiring thing but it’s a good thing.

Alexa understands her emotions as her true Self. She understands her ‘lived’ emotional experience as her ‘enabling’ ‘tool’ to understand the ‘unknown’, and achieve things that seemed ‘irrational’ and ‘impossible’. She feels ‘blessed’ for having experienced a whole ‘unknown’ life of ‘unpredictable’ situations. A life which is both a ‘blessing’ and a ‘curse’. She learned to ‘live’ with ‘stressful’ experiences.

> This radical *difference* of every child, every other person, renders our pedagogical narratives *ambiguous* but at the same time *hopeful*, because the immanent ambiguity held within them opens a space for genuine speaking, holding out the promise that something *new* can be said from out of the mists of the oracle of our own flesh [*Italicized*] (Smith, 1999, p. 136).

Alexa feels ‘emotionally’ and ‘intellectually’ ‘richer’. She feels herself a ‘stronger’ human capable of living various emotions in encounter with ‘unknown’ Others.

Seekers of Justice (Ali & Saád)



A bird asked Hoopoe: How justice and loyalty is seen by Simorgh?

Hoopoe replied: Justice is seen as the saviour king by Simorgh. The just one is away from false speech. Justice is better than a life of all prayer.

His untaken road is an old one, a since-teenager road of travelling afar, from Jordan to Dubai, from Dubai to Canada, for knowledge, for self-betterment, a road for self-emancipation from fragmentation, from forced borders.

The Road Not Taken for Ali is the road of 'ambitious' persons, 'determined' people who take the more difficult, less travelled road, people who sacrifice themselves, face obstacles and achieve 'what has not been achieved'. Ali sees Road as a 'difference making' decision, as a decision to become a 'better person': "we harvest the decision we make, what we grow". *The Road Not Taken* raises Ali's ambition, urges him to keep on taking *his* Not taken road to become a 'better person'. Ali finds the title in line with his ever ambition in taking difficult roads which require great persistence on his part:

> When I was in the age of 18 [I] had to decide whether to study in Jordan or travel to the United Arab Emirates .... as a teenager I was the only one who took (...) a decision and I moved to UAE although many many people .... were not happy with my decision many people asked me are you going to study in UAE? Because it looks like weird .... the

general idea about people living in UAE is like some Arab Bedouins who do not know how to speak the language (English) so how do expect to ..... teach you how to speak the language.

Ali's transition to Dubai to study English as a teenager was a great 'learning' experience, very different from what he had heard about in Jordan. The experience made him 'confident' to make his second main decision for transition to Canada with his family.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood

After a 'life of experience', Ali now has a 'clear' view of his current wood. His current wood is an 'autumn' wood, a "yellow" wood of 'clear' view, one he can easily see through, where he can find his road. It is not similar to a past 'green' wood, of 'hidden' view, all covered with trees. Ali seems 'experienced' in recognizing his road. His road is 'clear'.

And both that morning equally lay In leaves no step had trodden black

On his 'clear' road, looking back after six years, Ali finds his road worthy, a 'real Not taken' road. He could achieve the things he once dreamed of in Dubai: good education, guaranteed future and above all nationality. He could successfully pass the road "with no step had trodden black", a road which was prohibited from being stepped on by 'black' people, a reminder of his similar road, his discrimination experience in Dubai, where he was treated like a 'foreigner', a 'machine', forbidden from all citizen rights:

Racism (asks if the poet was a black) black people were like prevented from .. stepping on some places or using some buses *The concept of black and white, the use of other colors to refer to* *human beings, a concept that I came to know in Canada; what I never could accept as an appropriate way of looking at human beings as colorful objects.*

Ali's sad memory makes him persist in viewing *The Road Not Taken* as a 'further urge' and 'advice' not to give up and keep on a once forbidden road. He is reminded of a quote from his favorite businessman author, Stephen Covey, which refers to only three percent of the world as the leaders, those who go for "less travelled" roads, those who create roads for others. Ali wishes to be one of the leaders, one who can achieve far-reaching goals. He views himself as a determined 'fighter' who is 'armed with' several plans to take any road of 'no step had trodden black' it, to fight and win any discouraging, 'discriminatory' situation.

I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence

Thinking of his current situation, Ali is happy with his past big choices, with his growth and achievements. His main 'worry' is for the future of his daughters who are more inclined towards Western culture, distancing themselves from their native values and ancestral tradition. This makes Ali 'worry', and "sigh" for a future of no native values and tradition, values whose retention has been making Canada feel home for him and his family:

> If you want to be in the Canadian culture there are many many values you have to let go ... I don't like it .. really to tell you the truth I don't like it ... because these are the values ... that I have been carrying for all my life.

Ali's worry comes from other things as well. From what he calls 'oversystematicity' which he finds effectively spread in everything from a simple bus service to education, and also to human relations:

> My only concern is that I like the system but I don't like people who worship the system .. they become slave to that system ... at the end of the day we are human beings we are the ones who put that system ... we can adapt it.

Only as much knowledge is useful as one is capable of forgetting, that's the measure. As Plato said at the very end of the *Phaedrus*: give me as much gold as a reasonable man can carry. One should not let herself be deformed by knowledge (Misgeld & Nicholson, 2016, p. 70)

While ‘thankful’ for the efficient, and caring system, and feeling ‘responsible’ to ‘adapt’ himself to the new societal system, Ali is concerned with individuals’ automatic obedience to the system in their relations. He is upset for the widening gap that he feels between individuals, including himself.

Ali’s worry also comes from his ‘mysterious’ situation of feeling a ‘stranger’ everywhere, even in his ‘real’, ‘original’ Circassian home, a home that he wishes to go back to one day, even though he knows that there he will be a stranger there, a native stranger:

It’s a kind of mystery .. when you leave your home for forty years and you come again you will be stranger it’s not home anymore.

The one named ‘stranger’ will never really fit in (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 12) Searching for home involves the risk of getting “lost in the space of transformation” (Tang, 2003, p. 28)

Ali relates his constant upsetting feeling of being a ‘stranger’ to his ‘inborn culture’ which he, painfully, finds less present in his children whom he hoped to pass by their native tradition to their next generations:

If it is problematic to be a stranger, it is even more so to stop being one (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 15)

I have all the rights and responsibilities ... I'm stranger ... but my children do not feel stranger as I do myself and my wife still feel strangers ... the children are accustoming in a better way .... maybe because they don't have some other cultures to compare.

In travelling, one is a being-for-other, but also a being-with-other (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 22)

I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference

Finding the poet happy with the ‘different consequence’ of his road, Ali feels ‘reassured’ of his current road. The bigger picture makes his worry disappear in satisfaction:

> I'm happy to see that some people are ... doing the way I do .... I'm not the only one so when I see this poem was written in 1916 and now we are in 2016 ... that is one hundred ... difference of time.

Ali understands himself 'reassured' of his 'winning' character. Freed from his forced boundary, Ali feels him Self as a 'respected' human as others, and, 'with others'. The more 'secure' life gives him the space to move beyond him Self, to 'attend' to others. The hardship that Ali underwent in his transition made a difference in his personality. As a 'better' person, a more 'learned', 'caring', 'confident' and 'stronger' person, Ali finds his difficult road worthwhile:

> I achieved my goals and ... this is harvest time and I am collecting my harvest.

Individuality in Globality

Saád, another aspirant of liberty from discrimination, an aspirant of 'possession', took his Untaken Road to repossess his 'robbed' properties. The Road Not Taken retells Saád's awakened sense of ownership after his transition from Sudan to Canada. On his Not Taken Road, Saád repossesses his personal belongings, his place, time, and voice, the properties "that no one can take them away" from him, which gives him a new understanding of his road which again he views as his possessed 'knowledge' and personal learning:

> I possess my own passage my own road and nobody can take it out of me .. or nobody can .... actually make my own road ... I have to .. make my own path ... it's a *possession* .... so road and taken that's the knowledge that I can make ... something belongs to me and nobody can take it away.

- **Personalized Road, Mixed Emotions**

Saád's emphasis on 'taking' the road, or making a 'life plan', as a 'personalized' self-experience that no one else can take still follows his image of possession. He sees himself alone with his family and separate from others on the road that he wants to take only 'by him**Self'**. His past experience of living with no ownership of his place, time, and even his voice, has lead him to look at his current road as a *private property* which is shared and taken in collaboration with just his family, away from others' pillage:

> If I'm married then ..... it's not also *personalized* but it's *contextualized* ... a collaboration I guess and making road so that they cannot take it away from us.

Saád's lens of *possession* detects the repetition of the pronoun "I" throughout the poem as the poet's sense of 'ownership'. He considers this recurrent pronoun as highlighting the 'individuality' of the experience and the 'personal' take of the road by the poet as himself.

The admirable self-reliance and the towering egoism of American flavour in *The Road Not Taken* (Orr, 2015)

Saád is aware of the function of 'systematic' life in Canada on his repossessing time, but also his obsession in becoming a more 'pragmatic' and 'practical' while a less sociable person:

> (Becoming) more practical means being more busy in life and less interested in .... socialization.

In his ownership, Saád experiences a 'mixed' feeling of 'happiness' and 'depression'. The empowering pragmatic life has loosened his family and social ties and has left an 'isolating' feeling in him.

- **Choice in Destiny**

Having perhaps a better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear

In his adventurous journey for freedom, Saád keeps his deep connection to his faith. Although he is determined in his 'repossessing' road, he does not see himself able to see the hidden truth behind his road (*And having perhaps the better claim*):

This is again deep rooted in my culture and my faith .. you never know what you're doing is good for you.

Nothing comes to be at random, but everything for a reason and by necessity (From Orr, 2015)

Remembering his father's frequent advice "don't fight against the current", Saád views his Not Taken Road as a road which is 'destined' against the 'current' of the 'crowd'. Saád draws a fine line between not 'following the crowd' and 'wrestling' against the current. He believes that his road is not the 'current' road, the one that the 'pack is following', but one which is against their current, and in the direction of an overall, 'destined Current', as part of a destined circle. Saád believes that always the best expects him even when the conditions do not seem favorable:

I can't .. I cannot wrestle my destiny ... my father always says .. if you see all the conditions against you pushing you towards something else don't fight against the current ... it might contradict with the idea of following the pack following the crowd ... not wrestle with your destiny and following the crowd yea there is a fine line between these two ideas.

Catch only what
you've thrown yourself,
all is mere skill and little gain;
but when you're suddenly the
catcher of a ball thrown by an
eternal partner with accurate and
measured swing towards you,
to your center, in an arch
from the great bridge
building of God:
why catching then becomes a
power—
not yours, a world's.

- Rainer Maria Rilke

Saád considers himself situated within 'extrinsic' societal and cultural values which serve as another current which he cannot 'wrestle' against. He sees himself within the external forces which once shaped and directed his road outside his control.

- **Nationality Dilemma**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood

In his ownership journey, Saád is frustrated on 'wood junction'. He is frustrated by his 'nationality dilemma', the common dilemma of all people in his Sudanese Canadian community. He imagines himself standing 'undecided' between the two roads:

whether he is Canadian or Sudanese or both, whether he is Sudanese Canadian or Canadian Sudanese? Whether he is expatriate or immigrant? Saád is unsure of the road he belongs to.

Dihliz, space between the inner and the outer, the esoteric and the exoteric, the indigenous and the foreign (Moosa, 2005)

He sees some of his countrymen who have been staying in between the two roads for a long time and still are uncertain of their own nationality. Some have their families in Canada to improve

their life conditions and they themselves stay in Sudan; some have left their families in Sudan and themselves work in Canada. Saád cannot do any of these. He has to live with his family. He sees some others who have chosen their road as Canadians, stayed in Canada and established their ties in Canada; and still some others who chose the other road and decided to go back to Sudan.

Saád seems 'puzzled'. He is 'unclear' of his nationality. He feels in between his native and 'adopted' homes.

The undeniable push and pull between the land he was born and the one he chose (The golden son, 2015, Gowda)

Saád thinks of the worst scenario of standing 'undecided' in the middle, between the two roads. He knows that he has to take one road, accept all the risks and hardship. "Yellow wood" then also feels 'puzzling', it makes him more 'confused'. Saád seems all puzzled for his road. He is encouraged to 'think deeply' (*And looked down as far as he could*), to rethink his choice because he thinks that there won't be a second chance to try both roads (*I doubted if I should ever come back*). He reviews his transition. In 2003 he married and decided to move to Canada with his wife. Would he choose to move to Canada again if he had given another chance? Would he know which road would be best for him? He "would never know"

Saád thinks that he could never know his 'fate' and he should accept and love whatever happens on his 'chosen' road as it is all for his good. Saád again remembers his father's advice to stay positive and not get upset for unfortunate events as it could always have been even worse.

The necessity of choosing that never makes a choice itself, repeatedly returns to the same "enigmatic, leaf-shadowed" crossroads (Orr, 2015)

I took the one less travelled by

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

> This is very touchy ... that has made all the difference ... this is really speaks about me .... I like I will take the path that [is] not common

Saád chose his first less travelled road twenty-eight years ago when he decided to study physics in Pakistan instead of studying civil engineering, chemistry or biology in Syria. Saád chose Physics because he knew the majority would choose other majors and there were always very few people interested in physics. His choice of a rare, and "dry" major that not everyone likes made a big difference in his life: "I'm taking advantage"; he never was stressed for high job competitions and was able to find good jobs both in Dubai and Canada:

> My idea is to study something rare and nobody likes it .... nobody likes taking that path ... the hardest.

Saád's positive view of his road events impacts his view of the poet as 'happy' and 'satisfied' with his choice of a rare, 'bumpy', less travelled road (*I shall be telling this with a sigh ... I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference*). This reassures him of his choice. Saád believes that he also has chosen the right road, the "less travelled", 'independent' road. He is 'satisfied' with his past choices. The Road Not Taken has become a 'fact' now. He 'believes' in his road. He is happy that he has not followed the 'crowd', the 'norm', the 'common' road; that he had his own 'deep', 'different' thinking and way of taking a new opportunity. Making a 'solid' and 'self-reflected' decision seems key to Saád, regardless of consequences, even if failures. The big difference, what Saád most values, is the 'independent' role he takes in making his decision, which gives him the sense of 'possessing' and having power over his own choice. Saád truly appreciates the poet as 'happy' in having taken his 'possessed' road that made a 'big' difference in his life.

In his transition, Saád succeeds in repossessing his missing, individual properties: his place, time, and his voice. He finds freedom in becoming a more 'liberal' person, 'tolerant' of other ways of thinking; in 'adjusting' himself to become 'practical' in a 'fast' system; in becoming a person of wider horizon, of 'global' thinking. Saád finds himself making and achieving his own

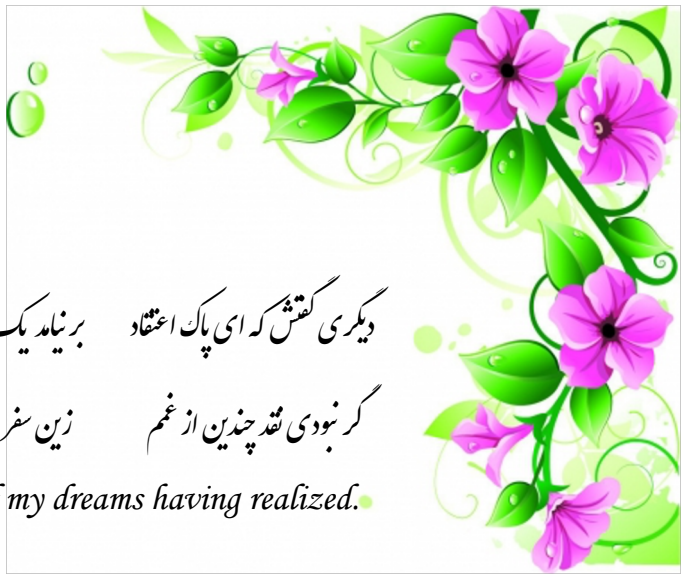
‘self-reflected’ decisions made possible through his chosen, developed way of thinking globally, which was not possible in his past, ‘given’ life of ‘restrictive’ way of thinking:

I become more liberal...more ... tolerant .. more accepting ... more ... thinking global thinking rather than restrictive thinking ... I think so .. global thinking I mean ..... that helps me to making good decisions ... I'm doing my best to achieve better decisions... before we just .. localize ... I was and not open towards the global .. characterization so we just ... we do whatever we have to do without paying attention to what's going on around us.

Travelling can thus turn out to be a process whereby the self loses its fixed boundaries—a disturbing yet potentially empowering practice of difference (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 23)

On their Not Taken Roads, Ali and Saád’s previous similar experience of transition and discrimination makes them more ‘resolute’ in achieving their own goals, in becoming ‘better’ persons, persons who regaining their taken away rights makes them concerned about those beyond themselves. Re-understanding themselves, Ali and Saád do not think of human or national borders. They gained greater global understanding which could not happen in their prior, restrictive, and fragmented worlds.

A Journey Towards Collective Self



دیگری گفتش که ای پاک اعتقاد بر نیامد یک دم از من بر مراد

گر نبودی قدر چندین از غمم زین سفر بودی دلی بس خرمم

A bird said: I have had a sad life, with none of my dreams having realized. I'm sad to embark on this travel.

نامرادی و مراد این جهان تا بجنبی بگذرد در یک زمان

چون جهان می بگذرد بگذر تو نیز ترک او گیر و بدو منگر تو نیز

Hoopoe replied: dreams and regrets are transitional in this fleeting world. Move on with this transient life. Leave the world with its dreams and regrets behind.

- **Trail of Oz**

She followed the lion on the yellow wood trail and found the courage of going through the "unknown" and finding her own dreams. The yellow road revealed her Self. She found her dream, her dream Self "within" herself. She found her Self with Others[111]*, through "very different" Others: the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion, on the same journey.*

The Road Not taken reminds Leila, of the decision, the 'Road', she did not take, of her stay in Brazil, and her 'curiosity' about her 'would be' life in Brazil after her transition to Canada. Although still curious of her other choice, Leila enjoys her exploratory trip in the yellow wood, in her 'yellow trail' of 'The Wizard of Oz'. Leila imagines herself exploring her dreams, her Self, her 'within world', an inner road, in an 'unknown' land, like Dorothy exploring a 'new world' by following a "*yellow wood*" trail, a 'different' 'discovery road' which finally directed her back to her home, Kansas, to her Self. Leila views the whole journey as exploring her 'inner dream', her within 'hidden power' by *experiencing* an alien land, with different Others exploring

[111] Other is capitalized in this story due to the significance given by the participant

themSelves: the Scarecrow looking for a brain, the Cowardly lion desiring his ‘lost courage’:

The experience of the foreign, the catalyst for the discovery of the self (Classen, 2012)

> "Can't you give me brains?" asked the Scarecrow.
> “You don't need them. You are *learning* something every day. A baby has brains, but it doesn't know much. *Experience* is the only thing that brings knowledge, and the longer you are on earth the more experience you are sure to get."
> "I'm not much of a magician, as I said; but if you will come to me tomorrow morning, I will stuff your head with brains. I cannot tell you how to use them, however; *you must find that out for yourself*."
>
> "But how about my courage?" asked the Lion anxiously.
> "You have plenty of courage, I am sure," answered Oz. "All you need is *confidence* in *yourself*. There is no living thing that is not afraid when it faces danger. The *True courage is in facing danger when you are afraid,* and that kind of courage you have *in* plenty”.

And they found their desires ‘within’ *themselves* in their journey of a “less taken road” with different *Others*, a journey that they could not take in staying in Kansas.

- **Way Leads to Ways**

Two roads <u>diverged</u> in a <u>yellow wood</u>

On her transition road, Leila has developed an ‘inclusive’[112] ‘persona’. She understands others anew as she understands herself. People who seemed different in Brazil and she would avoid their friendship for their differences, seem ‘familiar’ in her new understanding. Her cultivated ‘Collective Self’ after revisiting her prejudices finds ‘similarity’, connections with all different others. Leila’s new, inclusive self marks her passage through *The Road Not Taken*.
“Two roads” “diverged” seem connected rather than parted to Leila. While seeing her current life road on the ‘yellow trail’ in Canada diverged from the road she left behind in Brazil, Leia sees the two roads as finally united. Leila views her current life in Canada as finally connecting to her other road in Brazil, to her starting point:

[112] Single quotes in this section are used to identify exact words used by participants; double quotes are used to identify words taken from the poem

> When you choose one road you are always not taking some other road but it's fine because ... way leads on way ... taking this one road at the beginning will take you to other road .. at some point down the road they would connect.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

'Sigh', as the poet's 'painful' reflection on the road he did not take and the things he missed on his current road, does not reside in Leila's new Self. Viewing 'ways as always leading to ways', Leila does not see any reason to regret her 'untaken' road as she sees all roads ending in one destination:

> I see the more and more I'm I feel like way leads onto way ... there is no crying over spilled milk ... you never know where things take you ... there is no point regretting what you did

I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference

"The Road Not Taken" does not seem just as one road in Leila's 'inclusive' lens, but as 'roads' taken by many different people transitioning from many different parts of the world to Canada. Her 'modest' view does not regard her road as being 'different' from Others'. Leila considers 'every road' as making a difference. While seeing her transition as a 'big' difference in her life, she still considers her other road in Brazil as 'different' and worthwhile:

> You can take different roads inside your own country and they can take it to a very different places ... I just don't think any road is any better than the other.

Leila's view of the poem as her self-exploratory journey of *The Wizard of Oz* involves the journey of finding '*within*' ourselves what we wish, and 'need'; as the story of our Self great 'power' revealed by experiencing the 'unknown':

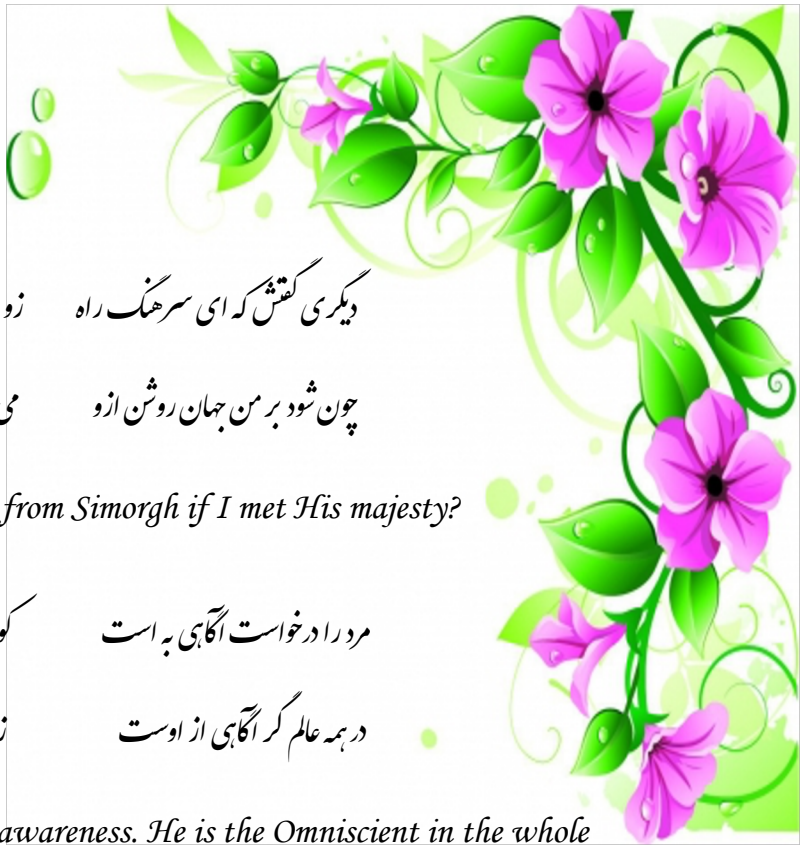
> ("The Wizard of Oz" is) about courage of going to something unknown and finding within you whatever you feel like you need .. it's kind of you are more powerful than you think .. in being in this unknown situation brings it out ... and you are capable of doing things you have never dreamed of.
>
> *Reminded of invisible parts of my own Self back in Iran and my inability to see them in my familiar world ... I needed to take this risk, this untaken road and explore an unknown land with unfamiliar people ... I did the excursion from my familiar Self, was challenged by unfamiliar Others, and found my Self again with Others, differently .... I came to see my hidden potentials while missing my previous Self ... I came to discover my Self differently, more fully, more wisely. I came to value my original Self, and all Others who enlightened my Self.*

Discarding her prejudice in her passage through the valleys of understanding, Leila moved out of her bubble, her illusion of "I", forsook her detached Self, and grew through being-and-living-with-others and taking a *Road Not Taken* which ended in an empowered Collective Self:

> I'm Brazilian from a well-off family I lived in a bubble ... a lot of people that I have included as my friends that I wouldn't have included in Brazil ... that allows me to grow .. to revisit certain prejudices.

Leila found her dream Self within her Self, with Others in the 'unknown' land of no "I" bubble.

Inner Voice



دیگری گفتش که ای سرهنگ راه زو چه خواهم گر رسم این جایگاه

چون شود بر من جهان روشن ازو می ندانم تا چه خواهم من ازو

A bird asked the leader: What is best to ask from Simorgh if I met His majesty?

مرد را درخواست آگاهی به است کو ز هر چیزی که می خواهی به است

در همه عالم گر آگاهی از اوست زو چه به دانی که آن خواهی از اوست

Hoopoe replied: The best for man to seek is awareness. He is the Omniscient in the whole world. Ask him for whatever you want to know the best.

<u>*The Road Not Taken*</u> is a flashback to her past Self in China, her past choices; it revives her past 'dependent', voiceless Self. Neo explores her past Self in the poet: a 'helpless', stranger to herself, 'losing power', a Self standing in the opposite direction to her current 'confident', 'independent' Self, a Self which is 'gaining power' by finding her Self with Others. *The Road Not Taken* pictures her own *enlightening* Not Taken Road: a road which freed her from her past assigned Self in her 'biased' society, a road on which she explored and cultivated her transnational Self with Others.

The Road Not Taken revives her past road in her current road.

- ***The Road Not Taken***

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood

The title of the poem *Road Not Taken* is a reminder of 'uncertainty', her past uncertainty before her journey to Canada, her past 'doubts' in her 'dependent' choices. The "Not" taken road pictures the poet's great "regret" and "curiosity" for the road he did not take, the choice he could not make, a state that she would face after each choice she made before her transition. Unlike the past, Road for Neo is a 'determined choice', a choice which is made after 'looking inside', after 'independent', 'free' thinking, a view not similar to the poet's 'uncertain' road or her 'past' road, but related to her determined goal of making sense of the world after changing her major and knowing about herself through knowing the world:

> I **am** happy although ... I haven't gained anything or achieved anything but I am happy about it because I **know** eventually I'm going towards my own goal ..... just want to make sense of the world ..... hundreds years ago how did we start .... in this whole universe .... and why this society start shaping to become how it is today and why there are .. deviation of .. capitalism, socialism, or communism like how they did become like that? I just want to know all the answers of these kinds of things ..... just .. learn as much as I can, that's my current goal.

The image of an 'assigned' and 'dependent' past spreads through other lines of the poem. 'Yellow wood' evokes an 'already decided' past. Neo views "yellow wood" as 'already happened', as the 'oldness' of a 'bygone decision', a decision she had no role in making, at a 'former' time by a former, 'assigned' self, a time when she had to choose between two options, two roads, and she, like the poet, would try to anticipate the end of the road in hesitance, by looking through the roads, to a farthest point she could see:

And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth

Neo takes an 'insider' view in her current independent self. 'Looking inward' to see her road, she is not 'curious' after her choice, as she finds the poet after his assigned choice. Neo finds great 'opportunities' on the road **(***And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy*

and wanted wear) she is tempted to take. 'Opportunities' which were hidden to her before her inner consult, before living her 'assigned' self.

I shall be telling this with a sigh *Somewhere ages and ages hence:*
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— *I took the one less traveled by,*
And that has made all the difference

The image of the poet's 'hesitance' in his choice and 'curiosity' for the road he left behind extends throughout the poem from the beginning title to the last stanza. "Sigh", in the last stanza, still evokes her past 'curiosity' for a future she could not live because of her 'assigned' choice, a curiosity which does not dwell in her free Self anymore. Hoping to have made a difference by taking the 'unique' road, the poet still remains 'hesitant' for his future, for his choice of his current road.

Neo perceives the four stanzas of the poem as a 'doubtful' process of making a decision starting with hesitance, followed by 'surprise' after making a decision in hesitance, represented by the 'exclamation mark' (*Oh, I kept the first for another day!*), and still ending in 'sigh', uncertainty.

- **Lost Self-------Becoming Guide**

The memory of her 'helpless' past through reading the poem is a sad one. Neo is reminded of her previous Self in China when it was very difficult for her to make a decision without Others' guidance. Getting to know herself in Canada, Neo has changed her way of making a decision. She does not look outside for Others' guidance anymore, but inside for the light in her own 'cave', for her inner voice':

> It's more feeling like when you decide okay and there is no light or anything else, and all you could hear is the *voice* you had, that's it, and that voice talking with you ... I understand myself much better *now* because *I ask every single question in that cave.*

Her past road, her past decisions, were missing deep, 'self-reflected' thinking. Neo's transition from a dependent to an independent and self-centered person has given her great confidence

which is challenged by the poet's infirmity. She views her decision making as a way to *self-awareness*, something she does not see in the poet's decision making:

> I'm really certain of my beliefs and this poem is challenging that beliefs ... I disagree with him .... no matter which road I choose ... I have the feeling he is giving up and I don't like that .... I rely myself through ... so *this way I get to know myself better*, I know and that's not ... how do I make decision.

Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about ***the same***

The poet's Self reminds Neo of all her past 'lost' situations. The times before her transition in China where she found herself surrounded by too many people that did not give her a chance to look inside; when she had to follow and rely on Others for her life decisions. Neo is reminded of her other 'lost' times in Canada, when she initially felt a stranger to the new system, at school or outside, when her English was not helping her to cope with her transition challenges.

At the heart of life is a contradiction. To find myself I have to lose myself by a thousand self achievements that leave me isolated in the cage of my own subjectivity, bereft of the companionship of the world (Smith, 1999)

Neo distances herself from the poet, from her past lost Self; she finds that the poet has so many concerns that is distracted from looking inward and choosing his way, comparing the two roads without consulting his Self:

When you have hard time to choose, I feel ... it's the time that so many things are in front of you, you are not looking only at two roads that's it, you have too many concerns .... the poem is like comparing the opposite of what I believe... I ask myself.

Diverted by the world of multiplicity that cannot look inside (Simorgh)

Neo thinks that everyone needs guidance in making difficult decisions. When there is no outside guidance, we obtain the ability to 'create' our own guide. Our fear of making a decision disappears when our outside guide turns into an inside one; when our outsider perspective turns into an insider one, when we gain the inner ability to choose by ourselves. Having gained self-knowledge and the inner perspective after her transition, Neo thinks that two roads can never be the same unless they are viewed from an 'outsider' perspective:

In this civil world he will have to choose his own goals and the means to attain them and can no longer depend upon authority and guidance. He will feel, as Professor Waller puts it, like a "motherless child" (Schutz, 1976, p. 376).

> I don't think there is ever two roads about the same but actually when you *look inward* to yourself, really ask yourself, you could have found the road that it really make you happy .... and from outsider's perspective they .. maybe they look at it differently, they may value the same.

- **Inner Light ____ Universal Eye**

Everything in the universe is within you. Ask all from yourself.

(Rumi)

In her inner view, Neo thinks that the roads seem different in people's different 'eyes'; that individuals' different Selves give distinctions to the roads:

> Two roads are different in different people's eyes

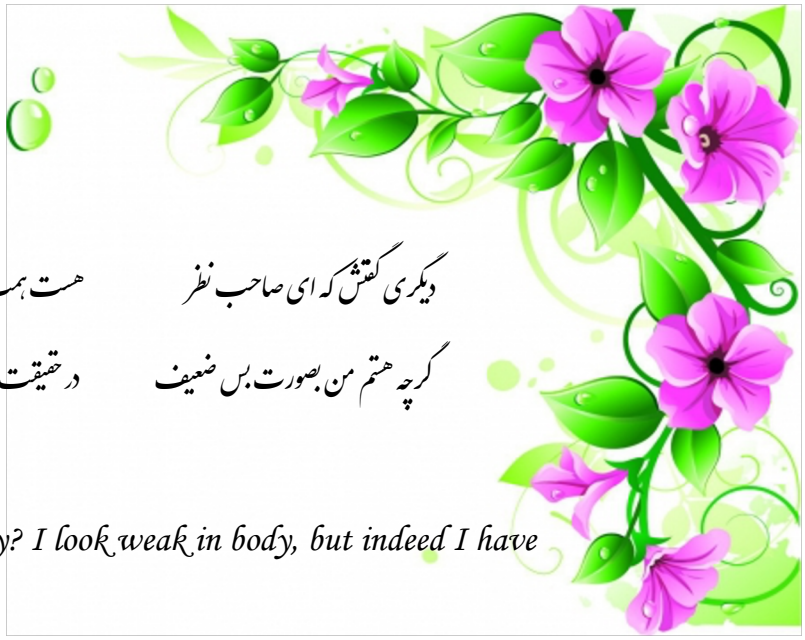
Having made his choice without looking inside, without seeing the 'distinctions' between the roads, and 'assuming' them to be the same, the poet, any person, remains 'uncertain' and 'curious' throughout his road.

Looking inside, Neo found her Self, her own guide for her life choices, her life perspective. Her self-awareness, her inner eye, freed her from 'assigned' human borders. In her free re-understanding of her Self, after all moments of lost and isolation, Neo discovers the emptiness of our *human-bound* assumptions, she rediscovers her Self with Others, appreciates her transnational, Universal Self:

The self cannot understand itself until it loses itself in the work of great relinquishment, of being born again in the ocean of wisdom wherein Self and Other have no time to negotiate their differences (Smith, 1999)

> When you think about what makes you and me different, we're the same and why would I consider, you're from Iran, right? Why would I consider Iranian is different from Chinese or why would I call myself Chinese and you're Iranian, what's the difference? ... I don't see the drive to see that sense of belonging and that's not something matters to me.

Union in Detachment



دیگری گفتش که ای صاحب نظر هست همت را در این معنی اثر

گرچه هستم من بصورت بس ضعیف در حقیقت همتی دارم شریف

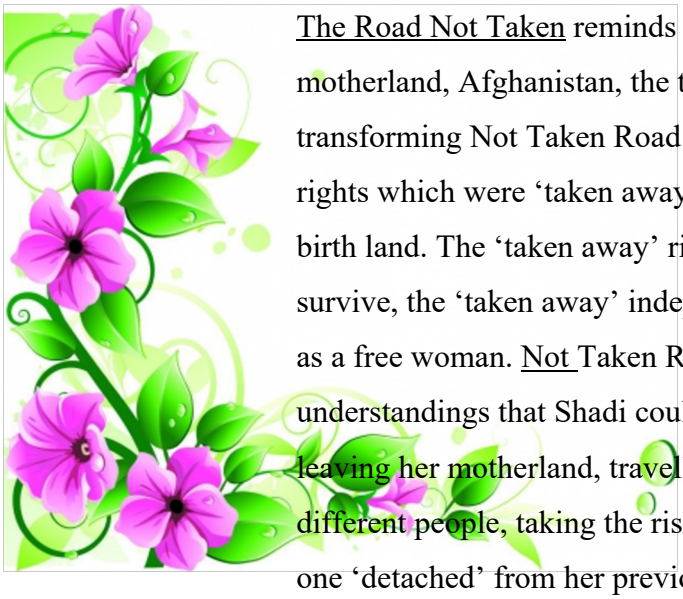
A bird asked: Does effort help this journey? I look weak in body, but indeed I have great perseverance.

گفت مفتاحیں اسرار الست همت عالیست کشف هر چه هست

منطق ملک جهانها همت است بال و پر مرغ جانها همت است

Hoopoe replied: Great perseverance is the magnet to the eternal secrets. Perseverance is the key to all the mysteries. It rules the Kingdoms of the world. Perseverance is the wings of the bird of the souls.

- **The Road Not Taken**



The Road Not Taken reminds Shadi of the things she was missing in her motherland, Afghanistan, the things which moved her to take her transforming Not Taken Road. It reminds her of the experiences and the rights which were 'taken away' from her as a human and woman in her birth land. The 'taken away' right of access to the 'basics' of life to survive, the 'taken away' independence to 'experience' and 'explore' life as a free woman. Not Taken Road evokes the 'experiences', and understandings that Shadi could not achieve without taking the risk of leaving her motherland, travelling to 'all' new places, and meeting different people, taking the risks and experiences that transformed her into one 'detached' from her previous self, but 'attached' to everyone.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

On her road towards her dream Self, Shadi is still obsessed with the miserable life in her motherland. “Yellow wood” reverberates a ‘gloomy’ condition, uncertainty, and the start of a cold and difficult period:

> I think the poet is trying to paint gloomy picture of the circumstances by referring to yellow wood ..... for me yellow is the fall or the uncertainty or the beginning of something cold icy irresponsive.

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same

Shadi views her current ‘values’, the ‘new ideas’ in her life as the “grass” of her road which emerged after her ‘rational decision’ for taking a road of a more ‘convincing claim’ in transitioning to a new land. “Grass” for her implies ‘new’ norm of life which grew in her new road; “worn” grass pictures her ‘old ’values, the ‘dead’ norms and ‘destroyed’ life which she left behind, which she exchanged for her Untaken Road.

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black

Shadi distinguishes her current road as “trodden black”, one which is turned ‘black’ by her ‘chosen’ ‘steps’, her ‘conscious’ and ‘intentional confrontation’, and with her ‘selected’ ‘values’ and ‘norms’, from her previous “worn” road of a ‘given’ life which was ‘normally’ taken, a forced and passive road of no ‘choice’ of norms and values.

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

She "kept it for another day", Shadi finds herself 'persistent' on her road, persistent in 'continuing' her current road and lifestyle of 'chosen' norms and values, knowing that her current road and 'mindset' will lead her to 'different' and 'unexpected' consequences:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

While sympathizing with the poet in taking a "different" road, Shadi does not see herself "sigh" and 'regretting' the past. Shadi finds her current situation a 'privileged' one, as an 'independent' and free woman who has travelled to different places (Pakistan, Canada, Nepal, Afghanistan and America), who has studied away from her family, and has transitioned into a person of a lifestyle and experiences very different from all other Afghan women:

> The person I am is also a by-product of travelling and meeting different people ... so the difference it makes is so much worth it .. although the price I paid is that when I sit with the other Afghan women I don't have anything in common with them I'm totally a different person but it's so worth it I wouldn't want to be them .. as much as they don't want to be me so there is nothing about judging others but I love who I have become.

Home-and-abroad or land-and-water trajectory is a mutual voyage into self and other (Minh-Ha, 1994, p. 20).

The other's personality is no longer accessible as a unit; it has been broken down into pieces (Schutz, 1976, p. 372).

Shadi's experience of taking a different journey other than the women in her generation has helped to achieve her 'taken away rights' as a 'respectable' woman and human. Shadi sees her 'deviation' from her native culture and tradition a consequence of her different life journey which dared her current Self to be a 'risk taker' who does not follow the road of 'older generations'. Shadi conceives her 'different', 'independent' and 'respectable' condition as a human and woman as the right of all other oppressed Afghans in her birth country. She became 'outspoken' for their rights, craving to make a difference in their lives.

It is not only the homeland that shows to the homecomer an unaccustomed face. The homecomer appears equally strange to those who expect him, and the thick air about him will keep him unknown. (Schutz, 1976, p. 376)

- **Costly Road**

The Not Taken Road of Shadi has come at great costs. Feeling 'disconnected' from the rest of Afghan women for having become an 'independent' and free woman through her 'different' life journey and also from the rest of the Afghans who would suspect her of having a 'double' life for her independence as an Afghan girl, Shadi experienced a very hard time. She had to 'break' some boundaries and create a 'room' between herself and others to retain her desired Self.
To take her Not Taken Road, Shadi had to 'sacrifice'. She chose to 'sacrifice' herself and her education for her family, to initially take care of them, before thinking of her own dreams. Her sacrifice cost her years of hard work, but made her more 'persistent' in following her dreams.

And that has made all the difference

Having the choice to plan and control her life the way she 'chooses', Shadi is happy with the price that she is paying for her current life. She has the opportunity to realize her dreams, something that has stayed as mere aspiration for many Afghans in Afghanistan:

> That's the sad part .. people (in Afghanistan) have aspirations dreams hopes but they cannot act on it ... there is no space for them to ... realize and materialize their dreams.

Shadi's *Not Taken Road* accords with her ever aspiration of 'making a difference' in the world. Taking the 'costly' road to approach her dream self, Shadi envisions future traces of her Self impacting the whole world. While trying to make a difference in the life of the 'oppressed', the 'aspiring' people in Afghanistan, through her job in international development, Shadi cultivates the 'universal' aim of contributing to the whole 'world', to her home of no 'border', the home of everyone:

> If we don't believe in *borders* anymore that means *anywhere* could be your home with all the differences that that place may have with your own preferences and interests .....
> I know I would suffer if I think that traces of me is not left in this world.

Reading the poem makes Shadi feel reassured for seeing someone in 1916 has taken a similar road and had seen the difference:

> Even in 1916 somebody says it's worth it ... because it makes a big difference to take risks ...
> I think it's more like a reminder ... more assuring .. piece of art.

The Light of Lights

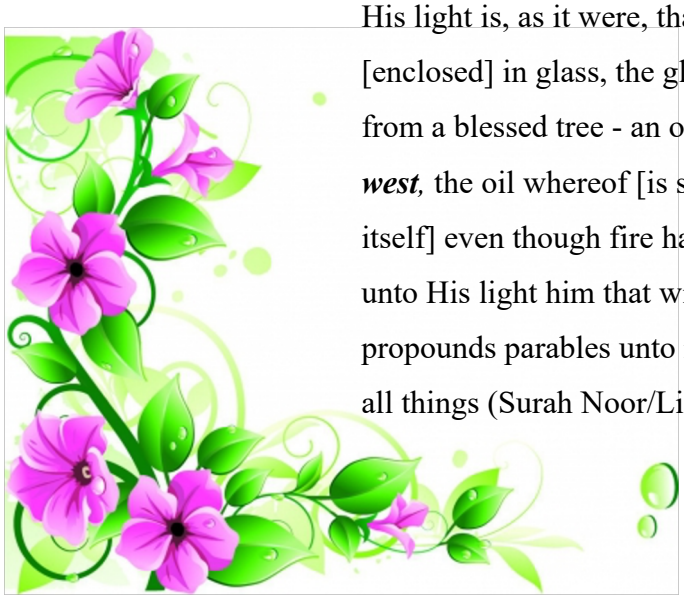
اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ

فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِن شَجَرَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونِةٍ لَّا

شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُّورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ

يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاء وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ

وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ



Allah (God) is the **Light** of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp; the lamp is [enclosed] in glass, the glass [shining] like a radiant star: [a lamp] lit from a blessed tree - an olive-tree that is ***neither of the east nor of the west,*** the oil whereof [is so bright that it] would well-nigh give light [of itself] even though fire had not touched it: light upon light! God guides unto His light him that wills [to be guided]; and [to this end] God propounds parables unto men, since God [alone] has full knowledge of all things (Surah Noor/Light, Verse 35)[113]

[113] "Only when light is created does God speak for the first", St. Augustine in *Truth and Method* (2013, p. 499).

دیگری گفتش که ای مرغ بلند عشق دلبندی مرا کرده است بند

A bird said: I have my love in my land; it is hard to leave my love.

چند گردی گرد صورت عیب جوی حسن در غیبست آن از غیب جوی

Hoopoe replied: How long you want to stay amused with your mortal love? look for true love from the Unseen in her absence.

- ***The Road Not Taken***

Her 'Road Not Taken' is the road of 'pondering' on life 'purpose', a road of Self 'transformation', Self-cultivation, Self-sacrifice, and Self unification with Others, "fusion" of Self and Other; an 'inner' road illuminating life purpose, the Self ultimate Perfection.
Fatima does not see her life road as a 'normal' road taken by most people. Her life road is a 'reflective' one, a road of great 'sacrifice' and 'bravery'. Her Not Taken Road involves forsaking her loved ones, here and there, Canada and Mali, abandoning her own 'desires'. Her road is a 'universally beneficial' road, a road that serves the 'whole humanity'.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both

Fatima's "Two roads" are different: one is the 'Love Road', an easy and lovely road, which almost everyone takes, and the other 'Wise Road', the difficult and 'unfamiliar' road which is rarely taken. The 'light' on her road ("yellow wood") helps her see the difference between the two roads and choose the 'good' one, the road that brings her greater 'learning', and understanding.

And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

The 'bent' in the middle of her road is obscuring the end of the road. Fatima knows that the 'bend' might be hiding an 'unexpected' ending very different from the beginning, one that she cannot predict or manage:

"Limited selfhood": Decision is an act of will that occurs within limits (Orr, 2015)

> Maybe the first one starts by goodness and it ends by bad, it ends by what the second one looks like the second one ends by what the first one looks like.

Fatima knows that she may start with either road and end in a different road. She is aware of the complexities and challenges of her road, of her 'limited' power over it.

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

Imagining herself in front of the two roads, Fatima chooses the Wise road, the road of "better claim", of greater 'learning'. The "grass" has 'blurred' her road; it seems somehow 'hidden'. But she still feels 'assured'. She believes in her road. She knows that it will bring 'goodness' to everyone. She steps in. Sometimes, she gets "worn out", 'tired', 'doubtful'; stops and 'questions' her road: "why I chose this road?" She thinks of the Love road, the road that she left behind. She is tempted to change her road, to go back. But her 'heartfelt' love for her road does not let her give up. She continues. She knows the two roads are connected to One 'origin', a 'common source', that both are "the same" in having a 'bend', an 'unpredictable' end.

On her road, her plans sometimes seem "the same", 'far', 'unachievable'. 'Living' them on her road, they change, they do not seem too far, they seem "the same". The word "living" suddenly finds a new meaning for her: 'giving a new perspective':

> The road that he (the poet) loves, the people who have passed there, they have the same experiences lived there like the same things maybe he is trying to a little bit in life *perspective* making it new even though it's not .. (he is) trying to have *new* experiences

Now "Two Roads" look "the same". The poet is 'living' everyone's road, differently:

> There is one road ... he is taking the road that he likes (...) and it's the road that people common people use but he is trying to live it in another *perspective* in another way

She reflects on her Self. Wearing hijab[114] now finds a new meaning for her. She is living it differently, giving a 'new' meaning to it:

> We're wearing it all for the same reason in the same ways but you could put a different meaning of it"

She understands that she is not wearing hijab for the same reason as others do. She is not 'living' it the way she was told, was born in, but she lives it for her own 'purpose'. Fatima sees only one road in front of her, the same road as the poet's, as everyone else's. The poet seems to be 'living' the road differently. He seems to be taking the 'special' road, from inside. From outside, he is taking that common, everyone's road, within himself; he is 'experiencing' a special road. The main road now seems to be the 'inner' experience of the poet, of herself:

[114] How she suddenly found roads connected to hijab, I could never guess. As a Muslim girl, she did not wear hijab in her culture before coming to Canada. In Canada, she decided on wearing hijab for her own lived understanding.

Because he is experiencing something within himself it's inside not outside if it was outside, common people, it's common something common but within himself, something is going on so he takes that road ... why then they're really about *the same*? Because it's .. the source of why they're going there is *the same destiny.*

We are pawns in a game whose forces we largely fail to understand (Orr, 2015)

On the Wise road, the poet, as others, is moving towards his *destiny*. He watches other travellers taking the Love road, the road of pleasure:

> If it was the road he love(s) people (had) trodden it .... they saw the road that could benefit them and they saw the road that can provide them pleasure and they went for pleasure.

incorporeal (soul) and corporeal (body). The two parts represent light and darkness. Human soul is in constant struggle to keep itself aloof from the influence of the body in order to reach perfection, which can be obtained by giving up worldly pleasure and the demands of corporeal life. This is the Sufi path of self-purification and elevation towards pure life (Kamal, 2006)

Suhrawardi divides human beings into two parts:

The poet is taking the difficult road that not everyone takes, a rare road that not many steps had "trodden black". He is taking the 'special' road of 'inner' transition. The poet seems to be on a 'spiritual' journey. "Delivered" from his desires, he has become 'purified', 'cleared' of 'black steps' on his 'inside page':

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.

سالکی گفتا که ره خالی چراست

A wayfarer asked: Why the road is empty?

هدهدش گفت آن ز عزپادشاست

Hoopoe replied: It is because of the His Majesty [qualified are rare].

Fatima sees herself on a similar 'spiritual' journey. She pictures a 'satisfied' future for her Wise Road, one with a "sigh" a 'hard', but 'pleasant' sigh:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Recalling a quote by Imam Mohammad Ghazali:
"Desires and lust have turned kings into slaves and that is part of their corruption" (Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn 3/66), Fatima describes the people who only take the Love road and go just for pleasure, as those who seem to be walking while their inside is dead. Fatima sees the "less travelled" road as a 'special' road coming after training, after deliverance from lust and desires, becoming clean, and ready for learning. The "less taken" road seems a 'teaching', a learning, a '*light*', which is acquired and taught back, a 'gift' which 'remains' even if the road taker dies, as the 'world' continues the teaching and the road will be taken 'forever', and the road taker will become 'eternal':

> You become the road that stays there forever. You become *eternal*.

The Road Not Taken is about the path to self-improvement, to the "truest" version of the speaker's self, a speaker who is, as commonly interpreted, taking the most arduous spiritual and personal journey. It is about the road of "spiritual growth", which begins by distrusting what we already believe and seeking the threatening and unfamiliar (Orr, 2015)

Devoting himself to purification of his soul and the cultivation of virtues (Moosa on Ghazali, 2005)

Fatima seems happy with the poet's choice. She finds him 'chosen', 'favored' to take the 'special' road, to find his purpose:

> He was given the gift the grace he was *qualified* to get the gift, he had cleared his black spots and then the road chose him for his inside he travelled and made a *difference* because his life was fulfilling and he found the purpose of his life.

سائلی گفتش که ای برده سبق تو بچه از ما سبق بردی بحق

نه تو چون مائی و ما همچون تو راست در میان ما تفاوت از چه خاست

A bird asked hoopoe: How you gained supremacy? We are the same beings, what made us different?

گفت ای سائل سلیمان را هی چشم افتاده است بر ما یکدمی

تو بطاعت عمر خود می بر بسر تا سلیمان بر تو اندازد نظر

چون تو مقبول سلیمان آمدی هر چه گویم بیشتر زان آمدی

Hoopoe replied: I am favored by Solomon. Obey God throughout your life, and Solomon will gift you endlessly.

Fatima expresses the “difference” of the poet’s road in a deeply reflective tone, as if she was finding her own life purpose on reading his road. She finds the poet’s ‘sigh’ a reminder of his ‘hard’ road, all the ‘efforts’ that he made on his road. Fatima is reminded of her own ‘difficult’ life away from her family since she was twelve. Fatima learned to deal with difficult situations by herself. She remembers hard moments in high school or other environments in Montreal when she was the only ‘black’ girl among all ‘white’ people. She is reminded of her biggest challenge to change her ‘mentality’ in new places, for she could not ‘apply’ her previous ‘mindset’ to new places. Fatima had to ‘compromise’ each time with herself to ‘accept’ new others, to become ‘open’ to new ways of thinking.

Black and white, sorting humans as colorful objects, the concept that I, and Fatima, came to hear about in Canada …

The poet's rare road seems to have been as challenging, but it ultimately could make a difference in the 'world', for 'everyone', for she believes that "we are all ONE". The poet's 'purified' Self and 'good' moral made a difference to the 'world', for she sees that he was 'chosen' by the 'special' road, and he 'became' the road:

> He sacrificed himself, he purified himself and became a good person and his moral affected everyone. He was chosen by the road and he *became* the road:

Being exiled (gharib) from what is familiar is invoked through different forms (Moosa, 2005, p. 275)

The poem as a way to separate the audience into factions (Orr, 2015)

> It is a road of sacrifice. Both roads were calling him. The worldly and the hereafter, but he chose the second road.

Fatima decides on her own life purpose:

The intersection of the foreign with the self, the merging of the outside world with the inside (Classen, 2012)

Fatima: I wanna be a good person I wanna be .. like someone can teach people or someone .. I wanna be someone not common someone good you know but not the good that human being thinks ... and I read this (searching for a page on her cell phone) and it's about ... the Strangers ... it's people that are living in this world but only their bodies are here.

My ethical responsibility of being gharib, the exile, to give life to a forgotten tradition .... Like Abraham, like Ghazali, my exile involves leaving home, visiting other people and climes in order to see the world through lenses of new experiences which empowered me with new insight .. allowed me to see things that a domesticated and complacent gaze may fail to observe (Inspired by Moosa on Ghazali, 2005)

Farzaneh: Do you want to be like them?

Fatima: Yea, they live in this world with their bodies but their souls are attached to heavenly matters .. they are the ambassadors of Allah in His lands and His callers to His Religion ... I want that road (excited) but at the same time, I'm here and I'm going with this life and worldly matters and stuff you know so I'm kind of between both.

State of liminality, rehabilitation and healing, forsaking the loved ones ... pilgrimage to self, God in self ... to cultivate self (Moosa on Ghazali, 2005) Dihliz, the intermediate position between inner self and external (ibid, p. 259)

Dehliz, an interspace: In betweenness: negotiating and struggling our stance in this world (Moosa on Ghazali, 2005)

Fatima knows her life purpose. Her life purpose is a universal one. It is for 'everyone'. She feels 'in between' the worldly and divine roads. Her early transition to Canada, her isolation and 'detachment', her self-sacrifice, self-education, her concern for others in her self-education, in her hardship, her becoming homeless, in between, all her self-transformation in her transition from Mali to Canada, has developed her Self into a Global Self, aware and concerned for her Self moral as for a Universal Self belonging to and impacting Others, Others as parts of her Global Self: "Because we are all One".

Practical Bildung: fulfilling one's profession fully, overcoming the particularity, thus giving oneself to the universality of the profession (Hegel's Propaedeutic in T & M, 2014)

Fatima finds her Self transformed in her physical transition, as the poet whose travel has transformed his 'inside', whose 'heart' has experienced and transformed his inside. Recalling Ghazali's view of heart as an understanding organ capable of experiencing and transforming human from inside, Fatima fully appreciates the poet's 'heart' experience in his transition. She also thinks of her *Road Not Taken* as her inner transition after moving to Canada:

Once heart becomes the owner of truth, the mind then obtains certainty (Nasr, 1996, citing Ghazali1967a, V. I, p. 259).

Heart as integrating the complex competencies of perceiving, knowing, and experiencing (Moosa citing Ghazali, 2005).

Unique communication style of heart researched at Heartmath Institute (Hussain, 2013)

I didn't know that I took the road not taken (in a slow and reflective tone) I haven't realized that before you asking me that and making the connection between my transition from Mali from coming here and this transition within myself

Fatima feels ensured. She feels that she has learned about her Self, understands her Self better, and feels connected to her Self. She feels 'at home'. She is happy leaving with questions, questions on her Self, her life purpose and destination:

I thought I was the only one who had to choose between the two roads .. and now it's the others ... I feel ensured ..... I feel understood when you're understanding you *feel at home* ... I feel at home ... because I have learned ... and that pushes me to try further and to think about it ... it has clarified my mind and I have to think about it ... you lead me with a question now and I have a question in my head .. I have to sit down talk within myself and I'm like *where do you go?* *What do you want?*

A suffocating, rewarding ending for me as the interviewer .... as a lifelong feeler and explorer of her questions ... Where are we coming from? Where are we going? Why are we here? What are we supposed to gain here? In this temporary stop in our long, destined journey? Deep questions beyond my limited humanhood .....

Fatima's words are heart words: becoming the road, living your road as the road of everyone; a deep, distant dream which made me a wonderer, an inner drive which made me look for my self, made me homeless ... remembering from my primary school religious text: 'any' inner drive finds an answer outside, so don't sit, move, explore and you will find, you will calm down ...

Fatima's understanding of the poem involved beautiful complexity, dynamicity and evolvement. I tried to keep it live as much as possible. She has a very existentialist and universal view of life road; she sees taking a different road as giving a different meaning to the road, as living it differently. Her definition of understanding as ultimately understanding about her self is nicely similar to Gadamer's definition of understanding. Her lifestyle, her cultural and religious background has given her a self less, more comprehensive life image, different from other birds. Her definition of understanding at the end, as 'feeling at home' is the hermeneutic definition of understanding, feeling at home in our understanding which is an evidence for our self-perfecting goal of living in this world. Fatima's story was the one I would read and read many times; I would spend a long time reflecting on each beautiful, profound sentence of her story. Her words and life view indeed did reflect a Not Taken Road.

All day I think about it, then at night I say it.
Where did I come from,
and what am I supposed to be doing?
I have no idea.
My soul is from elsewhere, I'm sure of that,
and I intend to end up there.

This drunkenness began in some other tavern.
When I get back around to that place,
I'll be completely sober. Meanwhile,

I'm like a bird from another continent,
sitting in this aviary.

The day is coming when I fly off,
but who is it now in my ear who hears my voice?
Who says words with my mouth?
Who looks out with my eyes? What is the soul?
I cannot stop asking.

If I could taste one sip of an answer,
I could break out of this prison for drunks.

I didn't come here of my own accord,
and I can't leave that way.
Whoever brought me here will have to take me home.

(Rumi)

Life is a strange sense experienced by a migrating bird زندگی چیزی نیست؛ زندگی حس غریبی است که یک مرغ مهاجر دارد

Life is the whistling of a train ringing in the sleep of a bridge زندگی سوت قطار است که در خواب پلی می پیچد

Life is like looking at a garden through the closed window of an airplane زندگی دیدن یک باغچه از شیشه مسدود هواپیما

The news of a rocket flying to the space … Touching the solitude of moon ؛خبر رفتن موشک به فضا؛ لمس تنهایی «ماه»

The thought of smelling the flower in other planets فکر بوییدن گل در کره ای دیگر

(Sohrab Sepehrii سهراب سپهری)

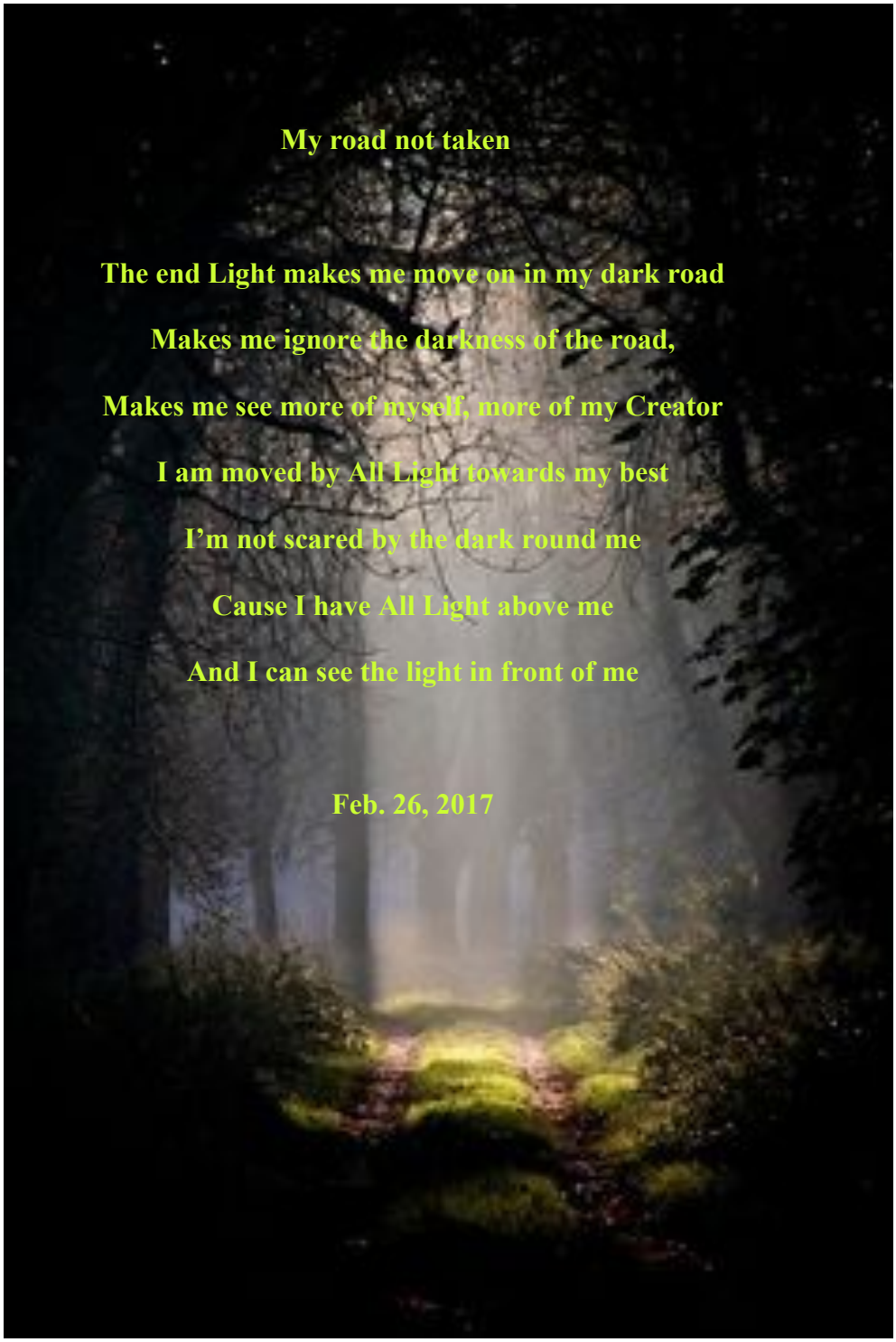


Figure 29. My Image of Dehliz, my position in my worldly road: While surrounded by dark I am headed by Light. I feel confident and joyous to move with Others towards Perfection.

The Roads of Other Birds, A Snapshot

Jane, having transitioned from a traditional Chinese culture into Canada, feels 'in between' her current and past Selves. Her feeling 'in between' a traditional Chinese girl, a frame worn on her without her willingness, and a modern Canadian girl, not fitting either culture evokes in reading:

And sorry I could not travel both

I don't know whether I'm doing it (transition) right or not ... I just do whatever I can do like give myself happiness and to give my family happiness.

Three years after her transition to Canada, Jane feels 'lost, and 'uncertain' of her transition. She is 'uncertain' of her Self, of her future. Remembering her past 'confident' life, Jane sees her 'blurry' future making her feel less 'confident' and less 'optimist' in her life:

> At that time even though I didn't know what I can do but .. I feel like ok my life my future is right any way no matter what I do that's how confident I was .. here I feel like my life my future is out there I cannot see anything clear anything.

Jane's uncertain, 'constantly' 'fluctuating' Self is awakened reading *The Road Not Taken*. She reads "sigh" in the first line of the last stanza:

I shall be telling this with a sigh

as the poet's 'uncertainty' and 'doubt' for the future. Moving to the next lines of the same stanza,

Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

finding the poet's ultimate satisfaction with the outcome of his 'uncertain' road, Jane makes a big shift into a 'confident' Self, feeling 'happy' for the future and 'confident' of her road after. Jane finally feels calm, and reassured of her transition to Canada:

> I'm more certain about the road I chose .... just remind me of one thing that .. life is ..... uncertain but like no matter choices we make, we just like stick to that and then work hard and then no matter what happen no matter how hurt and how hard it is you can get what you really want to at the end ... just like you need to have belief in self .....

After the whole interview, to be honest I feel like I'm more calm ... I'm not the only one here ..... I'm very confident of myself.

Madina, in search of 'novelty', the 'unknown', has taken her 'different' road, the 'harder' road of transitioning to Canada. Far away from home, Russia, in time and distance, Madina enjoys her harder road for its everyday novelty and her current Self for her more challenging road:

> There is like an easier road I mean I'd be a different person if I took the easier road but .. I'm kind of glad or maybe proud took the harder road and there is nothing to feel about it like I know it's harder but ... and I think it's more fun like a challenge .... because there is something novel and something new every day and what's not to like about it.

For **Carolina,** *The Road Not Taken* portrays her ever 'lonely' life, the life 'Not Chosen' by her, defined by other than her choice, a life of feeling being a 'foreigner' everywhere:

Sometimes your life is defined not by one thing that you choose but those you don't choose Carolina's 'sad', and 'lonely' view of her 'unchosen' life road spreads from the beginning title to the end of the poem: "no step had trodden black",

And both that morning equally lay In leaves <u>no step had trodden black</u>

the ending "sigh":

I shall be telling this with a <u>sigh</u>

Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

further invoke her "sadness" in her all lonely world.

Camila's *Road Not Taken* is her other would-be Self in Colombia.

Finding her current Self the consequence of her previous decisions and actions, Camila is 'curious' about her other 'Self'; her 'Self' would she had stayed in Colombia, her other, Not Taken Road:

By choosing our road, we choose who we want to be, we change ourselves, or we "create ourselves: "We are the sum of our choices" (Orr, 2015)

> I'm happy with the road I take ..... I think it has made all the difference .. where I am right now .. and .... you still have that question what if I had decided to stay at home ..... who will I be right now?

Qazal's *Not Taken Road* involves becoming 'homeless', feeling 'in the middle', being 'cursed'. Qazal's 'uncertainty' for regaining her original feeling of home, her original Self, is evoked reading these lines from the poem:

Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

Living 'in the middle' of her past 'bold' home and her current 'pale' home, 'in between' her past 'introvert' Self and her current 'extrovert' Self, Qazal feels she has been 'cursed' after her transition from Iran to Canada. Having lost her 'original' feeling of 'Self', Qazal feels 'artificial' in switching back to her 'original' Self.

And for **Zahra**, from Saudi Arabia *The Road Not Taken* is her 'different' road of taking a long trip from her country to Canada in order to have a 'new experience' of life, to 'learn', and 'grow'. Zahra's 'new experience' of life in Canada involves her 'learning' about a different nature, a different circulation of seasons. In her past understanding of "Yellow wood" in her Sahara country of no fall,

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood

reminds her of the school time, the beginning of 'learning', and 'new experience'. Her new experience of seasons in her transition to Canada has given Zahra a new understanding of the yellow color:

> In Saudi Arabia it's like Sahara ... lot of deserts so ..... it's (color yellow) a yellow wood .... doesn't reflect the same meaning as fall.

Zahra understands her new learnings and experiences 'transforming' her, benefiting her and others. She considers Others shared in her learnings, Others that she would 'pass by' her learnings after her new experience:

I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

> This is what makes a difference this is what transforms people .... when they .... learn new things .. they have something to give to other people .. have new experience to pass by ... to pass to other people.

Zahra views her learning and growth for more than her Self, also for Others.

Chapter 8: Birds/Students' Essential-Existential Understandings (Self & Metaphor)

Discussions

This last chapter before the final reflections and epilogue discusses the findings of this study narrated as stories within the previous chapters. The chapter starts with presenting some inherent essential-existential underpinnings and interpretations of the metaphorical poem *The Road Not Taken* as documented by Orr (2015), a key author on Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken*. I intentionally present his perspectives after, and apart from, my participants' interpretations to respect the existential aspect of my participants' understandings, while revealing similar *existential tension* of human being evident in the poem and in my participants' interpretations of metaphors, as the nature of human being. After this section, I summarize and discuss the findings from three story sets on students' transition (existential and essential) including their interpretations of the metaphorical poem and my own understandings and interpretations in response to first three research questions, supported by relevant literature. The extracted parts for answering the research questions, including the verbatim segments of the bird's transcripts, are taken from all thirteen participants/birds. The excerpts taken from the second Sufi stories of the birds and the parts written in response to the third research question are arranged in essential-existential, Sufi stages of Self-transition towards the Other and their Self-Perfection.

I end this chapter with my designed essential-existential model of understanding which summarizes the students' existential and essential understandings of their Selves and metaphors in dialogue with Others.

On The Road Not Taken (Frost, 1916)

(From Orr, 2015)

Although the choice of the poem *The Road Not Taken* initially occurred for my personal interest in the meanings and the incited imagination, it was later revealed to me after my research experiment that the poem itself is also very much existential and hermeneutic in some respects. The view of life as a spiritual journey and a road, a self-made existential way- rather than a path or a trail which already exists and does not suggest a destination as a road strongly suggests- is a key concept running throughout the poem. Our choices (with choice as another key concept in the poem) of our life roads are of existential significance, meaning that we not only decide on our direction, but also our Selves are transformed by our decisions. What is interestingly mentioned in Orr (2015) is the simultaneous appearance/discovery and creation of the True Self in human's travel of the road reminding that while we are the sum of our choices, there is some "true self", an "unsplittable core" (p. 142), which remains hidden and keeps our being a mystery to ourselves.

According to Frost, our Self thus exists as an interplay of questions about our selfhood- very much manifested in metaphor interpretation story of Alexa- and these questions emerge in various interpretations of the poem envisioning two different selves in the poem: one unified self that has chosen the less travelled road and the other a fragmentary, improvisational self that is unsure of its own choices. Our Self is also viewed as existing in a *tension* of being a capable, choosing Self whose selfhood is limited ("And sorry I could not travel both"). So, our choices can be both liberating and confining. This was expressed by Fatima in terms of her "limited" power to see the bend of her road in her freedom, inability to see the end which could be very "unexpected" and different from the beginning.

There is an obvious emphasis on admirable self-reliance and egoism reflected by constant use of "I" throughout the poem which accounts for the speaker's decision as a 'solitary' act of will which is bound by the context of its occurrence. Saád very much admired and relied on "I" and highlighted the will and the individuality of his experiences on his road after transition to Canada when he could "possess" his "taken away" Self, place, and time.

The poem centres around the multiplicity and malleability of the self, and is simultaneously focused on who we are, who we were, and who we might become. This embraces the potential of

the Self living the present, future and past. Frost pictures a deep Self beyond a handful of sensory impressions and an ephemeral sense of wholeness, highly aligns with the Sufi approach and Fatima's view of the worldly body and heavenly souls of "Strangers" and her state 'in between' the worldly and divine roads.

The Road Not Taken is the portrait of the choosing self. A perpetually choosing and returning Self who chooses a less travelled road but is also unsure of his choice, of his continuity, and of his future that may or may not be different. The poem itself is inspired by indecisiveness of the closest friend to the poet, Edward Thomas. Frost and Thomas took long walks in the woods and their conversational walks gave rise to *The Road Not Taken*. Reading the poem, as debating his departure to war, Thomas was troubled and confused by the poem. He joined the army and was killed in battle. The embedded confusion in the poem is thus reflected in the "love and misunderstanding between the American author and his English friend" (p. 16). The rooted tension of the poem- the concept of choice and the possibility of self-deception- defines the ambiguous America in celebrating self-reliance, egoism, and liberty but also its thirst for controlling other countries. A mix of contradictory splendour and hypocrisy which came together in the idea of "self-determining power", and proved fatally compelling for Edward Thomas (p. 16).

The Road Not Taken raises key noteworthy existential and telic questions relevant to the key notions of writing including the possibility of the traveller transcending his Self ("travel both") while still remaining himself ("be one traveller"), or the possibility that a traveller can ever arrive anywhere if he is constantly looking for something more pure? ("the one less travelled by"). These reflect the *transcendental* nature of human Self, a Self which is endlessly in pursuit of a more pure and perfect version of his Self. Neo and Zahra expressed their intentions to travel next to other places to see more of their Selves and feel more connected to their Selves in learning with new individuals in other places.

The Road Not Taken provides a portrait of both choices and the Selves as choosers. It is about celebrating Selves and glorification of Selfhood. For conclusion, *The Road Not Taken* is a protest against conclusions, the way that understanding is viewed as interpretation.

Home, Away From Home

My transition understanding experiences led me to investigate international students' transitioning understandings of their Selves in English, home and home language in relation with Others, and examine the impacts of their Self-transitioning on their understandings of metaphors.

- **Students' Existential Understandings in Their Sociocultural and Linguistic Transition**

Home, away from home, international students' understandings involving their *excursion* from the familiarity of their EFL homelands into the alien ESL context of Canada (away from home) and their *reunion* at home (the home of Self, language and place) as a different Self (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991), involved their existential journey of Self-transition and Self-discovery in an alien land, with unfamiliar Others, and in an alien language (English). Students' various individual, sociocultural, and linguistic challenges were the key drivers to their greater Self-understandings in their transition journey. Students' transitioning Self-understandings were highly interwoven with their understandings of English language and their interpretations for metaphors. This section discusses the birds' understandings from their stories, mainly in response to the first two research questions. Initially, in response to the first research question:

- How does learners' transition from their native home and an EFL context to a new home, the ESL context of Canada (sociocultural dimension), influence their Self-understanding (existential dimension)?

The findings from the first story set on students' sociocultural, linguistic and existential transition are discussed. Students' key existential and experiential views of their Selves were interrelated to their understandings of English and their evolving conceptions of home and home language in their new sociocultural context. The students' transitioning understandings of their Selves, as reflected in their understandings of English language, connected to their understandings of home and home language in relation with Others, are provided here. International students' various challenges are presented within three broad existential/ individual, linguistic, and sociocultural dimensions for an investigation of their Self-understandings in their new context. The influence of sociocultural and political challenges on students' sense of

belonging in their new community, culture, and education was previously investigated by scholars such as Yan and Pei (2018).Through a deep and detailed analysis of students' existential and experiential views of their home, home language, and their Selves in relation to Others, I traced students' home, away from home: their Self-understandings in their transition challenges as suggested in their individual stories and their understandings of English and metaphors. Students' transitioning Self-understandings formed the basis for their interpretations of metaphors.

- **English, Home, and Home Language of Self in Dialogue with Others**

Students' stories of their transition and their transitioning understanding experiences of English relevant to their understandings of their Selves, home, home language, and Others - linked to the three existential, sociocultural, and linguistic aspects of this study- were very diverse and interrelated. Key existential views of English experienced by transitioning students in my research involve:

- English as home or away from home: Students' sense of home in English (their understandings of English) was very much dependent on how they felt and experienced their Selves in using English, how their emotions and their place were connected, and how much they could use their (positive) emotions in using English with Others. This did not seem possible in many places and with different people and entailed a sense of homelessness. The absence of (positive) emotions in using English and lack of the sense of connectedness of Self to Others in most of the students' contexts in new places made them feel 'away from home', not be themselves and not feel their selves and be truly present in their use of English. This made them feel isolated and alienated (Guo & Chase, 2011). Linguistic and cultural differences of international students with domestic people had adverse impacts on their social relations (Sato & Hodge, 2009). The negative impacts of international students' psychological and emotional challenges (e. g., Yeh & Wang, 2000) involving loss of social support (Grayson, 2008; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Zhang, 2012) and Self-questioning, homesickness and isolation on their academic success (e. g., Harvey et al., 2017) and their psychological well-being (Zhang, 2012) were previously studied. My study moved beyond these studies and examined the influence of Others' (including domestic students') emotional connection and social relations on international students' emotional and psychological

states and their Self-experiences (feeling home or away from home) in using English (and understanding metaphor) after transition to a new ESL context.

Contexts of homecoming/English as home (feeling home in English and so understanding) for my participant students occurred when they experienced others sharing their feelings and they united in sharing their emotions as themselves. That is, when they found their Selves, with their emotions, connected with their places: the times that they could feel belonging to their new community, culture, and education (Yan & Pei, 2018; Yao, 2016). This, as stated by the participant Qazal, points to the high significance of genuine share of positive emotions and positive presence for both sides of a conversation to guarantee a mutual sense of home in an actual existential and linguistic exchange and understanding.

In contexts of away from home, students (such as Carolina), who were multilingual in using more than two languages, experienced English as Self-alienating. They felt exhausted in using different languages and using English made them feel isolated. These students experienced living 'in between' their past and current cultures, in a third world. They found their Selves, their roots, existing in their different homes, in different places they lived. Their sociocultural challenges abated their sense of belonging in their new community, culture, and education (Van Horne et al., 2018; Yan & Pei, 2018). Students' language challenges disrupted their social interaction (Abu Rabia, 2017; Briguglio & Smith, 2012) and their ability to develop a support system in the new environment (Berger, 2008; Wang, 2012). Language challenges also hindered their social adaptation, academic achievement, and psychosocial adjustment to life (e. g., Li et al., 2018; Liao & Wei, 2014). Participants' interaction with their local culture- through home food (Ali), music (Leila, Saád), clothes, values, religious beliefs, and language (Ali, Carolina)- helped in alleviating their psychological challenges (Wang, 2012).

- English as an occasional, non-original home: Some students had an occasional sense of home in English when they could not feel their original Self but rather their acting Self. For these students their mother language constantly remained as their original home language and was engaging when they used for certain speaking communities. These students, such as Saád, lived in between their native and adopted homes, in between different home languages, in between English and their mother language. They felt at home when they emotionally felt safe in experiencing a collective power with others. They experienced a mixed feeling of Self estrangement and friendship in their transition experience in a new sociocultural context

(Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009). English for these students was an 'occasional home language' in contexts where they could feel their Selves as part of their speaking community, when they felt shared emotions with their interlocutors, and their interactions created a 'sense of belonging' (Yan and Pei, 2018).

- English as contextual and transitioning was experienced by some students who felt home in English in certain technical and analytic contexts but not in their emotional contexts or for self-expression. Home for these students was a transitional feeling that they experienced here and there in different places. These students, such as Shadi, did not feel that they fit anywhere because of their intimate connection to their homelands. Home for these students was wherever they were. Their spiritual transition and their evolved, and 'compromising' Self, enabled them to view the world as a borderless land, on any point of which they could carry the beloved connection to their homeland. This global understanding involved the shift in their perspective from *mononational* to *multinational* Selves (Brown & Graham, 2009).
- English as 'an *occasional* window' to others, and a channel for knowing different cultures and languages was experienced by some other students. Distance from their former life gave them an objective and less biased lens in their social relations (Hofstede, 1991). The personal outlook of these students, though, was many times disappointed and shattered in interaction with native speakers of English. Actual interactions in English were fearful and alienating, sometimes biased and marginalizing (Dyson, 2005; Wang, 2012), and moved them to adopt 'copies' of their Selves in order to cope with their challenging situations. Not feeling at home in English in their adopted selves, as they could feel in their mother language, in their 'reflexive project' of their Self (Giddens, 1992) and continual negotiation of their Self (Brown & Brown, 2009), these students, such as Alexa, considered their new places as copies of their conventional and original homes.
- English songs, feeling home as other languages: for some students, such as Leila, English, when involved high emotions, such as English songs, felt home as their native languages. Using non-song English, multilingual students, such as Carolina, faced cultural confusion for the interference of one language into another. The multilingual students could hardly focus on one language or attach their Selves to any specific place as home. Their life experiences in various places made them collective and selfless individuals of *multinational* perspectives (Brown & Graham, 2009). Songs and other emotional literary texts and contexts authenticated the students'

respective experiences and inspired their deep and meaningful engagement and helped them learn English language faster (Lemon, 2013).

- English as a good friend and monitoring tool: some other students experienced English as a monitor, as a good friend and tool for interaction and connections of their Selves with others and as being functional in their new context. These students, such as Qazal, felt 'disarmed' in feeling their Selves connected to their new society through learning English and education. They experienced a simultaneous feeling of losing and gaining home, becoming homeless, and becoming distant from their original Selves in adopting artificial Selves, experiencing "unchartered" psychological dimensions of their transiting life (Elliot et. al, 2016).
- English as an emotional savior, a home-making tool: Some students, including Neo, who transitioned to Canada at younger, pre-university age, found English as their 'emotional saviour', as their true home in feeling it as part of their Selves. English was their 'home-making tool', the means for building their life and home which made them feel closely connected to others and their Selves. Home for them, thus, was shifted in both language and place after their transition to Canada. English for them was the key Self-transforming tool in their new home for their transition from their "Ought-to Self" to their "Ideal L2 Self" (Fong, 2014), and their achievement of their desired Selves (Hayes, 2007).

Students' existential understandings of English were as varied as English as a Self-alienating language to an emotional saviour and a home-making tool for their Selves. In all of the students' varied understanding experiences, the *emotional connection* between Self and Others played a key role in their existential experiences and understandings of English in their transition. The impact of *emotional* presence of their Selves in use of English in relation to Others on their views towards English was noticeable. Language, as a key multifaceted challenge of international students, overlapped with other facets of their transition challenges, including their emotional and psychological challenges (Cowley & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2018) in relation to Others. The way(s) that students were received and communicated by their interlocutors (Others), especially native speakers of English, highly affected their Self-experiences in English, their feelings towards English, and their sense of home language and even home. They felt at home and were positively present in English at times when their Selves were positively connected to Others in some way, even if it was occasional or transitional. This conveys a key message for English educators, especially native ones, also non-academic users of English, to be cautious in

their facial, verbal, behavioural, and gestural reactions in talking with other speakers of English. Many times, as expressed by Alexa and frequently experienced by my friends or myself early in our transition to Canada, native speakers of English might not be patient in talking with a speaker who might have an accent, speaks slowly in her new context for a variety of reasons, or uses her own cultural expressions and cultural ways of speaking and understanding in English. For years, in the context of ELT, native speakers of English have been considered as the 'norm' for accent, vocabulary and structure of speech. However, with the ever-growing population of non-native speakers of English, 'norm' does not seem applicable and even does not make much sense (e. g., Hamp-Lyons & Davies, 2008; Jenkins, 2002).

The emotional Self that students experience in using English, or any other language, in communicating with their interlocutors is the key for making students feel home or away from home in their language and context of use. Many times, it is Others who make English and a place feel *home* or *away from home* for reviving the positive or negative emotional Self of their interlocutors.

Another noteworthy point is the impact of the connection between English as an interaction tool and the connections that students make in English through using English and their transitioning attitudes towards their Selves and place. Students who made a friendly and close connection with English had a 'disarming' and 'smooth' transition into their new context and in their shift of attitudes with regard to their selves and place. Qazal, for example, viewed English as a friend which helped her in transition to a new place. Similarly, Neo found her transition to Canadian culture very smooth and English language was her saviour tool to make home and develop a new self, a self-centred one, matching her new home in Canada. On the other hand, students who could not make a close connection with English- such as Ali, Fatima, or Alexa- either because of the language itself or their interlocutors, distanced from their original selves, became 'actor' selves, and adopted a position in between their selves, in the middle of their original and home languages and English, and in between their homelands and current places. Alexa, for instance, mainly felt alienated in English. This made her Self fluctuating in interaction with different interlocutors who made her feel uncomfortable and away from home. Some students, such as Saád, who switched in between their close and isolated connection with English and their occasional connection with English affected their views of home language, their selves, and their

home. Here again, Others (interlocutors) played a key role in students' connection with English, their Selves, and their conception of their home/place.

Multilingual students who had lived in different places, however, were less dependent on a specific language including English. They could not feel fully at home in English and many times faced confusion in between their different languages. They experienced a mixed feeling of Self estrangement and friendship in their transition (Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009) and their confusion was extended to various personal, societal, and academic levels (Elliot et. al, 2016).

One last significant point related to this discussion is the very close connection of English and Self in dialogue with Others, especially in transitioning students, and the way that this close connection can affect students' understanding of texts including metaphorical texts, and their academic success (Elliot et. al, 2016). There was a significant relationship between social support and students' sociocultural adaptation (Schartner & Young, 2016) and their success and comfort and in use of English. Students' feeling at home or away from home in English was highly dependent on the presence or absence of social support in their relations with Others. Students' positive Self presence in their understandings of texts, and their Selves, could strengthen their sense of empowerment and confidence in using English. This again highlights the role of teachers in creating an open and comfortable space for students to become present in their language learnings, as well as the role of students' interlocutors in creating a safe and open space for students to be able to feel at home in English and express themselves in their conversational contexts. As Yao (2016) points out, helping with language challenges of international students can boost their sense of belonging, and so, their sense of home in their new place and academic context.

The discussion on the connections between students' Self, language and Others in their new ESL context revealed a very close connection between the students' experiences and their views of *English and their Selves.* Students' Self experiences in English varied within a wide range of full alienation and Self detachment in using English to full Self presence and home feeling in English in their new sociocultural ESL context with Others. Other varieties of Self experience in English involved a mixed feeling of Self estrangement and friendship in English: an in-between Self in English; a hesitant Self in between original and copied Selves; contextual or occasional Self presence in English; reflexive use of English: a Self-questioning presence in English in using it

as a window to Other cultures; multinational Self of no/less bias: global Selves of not considering any borders in between various languages and places; Engaged Self in songs and literary works; 'disarmed' Self in using English as a friendly interaction tool for connecting to Others; and, feeling their desired Self in using English: experiencing English as a home-making and Self-transforming tool towards their ideal L2 Self.

The first set of the stories revealed the high impact of the nature of students' *connections with Others* on their Self transitioning and Self experiences in using and understanding English in diverse contexts.

- The Birds' Self-understandings on Their Roads Not Taken (Metaphor Understanding)

The students' transitioning self-understandings and their suggested representations in their use of English- described in the first story set and discussed above- were reflected in their interpretations of metaphors which pertain to the second research question:

- How do learners' Self-understandings in a different sociocultural setting- ESL context- manifest in their interpretations of linguistic metaphors in a poem? (existential, sociocultural, and linguistic dimensions)

The third set of stories on the birds' roads of metaphor understanding highly revealed the birds' Self-understandings in their existential and Self-transitioning journeys. In interpreting the poem, *The Road Not Taken*, the birds projected their own Self-understandings in their challenging transition journey in different ways. Emotionally, the birds pictured and associated the poet with their own current or past Self. Depending on their own stage of Self-transitioning, the birds regarded the poet in their own temporal state of being. Some birds viewed the poet on his initial *stage* of inner dilemma and confusion for the choice of his road (Jane, Alexa), taking his journey of constant Self-analysis, Self-doubt, and Self-criticism in their own habit of their present Self (Alexa), and feeling lost and hesitant in his initial journey of transition with hope for a bright future (Jane, Neo). Other birds found the poet in between their current and past Selves (Camila), their traditional and modern Selves (Neo), their Original and artificial Selves, and homes (Qazal). Still other birds viewed the poet as 'happy' and 'satisfied' for living his Self-selected and Self-possessed road (Ali) and as emotionally and intellectually richer (Alexa) at the end of his Self-journey.

The birds projected their own Self dilemmas- nationality, home, language, and Self- in picturing "Two roads" in *The Road Not Taken*. Their view of "Yellow Wood" was a puzzled state of their Self (Saád), further manifested in their constant back and forth between their past and current Selves (Saád), or in between their confident and hesitant Self (Jane), in reading through different stanzas of the poem.

The birds' temporal, emotional Self-understandings impacted their metaphorical recognition or understanding of other words in the poem such as "sigh" in the last stanza which in their own current psychological state implied 'worry' for the future and loss of their native values and tradition (Ali), rooted in their life-long sense of being a stranger everywhere (Ali & Carolina); or, suggested their confident' Self, feeling 'calm' and 'happy' for the future and 'reassured' of their taken road.

The birds' Self-reflected projection of their own psychological states or individual experiences was also noticeable in their understandings of the colors or the setting of the poem. They found "yellow" in "yellow wood", for instance, as suggesting the 'stressed' and 'perplexed' state of the poet (Alexa), or "black" in the road "trodden black" as the racist prohibition of the road for 'black' people, applied to their own past racist experiences in their previous places (Ali).

The birds also projected their own thinking pattern of Self-analysis in their decision-making process and reading of the structure of the poem (Alexa & Neo). They metaphorically viewed different stanzas of the poem as related to different stages of the poet's thinking and Self-questioning in making a decision, similar to their own thinking stages and habits of decision making (Alexa). The birds' existential (Self-based) view of the structure of the poem and transition in their own Self-understandings in interpreting the structure of the poem involved a mutual transition (Jane & Alexa). The birds' Selves were not only projected into their view of the structure of the poem, but also were affected and transitioned in switching back and forth between their past and current Selves and experiences as they read through different stanzas of the poem (Saád).

The birds' Self projection also happened in their understanding of the punctuation in the poem. They viewed the exclamation mark, for instance, in their own metaphorical way of understanding their Selves (current or past), their inner and emotional challenges and their habits of Self-questioning and Self-battle (Alexa & Neo). This points to the close connection and overlap between international students' linguistic and psychological challenges (Cowley &

Hyams-Ssekasi, 2018). Similarly, the birds Self-understood the recurrent pronoun of "I" by projecting their own Self-possessed understanding of their own road into the poem as a 'Self-possessed' road, and became more Self-centered in their interpretations of repeated "I"s throughout the poem (Saád). This points to the birds' capture and focus on certain lexis highly relevant to their own past experiences and *temporal* Self-understandings, and also the application of students' Self-experiences to their understanding of the linguistic metaphors (Gadamer, 2013). While most of the birds (e. g., Ali, Saád, Shadi) read their own current (liberated) Self or fluctuated in between their current and past Selves in reading *The Road Not Taken*- "the most misunderstood" poem (Orr, 2015)- some birds (e. g., Neo) explored their past Selves throughout the road. Finding their current Self in contrast with their past Self, the birds found the poet as opposing their current Self. This further suggests the birds' Self-transitioning and their understanding of their transitioning in their understanding of the poem.

This diversity in representations of the birds' Self-experiences in their recognition and interpretations of metaphors refutes the *constancy* and *systematicity* of the cognitive approach to metaphor understanding (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) which delimits metaphor understanding within generalized, abstract and pre-existing conceptual domains and disregards the dynamic and linguistic aspect of understanding (Cameron, 2010).

- The Birds' Self-Understandings on Their Roads Not Taken to Self-perfection: A Sufi-Hermeneutic Perspective to Students' Essential and Existential Understandings of Metaphors

Students' inner transitioning and spiritual knowledge and understandings in creating deeper connections with Others- represented in the second Sufi stories of Seven Valleys of Understanding- revealed their experience of the metaphorical poem in full perspective, depicting their *essential* and *existential* understandings. The mystic representations of different spiritual stages in my participants' individual stories and their understandings of metaphors- highly resonating with my own personal passion and deep understandings- involved their common humanistic understanding experiences which were reflected in their interpretations of metaphors. The students' mystic suggestions and their universalist, *unifying* understanding experiences with regards to Other humans are reminders of the *forgotten* higher realm of language and language

understanding in human connection to Others, to Infinity, our common Source, and so the infinitude of our finite understandings- what we often hear about in many current traditions but rarely hear about the underlying reason- our *essential* Unity and the *Unity of existence,* which its realisation and constant reminiscence could serve to recover our disrupted linguistic and non-linguistic relations with Others.

The choice of a Sufi model of Self-transition and Self-cultivation (*Bildung*) on seven stages of human illumination and Self-perfection for framing my participants' Self-understanding journeys with Others, as a fusion of the horizons of their Selves with Others (Gadamer, 1989), was intended to uncover the firm unity and common basis of the two deeply Originated traditions of Sufism and Hermeneutics. It was meant to reveal the unified *essential* and *existential* understandings of the participating students, as typical humans, and as the response to the third research question:

- How do the learners' transition journeys of their Selves and their inner transitioning, presented as the birds of the Sufi story of Simorgh, contribute to their understandings of Others and metaphors?

The birds' *essential* and *existential* Self-understandings in their conscious or unconscious Self-transitioning journeys with Others towards their perfect Self involved their *unifying* understandings integrated in the *diversity* of their interpretations of metaphors. Here I present the gist of the students' understandings of metaphors incorporating their unified existential and essential understandings of their Selves and Others within a Sufi-hermeneutic perspective:

The poem inspired the students/birds to reflect on their own experiences connected to the metaphorical literary work, expand their worldviews and experience Self transition (Kim, 2010). The birds' Self-application (Gadamer, 1989; Madison, 1988), the projection of their horizons and worldviews and their Self-views to the meanings of the poem revealed the linguality of the metaphoric poem: the 'not-yet-said/understood' of the linguistic text (Gadamer, 2012). The birds' Self-application revealed their ambiguous being (Mulla Sadra, 1999): powerful and free beings, but also 'destined' Selves whose sight, as the poet, did not reach beyond the 'bend' of their roads (Saád). The birds found Others' diversity as a clue for better knowing of their being, for their Self re-discovery (Leila, Camila, Zahra). They became open to diverse people of various

cultures (Elliot, et. al, 2016). In their Self negotiation and interaction with new cultures, the birds practiced tolerance, respect, empathy, and flexibility with Others (Van Horne et al., 2018). They experienced "perspective transformation"- they changed cultural outlooks (Taylor, 1994) and accepted their new values with an understanding that no single culture has the absolute criteria for judging another culture (Hofstede, 1991) (Fatima, Zahra, Leila, Shadi). They developed a nonethnocentric value system which helped them find their authentic Self (Brown & Brown, 2009), their global Self, one which does not know any border between her Self and Other humans, Other lands, and languages (Neo, Shadi, Leila, Fatima). The students' increased deeper understanding of their Selves enhanced their intercultural and global competence (Costello, 2015): they gained the ability to live and learn with people from diverse cultures (HEA, 2013): they became culturally empathic, open-minded, and flexible (Schartner & Young, 2016; Van Oudenhoven & Van der zee, 2002). Transition to a multicultural society involved the clash of their original cultures, their ingrained habits and their altered Self. The interface of their internal and external transition experiences, mainly related to their language and cultural differences, ended in their Self-awareness (Sato & Hodge, 2009), their new Self-understandings, and enhanced their intercultural competence (Kohut, 1977; Winnicott, 1958). The birds' existential journey of detachment from their Selves and re-understanding their Selves in their growing closeness to Others acted as a catalyst for becoming more culturally aware Selves (Brown & Graham, 2009): they rebuilt their sense of Self (Wang, 2012) and revisited their prejudices (Hofstede, 1991), in different ways and different degrees. The birds could see beyond themselves, could see the place of the Other in their Self-discovery, in their transformation and ascent (Attar, 1177; Gadamer, 1989), and could abandon their individual Self-made and fragmenting boundaries between their Selves (Leila, Neo, Shadi, Fatima, Zahra).

The birds pictured their own road of transitioning Self-understanding and Self progress with Others (Attar, 1177; Gadamer & Silverman, 1991) in the poet passing along *The Road Not Taken*. They pictured their moments of *Bildung* and Self-alteration (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991) in transforming from hesitant to Self-reliant beings at the end of the road, from their lost Self distracted by external concerns and unable to attend to their inner road and inner Self (Neo) to Self-guided and free Selves (Neo, Shadi, Saád), to global beings (Shadi, Saád, Neo, Leila, Fatima). The birds' new Self-understandings occurred in linguistic texts, in understanding linguistic metaphors and in recognizing new possibilities of their Selves (Gadamer, 1975). In

understanding the text and re-understanding themSelves, the birds revived the invisible existence within the linguistic text (Wiercinski, 2009): they re-understood themselves in language (Gadamer, 1975), in a language-mediated understanding and Self-transformation (Gadamer, 2006; Wiercinski, 2009).

The birds' Self-actualization, personal growth, resilience (Elliot et. al, 2016), their social development (Van Horne et al., 2018), and internal strength happened through their debilitating and painful transition (Giddens, 1991) ended in a "joyous and frightening shock" of understanding (Gadamer, 2007a, p. 131). The participants' concurrent encounter with their Selves (Adler, 1975) in exposure to cultural, geographical, historical, climatic, religious, and linguistic diversity (Goodfellow & Lamy, 2009) involved Self-threatening and Self-strengthening experiences (Magnusdottir, 2005)- undermining and building their character; they experienced a temporary disintegration of their Selves which ended in their personal growth (Gudykunst, 1998). Their transition experiences changed them as free Selves who became detached in being attached to Others (Attar, 1177) (Shadi), who became better Selves after their "difference making" road and journey.

The birds considered the *Not Taken Road* of their transition in relation to Others, as Selves who care about the lives of Others (Ali, Shadi, Leila, Fatima), as open and caring individuals (Wang, 2012), who sacrifice their Selves (Harvey et al., 2017; Attar, 1177) on their *Road Not Taken* for Others, and this way, they get closer to their ultimate dream Selves (Shadi, Fatima) (Attar, 1177). The birds endured the hardship of their "difference making" road of Self transition for the happiness of Others, to end with a 'happy' "sigh" (Jane). They found their "making a difference" in the lives of Others as leaving 'traces' on their road as the poet, Frost, (Shadi, Fatima). The birds found their new Self-transforming experiences and "difference making" learnings on their road enjoyable (Madina, Neo, Leila), in benefitting their Selves, and Others involved in their learning and those inheriting their learning and "making it a difference" (Zahra, Fatima).

In a Self-perfectionist way, the birds found their *Road Not Taken* as a path of Self-cultivation and Self-perfection through the union of their Self with Others (Attar, 1177), through unity and integrity with Others (Gadamer, 2004). In their *Bildung* and rise to the universal, the birds devoted their Selves through Self-sacrifice (Attar, 1177; Gadamer, 2014). They attained a higher *universality* that overcame their particularity (Gadamer, 1975). Seeing their Selves in union with Others, the birds realized their road a universally beneficial road of serving the whole humanity

(Shadi, Fatima, Leila). The birds viewed *The Road Not Taken* as their inner, Self-exploratory and transitioning journey with their inner guide and with Others on their same journey (Leila, Neo, Fatima), as the journey of Self-effacement, of ascension of "I" to a Collective Self (Leila, Shadi, Fatima) (Attar, 1177), a constant, transforming understanding journey with others which extended their horizons as individual and collective beings (Davey, 2011). The birds viewed their path a Self 'chosen' road towards their dream Self, towards their greatest Self power and capacity with Others in their move towards their end (Leila). They saw themselves as seekers of their Selves in a most challenging and wise *Not Taken Road* of Self-transition (Alexa, Leila), on a universal road of traversing by love for the Other, on a road which is lived differently in different perspectives and meanings, which seems *multiple from outside* ("diverged") but is *One* when experienced *inside* (Neo, Fatima, Leila). The birds saw themselves on a "less travelled" road, a wise, Self-transforming, Self-knowing, and Self-unifying road towards *Light* (Attar, 1177), towards a *unifying* Source; on a road of Self-training and Self-education (Grondin, 2011; Wiercinski, 2011) with a *Self-eternalizing* learning being passed from Self to Others (Leila, Fatima).

Ideally, the birds viewed their road as a road of Self-purification and freedom, through *Self-reconciliation* with Others (Gadamer 1960), finding their Selves belonging to each Other in a non-worldly journey (Attar, 1177), an *in-between* journey of Self-understanding living ***in between*** *their* ***worldly and celestial existence*** ("Two roads") (Fatima).

In their journey with Others, the birds became more 'accomplished' Selves (Camila) in living with and cultivating their Self in Other languages (Neo, Zahra, Qazal), in making home and feeling home in love and care for Others (Alexa, Fatima). The birds developed/explored their *transnational* Selves (Leila & Saád), the Self of *Simorgh*; some even could see the Other before their Selves, as part of their Selves (Fatima) (Attar, 1177), as rays of one Sun (Mulla Sadra, in Nasr, 2014). The birds found the Other as the eye to their vision and the gate to their Self-perfection (Attar, 1177) (Saád & Fatima, Zahra). They saw their Self-education for the benefit of Others (Ali, Fatima, Shadi) in transitioning from mononational Selves into *multinational* Selves (Brown and Graham, 2009), into One Self (Attar, 1177). At highest stage, the birds created ***unity in their multiplicity*** (Zahra, Fatima) in realizing only one end to all their connected roads (Leila, Fatima) in their *Bildung* and in cultivating God in their Selves and in moving towards the perfect version of their Selves with Others (Attar, 1177; Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014).

Moving on …

International students' transition process proved a stressful and painful experience (e. g., Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1998; Yeh & Inose, 2003) for the conflict between cultures and values, the resultant language barriers, loneliness, discrimination, and struggle in building relations with domestic students (Wang, 2012; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). It also proved a rewarding Self-understanding experience (Taylor, 1994) in connecting with people of various languages and cultures (Brown & Graham, 2009). The international students' Self-reflected understandings of the metaphorical poem retell the multi-faceted, essential-existential understandings of their Selves in connection to their transitioning understandings of home and home language in relations with Others. They revealed a complex set of shifting relations exist between language confidence, social interaction, and the Self progress of the students (Gu et al., 2010). The way that students considered themselves psychologically and existentially, for instance, as being happy, hesitant, alienated, or in between in English, their home and home language in relation with Others, or essentially, as feeling accomplished in cultivating their Selves in Other language or in feeling home or away from home with Others, were also reflected in their existential understandings of the metaphorical poem. The existing literature on international students' transition challenges has not attended to this crucial and complex interrelations between the essential-existential aspects of the students' Self-understandings and the impact on their understandings of metaphors and language. The less attended existential, or essential-existential, aspects of understanding needs to be researched for other than poetic and metaphoric genre in second language education or other fields of education. Attention to the *existential* aspect of understanding can open the space for the students to include their previous understandings and experiences, their own cultures and ways of living. This enriches the overall learning of the classroom, creates confidence in students to see and be themSelves in their learnings, and to feel the freedom to be critical and creative in presenting their selves and their original culture and ways of thinking. Above all, attention to the *existential* aspect of understanding renders understanding and learning a joyous rather than a challenging process for various students. Focus on the *essential* aspect of understanding, involving the attention on common humanistic experiences of the students can help in *reunifying* students in their vast multilingual and multicultural differences inside and consequently outside academia.

Students' Self-understandings in their new ESL context of Canada- highly impacted by their existential, sociocultural, and linguistic challenges- involved a complexity and historicity which was reflected in their temporal understandings of metaphors in various ways. Students' metaphorical readings of the poem included their *recognition* and understandings of different words, phrases, sentences, or the whole poem/text as metaphors (Goatly, 1997). Their metaphorical understanding was extended to their understanding of punctuation, the structure of the poem, the Self and emotional states of the poet. This reaffirms "lack of marking" of metaphor in modern literature (Goatly, 1997, p. 318), and defines metaphor as a bearer of new information (Vedder, 2002), and as creating new meanings (Gibbs, 2011). Students' metaphor understanding proved as a highly *personalized* phenomenon (Littlemore, 2004) and as an epitome of their maximal subjective involvement (Steen, 1994). Students' metaphorical understanding also confirmed the hermeneutic view of metaphoricity of understanding (Gadamer, 1993) and understanding as temporal and as a historical interpretation (Gadamer, 1989), as the interpreter's self-application to his temporary situation (Madison, 1988), the temporal, hermeneutic experience of the students (Gadamer, 2013). Students applied their Self including their emotional states, their values and individual experiences, their existential experiences (involving their home feelings and their dilemmas with regards to their Self, home, and language), their future, and even their thinking pattern to their interpretations and suggested meanings for metaphors. They applied their own Self including their inner understandings to the meanings of the linguistic words, and even the punctuations of the text. Understanding in this perspective proved a dynamic process- related to their understandings of their selves in relation to language- rather than a finished process conceptualized in CMT (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), one which ignored the role of language (Steen, 2007) and Self in defining conceptual metaphors. The findings thus reaffirmed the existential view of *understanding as Self-understanding* occurring through the fusion of Self with the Other (text or interlocutor) (Gadamer, 1975, 2004). This dialogue and interaction between the interpreter and the linguistic-metaphorical text and the connection between the being and Self-transitioning experiences of the learners to their understandings of metaphors are mainly ignored in reviewed approaches to metaphor understanding in this study, including the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), contextual theory of conceptual metaphors (Kövecses, 2008, 2009, 2015), discourse dynamic

framework (Cameron et al., 2009; Cameron & Maslen, 2010), Cultural Linguistics (Sharifian, 2014; 2017), and sociocultural theory (Guerrero & Villamil, 2001; Kim & Lantolf, 2012). Students' various Self-understanding stages from alienation and Self-doubt to Self-globalization and Self-universalization mainly resonated with the Self-perfection stages of *Simorgh* as the highest version of their Self being attained through their inner formation and Self cultivation, *Bildung,* in moving closer towards Others and so a more perfect version of their Self.

To visually summarize this chapter and the linguistic, essential-existential aspects of this study, I end this chapter by presenting my model of understanding based on the findings from the students' understandings of metaphors as related to the investigated dimensions of understanding: essential- existential, sociocultural and linguistic dimensions. Considering understanding in a hermeneutic perspective as a 'fusion of horizons' (FOH) (Gadamer, 2004), as a circle of understanding between Self and Other (ibid), I designed a bow model of FOH of Self and Other, two individuals of different histories whose understanding involves various layers or dimensions of linguistic, sociocultural, underlined by the essential-existential dimensions. In this model the impact of Self and Other (text or interlocutor) is mutual, and different with one or both with the experience of transition from an EFL context into an ESL one, from their original home to a new home. In this model, the hermeneutic or existential concept of language as a medium of interpretation disclosing the world of the interpreter as a socio-historically conditioned being (Gadamer, 1993) is used to encompass the socio-historical, sociocultural, existential and linguistic dimensions of understanding. The existential aspect of understanding, coexisting with the essential dimension, overlaps the surrounding essential aspect signifying the reality of human existence and understandings (Mulla Sadra's notion of "*tashkik al-wujud* "or Systematic Ambiguity of Being, *Al-Asfar*, p. 35). While students experienced common unifying humanistic experiences, they took multiple ways in experiencing them. Their understandings were thus both identical (essentially) and different (existentially). This ambiguity of being was specifically addressed in my writing by including one chapter focused on existential differences in students' metaphor understandings due to their individuality and their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (The Birds' Roads Not Taken), and another on students' essential, humanistic understanding experiences (The Seven Sufi Valleys of Understanding).

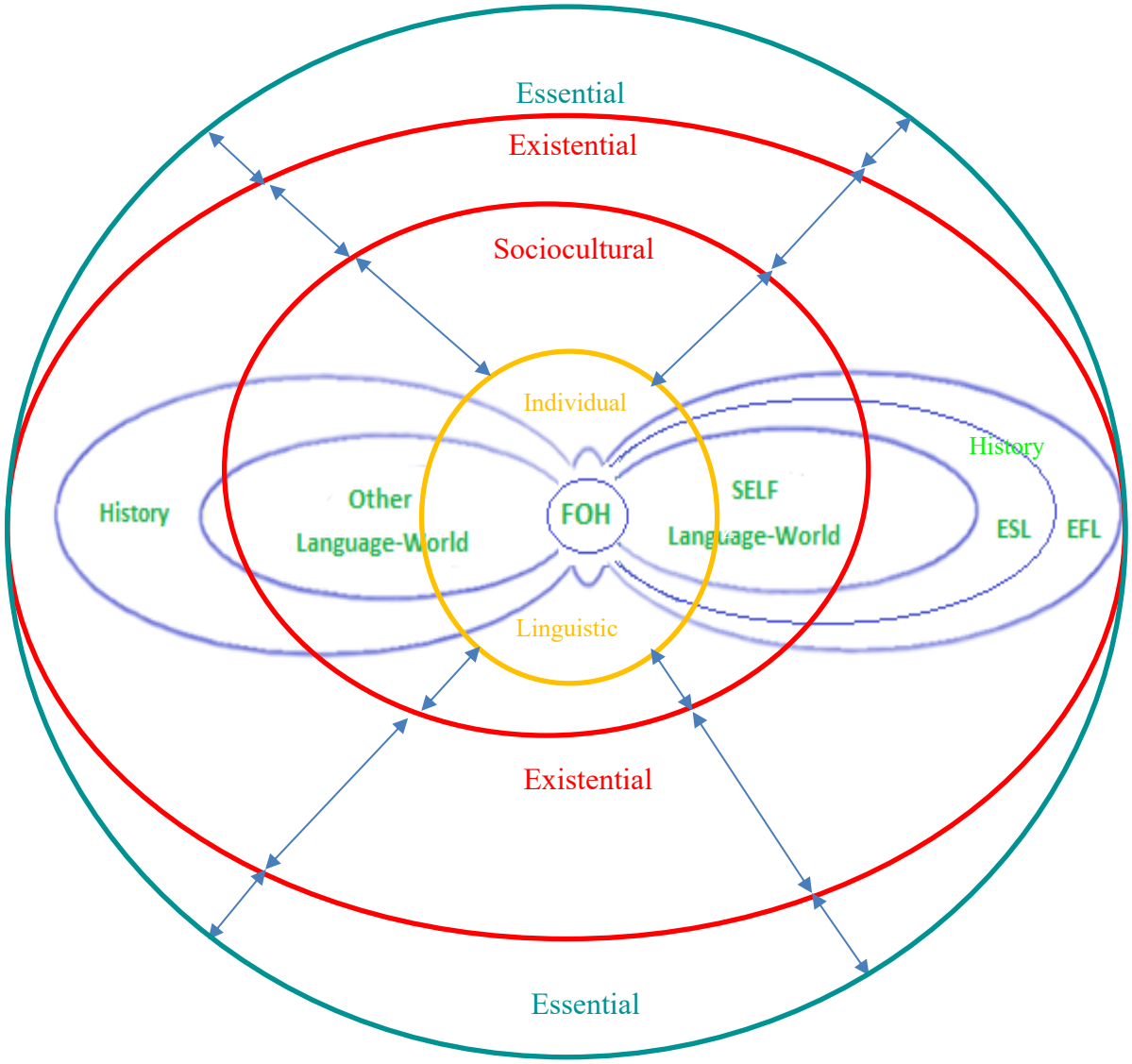


Figure 30. Essential-Existential-Linguistic Model of Understanding: (L2 learner (right) in relation to Other (left) (text/interlocutor))

The two sets of interconnected, symmetric ovals picture the horizons- including the prejudices, values, beliefs, interests, and perceptions- of the interpreter or Self (right) and the text or Other (left) in their given context. Ovals are chosen to signify the circular movement of hermeneutic understanding. The small interior ovals represent the being of the interpreter and the 'Other'- the interlocutor or the metaphorical text- as surrounded by their socio-historical and sociocultural contexts (historical-sociocultural dimension). The openness of the ovals suggests the negotiation and dialogue between the interpreter (Self) and the text (Other) which involves a reciprocal

transfer of the horizon or language-world (existential and linguistic dimensions) of the interpreter onto the text (object of interpretation) and that of the text onto the interpreter. Exterior interconnected ovals represent the contemporary socio-historical and sociocultural context of the interpreter in dialogue with the historical text or Other. Considering understanding as the reciprocal application, involving transference from the past to the present and from present to the past (Gadamer, 2004), these ovals are also depicted as open. For the impact of the EFL context on the learners' interpretations, I slightly bordered the EFL from ESL context for the interpreter. To leave space for the potential overlap between the learners' interpretations in ESL context and their suggested interpretations for an EFL context, I left this semi-oval open as well. The circular form of different layers or dimensions and the bidirectionality of the arrows highlight the essential-existential, Sufi-hermeneutic notion of 'circle of understanding' happening in between the interpreter (Self) and the text (Other): in between the parts of the text and the whole text, in between various interfused layers of the linguistic text (cotext), the societal, cultural, historical, and the global and existential dimensions inherent in language world of the Self and the Other. As represented, students' understanding happened in a 'fusion of horizons' (FOH) (Gadamer, 2004), a never-ending dialogic process where the students saw not only what was before them in the poem, but also what they made possible from their ontological positions. The fusion occurred in the act of interpretation: where their historical and contemporary understandings came together and created a new horizon and new possibilities of understanding and interpretation (Francis, 2015). Understanding happened when learners experienced their being, could apply their being, their language–world, onto the metaphorical text or interlocutor (Other); when students could re-situate their being and recognized new possibilities of themselves, when they could feel at home, in their new home, within the alien metaphorical language or Other. Recognizing the contextual dimensions of understanding- the essential-existential, linguistic, and socio-historical and sociocultural dimensions- this model views L2 metaphor understanding as a provisional understanding which is situated in the learners' lives, relationships, contexts, and histories (Moules, 2002).

The next chapter presents the contributions, implications, reflections and limitations of this study before I end my writing with the last chapter, epilogue, in reply to the last research question and a wrap up of my own and my participants' stories.

Chapter 9: Reflections

There is no conclusion in a hermeneutic study, nor should there be. Instead, in this chapter I offer my reflections on the contributions of my research, the pedagogical and theoretical implications and some reflections on the theoretical framework. I present the limitations of my research and suggestions for further research before closing the chapter with my own road.

Synopsis and Contributions

The reality of my education experience moved me to beyond linguistic dimensions of my research study. The dominant cognitive literature on L2 metaphor understanding and the actual academic contexts heedless of emotional and spiritual nature and needs of the human users and interlocutors of language determined me to make an effort and take broader steps to re-situate and re-vision language in its original human sense. Within a deeper perspective, I dug into the interdisciplinary nature of language understanding and attempted to apply language along with its interwoven philosophical and theological counterparts. I did so as I integrated two kin and far apart traditions to represent the interdisciplinary nature of my research perspective. Through these Self-emerged steps, my research incorporates the literature on metaphor and L2 metaphor understanding and second language education while situating them within the interrelated, kin disciplines and presents them within an inter-traditional perspective. These additional steps and layers of presenting L2 metaphor understanding besides and beyond its second language literature and context are undertaken to address the lost connection between the humans and disciplines theoretically in mainstream linguistic texts and cognitive approaches and practically in most educational contexts. In response to my experienced discrimination as an international and Muslim student and similar experiences of my participants including Fatima as a black and Muslim international student, or Alexa, Jane, and Carolina as other international students from different countries, I adopted a reconciliatory, intercultural Philosophical approach theoretically and applied the integrated epistemological and ontological underpinnings to my research in order to incorporate inclusion and anti-racism framework. Recruitment of thirteen international students of twelve various linguistic and cultural backgrounds and different ways of thinking and understanding their Selves and linguistic metaphors and the interfusion of the two Oriental and

Occidental philosophical traditions and applying them to my research, ontologically and epistemologically, contribute to inclusion and internationalizing goals of higher education and research.

This study is conducted for the necessity that I felt in education, for what I found ignored and less attended, for lack of basic humane educational principles in theory and practice, in an effort to make understanding and education seem more meaningful than what I mainly experienced. I am guided by my own lived experiences- as a key experience of my initial class episodes described at the beginning of the introduction chapter. I investigated three key elements of L2 metaphor understanding: the learners, metaphor and understanding of metaphors. I presented the literature on the transitioning learners, their challenges and understandings, the literature on metaphor and metaphor understanding, and re-examined the phenomenon of language understanding as interwoven and deep-rooted in human understanding. Comparing cognitive, hermeneutic, and Sufi approaches, I reflected on how humans and their various capacities and faculties are envisioned, addressed, or missed, within these perspectives. I interfused hermeneutics with Sufism and created an integrated approach as my chosen theory of understanding, replacing the dominant cognitive approach for considering humans' whole beings as possessing mind, heart and spirit and attending to the rational, emotional, and spiritual aspects of human understanding. The interpretive, existential and essential aspects of Sufi-hermeneutic approach served to study the learners' understanding of language and linguistic metaphors as a full human understanding phenomenon of rational and spiritual aspects. The spiritual underpinnings of the definition of understanding held in hermeneutic and Islamic traditions and the Sufi stages of Self understanding and transition are highlighted and used to bridge the gap which exist in merely rational approaches to metaphor understanding and in most human relations.

Investigating the philosophies of language, including its existential aspect, with its theological underpinnings, and interfusion of Oriental and Occidental[115] perspectives serve to imply and stress the place of a classroom first and most for humane education before teaching another subject. Failing to meet this underlying humane basis, the subject and knowledge itself cannot fulfil its humane mission nor could help in bringing the learning community together.

[115] Oriental and Occidental described in methods is used as in Holy Qor'an which divides the whole world into two halves

This research on L2 metaphor understanding is conducted in the context of a metaphorical poem, with poem as the context of maximal subjective involvement and existential understanding (Littlemore, 2004; Steen, 1994; Weinsheimer & Marshall, 2014). The implications are, however, applicable to other metaphorical genres and contexts in second language education of various existential degrees (such as the aboriginal Australian metaphors studied by Sharifian, 2017, cited in chapter 3). The Self-informed and existential aspect of understanding could direct teachers to provide students with the space to involve their own language-worlds and develop their own reasonings and imaginations in their understandings.

- **A New view to Metaphor and (Second Language) Education**

My PhD study of L2 metaphor understanding started with a cognitive perspective in continuation of my master's research (Salehi, K., 2008) in Iran. The cognitive approach did not seem applicable in my new Canadian context. It seemed very systematic and top-down with individuals assumed as 'physical' beings of fixed ways of thinking, feeling, living, and being. Reading the literature, I felt a pressure which I could not feel in the context of my MA research. After my transition to Canada things seemed more defined, space seemed very limited for me to be myself as the understander of linguistic texts and my socio-academic life. In my research journey, I attempted to find my own way of disrupting research and some solid thinking routines in my context, a way that I could feel and live my Self, so that respect exists for my Self and/among Others. In my discovery and exploration of the hermeneutic-existential approach to understanding, later Self-perfected through its fusion with essential-existential Sufism, I attempted to open a new space. I attempted to open a new intercultural and inter-traditional Self-understanding space in my field and academic context. My integrated approach addressed the missing space for the Other in linguistic contexts. It considered the ignored human Self, humans as an 'in transition' beings, beings of body, heart and soul, and not just 'physical' beings. Building on previous studies on metaphor understanding, the findings of this study serve to advance the theoretical and empirical aspects of L2 metaphor understanding in first place. Introducing a new integrated approach of hermeneutics, existentialism and Sufism, it also seeks to illuminate universally valued human experiences which are essential and applicable to the field of human education and our integrity in everyday life.

The findings on metaphor narrated in the third story set on the birds' 'Roads Not Taken' and discussed in the previous chapter reveal that metaphors are *recognized* by individual students. Metaphor understanding involves individual *recognition* of metaphors. This demands an interpretive view and an open perspective to consider metaphor understanding beyond the systematic way held in CMT and other cognitive approaches. Students viewed and understood different terms metaphorically. Various terms were thus seen and interpreted metaphorically by different participants. Different students *recognized* different terms or expressions as metaphors. This reconfirms the cognitive and hermeneutic definitions of understanding itself as being metaphorical involving the interaction and dialectic between two conceptual domains or spheres of discourse (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The metaphorical nature of understanding phenomenon is described as 'construing something *as* something else' by Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (Weinsheimer, 1991). In understanding the metaphors in the poem in this research, the temporal horizons of the students involving their individual experiences, emotions and provisional assumptions and prejudices provided the medium for their temporary and metaphorical understanding which entailed their Self transformation and new understandings of their Self. The students' understandings of the metaphorical title or color "yellow" in the poem, for example, were vastly different due to their different temporal horizons and various individual experiences before and after transition to Canada. This sparked a new view of metaphor as being rooted in students' Self understandings and individual experiences. Attention to the interconnection of the students' temporal and existential experiences in their understanding/recognition of metaphors can help with their understanding challenges and inspire their deep and meaningful engagement.

- Integrating Multilingual Native Traditions with Mainstream Research Educational Approaches

My research involves a dialogue and fusion of two philosophical traditions of hermeneutics and Islamic tradition and Sufism. Through multimodal (verbal and visual) presentation of my writing, using poetry and art, I attempt to address beyond rational aspects of human understanding as regarded in my tradition, with language as a tool for our human understanding. This calls attention to various learning orientations and interests of multicultural learners of diverse traditions, ways of knowing and acquiring knowledge in education and research for

creating more engaged and vibrant academic contexts. While my research presents existential hermeneutics to my field in second language education and metaphor, integrating existential hermeneutics with my home traditions for the perceived gaps made my research journey enjoyable. Living a mixed sense of familiarity and unfamiliarity in my attempts to find the familiar in a new tradition were the key drivers for my greatest engagement and Self-understanding and education. Given the freedom and motivation, other users of English as a second language would enjoy exploring novel ways of creating their own original approaches in research and education through integrating their native traditions with mainstream research approaches. Inclusion of native traditions of multicultural students will enrich research and curriculum and encourage students' creativity and critical thinking. It will also help in opening the minds and expanding the horizons of individuals involved in education to accept others' traditional ways of being, thinking, and learning, to earn through various traditions, and live their inter-traditional attitude in their relations with Others in universities and society.

- **Inter-Disciplinary Research: Unity in Multiplicity**

In my attempts to create a more comprehensive approach to metaphor and language understanding as human and humane understanding, I considered language with its inherent philosophical and theological underpinnings to address the interwoven needs of the learners in feeling belonging and included in their academic contexts and theoretical frameworks. I applied and traced the interconnections in my theoretical framework and in my experiment: in my participants' ways of understanding themselves and metaphors, in their individual Self and metaphor understandings which were rooted in their personal, religious, epistemological and ontological understandings of their beings on their transitioning life roads. These interconnections existed in me, in my participants and their interpretations of metaphors: they define and represent *Who we are* and *How we understand*.

My transition experience made me see the significance of original, missing connections between disciplines of language, philosophy and theology for true human education, morality, justice, and achieving the ultimate humane goal of education in uniting people and creating a peaceful academic context. I tried to do this task as an obligation in my limited space. This inter-disciplinary exploration and research seemed much needed in my linguistic and non-linguistic

contexts after my transition. I faced many studies which have investigated diversity in learning or understanding in second language or education. I rarely found any study in my researched fields which attended to the core unity in diversity (Simorgh in Si-morgh), the common humane experiences and understandings of individuals, and the significance for peaceful human relations, human education and academic success of students of diverse backgrounds. While focusing on diversity can create a respectful instructional context for students and educators, highlighting *common* humane experiences can help in re-creating the lost bonds between various individuals inside academia, and serve as a basis for broader societal and global contexts. This especially could be accomplished in language education and lingually through an essentially unifying conceptualization of human understanding in language to re-unite individuals of various traditions and diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Looking back at my experience of the class scene with the least sense of human sympathy and intercultural respect and understanding, through integrating Sufism with hermeneutics, I aimed at highlighting the necessity of valuing both *diversity* in our (language) classes and understanding the humane goal of education by practicing human *empathy* and *intimacy* in our educational contexts. I departed from the pervasive systematicity of cognitive approaches towards an essentially unifying, humane approach of no *human-assigned* systematicity of humans' dynamic understanding. I used the two complementary approaches to convey integrity and unity in language and human education. Within Sufi-hermeneutic framework, human's dynamic understanding is rooted in his ever "in motion" being/wujud and ceaseless transition (Mulla Sadra in Nasr, 2014; Gadamer on *Bildung*, 1989), as part of the substantial motion of the whole world (Mulla Sadra in Nasr, 2014). Introducing this integrated dynamic approach to L2 metaphor understanding, I highlight the temporality of students' individual understandings, which was underestimated in cognitive approaches. Attending to '*unity in multiplicity*' of understanding through this integrated approach, I aim to revive the sense of *belonging* among us as educators and learners of language and stress the higher, ignored aim of education as *unifying* individuals in their diverse understandings and perspectives.

- **Transition: Individuality, Contextuality, Complexity and Historicity of Existential Understanding**

Revisiting the famous conceptual metaphor 'Life Is A Journey' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), in an existential, Sufi-hermeneutic perspective, 'Life is Self-understanding Journeys' to the number of individuals living the journeys, and not A defined Journey formulated for all individuals. We think and understand metaphorically, but the fact that we think "differently" metaphorically needs focus. Ignoring the dialogical aspect of understanding, cognitive approaches, and specifically Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), disregard the immediate and dynamic interactions between the interpreter and the text, the interpreter in interaction with an interlocutor and/or the linguistic text (the way that participants interpreted metaphors in interaction with the poem and myself). It is through this dialogic interaction, or fusion of horizons, that meanings are co-created in conversation with the text, and the multiplicity and dynamicity in understanding and life journeys emerge much beyond a formulaic 'A Is B' as conceptualized in CMT. My Sufi-hermeneutic approach involves a bottom-up process which considers individuals' 'taken for granted' experiences and the 'how' of their individual journeys, their differentiating metaphor understanding journeys, rather than relying on universal metaphor understanding experiences. Through a deep analysis of the students' various interrelated understandings and experiences involved in their interpretations of metaphors, I tried to picture the individuality, contextuality, complexity, historicity, and the variety involved in understanding metaphors by students of various backgrounds and experiences, especially students who are in transition to a new place and sociocultural and language context and their views of their Selves are in constant fluctuation in their relations with Others. The choice of transitioning students to picture and highlight the existential and temporal aspect of emerging understanding- the fundamental traits of the whole existence- was a deliberate choice to provide a snapshot of transition in human substantial "in motion" and dynamic understandings (Mulla Sadra in Nasr, 2014) and the perpetual transition in human's understandings of his Self and language. The pedagogical implication involves developing an openness on the part of the teachers in considering and including students' various understandings of language, in welcoming students' cultural representations in their linguistic understandings and presentations and giving the students the chance to be present in their understandings and learnings. Teachers' openness will also teach students to be respectful of their classmates' different linguistic and cultural representations in their understandings and

productions. The overall impact of this openness will be students' enhanced engagement, creativity and critical thinking. In engaging students to make sense of metaphors rather than providing them with pre-set conceptual metaphors, students become "an integral part of the contemplative process"- a process beyond learning in "building a greater sense of community and solidarity in the pursuit of understanding". Students become teachers and from their activity "grows a new teaching, a living universe, which is certainly more than something known, more than something learnable, but a place where something happens to us" (Gadamer,1992a, p. 59).

- **Listening to the Other**

Practicing 'Listening to the Other' and putting ourselves in place of the Other, is a relevant key implication of my research for a truly existential classroom and a humane education. This involves the ability to practice dialogue in an open-minded, unprejudiced manner. In the classroom, the teacher is responsible to enter into dialogue with the students, listen to them, and consider their various viewpoints in his/her teaching practice- or precisely, to be-with-the-students (*Miteinander*) (Gadamer, 2011), and learn in conversation with them. The same with teaching the students to practice listening and considering the Others' different perspectives in expressing their views and understandings. Through *attentive* listening to one another, learning happens in actual conversations which are based on the experiential understandings of the class members and away from personal bias. Listening, attention, and care for our fellow humans in a class, and society, is the central message of my research which is the ultimate purpose of all human education and attainment of knowledge. What I would like again to connect to the famous opening poem by Saádi Shirazi (1210-1291), the wise Persian poet, who considers all humans as parts of the same body, such that the pain and difficulties of one member affect the life of other members as well. As mutually understanding parts of the same body, we need to care for the wellbeing and learning of Other members beyond our Selves. Through listening to Others, we will also be able to better understand ourselves:

"We listen to others also in order to understand ourselves, because others can read our lives and our deafness and blindness back to us in ways that we cannot read them alone ... We find our limits in each other" (Jardine, 2008, p. 3).

My integrated approach would not invite students to just listen to the Other, to the teacher or the author of the text to be able to make sense of metaphors and language, nor to follow others'

understandings for learning about themselves, their classes, texts, and Others, which is oftentimes the case in EFL/ESL classes. Each person in my approach is regarded as having an individual, cultural and historical horizon of his/her own personal values, beliefs, and emotional states to start with his/her own understanding which happens in fusion with Others of their respective, distinctive horizons. Understanding as Self-understanding and as fusion of horizons of Self and Other which is theorized in both Sufi and hermeneutic perspectives, in more or less degrees and intensity, is a most *modest* understanding that is necessary to be highlighted and considered in our human relations as individuals in our everyday encounters in academic and social contexts, in our encounters with students in class and other teachers of various linguistic, sociocultural, and religious backgrounds. This is what I mainly found missing in academic contexts. What this combined approach, in a Self-perfected Sufi manner, communicates and points us to see is that overall, we need to know about Other perspectives to better know our Selves. Each distinctive being of a different perspective *illuminates* a new aspect of our being (one morgh of our Simorgh: one bird of all birds of our being). Knowing about Other beings unravels the mysterious sides of our own existence. Others are the *lights* to our own existence, through their dialogues we grow into intellectually and emotionally accomplished Selves. Others are valuable and respected parts of our existence.

- **International Students**

The theoretical and practical contributions of my research approach for metaphor and second language education encompass the research participants. Various challenges of international students in their transition to ESL contexts were examined, challenges which were also manifested in participants' interpretations of metaphors. To learn about students' challenges, I sat in dialogue with them, I listened to their genuine understandings of metaphors. I attempted to learn more about the challenges of international students through recruiting students with a diversity of linguistic-cultural backgrounds. My study revealed the interconnections between students' transitioning Self in using a different language and in being in a new place in connection with different individuals. It revealed how the whole involved complexity can affect students' understanding of their Selves and metaphors. International students' various challenges in their new context are significant to be considered in academic contexts. *The complexity of their challenging situation can bring about a complexity of understandings which could be*

insightful for others. They need a prepared and welcoming space to feel belonging and become truly present in their academic life, so that they can offer the capital of their traditions in their educational contexts. I tried to picture the significant role of Others in students' challenging transition, the impact of Others' humane or disconnected, or even rejecting relations with them, the deterrent impacts of many biased interactions in their academic and societal contexts, and the necessity of taking the required measures to help with international students' challenges.
I explored the essential and existential aspects of my fused Sufi-hermeneutic approach to consider the needs of international students in classes. While including their various perspectives would respect the existential side of their beings, so of educators, and create an open and authentic class context, considering the essentiality of their (so our) beings would create a collective sense of belonging in educational contexts. Many times, as an international student, I felt external to class discussions, either for not having the background of the discussions or for not being given a chance to attend. Unlike my past, I stayed passive most of the times and could not enjoy my classes, classes which I hoped to use in the best way after my great investment and transition difficulties. I believe that it is the responsibility of educators to consider the space of multicultural students, to choose topics and lead class discussions in a more 'inclusive' way and open the ways for all the students to enter into dialogues with others. My participants', and my own, observed 'reluctance' among many native speakers to speak with non-natives inside and outside our classes can negatively impact the confidence of international students to talk and share their own ideas and experiences. I find my fused Sufi-hermeneutic approach a humane approach which can direct our classes towards more inclusive and intimate educational contexts.

- **A Call**

Philosophically, my research attempted to show the interconnections between two apparently different traditions: to reconcile Eastern Sufism and Islamic traditions with Western Hermeneutics, or the Oriental and Occidental essential existentialism. I endeavoured to show deep connections, similarities, the roots, and common basis of two worldviews. Through my philosophical fusion, epistemologically and ontologically, I have tried to justify the reasons why we need to know and see the presence of past traditions in current traditions as a way to value our past ancestors to our current state of knowledge, to keep solidarity, and to maintain peace in our relations with humans of Other traditions.

My philosophical trace of the presence of my ancestral philosophy and knowledge in hermeneutic philosophical texts was meant to signify our educational responsibility in reviving the lost bond, the existing traditions in academic textbooks and contexts, in our students' diverse backgrounds. Knowledge about our *whole* past traditions recognizes us to ourselves, and to each other, it helps in strengthening our human relations, and valuing others' traditions as a different aspect of our whole understanding. This Self-awareness can help with the existing challenges and the conflicts between students and individuals of various traditions inside and outside academia.

For the cited reasons, I found the Sufi-hermeneutic approach as an interpretive, essential-existential approach that appreciates and *unites* diverse traditions and emphasizes the generative force of the plural. The integrated Sufi-hermeneutic approach can help in second language education, and in education in general, especially in multicultural contexts where 'listening' and 'being open' to students of different backgrounds is required for creating a 'learning-with-one-another' class environment, an environment which favors all the students, an approach which is needed but is absent in most university contexts (Gadamer, 2001). I see the fused essential-existential approach an opportunity for students to find their 'original face', their genuine voice; as creating a space for students to view metaphors without some sort of instructional intervention (Smith, 1999), the way my participants viewed. Using conceptual metaphors for teaching would 'deface' students in their struggle to fit the codes that hurt and scar their soul and imagination (Smith, 1999).

My study is a vigorous call for application of such essential-existential approaches in our education, a call for *Self-transformation* for a 'true' Self-education by 'true' living of diversity in approaching Others in our academic and research lives. It is a call for a 'Self-liberating' education which frees our Selves from our biases where metaphor becomes a tool for knowing our Selves in interacting with Others, the way that the birds listened to the metaphorical text, listened to Others and questioned their Selves in reading the text; in their relations with Others, they re-cognized themselves in re-meeting the Other in language, in a new society and culture. My study is a call for humane approaches to (language) education for justice and peaceful human relations in linguistic and non-linguistic contexts, at this sensitive and critical era of great local and global tensions.

Reflections on Philosophical Framework:

- **Full Human Approaches**

In my research study, I tried to revive and re-envision the reality of individuals as whole human beings. Considering humans as whole beings of mind, soul/spirit, and heart corresponding to rational, spiritual, and psychological and emotional capacities and aspects of human understanding is the basic, yet less attended aspect of most education. At first sight, finding the spirit in hermeneutic circle of understanding for *Bildung,* as the excursion and reunion of the spirit, might seem impertinent or insignificant. This metaphorical description of understanding is not, however, far from the reality of understanding: it describes a basic nature of human understanding through (the motion of) our spirit- not apart from our heart and mind- in dialogue with the Other. This spiritual aspect of understanding is mostly overlooked in view of understanding as a mere rational phenomenon. Adoption of either rational or spiritual approaches and considering one apart from the other aspect resulted in disconnected disciplines with contradictory or unjustifiable notions and disconnected and care-less relations between individuals inside and outside academia. Focus on one faculty[116] (commonly mind) and ignoring other ones (spirit/soul and heart) in education would not make our learning beneficial for meeting our essential human needs and cannot recover our disconnected human relations. It will hinder *Bildung*, individuals' Self-formation and growth towards perfect Self (Attar, 1177; Humboldt, 1993;). One key implication of this research is then understanding as a *rational-spiritual* phenomenon, with the spiritual aspect of understanding, alongside the rational aspect, as essential to the lost unity between humans of the same "unsplittable core" (Orr, 2015, p. 142). Exploring, developing, and applying 'full human' approaches in both research and education is a vital task of educators and researchers in second language education and other disciplines. Considering our students, classmates or colleagues as full human beings in our teaching and learning practices makes full humans of ourselves in glorifying our latent capacities in interaction with them. Within the essential-existential Sufi-hermeneutic approach, the metaphoricity of understanding is attributed to not only the rational but also the existential, emotional, and spiritual aspects of individual understanding as full humans of higher mental and inner capacities with corresponding needs to be fulfilled in relation with Others.

[116] Inherent mental or physical power

In my research, I tried to address the interconnected aspects and faculties of human being and understanding (mind, heart, and soul) through using and combining art, poetry, philosophy, theosophy and (metaphorical) language. I found it crucial for keeping both the spiritual and rational Self of my research on humanities and language education as representing the full nature of understandings of my human participants and readers.

Addressing various capacities of human beings in research is the way to address both the differences and the commonalities of human understandings. Considering both experiences, the multiplicity and unity in language and human understandings, situates (language) understanding in its original human understanding as beyond a rationalist experience. As supported by the hermeneutic theory of existential understanding and the Illumination and Transcendent Wisdoms, the stories of the students' metaphor understanding journeys were not separate from their *Bildung*, which involved the stories of their simultaneous inner transitioning and spiritual growth. The rational and spiritual Self of the students *coexisted*, resonated and *illuminated* the Other in creating significant understandings. My writing envisioned the students' full understandings by presenting both the diversity and unity in their understandings through different stories. The coexistence of the rational, emotional, and spiritual Self in understanding calls for attention to the related needs of the students in teaching and research in second language and beyond. The spiritual aspects of understanding related to deep interhuman connections demand beyond pragmatic and rational approaches to tap into our higher modes of understanding and access less tangible inner world of humans' common essence for interhuman reconciliation.

- **Simorgh, Sufism, Hoopoe and Hermeneutics**

Simorgh (Sufism) is a constant reminder that we are One in all our diversity and that unity pre-exists our multiplicity. To convey how unity exists demands loyalty to the *whole* knowledge and wisdom as they originally delivered to us from past traditions. It requires a full presentation of all traditional and philosophical thoughts, without excluding some, with their theological/spiritual underpinnings which consider the *universal* needs of human beings and address the basic needs of humanity, the inner unifying needs. Unity does not entail from presenting abridged, selected, disconnected or unrooted forms of traditions to fit different times and groups with no concern for humans' essential needs.

In hermeneutics and Sufism, I found about the significance of the Other in human elevation (*Bildung*/*Simorgh*) and his greater Self-understanding, through *Sama*, the Sufi circular dance of Self-understanding, the hermeneutic circle of understanding, through *Bildung*, in spirit's excursion towards the Other for a more fully reunion with its Self. In humanizing the research and educational approaches for respecting the individual, cultural, and human-relation aspects of understanding, I considered human understanding in its true, common, and Original essence of beyond human, what its appropriate understanding can *unite* us in our differences. *Simorgh* unites humans in their differences, their various roads, through inviting humans to dialogue, to dialogue in their differences and multiplicity. *Simorgh* invites humans to learn from their differences and move to higher stages of understandings together. *Simorgh* teaches the story of human *universalization*. The hoopoe of *Simorgh* is the inner Hermes of human, the herm in hermeneutics: the "go between" the gods and humanity, between one text, one tale and another. Hoopoe is the guide and the gatekeeper, "The true locus of hermeneutics", the in-betweenness (Gadamer, 1989, p. 295). Hoopoe, the Hermes of *Simorgh*, does the two-way work of hermeneutics, a "to and fro movement" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 103), a "play" "that takes place in-between" (p. 109; Jardine, n. d.) God and human. Hoopoe- the bird of divine and human nature- is the divine inner of human, the gate between God and human. It is the divine representation in human being, the source of human's infinite understandings. Hoopoe is human's beyond human reason, his guide, and thinking faculty. In resorting to our Hoopoe, we shall stay in union and peace.

In Sufi-hermeneutic fusion, hermeneutics aligns the higher essential-existentialist aspect in seeing our Selves as parts of Others, in viewing our ascension in union with Others, and in conversation with Others in understanding a text which is hidden, a universal script which is not beyond our Selves-in-connection-with-Others. This highest understanding directs us to the necessity of learning about our Selves as 'who we are', 'where are we coming from' and 'where are we going' after all. For us, as teachers, students, and citizens, this Self-education involves considering and caring for Others- Others of the same essence and on the same journey- and attending to what is known as the 'soul of hermeneutics', which is "the possibility that the other person may be right" (Grondin, 1995, p. 124) in all our educational contexts. The sublime message of *Simorgh* on loving and care for the Other is about the ultimate purpose of education as human education and universal education, a Self-education which benefits everyone and

contributes to the world understanding. And language in this Sufi-hermeneutic perspective is the humane tool for the highest aim of human understanding that is Self-knowing through and with Others.

In a milder Sufi version, the Seven Valleys of Understanding are the valleys that we undergo in understanding any unfamiliar Other, any text, any linguistic text. It involves our quest for meaning, for knowledge, accompanied by detachment from our Selves, from our prejudices, and unification with the unfamiliar Other, to understand the Other, and to understand our Selves with the Other. The valleys remind us that any understanding, including metaphor and language understanding, starts with us in relation to Others, it involves transforming our Selves and ends in our better understanding of our Selves in our different understanding journeys.

As an extension and reflection of human existence, language and metaphor understanding involve not only the *existential* aspect of human being which includes the freedom in choice of the words and meanings- as the free, metaphoric choice of the roads in the poem- but also the *essential* aspect of human existence and understanding which encompasses and limits his understanding choices- as the bend in the poem blocking the sight of the road taker.

Sufism *illuminated* the spiritual side of hermeneutics in this research journey (as hermeneutics *illuminated* the linguistic side of Sufism in this research). Sufism reveals the human goal of *Bildung* and the evolving Self-understanding of human. It reveals the contingent relation of beings to Being as the rays of one Sun, the *coexistence* of unity and multiplicity as modalities of the same beings (systematic ambiguity of being, Mulla Sadara, *Al-Asfar*), with humans as contingent beings and parts of the whole existence as one single animate being (*hayawan wahid*) (*Al-Asfar*, 2.2, p. 342-50), each representing different shades of light in their various proximity to the sun, the Light of lights, as the telos of their collective motions. Sufism, enlightened by the mysticism of Attar, Surawardi, and the Transcendent Wisdom of Mulla Sadra, complements hermeneutics in illuminating the telos of human (Self) understandings and education.

Final Research Reflections

My research, like any other research, involves my contextual perspective and my understandings of my participants' understandings based on an integrated approach to human and language understanding. My research takes the universal perspective in residing the divine basis of human infinite (Self) understandings; in having *Simorgh* with the forgotten, universal message of *unity in human multiplicity*, for this timeless story befitting our time and era. My participants'

understandings of the metaphorical poem happened in between many texts. It happened in between their understandings of their Selves (of different ages and horizons including their different personal histories, experiences, values, beliefs, their temporal mood and emotional state at the time of interpretation), their past and present Selves, and their past and new sociocultural societies (their home, home language, their new connections and fields of study). My understanding of my participants' interpretations happened through fusion of my horizon- involving my different background- linguistic, cultural, religious- and my dialogue and understanding experiences with my participants' various horizons and experiences. My research provides a real-life picture of my participants' understandings. It is a 'temporal' microcosm of the macrocosm of my participants' 'lived' understanding experiences of metaphors and beyond.

In my thesis, I have used a bilingual language, a combination of Persian and English vocabularies, quotes, literary scripts, philosophical quotes, and whatever composed me, my being, and my perspective in viewing my participants' interpretations and my 'temporal', emotional and existential horizon at the time of reading my data and writing my thoughts and understandings. My writing is thus a fusion of my Persian and English worlds, each connected to the vast worlds of their ancestral languages, altogether presenting my being as the researcher and interpreter of my participants' interpretations of metaphors, rooted in their own unique traditions and their complex inhabited worlds.

My hope is that my research has acknowledged some of the problems and challenges that exist in our academic settings and inspires actual efforts to solve the issues. I hope my study informs our long-rooted connections and inspires the introduction and inclusion of ancient traditions in our classes to create the space for diverse voices of our students, to enrich our classes, and to create the spirit of peace, belonging and global thinking for everyone.

To end this section, I would like to highlight the fact that ***emotions are the last things that students inherit from their classes and schools***. My birds' deep understanding experiences, and my own experiences, reveal the significance of our social and academic relations, understandings, the inclusion and exclusion of Others as educators, colleagues, or administrators. The emotions that our students experience in our classes- if it is joy for being included as part of their own learning, or stress for dealing with an unfamiliar context that they seek to find their own way, or unhappiness for being left as complete outsiders- can impact their academic progress, their wellbeing, even their everyday life. This significant fact highlights the key role

and responsibility of educators in creating memorable feelings of joyful inclusion and learning for all of their students at different levels, including higher education. If we can create joyful feelings of inclusion, then we can feel reassured that we have accomplished our duty, our sacred duty, as caring educators.

Through my deep, extended work in my most challenging endeavour, in creating and using an essential existential approach to understanding, I aimed at directing our educators to underlying, beyond linguistic needs of the learners as human beings to feel belonging to their class community and not experience classrooms as disconnected language learners. I hope we all can awaken the *Simorgh* of our Si-morgh in seeing and treating our fellow human beings inside and outside classes.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Sufism used in this research involves divine stages to perfection of Self in becoming Selfless through approaching Others and seeing them as parts of One Being. Attar's Sufi model is useful in recalling humans' essential unity and the possibility to approach our original unified Self in modest approaching and understanding of Others. For my research participants, as in actual academic and life contexts, it is a matter of degree to appreciate Otherness and approach their Self-perfection goal. Self-perfection depends on the individuals' spiritual, historical, cultural, societal and traditional backgrounds and their potentials and readiness to perceive their inner voice and receive Others as connected to their beings. Although the assignment of the participants for each valley was based on their understanding experiences, similar to other interpretive studies, it still remains a relative and interpretive process. My readings of the philosophical texts, my contemplations on the ideas and several years of experiencing and reflecting on my own Self-transition journey created my historical and temporal subjectivity which differ from the histories of my participants. Differing histories and subjectivities are the natural limitations of my study (Francis, 2015) and other studies in humanities.

Relevantly, for investigating the participants' unifying understandings in various lines and metaphors of the poem and their various Self-transition experiences narrated in the story of Seven Valleys of Understanding/Love, the focus is on the ways that participants experienced their Selves in approaching Others in their Self-understanding journeys. Consistency in time and place of experiencing human unifying moments is underrated in favour of the significance of

humane understanding of Others and/with their Selves. I deem it valuable to ignore the consistency in reviving the ignored, humane side of linguistic understanding, although it could limit my study.

Using Sufism and the mystic poems by celebrated Rumi and Attar including Seven Valleys of Illumination, titles and descriptions, I appeal to the closest translations and English equivalents of the Persian terms. However, the mystic terms involved profound meanings for some of which I hardly could find an English equivalent. In face of the huge gap between the divine and worldly terms and between Persian and English terms, I made my best effort to stay close to the soul of the Sufi poems. Yet, nuances might have been lost in translating from Persian to English.

The focus of my research on international students is on their transition in Self as reflected in their understandings of metaphors and influenced by their new understandings of English and Others in their new sociocultural context. I completed the experimental part of my research within one month. Further detailed enquiries and clarifications happened through correspondences with my participants a few weeks after the data collection month. Although my study examines the students' past understandings and experiences, it provides a snapshot of their understandings and involves little space to acknowledge the historicity of understanding. For a deeper understanding of the students' transitioning Self-understandings, longer periods of time, possibly between two points before and after their transition, could be beneficial. A longitudinal study could also provide more opportunity for investigation of how the transition process itself shapes the participants' understandings. My research questions addressed the students' pre-transition understanding experiences which were responded to after their sociocultural transition to Canada. Consideration could be given to students' Self-understandings, as they experience their Selves in English before their transition to ESL context.

The interviews reveal that the participants found the reflective process valuable and a "good pause" to Self-reflect. The participants expressed their happiness and are interested in knowing about the research, reflecting on their transition journey, reading their stories, and having further meetings to Self-reflect and contemplate transitions in their Self and understandings. I studied the impacts of their transitioning Self-understandings in their understandings of Others, language, and metaphors. Future studies might consider Self-reflection for other linguistic and educational purposes.

The existential-interpretive approach used for investigating metaphor understanding in a poem is suggested as an inclusive approach to investigate other aspects of second language understanding and education in multicultural contexts. Poem, a genre of maximum subjectivity, can also serve as a suitable genre to study diversity in L2 understanding.

Finally, there exist many studies in (second language) education which investigate diversity in understanding and learning in various ways. Attention to common humane experiences of the learners is likewise significant for exploring the ways to connect and unify students and professors of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this thesis, I attempt to depict the significance of humane relational understandings through using the Sufi Valleys of Understanding in an artistic manner. I used art to address my readers, to talk to diverse readers of the same inner side through the language of art. Further research on diversity and inclusive education in second language and other fields is suggested to explore other ways of attending to human *unification* besides appreciating diversity for improving human relations at various academic, societal and global levels. Consideration should also be given to conducting further inter-traditional and interdisciplinary research to explore deep connections between other traditions and various disciplines and the applications for reformation and improvement of educational practice. Applying international philosophical/theoretical underpinnings for research and pedagogical approaches and curriculum in higher education can work in a fundamental way to nurture intercultural ways of thinking in classes and academic contexts, offering a promising way to change biased and exclusive practices in academia and creating more inclusive, comprehensive and peaceful academic contexts.

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My Road Not Taken: My Self-fulfilment

In all my suffering, in my transition difficulties, I created a *Not Taken Road* in my field and in education for the need that I felt for humane approaches and perspectives to research and practice. My transition experience, my notice of the significance of students' pre-transition experiences and understandings for their learnings and understandings after their transition, and my keenness to different philosophical roots to biased treatments made me take a new road on transition. I took a deep look at linguistic and cultural transitioning, which I found mainly

ignored in my actual and research context. My lived research experience inspired similar research in other fields in my academic context.

I started this research with its humanitarian perspectives for oftentimes Self-centered and inhumane practice, for the missing true human relations between the individuals in my academic and social context. My transition to a different culture and society moved me to see the philosophical underpinnings, the ontological and epistemological connections to excluding research theories and discriminatory practices. I feel fulfilled finishing my writing seeing that my suffering and my hard transition understandings and research experience have changed the research perspective in my academic context and sparked further humane studies which attend to the significance of multicultural students' transition and the philosophical roots to educational practice and theories. The *complexity of my challenging transition and arduous situation could bring about a complexity of new understandings which, thankfully, became insightful for others as well.*

Despite the inspired research and verbalized justice, inclusion, antiracism and internationalization cliches at my academic context, there is systematic reluctance to take into account and respond to the challenging and discriminatory reality of the academic life of international and Muslim students. There is a vivid reluctance to attend to such research, to actual internationalization of research and higher education and to value and appreciate inspiring multicultural research which emerge in actual challenging situations. I hope that one day the learnings and cliches get *actualized* in practice and positively impact human treatments in academia, the required measures be taken and create truly inclusive academic contexts for students of diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds. I hope that people in power *truly* act to eradicate discrimination and Self-centered behaviours so that justice and peace, and Truth, can rule our academia and beyond, so that students as my examples feel valued and appreciated for their original trials, for their impacts and contributions to the understanding of multicultural education in their academic contexts.

Chapter 10: Epilogue

My Bildungsroman (Final Research Question):

My transition journey, my PhD journey in my transition, has been part of my lifelong spiritual journey. It is my bildungsroman, the story of my Self growth, my flight towards my Original Self, with Others (Attar, 1177). It has been part of my pilgrimage, my education: the spiritual journey of my Self (Wiercinski, 2011), in a state of liminality of my celestial and worldly existence; in a state of rehabilitation and healing (Moosa, 2005). Forsaking my loved ones, I departed to explore my Self, to fulfill my never-ending duty to understand my Self (Grondin, 2003). My research provided an in-between space, another liminal state for knowing my being (Nasr, 1996/2007; Weinsheimer, 1990), for knowing the world. Pulled between familiarity and strangeness, I re-experienced living in between home and exile (Rumi, 1260; Gadamer, 1975). The tension between familiarity and strangeness (Wiercinski, 2011) and the uncanny sense of alienation and belonging created the locus of understanding my Self (Gadamer, 1989). I could better understand my Self through knowing Others, reading texts, through dialogues with my inner Self (Moules, 2002), with Others. My new self-understanding happened in between my HOME and school, in between my HOME and my adulthood kindergarten. Here, in my adulthood kindergarten, I re-understood my Self in becoming homeless, in *home, away from Home* (Gadamer & Silverman, 1991).

In the circle of understanding my Self through the Other, from my Persian Wisdom background to Western philosophy and my reunion with my HOME tradition, with my Self in my home away from HOME- the dynamic of my understanding journeying, leaving home, healing and coming back home wiser, more compassionate (Smith, 1999)- I tried to depict the picture of the past in the present. I tried to show the existence of the past in the present through the dialogue of the past texts with present texts, present beings, present historical beings (Gadamer, 1975/2006; Wiercinski, 2009), through the dialogue of the past and present traditions (Grondin, 2011). I tried to do my duty as a responsible human, as a Persian and Muslim in partially uncovering the strengths of a rich tradition- rooted in a rich and ancient civilization- a tradition which is already present, but is hidden in the visible, a strong tradition which is violated, misunderstood, or feared

or avoided for its strengths. I understood my own tradition with greater insight and creativity after all (Smith, 1999).

In my research journey, each bird revived a part of my Self, bespoke a stage of my transition and Self-exploration journey, or highlighted a personal, existential character of mine. Alexa revived my existential fluctuations and the overwhelming anxiety of understanding in an entirely unfamiliar land, very much resonating with the initial unsettled stages of my transition, many times heightened by some others' mistreatments. Neo's change of perspective and greater Self-understanding after changing her major reminded me of my fascination for philosophy after my transition, of finding myself in philosophical and metaphysical texts which became a love journey in being tied to my ancestral roots. Qazal revived my feeling of missing the original and generous share of emotions and honest and genuine human relations many times after my transition. Saád reminded me of the unpredictability of destiny- that everything under the sun is written by only one hand (Paulo Coelho, 1988)- and Leila of how everything is already well connected towards becoming what we once dreamed as our wished Self in our own wonderland. Fatima brightened the depth of my inside, my ever sense of astonishment and homelessness in this world and my lifelong exploration of my Self, of parts of my Self in different places, with different people. And Shadi invigorated my deep passion for my beloved, cradle motherland.

My understanding journey, my essential-existential journey, was as much collective as it was individual. In my journey, I sat in conference with the birds. I sat with the birds to listen to their transformation stories, to learn from their stories, to understand my Self (Attar, 1177). I was in dialogue with them till the end of my writing journey. I still listen to my birds; they talk to me. We came to *shared* understandings about our Selves through our dialogue (Koch, 1999). I found my Self changed by talking with the parrot, the nightingale, the peacock, the hawk, the swan, the duck, the owl, the partridge; I am changed by listening to the cuckoo, the rooster, the heron, the pheasant, the crane, and the sparrow among the others. We were mutually changed under our hoopoe in our free understanding flight (Attar, 1177); in our self-forgetfulness we could find ourselves in relation to each other (Smith, 1999).

Being a full insider to my study, to my suggested essential and existential concepts and understandings since childhood, as a student, an international transitioning student and teacher, as a second language user of English, and as a Persian and Muslim who has transitioned to a new land of vastly different culture, religion, school and societal system, I could sympathize and

empathize with my birds' challenging understandings. I could empathize with their interconnected and transitioning understandings, their essential-existential, linguistic, sociocultural, and educational understandings.

My fusion of the two Oriental and Occidental philosophies was a way of making my understanding journey feel home, a way to fuse my Oriental Self with the Occidental Other, my Self counterpart, in my world of my research, as a way to feel complemented, feel peace inside if not outside. I had found Persia in many places, in architecture of Rome and artwork of Venice, in Western philosophy, in Greek festivals and dairy, and most recently in quarantine and alcohol[117], and in many other things in different places. I saw Persia everywhere but named nowhere! As a fan of honesty and a passionate patriot of my country, its ancient art, civilization, history, culture and cultured religion[118], I felt responsible to revive it. I loved to revive Persia (my Self) through art, poetry, philosophy, language, religion, and culture[119], in my limited way. In reviving Persian tradition enriched by Islamic tradition, I enjoyed creating a dialogue between the Eastern and Western philosophies. I enjoyed finding the connections between Mulla Sadra's philosophy of primacy of being and hermeneutic existentialism, connecting the school of my city Isfahan to German hermeneutics. I enjoyed finding 'Unity in Multiplicity' in *Simorgh,* in Attar's mystic masterpiece of the twelfth century, I enjoyed connecting it to our current world of full of multiplicity and contradiction and less of unity. I felt strongest when I could frame all schools in Suhrawardi's philosophy of Light, which resonated the great parable of the 'Light of lights' in the Holy Qor'an as the star lit by the oil of a *tree not belonging to the East or West* (Surah Noor, 35), the greatest evidence for the Universal Soul of our beings and an excellent exemplar of a *global call* for equality and respect for diversity, if we reflect deeply, as recommended.

I embarked on my dream Self-exploration journey which had sparked in me in childhood and tied me back to my own childhood land, my tradition, one on which I could feel the fusion of my Self with Other, the fusion of my Oriental and Occidental sides, the obvious and hidden sides of my Collective Self (Attar, 1177). I tried to show Islamic tradition the way that I experienced it in

[117] Quarantine was first used by Ibn Sina before being taken by Venice tradesmen to Rome. Alcohol is discovered by Razi, Muhammad ibn Zakariyyā al-Rāzī, the Persian polymath; we never about these two key saviours of humans at this critical pandemic era here. These are just a few examples of hidden sources/roots.

[118] The way that Islam has been accepted and advanced in Persia at the peak of its civilization and through top notch scholar Persian scholar philosophers such as Ibn Sina, Mulla Sadra, etc. in Golden age and beyond have had a great impact on development of Islamic philosophy.

[119] Representing its strengths in other deep-rooted disciplines such as medicine, science, mathematics and astronomy was beyond my expertise

my culture as beautiful, deep, strong, modern, precise, perfect, caring, and attentive to the most delicate, vital needs of humans through love for Others as parts of our Self. I attempted to reveal a hidden part of the chain of philosophy from ancient times till today[120]. Having God as my- and our- first ancestor with my other ancestors in my research, I felt strongest, I felt most at home in my research. I created my dream home in my research by bridging what I found bordered as East and West, as Oriental and Occidental, through using the notions from my tradition, from Qor'an, from the Light verse. I consider my PhD research and journey as part of a bigger human responsibility to revive a strong, rich, forgotten, and misunderstood tradition which is not different from the origin of all traditions.

When I started my flight with Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980), I could not predict that I will land in my HOME with Attar, with Rumi, with Ibn Sina- the gem of my work and history- with Mulla Sadra, in my own city Isfahan, in my beloved land of Iran, Persia. I feel blessed in my trip. I feel I had everything that I once imagined and dreamed, all that could make me feel happy. I read the books that made me know who I am, that made me more and more restless in understanding my Self, that made me closer to the universal soul of knowing my Self. In my research, I had everything that made home in my research, which made me feel at *home, away from HOME*. I feel close to the soul of my people back home, to those dead and alive, to the people here- although they might not or cannot feel the same unfortunately. I feel close to what I always felt deeply connected long before, afar …. I'm thankful.

I wrote the story of my old, deep emotions which I found them deeper in any pure encounter; my deep, mysterious emotions which made me restless, which made more aware of a magnificent, infinite Origin. I portrayed my inner-derived journey in my writing, in my inward writing, in my cultural writing with honesty and clarity, a writing composed with extreme love, passion, tears, and with great hope, hope for a world full of honesty, justice, care, peace, a world of Truth and Light.

My research journey, all conversations, my existential journey, my philosophical fusion have educated me. They have changed my perspective, expanded my horizon (Gadamer, 1996). They have changed the views of my companions, their research perspectives, all those in my relation.

[120] This is unlike philosophical studying in Iran where Greek philosophy is included in ancient Iranian philosophy before Islamic philosophy and modern philosophy, where all key scholars of all nationality are studied and respected.

We grew together. This is education, this is Self-education which is passed to others. Hopefully it stays honest and faithful.
In my journey, I *refuged* to the theological roots of philosophy, education and language for the inhumane issues that I experienced in education. My purpose was to remind everyone of the ignored Core and the ultimate purpose of education in uniting humans, the purpose for our being here and for being educated in language or any discipline. My refuge saved me in difficulties.

My love journey is over, at this stage ... I feel honored to have the names of great ancient world shakers in my thesis. I am still at the beginning of my road, astonished, exploring the infinitude of my Self, the world, our Creator … I am interpreting My self, my being, as a word in a wide-open book of creation … an infinite task … I am connecting my dots[121], the dots of my road, finding my way in this magnificent world … I can never see beyond the bend of my road yet … I walk with honesty and trust … that is all I need.

Here is the end of my many overwhelming moments, a temporal end … I enjoyed my hard journey and feel accomplished in having dug through ancient, hidden treasures … it is very hard to stop, to say goodbye … my art is ready, I feel skilled having gone through many deep curves and delicate cuts ... it still calls for more depth, delicacy, polish … but I have to leave it to get dry … I will come back to you soon … it is hard to say farewell … sweet sorrow … to beautiful stories of God, Love, and *Honesty*, the stories of the prophets Joseph (Yusof) and Solomon (Soleyman), Attar's Sheikh San'an of *Simorgh* … beautiful, Truth stories which warmed my heart, complemented and alleviated the heaviness and isolation of reading on metaphysics, which eased tolerating injustice … farewell to many restless days and nights of awaiting books from faraway lands … anxious for the smell of Truth, originality, and purity … to many exciting days with Oriental texts on my right side and Occidental ones on my left, imagining, and living 'in between' the two worlds… between the past and present … feeling connecting the two worlds … getting connected to my ancestors … finding my Self, healing my Self …

I hope we all, the *migrating birds* in our flight towards *Perfection*, can free our Selves from the multiplicity of Si morgh and unite together into *Simorgh* and get rid of our hidden, inner sufferings ... to become *modest* and be able to see Others not as an obstacle on our roads but as

[121] https://news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/

companions in our Self-perfection journey- companions for us to survive, complement and grow, ones who need care and who care for us … to become able to see our Selves through Others.

As a new PhD years ago, I was suspended in American border for presenting in AAAL, a key, very competitive conference in applied linguistics. Next years, I was banned from traveling to that country for the same conference for my nationality along other Muslim nationalities. This moved me back to Cyrus The Great, the true globalization model in ancient Persia and in history. I never regretted then. Now with all the borders closed, everyone can attend, all nationalities, all online, all detached. How we understand our Selves? With Others? Who brought all these to us?

I would like to end my heart writing with these *essential* understanding questions for my readers, to feed their minds and *heal* their souls in exploring their Selves through reflecting and mediating:

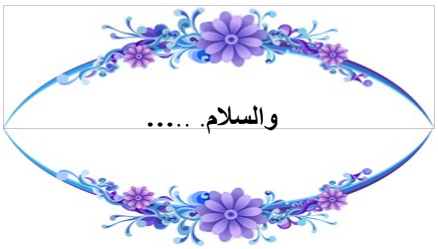
Where does our infinite understanding come from?

How can knowing about the Source of our infinite understanding have an impact on Who we are? on
Who we are in relation to Others?

Where are we all moving together on this understanding journey?
How can this knowledge impact our relations and our world??

I believe that we all can feel deeply *Whom* we are standing for …

I'm a bird from the heavenly Gardens of Paradise,
I'm not from this dusty earth.
My body's trapped in this worldly cage
for just two or three days.
(Rumi)



Final Point

I would like to declare that the Sufi path of Self-purification and Self-Other union is exceedingly higher and beyond what is pictured in my limited, superficial way of understanding the elevated Sufism. Sufism requires great devout practice and deepest appreciation which is gained through a deep inner journey. I see myself nothing, much behind the actual journey. I did my best to word what I could temporarily see and picture through my personal understanding and my participants' related understandings and experiences. To narrate my story in true Sufism is my wish, true to my nature and our divine essence. Ya Hagh.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview, Introductory Script

This purpose of this research is to explore how transitioning ESL learners understand metaphors. I'm using the metaphor *Home, away from home* to examine the sociohistorical, existential and linguistic dimensions of metaphor understanding. To investigate these dimensions, I'm going to ask you to start with interpreting the *Home, away from home* metaphor. Then, I will ask you some relevant questions. After the questions, I will ask you to interpret the poem, *The Road Not Taken* (Frost, 1916) (Appendix III). Let's start with the metaphor:

What do you think about *Home, away from home?*

1. Tell me about your transition to Canada. Why did you move to Canada? How do you *feel* about it?
2. Tell me about home. What is home? Do you feel at home here? Where do you feel at home?
3. How has your life changed since you came here? What changes have you noticed?
4. What is the big difference between here and your country? What are the main/best changes in your life here?
5. Tell me about the process that you went through after your transition to Canada? What changes did you notice?
6. How do you describe yourself in your country? How about here?
7. How do you feel about yourself in the past and now?
8. Now that you're in Canada, what do you want to accomplish in your life? Has your destination changed?
9. Tell me about studying here?
10. Tell me about the time you were learning English in your country. Do you remember how did you *feel* then?
11. How do you *feel* about learning English here? Do you feel at home in English?
12. How different or similar you *feel* towards English and your native language?
13. What *changes* did you notice about learning English here?

Appendix II: Supplementary Questions

1. Is there any specific line or word that strikes you in any way? If yes, what part and why?
2. Did you find any part of the poem close to your life experience or your perspective? If yes, which part? How?
3. Did you *picture yourself* in the poem? Did you see any *relation* between the poem and your life experience?
4. Did you see any *contradiction* in the poem? If any, what do you think about it?
5. How do you *feel* about the poem?
6. Do you think that if you have read this poem before your transition, you would interpret it the same?
7. Do you think that if you read this poem *many years from now*, you will interpret the same?
8. What parts do you think you see differently because of your *transition*?
9. How did the poem make you feel about *your transition* to Canada?
10. Do you see any role for *language*? How?
11. Did you see any *change* in the way that you *saw the life* before? Did your ideas change?
12. Do you think that many years from now you would feel/think the same about your transition?

Concluding questions:

1. How do you understand yourself now?
2. How do you feel about life now?
3. What language do you feel at home?
4. How do you feel at home?

Appendix III: Poem

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference. (Frost, 1916)