

**University of Toronto**

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**Mini Portfolio: Poetry**

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## Ghazal-e-Gulshan

On broken roads of broken dreams, breaking every rule we know, flying high and driving fast—  
this is Gulshan

My city or yours, it doesn't matter. We welcome everyone – this is Gulshan

Concrete flower beds, high rise vineyards, birds howl a merry song, let us follow  
the bare foot children on the red traffic light; put a coin in their hands, they smile and say – this  
is Gulshan

Midnight you'll find the streets alive. Vendor – carts – pushing sleep with barren hands –  
embracing poverty like an old friend.

In the city of light no one ever sleeps well. But don't be fooled, it is never truly dark in this  
Gulshan

I have seen kindness, etched in tired faces. I ask them “tell me your story?”

“we don't have one, we just live day to day. Can you tell us why the saplings don't grow in this  
Gulshan?”

I run through the streets a little girl again. The gola\* vendor still sits under the palm tree on street  
end.

He knows my name – the people all know my name. I know their faces – just not their names. Is  
this really my Gulshan?

Years and years I was gone – how can you still remember my name?

You left Maria. *You* left. But tell me did it ever leave you? Your Gulshan?

*\*gola: A famous street dessert made from crushed ice similar to a snow cone, mostly sold on  
hand pushed carts.*

## Not A Confession

What if I told you how I really felt?  
Poured out on paper torrent of words,  
overflowing emotions lacking restraint.  
What if I told you everything you never heard?  
Things I left unsaid, like poetry on a crumpled page –  
balled up in an angry fist.  
What if I told you, you are the poem I never meant to write?  
I kissed the page with my words,  
made love with the punctuation,  
in between every line you will find yourself.  
What if I told you, you were right?  
My emotions consume me,  
that I feel things too deeply.  
The heaviness of it is a weight I cannot describe.  
What if I told you I knew every lie?  
From the very beginning,  
I saw the way you smiled –  
concealing it behind your hazel eyes.  
What if I told you I was a fool willing to be fooled?  
Wearing the necklace you gave me  
shards of dignity hanging around my neck.  
What if I told you that I lost myself?  
Looking for filters to mask the cracks  
like the photos we took for Instagram  
What if I told you it wasn't my fault?  
I am not the person I once was.  
What if I told you, I choose myself this time?  
ctrl+alt+del the history  
of you and me  
now  
it's  
just me

### To All the Lost Mamas (Revised)

She's lost herself, *they* say as they talk with one another.  
Just a mother, a wife – nothing more.  
I see them shake their head at the spit up stain on my shoulder now scruffy and hard,  
I try to pry it off with my peeling nail paint.  
I pick up a baby shark,  
I stumble on lego  
Fuck (*actually I said 'fudge' – the PG-rated curse*)  
I see *them* stare at me and shake their heads  
You need 'me time'. You are losing yourself.  
So, I try to listen to their advice.  
A bath sounds nice. In the silence I try to close my eyes  
*Mama mama!* I hear phantom cries  
Shake my head. This is *me* time. Smell the lavender. Feel the bubbles.  
*Mama Mama!*  
Oh! how I miss your scent. The raspberries you blow. Wet on my cheeks.  
Water drips as I rise, I suddenly realise  
I am not lost. *Yes*, maybe they are right.  
That I have lost the *I*. *Yes*, I have changed  
I have found myself, in a mother and a wife,  
I have found myself in sloppy smiles and tired eyes, in dirty dishes and piles of laundry  
I have lost myself to find I'm more than *I*  
I'm the world, for those who are mine.

## A Pandemic Winter

In late winter  
the ways deep and the weather sharp, the very dead of winter.  
When snow like sheep lay in the fold  
when despair for the world grows in me  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives maybe.  
Rage rage against the dying of the light  
the world is too much with us; late and soon.  
We wear the mask that grins and lies  
with torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
Though the world has slipped and gone,  
the morning comes to consciousness  
and the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
It was evening all afternoon,  
it was snowing.

*(Note: This poem is a cento – a patchwork poem of different poems that I have studied over the past three years for my English Major at UTM. I have referred to “250 Poems: A Portable Anthology” compiled by Peter Schakel and Jack Ridl for these poems. Some of the poems used in this CENTO are: The Journey of Magi by T.S Elliot, We Wear the Mask by Paul Laurence Dunbar, The Peace of Wild Things by Wendell Berry, The World is Too Much With Us by William Wordsworth, and Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird by Wallace Stevens.)*