

MWWWI Newsletter

Muslim Women Writers Workshop-International Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 9

The Nurturing Pen

Jumadi II 27, 1429 / July 1, 2008

Assalaam Alaikum! *MWWWI* welcomes you our readers to the ninth and final issue of our newsletter for the year 2007-2008. The *MWWWI* Newsletter will resume again in September 2008. Enjoy your summer!



IQRAA! READ IN THE NAME OF YOUR LORD!

THE PEN IS MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD!

NOURISHING THE SOUL

Looking for a nice place to swim? Maybe even a place to work out? If this sounds good, then come on let's go. The place I'm talking about has pretty much of everything that one needs to beautify one's self. And you can also take a break and relax over a bowl of soup from the many delights are on the menu.

Skin care, hair care, etc., but wait one minute! They have all these treatments for the body, everything that one could think of. But I thought of something they don't have. I need something for my SOUL! I need something calming for my ears and soul.

What could they have for the soul that I don't see on the menu? Well, guess what it didn't take me long to figure it out, since we were there everyday. Alhamdulillah! Our souls and ears are missing the sound of the Adhan! (call to prayer)

We were told we could make a suggestion at any time. Well now the time had come to make a suggestion. I walked up to the desk with an ...

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MWWWI Welcomes the Summer Refreshment of R&R

Rest and relaxation are wonderful boosts to refueling the creative writing process. For many of us the days and weeks that comprise the summer break are a welcome relief from the regular grind of work, even if that work involves writing, which we writers love. How does one rest from writing when the repetitive act of writing is what makes us a better writer? Everybody needs a break and writers are not exempt especially since writing is such a solitary activity. Getting out and away, meeting and socializing with old friends and new acquaintances are great ways to refresh your creative juices.

In fact, going to a new venue and using a new tool to write is a wonderful opportunity to write but not in your usual way. For instance, suppose you always sit at the computer to whittle, to write, to communicate; instead, use a ball point pen, pen and ink or pencil on paper. For even more fun, try using a brush to paint words or pictures without worrying about the veracity of the images or words. Be intuitive and let it all flow no matter the sense of it.

Another way to relax is to read. Catch up on all those books you have on your to do list. Make the time to do it. Of course the first book you should read every day is the Holy Qur'an. This is the time to make it a part of your daily ritual if you have been too rushed or preoccupied before.

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unsettled stomach and told the receptionist that I was late for Maghrib Salaat. I asked if we could please hear the Adhan for each salaat. She apologized and said, "We will start tomorrow." I walked away thinking, "Masha'Allah, that was easy."

Well the moral of this story is: when your soul is having a problem and you are not satisfied, the possibility to help it may exist. We need to speak up and make the suggestions. But I learned the hard way. There is an easy way to do it. Speak with kindness, but don't forget to make your du'a first.

Sarah Farlow 

"Youth, naivety, reliance on instinct more than learning and method, a sense of freedom and play, even trust in randomness, is necessary to the making of a poem." *May Swenson*

The Goals Lady:

I am the Goals Lady and I want everyone to take a look at the list below and consider reading something on the list. These are classical books that have been read by nearly every English student on the globe. One might argue, but these are all by non-Muslims. Consider this, these books have been read for centuries as part of classical studies. There must be something we can take from it to improve ourselves, not just as writers, but as writers of wonderful Islamic stories, novels and poems that someday may be studied by English students all over the world from an Islamic point of view.



- Beowulf

Achebe, Chinua - Things Fall Apart
 Agee, James - A Death in the Family
 Austen, Jane - Pride and Prejudice
Baldwin, James - Go Tell It on the Mountain
 Beckett, Samuel - Waiting for Godot
 Bellow, Saul - The Adventures of Augie March
 Brontë, Charlotte - Jane Eyre
 Brontë, Emily - Wuthering Heights
Camus, Albert - The Stranger

Some members of *MWAMI* and their families have already started to relax and unwind by going to see the exciting dolphin show at the Dolphinarium in Creek Park, Dubai. Seeing the dolphins soar out of the water was an inspiration and an indicator to us (*MWAMI* members) that we should know clearly what our writing goals are for the coming year and insh'Allah, feel confident that we can rise to the challenge to achieve them.

Zakia Iman Shahbaz 



Cather, Willa - Death Comes for the Archbishop
 Chaucer, Geoffrey - The Canterbury Tales
 Chekhov, Anton - The Cherry Orchard
 Chopin, Kate - The Awakening
 Conrad, Joseph - Heart of Darkness
 Cooper, James Fenimore - The Last of the Mohicans
 Crane, Stephen - The Red Badge of Courage
Dante - Inferno
 de Cervantes, Miguel - Don Quixote
 Defoe, Daniel - Robinson Crusoe
 Dickens, Charles - A Tale of Two Cities
 Dostoyevsky, Fyodor - Crime and Punishment
 Douglass, Frederick - Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
 Dreiser, Theodore - An American Tragedy
 Dumas, Alexandre - The Three Musketeers
Eliot, George - The Mill on the Floss
 Ellison, Ralph - Invisible Man
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo - Selected Essays
Faulkner, William - As I Lay Dying
 Faulkner, William - The Sound and the Fury
 Fielding, Henry - Tom Jones
 Fitzgerald, F. Scott - The Great Gatsby
 Flaubert, Gustave - Madame Bovary
 Ford, Ford Madox - The Good Soldier
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von - Faust
 Golding, William - Lord of the Flies
Hardy, Thomas - Tess of the d'Urbervilles
 Hawthorne, Nathaniel - The Scarlet Letter
 Heller, Joseph - Catch 22
 Hemingway, Ernest - A Farewell to Arms
 Homer - The Iliad
 Homer - The Odyssey
 Hugo, Victor - The Hunchback of Notre Dame

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THE POETRY CORNER

We Really Do Care

Plane landed, we're greeted
With men well dressed,
Cold drinks at our hands,
Without being pressed

The life of luxury, yes in deed,
Little did I know the shadow in need
He was watching me as I drank from my cup
I sat it down and as I looked up,

Our souls are bothered
We really do care
Our feelings inside
We are going to share

As I approached the boy with tears in his eyes,
I asked him softly, Why do you cry?
He ran away with a big sigh,
The clothes he had on
Was just an old torn cloth

I followed him in a big green field,
I came to the end and put up a shield

Devastating for my eyes to see
What was in front of me,
Poverty struck straight ahead,
The real world was over my head,

Our souls are bothered
We really do care
Our feelings inside
We are going to share

Looked all around,
The sight was a fright,
Seeing the people thin of height

The boy was starring as I walked around,
My eyes met his as he fell to the ground

I ran to him and put out my hand,
His hand met mine as he gave me a grin

I told him it's going to be alright

Our souls are bothered,
We really do care
Our feelings inside
We are going to share

Sarah Farlow 2008 

Where the Road May Lead

You never know where the road may lead; the
twist and turns and round-about.

One day it's America; the next day Malaysia with
its wild jungles of monkeys, lizards, friendly people
and curious glances.

Then one morning you find you are in a new
place,
Singapore; buildings of white and streets so clean;
a wondrous place, racing to win the modern world
of advances.

Then in a flash you are standing in a busy
crowded street in the Middle East; women in
black, men in white, the beautiful gulf waters
glistening in the hot afternoon sun framed against
the sands of the desert. You never know where
the road leads you.

But you always know that Allah guides you.

Nasima Bair 2008 

Levels of Faith

Levels of faith
just learning ever changing
ideas of what is right
what roads are wrong
over time
not noticing changes evolving
looking back it's all quite obvious
step by step
growing thoughts
different views and ways of life
yesterday a prayer
today niqab
different views on
levels of faith

Nasima Bair 2008 

Sonnets: 'Little Songs'*

Sonnets were first written in Italian and were traditionally love poems. Though the sonnet is a form that can be experimented with, it has remained true to its original length of fourteen lines and its Anglicized meter of *iambic pentameter**. Petrarch developed the sonnet to one of its highest levels during early Renaissance Italy, but it wasn't translated into English until the sixteenth century. From there, Shakespeare made the sonnet famous in England and others followed his lead.

The sonnet can be thematically divided into two sections: the first presents the theme, raises an issue or doubt, and the second part answers the question, resolves the problem, or drives home the poem's point. This change in the poem is called **the turn** and helps move forward the emotional action of the poem quickly, as fourteen lines can become too short too fast.

Most sonnets are one of two kinds:

1. Italian (Petrarchan)- this sonnet is split into two parts, an octave and a sestet. The octave is composed of two envelope quatrains rhyming "**abba abba**" (Italian octave). The sestet's rhyme pattern varies, though it is most often either "**cde cde**" (Italian sestet) or "**cdc dcd**" (Sicilian sestet). **The turn occurs at the end of the octave and is developed and closed in the sestet.** Over the years, the Italian sonnet has been the most favored type of sonnet.

Donald Justice - "Sonnet: **The Poet at Seven**"

And on the porch, across the upturned **chair**,
The boy would spread a dingy counterpane
Against the length and majesty of the **rain**,
And on all fours crawl under it like a **bear**
To lick his wounds in secret, in his **lair**;
And afterwards, in the windy yard **again**,
One hand cocked back, release his paper **plane**
Frail as a mayfly to the faithless **air**.
And summer evenings he would whirl around
Faster and faster till the drunken **ground**
Rose up to meet him; sometimes he would **squat**
Among the bent weeds of the vacant **lot**,
Waiting for dusk and someone dear to **come**
And whip him down the street, but gently **home**.

*10 syllables, or five feet, per line with five pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables),

2. English (Shakespearean)- this contains 3 Sicilian quatrains and one heroic couplet at the end, with an "**abab cdcd efef gg**" rhyme scheme. The turn comes at or near line 13, making the ending couplet quick and dramatic. Not many modern writers have taken to writing the Shakespearean sonnet.

William Shakespeare's Sonnet 71 No Longer Mourn for Me When I Am Dead

No longer mourn for me when I am **dead** (A)
Then you shall hear the surly sullen **bell** (B)
Give warning to the world that I am **fled** (A)
From this vile world, with vilest worms to **dwelt**: (B)
Nay, if you read this line, remember **not** (C)
The hand that writ it; for I love you **so** (D)
That I in your sweet thoughts would be **forgot** (C)
If thinking on me then should make you **woe**. (D)
O, if, I say, you look upon this **verse** (E)
When I perhaps compounded am with **clay**, (F)
Do not so much as my poor name **rehearse**. (E)
But let your love even with my life **decay**, (F)
Lest the wise world should look into your **moan** (G)
And mock you with me after I am **gone**. (G)



Sonnet 1- Sleeping Stars

I lay in my bed at night and wonder
Why the stars above shy away from me
Agitated, my thoughts become plunder
Stopping peaceful repose so I can't see

Sparkling stars outside I wish were inside
To distract my mind and attract my eyes
With their bold designs that open them wide
And I forget that no sleep makes me cry

I close my eyes and pray that sleep will come
Keeping my thoughts still trying not to think
Practicing this ritual is no fun
The strain of it all causes me to blink

I make du'a and look upon a star
Darkness descends and brings sleep from afar.

Zakia Iman Shahbaz - June 2008

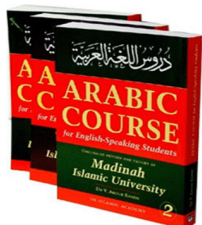


* The name *Sonnet* came (through the French) from the Italian *sonnetto* ("little sound" or "little song").

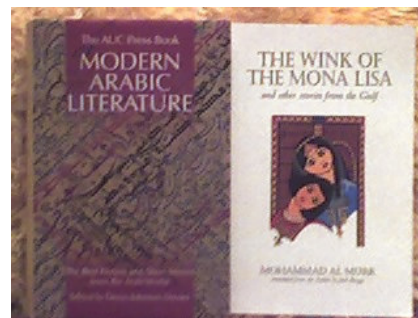
A GOOD READ!

MWWWI LIBRARY

ISLAM/ARABIC



Culture



Learning classical Arabic effectively could not be easier than this course of Madinah Islamic University. A tried and tested course over 40 years with proven track record of success, it is ideal in terms of the topics covered and the short time taken to learn. Free Download- [www.e-aalim.com /Lughat-ul Arabia1.pdf](http://www.e-aalim.com/Lughat-ul Arabia1.pdf) (Arabic 2, Arabic 3 - (Exercise L1 Exercise L2 Exercise L3) To enroll go to: www.eaalim.com/userfindrevision.php.

There is a very nice Arabic book called **Nooraani Qaaidah for Tajweed**, with the rules. It has color codes to implement the rules. The actual book is excellent for beginners but it does not have the color code for pronunciation. If you go to the site you can practice with the letters from the beginning by clicking on each letter as it is voice activated. Enjoy. <http://www.quranicsciences.com/OneSheetNooraaniQaaidah.asp?lessonno=16&visitormonid=104661&qsisudentid=&font=simplified>

Continued on page 8



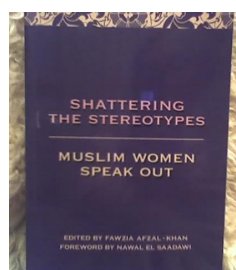
The Goals Lady continued:

Hurston, Zora Neale - Their Eyes Were Watching God
Huxley, Aldous - Brave New World
Ibsen, Henrik - A Doll's House
James, Henry - The Portrait of a Lady
James, Henry - The Turn of the Screw
Joyce, James - A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man
Kafka, Franz - The Metamorphosis
Kingston, Maxine Hong - The Woman Warrior
Lee, Harper - To Kill a Mockingbird
Lewis, Sinclair - Babbitt
London, Jack - The Call of the Wild
Mann, Thomas - The Magic Mountain
Marquez, Gabriel García - One Hundred Years of Solitude
Melville, Herman - Bartleby the Scrivener
Melville, Herman - Moby Dick

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The AUC Press Book of Modern Arabic Literature, edited by Denys Johnson-Davies samples the novels and short stories of 79 writers from Morocco to Iraq, from the 1930s to the 2000s. It contains writers Taha Hussein, Tawfik al-Hakim, Yahya Hakki, and Nobel Prize winning author, Naguib Mahfouz. (1988) to name a few. The writings in this anthology range from the experimental to the masterful, from fantasy to social realism that reflect the broadest picture of the state of Arabic writing today. (American University Press in Cairo 2006 ISBN 10: 977 424 906 2/ ISBN 13: 978 977 424 906 8) www.aucpress.com

The Wink of the Mona Lisa and other stories from the Gulf by Mohammad Al Murr, lifts away the façade to find drama, humor, and pathos in the life, death, and the humdrum of daily existence. He creates memorable characters whose thoughts and actions endear them to us. (Motivate Publishing, 1998 –ISBN I 86063 076 6)



Shattering Stereotypes, Muslim Women Speak Out, Edited by Fawza Afzal-Khan is an is an anthology of stories, essays, plays, poetry by American Muslim Women from many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

'The achievement of this superbly edited anthology is that it discredits both the pernicious stereotype of the oppressed "Muslim Woman," and the naïve "us-them" logic which drives the self fulfilling prophecy of the clash of civilizations, while at the same time offering alternative ways of thinking, feeling and acting.' Wail S. Hassan (Arris Books 2005, ISBN1 84437 044-5).

www.arrisbooks.com



My Journey to Islam

It all started in the late 1980's. I woke up and wondered where is my life leading? I realized that it was leading nowhere. I had two sons that I needed to take care of and I just felt that I wasn't succeeding. I used to drink and go dancing. It was something I loved to do. Not so much the drinking but the dancing; it took my mind off things. I had tried many times to stop drinking. I knew this was not a good thing and very unhealthy. It was not how I wanted to bring up my sons. So I went through many hard times and life seemed so difficult that I just didn't know what to do anymore.

One day I felt I really needed to rest. A big change in my life happened. I needed to just sleep and wake up in the morning with a clear mind. I had medicine from a doctor for sleeping. I decided to take a couple of pills, meaning no harm to myself. I do not know how much time went by but I felt it hadn't done its job. I went to the cabinet to take a couple more. Well the bottle was empty and so I mixed it with something else. I didn't think, which means maybe the medicine was working from before.

What happened next was that my friend ended up taking me to the hospital where they pumped my stomach. I did not mean to harm myself intentionally. I woke up in the hospital with black chalk or whatever it was all over me and my sons were standing there. That was hard for me, them seeing me in that condition. I was very tired and fell back to sleep. To this day I still don't know the actual damage that was done if any, to my body. What I do know is the damage I did was to my children. Then I knew I had to make a change in my life. I slept quite a bit with not much memory of the days afterwards. I know I woke up with a thin body and a different mind. Things had to change.

Since it was the fall season, I started to question Halloween. I wanted to know exactly what it meant and why people celebrate this day when it has a bad reputation for so many reasons. Children go door to door collecting candy. Why? Especially since some children were getting hurt. The givers were putting razor blades inside apples and drugs in the candy and whatever else. They wanted to hurt the children. Why again? I asked the nuns why people celebrate Halloween if it is supposed to represent evil. It involves scary customs, evil sounding music, and once again the kids were getting hurt.

Since my sons were brought up in the Catholic Church, I decided to also become Catholic thinking it was the best place to start. I needed to find a place where I could belong.

I was told I would have to take classes to become a Catholic and to take communion. This made me a bit upset. I decided that I would take communion without the classes. Who would know? I thought. I did it but I was not satisfied.

I called my cousin and decided to go to her church. She came a long way to get all three of us. It was ok at first, but inside I still felt unsatisfied. I thought I just needed to give it more time. We went to a concert given by her church. A group of singers performed. One of the singers was from a famous band. I thought that maybe this was it. I don't know how long I went there but one day I knew after seeing all the people trying to talk in tongues that it wasn't for me. So I was on the hunt again. Once again my soul was not quite satisfied.

Halloween was coming up and I knew I didn't want my kids to celebrate it. They begged me until I said ok. They said all they wanted was the candy. I agreed to take part one more time. I told them no dressing up scary and we would go to Crossroads Mall. This was to be the last time. All agreed upon. Little did I know that, this was the start of my quest.

At the mall, we saw four men sitting on a bench; they were Arab. I asked them where they were from. They said Saudi Arabia. I asked a few more questions but was really not in the mood to be around men. They could barely speak English anyway, so we moved on. We went upstairs and they were there again sitting on another bench. I did notice them but we walked by.

Later, we decided to go to the Pearl Street Mall an outside Mall that was full of people dressed up for Halloween. I knew this wasn't the best place to be with my kids. While we were walking we ran into the SAME FOUR MEN from Saudi Arabia again. Wow! Three times in a row! Then I tried to talk to one of them again. He could only speak a few words of English. From that night on they stayed in touch with me.

I had to go into the hospital for six weeks because of what happened to me with the medicine. I also had Bulimia; they were also going to teach me how to eat. While I was there the man that I spoke to at the mall, Adel, visited me there to help me along. I was really starting to care about him. He would visit me regularly. There was something about him that was so different then any other man that I had known. Little did I know that maybe he was feeling the same way.

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My Journey to Islam continued:

Adel called me a few days before the completion of my treatment. He told me that he couldn't live without me; he wanted to marry me. I thought to myself, what kind of man is this? Then it was time to go home. We got married and moved to our new apartment. Masha'Allah, he accepted my sons very well.

During this time he would speak about his religion. But when things got a bit touchy he would change the subject. This kept on for a while but one day I was really listening to him. I had never heard a man talk like this; speaking and making me think how the birds fly and what this life was really about.

Time passed and I continued to like what I was hearing. But the old way of thinking that I had learned previously was a problem. Now, I know it was shaytan (devil). We did a lot of things together; I used to go to work out with him at the YMCA. He was a big part of our lives.(my sons)

I spent two months with emotional ups and downs, crying. I know I gave him a hard time. I was a big mess in those days. I wanted to know everything. But why was I feeling this tug of war for wanting this religion? However, nothing happened. I just kept asking God to give me what was right. Was it Islam that I had been wanting so long in my heart and didn't know it?

There was a peace to Adel, masha'Allah when he would pray. I wanted that but for some reason it wasn't happening. Then one evening I was supposed to go with Adel to work out. Instead one of the boys went with him, and my other son went to a Boy Scout meeting. I stayed home alone cleaning house and crying. I wanted to know what my destiny was. Something was missing in my life; it was so strong that I no longer wanted to live without it. Was it ISLAM? I was starting to really believe it was.

That night while alone, I was standing doing dishes, crying, and so confused about what to do. I wanted to make the right moves, because I knew Islam was not a game and once accepted there was no turning back. While doing the dishes and crying I felt a hot breath on my left bare shoulder not just one but two. I was so frightened; I turned around and saw that it was nothing. Then I knew that two months of dealing with moving bushes and whispers telling me to hurt or kill myself was a serious matter.

Right then I said to myself when Adel walks through the door I will ask him how I can become a Muslim. At that moment Adel was opening the door. I ran to him grabbed his hand and asked him what to say to become a Muslim. He explained it and then I said the most important words of my life, The **Shahadah**. I did not have to take a class. I felt so different, so clean from what I had been through.

Soon after, my sons asked me if they could become Muslim too. I had a talk with them and I told them this was not a game. I wanted them to really think about all I was telling them. They decided to become Muslim.

Adel sat me down and talked to me about Hijab. I was in tears because of what he was telling me; all good things. I told him that from that day forward I would not leave my house again without wearing hijab. I remembered I had a wedding to go to the following day. So it was, I wore my hijab and never left my home without it again. It was difficult at first with the name calling and being laughed at, but we get rewarded for all of that, Alhamdulillah. This was a nice peaceful time; our lives changed so much. I knew there was more to know about Islam. And this time I WANTED to learn.

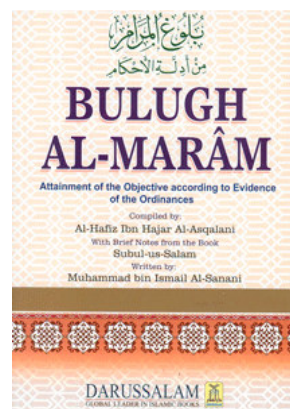
I learned that the word RESPECT was definitely part of Islam. I tried to stop drinking for so many years. Now I had to; in Islam it is not allowed. Alhamdulillah! What a religion! I have a few more things to add:

I was in Jordan in 1980, I believe, before I met Adel. I found a picture of myself wearing a Saudi abayah standing in front of a minaret of the masjid. And to top that, I stopped eating pork two years before I became Muslim. I was looking for Islam before I even knew it.

My sons:Yousef and Muhammed
Lanette Elona Farlow (Sarah) June-21-08



Arabic/Islam Books continued from p. 5
Author: Compiled by al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr al Asqalane. **Pub.** Darussalam - September 2002



Bulugh Al-Maram (attainment of the objective according to the evidence of the ordinances) is based upon the Ahadith of our Prophet which have been the sources of Islamic Jurisprudence. Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani has recorded the true significance of the Ahadith and their origins & also made a comparison of the versions, if the sources are more than one.