

Statement of Purpose

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While taking an advanced poetry class under Dr. Hopler at the University of South Florida, I learned of the heavy responsibility poets carry in their work. Poetry was described to me as a type of possession –a control of peoples’ tongues, mouths, and even their breath. I thought of Fargo Tbakhi’s “Elegy with Lines from Mitski” who writes “*would you kill me, jerusalem/ one more second for bayan abu khammash,*” to which I must hold my breath and say “Allahyerhamu,” the Arabic blessing for those who’ve passed. I am left to consider not only the process of creating, but the effect of my creation unto the reader.

At its core, I want my work to be a vessel for hope. I’d like to give hope to the LGBTQ+ Muslim community, to first- and second-generation immigrants who carry trauma to and from one another, to the people of Gaza, whose land my father comes from, and to anyone else who needs it. To do this, I must learn of the haunting bravery Mahmoud Darwish carries in his work; Even after being imprisoned for reciting poetry, he writes, “To our land, and it is a prize of war/ the freedom to die from longing and burning.” I aim to learn how to reclaim my people’s words like Danusha Laméris, who writes “The baby will come in spring, insha’Allah. / Insha’Allah this year we will have enough rain,” and suddenly I am no longer afraid to write “insha’Allah” in my poems. After reading this poem to my 9th grade class, a student raises their hand and says, “Insha’Allah feels like hope,” and this reminds me why I must continue to write. I have begun to see my identity as a source of strength to produce work that serves to heal, to question what we were taught not to, and to bring people together.

I am currently working on a sequence of poems on shame and liberation. I felt obligated to start this project after writing “On the Reconstruction of Shame with lines from Mashrou’ Leila” forthcoming in *Rattle* and “Billie Eilish Breaks the Bold in Her Baggy Clothes: What They Don’t Tell You About Covering Up after Jessica Thorton,” forthcoming in *MQR*, which both challenged me to question the cultural systems that perpetuate shame. However, I am continuously aware of my struggle to move from spilling to craft, which makes me eager to learn how to acquire control of my page. I aspire to learn how to better craft white space to create rhythm and structure. I look forward to learning how to refine my work in technique –to be purposeful in the breath each line demands. However, while this is the path I am able to visualize for myself, I am certain there are paths that my peers and professors will see for me that I can’t. I hope to given the opportunity to contribute to this space of growth, realization, and collaboration.