

unearthed: a long year

(running ghazals)

By Karl Meade

unearthed is a work-in-progress of 52 ghazals. The work is divided into four sections—spring, summer, winter and fall—and uses seasonal imagery to reflect the passing of the year, as well as the (pseudo-Jungian) phases of life. The poems are numbered from 1 to 52, each with a two-word title, one of the words being a season. However, each section contains poems from all seasons (eg. the opening poem in the Spring section is entitled Stone Winter), as we experience “winter-like” sentiments in the spring or summer or fall of our lives.

Like many western adaptors of the form, such as John Thompson, Phyllis Webb, and Adrienne Rich, my unearthed ghazals play fast and loose with the traditional form. They feature multiple couplets (but not always the traditional five couplets, and without a set rhyming pattern), with the individual couplets interplaying with one another, rather than standing on their own. While the poems play with some of the traditional themes and content (the dualistic, unrequited love poem, but with “you” as both human as well as god-like, almost a “fourth person” point of view), they also play with a duende love-death theme, with the unrequited love being elegiac in tone.

The ghazals tend to rely heavily on imagery from the natural sciences, probably due to my geological engineering background, but also due to my interest in such poets as Don McKay. Different imagery dominates each season, and I initially created an imagistic framework for the seasons and themes, to “play it” like a kind of fugue, but have now left that behind.