

# *The Falconer*

*"Out, out brief candle!"*



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## ***From the editors***

***Nimra Saeed, M.A. Final, Evening***

Death — as a question, as a thought, as an anxiety — always exists, one may argue, against the backdrop of Literature.

Death appears to have the final word, a full stop which seemingly gives meaning to the whole sentence. It assumes a place of finality, so to speak. We attribute *meaning* to a life in reference to that final moment. We cannot deny the impact a character or an author's death has on our reading of texts (I'm thinking of Virginia Woolf among others). At the moment of death, or right before the moment arrives, the subject is seen grappling for meaning (what was my life for?), the thought does not emerge at that particular moment, but rather the subject's life is haunted with this anxiety throughout.

We see Mersault, the protagonist in Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, paralyzed with this thought. The book starts with his mother's death and it is supposed to change everything, but this moment seems anchor-less. The change happening in his life at this moment of encounter with death, is perhaps too much and too close, and he cannot afford to distance himself from it in order to reflect. His language is laden with this feeling but he is unable to fully register it.

Death is an orientation as well as a disorientation — a disoriented orientation, because it propels one to orient oneself, one must seek a meaning, a belief to believe in, as death looms closer and closer, yet what it is, who can tell?

We invent numerous fictions to believe in, to abate the overwhelming probing of the awareness of mortality — we use methods of archiving, leaving memoirs, letters, to alleviate our anxiety of being forgotten. Recall King Hamlet's ghost's command, or parting plea, "Remember me." The two words that arguably represent the desire to speak itself.

In *Nausea*, Jean Paul Sartre captures this posthumous meaning-making process. The historian protagonist, Roquentin, is writing an account of a dead artist's life and he begins to realise the futility of his endeavour. He questions how he affects things around him, how he could affect them differently through different choices, but this is a freedom available to him only until he exists. What about the dead artist whose life he had sought out to narrate, we may ask. He is not privileged enough to make different choices. It is only when the narrator realises that he is as much a subject to time as the artist, that the real nausea starts to come to the fore.

Poets writing during war exhibit this anxiety, this nausea, palpably. Siegfried Sassoon, writing from trenches, from a place of bitterness, continues to write as

life around him is being shattered, all his ideas about the world are being splintered. Although he witnesses the moment, in real-time, when the line between death and life is blurred, he takes it upon himself, to express it through poetry, showing even the impotency of metaphor. Why this attempt to show something that he feels is not quite being represented, instead of giving up? Why this last, what could have been the literal last attempt, at saying something before death?

Towards the denouement of the Shakespearean tragedy Macbeth, the titular character realises the life he sacrificed his dignity, his virtue for, was in fact, "a tale told by an idiot/ full of sound and fury/ signifying nothing," but if it was signifying nothing, why did Macbeth, when faced with death, feel the need to signify this 'nothingness'?

Thinking on the theme of our tenth issue, we chose this question that perturbs us, on an existential level, and in our everyday lives. Reading through our submissions, we found many different perspectives approaching the same unsettling subject that we all try to grapple with.

In the last words that the Palestinian poet, Refaat Alareer, left us,

*If I must die*

*let it bring hope,*

*let it be a story.*

**Duaa Azim, M.A. Final, Morning**



## ***Death, Performance, and Lady Lazarus***

### ***Bushra Irshad, M.A. Final, Morning***

Lazarus wakes up again, earning his name through his savior, in turn condemning his savior to crucifixion. He may have not wanted that, but it is the people who decide who lives and who dies, and they do not like this power be wrested from them.

So does Lady Lazarus.

The picture painted before us is an invitation. It is the reader many decades away stepping into the room where Lady Lazarus performs death. It's intriguing. Lazarus? Lady Lazarus? When the reader joins the legion of spectators that have come before him, as well as the ones who are acknowledged by the poet, a few things soon become clear. One learns that they would not be able to look away. One also learns that words can scream, and that return from the dead is no more than a cruel role the audience has thrust upon Lady Lazarus to perform. She is very good at it too.

### *Dying*

*Is an art, like everything else.*

*I do it exceptionally well.*

She knows not everyone in the audience is her friend. In fact they are all enemies. For what friend, what well-wisher would reignite the flame of life, again and again and again, of a life so torturous and so unforgiving? In the light of the success Plath found in the third attempt on her life the poem reads like a suicide note. Adding a sense of hope, a promise of release, and also doom, for the cheerful reader.

The show is set up by, and sold to, the peanut crunching crowd. They buy her death and they sell her life.

*There is a charge*

*For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge*

*For the hearing of my heart*

One wonders which part of her identity caused the crowd to assign this role to her. Was it of a Jew, for the death part, or was it of a woman, for the rebirth part.

Or was it one or both. One wonders, she performs. You see the crowd always decides. Crowd decided to crucify Jesus, and in the same ironic way, Lady Lazarus' coming back to life will inevitably lead to her dying again. She has nine lives and the show must go on.

She is "lady" Lazarus for a reason. Echoing Atwood, the "lady" part of Lady Lazarus is performing even in the loneliness of death. Even if the peanut crunching crowd vanishes, their voyeur eyes remain. In fact it is their absence, this aforementioned loneliness that is that of the experience of death that turns this into a performance. A woman will always perform what the society has asked of her, with or without society present. To be a man is to be a man, and to be a woman is to play a woman. And to play show after show, to give birth after birth (re-birth), is exhausting. Lady Lazarus is tired,

*The second time I meant  
To last it out and not come back at all.*

But it is not for her to decide, the crowd would pick all her worms and then marvel when she returns.

In a mood to philosophize in the company of this poem, with the very graphic images of flesh replacing and regrowing the very same, as lady Lazarus promises, *I am the same, identical woman*, the reader may recall the ship of Theseus. If each part of Lady Lazarus' body dies, and then grows back again to whole, is it really identical? Is it really the same part and is death really so weak as to surrender her full essence back to life. One would find the questions run deeper (the answers we may not concern ourselves with yet). In a world where killing your-self is a task demanded by the crowd, in exchange for some version of life as compensation, what would identical mean? And furthermore, what would identity. Is the inevitable identity the peanut crunching crowd, cheating both Lady Lazarus and itself out of the death that must come to it? Or like the ship that completely loses its old parts, she too will return until life completely drains out of her, one rebirth at a time.

One may indulge in a variety of answers about identity and what is meant to be identical. Or at least in an attempt. Like a theatre performance, this art of death and rebirth is meant to affirm itself in repeating itself. Every show aims to be as alike to the previous one. If not better. The crowd then, seems to know its limits at every encore. It is not going to be better than the last death and rebirth, but it

will be as thrilling, it promises to itself. As long as she comes back. We know she doesn't want to. But has to, until she runs out of lives. One may conclude that it is in these limitations that identity emerges. Lady Lazarus, almost snobbish at the skill in her art that she detests and the crowd, never able to see something even more thrilling, never encroaching on the art itself, but holding omnipotence on encore.

Plath left us soon after writing this poem. Lady Lazarus, on the other hand, will come back and she will eat these men. And what a show will that be. Like the reader already knows, she is good at this.



## ***Title***

***Maham Owais, BS Third Year, Morning***

To be motivated by the ache that is inherently present in each of us since the moment we are born is an urge befallen on all of humanity. But to be aware of this ache is a blessing not imparted upon most. Since the moment one is brought into the physical world, an inevitable, gluttonous, insatiable emptiness lodges itself in their being. It screams in its hollowness, echoes across the space of lack it is cursed to inhabit.

From the moment of conception to the fatalistic snap of the thread of life, man indulges in various vices in an attempt to quieten this echo. But the hushing is temporary; it is a mission doomed to fail before it even commences. The ache is as natural as breathing, and over time, it transforms and molds itself in a manner so deceptive it becomes hard to distinguish it from its own truth. From an emptiness that desires fulfillment in the form of a suckle as an infant morphs into a space that desires companionship; the hollowness sucks like a marrow everything fed to it. Religion, science, philosophy, more material pursuits; all a fruitless effort to fill this inimitable abyss.

Eventually, in its hunger, the ache transforms into its true form. This ache for completion, in its cyclical irony, is a yearning for death. Emerging at the pivotal moment of one's birth, the inescapable craving for death is what drives the most primal of man's instincts. Sex, hunger, and even greed are all a direct consequence of death's awareness and desire. The human struggle is this yearning for completion. To want to complete this cycle is natural, hereditary, perhaps even woven into the strands of our DNA, not too unlike the concept of unification of soulmates in the mythological realm.

Does it then not stand to reason that when immortality comes into the discussion, the ache would subside? That to be complete would be a mission abandoned in pursuit of a seemingly grander avenue. Or, alternatively, would the ache never reach its intended conclusion? Would the soul's cry for resolution be forever slighted? And will the abyss within that demands consummation grow large enough to overtake man?

In the Picture of Dorian Gray, what stands out in this particular context, is Dorian Gray's fall into degeneracy. His descent into moral decay is palpably parallel to the exploration of his newfound eternal youth. Similarly, in many works of fiction,

both classic and contemporary, degeneracy and a “falling” of the conscience is presumed to be brought about as a direct result of being granted eternity. The literary fascination to unravel the ceaselessness of existence, particularly human existence, always results in the soul’s moral decomposition.

When death is postponed indefinitely, the lack of satiation on either end inevitably results in the soul, or the human conscience, cannibalizing on itself. What remains when the soul feeds on itself; What remains, the part that consumes or the part that is consumed? As a consequence, the human granted the hypothetical “gift” will naturally and inevitably go down a path of self-destruction. Existence, after a certain time, might then become a hapless attempt to acquire and consume anything that resembles the soul, including but not limited to other souls. This consumption is starkly differently than the kind committed during mortal existence, not because of the intent, but because of the result it yields.

Immortality may be a variation of death, but in being so, it defeats the purpose of life. Death is permanent, eternal, forever. So is immortality, ergo, they should be one and the same. However, immortality does not take the way death takes, i.e., by stripping one of life. Immortality takes by making one bear witness to the loss of every variation of them they try to construct in their own hollow image. Much like a series of deaths in succession.

## ***Writing Oneself: a coping mechanism, a hoping mechanism***

***Nimra Saeed, M.A. Final, Evening***

"I think about nothing but death, I think about it all the time, ten seconds don't go by without the imminence of the thing being there. I never stop analysing the phenomenon of 'survival' as the structure of surviving, it's really the only thing that interests me, but precisely insofar as I do not believe that one lives on post mortem. And at bottom it is what commands everything – what I do, what I am, what I write, what I say."

Jacques Derrida, *A Taste for the Secret*

The Blind Owl by Sadegh Hedayat is a story told by an unnamed narrator who is an opium addict, and suffers from leprosy. As soon as he becomes aware of the fact that he is going to die soon, his first impulse is to write down an account of his life; to create an archive of his memory. He claims that he will "attempt" to write all that he remembers. The claim to write all that he remembers is problematic insofar as he himself acknowledges that he might just be creating this narrative, to believe in it himself, to be able to find some truth about his life, for himself.

This suggests a self-awareness about the unreliability of his narrative. He is aware that his story will find no reader yet he still feels an urge to leave a narrative behind, encompassing his memories before he loses his grip over them forever. It can be argued then that even as he tries to remember, his memory is simultaneously being destroyed and replaced by its archive. The narrator only knows about his early life through his nanny, Nanejoon's stories, who his parents left him with. There are logical discrepancies in his memory and he is trying to achieve a semblance of coherence through the narrative, but it can be argued, that the narrative assumes the place of something separate and stands on its own with no reference to his memory.

He says he writes only to introduce himself to his shadow, his only fear is that he might die tomorrow and he might die without knowing himself. Such an attempt to hold on to one's memory and archive it, I hypothesise, emerges from the desire to live beyond death. It emerges with the hope of surviving death through memory. The story that he is writing, questions its own futility time and time again but he seems to have no other option than to include those questions in his narrative and go on writing.

The narrator writes "I must narrate my story but I do not know where to begin — my entire life is a story and a narrative". Conventionally, a story needs a

beginning and an ending but in writing about his own life he is presented with the problem of selecting the beginning. The narrator asks, "From where I must begin? For all the thoughts that are presently in my head are from this moment, they are without hour, minute or history". Through writing, he is prompted to create an order, not necessarily the true historical order, but what he deems significant enough to be written. So while he recounts something that happened in his childhood, he could simultaneously recall a memory from a few days ago in the same sentence. Writing cannot maintain a true chronological order of memory, if such an order even exists. Therefore, it can be posited that he is actively altering history.

It is not a true account, there can be no true accounts of memory as per Jacques Derrida's conceptualisation of the archive. He writes that the archive would never "be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory". This is reflected in the novel when the narrator paints a portrait of the mysterious woman he falls in love with. He tries to paint a portrait of her to remember her forever, but in trying to create an archive of her, he replaces his memory of her with the archive. He writes that he must "imagine" that "illusive" part of her face.

In an attempt to recreate, to archive, he loses the memory itself. Derrida calls this phenomenon "the violence of the archive". Creating an archive will always be a simultaneous creation and destruction. Writing is always belated and has a retrospective quality to it, it alters the meaning according to the time it is being recalled in.

Plato's comment on writing in Phaedrus seems relevant here, as he calls writing the illegitimate offspring of Logos for its quality to defer meaning.

The narrator in the novel remembers his "long-forgotten days" that had become "magically" distant from him and these memories now had a life of their own and he was merely a distant witness. He writes, "The being that I was at that time no longer existed and if I could bring him back and talk to him, he could not hear or understand me". His narrative centres around this loss, this memory that he can no longer get to, so he creates an archive of it through writing but even that is unable to reconstruct the memory that he had, it's more of a deconstruction, for it destroys the memory and replaces it with its archive. However hard he tries, he is unable to reach the origin of his memory. In *Archive Fever*, Derrida writes about the archivist's desire to find this origin, but the origin is always out of reach, it is an "archive without archive".

We will be left wondering, what was concealed, consciously or unconsciously, what was kept a secret even from the archive and will be left "without even an ash" of the trace. Trace, as Derrida conceptualises it, is what is left over or

remnant when one sign fails to fully represent a singular signified. If language is to be thought of in terms of relations of difference, then trace is that which contains the remnants of what it signifies as well as the remnants of what it does not signify. Thus, the trace is neither a sign nor a master signifier in and of itself. Moreover, the trace does not manifest in the logic of a presence, because it also contains in it the trace of all that is not-there. It straddles the line between the binary opposition of presence-absence. The traces of the narrator's past haunt his present in ways he himself might be unaware of. He might unconsciously exclude a memory when he includes one.

Derrida describes Archive Fever as, "burn(ing) with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away... it is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement". The unnamed narrator searches for his origin because he has nothing to hold on to, no fixed truths about his life. He feels stuck in-between this dichotomy of the living and the dead, in this nonplace that he does not have a word for.

Leo Tolstoy too, as Irina Paperno points out, found himself troubled with a similar problem concerning memory, writing, and 'I'. He made quite a few attempts to write a memoir based on his recollections of the past but never completed the project due to dissatisfaction with what he produced for either being too honest, and therefore, vulgar, or too fictionalised and therefore, an artifice. He asked himself the question, "What does it mean to write one's own life?" How can one be sure if something really happened or was a dream? After much thought and many attempts, Tolstoy had given up on the idea of writing a memoir but, on a sleepless night in 1902, during a serious bout of illness, he started dictating his reminiscence. Suddenly when the reality of mortality became more evident, something drove him to write down his memories. She quotes, "6 January 1903. I am now suffering the torments of hell: I am calling to mind all the abominations of my former life, and these memories will not leave me, and they poison my life". Paperno notes, "In the face of death, the limitations of autobiography were only too obvious. But, hard as he tried, he could not abandon the autobiographical mode".

There are certain limits that autobiographical writing is confronted with. One such limitation being no recollection of the significant beginning or ending of this narrative — the narrator's own birth and death. A critic writes that "Death is a type of aporia of autobiographical writing; it is as impossible as it is inevitable".

I draw the connection between the autobiographical mode of writing and this fictional narrative because of two interconnected reasons. Hedayat's narrator claims that his narrative is a true account of his memory, and yet he relentlessly

questions its truth throughout. Secondly, autobiographical narratives themselves contain a certain inherent fictionality, primarily because of the unreliability of memory and language's inability to capture memory in its totality.

Jorge Luis Borges' autobiographical short story *Borges and I* asks a similar question. In the story, Borges tries to write himself but he acknowledges that the self keeps moving further and further away. Language, instead of encapsulating one's self and preserving it in time, creates a screen between the memory and its archive.

Despite this futility, there is an inherent urge to continue archiving, to continue writing. In *The Blind Owl*, when the truth of his own finitude starts to appear more real, when death becomes imminent, the narrator cannot simply give up and wait for death to take him. He is unable to submit to "the one act that is beyond man" and writing becomes a coping mechanism, a hoping mechanism, for him to deal with the great unknown.

He writes, "The anxiety that my voice would leave me and no matter how much I would shout, no one would come to my aid..." this anxiety drives him to write, to speak even if no one listens, because someone, someday might. Even in his utmost hopelessness, there arises almost a hope.

The narrator is urged to recall his memories and leave a narrative behind, although the memories he looks back on in the present are not able to reflect the past as it was. A critic calls the afterness of memory the "open futurity". It eludes a clear conceptualisation but it is something that drives us to remember a memory, to mourn a memory even sometimes while living it. Because memory is always attached to the threat of mortality, one remembers that the moment will not last, and neither will he.

I wonder whether such a coherent memory even exists, and if it can ever be captured in language as we see the protagonist attempting and failing to do so, or perhaps the desire to capture it arises from the very fact that it is never present as a whole, coherent form, but rather always as traces, always as pieces of a puzzle that once put together, present a promise to him, to perchance give a glimpse into some truth about his own self.

There is so much anxiety that stems from the mere thought of death, and an illness, like leprosy in the novel, gives a certainty to this anxiety. He comes to believe that his anxiety is indeed telling him the truth. To reduce this overwhelming sensation that death arises in him, he writes. Even in his writing, it seems as if he is trying to create a screen between him and death, a screen of language. He apparently calls out to death "Death...death where are you" but this address to death is simultaneously putting death at a distance. Language serves as a veil behind which one can hide from the realm of the real, from death itself.

Similar to the fort/da example that Freud used to explain the death drive, it seems as if writing about death is an attempt to take control of your own death. As he says in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, “the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion”. This is what drives him to write despite its ultimate futility.

This story, an archive of his memory might hold no importance, and might not be read by anyone after him but he simply must not succumb to the anxiety that death creates in him, and must not submit without taking any action. Despite the hopelessness in him, there is a contrasting hope which can only be traced implicitly.

Derrida writes, “There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness ... without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive”.

The narrator writes that he imagines himself “already dead” but he also fears melting away in the waters of the bathhouse “like a lump of salt”. Perhaps he is trying to imagine himself as already dead to abate the anxiety of death. These wishes and feelings are paradoxical, the death drive and life drive are at odds with each other, one makes him want to be reduced to nothing and the other to preserve his being.

Although contradictory to his wish to prolong his life through writing, it can be argued that the narrator lives his death in writing. He writes about himself from the place of death, imagining his room to be a grave.

Perhaps one always writes about oneself as being dead, as a critic notes, Derrida “suggests that the subject’s self-assertive ‘I am’ also implies ‘I am dead’, and that the traces left behind by the subject always assert that ‘I died’”. Each time a memory is translated into a word, rather than prolonging its life, it stands on its own, with the absence of the memory and its writer.

The repetition compulsion instigated by the death drive propels him to repeat the loss of memory even as he tries to preserve it. The act of archiving, and writing down the memory is thus destructive as much as it is creative. It leads to the creation of a narrative but the narrative itself is independent of memory, it, in effect, replaces the memory. The memory of his life becomes an anachronistic narrative, with a non-linear timeline. Such a paradoxical desire is driven by a hope to affirm a future where the narrator exists, if only as a trace.

Derrida leaves us contemplating about what may have been excluded from the archive, what may have become a secret unknowingly, repressed to never return, what may have burned “without a name, without the least symptom, and without even an ash”.

Ayza



ayza

## ***In Conversation with Dr Moonis Azad***

Hello, thank you so much for giving us the time for this interview. Although we had so many questions arising for this interview on the theme of death, we also found ourselves perplexed in how to bring the unspeakable in conversation, but we also agreed that you were the most suitable person to have this conversation with. So, let us begin.

### ***How do you view death?***

There are two kinds of deaths. One occurs at the end of life, our physical death. The other, as poets have always informed us, happens symbolically in this life, over and over again. In the words of Ghalib:

*Kahoon Kis Se Main Ke Kya Hai, Shab e Gham Buri Bala Hai*

*Mujhe Kya Bura Tha Marna Agar Aik Baar Hota*

I can't say what the first kind of death is. But this other kind of death is what disturbs me, but also fascinates me.

### ***How do you think death alters our perspective of life?***

Death changes life, or maybe replaces the old life with a new one. It takes away the essential from life, but also adds something to the new one. It is a gain in loss. We die, but what remains of us can be more precious than our (lost) selves. But it all depends on our ability to mourn our loss.

### ***Why has thought been preoccupied with questions of death?***

Thought has been preoccupied with anything that it cannot think. Thought is obsessed with god, with perfection, with evil, with life in outer space, with life beneath the depth of the sea, with the human brain, with quantum physics. Anything that hasn't been thought, thought wants to think. And since death by definition is the end of thought, its limit, it provokes thought to think. Questions are desires. They chase after what they don't have.

***Do you think to think of death, to speak of it even, is to abate the anxiety of death? Do you think death signifies an impasse, and all discursive endeavours are futile ways to deal with this?***

Not thinking of death doesn't abate the anxiety of death either. Because thinking isn't just what we do while being conscious. Thinking happens unconsciously too. Someone who refuses to think about something starts thinking about it in dreams and nightmares. Sometimes the body starts thinking in strange ways about things we stop ourselves from thinking about in waking life. Thinking is desiring. The only way to abate anxiety is to think about what is causing it. What is death the end of? What loss are we not ready to take? What gain are we refusing ourselves by doing that?

Yes, death signals a limit in discourse, in language. But so do many other things, like love, enjoyment, the Law, meaning itself. Limits are not interesting in themselves. What interests me is what happens around them within discourse. The question for me is: why must a limit become a site for love/hate, for worship/violence, for the divine/the diabolical, for all forms of individual and collective obsession? How else can we come to view limits?

***Death is often personified in the mythological and legendary realm, often even religious texts. Do you think any of these personifications manage to hold their ground, when compared to a concept as all-consuming as death?***

Nothing holds its ground in language. There are no right representations of limits. Why else would they be limits? Every representation, every act of speaking, is born out of the pain of the point where words die. Where words die, desire is born. And desire tends to speak in whatever way it can. That is what we potentially gain in death. I don't see the point in judging the accuracy of representations.

***What do you think is the relation between writing and death?***

The same as the relation between desire and its object. One tries to capture the other. The other cannot be captured. This repeats. The question is what does each of us do with this repetition? Some write. Some stop writing. Whatever helps.

***Do you think Literature will eventually die, considering the kind of literature being written today in the period of mass-produced culture?***

If we take "literature" to mean great works, canonical literature, then maybe it already died decades ago. But if we take literature to mean, as I do, the human ability to live through loss, to try and mourn better, then literature cannot die, nor

art in general. If great literature successfully represented universal human experiences, then even if those texts are never read, those experiences will be represented again someday, great literature will repeat. And I see it already happening in the form of cinema.

***If we humans have an inherent desire for immortality, why do you think we have a lot of literature portraying immortality as a failed project as well?***

Yes, because immortality depends on memory. We can only stay alive, after we die, in the memory of others. The thing about memory is that it functions exactly like language, like the game Chinese Whispers. A word travels from one person to the next, from one generation to the next, and its meaning changes, slips, distorts. Take the word “honour”, for example. It used to mean a lot. In ancient times, people would die rather than lose their honour. Today, it doesn’t mean as much. In the same way, our great grandfathers, or ancestors who were once revered for their heroic deeds, their stories don’t impact us as much. Wanting to be remembered is like wanting what you have written to always be read in the way you intended it. It is futile. Memory, like writing, always dies. It’s a blessing.

***How does one cope with the anxiety of death from a psychoanalytic point of view?***

Mourning! People knew this, even before Freud. Even before modernity, before philosophy. To mourn is to slowly come to accept that your writing will always be read in ways you never imagined and there is nothing you can do about it. To mourn is to die with the one who is dead. To live as already having died. There is a gain in this, a gain of desire. In letting go of what you loved the most, you find an object in the form of a loss. To come to love that object, which isn’t really an object but a loss, is to be able to cope better. I can’t explain it better than Emily Brontë who says:

*Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,*

*How could I seek the empty world again?*

She seems to have found something because of death. She has become someone else. And now maybe she can live.

## ***The Drops of Ink***

The drops of ink drip from the eyes  
Fall and form into words that cry  
Like the musical script of a sad symphony  
The violin, the flute and the piano's white keys

What inspires this script of sweet sad notes?  
A fresh wound or some long lingering sore?  
A knock that opens the memory's closed doors  
And releases the rhythm of the locked up score.

***Dr Faisal Nazir***

Do not believe me if I say  
That my love is brighter than the day  
Ethereal as a cloud  
Reddened by the sun's warm gaze  
Do not believe me  
For I am blinded by love

Do not believe me if I say  
That my love is not like us made of clay  
But of embodied light  
An angel that appears to be in human shape  
Do not believe me  
For I am blinded by love

Do not believe me if I say  
That my love is the heaven for which we pray  
A prince of the ghilman  
Whose pearl like form is beauty incarnate  
Do not believe me  
For I am blinded by love.

Do not believe me  
But if you can see, touch or smell  
Your dumb senses can tell  
That only blind love can see  
And then, you will as well  
Believe me.

**Dr Faisal Nazir**

***The Light of your Being***

The light glimmers  
at the edge of the night  
holding back the shadows  
announcing the coming of Apollo.

So too you, my love  
keep the darkness,  
nibbling at the edges,  
from swallowing me.

The light of your being  
keeps me in the sun.

***Miss Nishat Wasim***

always the tears are waiting to be told  
to fall  
waiting to be undone with the undoing  
of the wall that withholds.

always something is borne with a mouth  
and never with a tongue to turn  
it still turns onto itself  
and with a waiting frown.

my sorrow must somewhere know what  
it mourns.  
between the tiltings of my sound  
there must be some purpose that is born.

there must be a soul somewhere.  
here is a waiting hole  
waiting to be formed.

some solace must be my gain  
or what else is this wanting for?

***Sir Moaz Ahmed***

***An ode to Words that often Cut too Deep for Screams***

The bones hide and shove one or two  
wavelengths of asymmetric sounds,

the flesh, in an attempt, to cover its ear

is pressed,  
Red.

Behind the bar, a heart pretending it doesn't  
care, beats

& I, despite the creaking of the bones,  
heard it.

***Areesha Khan, M.A. Final***



## ***Freedom's Dawn***

In the midst of darkness, where shadows reign supreme,  
I beheld a gruesome form, torn by vultures' cruel scheme,  
Half torn apart, yet still alive. Then, a spirit entwined with the corpse  
Raised its head and bid me a haunting farewell. I stood aghast, frozen in horror,

The villain's eyes bore into mine, devoid of remorse,  
his laughter a chilling symphony, a discordant force.  
"Reckless mortal," he sneered, "you owe me your breath,  
but redemption awaits—a path beyond death."

In that desolate moment, I felt humanity's sins—  
lust, envy, heartlessness that tore us apart.  
From noble creatures to something worse,  
our hearts tainted by infidelity and cruelty.  
The villain's words cut deep, a shared fallibility.

Yet, even in the abyss, hope flickered.  
A glimmer of light, fragile but unwavering.  
I resolved to rise above wreckage, forge a new path.  
Guided by redemption's beacon, I sought freedom from chains—  
sins and sorrows threatening to consume my soul.

And so, I stepped forward, spirit unbound.  
Darkness clung, but I pressed on, fueled by renewal's promise.  
The villain's laughter faded, drowned by hope's symphony.  
In quietude, I glimpsed dawn beyond despair—  
a chance to rewrite my story, find solace in the light.

***Zeemal Fatima,***

## ***Death***

A wrinkled creature crawling up on your  
hefty limbs,  
Crushing your ligaments into fine powder,  
Never has the devil seen something so  
gruesome,  
Yet shadows cater upon it to intensify their  
foulness,  
Mortals don't search for it, it comes  
searching for them,  
Life cripples in the corner, ignited with its  
anguish,  
Mercy is deemed as a sinful reprieve in its  
cold embrace,  
It's not a choice to be chosen and not a  
chance to be taken,  
When it comes knocking on your door,  
begging will be futile,  
It will be the beginning and the end will be  
the death of it.

***Kiran Shahid,***

## ***Smart enough***

Pigeon-he  
Ad. I know what  
It means. As I  
Read line Upon li  
ne I know what it says.  
Fluttering in my filth I, a dark pig  
eon , fly from door to door I know what  
it says for I know what it looks like Do not  
ask me, a dark pigeon, what it me  
ans Addresses Na  
mes you  
Lett me  
ers: us:  
Meani ngless.

***Bushra Irshad, MA Final, Morning.***

## ***I'm Running Out of Time***

He's hurrying across back-alleys,  
scurrying through the parks,  
Any chance he can shorten his path,  
For, one can be sure that  
Sudden emotions hit hard;  
A huge blow for the old man  
Looking to slow down life's flow  
The air of haste picked up by neighbours,  
Oblivious — men watering their lawn,  
Women chattering along.  
Their pause is brief, his cause too deep.  
Plainly, 'No time to waste,'  
They shrug and deduce, having reduced  
This man on a mission  
To an occurrence most ordinary  
Like their whitewashed fences,  
Their plain porch and benches.

He keeps on going,  
A pocket-watch for company  
Urging on — *tick-tock-tick* —  
Fast-paced steps and a sweaty brow.  
Little chance he may slow down for a crowd  
Of young children lazing around.  
But, to a want he is, much as us, bound.  
He spares a thought, halts —  
Maybe his walk has proved fruitful,  
Perhaps he's found  
The best map for directions,  
A shortcut, indeed, to roam about  
In the new town.

"Excuse me — young ones,  
You wouldn't — happen to know,"  
In parts he breathes, garners eyeballs  
When painfully heaves:  
"A place for some hundred books,  
Good and cheap...not a library;  
Ones I get to keep...?"  
He's still not stood in a single place,

Toes on the road, but heart at race.  
The children, eyes bulging, dare not speak,  
Much too fascinated with his feet.  
After an eternity, a brave boy,  
Face dripping innocence and naivety,  
Clears his throat —  
“A hundred books you say?”  
Southern thick on his lips.  
“Yes, yes, child, if I may.”  
“I know of such a place — not a hundred,  
Not even two, but a thousand books  
there you shall find.” His eyes come alight,  
Over the mere prospect of this sight.  
“Could you show me, please?”  
And the boy agrees.  
The old man, giddy with excitement,  
Asks when they shall take leave.

But behold! For there's a catch.  
“Wait!” The boy says, “first you must let  
Me in on your secret.”  
A mischievous grin on his face that is laced  
With haughtiness, he adds,  
“With these books you seek,  
What do you aim to achieve?  
Do you even read?”  
The old man is left perplexed.  
What shall he say, that he is distressed?  
Eyes downcast and reddening cheeks  
He lets wash over nature's wear and tear,  
Eerily still and knees going weak;  
His voice is especially meek.  
“I'm not sure...I merely wish  
To not leave for you and your kind  
Absolutely nothing behind.”  
— Is what he wishes to say,  
Yet what comes out is far simpler:  
“Kid, truth is, I'm running out of time.”

***Duaa Azim, M.A Final***

### ***Nosebleeds and death***

I didn't understand why the cotton was necessary,  
stuck up her nose like that.  
Like when my mother tipped up my head,  
and used tissues for nosebleeds.  
I didn't understand why she needed that,  
you're supposed to get nosebleeds when you run...  
When you're going so fast you barely register a wall,  
or when your sister slams the door in your face.  
But nani didn't have sisters anymore,  
she barely had any cousins left.  
I didn't understand why she had to wear the white cloth,  
she looked comfy though,  
all tucked in..  
but all I could remember was,  
that she said white washed her out,  
"But your nana loves it, so I wear it for him",  
But nana couldn't see her today,  
Nana hadn't come to see her in a long time.  
I didn't understand what I was supposed to say,  
when my mom told me to say goodbye.  
I never had to say goodbye before without my voice muffled in her chest,  
I didn't know what to do with the extra air.  
I didn't understand why she couldn't have waited,  
I was turning eight.  
There was a cake she promised me,  
a cake she never got to make.

### ***Aasiyah Naim, MA Final, Morning***

the canines were sharp  
but not all that bad  
the pain, curdling in my esophagus  
came from the incisors  
the flat edged sword, it's dull press  
as it tore  
gashed  
its way into soft flesh

the intent to prick  
was not all that bad  
the desolation, unraveling my guts  
came from the pull of skin  
the hedonistic urge to consume  
as i writhed  
depleted  
on the floor in agony

the careless extraction  
was not all that bad  
the loss, draining me bone dry  
came from heretic mercy  
the pitiful remorse of a predator  
as it clung  
to skin  
an echo of your kiss

***Maham Owais, BS Third Year***

death is delicate in it's approach.  
slow and forgetting, a quiet keeper of time.  
it wears no cloaks, carries no scythe, but comes when called, taking only what it  
must- no more,  
no less.  
it moves softly through unseen spaces, neither grim nor cruel.  
it doesn't wait in the dark.  
it is not some distant end, but the shape of life itself.  
it is not a stranger, but looms in the fading light of autumn, in the wilting bloom of  
a flower, in the  
final notes of a song we loved once.  
without death, what is life?  
a never-ending expanse without horizon, without urgency, without the tenderness  
that comes  
with knowing all things end.  
an eternal weight of loss, a punishment, a thing to run from?  
or  
ending the endless ache, the long stretch of suffering, the silent release of all we  
have carried?  
the quiet hand that takes us when time runs thin.  
and so it comes, not before and not after, but precisely when you have seen  
enough and are full  
enough.

***Hania Afridi, Third Year***



## ***A Moment Before Death***

***Sajjad Shehzad, BS Second Year***

“Is this... afterlife? It certainly seems like so. It is vague and *numb*. All I can see is ... darkness. Yes, darkness. I can see my own body – floating above nothing – but I cannot see anything else at all. There is no source of light, no sound, no visible passage of air and I don’t seem to *feel* my body either. I know it is here but I seem so ... weightless...”

“It is because you have left the baggage and have ascended here without having to bear the weight of your sinful body.”

“But my body is right... WHO ON EARTH ARE YOU?”

“No – not on earth – *this* is the bridge – and neither is it *afterlife*. These are your final moments”

“Wha... the bridge to where, from where ... who are you ... where am I? Is this some kind of sick joke? I was just driving to work and now I am floating in some sort of sensory deprivation tank (yes, this must be it) with a source-less and nameless voice.”

“From the living to the departed.”

“I NEED ANSWERS, NOW!”

“I have already answered the only question you *did not* know the answer to.”

“Hey man ... I am already having a bad day. My boss will let go of me if I do not make it in time today. Have I done something to anger you? I am sorry. I am sure we can settle this dispute sometime else but right now I *need* to get to work.”

“Work? Is that the only concern you have right now? Try to *remember* ... how you got here.”

“I ... I was simply driving through maddening traffic when suddenly – yes, I was hit – a truck driver rammed his vehicle into me ... or maybe I was the one who got in his way ... I don’t really remember.” – “The departed? Am.... am.... am I dead? Huh c’mon what is this? Am I on some silly TV show? C’mon man it is not funny anymore – it wasn’t funny to begin with.”

“To put it in Layman’s terms, YOU are dead. This is where you will be given a *choice*. But before you are given *the choice* you need to fully understand everything that is at stake here.”

“Dead? Oh... hah ... I don’t feel *dead*.”

“Oh mortal how would *death* feel like? Now here is the rundown of things: You can either decide to let the essence of your soul – energy as you mortals call it – given back to the universe in the form of a new soul or would you like to relive your life. Mind you, you will not remember any of *this* neither will you be able to remember anything from your past life, mostly.”

“Why would you have me relive my life... that makes no sense whatsoever? Why am I even given such a choice? What is the difference if I even go back – I won’t remember anything at all?”

“You are already asking the questions most of you ask at the very end. How amusing is that. But the answer is quite simple. The universe was born with a certain quanta of *energy*; for the universe to continue to live perpetually – without breaking any of the preordained laws we edified your realm upon – we must give back the energy to the universe.”

“I get to live my life again ... that is – won’t that violate you *preordained laws* of time?”

“The concept of time is a human construct. A futile attempt at understanding the passage of life. Albeit it is clever, it is incorrect. Now, would you want to go back or would you simply be transferred?”

“It ... it won’t make a difference at all. There is no telling if I might change anything at all.”

“Do ... you want to change things?”

“I live in a small apartment. I have a mountain of debt and unpaid loans. I hate my job. I have nobody in my life. I can’t do anything. Is this a life anybody would want to relive? Even *if* it was by remaining unaware. I wouldn’t wish this accursed life on anyone.”

“I wouldn’t either. All those *accursed* moments you shared with your family. The wretched moment when you rode on your father’s back while your mother’s laughter echoed your living room. Surely, you don’t want to aimlessly chatter with your mates at the local pub, every night. Who would want to be stuck in rain with the darling of their dreams – to succeed in getting closer to them? I wouldn’t wish a life as sick as yours on anybody either. The course of events may be dynamic but these *accursed* experiences *are* what make you what you are.”

“ ... ”

“Your decision mortal?”

“... Even if it makes no difference, even *if* I don’t remember to cherish those moments, even if I remain aloof to transience... I would still like to go through every moment of my *accursed* life. Just one more time.”

-

-

“Wouldn’t it be better if we let them remember this interaction ... in some form?”

“You are not to speak on these matters”

“But I make an excellent point, don’t I?”

“Remain quiet please, the next mortal is about to turn up...”

## ***Enchanted***

***Umama Saleem, BS Second Year***

I stood quietly on the shelf, beside a broken clock– forgotten. Once, I was a source of joy, cherished in all times of happiness and sadness alike. Today, I felt a familiar touch, a delicate yet firm hand lifting me from my resting place. It was Mrs. Rein, an old sweet lady, cloudy haired, and with wrinkles that spread across her face. She dusted me with her ageworn but gentle fingers, held me close, and in that moment, I could feel the warmth of emotions returning.

“The weather was heavenly today; it rained meloncholically calm...also, a family of 3 moved into the next house– a mom, a dad, and a little girl. The roses in our garden appeared more alive today, probably because of the rain... Days like these always take me back to when I was still young and energetic, and not old and lazy. However, I shall stop being snarky and live the most of what is left” said Mrs. Rein. She then opened her closet, her fingers brushed past old dresses and coats she hadn’t worn and adorn in a long time. Each piece possessed a poignant memory– the white coat she had worn on her first date, the yellow cardigan she had rented off for the first time; among them she found a beautiful black dress, cover with golden lacework– the same dress gifted to her by her husband when they had welcomed their baby girl home– gently swaddled in a soft pink blanket; like that of an angel’s palms. Mrs. Rein put on her this black attire that night– and started admiring herself. “I’m blessed not to have gained weight for I wouldn’t have been able to fit in my dress” she murmured to herself– her eyes glistening more than the stars on a black night. “This might be the last time I wear this dress” Mrs. Rein announced to herself as she looked at her reflection in the mirror– smiling back with a faint smile. She then continued to get ready; putting her mascara, wearing her lipstick, adjusting her silly little hat. Mrs. Rein searched through her vanity; and found a bottle of perfume– the sweet lavender smell of the perfume filled the room. It was the same perfume she had worn on her wedding,

I remembered for I had witnessed it. Mrs. Rein started gathering me up– and then proceeded to leave, in that moment, I could feel her heartbeat. Mrs. Rein had always loved clicking pictures; the ones that she always cherished were of her new-born baby who sadly lost her life to a hit and run accident. “I will capture everything tonight; the couples, the sky, the fountains, the moon” said Mrs. Rein as she walked down the brown crusty pavement with her pointed shoes. A

moment later, a boy on a bicycle splashed mud on her dress while she was walking, and startled her steps “I wonder if he can’t see or is blind that he didn’t watch his way” thought Mrs. Rein. However, for a split second, the needles of time ticked slowly, the air felt weird. Mrs. Rein blinked in confusion, but she brushed off the incident; However, a shiver ran down her spine, but she quickly calmed herself down. Stars were smiling a little brighter that night, the people were cherishing their lives, the wind was chill, and a fragrance of gloom hung in the air; giving a cinematic touch to the night– almost structuring a great picture to life.

Mrs. Rein pictured the lively people, the cafes which erupted scents of indescribable, the stars which were peeking at her from behind the clouds & her favourite; the moon. Each click of my shutter resonated with her emotions, each scene served as a testament to her life’s journey. Mrs. Rein knew this night’s disclosure was going to mark done an important goal in her list of to-dos “I really wish my husband could buy me flowers like that young guy; and I could giggle and blush like the young lady; but sadly he’s gone– abandoning me” Mrs. Rein said with a weak sigh. She then sat down on an old bench with a pen and a notebook in her hands. Mrs. Rein had always been creative, she knew how to glue words together in the most sophisticated way. But that night, came nothing in her mind; she kept fidgeting on her pen, continuously trying to work with her words. After a while, she finally soaked the paper with her pen, writing vigorously: “Tonight is the night of reunion, the stars are making the moon blush, just like how you made me on the day we saw each other as bride and groom”. She traced the word “reunion” again and again. The pen started piercing the paper— like a knife peircing a skin— tears marched down her eyes– racing through her wrinkles of obstacles. But she remembered that the tears of longing were to be wiped by the kerchief of the reunion– which calmed her down at least a bit. The dancing melody celebrating nearby comforted her a lot, for her once melodious house now ringed with the same monotonous rhythm; enough to drive her crazy. She enjoyed every second and every beat as if they were her last. The moon now yawned with deeper sleep, the hustle slowly started returning home; signalling Mrs. Rein to leave as well. Mrs. Rein took a deep breath; her lungs got filled with the smell of wet mud. She then stood up and proceeded to leave. On her way back home, each of her steps deliberately kissed the ground. That moment brought back the memories of her walking with her husband– her hand clasping her husband’s hand; the baby sounds coming from the stroller they pushed along. As she reached her house, she was welcomed by the sight of her

patchy garden. Her red roses glistened— like a mother’s bathed baby does— with the remnants of the evening rain. She smelled her roses, clicked their pictures and plucked a few. She then kneeled down to her cotton soft kittens; petting them, who nuzzled against her somberly touch. She kissed them and said goodbye. She made her way to her room, turned up her radio playing a note of sadness, and placed me adjacent to her bed. Her husband laid unresponsive; but breathing, on their bed, with his heart rate being the same each time. She put her hand on his head, caressed his hair and put her head on his chest. “My monologues will finally turn into dialogues and I cannot be more thankful”, “I’m very excited to read you what I’ve written since you stopped answering me”.

Her other hand moved towards his mask— trembling, her heart pounding like it would burst out of her bosom, the lights of her room flickered... She slowly removed the mask, for it served no purpose anymore.

The once calm clouds now thundered, lightening a bolt. Mrs. Rein opened her eyes to a spotlight on her; with her husband offering his hand, just like he did; on the day of their wedding— I witnessed this moment, and it was a moment of transcendent beauty, one that even I could not capture fully. But I was content, for I had been a cherished part of her journey, preserving the moments that coloured her life.

Years later, I laid lonely in an attic, rotting in the time’s mold. Until one day— a little girl, with blonde hair, and rosey cheeks, with curiosity bubbling in her eyes, retrieved me from a dusty box. She dusted me with her soft hands, and the aroma of life returned. The little girl sat down on the floorboard, her dress met the surrounding dirt. She clicked through the pictures— confused and contented as they served as a storyline to her fragmented dreams. She stopped at the pictures of Mrs. Rein, feeling a memory of distant familiarity. Among them, she found a picture of Mrs. Rein’s writing which read “Love gives birth to bravery”. Confusingly, she again clicked through all the pictures, until she scrutinized the strange angle of when the splashed mud met Mrs. Rein’s dress— it never did. The splashes hung mid-air. Strangely, all the images started appearing odd to her, making her question whether Mrs. Rein even lived those moments or not. Her mind raced with thoughts, her heartbeat started deafening her; suddenly, her thoughts were interrupted by her parents calling her name “Rein”.

## ***Book Review: The Death of Ivan Ilyich by Leo Tolstoy***

***Urooj Harriet Gill***

Tolstoy, a revered figure in the literary realm, presents us with a thought-provoking exploration of mortality that makes us delve into the intricacies of his narrative, as he deftly examines the existential questions that plague us all. Through the lens of Ivan Ilyich's life and his confrontation with his own mortality, Tolstoy invites us to reflect on the meaning and purpose of our existence and with masterful prose, Tolstoy's work challenges societal norms and forces us to confront our own mortality head-on.

The narrative structure of "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" deviates from the typical chronological sequence. The story begins with the events following Ivan's death, providing a glimpse into the impact his passing has on those around him. This non-linear approach adds depth and intrigue to the plot, as we are initially confronted with the finality of Ivan's death and then gradually uncover the events that shaped his journey which prompts us to consider the choices we make in our own lives.

Ivan Ilyich, a high-ranking judge, leads a seemingly perfect life in 19th-century Russia. However, everything changes when he falls ill. Throughout the story, we witness Ivan's physical and emotional decline. He seeks solace in the company of his family and friends, but their superficiality and inability to understand his suffering only deepen his sense of isolation. As Ivan's condition worsens, he experiences moments of profound introspection and selfreflection. He confronts the emptiness of his past choices and the superficiality of the society he once embraced. In his search for meaning, he turns to religion and philosophy as well, desperately seeking answers to the ultimate questions of life and death.

In the final stages of his illness, Ivan finds a glimmer of hope and acceptance. He comes to understand that true happiness lies in living an authentic and purposeful life.

Tolstoy's portrayal of Ivan Ilyich's character clearly undergoes a profound transformation throughout the story. At the beginning, Ivan is depicted as a successful and ambitious man who is solely focused on climbing the social ladder and conforming to societal expectations. He prioritizes his career, wealth, and status above all else, even the relationships he values are only valuable if they ensure societal validation.

However, as Ivan confronts his own mortality and grapples with the pain and suffering of his illness, his character evolves. He begins to question the superficiality of his previous pursuits and seeks deeper meaning in life. Ivan's journey forces him to confront the emptiness and shallowness of his existence, leading to a spiritual awakening. Through his physical and emotional struggles, Ivan experiences a profound shift in his priorities. He starts to value genuine human connection, compassion, and the pursuit of inner peace. Tolstoy skillfully portrays Ivan's inner turmoil and the internal conflicts he faces as he confronts his mortality.

Tolstoy's masterful use of imagery throughout the story adds depth and richness to the narrative. He paints vivid pictures with his words, allowing readers to visualize the scenes and emotions experienced by the characters.

One striking example of imagery is Tolstoy's depiction of Ivan's physical decline. For example, the imagery of Ivan's deteriorating physical appearance, such as his sallow skin and sunken eyes along the pain etched on his face, creates a visceral and haunting image of Ivan's decline, evoking a sense of empathy and unease in the readers. Additionally, when Ivan is in pain, Tolstoy describes it as a "gnawing, cutting, and grinding" sensation and the imagery of his body wasting away conveys the physical and emotional suffering he experiences as he nears death.

Tolstoy deftly uses the black sack as a powerful symbol throughout the narrative to represent the inescapable presence of death and serve as a haunting reminder of our mortality. The black sack symbolizes the weight of Ivan's impending death, which hangs over him like a dark cloud throughout his life, a constant companion shadowing his every step.

As Ivan's illness progresses, the black sack becomes more prominent in his thoughts and experiences. It symbolizes the inevitability of death and the futility of his previous pursuits. The sack represents the burden of regrets, unfulfilled desires, and the stark reality that life is fleeting.

One of the prominent philosophical themes in the novel is the existential exploration of the meaning of life and the inevitability of death. Through Ivan's journey, Tolstoy raises profound questions about the purpose of existence, the pursuit of happiness, and the nature of human suffering.



Moreover, Tolstoy's critique of the superficiality and materialism of society reflects the broader social and cultural context of his time. The novel serves as a commentary on the emptiness of the upper-class lifestyle and the pursuit of shallow ambitions, highlighting the need for individuals to prioritize genuine human connection and the pursuit of inner fulfillment.

One of the relatable aspects of Ivan Ilyich's journey is his progression from an initial appearance of perfection to becoming entangled in the demands of work, wealth, and societal validation. This gradual transformation influences his relationships and redefines his priorities. Genuine emotional connections with others were scarce for him unless they fulfilled his societal requirements. However, everything shifted dramatically when the disease struck, altering his perspective and priorities.

The suffering he endured was truly terrible, and it's natural for readers to feel sympathy for him. It's heart-breaking to think that his epiphany came during his last moments, leaving us questioning whether it was fair. It's almost like he didn't really live the wrong way, but he himself had to come to terms with the fact that it wasn't the case. Ivan Ilyich's life wasn't lived authentically, it was all about fitting into society and meeting its expectations.

It is fascinating how the author portrays the illusion of a luxurious life. Ivan Ilyich and his family were striving to be like the rich and elite, but it wasn't truly fulfilling. It's a common goal for many people, but the book shows that it does not necessarily lead to genuine happiness.

Ivan Ilyich's situation is a reminder that having material wealth doesn't guarantee a meaningful life as Ivan Ilyich's downfall wasn't about being homeless or losing everything. It was more about the emptiness he felt despite having all the external trappings of success. It's a powerful message about the importance of finding true fulfillment and living a life aligned with our values.

In conclusion, 'The Death of Ivan Ilyich' by Leo Tolstoy is a thought-provoking masterpiece that delves into the complexities of life and death. Through Ivan Ilyich's journey, Tolstoy explores themes of societal expectations, the pursuit of authenticity, and the true meaning of a well-lived life. The book's significance lies in its ability to challenge readers to reflect on their own lives and question the choices they make in the pursuit of societal success.

Despite being written over a century ago, the book's relevance endures as it prompts readers to examine the value placed on material wealth and social status. This novel leaves a profound impact on readers, reminding them of the importance of living a life true to oneself and fostering genuine connections with others.

کسی یوسف کے جیسے ہی سر بازار بکنا ہے  
زلیخا ڈھونڈ کے لاؤ مجھے اب یار بکنا ہے  
تمہیں جس نے خریدا ہے کوئی اس کو خریدے گا  
سر دیوار کا گاہک پس دیوار بکنا ہے  
مجھے اس کے ہی ہاتھوں کی بنے رہنا ہے کٹ پتلی  
خریدے وہ اگر مجھ کو ہزاروں بار بکنا ہے  
ابھی قیمت خداؤں کی یہاں پر یار لگنی ہے  
ابھی بکنی ہے مسجد، ابھی دربار بکنا ہے  
محبت کی اسیری سے کمایا ہے جیسے میں نے  
ہزاروں غم کی قیمت میں وہ اک آزاد بکنا ہے  
ذرا بولی تو لگنے دو، ذرا بڑھنے دو قیمت بھی  
ترا بھی یار بکنا ہے، میرا بھی یار بکنا ہے  
کہیں پیوند ہیں اس پر کہیں گہری دراڑیں ہیں  
اگر بک بھی گیا تو بھی یہ دل بے کار بکنا ہے  
منافق اس لیے بھی ہیں یہاں پر لوگ  
زیادہ جھوٹ ہو جس میں وہی اخبار بکنا ہے

لابتہ طارق

جیتے جیتے ہاتھ آئی ہوئی ہار کا دکھ  
تم کو معلوم ہے ٹوٹی ہوئی تلوار کا دکھ؟

دو ہی لوگوں پہ توجہ رہی مرکوز سبھی  
کوئی سمجھا ہی نہیں ثانوی کردار کا دکھ

رقص بسمل کے تماشائی پہ واضح نہ ہوا  
ناچتے پاؤں میں تازیاب کا دکھ

گردیں لتھڑا وہ مزدور اپاہج لڑکا  
اسکی آنکھوں نے دکھایا مجھے لاچار کا دکھ

عمر بھر جس نے ہر اک دکھ سے بچائے رکھا  
وہ مجھے سونپ گیا آخری انکار کا دکھ

لابتہ طارق

غزل

یہ پوچھتی ہیں نگاہیں کدھر گئی ہے بہار  
خیال و خواب کی صورت گزر گئی ہے بہار

خزاں پہ کب تھے کوئی بے دلی سے مائل ہم  
عجب نہیں ہے کہ دل سے اتر گئی ہے بہار

یہ کس خرام کا محشر پیا ہے ہونے کو  
رکی ہوئی ہے خزاں اور ٹھہر گئی ہے بہار

تری نگاہ کے رنگوں کو دیکھ کر سرباغ  
حدودِ رنگ سے بڑھ کر سنور گئی ہے بہار

برس گئے ہیں اُن آنکھوں سے آج لطف کے رنگ  
طلب کے دشت پہ آخر بکھر گئی ہے بہار

چمن میں اب کے فضا کتھتی سی ہے، شاید  
حنائے پا کو تری چوم کر گئی ہے بہار  
منہاج علی



