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fiction & film

From the Editor

Deborah Cartmell puts it best. Fiction and film are in a marriage that is lined immaculately with jealousy, deceit, and an ungiving obsession with who owns what. It is an endless round of push-and-pull. A narration with no structure. Even in the face of continued hostility, however, a divorce is hard to envision. For better or worse, the two have maintained an inextricable association for over a century. What, then, is the case of this successful misalliance?

A great amount of literature has been dedicated to the continued dialogue following the first collaborations between fiction and film. Adaptive works, perhaps more than any other branch of films, have received much critical attention. From the question of fidelity to the semiotic and linguistic arguments, the discourse has given shape to three distinct camps: the likes of Woolf and Bluestone, who believe that films *cheapen the chastity* of literature; critics like Cartmell and McFarlane, who believe a more peaceful and productive reconciliation is possible, and has been, for many decades now, in the coming; and simple writers like Kafka and Huxley, who, far from getting caught up in the futile scuffle, partake in both mediums, occasionally even blending the two with unsuspecting ease. With this issue, we tackle the three questions posed by each of the groups: is fidelity important; do literature and film only have a second-hand aesthetic relationship; and whether the two need to be juxtaposed to begin with.

This issue of The Falconer builds on contemporary ideas surrounding the seemingly irresolvable debate through the multicolored lens of culture, philosophy, history, and symbols. Between a thorough investigation into the aesthetic value of the symbolic glance, a reading of the mutualistic translation of humanism into the two mediums, a dialectical evaluation of their sometime-fruitful association as distinct modes of narration, and an interpretative account of the advent of the modern horror cinema, there lies a somewhat authentic and timely representation of the clash. In addition, this issue includes an in-depth discussion on the thematic premise, as well as original works by the students of the English Department. And while we read, reevaluate, and revise the critical understanding of the relationship (or

lack thereof) between the contentious duo, in hopes of answering the three questions, we pose a few of our own — of perception, interpretation, and the narrowing distance between the signifier and signified in the two forms of art. It may seem, to the modern reader, easier to let these questions simmer in silence than to grapple with them; but it is imperative that they be answered if this marriage is to be saved.

Yet one wonders: *must it be saved?*

Fleeting, Frail, and Fragmentary: *Glances of Desire in Film and Fiction*

Manal Fatmi (3rd Year, Evening)

"But it might have started way later than I think without my noticing anything at all. You see someone, but you don't really see him, he's in the wings. Or you notice him, but nothing clicks, nothing "catches..." How couldn't I have known? I know desire when I see it- and yet, this time, it slipped by completely."

- Andre Aciman, *Call Me By Your Name*

Time works in mysterious ways. It contracts, expands, lingers, and teases, but rarely does it ever come to a halt. Last year, however, when one day melted perpetually into a stream of endless hours and seconds, and the monotony of quarantine sat like a depressed, little bird on my shoulder, time ceased to be. It is only in reflection that little tidbits and memories come back to me, and take me by surprise. One such memory was watching Luca Guadagnino's *Call Me By Your Name*, and letting myself be ensnared in the beautiful net that the film cast. By the time the end credits rolled, I had felt all the raw ache of desire, and the heartache that Elio felt; and after being thrust crudely back into reality, all I could ask myself was *how?*

I had watched romance movies before, had even taken up the mammoth task of devouring as many 'rom-coms' as I could in my early teenage years, and yet none of these movies had even come close to how utterly spent I was this time. To quote Elio himself, I thought I knew desire, at least when it appeared, all prim and proper, on a screen before me, but this time, it had taken me completely off guard. It was an itch that I could not scratch, and the question of *how* soon turned into a lament. Hours of binging Netflix's romance catalog poured down the drain, and if it wasn't for the endlessness of time in those days, I would probably have never picked up Andre Aciman's novel, or watched the film again. On a second and more informed viewing, the hounds that feasted on my doubts eased their pace, and while I did not have the answer to that initial question, I did feel as though I had gotten somewhat nearer to the inexplicable. Days passed, and as I watched more films, I began to recognize *it*. A mere spectator; as I watched, and

watched, that which, until that point, I had only read about, a *thing* crept out of the shadows, and bore all the flamboyant and unabashed markings of desire. I was struck; I knew not how, but to scratch the itch, to quench the thirst; I had to look, and in doing so, come face to face with the phenomenon of the glance.

The phenomenon was not entirely new to me; I had caught glimpses of it before, and had even felt it, while reading an exchange between Emma Woodhouse and Mr. Knightley. As Emma's eyes invite "him irresistibly to come to her and be thanked," the entire dynamic of the relationship changes. No longer is Mr. Knightley the brotherly figure that Emma thought him to be, and suddenly, as the two dance and dally, the reader is made acutely aware of the change that has taken place. Unlike fiction, film, being a strictly visual medium, has always centered around the action of looking. As a camera pans across a room, guiding our eyes to where it is that we must look, the spectator is integrated in the action 'on screen.' Good movies do this particularly well, and by the time the screen fades into darkness, the viewer is forced to come to terms with a hasty parting, inflicted by 'The End.' The ability to look, and gaze has always been of tremendous importance to film. When deployed in horror, the act of looking is one that carries an implicit power, for who can gaze into the nefarious depths of darkness? As critic Linda Williams points out, in F.W Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), Ellen makes the grave mistake of staring at the vampire in a trance-like state, and from the moment that the nefarious glance is cast, we watch Orlok's shadow approach from the windows of facing houses, and await his attack. In Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation*, the 'looking' power of the viewer is put into question, when the camera lingers for just a moment too long on an introductory shot of Scarlett Johanson's character; rendering the spectator uncomfortable. The camera, then, becomes a living thing, a tool that provokes and asks: *So, you dare to look?*

In the space of time after *Call Me By Your Name* — which in retrospect, I have come to see as a turning point of sorts — I have watched, and rewatched several romance movies, and a common characteristic that they seem to share is that one glance, that quiet, unsuspecting glance of desire that slithers and slides in between dialogues, and speaks, without speaking, so much of what desire is.

When it comes to desire, or desire as it is portrayed in the medium of film, the camera usually takes a back seat. In most popular romance movies that I've consumed, when the time has come for the grand declaration of love to finally be made, all dynamic motion comes to an abrupt halt. The small and heavy silences, the maddening anticipation of all the build-up that we've seen so far, and finally the hero pours his heart out; and the tear-stricken face of the beloved trembles, until the faint notes of a love ballad quiver from a distance, growing louder with each beat. Finally (*finally!),* the two embrace, and the viewer breathes a sigh of relief. *All is well.* In films such as *The Notebook, She's All That, The Wedding Planner*, when the grand moment of declaration arrives, it is upon the viewer to recognize what they are seeing as desirable, and in turn, desire it. After all, to see is to desire, and in these over-the-top, flimsy declarations, the modern spectator sees manufactured images of what love is supposed to be like, and in doing so, something is distorted.

The problem with most of the rom-coms and chick-flicks that I've watched lies not in their reusing of worn-out tropes and cliches, but in their insistence on what desire looks like. In creating a guide-book for what love and romance is, these films fail to make a lasting impact on the viewer. The spectator is there, on the other end of the screen, but there is nothing for their gaze to latch on to, nothing for their eyes to "catch," instead the highs, the lows, the sighs, the gasps, and all that culminates in the wide plethora of desire, is crudely reduced to an hour and a half of cliches, and cheap thrills. Having said that, while it is easy to point out the flawed and gimmicky portrayal of desire in popular romance movies, it should be mentioned that desire is highly subjective. What strikes one viewer, might not strike the other.

Then there is the matter of pining, of course. The raw *wanting* that speaks to us. In Wong Kar-Wai's *In the Mood for Love,* Mrs. Chan and neighbor Mr. Chow are in an impossible situation. Their spouses are having an affair with each other, and they cannot want each other. Framed by corridors, window panes, and gullies, the camera follows each movement of the couple that cannot be, and notices each quivering sigh, each intake of breath as they cross each other, keeping their distance. For the majority of the film, the words are never uttered. There is no declaration of love, only the realization

that regardless of what their desire might result in, their *want* for each other is a frail and fleeting thing. Another movie that stayed with me for a long time was Abdellatif Kechiche's *Blue is the Warmest Color*. Emma and Adele's love story relies on glances, and the pull that a shared glance with a blue-haired stranger on a crowded street can have. As the spectator, these glances call to us. They hook themselves on to our skin, and ask questions that we do not know the answer to. In Richard Linklater's *Before Sunrise,* the viewer instinctively knows, before a single word is shared that there is *something* that Jesse and Celine know about each other, and quite possibly, us. Similarly, in Kogonada's *Columbus*, desire is presented not by the presence of a phenomenon, but by the lack of it. As Casey and Jin begin to form a kinship, the city's architecture that stands between them, slowly fades away. No longer are the characters divided by fences, or arches. For their desire to be seen and in turn, recognized, the penetrating cityscape is silenced, and the characters are simply allowed to be.

For a moment, when a film really touches us, the desire to look is overpowered by the desire to turn away. But like Orpheus, we must gaze, and in doing so, occupy a place in the economy of desire. We are not the object of desire, we do not desire, but hooked as we are, we cannot help but watch.

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Adapting Hamlet: *Hamlet 1990 vs. Hamlet 1996*

Maaz Masood (4th Year, Morning)

Flutters of credits and two films unfurl in time- two men, darkly-garbed, each herald new retellings of an old story. In their gaze and gait lies the same sorrow, albeit in different haunts.

They are, in fact, both Hamlets; or rather, two separate interpretations of Shakespeare's Hamlet, respectively belonging to Kenneth Branagh's full length 1996 play-to-film adaptation and the shorter 1990 movie, directed by Franco Zeffirelli and starring Mel Gibson. I'm no movie critic (yet), and thus won't try to judge which is the better movie. However, since both movies directly adapt from the play, I will be trying to pick the best adaptation between the two.

Accuracy when it comes to adaptations, especially when it comes to Shakespeare, is a fickle thing — too much liberty is simply distracting, but sticking too closely to the source risks a bland and inaccessible final result. Yet I find that perhaps the solution is to be as true as possible to the core themes of the text, to be true to the truth of the work. Of course, an adaptation ought also to respect the form of its own medium, otherwise, that very much defeats the whole point of adapting something.

To judge these adaptations, then, I feel it's first important to understand the design choices behind each. For this purpose, let us first focus on how they each interpret our favorite brooding Dane.

Branagh's Hamlet could have been Macbeth on a Sunday. Wearing a sheer black costume cut to a strong, contrasting silhouette, each movement coiled, powerful and theatrical, here is a rare Hamlet: one who exudes such control that even his throes of indecision seem to carry the seeds of a resolution to come. It is a phenomenal performance by Branagh, yet at first I wondered: is this really Hamlet? After all, Hamlet is most often played as a moping intellectual or a helpless child, yet Branagh's helplessness is a seething thing, impetus to his cunning. Then, the realization. This Hamlet is not the

conflicted academic, but is rather the prodigal son, fallen from grace. A prince, who would have been one of those great kings of stories, had his fate and conscience not intervened.

Viewing the second film after the first, Mel Gibson's Hamlet came as a surprise. It's a remarkably understated performance, one far removed from theatricality, taking from the play only that which is most human. 'Human' is a word that succinctly describes this Hamlet; the performance cracks open Shakespeare's lines, letting us catch glimpses of a Hamlet as he might have been before the death of his father. Awkward at times, bookish in disposition, sheepish yet quick, this is a Hamlet truly divorced from the stage; his quiet performance uniquely suited to film. Far from Branagh's brawny, greater-than-life hero, Gibson's Hamlet feels like *some guy*, despite his royal station. Here, then, is a more relatable interpretation, one that allows us a more personal look into the mind of the wayward prince — a Hamlet made truly human.

And it is in these depictions that we find the crux of the films within their respective Hamlets. On one hand, the 1996 version stays as close as possible to the original play and revels in the theatricality of it, while the other, the 1990 film, is far more aware of its status as a work of cinema rather than theatre, and adapts the source material as such.

For an adaptation, then, which is more commendable?

While Branagh's version certainly understands and respects Shakespeare, one might argue that it seems more like a filmed performance of the play than a true film adaptation. It's not a sentiment I wholly agree with, but there's truth to it. After all, Hamlet was Shakespeare's longest play, and a full length film adaptation is undoubtedly indulgent. And while faithfulness to the source is to be commended, there can be too much of a good thing; indeed in this case, an excess of accuracy produces a somewhat converse effect. In eschewing the runtime conventions of cinema, the adaptation's experimentality alienated it from popular audiences, quite ironic if one considers the wide range of audiences that Shakespeare himself catered to.

And yet: I simply don't believe it to be a film devoid of innovation. Certainly, it fails to make Shakespeare accessible to wider audiences, but to me that is certainly not the only consideration of a good adaptation. Understanding and catering to the audience is one thing, but understanding the text is another — and this is where Branagh's direction most shines. Thoughtfully crafted and directed, the film not only applies a new lick of paint to an old classic, but truly recontextualizes the text in a fresh setting. As for understanding the medium, the splendor of the sets and design, the camera techniques and overall visual variety prove that while the film rejects some conventions of the film medium, it plays masterfully well with others.

As for the 1990 adaptation, it really is a *film*. The minimalistic music, the natural echoes and bird-songs, the quiet moments of repose and the marginal use of theatrics all converged into a film that is truly its own. It is a breath of fresh air. At moments, one even forgets it to be an adaptation of Shakespeare. Far more than Branagh's film, this adaptation understood the value of being a movie first. Knowing keenly the spirit of brevity, the film delivered the most relevant story beats, trimming characters and scenes where deemed unnecessary; and rearranging or merging other scenes, such as the clever sprinkling of 'to a nunnery go' into the mousetrap play. And starring Mel Gibson as Hamlet is its great doing, a visually expressive interpretation of the character that I found perfectly suited to the film medium.

Regrettably, however, this film was soured for me by the deliberate misunderstanding of the original conflict. The terribly thought out insertion of an overt oedipal conflict into the film felt both forced and contrived, especially in the extremely crass execution of it in the bedroom scene. In a stroke, it invalidated Hamlet's entire moral stance against the union of his mother and uncle; his father's spirit creeping into the bedroom seemed more of an inappropriate afterthought than the heart of his distress, which now seemed to lay smothered in bed. Certainly, adaptation is free to take liberties; yet to crudely interfere with the very central themes and conflicts, is a liberty taken too, too far. Ultimately, I found the addition of that one scene so against the overall balance of themes, that for me it invalidates the film's

entire understanding of the text; it turns Hamlet from hero to hypocrite, and disjoints the very harmony between action and narrative.

If it was only a matter of knowing the medium and then delivering an entertaining film, the 1990 film would be enough. But I began with the aim to discuss which of these is the overall better adaptation, and when it comes to that, faults and all, Branagh's Hamlet takes the cake. While it may not be the most accessible adaptation, for me, accessibility in an adaptation simply does not take precedence over doing justice to at least the core themes and truths of the source text.

So then Hamlet 1996 is my pick for the better overall adaptation. If you do decide to watch the full four hours, take a break at the intermission. You'll be needing it.

Fiction, Film, and Humanism: The Broken Binary of Hero-Villain

Uroosa Hashmi (3rd Year, Morning)

The combat between good and evil has been the essence of literary narratives from the very outset of literature. God-like figures, like Gilgamesh and Achilles, are always created as the embodiment of human virtues and heroism. The nobility of this mighty protagonist is set against the wicked and vicious antagonist who symbolizes the villainous attributes in order to draw an obvious distinction between right and wrong. This archetypal representation ran amok until Humanism posed the question, *"what does it mean to be human?"* This question called human nature into investigation and ultimately transformed the traditional two dimensional characterizations of heroes and villains in literature; eventually blurring the lines between the good and the bad guy, which would later be adapted by the film industry as well.

For all its revolutionary spirit, J*oker* completely altered the conventional definition of the villain when it humanized the protagonist by depicting him as a salient, sensitive human; a product of his evil society. It evoked in the audience an emotion not regularly felt before - empathy. This film was the culmination of the gradual change in the ancient doctrine of labeling people as either saint or sinner. *Frankenstein,* in 1818, roughly did the same when it obliterated this clear distinction between the protagonist and antagonist by creating the first anti-hero in fiction. Victor Frankenstein, whose fanatic obsession with power drives him to invent a hideous creature, goes on a killing spree, raising an undying commotion among critics, echoed throughout the centuries: who is the monster in the novel? The answer to this question has impregnated fiction with the trend of the dehumanization of the hero by imbibing in them some of the qualities typically associated with the villain, instead of portraying them as an unblotted figure of virtue. The aim of this modification was to truly depict the complexities of human existence. And so the seed of this trope germinated, embodied eternally in the words of Dostoevsky:

"An 'extraordinary' man has the right… to overstep…certain obstacles, and only in case it is essential for the practical fulfillment of his idea."

Fyodor Dostoevsky, in his seminal work, Crime and Punishment, encapsulates the philosophical justification for the emergence of this anti-heroic character. Raskolnikov is considered the epitome of the evil-protagonist in the fictional world. He glorifies the villainy of the hero and deconstructs the long-held idea of the hero as a symbol of an ideal moral figure. Dostoevsky's ideology was actually an echo of the waves of the Existentialist Movement, which freed man from the shackles of Christian morality and enabled him to exercise his full potential. One could finally give shape to their oneness. Oscar Wilde's controversial creation, Dorian Gray, is the perfect embodiment of the philosophy, signified in Nietzsche's superior man; but it is Jay Gatsby who gives complete currency to the act of doing whatever it takes to fulfill one's own desires. This concept fully bloomed with Albert Camus's The Stranger where Meursault becomes the object of resentment by other people due to his psychologically unconventional demeanor as he is labeled immoral by society. He is shunned as inhuman, owing largely to his complete lack of "humane" remorse. He becomes a horrifying image of an outsider — unreadable and unwelcome.

The latter half of the 20th century saw man continually at strife with the good and the evil, owing to the unquestioned willingness with which the distorted binary was being embraced by many contemporary writers. *The Catcher in the Rye*, *East of Eden*, *Lolita*, and *The Clockwork Orange* are some of the notable works which are grounded in the theme of this internal conflict. This subject matter, however, evolved with the climactic nuclear explosion of the Second World War. By addressing the atrocities of war, psychologists made an attempt to understand the impact of the socio-political influences that culminated in the construction of this anti-hero. This time around, with the birth of other mediums of expression, the multidimensional approach to humanity was adopted by the entertainment industry, borrowing shamelessly the anti-hero/heroic villain tropes. This gave way to more complex villainous-heroes and heroic-villains to enter the realm of film. Hence, in subsequent years, the production of

movies with such characters became preferable. *Rebel Without Any Cause*, *The Godfather*, and *Schindler's List*, to name a few, are movies that made a clean labeling of the protagonist and antagonist nearly impossible, and effectively irrelevant. Naturally, the idea reached its zenith in the 21st century.

The contemporary state of films is the golden age for further exploration of the morally ambiguous, demented, strange, and charming anti-hero. The growing popularity of psychological thrillers has contributed to the idea that evil-doers are actually by-products of this inhumane, cruel, and overly-political world. *American Psycho*, a moving investigation into the mind of a serial killer, explained how certain elements of one's society make a monster of man. Wicked portrayed Elphaba, the famous Wicked Witch of the West from the *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, as the misunderstood and otherwise smart girl who was labeled wicked without any thought given to what made her so in the first place. Because such depictions make the audience ponder and realize the greater impact of the external on the internal, audiences grow more empathetic to otherwise evil figures. They make an emotional appeal to the feeling audience that these people are human, despite their exterior, with understandable reasons and justifiable motives for their actions. As a result, the 21st century filmgoer finds himself increasingly gravitating towards "villains" like Cersei Lannister, Thanos and even Killmonger.

Fiction, Film, and Culture: *Japan through Anime*

Umna Salman (2nd Year, Morning)

Cherry blossom viewing, vibrant festivals, and captivating, rich culture. Can one not fall for the hauntingly beautiful ancient temples, haikus written under trees with drops of melancholy rain wistfully clinging, and grotesque urban legends? The land of the rising sun is forever beaming with aesthetics which are not only confined to the domain of art, but to existence itself. However, what has managed to capture the attention of people best for many years is Japan's distinctive style of art that it portrays through its popular media, *Anime*.

Anime's visual ancestors can be traced back to the Edo period (1600-1868), when zen paintings often portrayed playful cartoons. Now, however, critics consider it a formalistic mode of art that has elements of realism, which are not common in other animation works produced worldwide. The beauty of anime is that it appeals to the viewers with its underlying dark and sombre themes. According to John Reeve, "Serenity and turbulence, spirituality and slaughter have often gone hand in hand in Japanese culture.." As can be seen in many popular anime like Spirited away, whose story on the surface is about a girl getting lost in the spiritual world, explores real life issues of the treatment of kidnapped children, as showcased when the protagonist is given a new name in the spirit realm, *Sen*, which in japanese means 1000, suggesting that this is what she will be worth. Makato Shinkai's *Kimi Na No Wa (Your Name)* uses the philosophy of Musubi (the force that connects the universe with all life forms), and this belief has been creatively portrayed through the red string of fate that connects the protagonists, despite being in alternating times.

> *'So the braided cords that we make are the god's art and represent the flow of time itself. They converge and take shape. They twist, tangle, sometimes unravel, break, and then connect again. Musubi – knotting. That's time.'*
>
> *- Hitoha Miyazumi*

On the other hand, Hayao Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* won the Academy Award for Best Animated Film in 2003, and quite rightly so. Not only is the anime heavily influenced by Shintoism, but viewers find the mystical connections between humans and the spiritual world essentially breathtaking. The anime successfully presents the shinto belief that spirits and *kami* exist everywhere, and that people should treasure all things because everything has a life to it. While western movies and general animations focus on a continuous stream of action, what really sets Studio Ghibli's anime apart is its portrayal of the minute details of life, moments when the characters are still and contemplate. Far from monotonous, this has a meditative and enchanting effect on the viewers. Such romanticising of the simple moments of life is sublime, to be truly quiet, aware and reflective of one's surroundings, lost in the meditative appreciation of beauty in the ordinary. No wonder anime has left a big mark on the entertainment industry.

Anime mainly has its roots in light novels and mangas. The Aoi Bunkei series is one such example, and is based on six popular short stories of Japanese serious literature, whose authors were born during the Meiji period. The anime adaptation blew new life to their works, whilst enlightening international viewers with the extraordinary works of these acclaimed authors. Those who have never had access to obscure Japanese literature before, now find themselves searching for the original source material.

Amongst these tales includes Ryunosuke Akutagawa's *The Spider's Thread*, a parable based on a notorious criminal damned to the pits of hell. The only good deed, his saving grace, was not killing a spider he once had the fortune of seeing. This spider, in an attempt to make even, spins a web for him to climb up to heaven. His elation, however, is short lived.

And, of course, the chilling urban legends that seem to have fabricated a world of their own, inspired the world of J-horror. Japan, notorious for its unyielding belief in spirits, ancient temples, and shrines, has given currency to some of the most blood-curdling and spine-chilling urban legends that mix the historical with the fictional. The all-famous historical theatre camp, known as *Kabuki plays*, borrows extensively from Japanese urban legends,

many of which are known to be true. One example is the legend of the Okiku Doll (the doll with growing human hair, kept in Mannenji Temple) that has inspired numerous works of literature and Kabuki plays.

The anime, *Yamishibai: Japanese Ghost Stories,* is not only based on urban myths and legends, but borrows from the kamishibai method of storytelling, also known as Japanese Street Theatre (paper play). This gives the viewers a refreshing insight into the method of storytelling with pictorial aid that was prevalent during the Great Depression in Japan. With its eerie framing and unsettling stories, it satisfies the fans "quickened appetite for images of the bizarre and the macabre," as Takeuchi puts it.

Anime has, for decades now, been a cultural cushion for change and impact. It liberates art and aesthetics by allowing novelty and innovation to coexist with the traditional. It is expressive. Deeply moving. The big eyes, often mocked as a racist subversion, give room to an expandable artistic expression, enabling a greater, exaggerated show of emotions. It is also heavy with references to Shinto, Buddhism and Zen philosophy, which are primarily Asian schools of thought, so it does pretty well on the meaning front. Anime is, at the same time, a political cover for Japan. It is the cultural encyclopedia, "a site of implicit cultural resistance with its distinctive Japan-ness." With a more nuanced understanding of Anime, now becoming easy for the common viewer, it has become somewhat of an international phenomenon. It draws people into the sublime world of the animated, which resonates, on an abstract level at least, with a primal human capacity to understand and feel.

Edgar Allan Poe and American Horror Cinema

Zonera Asim (2nd Year, Morning)

Poe did not live an easy life, all 40 years of it. He was orphaned, unable to build a fruitful relationship with his foster parents, and was widowed after only seven years of marriage. And as if the domestic troubles did not cripple him enough spiritually, he wasn't well-received as a writer throughout his life. That is what makes Poe all the more mysterious: how could someone, who was loathed and lashed by mortals, uncloak them so well?

The horror genre in literature was championed long before Poe. At that time, however, the supernatural dominated horror. It was Poe who introduced *psychological terror* - a theme that is intricately woven into the fibers of all his works, be it fiction or poetry. He entered the cinematic world in the latter part of the 19th century and has reigned ever since. Most of his works have enjoyed multiple adaptations and inspired a canon of subsequent works. The five tales from 1839-43 — *The Fall of the House of Usher, Murder in the Rue Morgue, Tell-Tale Heart, The Black Cat and The Cask of Amontillado* — have glistened in their overwhelming fame and popularity.

The infamous *The Fall of the House of Usher* revolves around an unidentified male narrator who visits an old friend, Roderick Usher, suffering from a nervous disorder, and his twin sister, Madeline Usher, living with a cataleptic disease. The story builds gradually, until the twin sister is suddenly declared dead by Roderick. She is then buried by the narrator and his friend. This episode takes a toll on Roderick's mental state as he starts to show signs of hysteria and psychosis. One night, when the gothic mansion is engulfed in the glowing *gas,* the twin sister, who was buried undead, returns. The final scene closes with a bloody Madeline falling onto Roderick and the two dying in each other's arms, as the narrator rushes out of the mansion fearing for his life. The house splits up in half and collapses. The first adaptation of this gruesome piece of writing came a century later. In 1928, a French movie, *La chute de la maison Usher,* depicted the story into an interesting (and ambitious) narrative, with Roderick Usher painting a portrait of his wife, Madeline Usher. However, as the painting proceeds towards completion, life seems to be draining out of Madeline until she eventually

dies. Then, in 1928, and again in 1979, under the title of *The Fall of the House of Usher,* two pieces were released — a 13-minute short film and a TV-movie. In 1960, *House of Usher* adapted Poe's story with the unknown narrator presented as Madeline Usher's fiance. He is eventually ensnared into the family curse and his brother-in-law's premature entombment of Madeline. Over time, the plot entered popular culture and many of the symbols have now become a permanent part of the fabric of the horror cinema, including burying people alive and the haunting of the actor by the tormented ghosts of those people.

Murders in the Rue Morgue is another piece that reflects similar themes and gained wide popularity both in the literary and cinematic spheres. The story revolves around the murder of two women, Madame L'Espanaye, and her daughter, Mademoiselle Camille. These crimes intrigue a man, C. Auguste Dupin, who possesses brilliant analytic powers and sets out to help with the investigation. After a rather diligent analysis of the situation, Dupin comes to the bizarre conclusion that the murders were carried out by a force much greater than what humans possess. Towards the end of the story, a witness testifies in favor of Dupin and the real murderer is unveiled — an Ourang-Outang. This story is known to be the first modern detective story and thus enjoyed 6 adaptations alone in the form of various TV shows from 1932 to 2014. Perhaps the best adaptation, in terms of the critical acclaim that it garnered, *Murders in the Rue Morgue*, was released in 1914. Movies like *Who killed Olga Carew*, *The Orang-Outang* and *Phantom Thief* were also inspired and presented the prominent Poean antagonist: a monkey and an orangutan.

In the dark piece of immortal art, a seminal work of fiction, the *Tell-Tale Heart*, a man murders his elderly neighbour and hides his body in a peculiar act of lunacy. Upon the arrival of the police, the narrator starts hearing the beating of *a* heart and is driven to the verge of madness, before he breaks and confesses. The haunting effect of the conversatory tone and the narrator's constant, vigorous reassurance of his sound-mindedness, is sure to leave an indispensable impression on any reader's mind. The cinematic world ran wild with this piece of literature and the first, of many, many adaptations, *the Bucket of Blood,* was released in 1959. The French movie, *Le coeur révélateur* and a short movie, *Hopeless*, were brilliant inspired

adaptations. Another inspired film, *Tell-Tale Heart,* is worth mentioning, since it is a modern re-telling of the story, and depicts an air-force pilot, captured and brutally tortured in Afghanistan. The identical assurance, by the narrator of his sanity, in both the original and inspirational piece, is what lends the movie the Poean presence.

The Black Cat, much like the Tell-Tale Heart, starts with establishing the narrator's healthy mental state through constant repetition and reassurance. The man, with small acts of desperation, sheds light on his problematic drinking and mood-swings, ultimately murdering his black cat. He portrays the escalation in his hysteria, over a conflict about a cat, when he buries an axe in his wife's head and then walls up her dead body. This haunting story has, over the decades, been reincarnated through several adaptations. A German adaptation, *Unheimliche Geschichten,* painted the story of a mad scientist who fled after murdering and walling up his wife. Inspired works, like the two Italian Gaillo films, took more creative liberties than the former: *Il tuo vizio è una stanza chiusa e solo io ne ho la chiave*, wherein the story of Oliverio — a failed writer, womanizer, involved in domestic abuse and later on suspected of murder, is presented through the lens of an observant black cat; the other, *Gatto nero,* showcases the story of a psychic who controls the mind of his black cat and seeks vengeance; however, in a midboggling turn of events, the cat ends up mind-controlling the psychic.

The Cask of Amontillado, yet another masterpiece of revenge and underground cellars, inspired *The Sealed Room*, directed by D.W. Griffith. Such was the depth and magnitude of the story that its adaptation birthed more adaptations. *Entombed Alive*, inspired by the story and its adaptation were remarked to have been 'a complete steal or remarkable coincidence' by *Variety*. Similarly, *Vengeance* was reviewed as a "modern version of the plot made familiar by Poe… in which a human being is walled up in brickwork" by *Moving Picture World*.

While some filmmakers took inspiration from the remarkable repertoire of Poe to bring forth new narratives like *The Avenging Conscience* and *The Sex Maniac*, others adapted the stories in small fragments, similar to *Tales of Terror* and *Extraordinary Tales*. The rippling waves of Poe's creativity washed over the realm of the animated as well. The famous show,

SpongeBob Square Pants, in its episode 'Squeaky Boots', referenced The Tell-Tale Heart (Mr. Krabs hiding SpongeBob's boots under the floorboard as they annoyed him). Just recently, an eight-episode limited series was announced, which would recreate different stories from the canon of Poe.

Regardless of how far the waves stream, this much is sure: Edgar Allan Poe's haunting works of intellectual horror, his macabre settings and exceptional trepidations, have culminated in the development of a genre that borrows extensively from his symbols and motifs. I is unlikely that Poe's influence on cinema will ever cease to be. His widespread and unwavering influence has helped him secure the status of a literary legend. In D.H Lawrence's words, "*Poe knew only love, love, love, intense vibrations and heightened consciousness; the human soul in him was beside itself. But it was not lost. He told us plainly how it was, so that we should know. He was an adventurer into vaults and cellars and horrible underground passages of the human soul. He sounded the horror and the warning of his own doom."*

Poe died over a century and half ago, yet his heart continues beating under the floorboard, ever-throbbing and evermore.

Story Competition*: Four Weddings and a Funeral*

Rumsha Rizwan (3rd Year, Morning)

After the death of his father, Akbar Shamsi married four women. The grief of his actions plagued our street and he was swift to star in the town's chatter. One wife would've been okay but four was a scandal. Akbar Shamsi disgusted any man who happened to walk beside him. His sin was unforgivable. My mother often said that Akbar Shamsi was but a black blot on his father's name. His first sin was giving in to his greed to marry four women at once, and the second was sinking his father's prosperous business. Apparently, he had sold the shop to some hustler or a peddler, something with an *-er*. That's all I recall. His face grew grim and dull each day, and then he stopped coming out of his house. There was rarely a human body seen exiting the black doors of the Fazlul Shamsi house. We never once saw the women or *the man.* They had gone into a self-inflicted exile.

His steps vanished from the porch of his house while the dust grew thick. Men loathed his guts and the women pitied the wives. And then there were my friends, who found it rather amusing. Each Saturday, we sat on the rooftop that faced the Shamsi house with our sheesha and cheap cigarettes. It showed three windows, two on the first story and one on the ground floor. You could see the wives' shadows lurking behind the thick curtains. Shamsi had vanished behind the walls of the last living souvenir of his father's life. My friend once said that Shamsi would eventually move out, taking his wives with him and *30* kids somewhere cheaper; and that when the realtor would ask him if he'd take the house, he'd say "Qabool hai, Qabool hai, Qabool hai" 12 times. We all laughed, and soon it became a thing of routine. It would be our answer to any question. The Saturdays bled into Sundays, and soon, we began sitting through Fridays too. We'd go around passing the pipe of the sheesha, while each of us would indulge in a plausible story of how the day-to-day chores would take place in that house.

On evenings, when I came home drained from university, I'd go and play cricket near the Shamsi house with school kids and purposefully shoot the ball over the black gate. The balls never came back, and I lost twenty rupees

to the kids each day. The days went by and Shamsi never came out. One day, I stood in front of his gate while returning from a trip to the grocery store. With a dozen eggs in my bag, I knocked thrice. Then again. There was no sign of even a shuffle behind. No one called out, nor did anyone come out. Unwilling to give up, I knocked thrice again. Angry, I mumbled, "*What does he do all day with four women in the house?*" My thought didn't want to go there, but they did. It made my heart swell with rage. "*How could he disgrace his father like that? He should've never married, nor sold the shop. He should have been attending the prayers in the mosque like his father, and he should be out there on the park bench with a string of beads reciting every prayer he knows*!" I wished wholeheartedly that he would soon starve himself, with all his wives and children that he kept locked behind those closed doors. It was better for him to die than to live and tarnish his father's noble name. My eyes squinted at the door and my hand reached for the egg. Who in the world needed four wives? I yelled against the door, "Ab bol na, qubaool hai, qubool hai!" The black gate stood shamelessly still. All was stained with bits of yellow yolk and shells, except for the rigid plaque that read his father's name. My mother later sent me to Lahore to live with my aunt to major in economics. Life in Lahore was mundane and I never thought of Akbar Shamsi again. But the door now haunts me.

I met an old friend from six year ago, who casually mentioned Shamsi's death and his wives. He told me that those women, that we pitied for being his deplorable wives, were his half-sisters. That Shamsi spent his prime years cleaning up after his father who owed huge amounts of money to hustlers, and had fathered four daughters out of wedlock. Akbar Shamsi's memory was a horrific imprint on my brain. The stains that I blotted the house with danced in my head as I stood in front of it, crestfallen in my guilt. It was as though the house had never breathed, and no man had ever stepped in it. The moon shone heavenly on that vacant, vacant home. There was nothing to be looked at now. The dust was gone, and so were the yellow yolks and white shells. It was all dead like Shamsi. I glanced one last time at the plaque that I left unharmed. The first L of the name had fallen, and the remaining letters were more there than ever.

In Conversation With the English Department Faculty: *Fiction and Film*

Q: In the past centuries, literature, theatre and drama have been read closely and have enjoyed an interwoven existence. In the age of quick, and fast media consumption, do you think that the philological courses of theatre should be aided, if not replaced with courses structured around film and literature? Do you think that would enable students to enjoy literature more?

Mr. Moonis Azad: It *is* a literary canon. Unfortunately, we haven't caught up to the trend yet, but I hope that we will soon. The world has already made everything interdisciplinary..There's no question of 'should' here, but rather, of how soon we will arrive there. (***Do you think it would enable the students of the department to enjoy literature if these interdisciplinary activities were to be introduced?)*** Every interdisciplinary activity is more enjoyable when it's made more relevant. For instance, our students, who are currently studying history and sociology, would find those subjects to be highly relevant, and would find the experience of learning a lot more enjoyable. Personally, my connection with literature is through philosophy. If you were to remove philosophy, then everything that I know about literature would be foreign to me. I'm still not very good at understanding all the complexities and nuances of literature like other colleagues of mine, but the angle that I have for approaching literature has always been philosophy.

Ms. Aamna Motala: All over the world in English departments, film studies and comparative courses for film and literature are cropping up, which highlights that there must be a demand for it amongst students. So yes, I do think such courses can get students to enjoy literature more. However, I do think these courses should expand the boundary of interpreting and engaging with literature rather than replacing courses that pertain to theatre and drama. Despite the similar visual aspect, theatre and film remain two separate arenas and should be treated as such.

Q: In the past years, more and more literary works are being adapted into movies and television shows. Taking this into account, do you think that the mediums of film and fiction are philosophically interwoven on some fundamental level?

Mr. Moonis Azad: My view of philosophy is that it is not a discipline like other disciplines; instead, it is *something* that human beings are born with. That *something* is 'ideas'. When a child is born, the child has to first develop an idea of where he is, what he is doing there, and why he has been brought into this world. What are his elders expecting of him? What is allowed to him and what is prohibited?

If it wasn't for these questions and ideas- of right and wrong and limit and excess- life simply could not begin. To be human is to align to a view of the world, which, in itself, is a philosophy. Now, the difference between common people and people who study philosophy is that students of philosophy know their view of the world, in a proper and academic way, while most common people don't know their philosophy. They've never thought about the fact that their actions and decisions are reliant on these abstract ideas that construct their world view. For instance, when you go to the shopping mall, and you pick one dress rather than another, you already have certain abstract ideas or standards of looking good in your mind which aren't specifically yours alone. These abstract ideas were derived from your experiences, which, in turn, led to the abstract conception and formed a sort of vague standard. It is the standard, then, that makes you act, and pay for a certain product. Everyone has ideas. It is just that most people don't consider them to be philosophical. For me, it's not just a question of literature, it is about the fact that we have opinions and perspectives, and we make choices that are determined by ideas. Not only do films give material shape to these ideas, they sometimes provoke new ideas, and thoughts about those ideas that we are born with, which, in my opinion, is more than an interweaving of philosophies.

Mr. Faisal Nazir: While any kind of art can have philosophical depth, I find literature to be more philosophically engaging than movies. Fiction and film have similarities, but film is a more 'popular' art form than serious literature. Films can make a powerful immediate impact. Literature is understood

slowly. Of the two, literature has been longer lasting. Film is a relatively new medium, so maybe there are some movies which will be watched hundreds of years ahead from now. But I have my doubts.

Q) We are taught as literature students that each literary piece carries a covert and an overt meaning. And that is one reason that makes literary text appealing. Do you think that films have the power to uphold overt/covert dynamic? Are they inherently overt in meaning that they have to convey?

Mr. Babur Khan Suri: Films can absolutely do the same thing as literature does because cinema actually began as an art form. It did not begin as pure entertainment, and if you actually look at the classic cinematic works, especially from Europe, they are completely based upon the artistic principles - a very basic artistic principle, which is that of ambiguity. It is ambiguity that creates the covert and overt meaning and those films were based upon that. I think we kind of mistake film to be what Hollywood has perceived it to be and how it has portrayed it - as an industry. We have to differentiate between film as an art form and film as an industry. If you look at classical films, I think it's very, very clear that all of those meanings and messages, interpretations, and artistic principles that apply to literature or any other art form, are applicable to film as well.

Ms. Aamna Motala: It would be a discredit to meticulous film directors everywhere to say films do not convey an overt/covert dynamic. I just think the dynamic is dealt with differently. Whereas literature benefits from the leisure of words (which can be interpreted and reinterpreted endlessly), films have to play with these overt/covert meanings in a fitted time frame, but they do have the benefit of the audiovisual experience. At the end of the day, both books and films have the power to wield this depth of meaning and interpretation as long as there is someone talented enough to do it.

Q) Do you think that some books and some novels (since the theme for this month's issue is Fiction and Film) are more adaptable than others; and if yes, then what really is the criteria to judge that adaptability?

Mr. Babur Khan Suri: I think that even if a film is based upon a novel, we need to treat it as a film because it's a completely different art form and it has less to do with the adaptability of the novel and more to do with the director who adapts it. Look at some of the films like Fight Club. I have read the novel and seen the film; and although I shouldn't be saying this, because there is no comparison between the two mediums, the film is better. Same is the case with A Clockwork Orange, so it's more about *how* you adapt it. Take *American Psycho*, for instance. As far as this movie is concerned, I'll agree with you because the kind of things that were depicted in the novel were almost impossible to be translated into film. In the end, the film should be treated as a standalone object. It should not be treated in comparison to the literary work where it is adapted from, instead a film should be treated as an original work. Naturally, then, the question of adaptability becomes quite irrelevant.

Q: How far do you think that literary adaptations should stray from their original source?

Ms. Huma Shakir: I feel literary adaptations should not be seen as simply the text turned into the image. Literary adaptations should be appreciated as a creative and artistic endeavour in their own right. So, perhaps the focus should be more on the embodiment of the vision and interpretation of the director rather than limiting the film to be merely an extension of the original text. That said, in the case of the adaptation of plays, I do appreciate adherence to the text.

Ms. Lubna Hassan: I believe that literary adaptations that keep the "essence" of plot, language, character and setting intact tend to go down well with the audiences. In my opinion, modernizing a classic story often loses its effectiveness. I have seen modern versions of Hamlet, Macbeth and Wuthering Heights, and they didn't appeal to me at all. Even if productions keep literary adaptations intact, there is so much room for creativity. An actor's expressions and dialogue delivery can lend fresh touches to an adaptation. With imagination and expertise, an original adaptation can be shown creatively too. It is not necessary to lose the essence of plot,

especially the language of an original work of art, for the sake of a modern adaptation.

Ms. Saira Mehmood: The golden age of content dominated by over-the-top pay televisions and streaming channels like Netflix and Hulu has made things incredibly accessible for people, but I don't necessarily find myself deliberately seeking out literary adaptations of my favourite classics. So my experience of literary adaptations is predominantly limited to the stuff that you could not, being a late 1990s kid, possibly miss out on. Take Harry Potter and Hunger Games for instance. That said, I believe one cannot and should not expect literary adaptations to follow the dynamic of the page from A to Z, given that both make use of different mediums and appeal to us in vastly different ways. What may work well on the page may not fare so well on screen, so there is, as there should be, a certain license given to literary adapters when developing on-screen adaptations of critically acclaimed works.

Q: We are living in an 'Age of Streaming', with platforms like Netflix and Amazon releasing new shows/movies, based on or inspired by famous literary texts, at a rampant pace. Do you think that this draws students towards reading or is the reading culture in danger?

Ms. Saira Mehmood: Well, to be honest, I do not entirely understand why reading is seen as the only yardstick for growth and profundity. This is something that I think about a lot. Does reading provide us with something other forms of entertainment can't? Why is it seen as a must, especially in an age where one can easily stream as many adaptations as they want? I do think films and TV shows ultimately draw people towards reading, but I'm not sure whether that is a good thing or not, given that people, in most cases, expect it to be the other way round.

Q: As a teacher of literature, you must have come across several instances where a student has watched a film adaptation instead of reading the prescribed text. From an academic perspective, do you think that in adapting literary texts, some meaning is inherently lost?

Ms. Nishat Wasim: Yes, because adaptations are not always true to the text and you rarely ever get to know what the characters are thinking on the

screen. On the whole, I would say that a lot of things are lost. I always recommend that you read the text first, form your opinions and ideas, and then, watch the film. Some films are very true to the book, but even then it is a different medium — a visual medium — which allows for certain aspects of the story to become clearer in their depiction, such as the age, the housing, clothing or the culture. These aspects of the story are easier to visualize in your mind as you can actually see the period costumes and everything, but the thoughts of the character, well, that is lost. You also don't learn the descriptive powers, the beauty of language, and in my opinion, that leads to learning not taking place.

Mr. Yousha Zaidi: Yes, of course! The author, and director are both responsible for writing the text. The only difference is that they write the text within a different framework, and bring it to life in another medium. To adapt a novel is to rewrite it, which means that it is not always accurate — it is a rewriting, and it's not always accurate, I don't even think it has to be accurate all of the time, since it is still a reimagining. No matter how accurate or how faithful you try to be to the source material, it's still another person's interpretation of the work. You are looking at the text through someone else's eyes. Instead of making a judgement on that, I would suggest that students actually read the text, and come up with their interpretations for the text first. Afterwards, you can watch the movie, and form a more complete opinion. Personally, I think there is an inherent meaning within the text, and in the transference of that to the screen, there is something lost.

Q: Do you think books are more suited for an adaptation on the big screen or television?

Ms. Maria Imran: Personally, I think adapting a novel for a TV series is much better than a film because in a film, you have limited time. Since most movies have an average run time of an hour and half, it becomes quite impossible to cram everything into it. In shows, however, you have relative freedom with time, and because of that, you can see the characters evolving in a way that is the most authentic to their portrayal in the source material. A novel that lends itself beautifully to the small screen is Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South.* Adapted by the BBC in a three-episode series, the show

has done a beautiful job in depicting the characters of Mr. Thornton and Margaret and the relationship that blossoms between them. Obviously, the showrunners have taken creative liberties, but they haven't changed anything drastically, which contributes to the authenticity to the source material, and makes for an amazing viewing experience.

Ms. Saira Mehmood: Between a movie and a television show, I think I'd go for a show because most books are considerably long and the traditional 90-minute time-frame of a movie does not always do justice to the book. While movies are arguably entertaining in their own right, they, limited by their short frame of time, cannot always afford to feature every significant scene from the book and might need to alter quite a few things. TV shows, on the other hand, allow the directors to truly encapsulate the nature of the lead characters as they're not restricted by time constraints and can take as much time exploring the themes of the book as they want.

Mr. Yousha Zaidi: I think it depends on the novel itself, because if the text is rich, then naturally, a TV show would be better suited to its adaptation. Of course, there are some texts that can be made into movies. Contrary to popular belief, not every text translates onto the small screen, and the insistence to adapt it to television results in the writers having to write atrocious filler episodes that don't add anything to the show at all. A recent example would be Game of Thrones, which, when it followed the canon, was really good, but as soon as the later seasons strayed from the source material; the entire show went downhill. So, I definitely think it depends on the source material. Having said that, I think that *Dune* is one of those movies which might do better as a tv show, because again, there is so much in the novel. It's a very rich text, and offers the filmmakers the liberty to truly explore the details of this fictitious world, and translate it on to the screen. As far as film adaptations are concerned, a controversial example would be *Lord of the Rings*. While most people think Lord of the Rings is a great adaptation of the novels, there are still a lot of fans of the original novels who feel differently, despite the films being some of the best adaptations of fantasy literature there is today.

Q) What is your favourite literary adaptation?

Sir Moonis Azad: I enjoyed *Fight Club*. I later found out that it was a novel. I think it was a great movie, and probably a great novel as well. I can't comment on how well it's adapted, but I thoroughly enjoyed the movie.

Mr. Faisal Nazir: I don't necessarily have a favorite literary adaptation. I did like *Troy*, which varies from the *Iliad* a lot, but is still a very touching interpretation of the Homeric poem. The human feelings are more accentuated in the adaptation, whereas Homer's poem focuses a lot more on the involvement of supernatural forces; an aspect that is overlooked by the adaptation.

Q) Do you have any movie recommendations for the students of the department. Is there any movie that had a lasting impact on you?

Ms. Nishat Wasim: Well, I like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Possession* by A.S. Byatt. I enjoyed these movies, but I wouldn't say they had a lasting impact on me.

Ms. Huma Shakir: *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* really had a profound impact on me.

Mr. Babur Khan Suri: A: *Requiem for a Dream* was a movie that had a huge impact on me. *Parasite* was also a very good film. The reason why I'm mentioning Parasite is because, right now, *Squid Game* is very famous. Squid Game, in my opinion, is quite artificial. The show tries to appropriate a critique of capitalism by creating a narrative which is violent, but that's about it as far as depth is concerned. I just don't see it. No subtlety in the message that it tries to get across. It is all very trite. Parasite was far more effective, and successful even, in its evaluation of capitalist culture. In Squid Game, there are glimmers of an idea, but those ideas are never fully developed. For instance, there is this idea of desperation, but even that isn't taken to all the way, unlike in Parasite. As far as movie suggestions are concerned, one should go for something like *Man Bites Dog*, *Mother* and *Green Knight*, or *Persona*.

Mr. Yousha Zaidi: I think that every movie — good movies, that is — that you watch, always has an effect on you. Sometimes, the effect might be very

subtle, but regardless of this subtlety, the movies change you, and you realize afterwards that something is touched within you. As far as movies that made a lasting impact on me are concerned, I think one of the most recent ones was *Incendies*, it forced me to think about it for a long long time, and I couldn't really get out of the space that the movie created. I think that reflects really well on the director's part.

I watched *Perfume* when I was very young; and the ending especially stuck with me. It still resonates with me to this day. I think my idea of what aesthetics and art should be are derived in some sense from that movie. This idea of art for art's sake stuck with me, partly because I watched it when I didn't even know what the phrase meant. I suppose in that way, it's interesting how movies shape your perception of the world that you inhabit.

Another film that struck a chord was *Blue Valentine*. It has Michele Williams and Ryan Gosling in it, and it portrays a failing marriage between two people who are trying really hard to make it work because of their daughter and tread the thin line of being in love with each other, both in total misery. I watched this when I was quite young, probably in the 8th or 9th grade, and like other kids of my age, I had all these ideals of love; which let's face it, were borrowed from Bollywood movies. *Blue Valentine* shattered those ideals, and the idealistic nature of love just crumbled away. It was a very traumatic idea, but they portrayed it beautifully and really effectively. And again, for both of the movies, the theme that ties both of them (for me) is this idea of learning to let go, and how that can be so important in anything that you do in life.

A Barren Destiny

Ghazal Farooqi, MPhil

The enchanting glittering sky that was,

Is an old tale that we read.

The moon is just a cold stone now,

On nothingness it has fed.

The shining stars have escaped our sight,

Like our hopes they too have fled.

This barrenness is our destiny,

The prettiness that was is dead.

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