



Department of English and Literary Studies



THE LITERARY FULCRUM

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Welcome Note by the Chairperson

First Words

Creativity requires a constant itch; a restlessness suffused with a desire to cross defined boundaries and sculpt an edifice magnifique out of amorphous thoughts. I acknowledge, it took us some time to materialize a platform to allow this restive creativity to settle down but we did it – despite unexpected change of hands, shifting circumstances, and the pandemic and its related challenges. The Literary Fulcrum, lovingly abbreviated TLF, provides support to the creative minds in terms of uninhibited expressions, imaginative flights, and soulful connections.

The journey from the conception to the launch of TLF's debut issue has been a tumultuous one. However, we would never have cracked the shell without the kind support of the President UMT, the Rector UMT, the Dean ILA, the Office of Communication and Media, the management in general, and of course, our dear students and colleagues who helped us realize our long-nurtured dream and gave it a tangible facade.

The current issue includes a plethora of creative expressions in the form of poetry, short story, play, and essays, carefully selected and edited to satisfy and satiate the desire to wallow into the mesmerizing world of literature. We have also included a few winning contributions from the competition held at the department at the outset of the pandemic. These creative endeavours may still be naïve expressions but I believe they hold the power to cudgel up the finer senses, rip open the creative lust, and become food for thought.

Without a doubt, the efforts when made with heart exhibit the beauty of the end product. My colleagues, Ms Sobia Ilyas and Mr Muhammad Saleh have given their finest moments to the tiring efforts of sifting, editing, and putting together a beautiful piece of written art. I would also remember the contribution Dr Furqan Tanvir made to the initial drafts of the issue with hopes that he would continue to offer his invaluable services to the literary world.

Nadia Anwar

Chairperson, Department of English and Literary Studies (DELS)

Editor-in-Chief, The Literary Fulcrum

Lahore, September 2021

Message from the Editors

Let there be Words!

We can finally say with pride that DELS has become articulate, and has found its voice through The Literary Fulcrum!

Since this is the debut edition of the magazine, we have allowed the authors a free rein to their creative imagination which makes this edition a collection of diverse literary expressions.

The first edition of The Literary Fulcrum (TLF) offers a prolific view of the latest trends in literary writing. It offers a unique blend of the aesthetic and the scholarly with its compelling themes and cutting-edge approach to modern social issues including the post-pandemic era. The current edition was carefully compiled and formatted: the review process was thorough and detailed. We remained in constant contact with the potential authors guiding and inspiring them to improve their work. We were delighted to see how driven our young authors were and are to meet the criteria of TLF; their passion can be seen in their awe-inspiring work. The current edition showcases the efforts of our PhD, MPhil, MA, and BS scholars and our esteemed faculty members, thus giving an insight into different generations of intellectual thought. The magazine is divided into five sections: short stories, poetry, essays, faculty contribution and as a special feature, The Literature of the Pandemic.

We aspire to elevate TLF to the best literary standards and this vision will be further realized in the second edition which will be a more enriching and empowering experience for the authors. We intend to introduce new segments corresponding to different genres of literature: detective and comic fiction, one-act plays, book reviews, and a more elaborate collection of poetry. The future editions of TLF will address current debates such as postmodern, post-colonial, feminist approaches, among many others to raise the magazine to international standards. The editors of 'The Literary Fulcrum' extend their heartfelt gratitude to the Office of Communication and Media (OCM) and its team of skilled designers who created such a spectacular format for the magazine. We are also indebted to the higher administration of UMT for their heartfelt support and last but not least, we are truly grateful to the Chairperson and Editor in Chief, Dr. Nadia Anwar whose tireless efforts and motivation made TLF a living reality. We are confident that TLF will go a long way in becoming a resounding forum for literary writing and scholarly debates and in creating a vivacious academic environment for students and teachers alike! Happy Reading!

Ms. Sobia Ilyas, Managing Editor, Senior Lecturer, DELS

Mr. Muhammad Saleh Habib, Assistant Editor, Lecturer, DELS



Section 1

Short Stories



Aiza

By Zakia Nasir

PhD Scholar (English Literature)

She sat in her office simmering with indignation, fists clenching and unclenching, she resisted the desire to bang them on the table, as she knew it would rouse the curiosity of her staff that sat in the adjacent room, the door slightly ajar.

'Mam, shall I bring tea?' The assistant peeped in, actually to find out why he hadn't been called in with the files.

'No,' she snapped, as he tried to inch in.

'I don't want tea and tell whoever calls, I'm busy,' she told her office assistant.

'And close the door, till I call you.'

She sat thinking. Enough was enough. Aiza had been newly appointed in this office after her training was over. Fresh from the training academy she did not have much experience of working among male officers. Otherwise she was a fresh, young, pretty girl with long straight hair, grey eyes and a curved mouth, giving her an attraction she herself did not care about. Her seriousness, her calm and poise piqued her male colleagues as well as her immediate boss, who imagined himself to be a prince charming that no female could resist.

'Ms. Aiza I hope you've studied the files I sent you, you were required to comment,' he said cheekily.

'Yes sir,' she replied, head held high, eyes straight. She had formed this habit of not looking at men directly in the eyes. Eyes they say are windows to the soul. Men's eyes were windows to their lust, she had found out. She was wary of many things. She had learnt to be cautious at a very early age. She had learnt to protect herself, but here she found that more than physical protection, she needed to ignore, rise above and stay unaffected by a very subtle, sly kind of harassment in her work environment. Words, innuendos, covetous glances all came her way from her bosses and sometimes even subordinates.

That day after the meeting had ended, she had risen to leave, when Mr. Jawed, one of the higher ups in the office, had stopped her.

'Ms. Aiza why do you run away like this? Come sit here for a minute. Let me know more about you, you're perhaps new in this office, after all I'm the boss here and should know the officers working under me,' he'd added.

Aiza stopped in her footsteps as she had turned to leave.

'Sir I have work to do in my office, sorry.' She took some steps forward.

'Oh, very conscientious! But I'm asking you, and I'm the boss,' he had stated with beady eyes.

'Sir I'm sorry,' but she had reluctantly acquiesced. Sitting away from him, eyes downcast, she waited for him to begin. When she looked up he was examining her from head to toe, a lascivious look in his eyes. This time her sensors were awake.

'Sir did you have anything to say?' she looked directly in his eyes.

'You're beautiful,' he stuttered. 'Let's have lunch somewhere, I'm sure you eat; though your slim form doesn't show. We can talk there.' He had suggested.

'Thanks Sir, I don't eat in the afternoons, and I don't accept invitations to eat out.' She looked straight in his eyes, boldly, pointedly staring at his white temples, his baldness in the center and the deep wrinkles around his eyes. She was huffing with indignation as she stalked out of his office, sat clenching her fists in a rage.

He was not the only one!

Her immediate boss, a young civil service officer in his thirties, considered himself a God sent to female staff. To her astonishment one day he had stepped into her office with a bouquet. She looked questioningly at him, surprised to see him like this unannounced in her office.

'Happy birthday Aiza,' he breezily greeted, handing her the bouquet.

She was nonplussed as he extended the flowers towards her. 'You know I was going through your personal file and discovered your birth date. I thought I'd give you a surprise. Come on take it, it's your birthday.' He had insisted.

Reluctantly she extended her hand, 'I don't celebrate birthdays, sir Usman,' she said. 'Why did you take the trouble,' she questioned.

'Ms. Aiza, don't be petulant. You should appreciate that I remembered your birthday. Here's a token for a very pretty girl,' he came too near. 'Please accept it,' he said, holding her hand. She wanted to slap him hard but she just restrained herself.

'Kindly leave,' she told him in a controlled voice. 'I don't accept gifts nor flowers, thank you.' She went towards the door, opening it wide and gestured to him to leave.

Soon she realized she had to fight to survive. Sexual harassment was everywhere. The torture of subtle acts of harassment had to be dealt with tactfully, subtly. She had learnt very early in her life to fight off advances. She had never imagined she would have to face it as a mature young civil servant. Her brilliance, her competence, her self-confidence irked her male colleagues and intrigued her seniors. They wanted to control her. They wanted to make her subservient to their whims, perhaps obey their beck and call. She stood her ground.

The last straw on the camel's back was what happened that day. She was doing her work when Usman, her immediate boss, walked in unannounced. He secured the connecting door to the assistant staff's office telling them they had a meeting. She had looked up to see him, her sixth sense had been aware of his entry, when she looked up to see him standing in her office. He kept looking at her pointedly till she stood up.

'Sir?' She looked at him questioningly. 'Can I do something for you?' she asked.

He came around to where she stood. Her inward self quivered but she held onto a serious expression on her face. She was keenly conscious of her isolated position, but in her heart she remembered and repeated her vow never to be cowered, remembering that day at high school when she had hit her tutor, for harassing her physically. Since that day she had liberated herself from all fears.

'Would you please state why you're here or leave.' She told him categorically.

'Aiza, I've been thinking a lot about you. I have decided to marry you, because you would not bend otherwise,' he told her.

'What?' She at once literally jumped up and questioned him. 'You want to marry me to bend to you?' She asked him pointedly. 'Who do you think you are? I despise men who think they can subjugate a woman through marriage. Thanks. I don't want to marry you. Leave before I raise the alarm.' she had said this, as he tried to hold her to him forcefully. As she evaded his grasp and stepped away, he was enraged.

He had always been irked by her confidence, but this was too much. 'Who the hell do you think you are? You are insolent not to say rude.' Usman rasped.

'Yes! I am,' she stated in a chilly tone.

'You teaser, you think you will catch men by your prudish coy behavior, I'll get you,' he lunged at her, exposing his shameless lust. Her immediate reaction was to back away from him, but as he again tried to get hold of her, her intuitive reaction to danger and harassment awakened. 'I think Mr. Usman you need to be told a No in the other way.' Before he realized she kicked him hard in the groin, then another in his stomach as he doubled up. She walked out to her assistant's office.

'The meeting is over,' she said, head held high. 'Take Mr. Usman away, he's not feeling well, by the way,' she ordered.

She went straight home. Outwardly she was calm, poised but inwardly she was shivering. Not with fear. It was rage.

The old feeling of nausea was back. The memory of old days came back; washing her over with emptiness, with a feeling of loss she had never been able to overcome. She wanted her mother's shoulder to weep out her feelings of being bereft of security. She wanted her mother's arms around her.

Aiza had unfortunately lost her mother at quite an early age. She had a younger brother too. Often, she recapitulated those wonderful days when her mother was alive. She remembered her as a pretty young woman with grey eyes, long lashes and wheatish complexion. It was fun being with her mother Faiza, who laughed and beamed at her children, her eyes full of love and adulation. Even as a child Aiza was a very sensitive young girl, too discerning and composed. Perhaps unconsciously she resented her father's unkind treatment towards her mother, which wasn't very obvious before the children. But she was sensitive to nuances. Even at a very young age she sensed all was not very well between her parents. Once she'd been in her bedroom and she'd heard arguments between them from the adjacent room.

'You went to meet that woman again,' her mother had sobbed.

'Shut up and mind your business. Who are you to question me?' Her father had raged.

'I'm your wife. You are obliged to be honest with me. Why are you so cruel? Please Sadiq, don't betray me. You vowed never to let me down,' her mother had whimpered.

'Don't irritate me anymore. I hate your whimpering whining self. Why don't you realize I've no interest in you,' Sadiq had very unkindly rebuked his wife in a disdainful manner.

Aiza was shocked. Aghast. She had never heard such arguments before. She was frightened. She thought her father would hit her mother. But she had heard him bang the door and leave. He had started the car, the engine whirring as she heard the door banging again. She could hear her mother calling pleadingly,

'Sadiq, please come back, don't leave me, I'll die.' She had cried out as he had revved the engine and zoomed out. It was nine at night. She was supposed to be asleep. She didn't dare go out. Hug her mother. Stop her from crying. She was so frightened that she seemed to freeze. It was a nightmare for her, which took her sleep away. Her young form had lain curled in the blanket, frightened even to stir, lest her mother came and discovered she was awake and had heard the argument. Aiza silently shed tears. She felt for her mother so much that she wanted to die.

In the morning at the breakfast table her mother seemed quiet and composed, though Aiza noticed the swollen eyes, as her brother Ali kept asking where dad was.

'He's left early for a tour,' her mother had tried to cover up, explaining their father's absence. For Aiza this was another shock. She was disappointed that her mother had lied. She knew their father hadn't gone on a tour, but contritely, she thought maybe it was the truth. This was her journey to learn about life at the very tender age of seven. She loved her mother, adored her, and felt a strange communion with her, whenever she saw her mothers' grey eyes clouded like the darkness of midnight or whenever she was sad. Things were inexplicable at this age. She couldn't share her pain with anyone. Her brother was too playful as boys are.

Then one night she had woken to the loud protestations of her mother, who seemed to be in some pain.

'Stop it, stop it you boor, you are hurting me,' she had cried out as if being strangled. Aiza was terrified. Eyes opened wide she had sat up. She tiptoed to the door, to hear clearly. It was dark. Quietly she opened her door, to see if perhaps she could see her mother. She heard a slap cracking on her mother as she heard her mother cry out.

'You stupid woman you don't even know how to please a man,' she had heard her father rage.

'What an uncouth peasant I have for a wife,' he had scorned in a loud voice.

'I detest you; I don't know why my parents chose you for my wife, the most unsuitable, unfit woman. It's not just your lack of education; it's your lack of sensuousness that piques me. Why do you think I go to Nazi? The likes of her know how to please a man, you, you can't even keep a husband happy.' He had scornfully stated.

Her mother could be heard sobbing, as Aiza had quietly sneaked back into her room in the darkness, shivering with cold and quivering with the burden of the unknown being talked between her parents.

She had seen her mother dwindling, wasting away slowly, gradually. She hugged her mother's unhappy form tight as she heard her crying silently, eyes swollen, trying to hide her anguish and pain from her children. The roses in Faiza's cheeks seemed to fade away replacing it with a paleness and tremulousness, only Aiza's young sensitive self could perceive or secretly understand and feel.

She hated her daddy. Despised him for his cruelty but so young as she was, she could not show her resentment or even breathe out what she had heard and intuitively understood. No one from her maternal side was allowed to come, and Sadiq himself coming from a low peasant background and having entered civil service was ashamed to meet his family. Sadiq was generally good to the children when he was home, tried to humour them with games and took time out sometimes for a drive and an ice cream. He never asked Faiza to come along, silently ignoring her forlorn form as she stood like a ghost looking at her children. Faiza was generally alone and lonely. The tension in the atmosphere at home could be sensed by Aiza's small form even at this age, though it was something only felt by the most perceiving.

Sadiq often secluded himself by remaining in his study, often unsteadily coming out for dinner if he was home. She thought perhaps daddy was growing old. What did she know at her age that he was drunk and quite not in his senses. He snapped at his wife if she spoke and uttered imprecations at the cook for bad menu, or tasteless food, degrading his wife in front of the servants who were all ears always. Aiza did not understand what was wrong

with the food, when even good food sometimes made plates flying towards the servants or her mother.

She had heard the servants whisper about the sahib, and snigger at his behavior towards his wife behind his back. He was a big civil officer, she had come to know one day from the servants, who were afraid of him because of his position. The cars in the garage and the staff in attendance made her in awe of her father, and secretly she was scared of him too.

It was a couple of years later that it was discovered Faiza had cancer. Aiza did not understand what it was her mother suffered from, as she saw her in extreme pain and anguish. A maid was appointed to look after her as a pretentious show to the world, of Sadiq's act of kindness, though he had no time for Faiza or her ailment. The maid was an eyewash to show the world how much he cared, though seldom he ever asked Faiza about her condition. The driver took the begum to the hospital and the kind maid who had sensed what was going on compassionately tended to Faiza. The children were now quite ignored. Ali went for sports and Aiza huddled in the corner of her mother's room pretending to read books whereas she constantly, indiscernibly eyed her mother's frail form. She would sometimes lie with her and hug her tight, gaining a strange solace and comfort from it.

One day she had heard her mother whisper for water, and she had at once slipped from the chair and had taken a glass of water to Faiza.

'Thanks, my darling,' her mother had whispered. 'Why don't you go to your room and sleep?' She had asked.

'I don't want to,' Aiza replied tearfully. 'I want to be with you,' she had said, holding Faiza's bony hand, the pink nails now brownish.

'Please mama get well. I need you. I want you to go with me to my school. All the girls' mothers come to pick up their daughters. My friends keep on asking me where you were,' she gushed out.

'Mama I want you to be like you were. Why don't you get up, dress well and go out,' she had asked in her childlike earnestness and honesty.

'Aiza you must always remember that I love you. Remember even if I am not able to accompany you to school, I am not able to pick you up from school, I am there! My whole self is tuned to you, wherever you are.' She had stated hoarsely.

'Also remember even if I am not there I will be looking over you from the heavens. Never be weak. Don't be like me! Be strong always. You have to fight to survive.' She had fallen back on the bed gasping for breath.

Aiza had clasped her mother to her small form. There was a strange comfort in that clasp, a warmth and security in her mother's lap as Faiza had risen on the bed again to hold Aiza close, cooing comforting words to her.

'And you know I don't like daddy. He is rude to you. I think he is unkind,' her small mind had summed up the situation and uttered it sobbing.

'No Aiza, you mustn't say such things. He loves you.' she tried to wheedle her, raising her gaunt form further on the bed. The long tresses had gone away, replaced with a baldhead, round which a scarf was tied.

'No! He loves that other woman,' the moment she uttered these words she put her hand against her mouth, awash with shame, fright and embarrassment. She rushed out of the room sobbing, when she bumped into her daddy.

'Where are you coming from darling,' a rare word of endearment he spoke these days. 'You're not supposed to be going into her room. She is ill!' he had tried to explain to her.

Aiza had looked at her father strangely. The look in her eyes had perturbed him.

'I will go, she's my mother and I love her,' Aiza had stated before she ran into her room.

To Sadiq this was nothing. He had hardened to pain and sensitivity. He was so full of himself, his position, his status, his authority that he had lost all humanity and humility. He scoffed at the silly little girl who showed sentimentality to a dying woman. He failed to realize the scars he was inflicting on the vulnerable minds of his children.

Aiza shunned him. Avoided taking food when he sat at the table. She was growing up and she was a sensitive witness to the drama being played out, but she was helpless. Her mother had started having chemo and Aiza matured with the spectacle of pain she witnessed.

One day her father brought a woman home. Smartly dressed in the latest of fashions, she looked around at everything critically. 'Who's this mouse,' she had asked Sadiq as Aiza had inadvertently emerged from her mothers' room.

'My daughter Aiza,' Sadiq had smiled, as Aiza swished inside again. At eleven years of age she understood what her father was doing was wrong. It was ludicrous the way he was drooling over that woman, Aiza had thought. The hate she felt for her father had sealed and deepened that day.

Her mother left them quietly, silently for the other world. She was twelve then.

A show of sorrow was made as condolences came from the high ups. Nobody knew the poor soul had left this world in torment and torture. As the gathering condoled, Aiza wept bitterly in her room. She knew what she had lost. She could see through the hypocrisy and sham of her father's sorrow. He, who had not even cared to find out what Faiza's last words were, was repeating to the people how he looked after his wife.

Aiza wanted to hide somewhere. If there were a grave somewhere she would have hidden in it. The days passed by in a strange darkness. The kind old maid who offered her services solved the problem of looking after the children. They were accepted without delay.

Now Sadiq could bring that woman home unabashedly. The walls were a silent witness to his debauchery and the servants gossiped among themselves. The children's studies were neglected and they stopped going to school, not waking up or too listless to dress up. It was then that Sadiq took the matters in his hand. He became insensitively strict towards them, thrashing them frequently. When this became known at the school he was summoned and questioned. The children had failed the exams. He had been so engrossed in his bohemian life, that the children had become non-existent.

A mother is like a deep-rooted, shady tree that spreads her branches to envelop her children. She protects them from the scorching sun and icy winds of the world. With the umbrella of love gone the children were bereft. A maid could not be a mother; if the father is gone a mother takes upon herself to play both roles. She protects her children from the harshness of the wind and weather, from the cruelty of the world. She is there like a deep shady tree. Not a father! Very rarely is it seen that a father plays both the roles. Sadiq was never truly dedicated to his family, he became more careless, engrossed in his immoral ways and lifestyle.

The children suffered. It was realized the children had stopped their Quran lessons long ago, nobody bothered to ask why? Though a tutor for school studies came, nobody monitored what was being taught. Thus, a Qari for teaching Arabic was engaged; yet again there was no surveillance or monitoring. Aiza was passing through the throes of growing up. Only a mother can guide her daughter gently and lovingly, teaching her to be discreet on certain days. The maid was an illiterate peasant who was compassionate but crude, thus the budding of puberty was unnoticed by her, though the male servants eyed Aiza in a peculiar way, which abashed her. She had questioned the maid who had given her lame reasoning, but Aiza intuitively sensed the strangeness of behavior and started being careful and aloof intuitively. If Faiza had been there Aiza would have been a more mature and composed person. Her vulnerability was so evident that even Sadiq's unseeing eyes had noticed the change in her one day. Though he was often away on tours he had made it a point to keep an eye on Aiza, whenever he was home. Making her sit with her head covered when she sat for her tuitions, believing in the fallacy that a Dopatta would protect her.

That day Sadiq wasn't at home, in fact he'd been away for many days. The Qari came and both Aiza and Ali went for their lesson in the study. This was thought to be free time by Naima the maid. Aiza had been noticing the weird behavior of the Qari for many days. Instead of giving lessons he indulged in frivolous playfulness with Ali. Caressingly patting his hands on Ali's body, he sometimes caressed him cooingly. The door of the study was usually closed and perhaps he knew there was no monitoring of his activities. Once or twice she had noticed the Qari touching Ali oddly. She was too naïve to know the implication, but suddenly to her horror she saw that the fly of the Qari's pajamas was open, one day. She was horrified to see his nudity, she had never seen male body parts, but she knew one was required to cover one's private parts. She would have literally swooned, except that Ali gave a shriek and pulled away from the Qari's grasp. In a second she had bounded out of doors, screaming at the top of her voice. The maid came running and so did the other

servants who had sat gossiping with her. She just screamed and screamed and pointed at the study. They rushed in to see the Qari sitting composed and Ali sobbing.

Nobody could make out what had happened, as the Qari had tried to cover up the whole thing by saying Ali was misbehaving. The servants as a matter of fact considered the rich people's children spoiled brats, so nobody gave much attention.

The children refused to study from the Qari. The servants, afraid of reprimand, coerced Ali and Aiza to continue with their lessons but they would not budge. It was then that Sadiq when he came back was brought into the picture. Both the children were summoned. They would not speak, did not utter a single word when questioned. Sadiq got up threateningly to give a thrashing that Aiza broke down. Quivering and sobbing she told her father the Qari was shamelessly naked and tried to hold Ali tight. Thunderstruck Sadiq was aghast. With a volley of abuses, he summoned the servants, and thundered at them loudly. They did not know what had happened! The Qari was brought from his house and Sadiq being in a position of power ordered the police to take him to the station and give a good thrashing.

The atmosphere in the house was subdued. Sadiq was at a loss how to cope with the situation. The children were frightened. The servants were whispering tales in the kitchen and avoided coming in sight. For many days the status quo continued. Children went to school chaperoned by the ayah and afterwards remained in their rooms. The trauma of the incident made the children withdraw from people and providentially turned them to their studies.

Aiza was now in her high school. She had grown into a pretty young girl with grey eyes, clear complexion, and features exquisite like her mother, with long heavy tresses. She was intuitively conscious of the eyes that followed her. The cook stood a bit longer to talk to her asking her what she liked while his interested eyes surveyed her, as he stood preening his moustaches. He'd been with them for years, yet when Sadiq wasn't home she preferred eating in her room. Frequently while going to school whenever she happened to look up she would find the driver staring at her from the rear view mirror. He had been with them for quite some time and was married and in his forties. When he jumped out to open her door, he would stand too close, sometimes breathing into her hair as she got out. She started being careful telling him to keep seated.

She was perturbed, upset but had no one to share her worry and confusion with. The only person who could have been her confidante would have been her mother, but alas her mother was not there. A young adolescent girl protected only by her father's position, sans his presence was the most vulnerable creature alive. She was growing to be a sensible, mature girl at her tender age, more conscious and strong than perhaps many girls who continue to be harassed and abused in manners too subtle to be noticed, but certainly silently borne by them in silence. Perhaps her situation in life as being the daughter of a high up saved her from the kind of harassment, which other girls suffer while studying among males or travelling by public transports. They do not even breathe out in fear of censure instead of getting compassionate empathy.

Her father was now posted in Islamabad and on Aiza's insistence they went to live with him, leaving their Lahore residence. She was a loner who did not befriend her classmates, keeping to herself most of the time. She was in A Levels in a co-ed. It was during one of her chemistry practicals that an unfortunate incident shook her to the core. Bending on her microscope to look at some microbes, her long hair falling forward, she felt someone standing behind her, surely it was the tutor who bowed above her into the microscope, too close for her comfort, too overbearing. She felt claustrophobic. Quietly, imperceptibly he slid his hands on her breast. She froze. Her whole form became taut. It seemed as if lightning burst into her head, blinding her eyes. Slowly she disengaged herself moving away from him, turning as if in a trance. She raised her hand and cracked a slap hard across his face.

The whole class was dumbstruck. Open mouthed they stood. Head held high she stood facing him, 'you dare that again and you'll be shot,' she spat at him. Turning towards the class she stated boldly, 'He was harassing me, beware this dog.' And out she walked giving him a last disdainful look.

The trauma of that remote event and its memory had strengthened her over the years. The insidious harassments inflicted by servants in the house, men in her co-ed school had silently made her vow never to bear it anymore. This time her father who had failed her mother was here, with her and she felt secure.

If she had been some ordinary girl her boldness would have been scandalous. She was the daughter of one of the highest ups. The tutor was at once suspended and faced enquiry by the institution, who afraid to lose reputation begged the affair to be hushed. Thus, Aiza learned to hold her head high always! She became unafraid and confident. She gained the confidence her mother lacked, as she progressed extraordinary well in her studies.

Over the years Sadiq had changed. Maybe remorse, or maybe the fear of losing his children through neglect to this world of abuse and harassment made him transform. Or perhaps at his position in life he could not afford scandal and dishonor. Though Aiza could never forgive him for his behavior towards her mother, she developed a respect for him. Her brilliant results secured her admission to a prestigious university abroad. As Ali had passed his O' Levels in good grades too, both the brother and sister were sent to study abroad.

'Please daddy, I want to study law,' she had pleaded.

'Sure, you can,' was his reassuring answer. 'I am proud of you Aiza; I know you can look after yourself, be brave and be confident. Just don't let me down,' Sadiq had said in a trusting manner.

'I know daddy,' and she smiled. The slap on the tutor's face was a liberating act; it had liberated her from trauma and fear. It had given her an everlasting confidence and reassured Sadiq that his daughter was now ready to face the world.

'I wish you would appear for your civil service exam,' Sadiq had one day broached the subject suggestively. She had agreed. With his guidance and encouragement, she had scored brilliantly.

It was at this juncture when as a mature successful young woman, she realized she was still eyed by fellow lascivious men as a trophy to be won. The seniors and fellow male officers patronized her and talked in sexual innuendos, whereas her subordinates eyed her covetously, not daring to utter anything. They never knew what potential to fight and guard herself this young woman possessed. These low-minded men of position lacked the finesse and sensitivity of a woman, always ready to take advantage of their position. But life had taught her to be brave and remain unvanquished.

The Catharsis of Nature

By Ayesha Waheed

M.Phil (English Literature), Session: 2020-2022

It was last spring, my uncle and aunt invited me on a visit to Changa Manga. I was ready at once as I had read a lot about it in my course books since childhood. This forest is located in Tehsil Kasur, Punjab. By National Highway 5, Changa Manga is approximately 81.4 km far from Lahore, a little less than a two-hour drive. In the beginning of the journey, I was excited to explore the far off area, and shaped a bookish image of a village in my mind. But I returned with the true sensation of the rustic lifestyle, and the secrets of peace of mind that the people of rural areas are blessed with.

As we got closer to the forest, the beautiful *Kikar* and *Sheesham* trees were lined along the road. The white Mulberry groves were also in abundance which made it a heavenly habitat for distinct species of birds and beasts. It is the world's oldest forest planted by man. Owing to the highly fertile land, it is rich in natural vegetation and beautiful green fields.

The car moved from a tiny road to inside the village, where barefooted children (some were half naked) of all sizes and ages came along following the vehicle because it was a rare scene for them. Finally, we entered the village. But the next move was to get on foot to reach the Haveli we were invited in.

A vast mud Haveli was standing tall in front of us. Its walls were built high to keep it safe from thieves, dacoits and especially from wild animals. There was only a two feet distance between the sugar cane fields and the main entrance of the big house. It was spring, the cultivation season, and the crop was standing tall up to seven feet or even higher than that. The sugar canes were so tall that they had started bowing.

The outer view fascinated me. I saw the multicolored butterflies; they were in abundance. I was occupied by the adorable bright blue butterfly that landed on my ponytail. As we entered from the main gate of the Haveli, a furiously barking dog followed our movements.

There were a few young girls and a middle aged woman, who were mixing the dung of cows in water with different colors in separate buckets. They covered the mud walls and floor of Haveli with that mortar-looking mixture. The walls were decorated with red and yellow dung paste while the floor was coated with bright green colored dung. There were dung piles at one side of the main entrance. A newly married girl with a big bangle sized nose-ring was making round-shaped dung cakes and pasting them on the wall to be dried up in sunlight. They burn it in their mud stoves as fuel. I was awkwardly moving through that filthy smelling corner of the courtyard. I escaped the animal droppings on the way to reach the few charpoys as directed by the host.

The toilet was built alongside the main gate. They don't make bathrooms near the living area. There were only two rooms at a corner which were made of bricks and concrete. A mud stove was built near a room and it was named as kitchen although it was only a five

feet wide open area in the courtyard, separated from the room by a two feet high hand-made mud wall.

It's almost irresistible to forgo Nature's call after a tiring road trip. I went to the toilet and stood shocked there for a considerable time as there was no water connection there. Neither a tap nor an ewer! Toilet papers were nonexistent. Only a half century old hand-pump was seen outside the toilet. It really frustrated me. I silently kept on feeling pity for the people who lived there. My aunt came to rescue at that critical time. I was glad she came. One cannot do anything in such conditions alone.

The problem didn't end there. There was no soap in the house and the hand pump, the only source of water, required two people to use it. One pumped the rotten handle up and down with full force because it was ages old and jammed in between as well while the other person used water. It was unbearable for me because the next things that I pondered on, a kneading scene, made me more vulnerable. I was ready to be thrown in delusion.

The middle aged housekeeper lady was kneading the dough for chapati in a low edged spherical steel dish, without washing hands. She had taken more wheat flour than the container's capacity and kept on pouring water slowly and kneaded it. She had grimly-grown nails and her gold rings were lined up with dried up animal dung. After kneading, the dirt was transferred to the dough; her nails and rings appeared cleaner than before. I could barely stop myself from looking at her. Now I know why my aunt had bought bread from the bakery on the way to Changa Manga.

The huge courtyard appeared calm and silent in the evening. The hens were locked up in the nest-like mud containers. I strolled inside the huge veranda of the Haveli with the daughters of our host, and enjoyed chit chatting about the neighborhood. I got to know that there were no educational and health facilities there. They were cut off from the rest of the nearby villages and cities, and lived like gypsies. But they were so astonishingly happy and satisfied that they didn't want to modernize their lives. They were afraid of the lifestyle in the cities just like I was afraid of theirs.

After the *Isha* prayer, they usually turn off the bulb hanging on the edge of a long wire. The bulb created a mysterious view when it danced with the air after short intervals. The family had specially put on the light for us that day. They never use electricity except in emergencies. Our host, the old man, kept a big A-K 47 near his pillow to tackle any kind of danger at night, especially from wild tigers. They get inside the village at night in search of prey most often. There was constant terror owing to dacoits too.

The house lady and her children had already slept in spite of the chit chat, they were not bothered by the loud noises. If it is sleep time they sleep come what may. I was not used to sleeping that early. I kept awake lying on the *charpoy* looking at the sky which seemed big and closer here as compared to the yellowish pink sky owing to the dust clad smoggy atmosphere of Lahore. I considered them poor in the beginning but I was amazed to know their riches. They were incredibly rich and could afford to buy a mansion in any big city,

still they remained there, for the love of that land. They could do anything except leaving that land. I was looking for the reasons for their carefree life and sheer happiness.

I was never close to wild before this journey. I didn't find it appropriate to go to parks because of the immense crowds. But in a big Haveli like that, one can let go of self-consciousness to get dissolved in the fragrance of wet clay after a heavy pouring, away from the dirty steel-smelling world packed with rotten iron and hot cement.

Rustic life ignited a spark in the wilderness of my mind. That soothing environment completely hypnotized me. The night was clear and moonless, but full of stars. The big bright stars twinkled like a groove of LEDs in the deep, dark sky. I felt happy for no reason. Long deep breaths calmed the heart drumming inside my chest, and the fresh air played with the strings of my soul. Nature brought the ultimate catharsis. I got the secret of the happiness of hillbillies. Every journey is bound to end. Amongst wandering sensations, with a will to come again, I left that far off forest abode because wherever we go, we have to return.

A New Disguise in Town

By Khadija Aamir

M.Phil (English Literature), Session: 2020-2022

It was an uncertain spring. *The silence depressed me. It was not the silence of silence. It was my silence* [i]. The reality was the rugs, the curtains, the bookshelves, and the coffee table with leftovers of bread on it. I was making an intense effort to concentrate on what my mother was trying to give me, but the feeling of a black hole in front of me, the voices, the laughter all continued.

“As you are indulged in your thoughts, for reference I should tell you that your grandma has been self-isolating herself from the past five days. She is afraid of spreading the virus, and needs some supplements for precautionary measures,” my mother continued. Being weak and docile at the age of four-and-seventy, my grandma was even terrified to breathe. It had been five days since this strange virus was spreading quite manifestly in our town, and due to this diligence, my grandma was nowhere but in her chalet only. The air was noiseless. I could only hear the sounds of birds or ambulances. The only distortion I got was my mother screaming in the quiet yet peaceful surroundings, majorly all the time.

“Well, you're no princess of some magical land, where things will be done by some kind of fairy. This is the real world, a real home. I am tired. You should fill it by yourself. And yes do not forget anything remember we are not allowed to go out unless necessary,” my mother explained a little scornfully when I told her about the empty basket. My mother does not forget to make me realize my past mistakes; meanwhile, I was in the pantry searching boxes for domestic hygiene items. While clutching some tissue papers, masks, gloves, sanitizers, and medical soaps, what I saw was the bottle of floor cleaner. On it, I read, “Kills hundred percent germs, and purifies the floor.” I smirked and thought, “I wish people would invent something to purify themselves. I mean look at this great irony. We all are busy cleaning our homes, our environment and are trying to protect ourselves from Covid-19 germs, whereas we are the mightiest of germs for each other. We are the ones where the toxic sets.”

Pondering on my thoughts, I pulled on my shoes, and when I was almost on my way to grandma's chalet, I heard my mother calling me from behind, “Look my daughter you may be a peevish girl, but you are my only child. You are all that I have after the day I lost your father. Hence, be very careful and do not take the path of Bloom Land. It might tempt you with its name and colorful flowers, but remember blooming flowers have the grumpiest thorns. Most people suffer thorns for the sake of flowers.” I for the first time felt the great pleasure of my mother's affection. My mother kissed me, and the special necklace that my father gave to me on my last birthday I celebrated with him. I adored this necklace with all my heart. The necklace was silver with a red infinity sign; engraved with words, *Beware, for I am fearless, and therefore powerful* [ii]. I know my mother wanted to hug me as well, but

nowadays we can get only one hug if we need it. Corona disguised as a human being was hugging everyone, and spreading itself.

A white beaming, sharp light shone on my face and mesmerized me into walking into Bloom Land unconsciously. The flower entranced me and their scent delighted my heart to the fullest. "Maybe to pluck one flower may not be harmful, and it does not have thorns either," I wondered. The moment I picked a Begonia [iii], the light shone even brighter and came near me in the form of a magical white being. I asked, "What great light you have! Who are you?" The reply was, "Where are you going little Miss Troublesome? Why are you all alone in this land full of thorns?" Upon hearing a voice without any physical being, I was more conscious now. Therefore, I reacted, "What great voice you have!" The light replied,

A magical being not so white.

I have existed for a long time.

I am a new disguise in town.

Call me by any name.

You will see the magic right from your eyes.

I requested the light to make me see my father. "A father? Hmm, strange. Perhaps I have never created a fatherly relationship with any young girl before. However, I have hunted down their grandmothers, disguised myself like them, and have eaten them up." The light murmured something to itself. Later it told me that my father was waiting for me at grandma's place, and now it was a race between us for who would reach first. I was certainly aware of the horrors running down my spine like a shrill chill, but I was eager to finally see my father and take him back home.

Pretty excited to see my father, I knocked on my grandma's door. "Come to me, my girl. What took you so long?" my grandma called me inside in a very different voice. "You seem healthier. This isolation is at least turning good for someone." I reacted, "Oh yes dear I am more than healthy, I feel as if I am living my life again [iv].

"Do not question my patience for I was waiting for you for several days now," my grandma grew eager.

Before approaching my grandma in her bed, I first started searching for my father. Upon which, my grandma said, "Oh my poor girl, but first come near me. Come to me in my bed, and I promise, you will meet your beloved father." I put away the basket on the table while my grandma made room for me. As I lay down in her bed, I saw the same light as I witnessed before. I tried to say something, but the light changed itself into my father, and then transformed itself into grandma, and then finally into a ginormous wolf.

Without letting me say a word, he brought me closer, tracing every line and curve, sealing his disgustful passion with a hideous kiss that seemed to stretch the end of my eternity. He

controlled my every movement, my every scream of pain whirling effortlessly around the bed. He was the one to kill my father, he was the one to kill my grandma, and I was next. I was hurt, not too badly, but I was too scared to move. He tried to snatch my infinity necklace as it was shining stronger than usual. I suddenly remembered my father's words that this necklace was not ordinary; rather "it shines when the possessor is in grave danger".

We spend our lives searching for a magic door. Perhaps, the necklace was my magic door. Hence, I just rubbed my necklace once, and it transformed itself into a sword. I took the sword in my hand and the wolf said,

Travelling lady, stay awhile

Until the night is over.

I am just a station on your way,

I know I am not your lover. [v]

Little did he know that I was not afraid of darkness or the unknown, but only of his deception. Sharp rays of light again spread its wings. The wolf was gone, my father and grandma were standing right in front of me. They were there to receive me. I remember I was happy at that time, but my happiness was no longer celebratory. I have heard that we can open the magic door anytime in our life, but we can only open it for once. I was badly wounded by the wolf's assault. I was infected with Covid-19 and could hardly breathe.

I felt my soul leaving my body and reaching up above the limit of skies. I felt a stranger's arms putting my flesh into the soil. I felt my mother growing lilies on my grave because Begonia did not turn out to be lucky for me, and neither for her.

[i] *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath.

[ii] Taken from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. This little girl loved to read books. Her powerful nature helped her to kill the wolf.

[iii] A type of flower used to alarm someone.

[iv] The French author Charles Perrault collected this tale with some other tales together and published them for the very first time in 1697.

[v] Winter Lady by Leonard Cohen.

Nirvana

By Hina Javed

MA English, Session: 2015-2017

Her cheeks were red and hot with shame, anger and helplessness. Her eyes welled up with tears and her throat seemed choked as if a big lump had stuck there. Her heart pounded violently. She was in a condition which was next to a state of half-dead, half alive. She came racing through the long, dismal corridor of the university. As she stepped outside, a strong gust of icy-cold wind of late December battered against her very sad but otherwise lovely face. She was so much engrossed in her cluttered thoughts that she could not even feel the severity of the frosty weather outside. Lost in her thoughts, oblivious of her surroundings, she walked to the parking lot.

She opened the door of her VTi, snuggled down on the seat and slammed the door shut. Inside, she realised how cold it was outside. The wind was howling out there. Trees with their pale leaves were trying desperately to stand upright against the force of the wind. Lots of broken leaves whirled around in the vast parking lot. The sky was overcast with black clouds. It was 2 PM, yet it seemed as if it was late in the evening. The whole atmosphere was bleak, dismal, and fraught with a pinching feeling of gloom and nostalgia. Very few people were in sight. Everyone had taken shelter in the warm, cozy atmosphere of the canteen or anywhere inside the university premises. With a shudder, she switched on the powerful engine; it cranked up with a growl. She turned the heater on; it began to whir, sending soothing, warm and perfumed air in the cabin.

Then after this temporary distraction, the same tormenting condition haunted her again. She thought that the weather outside was just like the weather inside her that day. This thought made her more pensive. A succession of all the painful events that took place that day came rushing to her. This morning she did not want to come to the university, as there was just one class that day. But she had to hand in an assignment, she had to come to attend the class. The class finished at 11. Then Sarah, Zobia, Nitasha with their friends Noman, Azeem, and Hammad, circled around her and said, "The weather is so romantic, let's plan something romantic as well for today, because we don't have any other class". All of them were pampered, or rather spoiled, people from big and rich families of the city. Their parents did nothing but to amass mountains of wealth. They invested in everything yet never in their most precious asset: their own children. They always boasted about their Mercedes, Audis, or Cruisers, or their attires or their handbags, jewelry or mobiles or watches. She resisted the idea, saying she had to leave early, as she was not feeling well. But they all said chidingly, "Look Maria, we won't let you slip away today as usual, you will have to accompany us at all costs".

She, Maria Waqas, also belonged to the elite class and was the daughter of a renowned businessman Waqas Hameed. But she remained quite indifferent to all that wealth and luxuries. To her this was not the ultimate aim of life. Her parents were not strictly religious, and never interfered in her life, yet she regularly offered her prayers. No one ever asked her to do so. Something that always amazed her class fellows was her dress. She had never worn jeans or any other revealing clothes, while it was the norm of the university. Wrapped up in a shawl and shalwar kameez, she was regarded as 'alien', 'rustic' or even an 'old soul'. No one ever saw her laughing. A smile was just what she could afford when showing pleasure. She was reticent and aloof. Sometimes, a mere nod was her 'yes' or 'no.' She was a good listener, but never a good talker. Her class-fellows always made fun of her for being 'dumb'. But she was a pleasant soul, with pleasant demeanour. She had such elegance in her walk and talk, that people remained very careful in her presence. She never tolerated any vulgarity or nonsensical banter. She would leave the company all at once if such a thing ever happened.

She had a galvanising personality. Everyone got attracted to her. For girls, she was either an object of ridicule or jealousy. For boys, she was a challenge, a dream, a princess to be won or conquered. There were many 'princes' in the university who were the centre of attention for almost every girl at the campus. But Maria proved to be a hard nut to crack, despite their high-sounding claims or bets with their friends that they would 'subdue' this rebellious soul. "If I am not like them, they should respect my individuality", she muttered to herself.

But that day whatever happened was the last straw that broke the camel's back. All of them started forcing her to go with them either to see a movie or on a long drive. She flatly refused. Then Nitasha grabbed her handbag and took out the car key fob. "Let's see how you go home", she said teasingly. Everyone was giggling, ridiculing her, her helplessness, or her naivety. She told them in plain words that whatever they did she would not go with them. At this, they all started snarling at her. "Yes, we know you are an imposter, playing tricks on people to look different". Even Zobia went quite far when she said, "Leave her alone, she is abnormal. She is not a woman at all. No boyfriend, no secrets, no affairs. What type of a woman she is". At this, Hammad commented, "I tell you what type... the middle type". At this comment, all the students sitting in the canteen, who were already listening to all of that intently, burst into an uproarious laughter. Some, who already bore her a grudge, even whistled and clapped. Everyone there took a malicious pleasure in her being disgraced publicly and in such a blatant way.

The weather outside had grown quite dark and uncontrollably atrocious, so had the weather inside her. The tears she had been trying to fight back started rolling up her cheeks. She put her head on the steering wheel and let go of herself. She cried and cried her heart out at this humiliation. Her natural composure shattered into pieces. There was a loud thunderclap, illuminating the surroundings. There was a downpour of heavy raindrops, playing a kind of irregular music on the metallic body of the car. Thick sheets of water were reeling down the windscreen. Streams of tears were flowing from her eyes as

well. She wept and wept endlessly. For an indefinite period of time she cried her heart out. Then the violent weather outside started subsiding, so did the weather inside her. Turbulence in weather was replaced with a deep sense of calm and serenity. The heavy downpour changed into a gentle drizzle. Darkness was no longer there, instead there was sweet twilight, prevailing the surroundings. The wind with gusty breaths turned into a gentle breeze. Everything outside presented a newer and fresher look. The weather inside had also changed perhaps contagiously. Some unspoken peace, some inner calm and contentment had taken hold of her, a sense of satiety she had ever felt before.

She lifted her head, took a deep breath, and wiped her wet face with a tissue paper. She muttered to herself, "I am proud to be the way I am. I don't have to make people happy. I have to make myself, Maria Waqas, happy. This is the ultimate happiness; this is the purpose of my life. I would be myself, not someone else". She smiled and put the gear into D.

The Hidden Miracles

By Hira Saleem Khan

Former Research Officer, DELL

She sat peacefully holding a mug of coffee in her hands beside the window. The bright sun rays were pouring through the window and winking briefly on Silah's face as she seesawed her armchair while gazing felicitously at the gentle waves of the sea, sparkling with the glimmer of sun. This tranquil spectacle enthralled her senses and while sipping from her mug, she pondered over the rise and fall of waves that resembled her life.

Her mother's words still echoed in her ears.

"Life has countless stations and every station is a new and distinct adventure where you meet different people and are exposed to multitude of situations. However, every station is not your destination. There may come trauma and adversity but do not ever take it to your heart. Move on and eventually you will find your station impregnated with exhilaration."

She never understood these words until misfortune befell upon her. These golden words had a profound effect on her life as they helped her to take in the wisdom and become mature.

Being born in a conservative family where girls were prone to early marriages, Silah's parents took a different standpoint. Against all odds, they raised their children generously and provided them with sound education. Silah, a high spirited, confident and perky girl was an eldest child and an apple of her parents' eye.

"Childhood is a period of ripples", she became nostalgic while watching children playing at the shore, "that allows you to remain what you are, unmindful of other's feelings. But as time lapses, everything changes. Life is like this sea where one has to discover oneself amidst its jerky waves where sometimes a soul is tormented with a tsunami of emotions and results in sheer collapse."

The last thought left her in pain with a wistful smile on her face. She recalled how she fell for a guy during her college days. Everything seemed so perfect and superlative in that utopian world that she had created for herself which actually turned out to be the beginning of a trap in which the bubbly young bird was going to be encaged.

She took a deep sigh and got up to place the empty mug in the kitchen and placed the meat onto the flame to prepare the lunch. The clangor of the cooker's whistle made her recall all the woes that had brought havoc in her life. That uproar was akin to the turbulence she had faced in the relationship with a vicious guy for three years. There was no love and the conversation between them was merely about riches. Her life was severely entangled and was under his cruel whims.

While turning the flame off, Silah regretfully thought, "How much have I aggrieved my parents only for the sake of the guy who never valued me!" A gush of anger flamed within her. Those were the worst years of her life, she admitted. She had lost all her confidence and self-esteem. She degraded her soul by indulging in frequent bargaining and fights with her parents for the sake of that chap. The tears rolled down her bright cheeks when the phone suddenly rang. She wiped her tears off and normalized herself by breathing a sigh of relief that the worst time has elapsed. She picked up the receiver and said "Hello?"

The voice on the other end dissipated her gloomy expressions and after listening to it, she replied rapturously, "OK. I'll be waiting for you, come soon."

After hanging up, she ran toward the kitchen to prepare the rest of the meal. The feeling that she was cooking for the special one had overjoyed her and made her ruminate on the importance of overcoming one's negativity.

She dressed up elegantly and, while waiting for him to arrive, she sat on the sofa in her living-room, gazed at the framed pictures hanging on the wall and felt blessed to have a partner like him. "Yes" she admits, "when all is lost, a miracle occurs and life begins."

His entry into her life was not less than a miracle. When she had met him first, she could not have thought he would become so important to her and ultimately would encompass her entire world. He came into her life when she had collapsed, had utterly shattered, had her soul crumbling into pieces and had lost all her faith in love. He had uplifted her spirit, boosted her confidence, infused a new life into her and encouraged her to face the hardships. She thought how love could blossom in the most unlikely of circumstances. He kindled a new hope of warmth in her life and with his efforts and devotion, the bird was now free from the cage and took a new flight towards the world of optimism and achievements.

Her heart quickened as the doorbell rang. "Yes, he is the one who is precious and deserves an immense respect", she said to herself.

Her outstanding features revealed a flashing spirit as she moved towards the door to open it.

"Hello wifey!"

As she heard those tender words, her heart swelled with pride and she blossomed like a flower for being a wife of such a man who understands her perfectly and has survived with her during her tough times. There he was standing with a sensual smile on his face and with a bunch of white lilies in his hand. She welcomed him warmly. After freshening up, they sat to have lunch together.

She still remembered the first time she met him, which was more of a casual meeting. She began by sharing her woes with him until, in time, the emotional bond that came to hold them together was consolidated in the sacrosanct ties of marriage. She thought of all that while gazing at him with a tender smile on her face.

Arsalan asked, "What is that shine on your face? Surely you are planning to rob my purse since there is a sale on clothing brands." He winked and laughed heartily. She grabbed his hand and replied in a soft tone. "What I am today is all because of you. I shine because you gave me the reason to shine. Thanks for being into my life or else I would not have been the same person as my parents wanted me to be. I love you."

As he heard her, he replied dotingly while his black eyes glimmered as if reflecting his words. "You deserve to be loved, Silah. You are the most interesting thing that has ever happened to me." She felt elated at his words. Now she understood her mother's words. Her life with Arsalan was her station and her ultimate destination. Every girl needed, she realized, a shoulder to rely on, and the few who were lucky enough to get one as dependable as her husband's could truly bloom and breathe freely.



Section 2
Poetry

Hail to Nature
By Ayesha Waheed

M.Phil (English Literature), Session: 2020-2022

O heavy somber clouds! Come
Curtain the sun while baby birds hum
Pour down precious tears, Shadow the land of plunder
Blow out your anger in lightning and thunder.
O sweet earth! Drink the rain
To spread the beauty of spring again.
O sweet sky! Fly far away
Along with stars and the moon, to keep up an eternal stay.
O sweet sun! Come down gently
To warm the earth mildly.
O wet wind! Blow
And force the leaves of trees to dance in a row.
O beautiful bird! Sing sweet song
With charming flowers dancing along.
O green grass! Grow
Absorb the dew drops from the soil above and below.
O grasshopper! Hop
To spread the pollen that sticks to your wings and top.
O tiny ants! Set your train again
Store food and clean the land from pallets of grain.

I am All Grey
By Bushra Mumtaz

M. Phil (English Literature), Session: 2016-2018

I am such an abysmal creature,
Loathsome in the world's furniture,
Craving to get back to Him,
Who let me see what I can't be,
Who let me feel what's hard to heal,
Who made me hold the spear,
That makes my heart tear,

When I run fast, I have a blast,
I'm all fire, an epitome of desire,
I failed to hide from others,
My huge black feathers,
Others have seen them,
So I had to leave them,
And fly towards the odious ones,
Where the world is beyond rights and wrongs,
A fair grey ground and an acceptable sky,
You can always find me there,
As I'm all grey,

How would I dare to get back on solid ground?
Always judging me in my sleep,
They try to hear every word,
They follow the footprints and watch my steps,

What will they conclude?

All they have got is a platitude,

They can't accuse me on my words and steps,

I'm a sleep talker and a sleepwalker...

So I would rather dream to get back into the soil,

That my existence wouldn't accost,

I would have a perfect unison; with the one for whom my soul craves for,

As my journey was never for the 'man of clay'

This time when I would take a flight,

Nobody would shout at me,

Nobody will distract,

How would they shout at me?

What would they call me?

I am so nameless,

And I am so shameless...!

At the Doors of Sleep

By Hadiqa Bashir

M. Phil (English Literature), Session: 2017-2019

In the dark sight of mysterious night,
Thoughts are wavering or making me fright.
Don't know whether these are valid or not,
Recalling memories; opening dreadful knots.
Sudden, feeling purity in jolt,
As if someone making me bolt.
Watching sports on stars,
Still shining in million scars.
No need to be restless but
Peace,
At last dragging me at the doors of sleep.

Binaries

By Humaira Hassan

MA English, Session: 2016-2018

Life without any trace of death
And death without a tinge of life.
Wisdom devoid of stupidity
And stupidity without any mark of wisdom.
Happiness unknown to sorrow
And sorrow, stranger to happiness.
Day as if it has never met night
And night mysterious to day.
Hell never touched by the breeze of heaven
And heaven, always a mystery to hell.
This is how we live with
Life and death
Wisdom and folly
Happiness and misery
Day and night
Darkness and light
And in our shells
In heaven and hell
Like abandoned rebels.

The Art

By Zulaikha Nawaz

MA English, Session: 2016-2018

The art was defined

Connected to its odds and rhymes

It's existence was relying

But all the perceptions were denied

They came along with their lives

Finding those shattered hidden lies

And whatever existed inside

Was nothing more than just an image behind'

All kinds of minds!!

Melancholy
By Arzoo Jamal

Bachelor of Studies (Hons) in English Literature, Session: 2018-2022

Sadness leads to the bank of demise,

Try not to sink in that pain,

To forget sorrow, don't follow lies

The poisonous trees and nightshade plain,

Don't make yourself go through this pain,

Your mournful psyche and sleepless nights,

Contribute to the sorrow in your gain,

Overwhelm your woe with calming sunlight,

Oh my lovely glum! Tussle your dolorous.

By heading towards the Arête,

Shivelight and Pirr, all bring you solace,

Put your morose in thundering clouds,

When raindrops splash upon the flowers,

Glutting your sorrow on rainbow upon woods,

Thus your grief will find a way of closure,

And sorrow will dance in the shadow of beauty...

White

By Fizza Tirmizi

Bachelor of Studies (Hons) in English Literature, Session: 2017-2021

Limitless rows and columns of bright white ceiling tiles

Laid in symmetrical boxes with a boring off-white pattern squiggled on them.

Even at night, they shined like unbrushed teeth,

Rotting of numbing dullness, covered with a layer of inescapable monotony.

The same off-white light bounced off the wrinkled, unwashed and pit-stained white scrubs of the nurses.

Piercing my eyes as they walked up with a tray of pills, ready for my next dose.

There was nothing but whiteness all around me,

White sheets, white uniforms, white pills and my own face, white as a newly-painted wall.

The whole room reeked of whiteness, not even a glimpse of a shadow could be seen.

Hiding behind a curtain, peaking at me with its hot gaze,

Was a light so powerful that it stunned me.

I woke up a day later, awakened by the piercing white lights of the operation theatre.

A corner of my heart filled with white matter.

The white ceiling of my own room still feels like its clawing its way into my brain,

Slowly trapping me in its web of colorless, ghost-like apparitions of the past.

I've painted my room black now, I've banished the whiteness from my world,

Black feels like home and home it is.

Emancipation of Emotions

By Hibah Zahid

Bachelor of Studies (Hons) in English Literature, Session: 2018-2022

One million pieces and thousands of cracks.

I break the shackles they tied me with.

I used all the schemes and all the tacts.

I lived in a world they said was a myth.

A nightmare or is it falsehood?

I scream for help, for help I cry.

Is it bad for me or for my good?

Alone I have lived, alone I'll die.

Peeking in my soul to corroborate,

If I am entirely weak and frail.

I once had no control over my state

My hands trembled and my skin turned pale.

I free myself from these notions.

And travel around like a vagabond.

I am ready to guard my emotions.

And exquisitely my life has dawned.

If I Had Wings and Could Fly

By Hoorub Saleem

Bachelor of Studies (Hons) in English Literature, Session: 2018-2022

If I had wings and could fly

I would fly to all the places where dust has still kept your footprints intact

Where air still smells like your favorite scent

From Italy's famous restaurant to Turkey's local teashop

Like a wandering bird, I'd roam to collect your traces in the narrow streets of Brazil

Above the lovers' heads around the Eiffel, to the glorious heights of the Himalayas

I would soar high to feel on my wings the ripples of Niagara Falls, and to open my eyes to rainbow clad skies

When tired I would sit among the Keets surrounding the Taj Mahal of Agra

And to relieve my sore wings after all these flights

I would fly to Lahore Fort to see the captivating dusky red sky at Mughal heights

This is how, I would fly to every corner of the world

To see what your eyes saw

To feel what filled you with awe

So, if I had wings and could fly

I would bet my life on this one nomadic spree

Until the last iota of this wanderlust resides inside me.

Primal Scream
By Hoorub Saleem

Bachelor of Studies (Hons) in English Literature, Session: 2018-2022

Men don't cry; when three years of age, he's expected to give away his favorite teddy bear,
That too without shedding a tear.

Time ticks by, a schoolboy is beaten up and ridiculed
For the tear stains on his face.

Stepping into the college life, depression eats him like a python, the dark moth of
repression settles inside

What apparently were the eyes, now have become an unsolvable maze.

Keen to study drama, the three year old, now an adult, opts for business
Since this would make him a "complete" man.

The world of adulthood forbids the little eyes, the water that irrigates the souls
The land of the tiny heart becomes more barren.

So that day, a 30 year old man, too old to cry and too young to die
Screamed, and he screamed his lungs out,

But the blinded eyes and deaf ears failed to grasp anything.

All they saw was a young man, found hanging from the ceiling fan,

Heaven knows how many young souls are longing to die, just because of the tongues
around us, chanting;

Men don't cry.

Life

By Maheen Waseem

Bachelor of Studies (Hons) in English Literature, Session: 2017-2021

Life is all about taking a risk

No matter how difficult it might be

Sometimes you learn, sometimes you frustrate

But try, try to never give up

Life is unpredictable

You never know what the next step of life is

But you should be thankful for what you have

And where you are

Live your life like a vagabond, don't be a resident!

Life is a short passage

Day and night are dispersing

Like sand in the air

It was not like this before

Why is life strange?



Section 3
Essays

Inside Out

By Arifa Saboohi

M.Phil (English Literature), Session: 2017-2019

I considered it funny at first. Being perceived as a foreigner in one's own country.

Happened last year during a week-long trip to Gilgit Baltistan. My siblings, their families and I had got together after a long time for this "getaway trip" as we called it. But at every check-post that we crossed on our daily excursions to the distant valleys, the vehicle in which I sat with my two siblings and niece would be stopped, and I would have to respond to the inquiry "Foreigner *hai?*" The question would be directed at me specifically. Initially I thought that this was so because unlike women of that area, I always sat in the front seat of the jeep, next to the local driver. But when I finally asked the driver why I was the target of this question and not my siblings, he said it was so because I did not cover my hair (like my sister and niece) and that I clearly looked different (I sport white hair) and spoke (quite often in English) like an outsider.

I don't think that the police force at the various check-posts meant it as a disrespect. If anything, perhaps the foreigner was being privileged over the local. But it made me angry after a while. How could one even be mistaken for an outsider in one's own country? The realization came only afterwards that the important question to ask was what made one appear an alien in one's own country? What made one look so clearly (I hate to say this) a colonial product.

It started from childhood when my parents decided to enroll their daughters in a local missionary school run by European nuns. It was my mother's desire really which emanated from her inferiority complex of not comprehending and speaking English like the male members of her family. Her daughters could not live with the same social (or do I mean psychological) marker. They had to speak English as the English did. I remember speaking in English at home (quite deliberately) using words which *amma* wouldn't understand and her sarcastic response in the vernacular "Is English your mother tongue?" I remember responding impishly "But it is *Ammi*;" leaving the corollary "You wanted it to be so" an unsaid whisper in the air.

Come to think of it, one's contrived Englishness does place one comfortably in the elite circle of the 'independent' Pakistan. A memory from early adulthood comes to mind. My father had accompanied me to the ophthalmology department of the Mayo Hospital on account of an eye ailment that I had developed. It was the senior doctor's time to make the round of the ward and the employee guarding the entrance to the eye ward was stopping everyone from entering the department. Except that when he saw my father, dressed in a lounge suit and a felt hat, he not only opened the door but saluted him as well. My first lesson in postcolonial studies was imparted by my father (a professor of Mathematics not

Literature, mind you). He pointed out that the respectful treatment meted out to him was for the dress and what it symbolized. The Western attired brown sahib and his daughter had been privileged over the natives.

I wonder whether you realized the consequences of your daughter's English education, *ammi*. Perhaps you didn't. It never stops with the language you see, for every language, even in this globalized world, breeds its own value system, its own culture, its own world. And your decision placed me fairly and squarely in a position facing the West. Nothing good or bad about this per se, except that I live in the East and this position leaves me unfixed both in my country and abroad. My hold on my own culture and that of the West, tenuous at best.

A Journey Towards Hope

By Mahnoor Rasheed

M.Phil (English Literature), Session: 2020-2022

A few years ago, depression and emptiness became parts of my life. I have had all sorts of luxuries in my life, yet my heart felt so empty and restless all the time. Whenever I tried to sleep on my soft silk pillows and comfortable bed, my heart would not feel at peace. My heart would start pounding harder, and heavy drops of sweat would cover my face. No doubt, the wounds of my soul started disturbing my body. Doctors and these modern medications remained unsuccessful in curing my restlessness. Depression stabbed my body, and it bruised my soul. In the modern world, everyone is a victim of depression. I discussed this issue with a good friend of mine, and she replied, "you need furlough from your daily and hectic routine. Depression and grief affect human credibility. It is the nature of humans that they yearn for change in their life".

I held the map in my hand and left my home with the aspiration of hope. On the map, the name "Princess of Hope" caught my attention in Balochistan. At first, I thought maybe it was related to a Greek goddess or any princess from fairy-tales. The interest spiked, and I decided to explore the regime of the mysterious princess. It was an excellent opportunity to explore a new area in Pakistan. It was approximately 275kms away from Karachi. So, I reached Karachi through a train. I took the N25 National highway from Hub Karachi. After a few minutes, I was passing by Gadani, a ship-breaking industry.

During my journey, I explored various new places. I reached the Makran coastal highway that connected Karachi with Balochistan. This land was the least populated, dry, infertile, and dusty area of Pakistan. For the first time in my life, I observed the beauty of nature in a barren land. The first time I felt a glimpse of life in a lifeless region. The combination of dusty brown track and blue water was mesmerizing. In that area, the warm kisses of air filled my heart with delight. It was as though they were welcoming me with all their warmth and vibrancy.

Later on, I passed through the village of Sangal. The village consisted of deserted and sterile land. Even during this modern era, the people of this village were living in mud houses. They were living a peaceful and unpretentious life. They were full of optimism, and happiness ruled their lives, evident from their smiling eyes and blissful attitudes. I had all the luxuries and facilities, but something was missing in my life. Their smiles were so full and rich which left me in awe. Their smiling faces were a sign that they did not have any laceration in their souls.

I left this village for the volcano of Chandragup. Volcano in Balochistan is surrounded by a dirt track. This volcano has great importance for Hindu pilgrims, and they call it baba Chandragup. That area was not inhabited, which made it an exciting yet strange mystery in the deserted land. The sun's yellow light turned the small brown particles of sand into the unique red and orange shore. I saw a small plant that was giving me the hint of some

optimism in this barren region. I was astonished by how life could take birth in this empty and lonely place. The plant was enduring the harsh weather, yet it was trying to spread hope.

My car was running on the rib cage of sand. After three hours, I reached Hingol River and Hingol national park, the largest park in Pakistan, which was quite a new revelation to me. Magnificent and Rocky Mountains surrounded the park. The top of the mountains was touching the roof of the sky. The mountains were jagged, folded, and transformed into ethereal rocks by earth movements—rocks surrounded by the green water of the Hingol River. In the green freshwater, the ethereal image of mountains was visible. The high-altitude mountains consisted of unwooded and sharp edges. Moreover, it was problematic for me to decipher the confusion of which scene was real. The topography was quite spectacular and seemed illusionary.

The land of this area was rugged, desolate, and deprived of greenery. Without any greenery, the valley has its unique beauty. I continued my journey on Makran Highway after crossing the river. This land has variations: it is not entirely desolate or dry, but it also consists of an oasis surrounded by green irrigated fields. Astonishingly, this land was an amalgamation of desert and oasis. It is a miracle of nature that it can do anything at any time.

Then I reached Kund Malir Beach. It is known as the golden beach. The view was breathlessly exquisite. It was the first time I saw a beach intermingling with the sea. The unspoiled beach was the great attraction of the Makran coast. The super panorama of clean blue refreshing water gave solace to my soul, and the bluest water bedazzled with the golden soil. The water of the sea was striking its head again and again with rocks. It was creating a sharp sound in the ears. I stayed there for a few minutes, and I resumed my voyage.

Within a few minutes, I reached the region of the princess. The Princess of Hope was waiting for me. My heart was impatient, and it was restless in the prison of ribs. I immediately came out of the car. A spectacular image was in front of me. The Princess of Hope turned out to be a sculpture. She was standing under the blue sky wearing a golden robe and a head crown. It was so surreal to find out that this Princess of Hope was not man-made, but Nature itself transformed rocks into a magnanimous sculpture. She was standing there for ages just like a queen with her great dignity. After my heartbeat settled, I went closer to her. She looked so powerful, tough, and indestructible. She was watching this barren and abandoned desert from the high altitude for ages while spreading the message of hope to its visitors.

The strikes of wind storms and insane blows of heat could not break her courage or kill her optimism. People say that winds that came from the Arabian Sea have formed the sculpture into a beautiful princess. No doubt, Nature has a great aesthetic sense. Here is what I found interesting; the famous Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie was the one who named it "The Princess of Hope" in 2002. I could not take my eyes off from her, and I wanted to absorb as

much positivity and hope as I could. At one point, I felt maybe she wanted to talk to me. She wanted to reveal the secret of hope. I was under her sharp yet kind gaze, and I could feel her whisperings in the cool breeze.

Her whispers were full of optimism and hope. She was asking me, "why are you hopeless and depressed? You have to find the purpose of your life. It would not be best to waste your life over nothingness. We should try to utilize our life positively. A wounded soul is a good indication that positive energy can enter through wounds. It enlightens our souls. After this, the body starts healing." She was consoling me. The Princess of Hope herself was giving me hope. After a long time, I felt at ease. I was not fighting the restlessness. There was a strange kind of soothing effect that embraced my being. After my visit, I changed a lot. The Princess of Hope was telling the truth. Just like a psychiatrist, she relieved my pain. The regime of the princess gave solace to my soul and healed its laceration.

Adult Life is Saying Hello

By Mishal Nazir Chaudhry

M. Phil (English Literature), Session: 2017-2019

There are times when you feel you do not want to grow up. It is not because your body is not growing but because your mind is incapable of accepting the hard and fast rules society made for you. It is so hard to accept that you are required to behave in a certain manner and live up to conventional ways of living. I would not lie to you; with each passing day, life brings good things and unpleasant surprises. The harsh reality of the world is not easy to swallow for a person who is not ready to conform to the society's norms or to take responsibility for his or her actions. Like everybody else, I have to confront my share of harsh realities, and to confront them regularly. It is not easy, because one does not turn into an adult in a day, or a week, or a month, or even a year—especially when people shout at one, “You are not fourteen, you are twenty-three. Wake up from this fantasy world of yours!”

Maybe that is why they celebrate birthdays – to remind one that the path ahead is not going to be easy, that every number added to one's lifetime after each year brings additional problems and responsibilities. There will always be someone to remind one that one is no more a baby, followed by the rallying tune of responsibility, “Don't let the world down!” But, yes, in the long run life will treat one like dirt anyway, whatever number of years one happens to sport by way of counting one's age with.

Sometimes I think, why did they make numbers or why did they give numbers to the age of a person? I mean, was it even necessary? Who was the first person to have invented a year as a marker for the fact that its passage brought one into a new phase of adulthood? A human body gets old with time—that is what science describes; but does physical growth always have to correspond with that of the mind? No human being can ever objectively testify to that. At least in my case, I am still thinking about the earlier question, “Am I still too young for adult society?”, or, “How do human beings *really* grow up in and with time?” Maybe I lack a full understanding of the scientific compulsions of growth and age. But, as psychologists tell us in their perceptive studies of what they have named the Peter Pan syndrome, probably countless hearts in the world feel just the way I do. People tend to argue with me on this. They say I am very efficient and sophisticated; my behavior and mannerisms fail to create an image of anything childish or immature. But then they do not know me at all. I really want to continue to be a child throughout the year – year after year. The only problem is some institutes demand maturity more than anyone else, forcing me to behave wisely against my will.

It was so easy back then, when I was a kid, until some years ago—if you know what I mean—to claim everything in the house because I did not buy it, and my dad did. And it

was so easy to live my life at his expense. It is known to many as a Tension-Free Era, but when my physique began to equal the grown-ups, they started nagging me with the idea that I had to be one of them. There followed whole lectures on how to get a job, how to use my average marks' degree, and how to make opportunities for career growth – or, in other words – how to put my life straight. The convoluted idea horrifies me: waking up at six o'clock, going to work, doing a proper job, coming back home (continuously studying/reading the stuff related to my field). The robotic life haunts me; it haunts me, I swear, like no other ghost on this entire planet. I just do not want to be one of those people who work tirelessly until their lives become boring as Hell.

But life is full of change and it demands Change. You cannot learn or think out of the box (that is what people call it) unless you will accept or understand others' side of the story. Life is not full of roses – and even roses come with thorns, and I have no idea who said it but it fairly sums up my story.

Once, after successfully ignoring all the people around me, I was reading a novel one evening by Osama Siddique; his debut book. It was an interesting book with supreme quality of language that pulled me into the story the way classics generally do. I noticed my father quietly sat on the sofa; his eyes were red, probably because of tiredness. Our exchange of greetings was very brief (one of those days when we don't talk much). Later, at the dinner table, his face looked down on the table. I kept asking myself, "What bothers the man? Is it the food? Or has something happened at work?" Maybe both. He was looking old, his skin was all wrinkled, and he was sitting with his shoulders slumped. It was as if the burden of life – his children, important contributors to it – dragged him down; their demands, trying to fulfil their unfulfilled desires had made him grow old. It was a shocking realization. I had not really noticed the changes that had assailed him for a long time, and had never actually asked him about his worries. He sat quietly, not uttering a single word. I thought, "The man is thinking about the solution for the toughest question of life, putting the pieces of the puzzle together – which is probably what it means to live life as an adult." I thought of sharing his burden, his worries – whether financial or worldly – but he did not talk that night. That day I realized it was so easy not to be an adult and being all selfish: Childish. Yes, Childish.

It is hard to take responsibility for our problems, and it is hard to correct the way we see things. Problems will come one's way eventually, no matter the number of years designated to one's age.

I realized at that moment that the father who had always been my pillar of strength – the selfless, caring parent who had given his children all he could – had done his part in life and that it was now time I took responsibilities from him and pay him with the comfort of knowing that somebody was there to take care of him. And that moment changed my perspective about adult life; it was an opportunity to learn to fight, to pay him back, to share the coming storm but also to look after him just the way he had raised me and my siblings. But my sentiment must not be misinterpreted: such a relationship is not about

give-and-take, it is about compassion, selflessness, and love. Now it is time for me and for all those who share my feelings to gear up and stand tall like Tom (yes Tom from *Tom and Jerry!*), awaken the inner giant, because it is time to do some chores and the world out there is not an easy and sympathetic place. So keep fighting the good fight, Good Luck!

The Mask She Wears

By Sanya Javaid

MA English, Session: 2016-2018

Every person has a different story and a different perspective on life, switching between beds of roses and thorns. A woman's story and perspectives are frequently coloured by wearing a number of masks intentionally or unintentionally.

That brings one to the questions: What is a Mask? Why does one need to wear it? Who is she? Why does she need to wear a "mask"?

The mask is a smokescreen; it is a cover one uses for concealing one's true self and innermost feelings. The mask she wears is very suggestive and open to multiple interpretations. On a superficial level, it is meant to conceal her truths and realities.

Human life is multi-dimensional (which adds to the vulnerability of the female kind) – personal, social, educational, official, religious, cultural, philosophical, sensual . . . Each of these dimensions forces a certain role on her. The variety of roles makes a variety of masks necessary. So, she wears a mask to perform her roles nicely and to be accepted pleasantly by those with whom she interacts in her daily life. She wears a mask to hide her real emotions and, sometimes, her character. She wears a mask not to let people know her real feelings, impressions and emotions.

There are variations and varieties in masks; some masks are worn to practice concealment of negative and nefarious designs and to create an impression of innocence and piety, while others are intended to make one presentable and amiable, and still others simply to mask hypocrisy.

The mask she wears can be seen through by insightful people but some others are rendered opaque by the wearer's ability and dexterity.

Compared with men, a woman needs more flexibility and adaptability. Chameleon-like, she has to adapt according to changing situations and circumstances. A society dominated by men would crush her unless she pretends to be the person they want her to be – a mask is a necessary accompaniment of all her roles: mother, daughter, sister, wife, or simply a female.

This mask has been changing according to the situation and position. A mask is worn by her for both good and evil, hinging on what she harbors in her heart and mind. Often she sacrifices her desires and wears a mask according to the will of those she wants to satisfy. In such cases, she simply kills herself to become alive in the eyes of people she loves and cares about. Most noticeably, the mask denotes her love for a man she does not love, in which case a mask of pleasure conceals her inner frustrations and dissatisfactions. She

always wears a mask because she knows that she has to present herself in a way they would like to see her because she needs their love and care, which is only possible if she wears a mask.

Conversely, she needs society's wholehearted support for the act of unmasking at certain crucial times, like, for instance, when she does fall in love or when she risks being accepted or rejected with all her strengths and weaknesses.

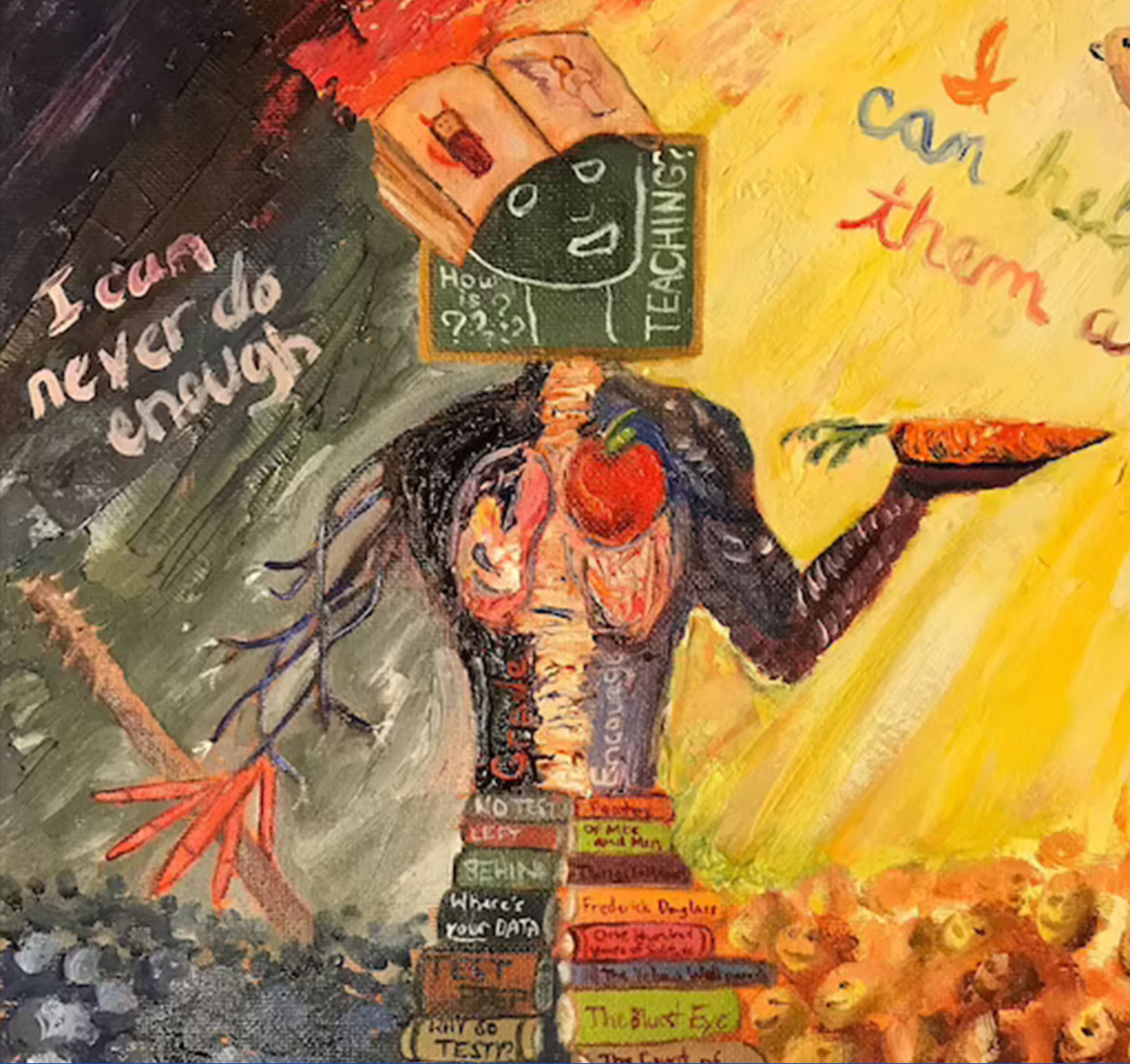
Sometimes she wears a mask of make-up to conceal the struggle and hardships of daily life in order to look more appealing and fresh so that nobody would be able to catch a glimpse of the darkness to which she is confined.

Sometimes she has to wear a mask of weakness because people would hate to recognize her strength. This makes her pretend to be a snow-flake, ready to melt with a slight shift in temperature. On the contrary, many times she has to conceal her weakness in a chauvinistic world behind a mask of strength, in an attempt to discourage those who would like to take advantage of her weakness.

The mask plays an important role in every society but the survival of women may be threatened without dualistic identities invoked by the mask as George Eliot's heroines tell us. Sibyl Vane, a character in Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, presents a very interesting perspective on the debate of the mask: having found ample social appreciation in accordance with her lowly rank in the society for as long as she successfully loses herself in the illusion of theatrical performances, she commits the mistake of letting her real emotions distract her to the point that she is denounced by the very man whose love leads her to be herself in spite of herself. She can be loved only for as long as her reality is not allowed to penetrate through the mask that is supposed to guide her professional life as an actress.

This proves that putting on a mask is a sign of her sensibility and intelligence, a simpleton cannot handle it with required imagination and common-sense. It takes a lot to always be on her guard about revealing her true self.

She frequently finds it useful to wear her masks in exciting and thought-provoking ways that are open to multiple interpretations.



Section 4

Faculty Contributions



Goethe's 'Mahomets Gesang'¹

By Dr. Syed Nomanul Haq

Dean, Institute of Liberal Arts

The great German poet, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, is known for the fascination he held for Persian poetry, the verse of Hafiz in particular, as well as for the inspiration he drew from the literary and mystical manifestation of Islamic culture. He wrote his acclaimed West-öslicher Divan [West-East Divan] replete with Perso-Islamic motifs and even folklore figures — so we find here sections such as *Muganni Nama* (Book of the Singer), *Hikmat Nama* (Book of Wisdom) *Ishq Nama* (Book of Love) and historical-fictional characters such as Rostam, Zulaikha, Shirin-Farhad, Laila-Majnun and so on.

But what is particularly relevant in this month of Rabiul Awwal is Goethe's poem that he wrote in 1772-3 celebrating the Holy Prophet (PBUH), called Mahomets Gesang (Song of Muhammad — Upon Whom be Peace!). In this lush poem the poet plays with the metaphor of a living water stream and gives it such glowing cosmic proportions that it becomes simply a poetic glory. Allama Iqbal wrote his work *Payam-i-Mashriq* (Message of the East) as a response and tribute to his German predecessor and rendered the Gesang freely into Persian, calling it *Ju-i-Aab* (Water Stream). I have translated Iqbal's translation into English, drawing some benefit from an earlier translation published by the Iqbal Academy. My translation, then, is twice removed.

بنگر کہ جوئے آب چہ مستانہ می رود
مانند کہکشاں بگریبانِ مرغزار
درخوابِ ناز بود بہ گہوراً سحاب
واکرد چشم شوق با غوشِ کوہسار
از سنگریزہ نغمہ کساید خرام او
سیمائے او چو آئینہ بے رنگ و بے غبار
زی بحر بیکرانہ چہ مستانہ می رود
در خود یگانہ از ہمہ بیگانہ می رود

¹ The article was published in Dawn, Books & Authors on December 10th, 2017
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1375639/column-goethes-mahomets-gesang>

دریائے پُر خروش از بندوشکن گزشت
 از تنکنائے وادی و کوه و دمن گزشت
 یکساں چوسیل کرده نشیب و فراز را
 از کاخ شاه و باره و کشت و چمن گزشت
 بیتاب و تند و تیز و جگر سوز و بیقرار
 در پرزماں بتازه رسید از کهن گزشت
 زی بحر بیکرانه چه مستانه می رود
 در خود یگانہ از همه بیگانہ می رود

Look at the stream —
 How merrily it flows
 Like a galaxy rising from the breast of the meadow!
 In the cradle of the clouds it lay in sweet slumber,
 And opened its keen eyes in the embrace of
 the mountains.
 From tiny stones its graceful flow draws melodies
 Its face like a mirror — polished, unblemished!
 How merrily it flows to the boundless ocean —
 Unique in itself, unconcerned with all else, it flows.
 A gushing river, it crosses over dams and folds,
 It flows past narrow crevices of valleys, hills and deserts
 Low or high — just the same, it gushes forth ...
 It moves across the king's palace and fortifications,
 It crosses green fields and gardens.
 Impatient, intense; fierce, heart-inflaming, restless —
 In every epoch reaching the new, leaving behind the old
 How merrily it flows to the boundless ocean —
 Unique in itself, unconcerned with all else, it flows.

Being

By Dr. Ambreen Salahuddin

Assistant Professor of Gender Studies, Department of Sociology

Hanging from the dark branches

yellow face of gloom.

Hands outlining my features

when rays fall down

upon my nothingness.

Dangling from my eyes,

the final tear of silence,

the ending note of harp,

frozen

in the midst of the Milky Way.

All is cold, yellow and bright.

Not gold but gloom.

The moon.

The last glimpse from

behind the dark tresses

that covers my yellow being.

The night.

Your hands and my being

A million miles

ahead of life and time.

Seven Deadly Sins
By Dr. Maria Isabel Maldonado
Former Associate Professor, DLC

A rhyme I intended to make
on how really sick I am.
I get itches, I despair
looking at the state of man.

Observing Sloth with surprise
Greed and Lust have shaken hands
while Wrath fixes his tie
and Pride is the party's star.

That leaves us at a café
with Gluttony at a date,
and Envy a little far
looks at her with disdain.

In every creed these sins
looked down upon they are
Can't we just introspect
And repair what is at hand?

Parallel Tracks

By Dr. Nadia Anwar

Associate Professor and Chairperson, DELS

Walking on the parallel tracks
I could hear
the clickety clock of her stilettos
on the hard grey gravel;
and perhaps she could too
the squeaking of my worn off trainers.
Neither of us saw each other.
But the trees on both sides
the witnesses of our strange alliance
Juggled with their branches
To acknowledge the mutuality of our presence.
And then suddenly
As if to break
this frightening coplanarity
She sped up and
took an unexpected turn
Vanishing forever
On the other side
of the parallel track

On Being Angry in Pakistan

By Dr. Naveed Rehan

Former Associate Dean, ILA

Let me say right away that I don't mean anger that leads to criminal activity. I mean anger that is justified, even—dare I say it, contentious as the word may be—righteous?

There are a lot of things that make me angry. I'm angrier in Pakistan than I ever was elsewhere, though if I was in the US right now, two years into the Trump presidency, I would probably be furious at a lot of things. But thankfully I'm not there anymore. Pakistan is my country, and just as you can be rude to your mother the way you cannot be with, say, your teacher, I can hate my countrymen and women and be angry with them the way I could not be in the US or Canada—two places where I have lived apart from Pakistan.

But Pakistanis can be really maddening, even though they are on the whole rather innocent people. I have to say that it's a wonder that people go quietly about their daily business when things are so bad in this country. I'm sometimes tempted to spell "country" a different way, but never mind that. I'm old enough to remember the time when schools and colleges in Pakistan did not have to be guarded with barbed wire and armed guards on lookout posts as we do now. We did not have suicide bombings, or the collective pathology that is now in evidence everywhere. Lahore, my birthplace, was then a rather sleepy city, not the monstropolis it has now become. I remember when the population and the traffic in Lahore was perhaps one-tenth of what it is now (a purely random estimate) and it used to take me fifteen minutes or so to get from our house in D Block Model Town to Liberty Market in my father's Mazda 808. The banks had not started giving out car loans at that time, and almost everyone had old, mostly smoke-emitting cars. Yet I never noticed the pollution. I miss that Lahore.

Today, the pollution and smog in Lahore make me angry. Winters are unbearable now because of the thick, poisonous vapor that hangs in the air all through the season. And our uneducated people—of whom there is no shortage—make it worse. I can barely contain my rage when I see yet another pile of burning garbage emitting acrid smoke into the air in a vacant lot or by the roadside. The other day someone lit a big pile on fire right in the open lot right in front of my house. I was down with the severe flu that had gripped Lahore this winter, and maybe that added to my frustration, but I grabbed the water hose in the lawn and pulled it across the road to the empty lot, cursing and swearing, and proceeded to put out the noxious fire. I was a little beside myself. Perhaps such anger is bad for oneself, but dear God! It's justified!

When I was at school—it was probably in the 5th or 6th Grade—we had a subject called Civics, a subject not in evidence at schools and colleges anymore. But a civic sense is what we desperately need right now. It would not be an exaggeration to say that most Pakistanis

are totally devoid of it. We see it on the roads every day. Not only is everyone in a tearing hurry to get ahead of others on the roads, but virtually no one is willing to give way or be polite, even when it would mean avoiding a traffic jam for oneself. One sees that often at unmanned crossroads. Everyone gets stuck, and after about half an hour, some selfless souls get off their vehicles and start directing traffic and everyone heaves a sigh of relief. When I was in Pocatello, ID, I was surprised to see that there were no signals or police officers at crossroads. Whoever got to the crossroad first had the right of way, and people smiled and motioned to the other person to go first. The fact that Pocatello has about 55,000 people and Lahore has over 11,000,000 is offset by the additional fact that while Pocatello's area is 83.86 km², that of Lahore is 1,772 km². So why are our roads insane? I do admit that we have all been traumatized for a long time, and perhaps that is what weighs on people all the time—a nameless anxiety and dread, and perhaps even anger. But it is high time we started getting angry about the right things, and in the right way. My pet peeve is people who try to take shortcuts for no earthly reason except that they are shortcuts, and will come at you the wrong way on the road when you least expect it, often at full speed in the fast lane. I have used, and continue to use, the international hand symbol while driving (not what you think) too many times on Lahore's roads lately.

That is just one example. I'm angry at the total disregard people here show for other people's space, their comfort, and their existence in general. We are severely handicapped in our ability to put ourselves in another person's place and see things from their point of view. There are so many examples of this that I'm at a loss as to where I should begin. Let's take up the things that are closer to my conscious mind right now: the use of metal wires at Basant is one. The fact that people use them to "cut" other people's kite strings and insist on reviving this custom even after gruesome accidents shows their complete lack of concern for other people's lives. Same is the case with aerial firings at weddings and other celebrations, blocking public roads and ambulances to ram one's agenda down everyone's throats, casually killing women for rejecting marriage proposals, poisoning people on a large scale by selling them hazardous food, milk and water...the list is practically endless.

The thing that's most galling of them all is that when one tries to cultivate and maintain a civic sense, and tries to see things from the other person's point of view, others who are less scrupulous—and less cultured—jump at the opportunity to take advantage of such a person, to take an arm when only a hand was offered. And then a reaction sets in: one explodes, and the shards fall where they may, and the other innocents wonder what in the world happened to such a nice woman!

Culminated Desires
By Dr. Tamsila Naeem

Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics and Communications, UMT

A new cradle of thrills and blubbing roars
Gripping relations with tender tickly pores
Haunting a city of artless dreamers
With romantic verses and sublime soars

Every star sings for unlimited joys and powers
Promising a velvety world of twinkling flowers
Of daisy, of jasmine, and of fragrant roses
Amid harmony and bliss that Nature showers

Secret mysteries lament in foamy mirrors
Panicked by obscure silencing whispers
A ray of solitude swiftly flurries
Faint empathies and shimmering crispers

Magnificent gems in compassionate tears
Remain fragments of gaudy fears
In an arroyo of opulent measures
Providence triumphs but Desire murmurs.

Cage

By Muhammad Saleh Habib

Lecturer, Department of English and Literary Studies, UMT

Caged Birds, trying to get free
I wish I could free you, and myself
But the Man who holds you captive
Is encaged himself, like you, like me
By his responsibility to feed others
Who are also in a cage, yearning freedom



Section 5

Literature of the Pandemic

Let the Door Stay Shut

By Mah-e-Nao

M.Phil (English Literature), Session: 2019-2021

Countless crimson eyes, deloused by the June sun:
Crawling shallowness murmurs, "Is there anyone?"

The weekend, its back broken, sinks into solitude
Which naps across the Monday meekly subdued.

Is need reversing normality that has been cropped?
Or exhaling a sick peace though no war has stopped?

Dust explores its own corners in the early morn
Breathing melancholic atoms, raging but forlorn.

Sobbing, howling, crying, goes the epiphanic search,
The lonely longings of weary limbs left in the lurch.

The lighthouse-keeper abandoned on the strand,
No more than a parody from a distant wasteland,

Though not shuddering with fear, he stays inside
His tiny cell to avoid masked faces unidentified.

He scrolls the telescope and succumbs to despair,
While shredded, primordial old memories blare.

He gazes seaward, sin has become air – this air
Has become poison – the poison an invisible snare:

Save him, Allah, from himself – for his mirror
Shows a demon, its contours each day clearer.

A Virus or . . .

By Mahmuda Akhtar

M.Phil (English Literature), Session: 2018-2021

As I looked out of my small window a waft of cool breeze touched my face. The light blue sky with fluffy white clouds sailing across was proof of nature being happy for some reason. I couldn't understand why even the birds enjoyed their flight and chirped the most dulcet tune ever while we, humans, were not allowed to go out. We had to bear the chilled winds of winter a few months ago, yet when the time to enjoy spring came, we were all locked up in our houses. The children who ached to play in parks begged their parents to let them out but we were all too scared of 'the presence'.

When I was a child, I had read novels which showed the future of humans locked up underground or on some other planet. Now it crossed my mind, "So this is how it might have all begun." I remember wearing masks in the winter as well. It did not feel weird then. The sky was almost greyish brown, the dust and smoke, all clearly visible everywhere. A thick layer of smog was threatening our health as well as suffocating Nature. When I used to look out of this same window, I would want to wash all the trees which were covered with dust. Now they were lush green as if bathed in heavenly waters. This pure Nature finally found a way of breathing. We had tried our utmost to strangle it with our inconsiderate ways of living. We thought all our daily routine habits of burning coal and creating pollution through our unrepaired vehicles was justified. We did not need to mend our ways because, after all, we are the only ones who deserve to live on the planet Earth. The animals and trees are all made for us. We can use them, torture them and live a comfortable life. I guess now the tables have turned. Nature is finally breathing and we are forced to rethink our ways.

We had made our own lives unbearable for ourselves as well. If I don't even look at the disgusting minds of the horrible people who were being cruel to humanity at large and only keep my observation limited to myself, even then, I can understand what was going on and why all this is happening now. As I look back at my routine, I can't believe how I had managed living through it.

Morning:

"Wake up!! It's 4:30 am" ... "Oh, isn't it too early? I just need five more minutes." Every inch of my body ached as if I had been beaten by a club. I realized I had only slept for four and a half hours. "Oh no! it's five o'clock already? How will I manage it all, breakfast, four lunches, kids' uniforms and reaching the bus stop, only one and a half hours left!!" I jumped out of bed and started working as fast as possible. All ready! But when I saw the time, it was six thirty... I missed the bus by two minutes... tomorrow I'll wake at 4:30 sharp, I promised myself. The next challenge awaits, my husband and son have to get ready quickly so that we

can all get in the car and reach our respective schools and offices on time. I put an extra burden on my husband just because I couldn't get up on time. *sigh*

Finally, when I reach school and all goes well the morning fatigue starts creeping up on me. I hadn't slept for more than five hours for many days. Whoever I saw seemed to be tired but I was never fresh in the morning either. Other teachers were suffering similar ailments, low HB count, high blood pressure etc. Whoever you saw was either too frustrated or was not feeling well. There were people who managed not to show it, who managed to keep up the spirits of their team members. Time flew by as swiftly as the night had passed, home time reached and I had targets to meet. On specific days I have to go to a university to study. If I have to reach on time, I must call Careem at exactly two o'clock. I have to wrap up my work, check whether my children are in the right place so that the bus conductor could pick them up and take them home and then, when Careem arrives, give quick goodbye kisses and hugs to them before I leave for university. Time flew by except for some moments like when my son wouldn't let go after this last goodbye hug. Time stopped. I stopped. Then I would have to tear him away kindly and tell him I'll be back soon (at night). Time flashed by again, lunch in the car, reaching class at the nick of time, catching Careem again, reaching home when kids were extremely sleepy and too hungry. Had to show super speed to be able to put kids to bed on time so that they won't end up as tired as I am every morning. After they would sleep, I would complete my school work or any assignment I would have from my university until I would be too tired to remember where the bed is and when my husband reached home. . . oblivion. . .

When I reached home in the afternoons, some really blessed days in the week, I would try my best to give all my time to my children by having them do their homework properly and then getting dinner ready on time. These were days when I had time enough only to look at my disorganized house and cupboards and think that I will set them right one day. I will find time, some day, somehow, but not right now. After all the fatigue, if I fell asleep in the afternoon I would wake up with a start. "Oh no! Dinner, homework, kids' Quran class, why did I sleep?! how could I, how could I be so irresponsible." Then a voice calmed me from within. "Kids can miss their Quran class some days, dinner can be late sometimes, and everyone knows you are a human being. Get up, you can still manage everything on time, just don't panic." This innervoice might be my mother's, I assumed. A pang of pain crossed my heart. "Ammi, Ammi, where are you? When did you leave? Why did you have to leave me? I feel so lonely in this world where I can't share my feelings with anyone anymore." The flowing tears seemed to wound my heart afresh. I must not sleep in the day time, it only hurts all the more. It's better to stay busy and forget the pain. But how long will I run? How long will this race against time let me live. I feel I'm losing it. I feel I can't cope with it anymore.

One day I heard about a disease in China that was predicted to overtake the world soon. "Yeah, now this. First the world was about to be destroyed by World War III. We get all sorts of news these days. Even this news is going to change within days. It would soon be: We found out that there was no such thing as Corona Virus and all the news was a hoax." It

turned out that the Chinese were very irresponsible people. The nation about which I had a very good impression in the past few years had suddenly turned into the world's cruelest nation. How can these humans fill their stomach with things that are not even digestible? I can't even digest normal vegetables and rice. I had an impression that Pakistanis were eating rubbish but turned out we were nothing compared to the world.

A few months later Corona had entered Pakistan. Headlines: "The first case found in Karachi." Soon all schools were closed. Teachers and students were to stay at home for an indefinite period of time. I was finally going to sleep! I could set my cupboards now. I could sit with my children and listen to their long weird stories without telling them that I don't have time. The most beautiful days had begun. I cooked dishes I had always wanted to. Out there, the world was in jeopardy. Economy was crashing, yet my health and my children's confidence were all getting better. My children started using their imagination more which brought out their hidden talents. My daughter started drawing, cooking and discovered new things on the computer. We had to 'stay home, stay safe' that meant 'focus on yourself'. China soon became a hero by having controlled the pandemic very efficiently. The virus seems to change its trends making it difficult to find a cure. While hundreds and thousands of people die out there we can only wonder, is Corona virus actually a virus or. . .?

I Seek Love
By Shahwar Akram

Bachelor of Studies (Hons) in English Literature, Session: 2019-2023

In the blooming flower full of thorns

In the silence that mourns

In the sanctum lacking peace

In the smiles that now cease

In the ink bleeding on pages

In the happiness shut down for ages

In the hearts turning cold

In the innocence all sold

In the winters with burning flames

In the future with forgotten aims

In the eyes, all heaving lies

In the lonely nights with muted cries

In the entrances bearing no door

In the memories found washed ashore

I seek love in all the things I've lost

Under the worldwide pandemic frost

Think as WE, Not As ME

By Zarmina Khan

Bachelor of Studies (Hons) in English Literature, Session: 2019-2023

Why did this pandemic really spread in the first place? Have you ever thought of that?

That also not in a couple of countries but it spread all over the world, and that too all at once. I hope you will get an idea about the scenario after reading this. Although some would also oppose my point of view, I respect all the opinions and differences of thoughts.

Let me start with my own condition first. I had been so much indulged in my hectic routine that I never gave attention to the social contacts but now that I was compelled to stay away, I missed every little thing ... the gatherings, the handshakes, the morning walks, everything is taken away from me in a blink of an eye due to this pandemic.

But this is life, it happens, life is all about unexpected things, tackling such hard situations is what we call living. Life takes unexpected turns; we never know where it's going to take us in the next moment. This is exactly what happened to me in 2020.

I had big plans, big plans for this year. I was determined to eliminate all of my shortcomings but it is well said, *"Most of the problems in life are because of two reasons, thinking, or we keep thinking without acting."*

I was busy in my life, my goals were sky high for the year 2020, but then everything went down all of a sudden. I had so many resolutions for this year, to be a better person, to improve myself in every field and above all, to be an extrovert but it seems like life played with me once again.

The recent virus, the horrible news of COVID-19 was flashing everywhere. I was so afraid to hear that the virus was spreading all over the world monumentally. This was terrifying for everyone, but still I never took it seriously, maybe because it wasn't happening around me at that time.

I was hacked by my hectic routine. I wanted to achieve something and I wanted to improve my GPA. I had heard about the pandemic and its severe impact from my university's instructors and fellows but now I realized that they were warning us absolutely right. You know it better when you experience it yourself.

I remember there was this news circling around that institutions were closing down due to COVID-19, but I didn't take it seriously as we knew that it wasn't going to affect our country.

"Mom, I'll come home late; I'll be spending some time in the library today."

I told her before leaving for the university. I was planning the things I wanted to do that day.

The professors enlightened us about the virus and the precautions that we should take during this dangerous pandemic.

They advised us to maintain the prescribed social distance so that we are more likely not to fall prey to the virus. I heard everything and even noted down some essential things in my diary.

The things I got to know made me a bit sad, so I postponed my plan and went home early.

I arrived home from my university and was shocked to know that all the educational institutions were going to be closed due to this pandemic. In the beginning, I thought it would only last for a week or two but I was wrong; holidays extended and kept on extending. Government advised the citizens to wear masks, use sanitizers frequently, drink plenty of water, and most importantly, maintain social distances. Meanwhile, I personally stopped myself and my family to watch the news because it produced nothing but panic. I advised them to stay home and act upon the precautionary measures.

Days went by, the lockdown was still there; the shops, malls, institutions everything remained closed.

Seeing the situation, the government took many steps and online education was one of them too. My university conducted online sessions to complete our semester and indeed the efforts and endeavors my teachers did were highly appreciative. I am getting best grades today just because of the cooperating and hardworking staff.

Other than that, I myself have never been in crowds frequently, always preferred my personal space, and socialization never really mattered to me. But now I am feeling the importance of all these things and how I had been lacking in them. This sudden change made me realize how important it is to make friends, to get along with people..

The one thing that distance did, was that it brought me and many people closer to Allah. I spend most of my time reciting the Quran and offering prayers.

The people are getting distant but we should understand that it is for our own benefit. If distance can keep us safe, so let it be. But unfortunately, some illiterate citizens do not understand this thing and they keep on showing careless behaviour.

And, distance is just a test, to see how far love can travel...

Social distancing is just a tough period considering the fact that human beings are social animals. But we need to act sanely and take all the measures that are going to benefit us and our future generations. I have a strong belief in Allah who will alleviate our problems. We are not only supposed to think about ourselves, but also think and care about others. Be a human being not a selfish being.

We should also pray to Allah to forgive our sins. Indeed, He is merciful. I don't know what science says or what doctors believe. I won't say much, but I just want to ask some questions that you should ask yourself too. I hope you will get the answers right away.

Are we living in a just society?

As leaders, are we giving justice to the lower class?

As judges, have we stopped favoring the upper class?

As professionals have we been faithful to our jobs?

Have we stopped thinking selfishly?

As a leader, have we taken appropriate steps to stop illegal target killing? Or those who have been killed, have they been given the proper justice?

As a citizen, are we acting upon the rules and regulations?

As a good citizen, do we do something that benefits others? (Other than those good deeds that you do just for your own interest)

At last, as a Muslim, what are we doing for the benefit of other fellow Muslims?

Why have we forgotten that day when we all have to be answerable for each and every single act that we have done in this world?

Maybe, this pandemic is a warning for us; all is not lost, and ALLAH has given us the chance to return, to deny, to admit and to be a true human being....

STAY SAFE!

About “The Literary Fulcrum”

The Literary Fulcrum (TLF) is a biannual literary journal of the Department of English and Literary Studies (DELS) which caters to the following genres of Literature:

- Poetry
- Short Stories
- Non-Fiction Prose
- Comic Fiction
- Drama/Plays
- Travelogues
- Literature of the Pandemic
- Argumentative Writings:
Speeches/Debates

Submission Guidelines

Authors are required to send submissions:

1. In proper English with a special focus on grammar and vocabulary.
2. Should adhere to the standard format of their chosen genre of writing, for example, a short story should contain its essential constituents: setting, characterization, dialogue, conflict, and resolution. The same applies to other literary genres such as plays and comic fiction, and
3. Essays, Travelogues (1st person/3rd Person), Non-Fiction Prose, and Argumentative Writings should contain a logical sequence of writing e.g. Introduction, Middle, and Conclusion.
4. The authors are encouraged to make abundant use of literary devices, especially in fictional pieces, to enhance their work.
5. All submissions (apart from poems) must be of a reasonable length. The preferred word limit of prose works is 1000-1500
6. The authors must clearly mention their affiliation: name, designation (in case of faculty), batch, and program of study on the manuscript.

Review Process

The reviewing process will be completed within a few weeks after which the authors will receive detailed feedback on their work along with the editors’ decision. It is advised that the manuscript be thoroughly proofread before submission to avoid any inconvenience.

Call for Submissions

Deadline for submissions for 2 nd Edition of TLF (Spring) 31st December 2021	Deadline for submissions for 3 rd Edition of TLF (Fall) 1st July 2021
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Send your submissions to
tlf@umt.edu.pk

PATRON'S MESSAGE

I would like to congratulate DELS on the successful launch of its first magazine: 'The Literary Fulcrum. As the title suggests, TLF promises to be a multidimensional platform for literature enthusiasts. The magazine offers a diverse range of creative expressions: prose, poems, plays and much more! However, its greatest attribute is its modernity and contemporaneity!

Dr. Muhammad Aslam

Former Rector, University of Management and Technology, Lahore

Send your submission to

tlf@umt.edu.pk