



SHAHEENS QUARTERLY

**For Generians,
By Generians**



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From the Editor

Welcome Readers! In front of you is a brand new copy of senior section's own Shaheens Quarterly. If you're unsure what this is, that's okay. In July 2020, as COVID-19 raged, Misha Asim (O-level, 2021) decided to finally make one of her dreams a reality. Thus, was born Shaheens Quarterly, a student led newsletter, for students.

The theme for Issue 1, Volume 3 was "Metamorphosis". The past year and a half has been a transformative period. Seemingly, with all the carnage we see in the news, nothing good happened due to the pandemic. But that's not true, is it?

It taught everyone the significance of life, time and perseverance. Most importantly, I believe we collectively emerged as much stronger human beings than we imagined ourselves to be.

The butterfly, the inspiration behind this theme, is so beautiful. But remember when it was an insignificant, rather ugly caterpillar?

The following pages tell this tale of perseverance, hard work and in the end, the final blooming. Aaliyan Rizvi writes about visiting an orphanage and how transformative a trip it was. Amna Azam, in "Karachi: The Teenager" paints a vivid portrait of our continuously evolving home city. And Rabia Lakhani's "Black Swan" will keep you wondering till the end.

Finally, to pay homage to our founding editor, I sat down for a chat with Misha. Her responses were hilarious, illuminating, honest and, quite controversial.

Happy reading!

Zainab Zaidi

If the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is that in the middle of difficulties lie opportunities. Kudos to the editorial team of Shaheens Quarterly Society for providing a platform to our talented writers to publish their captivating stories and poems. Having read the previous volumes, I am inspired by the depth and maturity in my students penmanship. I'm sure that penning down their thoughts must have been cathartic, as has been reading these gems for the audience.

May Allah bless you all for not giving up and setting an example for others to follow.

Ms Farnaz Akhtar

Former Headmistress Senior Section

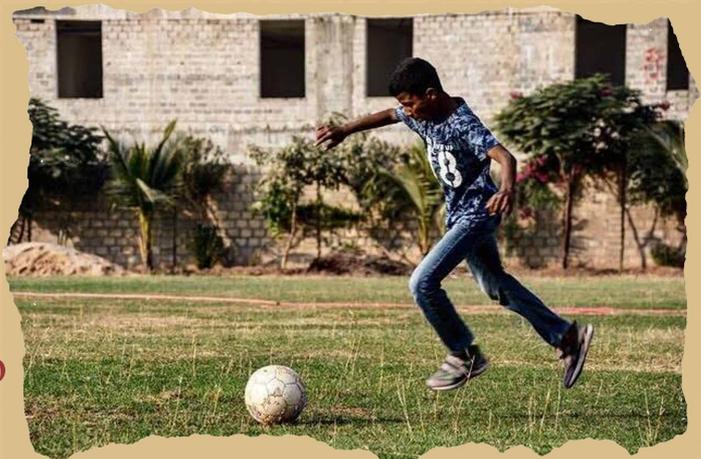
The Thankful and the Thankless

“I really need new shoes!”, I exclaimed to my mother. We were outside Fixit Family Home, an orphanage in Malir. I was due to interview some of the children and the caretakers. My quip about the shoes didn't sound unusual at the time. Two hours later, I would be completely changed. After all, unless you are incredibly heartless, seeing the myth of the orphan - a little, desolate, broken child who has lost everything in life, must strike a deep chord within you.

The future that this orphanage aspires to give its wards is to pull them out of the depths of poverty and gloom and allow them to walk with other kids their age.

As I entered the orphanage, I sensed joy and gratitude in the atmosphere - which was a surprising sentiment. The stereotype that orphan homes are drab and bleak places was shattered at that moment.

The keeper of the place told us the story of each child's parents, most of whom befell a tragic death. Many were involved in accidents but some were murdered. He continued, “When they came to us, they were not mentally





stable. But they have greatly improved now and continue to do so, slowly but steadily.”

Interacting and mingling with the children took away

all the darkness in my heart. They were so ambitious, with dreams of becoming doctors and army commandos. Some even wanted to come back, after growing up, to the organization that sheltered them.

“What do you want to become when you grow up?” I asked. “I want to be a volunteer for Fixit so that I can help people” replied Gul Muhammad.

Only gratitude flowed from their little faces when I asked about improvements at the orphanage. Better food? Better teachers? Better clothes?

The unanimous answer was, “We have everything we need and we thank our caretakers for it”. I felt a nail driving into my heart, remembering my insistence that I needed new shoes earlier.

An article about Fixit cannot be complete without mentioning its founder, Alamgir Khan. He started Fixit in 2016. To collect the funds for the Fixit Family Home, he and his team of volunteers would even collect money campaigning on the roadside! The

goal of his orphanage is to “train children to become doctors and engineers so that they can survive in this competitive world. As Barack Obama said, “A life so blessed must be spent in the service of others.”



That one day was one of the most character-building moment in my life. It taught me to appreciate the little things in life and to dedicate time and effort to charitable causes. But above all, no matter how dark life gets or how much we lose, there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

Aaliyan Rizvi



Aaliyan Rizvi (bottom seventh) with Alamgir Khan (bottom fourth) at Fixit Family Home.

Black Swan

I saw your interrogation. You managed to convince them of your innocence, quite masterfully I must say. You never expected to get caught, did you? But then, the police assumed you were just an ex-husband. A ballet accident in Moscow has nothing to do with an L.A based entrepreneur.

I knew the truth the moment I saw it on the news. You know that I know. Don't bother denying it. Your eyes reveal way too much.

What went wrong though? Were you so foolish that you spent five years planning a murder, only to forget that she was a star? Or were you so invested in dulling her bright shine that you did not realize the media would pounce on it? Doesn't matter now, does it?

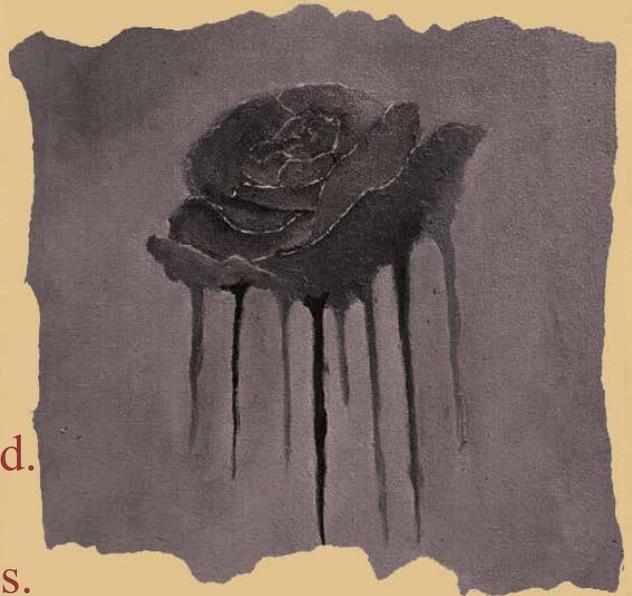
Drink your tea, come on. I am not trying to poison you, as much as you deserve it.

I have to thank you. You do have some class. You made sure her death complimented the dramatic life she lived.

A loose floorboard, and down she went, feather, wings, gowns. She was the Black Swan.

You want to know how I knew it was you? I remember your

audition tape. You stood out in the entirety of the hundred plus candidates. You had far too much flair, more than necessary. I remember you standing on the darkened stage, a lighter in your hand, illuminating your face. You were looking at the light, transfixed. Calm. Cool. Collected. And when you spoke, it was cold, emotionless.



“ I will not kill you at your weakest, oh no.”

Flick. The flame rose higher.

“I will let you get back on your feet. Help you even.”

Flick. You stared at the flame with a psychopathic excitement.

“And when you reach the peak of your success—”

Flick. You softly blew the flame out, your smile getting larger with taunting anticipation.

You let the silence stretch out. When you next spoke, it was barely a whisper.

“You will be no more.”

Clang. The lighter dropped, dousing you in darkness.

You see, the moment I saw that “lighter” in the folds of her dress, I knew. Yours are always custom made.

Text by Rabia Lakhani

Artwork by Aimen Idrees

Chatting With Misha Asim

Misha Asim is the founding editor of Shaheens Quarterly. She graduated from Generation's in 2021, and is pursuing her A-levels at Nixor College. She's an artist, in all senses of the word. Misha loves writing and painting, often using these mediums to champion women's and trans rights. To converse with her is one of the most interesting and fascinating experiences one can have. She blogs on Instagram, [@fairytalesfromkhi](#)



Interviewed by Zainab Zaidi on 31 October, 2021.

1. What did you aim to achieve with the newsletter?

My goal was to set up a platform that was run by students, for students. It would provide them with the maximum artistic freedom, as well the chance to showcase their talents in the underrated field of journalism.

2. What are your expectations from the upcoming volumes?

My “successors” could not have been a better team, equipped with very talented individuals, whom I also cherish and respect greatly as peers. With the upcoming volumes, it would be great to see the social issue column strengthen as there is still so much that we need to start having conversations about, particularly within youth. I hope the newsletter reaches newer limits with regards to content and more students, especially unrecognized talent, are discovered and encouraged to participate.

3. What makes you say “I really need to write now!”?

It's mostly a very scattered thinking process and my write ups tend to be an amalgamation of thoughts I manage to scribble down on my phone as I'm about to fall asleep, combined with random bursts of inspiration I extract from day to day life settings. I think what really boosts me though, is sensory overload. My thoughts quite often get tangled and I have to put them down on paper to make some sense of them.

4. What purchase of Rs. 1000 or less has most positively impacted your life in recent memory?

Mazzedar Haleem's biryani makes me look forward to the end of the week (when my mom allows me to get it).

5. Which books have had a great influence on your life?

- Off the top of my head, I can think of *Pir-e-Kamil*. It was translated in English and titled “The Perfect Mentor”. The book impacted me as a Muslim because I loved the way the reader got to embark on a spiritual discovery with the main character. Most importantly, it was a great way for me to look at my religion in a different light. I think Islam is always instilled within the youth through fear. We need to focus more on promoting it for the beautiful religion of peace and empathy it is, which will help people fall in love with it rather than be scared of it.

- Elif Shafak's “*10 Minutes and 38 Seconds In This Strange World*” is a close second. The author's writing style greatly inspires me to polish my own and her command over literary devices really resonates with the way I feel. Overall, the novel tells a beautiful story that made me realize just how impactful and liberating books can be, in terms of making people empathetic.

6. What is an uncommon habit or an absurd thing that you love?

I like to read the endings of stories and movies before starting them. Forgive me for shielding my heart from the unexplainable hurt sad endings can cause! But I just can't invest my time, heart and soul in something that will leave me with a gut wrenching feeling. Also, in my defense, real life is disappointing enough; I don't think our creative escapes need to reinforce the hurt too :p

7. If you could have a giant billboard anywhere with anything on it, what would it say and why?

One of my core and fundamental beliefs: "Biryani Without Aaloo Rules" in big, bold, capitalized letters.

8. In the last five years, what new belief, behavior, or habit has most improved your life?

In 2019 I was lucky enough to go on the (seemingly last) pre-COVID Hajj. I don't think I can choose anything else that had a greater impact on me than that did. Being present in the holiest place on earth, a lot of things about my religion started to feel very real to me. It greatly changed my perspective in terms of how much importance I gave to living in this world. I don't mean that it made me think that achieving worldly goals was of no use, but I did definitely start taking losses with a lot more patience, and successes with a lot more gratitude. I believe it also made me value practicing contentment rather than constantly trying to compete with others. I became kinder to myself and stopped being insecure for having different goals and not wanting what "everyone" else did. That took off a lot of pressure, and I began leaving matters to Allah much more.

9. If you could choose anyone, who would you pick as your mentor?

I firmly believe in the saying, "Don't meet your heroes". It's just always stuck with me, so if I were to choose 'anyone', I would choose someone who has already mentored me: Ms. Umaima Javed. I can honestly say that she's had the most impact on me during my school years, and has greatly encouraged me to improve upon talents I did not realize I possessed

Becoming

The fallen angel
With tears of glass,
And a heart of ice
Eyes of brass.
Hair of silk,
And a mind of gold;
Oh fallen angel,
Someone was told
Your wings of gems,
And your heart filled with pain,
Shall return to you
So, don't be in vain.
Whatever you did
Shall remain with you,
But whatever you'll do
Shall remain too.
So, oh fallen angel
With a mind of dirt,
Forget the past
Don't let yourself be hurt.

*Text by Eeman Ali
Azfar*

*Photograph by Zainab
Mazahir*



Metamorphosis

Unearthing the goodness we all perceive
Does change yet indeed deceive
For all that we expect, shall achieve
Save for those who don't believe

Like a caterpillar readying its cocoon
We shall be tested quite soon
The darkness of that very cocoon
Shall we see in our lives, fret not, nor swoon

While change inevitable, choice lies with those
Who exploit change, and transform
As with darkness comes hope, know
For that indeed, has been the norm

And as the butterfly, a caterpillar reformed
Trusts itself to the extent of paralysis
A day comes when its beauty, reborn
Well and behold, metamorphosis



*Text by Ayaan Arif
Artwork by Areesha
Misbah*

Karachi: The Teenager

I read somewhere that all places have a gender, all cities have a personality.

Karachi is a messed up teenage boy, still struggling to be a person, still searching for himself. He's made of a hundred stories, yet he's still searching for his story. This boy, he's a world of emotions. Sometimes melancholy, anger or jealousy. But other moments, he's overflowing with charm and affinity.

The onlookers however, only see his bouyant self - a young man who's flirtatious, pleasant and charismatic, one who knows no pain, one who is the centre of the party.

And they're right, somewhat. Karachi, the boy, he's still learning to control the turbulence within. He's still treading lightly on the field of truth, from where can emerge his honest self. He feels so much more than they see, but he's still learning that evasive art of expression.

Maybe he is afraid. They all expect his vibrance and nothing of the darkness. Whenever they do glimpse it, they're astonished. They jeer, they mock, and he shoves it all back in.



He's terrified of that reaction, so he doesn't take the risk again. Perhaps, if they had accepted him, what a richness that would've lent to the world around them! His darkness, his tears, his anger, it all has a grace to it. He isn't perfect, but he's still a child, still a teenager, still changing. If only they could've understood his adolescence! But Karachi will learn, and we will learn. Eventually.

Text by Amna Azam

Photography by Khubaib Hassan

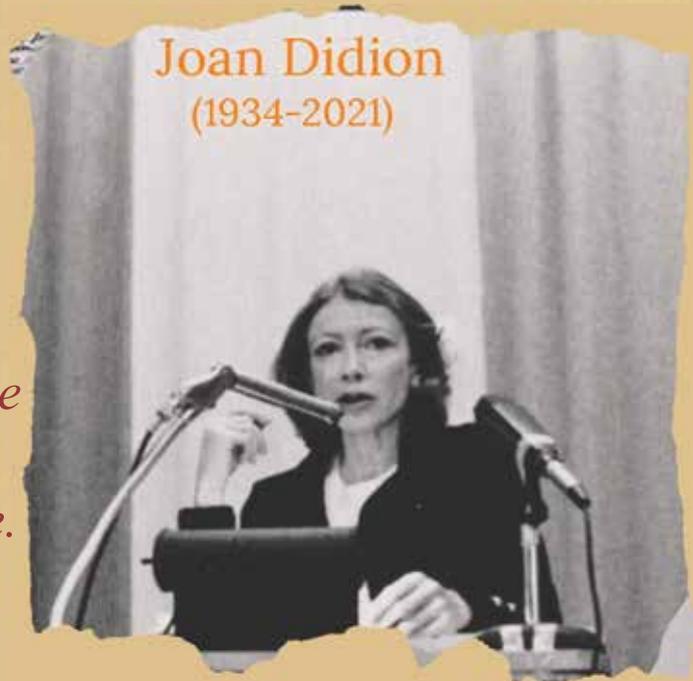
Attention Senior Section!

Are you a writer or a storyteller? Do you create comics? What about painting or photography? Do you feel as if you don't have a space to showcase all your talents? Well, now you do!

Send in your stories, essays and art around "Dreams" by February 10, 2022 to be featured in Shaheens Quarterly. You can email us at shaheensquarterly@gmail.com

Obituary: Joan Didion (1934-2021)

“We are imperfect mortal beings, aware of that mortality even as we push it away, failed by our very complication, so wired that when we mourn our losses we also mourn, for better or for worse, ourselves. As we were. As we are no longer. As we will one day not be at all.”



Once every iconoclast's death, a posthumous buzz ensues. It's the type of buzz that tickles your ears on a silent night. Once every iconoclast's death, as we begin to extract a very mortal artist from his or her work, of pensiveness begins to seep into the larger cultural conversation. It's kind of pensiveness that you find yourself absorbed in after finishing a good book. Joan Didion's death was no different. Everything reeked of smoldering cigarettes and Californian terrain and that aching pensiveness the day she died.

Joan Didion was an acclaimed American author, journalist and anthropologist who rose to prominence in the 1960s after winning an essay contest sponsored by Vogue magazine.

Most famous for her story-like journalistic techniques, Didion went on to pioneer a trenchant critique of American society found in collections like *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*.

Didion, in all her radical skepticism and laconic prose, gave birth to a cultural moment that took the United States by storm. Amidst the dizzying throes of a 20th century America, Didion's detached speculations on race, gender and politics shaped an entire counterculture. But the real beauty of Didion's work lies in her masterful storytelling, in lucid, throbbing prose. She managed, ever so elegantly, to capture the rawness of a moment, replete with the emotions attached to it, and thread together a single narrative. Her prose ranged from themes of womanhood, California, to love and the realness of it all.

So, let us grieve like Didion and celebrate loss and stories and contrarianism. For Didion, let us grieve like Didion.

“Grief turns out to be a place none of us know until we reach it.”

by: Nusaiba Siddiqui