

## Korean horror film: "The tale of 2 sisters"

By ADRA COOPER | STAFF WRITER

With the leaves changing colors and a chill entering the air, I have lately found myself in a Halloween kind of mood. Being that this is the appropriate time of year for all things scary, I decided to treat myself to a spine-chilling feature film.

In recent years, Asian horror films have become popular in the U.S., as demonstrated by the success of the American remake of the Japanese horror flick "Ringu." I had yet to jump on the Asian import bandwagon, so I checked out the Korean movie "The Tale of Two Sisters" from our very own Hege Library.

The film, made in 2003 and directed by Ji-Woon Kim, follows the story of two sisters,



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Soo-mi and Soo-yeon, who have recently returned to the home of their father and stepmother after spending time in a mental institution. The stepmother treats the sisters cruelly while the father remains reticent and does little to intervene. The house itself is dark and creepy and a ghost seems to be lurking within its walls.

The cinematography and soundtrack of Sisters are the film's strong points. The shots are both beautiful and eerie, fitting the mood of the story perfectly. The lighting and sets are gloomy and dark, which adds to the brooding ambience of the film.

The acting in the film is also superb. Each actor delivers a noteworthy performance that further carries the complex and confusing plot. Actress Yeom Jeong-A, who plays the stepmother, stands out in particular as she performs the role with the intensity that it needs.

Judging from the cover of the movie, which depicts a family portrait of the two sisters smothered in blood, I expected a gruesome tale that would shock and sicken me. Instead, the film proved to be much more psychologically horrific. While there are a few creepy scenes that involve blood and a ghoulish-woman, rarely did I feel frightened.

Instead, I felt utterly confused. The film starts with one storyline, but as

the movie progresses, the story slowly turns completely upside down. The audience suddenly realizes that the characters are not who they seem to be.

In fact, the audience does not fully understand the plot until its final moments. The story is told backwards, so the last scene is actually the beginning of the story timeline. While this plot method maintains suspense, it definitely bewilders the audience, which works against the film's effectiveness.

Once the credits started rolling, I had a vague, unconstrued understanding of what I had just spent the past two hours watching.

Feeling lost and unsettled, I knew where to turn for reassurance: the Internet. On the Web, I was able to find several essays and reviews on Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) that explained and interpreted the many twists and turns of the movie. One reviewer had claimed to have viewed the film more than 15 times and has written a 6-page explanation of the plot.

After reading this, I understood the gaps that I had missed in the story. This newfound comprehension enabled me to fully recognize what a rich, layered and well-crafted a film "A Tale of Two Sisters" truly is. This movie definitely requires multiple viewings, and I myself plan to re-watch it in order to pick up on clues and signs that I had missed

in the first screening.

So if you are seeking a casual, run-of-the-mill horror flick that provides predictable scares, than this film is not for you. If, however, you desire a psychological thriller that will make you think, then look no further. While it may trick you, it will certainly be a treat.



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## Kircher explores humanists in recent book

By DENISE FISHER | STAFF WRITER

Ciao tutti! Here's a story of two good friends: Francesco Petrarch, the father of humanism, and Giovanni Boccaccio, best known for "The Decameron," a collection of raucous love stories he compiled in 1350 in the far reaches of mercantile Italy.

Timothy Kircher, professor of history, gave a lecture titled "Adventures through the 14th Century Italian Renaissance" on Oct. 25 in the Founders Hall Gallery.

Kircher provided an overview of his latest book, "The Poet's Wisdom: the Humanist, the Church, and the Formation of Philosophy in the Early Renaissance." Ten years in the making, his book presents Petrarch's and Boccaccio's philosophies and describes their role in the origin of humanism.

"I wanted to demonstrate that these humanists have something important to say philosophically that is not often recognized in scholarship or in understanding the content of contemporary religion," Kircher said. "The moral and the philosophical are the center of the book. Humanists contributed to the understanding of subjective experience, the power of time in formulating moral decisions, more than one's sense of eternity, and the effect of our emotional life on reasoning."

Kircher invited audience ques-

tions throughout his lecture and cleared up misconceptions about early humanists.

"The humanist critique of hypocrisy, living up to ideals adequately by the individual, is their focus," Kircher said of Petrarch's and Boccaccio's break from church teaching. "They were raised in the church culture, but they took issue with the ecclesiastical latitude of expression — with the higher clergy."

"They were critics of Christendom rather than Christianity," Kircher said when asked about similarities between humanists and Voltaire. "Voltaire, on the other hand, wanted to get rid of the church."

Another audience member asked how Dominicans rationalism related to empiricism.

"Rationality had nothing to do with empiricism," Kircher said and went on to explain why humanists' acknowledgement of time, subjectivity and emotion set them apart from Dominicans' focus on rational dominance, objective certainty and immutable

knowledge.

Kircher showed slides of Giotto's Bell Tower, in central Florence, with its repeating sculpted tableaux of Bible scenes, occupations and planetary maps that represent ordering society and the cosmos with "with frightening rigidity."

"I knew surface facts about Dominicans, enough to know a bit of their history," said sophomore history major Melissa Alexander, "but I didn't know much about the stance Petrarch, Boccaccio, and other humanist writers took against a seemingly cold and un-

feeling 'order' of all things."

Kircher ended his lecture by comparing two 14th-century tales that cast women as either wicked or virginal.

"The Princess and her Stepmother" is a moralistic story in which a jealous stepmother chops off a princess's hands, and the Virgin Mary restores the princess's hands.

Boccaccio's "The Scholar and the Widow" is "The Decameron's" longest story. The scholar takes revenge on his lover who forgets him and leaves him in the winter cold. He locks her unprotected on a tower roof in the heat of summer. The scholar says vengeance "trumps the feeling of compassion."

"Boccaccio writes that the women (narrators in the story) were disturbed by the story and felt compassion for the widow even though they felt she was wrong," Kircher said. "Dominicans, on the other hand, state the moral of the story rather than evoke thoughtful consideration by the individual."

However, Boccac-

cio's scholar does place blame on the widow.

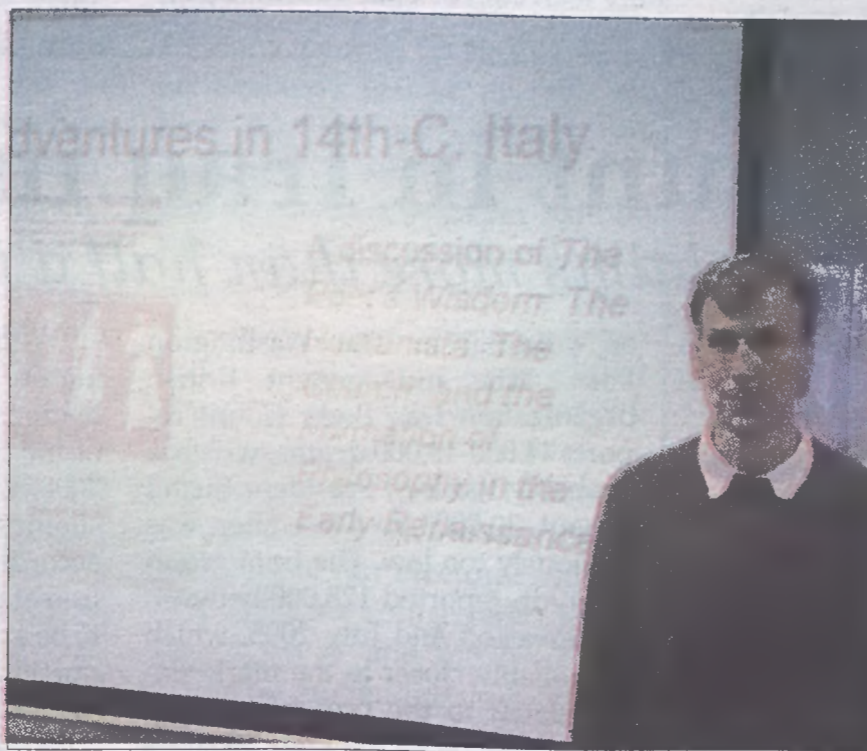
"A persistent presence in the history of western thought has been that women are responsible for others and take the blame when things go wrong," said Nancy Daukas, associate professor of philosophy. "Certainly, these major trends continue to shape our current society, although it may not be as obvious or as ubiquitous as once before."

Heather Hayton, assistant professor of English, encouraged her students to attend Kircher's lecture to get an enriched viewpoint and the chance to look through a multidisciplinary lens as they study of Umberto Eco's "The Name of the Rose."

"Humanists were the first to examine textual accuracy," Kircher said. "It's fundamental. How much do we learn about ourselves and our values from the authorities in the community in which we live, and how much do we learn on our own by trial and error from our experience?"

"I think humanists speak to values of tolerance and diversity — a part of the Guilford ethos," Kircher said.

"When you read his book," Alexander said, "a real love for the subject emerges, and because of that his work is void of the dryness and monotony of a lot of research."



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KIRCHER HAS TAUGHT EUROPEAN HISTORY AT GUILFORD SINCE 1989.