

A SINGLE MAN

“A few times in my life, I’ve had moments of absolute clarity... when for a few brief seconds, the silence drowns out the noise and I can feel rather than think,” mutters George (Colin Firth) in the closing minutes of *A Single Man* (2009), Tom Ford’s first foray into film. Inspired by the 1964 Christopher Isherwood novel of the same name, the movie narrates the day in the life of a man whose partner of sixteen years, Jim (Matthew Goode), dies abruptly in a car accident. He has sunk into depression and has decided to commit suicide, but he has to first make it through this last day.

Ford, on the other hand, displays a clear and vibrant technique, for instance, his use of color and saturation heightens beauty’s purpose as the savior of human pains.

George is a man of the arts. He is a successful English teacher in Los Angeles who lives in a strikingly beautiful modern suburban glasshouse, the only thing he has left from Jim, an architect. During his last twenty-four-hours he vacillates on his fatal decision whenever he encounters beauty along his way, an ecstasy elegantly revealed to the eye by a frenetic yet subtle saturation of colors. His life and routine —what is killing him actually— is depicted in a muted and poised color palette of soft ambers, honest light blues and real greens, a relatively approachable vision of life. His shirts are crisp white and his ties as dark as his coffee, every morning he “adjusts to what is expected of George and how he is to behave.” But as said before, there are “moments of absolute clarity,” where his world becomes alive in colors and beauty. It could be as

simple as the smile and eyeliner of a secretary passing on a message (18:53), as intense as the lust woken by the chiseled bare torsos of students playing tennis on campus (20:18); a girl's sky-blue patent-leather Mary Janes at the bank (38:30), the smell of a dog on his way to do the groceries (42:15) the simplest rose that welcomes you at the porch (56:10); sometimes even the most pedestrian things in life have charm.

A Single Man not only succeeds at making a delicate and transparent portrait of gay grief but human grief. Every step into George's reassurance is a waltz in which tones and shades, saturation and desaturation lead the dance. And just like that George walks into the zenith of the movie and embraces, "I could never make these moments last. But like everything, they fade."