

COLLAGE

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MTSU's Journal for the Creative Arts

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Contents

Poetry

My Nature is Flammable Innocence—Shelley Cook 4

The Czech Magician—Ehren Bivins 7

Everlasting Gobstopper—Julie Nastro 8

Three American Haiku—Andrew Trebing 10

Lady Lazarus—Mitzi M. Cross 12

Start the Bidding—Ehren Bivins 16

Rapunzel's New Butch Haircut—Christi Underdown 19

samy bangs and moonshine—Devon Koren 20

Giovanni's Song—Ron Fields 22

Letter to the Pacing Images—Julie Nastro 25

The Parties in This Town are Some of the Best in the

World—Ehren Bivins 26

Cosmology—Anaxarchus of Abdera 28

Genesis—Josh Cochran 43

Heidegger's House—Leaumer Typon 46

Photography

Untitled—sieves 5

Monte Sano—Alicia Fayth Reed 9

New Orleans—Teresa Mason 13

Flower—Toni Michelle Purvis 14

Untitled—sieves 17

Great Grandmother Reynolds—Alicia Fayth Reed 24

Memphis—Derrick L. Wilson 29

Untitled—Toni Michelle Purvis 30

Untitled—Keith Russell 33

Untitled—sieves 42

Tibetan Woman—Teresa Mason 47

Prose

easy—B.W. Carter 31

seven stories—Devon Koren 40

Essay

With Friends and Neighbors

Like These...: Three Cinematic

Views of Infidelity—Jared Wilson

Translation

Spring 1938—Tom Strawman, translated from Bertolt Brecht's *Fruhling* 1938 15

Mixed Media

Self Portrait—Teresa Mason 11

Untitled—Jonathan Griffith 23

Painting

One Angel's Flight—Jeremy Cowart 6

Contramarchar—Crespin Galindo 18

Untitled—Jeremy Cowart 27

My Nature is Flammable

Innocence—

Shelley Cook

My nature is flammable innocence—
dried pineapple and apricot chunks—
call me queen of the mango munch-
plump goddess of fertility;
gentle, sexful votive,
a furtive motif,
and to glancers—
a charming
Venus
bee.



Stieves
Untitled

The Czech Magician

Ehren Bivins

The grinning magician
winds clasps twirls
his fingers about a mysterious stick.
He has come to this confused country
as a visitor from Prague.

The humming lights battle above the grim geometry of his position and the room.

He calls everyone "friend"
but his Slavic charm is lost
on the cackling crowd of an audience.
They are all oblivious.
He performs:
a dove becomes a red-starred, hulking tank.
Tanks have never run down Main Street here.
Another:
he makes two crying children disappear inside a grey box.
Here they do not hear the crying of children.

He hides his velour gloves
Amidst his top hat.
No one pays attention—
They are lost in absences of minor crises.
They are in a drought of pure thought
and a famine of magic.
The Czech Magician frees a wide smile
of tempered nausea across his powdered face,
and pulls a string of barbed wire out of his hat...
bloody with human lips.



Jeremy Cowart
One Angel's Flight

Everlasting Gobstopper

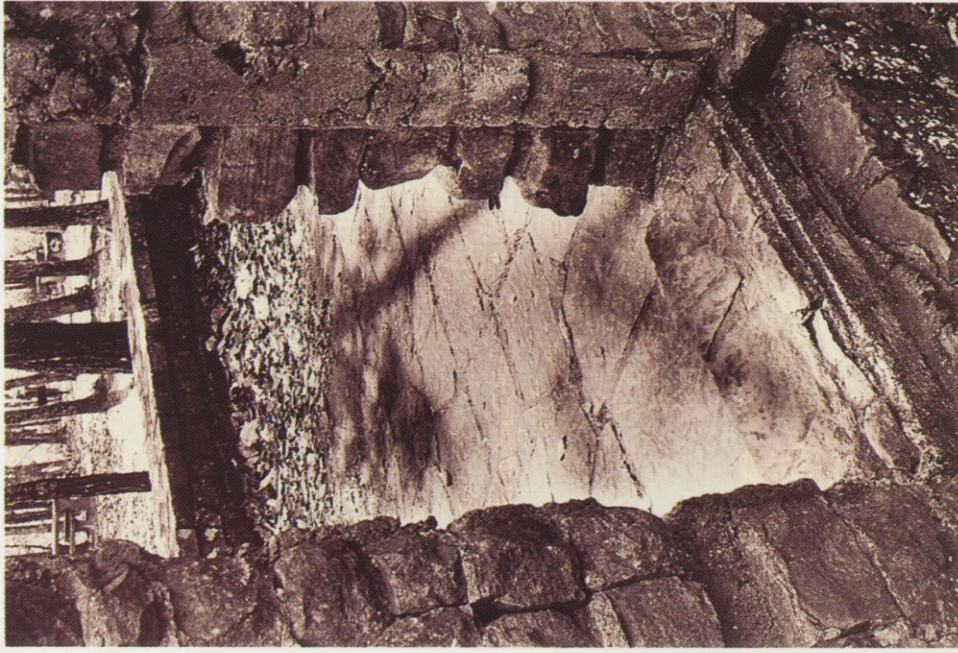
Julie Nastri

then:
slip & glide
down the creamy slide
where i became an estrogen-sized charlie.
midair adrift above the bridge, i drooled
through duties with daydreams

now:
("my relation with willy wonka
goes back to the honk-honka
of his liltng and candyjammed horn.")

how slanted i stood in the faraway daze
of a sweet-toothed phase, leaning toward him.
floating between whichever points,
& becoming a miserable failure at connect the dots.
choking instead and swallowing air
(the gobstopper didn't go over well),
another figment of an overflowing imagination
was unable to facilitate my sloppy stumble
into the present—

when I arrived, all I could puke up was words.



Alicia Fayth Reed
Monte Sano

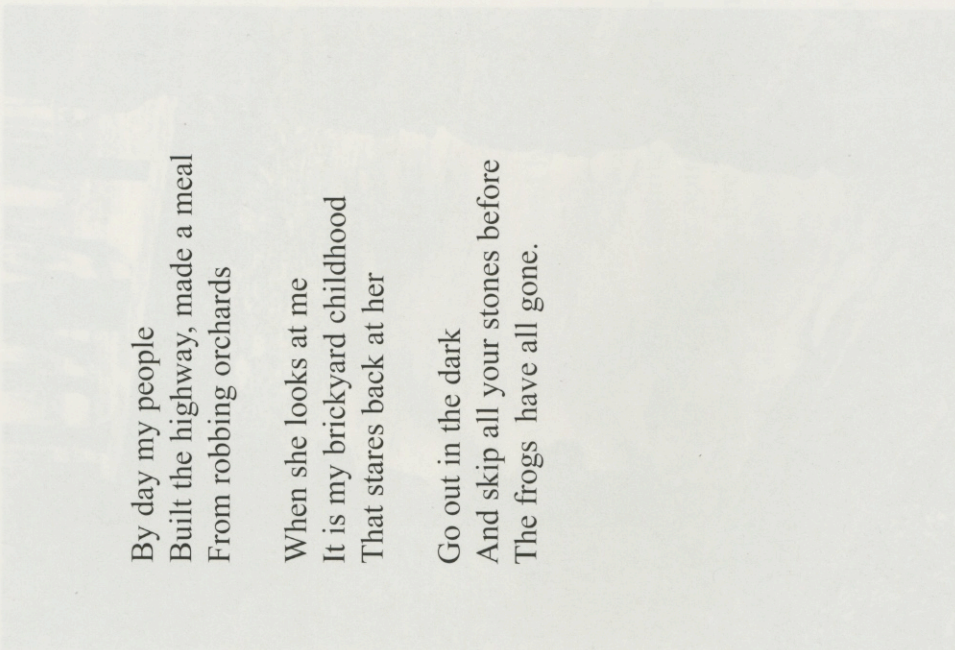
Three American Haiku

Andrew Trebing

By day my people
Built the highway, made a meal
From robbing orchards

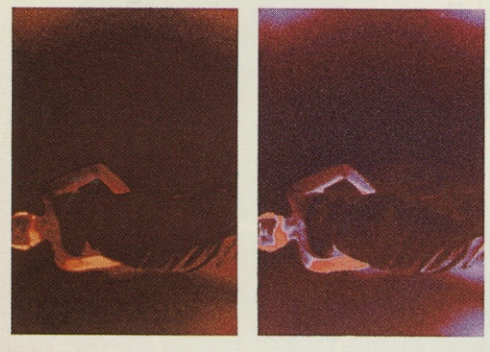
When she looks at me
It is my brickyard childhood
That stares back at her

Go out in the dark
And skip all your stones before
The frogs have all gone.



2016 MASON

and I can men like air. — Sylvia Plath



Teresa Mason
Self Portrait

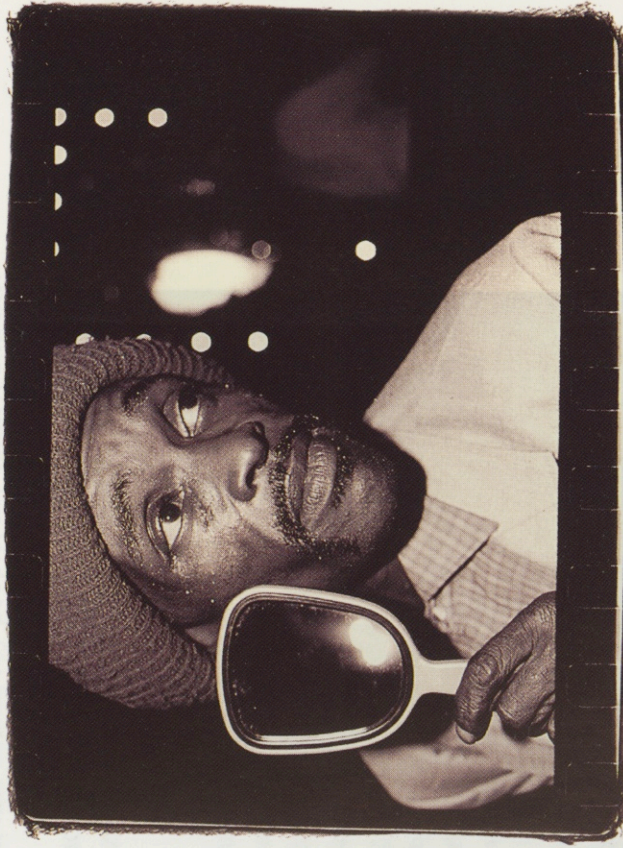
through bounds of metaphor
to make sense of her world
Was she I say? Presumably.

Lady Lazarus

Mitzi M. Cross

“...like the phoenix I rise with my red hair,
and I eat men like air.” —Sylvia Plath

Did she really believe she was like a cat? That her body could survive the decay of her growing self-contempt. Like a laboratory rat held under a bell jar. Truth layered in her suffering, came spinning its way out in words. Did daddy's hands cover her mouth in those dark years of self discovery? When her breasts swelled and her dreams were of flying, of running, of drowning, of falling off and then walking away. Her thoughts mix the isolation of a frozen pond with the fires of burning flesh in Germany. Spanning through her short life, wading through pounds of metaphors to make sense of her world. Was she Lady Lazarus?



Teresa Mason
New Orleans

Spring 1938

Bertolt Brecht, translated from German by Tom Strawman

I
Today, early Easter Sunday,
A snowstorm went suddenly over the island.
Snow lay between the green hedges. My younger son
Fetched me to a small apricot tree at the house wall,
Away from a poem, in which I was pointing my finger
At those who are preparing a war that
Threatens to annihilate
The continent, this island, my people, my family, and me.
Silently
We place a sack
Over the freezing tree.

II
Rain clouds hang over the sound, but the garden
Is gilded by sun. The pear trees
Have green leaves but as yet no blooms.
In contrast the cherry trees
Are blooming but have no leaves. Clusters of white
Seem to spring from barren branches.
Over the curling waters of the sound glides
A small boat with patched sail.
Commingled with the twitter of starlings
Is the distant thunder
From practicing gunboats
Of the Third Reich.

III
From the willows near the sound
The little screech owl calls out often on these spring nights.
According to superstitious farmers,
The owl's cry is heard by those
Who don't have long to live. To me,
Who knows that I have told the truth
About those in power, the death-bird need
Not bring his knowledge first.



Toni Michelle Purvis
Flower

Start the Bidding

Ehren Bivins

“Start the bidding at one dollar,” the M.C. says and is promptly replaced. A new M.C. is ushered in (straight from school) and fervor for his work has replaced the will to live.

“Can I git two hunnerd for this here cow?”

Mewling from the crowd...

“Do I hear a hunnerd-fiftee...hunnerd fiftee-five—”

Mumbled hisses from the shoddy chairs...

An M.C. who sweats anvils loosens the tricks that he knows.

“Folks, this here heifer is a steeeeeel...she wants ta come on home witch’

A fat woman in row 2 spits. Pshaws.

The hot seat has become spiked. People will get rowdy in fractions of seconds too hot. Sun boils everything in fumes of haybale heat.

“Help me out here, y’all...she’s a beaut...lookit her...”

And all his futilities are chasmed by the guttural cow.

She wobbles. Sick, god, she is so sick.

The cow is made from steel and iron parts.

Her udder is an old moonshine jug with used rubber for teats.

She gurgles Anthrax and her eyes are broken bottles.

Only milk she could produce is sour and poison.

Do not pet her. She digs at your skin with razor-strop teeth if you do.

Her hide is a tattered burlap sack once worn by a derelict with the syph...

The new M.C. has fainted. The cow licks with hefty-bag tongue.

Someone gets the old M.C.

“Start the bidding at one dollar” he chirps.

The crowd relaxes and a metallic moo escapes the world.



Sieves
Untitled

Start the Drama

Elbow Room



Crespín Galindo
Contramarchar

Do not put her. She dug
The crowd is a tattered
The new M.C. has
Someone gets the old M.C.
"Start the bidding at one dollar
The crowd relaxes and a meiotic man escapes the world.

Rapunzel's New Butch Haircut

Christi Underdown

The Knight fell from her tower
and the brambles scratched his face
and he was blind
to the fact that his Lady
had traded in her long skirt
for a pair of cut-offs,
thrown away the family jewels
and ran off to the Bush
to join the other
Amazonians.

sam, bangs, and moonshine

Devon Koren

they were talking about america
those gardener kids
(it's so funny to watch the way their lips change
after you get a little liquor into them)
they're brown-bagging paragraphs
and drinking the poetry down
the mountains in tennessee never really loom,
they just hang
lazily
(still-life)
in the moonshine fog and take a little bit of
wind to the rock
(inopportune blow)
someone left a notice on the door
for vacancy, for vanquishing
sam noticed, stuck a dagger through
(she always wanted to be robin hood
or little luther with his hundred and one
quiz show questionnaire)
the afternoon turns
running cattle down past the tobacco patch
barefoot
the mud in the toes, the red clay seeping through
with wink, with walk
field of clovers, daisies in the sagebrush
they have one week—still sam
whittles away the time with her
pocketknife
and little mary and josephine's noses are sunburnt and that
place where the straps of the bathing suit
criss-crossed
leave the little white x's at the nape of their backs

the swimming hole's still open, though the factory closed down
three weeks ago
there's another kick in
sam's adolescent belly
and she knows rent's not the only thing past due
she flicks the cigarette, tucks the little ones under
and places maternal kisses on the soft brown bangs
matted with sweat on their foreheads
johnny hasn't been seen in seventeen days—
but there's this nasty little hole in the back of the
cookie jar
where everyone suspects he jumped bail
so the seismograph in the town hall
waits
for that earthquake to never happen—
in appalachia it only rains
and only after you've clothespinned
the last
rags of your life
out to dry

Giovanni's Song

Ron Fields

Giovanni Marconi sat in his two room hovel
One warm, Mediterranean night. The song of the
Nightingale was accompanied by the
Gentle ping of his mandolin.

The nightingale's song tells of the forest and the sea.
Giovanni's song told of old, tattered shoes;
Defunct fishing boats with holes in the bottom;
An exile from Sicily during Mussolini's years.

Giovanni's song told of a night at the opera
With his future bride, who later died, and
A shared night together under a cloudless Sicilian sky.
Giovanni's song was for her, I think.

Belladonna, he smiles to himself.
He plays for other un-named beautiful
Ladies in far off places under different skies.
Giovanni cries, and sets down the mandolin.

There will be no more playing tonight.
The nightingale has flown away.
Giovanni slips off his tattered shoes,
Wades into the ocean, and disappears beneath the tide.



Jonathan Griffith
Untitled

Giovanini's Song

Ron Feld

Giovanini's song is his two even level
One way, the other is right, the song of the
Night, it is accompanied by the
Guitar, the mandolin.



Giovanini steps off his battered shoes, and
the ocean, and disappears beneath the tide.

Alicia Fayth Reed

Great Grandmother Reynolds

Letter to the Pacing Images

Julie N^astri

My long lost sweet ex-neverlovers,

We are cookie jars with padlocks. We do not acquiesce to prying hands. We are coasting lonely little shock absorbers; for example, me on my bike around 3 a.m., singing aloud to myself & slurping rain from my face. Or him, for example, as he sits with chocolate milk and combats shock by composing dissonance. An audience seldom exists during these petty moments when we know who we are.

One can only imagine ways to become a ventriloquist for the sake of such moments, to throw perception rather than voice into somebody's space—like dropping a cookie into the reach of a short child.

Therefore, you remain as images pacing holes through the schemas that my mind has concocted of you. I cannot revise these images.

The Parties in This Town are Some of the Best in the World

Ehren Bivins

Blue eyes avalanche over
greying, pasted skin.

The door behind you is a million-mile vault,
atomizing any chance of escape.

Stand away from that door or they will torture you with inquiry.

What you thought were people
become snarling, feral troglodytes
offering thirty-nine-cent drinks
and unpleasantly vague flirtations.

Carry a drink in your hand or they will kill you outright.

Purse your salted lips,
there are no quiet beings here...
five miserable couples moan and yawn
from a room collapsing in roach-filth and blacklite.

Walk around on all fours or the girls will not kiss you.

Raspy, liquor-coated tongues
slop and spin lies in all directions.
You have no one to slander.
No one to make short, short history with.

Bury your feelings and they will bring out sacrificial offerings.



Jeremy Cowart
Untitled

Cosmology

Anaxarchus of Abdera

Probably Plotinus thought so too,
That life is altogether too serious
To waste on quattering strawberries
Or receiving them whole, from a lover's fingers,
Shyly, under sun-stroked leaves.
Divine emanations, he said, inseminate infinity...
Who knows? Maybe there are strawberries
On Mars.



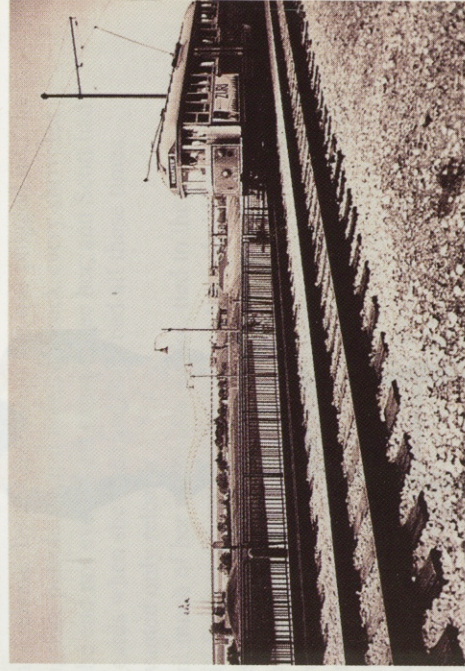
easy

Drew Carter

By the end she wanted a
wall, filled with something
heavy she imagined. By
then the sun had played
its part. By the end she
felt Vanesse spit
because the story was
long. They and he had
done the high company
for a moment, who had
been to because they had
supposed they were going
to. A day after she
had said this to her. She
wasn't sure if she was
completely sure if she was
fully at the end of it. Her
prayers were still in
at least she never let
sharp forked tongues until she was full. Another night of sun for shelter. For
Soul. Vanesse supposed she was killing him even then.

She'd say it. The drops makes it feel like masturbation so you can close
your eyes" as he watched circumstances which were out back — always
out back. Vanesse only meant to bring him comfort for the words were wrong
anymore. Always wrong somehow. His crew had begun to fade even then.

She started at the water-stained ceiling. She heard screaming from
somewhere down the hall, in some tiny shadow-drenched room where name-
less graffiti smeared rubber bands and hit on thin engines seemingly useless
when the prayers were unanswered — uttered by gods although it might and
possibly. She took a moment to reassure herself the screams weren't slipping
out her own pores. Vanesse was subtly aware at times of her problems, and
so passing for such small pluckings no doubt did wonders for her sanity —
for the sake of health, at least. So said those waxen-masked surgeons of



Derrick L. Wilson
Memphis

easy

B.W. Carter

By the end she wanted only release: by the end when she was plugged into the wall, filled with something like petroleum and vomiting back every shriveled breath she managed. By the end not even Scott came to see her, and Scott had been the one left playing cards when she'd earned their bed all those times.

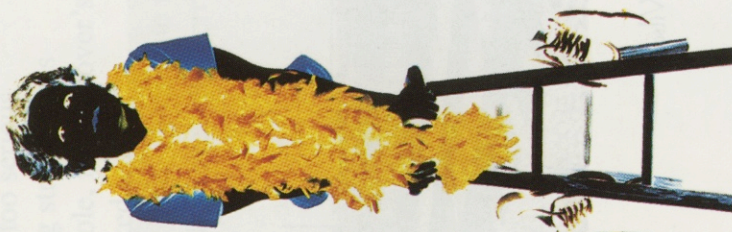
By the end she wanted only release.

But Vanesse spent much of her remainder awake, tied to the rails because the scars were still fresh and oozing from the last time she'd struggled loose. They tied her hands because Scott told them about the pills: the little red ones she held wrapped with cellophane up inside herself. She kept whispering for Scott, who had betrayed her when all she wanted was him — to breathe him, to breathe him. Scott had rode on his black tar horse out of town. Vanesse supposed he'd die more slowly without her.

A serpent uncoiled gingerly from between her legs and slipped across the foot of the bed. She remembered the stories from the back of the bar — stories from the old yellow prophets who murmured through the smoke of such darkly inextricable things as passion, and doom. They murmured into her belly at the end of the night that faith was a wasted ambition, that poppies and potatoes were idols of the fallen. Her mouth stayed dry, like the cool shed skin of men she never dared call lovers. She'd call them, though, and swallow their sharp forked tongues until she was filled. Another night of sins for shelter. For Scott. Vanesse supposed she was killing him even then.

She'd say *The dope makes it feel like masturbation so you can close your eyes* as he watched commercials while they went out back — always out back. Vanesse only meant to bring him comfort, but the words were wrong somehow. Always wrong somehow. His eyes had begun to fade even then.

She stared at the water-stained ceiling. She heard screaming from somewhere down the hall, in some tiny, shadow-drenched room where nameless wraiths wrestled rubber bonds and bit out thin tongues seemingly useless when the prayers went unanswered — unheard by gods almighty in myth and rhetoric. She took a moment to reassure herself the screams weren't slipping out her own pores. Vanesse was subtly aware at times of her problem(s), and so pausing for such small placations no doubt did wonders for her sanity — for the sake of lucidity, at least. So said those waxen-masked sorcerers of



Toni Michelle Purvis
Untitled

whom the prophets at the back of the bar spoke in hushed tones. Sorcerers who took her little red pills and made her instead swallow their brew; forced it up her arms and nodded in collective satisfaction at the stilted sagging of her features. Scott had called her beautiful once — before the slow violent wear of a million miles and men, before Agape House and Cumberland Heights and that somehow stilted sagging of her features. Vanesse had been beautiful once.

It's 6:00, baby.

She looked down, and Scott was a short black lady with a syringe and a smile. On either side of the door orderlies stood chewing gum until the jacke was needed. The short black lady had a badge that flashed in the light. Vanesse ignored the sinuous slide of color along the wall, focused on that one word stamped in brass: MARLENE. She pondered the irony of names in a business such as hers

(*It's 6:00, baby. You wanna sleep, baby.*)

as the short black lady uncorked a slender tube and pushed the needle in. Vanesse only had two or three good veins left, and so most of her buzz nowadays was filtered. Addicts can taste the vivid speed of purity in their blood — Vanesse needed no prophet to tell her that much. When it gushed instead of dribbled, she could almost dream the dignity in her passing. But there was no dignity in tubes, in collapsed arteries and the need for that tedious timeless drip: The sorcerers were sure to tell her this much. Scott's name flashed upon the little black lady's breast, and before she receded into the ashly comatose shades of normalcy Vanesse had time to watch the writhing mass of scales and sibilant promises in the light fixture and think I'm alright, I'm alright, at least you got a bed tonight...

She truly hoped he would die more slowly without her.



Keith Russell
Untitled

With Friends and Neighbors Like These...: Three Cinematic Views of Infidelity

Jared Wilson

"It's a bawdy planet."

-William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*

A few years ago, a close friend informed me that an acquaintance of ours had cheated on his wife. The couple separated, and our acquaintance moved out of town. Neither my friend nor I felt particularly shocked. This development, though unexpected, somehow seemed inevitable. This is not to say, however, that we took it lightly. We were saddened. We spoke about it in hushed tones even when alone. The only thing that can account for our sober treatment of the news was our appraisal of our acquaintance's moral state. His betrayal upset a delicate balance of marital and relational propriety our circle, if not our society, held sacred. Or at least used to.

The Cyclical Journey

In his poem *Little Gidding*, T.S. Eliot writes, "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started." The treatment of infidelity in cinema is hardly a recent development. Since the birth of motion pictures, some sort of sexual unfaithfulness has been projected onscreen. It is only in our modern era, however, that filmmakers may discuss the subject with greater freedom. In the independent film arena, young directors with unique voices break ground with sex-themed films bordering on the benign (*Sex and the*

Other Man), the taboo (*The House of Yes*), or even the horrific (*Happiness*). Occasionally, an important feature emerges.

This could be the case with Neil Labute, who dazzled audiences and critics with his scathing commentary on predatory sexism in 1996's *In the Company of Men*. Labute established himself as a maverick filmmaker willing to push all the right (or wrong) buttons, a director eager to cross the boundary of pleasantries in hopes of portraying the sickness underneath our social surface. His sophomore effort, *Your Friends and Neighbors* (1998), is an attempt to do just that.

Labute's view on infidelity in his film is strikingly different from two other works by two brilliant directors. Both Woody Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1985) and Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm* (1997) deal with this delicate subject with great success. They each take distinct views, but each sets its work in motion in a similar pattern. The three films represent three unique journeys, a progression of storytelling that seems to end where it begins.

The Malicious

The characters in Labute's film are aggressively social. They are sociopaths — charming, intelligent people whose every verbal exchange hides slick negotiations for sexual indiscretion. *Neighbors* assembles a stellar cast and hides them within despicable roles. Aaron Eckhart and

Amy Brenneman play an unhappily married couple. Eckhart's a meek chauvinist; Brenneman's his repressed spouse, eager for emotional fulfillment. Ben Stiller and Catherine Keenan are a couple living together, perhaps in the aftermath of a once-romantic relationship. Stiller's an emotional jerk, and Keener's a spiteful one. They remain together out of convenience, for they harbor no hope for rekindled love. The two outsiders are Natassja Kinski as Keener's secret interest and Jason Patric as a devilish misogynist. Not a sympathetic character exists among them. They are so like each other, Labute assigns them rhyming names: Barry, Cary, Cheri, etc. (For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the performers' names.)

Stiller, a university professor, cheats on Keener with Brenneman, a free-lance writer. Keener, an advertising writer, cheats with Kinski, an artist's assistant. Eckhart is left to dawdle about, swept idly along by the sexual juggernaut his wife and friends create, for the most part oblivious to it. He entertains daydreams of cheating, partly by attaching himself to Patric, a doctor and an altogether vile human being. Eckhart lives vicariously through him. Every story told by Patric, according to Eckhart is a "good story," be it about sexual revenge on an unliked coworker or about viciously mistreating a childhood classmate.

Patric may be Labute's foil, the creepy predator he hopes to measure the others against. Unfortunately, a negligible contrast emerges. Patric may be the others' deepest evils concentrated, an impetus to empathize with them, but he merely reflects what they may become. The notion is depressing.

What surfaces in *Neighbors* is a nihilistic character study. The film is a mean-spirited exploration of toxic behavior, a voyage with no moral compass. Labute offers no glimpse of outside society. There are no concerned friends, no interested passers-by, and no incidental characters. And without a sympathetic figure, the film plunges into murky depths. Yes, we comprehend what occurs, but do we really understand it? Are we given an opportunity to? The film is consumed by its egocentric characters, presumably the director's attempt at portraying men and women as having an equal capacity for heartlessness. *Neighbors* is touted as a "modern immorality tale." A more fitting moniker, perhaps, would be a "modern amorality tale."

At the heart of Labute's characters is no heart at all. They are completely driven by their own lusts, but they cloak their desires in seemingly justifiable trappings. Stiller believes himself a hopeless romantic. In this guise, he propositions Brenneman (and countless female students), extending his dramatic persona into reality. The spirited licentiousness of the Elizabethan plays he teaches makes its way into his life. Hoping to translate as the stuttering poet, the luckless lover, he maneuvers himself into Brenneman's world, wooing her with sleazy charm. Brenneman, in turn, appears eager to accept his advances, but she is not quite sure how. She secretly despises her louse of a husband (Eckhart), a man constantly pushing her to dismiss her reluctant nature. In one scene, he believes he is helping her by suggesting, "You need to see me as one big penis." Brenneman nervously accepts Stiller's invitation to a rendezvous at a hotel. Their tryst falls short when Stiller is unable to

maintain an erection. The message is all too clear for Brenneman: this experiment she craves, this exploratory search for emotional gratification, cannot be completed—her attempts fall short.

Keener, meanwhile, begins an affair with Kinski. Keener despises her live-in boyfriend, Stiller. His verbosity during intercourse infuriates her. She prefers silence, to focus on the task at hand: "Can't it just be what it is?" she asks. Her relationship with Kinski solidifies when she discovers Stiller's affair with Brenneman. With revenge her ultimate motivation, she is content to pursue a lesbian lifestyle purely for spite.

Neighbors's perspective on angry promiscuity culminates in Jason Patric. A man utterly devoid of compassion or mercy, he sets his course for the mass destruction of those around him. He ridicules Eckhart and Stiller, his only friends. He screams at a menstruating woman who accidentally stains his sheets. He is a predator, not merely apathetic towards others, but malicious towards them. A female coworker criticizes Patric during a staff meeting, so he seduces her, and while they are in bed, mid-coitus, he withdraws and threatens to kill her. Patric tells Eckhart, "You would have done the same thing. Common decency dictated it."

The zenith of Patric's horrid revelations arrives in response to Eckhart's query, "What's the best sex you ever had?" Patric responds, in lurid detail, the time he and his buddies gang-raped a male classmate in their high school locker room. The camera closes in on Patric's face, looks into his eyes, as he discusses this event at length. The after-shock is numbing. The camera slow-

ly pulls back, providing clear views of Eckhart and Stiller, who are shifting uncomfortably. Patric concludes with, "You would have done the same thing. Common decency dictated it."

Patric is the film's filthiest creature, but interestingly, none of the others seem agreeable even in comparison. He is dark, but they are not at all light. Rather, they are dark and he is dark's shadow. Labute, apparently by design, has assembled a union of sinners, focusing solely on the irredeemable. His gallery of narcissists pursue personal pleasure, but only find pain. And they are not at all enthusiastic about trading the latter for the former. They prefer their prisons so long as they help build them.

What Neil Labute has accomplished with *Your Friends and Neighbors* cannot be considered noble given the absence of satisfying conclusions. The deluge of debauchery ensues immediately after the opening credits and persists until the finale. In the course of its unfolding the audience must gag on convoluted moral messages form the morally bankrupt. There is no denouement allowing a synthesis of the events onscreen. There is only a depiction of the states of the characters at the time the film is done portraying their lives.

This portrayal leaves us without answers, without an explanation. The characters are no better (and arguably, no worse) than when we first meet them. The final scene, Patric in bed with a sobbing Brenneman, is an agonizing one.

The Misguided

Woody Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters*, a masterpiece of contemporary cinema, takes place over the

course of two years. It begins with a family Thanksgiving and ends with another two years later. This setting is of utmost importance in the film, as Allen seems determined upon depicting the romantic and social foibles of his characters in a familial context. The family is the moral center and, to its members, the reminder of duties and responsibilities.

The man most in need of this reminding is Michael Caine's Elliot. Elliot is infatuated with Barbara Hershey's Lee, the beautiful sister of his wife, the naive Hannah, played with a subtle vigor by Mia Farrow. The film opens with Elliot's voice-over, his innermost thoughts, and this device is used repeatedly throughout the movie, as Allen attempts to share with us the gradual befuddlement of a middle-aged man smitten with a younger woman he should not have. Caine, as Elliot, works hard to earn our approval, and though he never does, he never really earns condemnation. His selfish philanderer may not be sympathetic, but he is at least palatable. He is a scoundrel, but his good-natured goofiness transforms him into one we enjoy watching.

Allen divides the film into thirteen segments and sets in motion the broad display of human emotional development. Most of these portrayals are obviously extensions of his own psyche. Caine, despite his earnest performance, is obviously a variation on Allen himself (much like Alan Alda in several of Allen's films and, most recently, Kenneth Branagh in *Celebrity*), complete with the requisite neuroses and paranoia. Allen himself appears as Mickey, Hannah's ex-husband, who believes he may have a brain tumor.

The beauty in this arrangement finds its genesis in Allen's distinct mastery of composition. He separates himself into separate identities in order to best tell the story, in order to best portray the film's theme: the search for meaning.

Allen understands that, for many, the search for sexual fulfillment connects directly to man's questions about purpose, identity, and existence; thus, the storyline involving Mickey's flirtation with religious involvement parallels Elliot's affair with Lee.

Elliot leads a confused life. At once, he feels strong affection for Hannah and strong desire for Lee. He is both disenchanted with the family life and responsible to participate in it. He suffers at the hand of his own misguided wishes. An interesting catch in this situation is that involvement with Lee is not necessarily an extrication from family life. She is his sister-in-law, and much of their interaction takes place at family get-togethers. To remedy this complication, Elliot arranges happenstance encounters on the street, in a bookstore, or even in the apartment Lee shares with her Svengali boyfriend Frederick, played by Max von Sydow.

Allen's Academy Award winning script lazes Elliot and Lee's dialogue with melodrama, suggesting that they are more enamored with the created romance of their affair than with actual feelings of intimacy with each other. When not in bed, they spend their time slow dancing or eating, cultivating an atmosphere of "culture" they believe will sustain their relationship. They speak of needing each other and liking needing each

movie, a young boy says, "Your family is your own personal anti-matter. They're the void you emerge from and return to when you die." This is certainly a pessimistic start, and it lays the groundwork for Lee's carefully orchestrated work.

The year is 1973, and the nation is in the throes of political and social upheaval. This reverberates in the Connecticut haven shared by the two families. The father (Kevin Kline) from one cheats with the mother (Sigourney Weaver) from the other. Complicating matters are Kline's repressed wife (Joan Allen) playing a variation on her Oscar-nominated role in Oliver Stone's *Nixon*, impressionable son (the doe-eyed Tobey Maguire), and disillusioned daughter (Christina Ricci). On Weaver's side are her distant husband (Jamey Sheridan) and her two sons, Elijah Wood as the troubled Mikey and Adam Hann-Byrd as the confused Sandy. All of these characters, according to critic David Handelman, "appear to sense they're on a precipice of radical change..."

Another similarity *The Ice Storm* shares with *Hannah and Her Sisters* is that it occurs during a Thanksgiving holiday. The town suffers from bitter cold during this weekend, and Lee's visuals seem to reinforce the idea of frozen moments.

There are many "moments out of time" — icicles on train tracks, goosebumps on a bare backside, and Weaver dressed in black, holding a whip, a middle-aged vixen vamping like a Narnian ice queen (she makes it winter year 'round). These are all representative images. The best, perhaps, is the shot of Mikey sliding around on the edge of an iced-over diving board. The pool below is empty.

In one inspired scene, Elliot sits on the edge of his bed. Hannah is asleep behind him, and his thoughts, via voice-over, say, "What passion today with Lee. She's a volcano. It was a totally fulfilling experience." Then, these self-patronizing thoughts bleed into his guilty conscience. He curses himself for his disloyalty to Hannah and vows to end the affair. It is Lee who ends the relationship, however, and Elliot who is then obligated to realize how good his life really is. By the time the third Thanksgiving arrives, the misguided Elliot has resumed his place as devoted husband and father.

Hannah and Her Sisters is the rare Woody Allen film with a happy ending. Unlike Labute's *Your Friends and Neighbors*, this work spends time creating supportive alternate experiences — the family dynamic, dabbling with religious conversion, the sisters' men-chasing, the environment that is New York. In this manner, the infidelity storyline takes on greater significance. It appears real, because it is shown, not isolated, but in its real context.

The Morose
Ang Lee's *The Ice Storm* is a somber drama disclosing the secrets of our culture of infidelity. Set in the 1970s, the decade of "free love," the sad story concerns two families in New Canaan, Connecticut and their internal (and ultimately, external) conflicts.

Like Allen's film, *The Ice Storm* unfolds within the frame of "family," but in Lee's tale, the family assumes a more integral role. They are not merely the backdrop; they are the key players. Early in the

movie, a young boy says, "Your family is your own personal anti-matter. They're the void you emerge from and return to when you die." This is certainly a pessimistic start, and it lays the groundwork for Lee's carefully orchestrated work.

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Lee slowly builds his narrative, incident upon incident, until, in the midst of a dangerous storm, the film crescendoes, sending every character spiraling down and grasping for control. In the wake of Allen's realization that Kline is cheating, they attend a "key party," where the women go home with a man whose keys they draw from a bowl. In a startlingly brilliant scene, Lee focuses the camera on a frozen tree limb outside the house. The translucent window in the distance offers a hazy view of bodies inside. Cheers erupt from the party, and the branch snaps in half.

The infidelity in *The Ice Storm* reaps a deadly harvest. Mikey, the troubled soul, is lost in the mess of an adult world. He ventures out to experience the storm. As he sits on a roadway guard-rail, a power line cracks loose, spitting sparks everywhere and eventually electrocuting him as he stares transfixed. The symbolism of this event, that the oblivious child is victim of an out-of-control force that has no regard for him, hammers home the film's message.

Lee modestly portrays the destruction infidelity causes in families and climaxes his film with the dawn of renewal. The families are forced to return to their original order. Maguire's character says, "In the morning, it takes a while to find your way back to the world." It has taken a while, and the healing process will take longer, but *The Ice Storm* plays all the right notes with a magnificent sense of timing and rhythm.

The Journey Begins
Each of these films represents a distinct sensibility. Each offers a unique vision. Each assumes something spe-

cial about its audience and about its characters. But the three films share a trait important to their corporate analysis: they deal with infidelity in terms of the cyclical journey. The characters may be worse or better off when the story ends than where they began, but they are more than likely near where they started in the first place.

Labute's friends and neighbors achieve nothing in their malicious trek through sexual exploration. They merely switch partners and begin again.

Allen's primary characters realize what is worthy in life and reestablish their kinship with it. The misguided journey through infidelity only served to remind them that "there's no place like home" and that answers hard to find are easier accepted in the accepted order of society.

Lee's "free lovers" support his view that infidelity as social experimentation is antisocial, at best, and ultimately destructive.

Each of these directors seems to imply that their respective events are inevitable, and each asserts that the journeys taken lead back to familiar territory. As T.S. Eliot writes, "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time."

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The Journey Begins
Each of these films represents a distinct sensibility. Each offers a unique vision. Each assumes something spe-

seven stories

Devon Koren

the world goes tick tock, tick tock in its cylindrical shapes...i've spun time around my shoulders, draped them like shadows around me, and still heaven plays like a marionette on the strings of my heart, on the evil springboard patterns in the kaleidoscope...four more hours. i can still feel the caffeine as it hits my blood, it's only a pinprick but still even the heat could burn hideaways through my eyelashes and shorts...to wind up, to pitch, to throw a home run to the first field of forever and pick at the spikes on my ginger-ale sneakers and high-tale it out of there...maybe the music would still sound the same, even seven stories up, even half past the forever wheel...i'm turning. over and over the springs have fled, the floodlights draw in and my naked frame steams something akin to honey, with all of the sugar in my blood. glucose is warm, it gives the salty tinge to the sea, its been hiding underneath my flesh from the moment i first took air, and still, enough is never enough, if i want more, in my tea, in my coffee, i can drink it all down and drown myself in nectar and pepsi cola...photosynthesis behind the precious honey-bee in me. seven stories up, and i can almost see the ocean sometimes, just like poor dear edward in his nest above all nests...the birds are even lower than i, still with my eyes on their little gray backs and vinyl beaks pecking, pecking the tick tock, tick tock of the ants, the ants with their phonographs and photographs and digital earthbound frames, marching in and out, hurrah, with a

out feeling mild forms of electrocution. the trees, the branches to scramble upon in short skirts so that all the boys underneath can see what you're not wearing, the shots of rum in a new year's haze when your tongue has barely tasted alcohol before, swinging, laughing, the way air pushes into your lungs on a windy day with such violence that it almost tickles, and you can't help but to break out into smiles from it, hanging outside of the window at seventy miles an hour, yawping, bringing down the moon, the stars, those moments when you truly feel as if you are the king of the world...the soft velvet kisses first thing in the morning when your eyes and your arms are entangled with that which you love the most in the world, the way ice cream melts and makes your hands all sticky, the way if you don't watch your step you trip over your shoelaces, sneezing, the fact that one little sheep could take the life of a flower and extinguish the life of a star of one small prince, are these matters not of consequence? tomorrow doesn't exist, it never did, you only imagined it, in your memory somewhere where all of your dreams are kept, it's the same brain, after all...this moment, this minute, this flicker in the life of a star, this is all you have...the universe could explode, implode, spontaneously combust, and all of your worry, your nibbling on the edges of your pen stick, the misery you let in your heart and trudged through with bulky boots instead of taking the courage to actually walk on the water itself, will have achieved nothing, will end with a small little groan and then cease to be, and all you will have left in your heart will be the void and the darkness that always was...no. not me. i'm getting serious. with my thousand and one broken umbrellas and my crystalline snowflakes and the kisses of angels i

will stand on the edge of my seventh story hideaway with all of the laughter i can muster and all of the bubbles i can send and watch the sun die...and i will not be afraid. this is it. this is all i have. alive. i'm alive. over and over i throw that word through my mouth, my tonsils, and still it tastes just as marvelous as it did only moments ago, alive, here, in this world, to feel, to think, to have story after story to collect in silver-spun yarns, spiderwebs made out of sticky fingers and tricks, everything now, i can send stones plummeting through the atmosphere, whatever i want, here, in this world, where my fingertips trace the frame of plush toys and concrete walls and felt tip pens and flesh and fur and hair and lips and stickiness and needle-pricks...alive. alive here in these clothes of my body, this ragamuffin girl with gingerbread curls all tousled and roughed-over from a stormy night's sleep...still, in dreams of heaven i only find life, running through the corridors of rain eating pizza and zig-zagging among the elephant trees, shoe in the mud, one squish and then the other follows, the splash of a puddle, the soaking wet to the bone feeling of being left out in the downstorm and loving every minute of it...yes, i'm finally beginning to get serious. i'm getting serious about carousels and video games and eating barbecue in strange little red-neck hangouts and making penny wishes in fortune cookies and making a diet of chicken fried rice and skittles...i'm getting serious about the winter and the snow and the way that scarves wrapped around you always make you feel warm, and how hot chocolate always sings the first layer of taste buds as it goes down, and that even in the plains of tennessee you can see the mountains...at least my seventh story roost, where the pigeons play.

Genesis

Josh Cochran

sound

• • •

The vast auditorium is formless & empty. The starcloud purple chaos of its walls covers infinity. The Orchestra waits, their bows

poised- prepared to fire the arrows that will begin this great chain reaction of matter & energy.

The ageless Conductor steps up to His stand & takes His baton in muscular white hand. His furrowed brow glistens with concentration complete. This is a grand composition, this dissonant masterpiece to be.

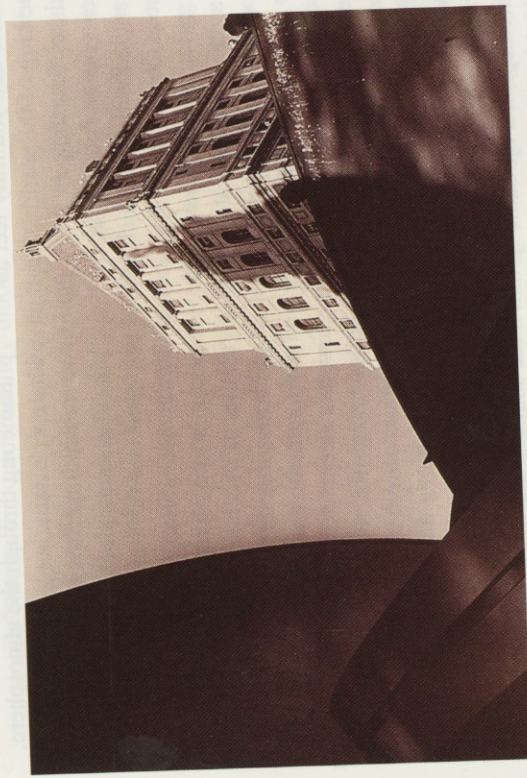
light

•

With a graceful wave of the wand, the contact occurs. Catgut & horsehair combinations in an ascending slow majestic glissando.

It is as if a great ball of hydrogen & helium that had not been there before suddenly sunrises. The Conductor smiles, the crowd is amazed.

("& there was the first movement, & there was intermission-")



staves
Untitled

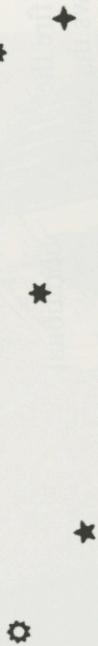
land



of course the notes must have some place to go,
some way to get around &
someone to hear their
sound.

so gather up the seas you have found
& we'll create a phrase
called
ground.
& over this ground we'll put our

stars



the organic section continues, in slow pulsing swoons,
a curious repetition of the constant ● and ○.

organisms



The ideas are walking around on tadpole tales.
Loops & spool(s) ○ of thought, pull, & dance
to the ocean trance- ●○○○

a
W v ing their prospect ive

Flagella_ to & fro.
("What curious sparks of electricity!")
coils of DNA twist & turn,

man



*nor skin nor hide nor fleece
shall cover you,
Nor curtain of crimson nor fine
Shelter of cedar-wood be over you,
nor the fir-tree*

nor the pine

*here is no water but only rock,
yes, there is no river to drink from.
but I am an ocean & there will be music today,
because I will sing to the rocks.
my voice will be a floating fragment in the treetops, of a chord
began long ago,
the patterns constantly reconciling themselves in their own
reinvention.
the root of this chord is deep, if indeed it sounds this way at all.*

Heidegger's House

Leaumer Typon

1

Tomorrow night
some forty-two philosophers, eleven lexicographers,
and two off-duty cops
will convene
to postulate
the being
of love.

2

They are perplexed.
They have traveled a long way.

3

A moon rises; it slips your breast
behind my eyes.
Suddenly
our lips touch, exchange postulates.



Teresa Mason
Tibetan Woman