

Across  
Campus'Who's Afraid  
of Virginia  
Woolf?'

MSU Theatre presents "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" The play is a dissection of an American marriage gone sour - a marriage tainted by delusions and disillusionment.

The play depicts sexual situations and contains profanity and is not recommended for junior high or younger students. For high school students, parental knowledge and consent is recommended.

"Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" will take place in MSU's Bea Wood Studio Theatre on Thursday, March 29 through Saturday, March 31 at 7:30 p.m. and on Sunday, April 1 at 2:30 p.m.

Admission is free with MSU ID.

For more information call 397-4399.

Foreign Film  
Series

Continuing Education and Richard Carter present the 1966 film "Masculin Feminin" at 7 p.m. March 1 in the Kemp Center for the Arts at 1300 Lamar St.

Jean-Luc Godard presents a candid and wildly funny free-form examination of youth culture in 1960s Paris.

Admission is free and donations are welcome.

For more information, call ext. 4756.

'A Wednesday  
with Matisse'

The Wichita Falls Museum of Art at MSU and The Kemp Center for the Arts will sponsor "A Wednesday with Matisse" bus trip to Dallas on March 7.

The group will leave from the WFMA, #2 Eureka Circle, at 8:30 a.m. and be treated to a continental breakfast and Matisse art orientation with Cathy Drennan.

The day includes tours of the Matisse Exhibit at DMA and the Nasher, lunch of your choosing at DMA Atrium Cafe or Seventeen by Wolfgang Puck and free time to either tour *Fast Forward: Contemporary Collections for the DMA* or spend more time with Matisse.

The bus leaves Dallas at 3:30 p.m. with complimentary wine and cheese.

Seating is limited and the price is \$45, which includes the bus ride, museum admission, breakfast and refreshments.

For reservations and more information, call 767-2787 or 692-0923.

## 'Babel' fails to receive its just rewards

RICHARD CARTER  
FOR THE WICHITAN

Mexican director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu's newest film, "Babel," got robbed the other night at the Oscars.

It was painful to watch, and it just goes to show that awards are no indicator of art. (Please see the Grammys.)

Anywho, Inarritu's newest film is about stories. Like his earlier "21 Grams" and "Amores Perros," he tells them in fragments, effectively jumping back and forth between the tales and the perspectives of individual characters.

On a worldwide canvas, "Babel" takes viewers through a world of heartbreak, fate and injustice with brief moments of humor.

Several heart-wrenching moments will cut through viewers.

Recently released on DVD, it also conveys messages on a global and personal scale that will stay with audiences.

It will make viewers think about what is right and what is wrong, but more importantly, how those absolute terms are rarely applicable in real life.

In addition to its ideas, the film features excellent performances by a largely unknown international cast.

The settings are also no less than impressive. From the desolate mountains of Morocco to the dynamic cityscapes of Tokyo to the rural colors of Tijuana, the landscapes are also pleasing to the eye.

The camera work alone - of many disparate scenes and lights and colors - is enough to recommend this DVD.

For example, in one scene, a young Japanese student named Chieko (Rinko Kikuchi) attends a rave.

The deaf-mute girl is rebelling against her businessman father and is on drugs at a pretty wild club.

We see her enveloped in a scene of blaring rave music, lasers, flash-



Pitt's disappointment shows as he realizes "Babel" didn't take home the Best Picture Oscar.

ing lights and masses of people.

But like the strobe light that quickly goes off and on, we intermittently see the more lonely and scary perspective of that scene, without the music.

Throughout the movie, scenes jump around the world from a small dark room in a Moroccan village to the neighboring mountains to gorgeously modern Tokyo and a festive small Mexican marriage scene in Tijuana.

As these scenes play out, the

drama ratchets up in the separate stories toward a realization of how the stories come together. There is no huge finale.

Like the name of the film suggests, audiences are left with the idea of how cultural and social factors make communication impossible or exceedingly difficult.

"Babel" begins with two married American tourists on a bus trip in Morocco. Richard (Brad Pitt) and Susan (Cate Blanchett) are attempting to reconnect after losing a

child.

The second story revolves around a Moroccan goat herder who purchases a rifle for his two young sons and instructs them to shoot jackals. Unfortunately for the poor family, boys will be boys.

The third story features a Mexican maid named Amelia (Adriana Barraza) who is looking after two children. The day of her son's marriage, she takes the kids with her and her irresponsible nephew (Gael Garcia Bernal) to Tijuana.

The last story looks at Chieko and her attempts to deal with her lost mother and her inability to connect with young men because of her hearing problems.

"Babel" was my favorite movie of last year because of its cinematography, ideas, storylines and performances. It may not be for everyone, but for viewers who enjoyed the director's last two films or any form of cinema that creatively engages with form and storytelling, "Babel" is a mindful treat.

## 'Alchemist's Daughter' is pure disappointment

KONNIE SEWELL  
COPY EDITOR

I was initially drawn to Katharine McMahon's novel "The Alchemist's Daughter" for two old-fashioned reasons.

First, the heroine promised to be smart, and I like smart heroines. Too many heroines today are annoyingly perfect and obnoxiously beautiful Mary-Sues.

Where are the *real* heroines, the heroines who are more than just their looks or family or wealth?

Second, the plot seemed promising. From the dust jacket we learn the bare facts of the story: 19-year-old Emilie Selden is the daughter of an Age-of-Reason alchemist who worships Sir Isaac Newton.

An only child, Emilie's mother

died during childbirth and her father has done his best to make sure he's taught her everything she needs to know about the world.

Unfortunately, he views the world only through scientific glasses and Emilie's emotional development is somewhat stifled, though she's got some Romantic rebellion in her. Enter a handsome, dashing stranger with a silver tongue and you've got the beginning of something scandalous.

Woe was me, then, because this book hardly delivered. There are small glimmers of something possibly enjoyable, but ultimately McMahon's major fault is that she doesn't know what to do with her sorrowfully two-dimensional characters.

Emilie isn't the smart heroine I was looking forward to. When I say smart I don't necessarily mean book smart. I just want my heroine to be interesting, to have a working mind of her own. I want her to make good

decisions (even if, unbeknownst to her at the time, they really aren't) and skewer suitors with her wit. I want a heroine that will see past the charms of the phonies and appreciate what she's got.

But, no. Not Emilie. Emilie is a little too willing to let other people live her life for her. She's weak and insipid and self-centered. It's too bad she narrates the novel — we have to be inside her head the whole time. McMahon tries to show how Emilie suffers when she leaves the only home she's ever know and enters London with the man who seduced her and thrust her into the *ton*, but it's completely unbelievable. Louisa from Charles Dickens' "Hard Times" she's not.

The man who steals Emilie away is one Robert Aislabie, a no-account dandy who claims to be a merchant. Every single reader out there will know he's bad business from the start, so it's hard to see why Emilie would let herself be enamored

of him. (It's hard to feel any sympathy for her when he gets her pregnant.)

Aislabie's foil is clergyman Thomas Shales, who shares Emilie's love of natural philosophy and dabbles in botany (could the man *be* any safer?).

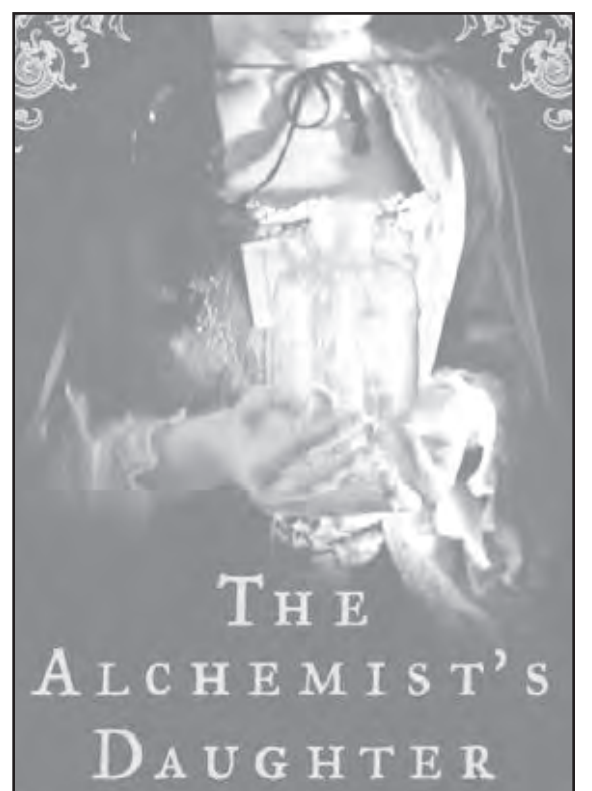
He's introduced on page 20 and it's at that moment we realize who Emilie's meant to be with.

But Shales is a quiet man with a tragic past he can't quiet seem to get over. How he ever falls in love with a girl like Emilie, who — curiously — hates him, is beyond me. But he makes a quietly stalwart effort to win her over through friendship and kindness, and eventually she comes to depend on him.

However, there's no real payoff at the end of the novel regarding their relationship. To have all that buildup and then nothing but a fizzle is just flat-out disappointing.

The only other character in the novel worth caring about is Emilie's father, who — surprise, surprise! — has kept a secret from Emilie since the day she was born. There's a poignant scene near the end of the novel where Emilie realizes who she really is and what she really meant to her father.

But to be honest, every character in this book is just following the set path that has been laid down for them from the very beginning of storytelling.



The plot is just like any other because the characters are just like any other. And who wants to spend time reading something that's recyclable, something that will pop up yet again in a few years with a different cover?

McMahon has no real gift with prose. Her style doesn't probe into the depths of logic or emotion despite the fact she's given so many opportunities. Emilie, for instance, is the only woman in attendance at Newton's funeral, but this scene is wasted.

The characters act just like they're supposed to, and the plot goes exactly where it's supposed to. So, gentle reader, do exactly what you're supposed to do when presented with "The Alchemist's Daughter": Pass it over.

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