



THE GRAIL

VOLUME II NOVEMBER 26, 2014 ISSUE VI

INSIDE

DIVEST REED

SEEDS OF CHANGE?

From Igor Vamos' commencement speech to Stanford's divestment, the Board of Trustees is facing more pressure than ever to divest from fossil fuels. Hear the whole history.

PAGE 1

#FERGUSON

FERGUSON RALLY

Thousands of people took to the streets all over America, including in Portland, to march and hold vigils in response to the non-indictment of Darren Wilson.

PAGE 4

CHURCH OF FILM

HOLY MOTORS

This Franco-German "meta-movie" both perplexes the mind and drowns the eyes in a sea of color. Coming to theaters in 2012.

PAGE 5

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FROM THE EDITORS

Greetings Lovely Readers,

Happy Thanksgiving Eve! We at *The Grail* are thankful to be done with another semester of reporting: Finals week is our last issue! Tomorrow, million of families will be huddled around the kitchen table, sharing laughs, bonding, and eating unhealthy amounts of carbohydrates. With turkey comes relatives, and with relatives come your relatives' weird stories. Hear Grace discuss and recount the tale of her turn-of-the-millennium woes (8). Are you a fan of movies with subtitles? Philosophical inquiries? Unrealistic wardrobe choices?

You may be the artist in your family and Holy Motors (5) may be the movie for you. Reed's divestment is a contentious issue these days, read about it (1) and argue with family members over a cup of hot chocolate. Lastly, the ruling in the Michael Brown case has come as a shock to many Americans, who took to the streets yesterday to rally and show their dismay. See photos of how the march in Portland and vigil on campus went down (4).

Have a safe holiday everyone.

Love,

Brendan, Brian, Grace, Jordan,
Lauren, Maddy, and Vikram

CONTENTS

News & Features

Divestment, 1
Ferguson, 4
Cultural Calendar, 10

Columns

Holy Motors, 5
Miss Lonely Hearts, 7
Graceful Grousings, 8

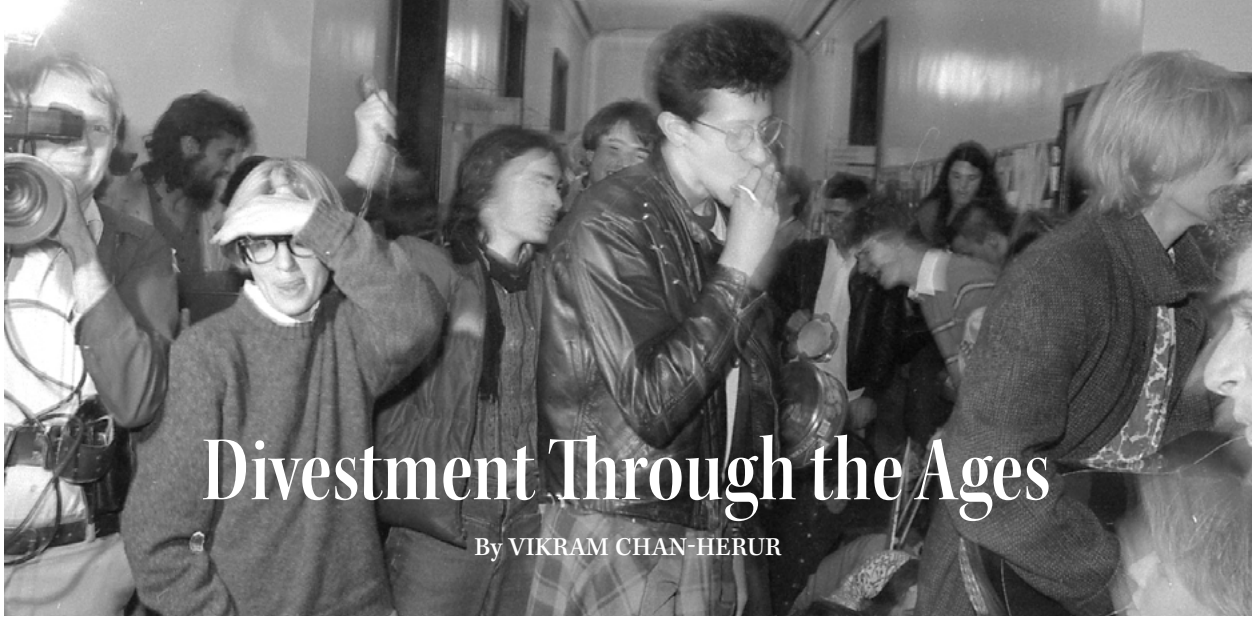
CONTRIBUTORS

Alexis Angulo
August Wissmath
Benjamin Williams
Blake Stewart
Brendan Sorrell
Brian Click
Charles Nunziato
Charlie Wilcox
Clara Rice
Dylan Holmes

Emily Merfeld
Erika Hurth
Grace Fetterman
Isabel Meigs
James Curry IV
Jordan Yu
Lauren Cooper
Maddy Appelbaum
Madeline Engelfried
Max Carpenter

Mia Uribe Kozlovsky
Mike Frazel
Nikki Cohen
Rémi Yang
Ruben de la Huerga
Sam Ramirez
Thanh Chu
Vikram Chan-Herur
Zoe Rosenfeld

Front cover photo: Maddy Appelbaum



Divestment Through the Ages

By VIKRAM CHAN-HERUR

Photograph courtesy of Reed College Library's Special Collections

The ideal college is "a college imbued with that kind of democratic spirit that cooperates for the common good with all the agencies of social progress; a college with a view of its responsibility that is not shut off by campus walls . . . a college that with all its idealism, makes daily, practical contact with the many sided life of the city and state, here and now; a college that is changing because it is living; that looks forward oftener than backward, yet seeks the wisdom of organized experience to light the path ahead, thus supplanting the blind guidance of tradition by the safer guidance of scientific insight."

— William Trufant Foster, first President of Reed College

Students' struggle to effect social change through Reed College and its endowment is not new. In the 1980s students fought to have the college divest from South Africa and last year students continued to fight for social change and urged Reed to divest from fossil fuels.

Igor Vamos '90, chosen to give their commencement address by the Class of 2014, announced that the College would completely divest its \$500 million endowment of fossil fuels. Reedies rejoiced over the good news — what many students campaigned for and believed in — and announced it to their friends and family online. But just hours later the Reed community received an email dashing its hopes of divestment. Vamos' culture-jamming political activism group, Yes Men, had planned the prank with Fossil Free Reed.

"He came to our group and said,

'we want to do a prank at commencement and we want it to be surrounding the theme of divestment, what do you think we should do?'" says Kayla Good '17. "They had the idea of announcing divestment and we were totally on board and excited about it. It was mainly their planning and they told us what we needed to do."

Two months later, Chairman of the Board of Trustees Roger Perlmutter '73 gave the official response on the behalf of the Board. They decided against divestiture and — unlike in the 1980s — declined to even take steps towards divestment.

The most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made clear that humans are changing the climate but that quick and decisive action is both necessary and possible. "There is a myth which is shared unscientifically and uneconomically that climate ac-

tion will cost heavily but I am telling you that inaction of climate action will cost much, much more. Climate action and economic growth are two sides of just one coin," said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the launch of the IPCC report in November.

It is a widely held understanding that humans are the cause of climate change and that our current rate of greenhouse gas emission is unsustainable.

Supporters of divestment argue that, like with the anti-apartheid divestment movements, institutional investors will draw attention to the gravity of the issue, bring the college in alignment with the ethical and moral right, and if enough institutions act similarly, allocate capital in a manner more consistent with the long-term needs of the climate. The need to protect freedom of thought,

institutional and political neutrality, and the College's financial security concern many opponents. A survey by Fossil Free Reed this term found that while most respondents were in support of divestment, there was a lot of concern about the potential impact on financial aid.

Students Take Eliot

Reed is not alone in this fight for divestment nor was it alone in the 1980s during the campaign for anti-apartheid divestiture. Students and faculty around the country demanded that their colleges and universities divest their endowments of companies doing business in South Africa. Reverend Leon Sullivan, a social activist, in 1977 outlined seven principles (the Sullivan Principles) for corporations to commit to in order to promote equality of races in the face of the apartheid system of South Africa at the time.

Students at the Reed formed the South Africa Concerns Committee (SACC) in February of 1985, an organization that "devoted itself to raising consciousness on the problem of apartheid, and the issue of divestment," as Tarso Ramos '93 wrote in *The Quest*. With the support of the Senate, the SACC brought their request for divestment to the Board. Students occupied President Paul Bragdon's office for a weekend in November while he was away for an alumni function.

It wasn't just the students fight, faculty also thought it an important issue, Professors David Groff (history, 1976–87) and Allen Neuringer (psych, 1970–) polled the faculty on their support for divestment. Less than half responded, but of those who did, 94% approved. As a whole, however, when the faculty later voted, they were against divestment. *The Quest* reported that Professor Groff said "I think it's unfortunate that so many of my colleagues feel that the faculty as a faculty should not take a stand on this issue."

In January of the 1986, President

Bragdon, standing on the steps of the Vollum College Center, announced the Board's decision that the College would not "buy or hold investments in businesses owned or controlled by South African interests, financial institutions making loans to the government of South Africa, and companies which do not support and do not demonstrably implement the Sullivan Principles."

It wasn't enough. According to *The Quest*, the adoption of the Sullivan Principles did not change Reed's investment portfolio. The change was in name only and the students were not satisfied.

Chris Lydgate '90 and Sandeep Kaushik '89 reported in *The Quest* that Christopher Phelps '88 started another occupation during President Bragdon's announcement of the decision: "As I speak," said Phelps, "part of our group has begun an indefinite occupation of Eliot Hall." This second occupation ended after six days once the Trustees agreed to create a study committee including students and faculty.

Ultimately, the Trustees did not divest the College of all companies doing business in South Africa.

Fossil Free Reed

Although the students and faculty have changed since the 1980s, the Board's response to divestment remains. In March of last year, a Reed Union on climate change was held. Fossil Free Reed emerged as a result of the dissatisfaction of Austin Weisgrau '15, Maya Jarrad '14, Salish Davis '15, Shannon Smith '14, and Kate Jentoft-Herr '16 with the Union. In a clear and reasoned letter to the Board of Trustees, the group went on to demand divestment. They wanted Reed to stop new investment in the 200 largest fossil fuel companies and to divest the existing holdings within a decade. Furthermore, they wanted the College's Investment Responsibility Policy to be amended to include ethical considerations, and finally requested an annual report of "ethically

controversial assets" with justifications of their holding. They charged the Board to consider honor in their investments.

The commencement prank served as a shock to the community like the occupations of the President's office in the 1980s. It forced the community to engage with the issue of divestment in a way it had not before, as a real possibility, something that could be attained with persistence and commitment to principles. The fake announcement revealed that the Reed community at the commencement — students, faculty, parents — were overwhelmingly in support of divestment. In a press release later that day, President John Kroger wrote, "we appreciate the robust and far-ranging debate that this prank will continue to spur."

But the Board was not swayed by the support of the community. Roger Perlmutter '73, the chairman of the Board, emphasized their stance on the need for institutional neutrality as it "provides the best protection for freedom of inquiry and expression" in his response to Fossil Free Reed. Together the trustees decided that divestment — for many reasons — did not make sense. They agreed, however, to "provide more information about the endowment to the Reed community," and to discuss alternative methods of reducing Reed's carbon footprint. Thus far they have not made these data about the endowment available.

Stanford & the Claremonts

While the Board of Trustees of Reed College did not take any steps towards divestment, the Stanford University Board of Trustees agreed to a partial divestment scheme involving divesting their \$18.7 billion endowment of coal mining companies. John Hennessey, President of Stanford University acknowledged that "moving away from coal in the investment context is a small, but constructive, step." Kayla Good '17, speaking on behalf of Fossil Free

Reed, said that Stanford's campaign was "really inspirational" and that it's "huge that a school with that large of an endowment has divested from coal." The highest profile school divestiture to date, Stanford's divestment still could be construed as a token way of quelling the demands for climate action.

Two members of the Claremont consortium have taken differing stances on appropriate institutional action in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Pitzer College, a school known for its sustainability and commitment to the environment, committed to divesting its endowment "of substantially all fossil-fuel-company stocks by the end of 2014" said College President Donald Gould. "It was not a decision made lightly, but one that we felt was a key step in more fully aligning the college's action with its mission and values." He further argued for the "moral consequence" of divesting of fossil fuel stocks: "the academy has a duty to educate not only its students but also society at large." David Oxtoby, President of Pomona College, argued that "symbolic actions have their place. But at colleges and universities, our first goal is to educate students to be skeptical about simple claims and to weigh competing values. Some schools see themselves as effectors of social

change while others uphold institutional neutrality to enable their students to effect change themselves.

Reed's Role

Today, Reed falls into the latter category. The prank "put Reed on the map in terms of schools that are getting into divestment" says Good. Fossil Free Reed is expanding their mission and changing their name to DivestReed to reflect their broadening horizons. "We're looking to expand beyond fossil fuels right now" and want to "build relationships with other social justice groups and see how as Divest[Reed] we can further their goals." To them, "gaining student support for divestment is the best way to go about it The way the investment policy is written it's very important for there to be universal student support."

Still, DivestReed believes they have a chance at fossil fuel divestment. "There are a few trustees who might support divestment if it was an easier process. And it is a messy, difficult process." Reed's complex endowment structure and use of hedge funds makes it difficult for the College to discuss its holdings and makes divestiture from individual companies more difficult. And the Trustees must take donors' expectations into account. Lorraine Arvin, Treasurer

and Vice President for Finance and Administration, stated that Reed "is fortunate to have the large endowment that it does, and has a responsibility to the college, and to the donors who contribute to the endowment, to maximize its growth."

In their upcoming Reed Union, DivestReed hopes to spur discussion on political and institutional neutrality. They hope that with enough student support, they "could try to at least pressure the trustees into being more transparent" in the College's holdings.

The Union may also provide a forum for faculty involvement, something lacking from this round of divestment talks. Their silence thus far may be a result of faculty attempting to allow students breadth of thought. But there are students who would welcome their perspectives and knowledge in the pursuit of a solution to the pressing problem of climate change. This year, the Environmental Studies Junior Seminar will look inward on campus and examine energy use at Reed.

Perhaps it was our faculty and students working together to find solutions to larger-than-Reed issues that President Foster envisioned when he proposed "a college that with all its idealism, makes daily, practical contact with the many sided life of the city and state, here and now." ▼



Fossil Free Reed members confronted by CSOs on the PAB roof.

Seeking Justice

By MADDY APPELBAUM



Candlelight vigil in Reed College Quad for Michael Brown

Maddy Appelbaum

Monday night's announcement of the grand jury decision not to indict Darren Wilson, the police officer who shot and killed Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO on August 9 of this year, left people across the country, and across our campus, with deeply felt emotions ranging from devastation, to rage, to fear. In light of this paralyzing news, though, many were compelled to act, standing up for the justice they do not think was achieved in the courts. Often, Reedies as a group are plastered with the label "apathetic," but those accusers seem to have it wrong. When an issue appears that, with its potential injustice, sadness, and wide-ranging consequences, dwarfs even the most pressing academic concerns, many students spring into action — even more into reaction. This action took several forms. At 4:00 PM on Tuesday

afternoon, a rally was held in front of the Justice Center in downtown Portland, splintering off into a march. Even closer to home, a candlelight vigil was held in the Quad at 6:30 the same night. Of these events, Olivia Kilgore '16 said "Today was rough. I ended up going to both the protest and the vigil on campus. Both were very different and incredibly important, for me personally." Kai Addae '15 echoes this sentiment. "I went to the protest downtown, which was pretty inspiring. So many people showed up and were so vividly present, it was great to just march and cheer with others who care. Processing all of this alone can be really isolating, and it was such a relief to be on the street standing next to people who are feeling the same things you are." Addae continued "Reed too, stepped it up on this one. A lot of Reedies went to

the protest, and the vigil tonight was really raw, but really meaningful. We stood in silence for a while, and I'm glad we made the space to mourn all of those who we've lost to this sick system." Of the vigil, Kilgore agreed "The vigil was a time to remember and reflect on what has happened, both in the last 24 hours and the last 10 years. And these issues open a lot of wounds for a lot of people." In terms of hopes for the future, Addae looks forward to Reedies, as well as the wider community, continuing to make "space to talk about this, and stay engaged in the long process of change. Black and brown lives matter, our deaths matter, and I'm so tired of being told and shown otherwise by the criminal justice system, the media, and white supremacists. There's a lot that needs fixing, and I can only hope that we can work together to make it happen." ♣



Downtown Portland protest of the Ferguson verdict.



Nikki Cohen

FILM REVIEW

Holy Motors: Holy Shit!

By DYLAN HOLMES

How do I write a whole article about a movie, like "Holy Motors," that resists critical interpretation? Where do I go when even the director, Leos Carax, willfully guards himself from interviews? I hate the *New Yorker* review and Google isn't helping, so I'm at a loss.

Here, I have an idea: Please allow me a paragraph to type out whatever comes to my mind, and maybe I'll find something in there that'll help me out with this.

The experiencing of acting there are a lot of masks and ourselves are splintered into ideas of ourselves and maybe acting is that's what acting is but then cinema is dying or is it just the oldcinema that is dying he's saying something about shrinking not sure what's shrinking cameras and death and death but not really death constructed construction architecture of person architecture of the person Bakhtin said something about this I think good acting machines machines they are disappearing and yet their presence is everywhere maybe? Paris the beauty of Paris or not. Cliches cliches wetry to fighttheclichesbuttheyalwayswinbecauseitstheonlywayweknowhow to construct ourselves? is there a self in this film or fuck too much hum220 i guess well there's a god right and maybe oscar's an angel that's interesting but then what are the cars when does this take place i wonder if its the present but it's a representation of the present the present devil angels christians Sleepers and cinema dogs near death apocalypse repetition where is home nowhere i guess start with a summary we all need a summary ok

Alright, thanks for your patience everyone. That helped a lot. So let's pretend that THIS is the beginning

of the article (I apologize for all the confusion). "Holy Motors" came out in 2012, ending director Leos Carax's thirteen-year hiatus from feature-length films. The star of the film is Denis Lavant, who gives an incredible and unforgettable performance as the mysterious Mr. Oscar. Edith Scob co-stars as his faithful driver Celine. They seem to have the only viable character connection in the whole movie, which is mostly because the movie itself is more of a meta-movie in which almost every interaction is a mini-movie that ends as soon as the characters are no longer obligated to each other.

That probably makes no sense, but really trying to approach "Holy Motors" as a logical sequence of events rather than a sort of self-perpetuating totality is pointless. I can say a few things that might ground the story a little better, but the rest is pretty interpretative and depends on who you are as a person (I know, scary). Mr. Oscar appears to be employed as some sort of "actor" who is driven to various appointments throughout the day and acts out a "scene" with people who I can only presume are other actors. These scenes can be anything from him begging on the street as an old woman to chastising his daughter as a disappointed single father driving her home from a party. At one point he's a loathsome bestial sewer-dwelling man dubbed in the credits as Monsieur Merde (Mr. Shit, if you must know), who steals a supermodel (Eva Mendes) from a graveyard photoshoot and takes her back to his underground chamber. Somehow, Mr. Oscar manages all these roles perfectly, but we're never given *why* he must perform these roles.

At one point in the middle of his

appointments, a man of ambiguous authority ends up in the limousine and questions Oscar about the commitment to his roles, whether he's getting "tired." Oscar responds that the cameras have gotten so small that it's hard to believe that they're there anymore. This is probably key to understanding what "Holy Motors" is "about," since the subject of machines getting both more ubiquitous and becoming impossible to see is a topic that re-emerges throughout the film as an expressed concern, something inevitable and ominous, looming over our heads. Oscar could mean in a literal sense that he exists in some near-future where camera technology has advanced so much that the cameras are invisible to the naked eye, but regardless of the literalness of his statements he expresses a more humanistic paranoia that the meaning we place in our lives is in the performance of it. And if there's no audience to that performance then who actually gives a fuck about you?

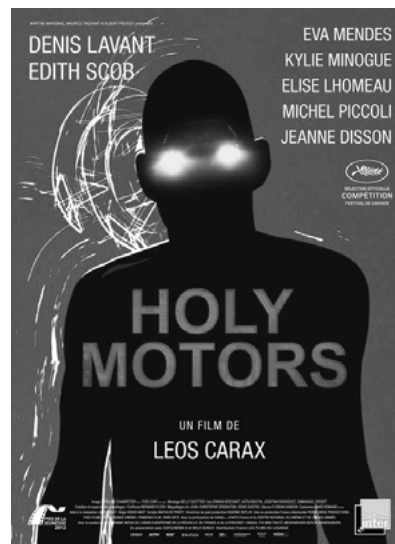
But I'm gonna back away from that existential question for a moment, and only partially because I'm starting to sound a lot like I did in the Jean-Paul Sartre paper I wrote a couple months ago. Because in the vein of performance, "Holy Motors" explores the question of what happens when the lived experience is forced through movie tropes, effectively "cinematizing" the individual and stripping him of his autonomy. And THAT'S pretty interesting. Carax seems to have beef with the failure of the "old cinema" to create meaning out of a new medium. Maybe, to him, all it's created is a tiresome list of tropes that easily evoke the proper emotions in the audience that will keep them coming back. The actor can just step out of that role and

drive over to the next one. The connections you thought the characters made were really just a professional, contractual agreement between two people to pretend to like each other long enough to get paid. Maybe Carax came back from the metaphorical grave to tell us all that the digitization and the acceleration of technology doesn't change the fact that Cinema Is Dead and all it has done is make us see ourselves as various incarnations of non-real characters.

But you know, that's MY interpretation, and it's a pretty gruesome one I'll admit. In fact I could be totally wrong, because Carax could also be celebrating the history of cinema if you're a little more positive than I am. The character of Monsieur Merde is actually borrowed from Carax's segment of the anthology film "Tokyo!" which is one instance in many of the inner-allusions to his own creative process and the world his movies inhabit. The various movie tropes and genres that are explored (melodramas, beauty/beast dynamics, action thrillers, musicals) are genuinely entertaining and evocative in their own right, and there's a certain nostalgia to the performances. At one point, Oscar asks Celine if he has any appointments in the forest, but he doesn't: "Too bad...I miss forests." Whenever Oscar is just himself he has the expression of someone who's nostalgic for something. Mainly, he misses the sincerity of his performances. But perhaps the monotony has beat it out of him, or maybe he feels hollowed out as a person himself. Which would make sense considering we're never given a single hint of where Mr. Oscar came from or where he's going, or really what it is his performances are even for. Every time we think we're getting a sincere glimpse into his life, we realize it's just another performance. The limo he's shuffled around in is the only nucleus of stability we're given for understanding Oscar and Celine, and I even hesitate to say we can trust these moments in the film.

Celine herself is the neglected

woman of the whole film. She's the female lead, yet she's intentionally shoved to the side for most of the action. Non-present for the performances and generally ignored by Oscar, one can only wonder what she must think about all day confined to the front seat of a limousine. And Carax makes it pretty clear that there's a lot going on with her that we're not seeing. In the only prolonged interaction Celine has with Oscar, she says that she was once a dancer. When Oscar asks "Once?" she hastily replies, "No, I don't know." We're almost given a morsel of her background, but before we can bite down it's cruelly yanked back from us. And we're forced back



into seeing her only in her worried glances to Oscar through a backseat camera. She's almost consumed by the structure of the film, but all the same she has a looming importance. I can't help emphasizing her role only because I feel like Carax wants me to. I won't say when, but at a crucial moment in the story she puts on a white mask with no face and only cut-outs for the eyes and nostrils. When I looked up Edith Scob, I was surprised to find out that her most famous role was the facially disfigured daughter in the 1960 French-Italian horror film "Eyes Without a Face." The famous image that emerged from the movie was that of the daughter's mask she

used to cover her mangled features. The mask in that movie and the one Celine puts on in "Holy Motors" are almost exactly the same and are both worn by the same actress 52 years apart from each other. So what the fuck is up with THAT?

Well, my conjecture is that it's a sort of literalized visual of the masks we don to hide our true forms, which would make sense if you think of "Holy Motors" in some ways as a film portraying a loss of identity. Our words are abstracted from our thoughts, which are further abstracted from the bodily functions that produced those thoughts. So nothing's genuine. You want your friends to think of you in some way, and your potential employer to think of you in some completely different fashion. The way your thoughts seem to flow in an essay are actually the product of hours of review, because if you wrote your essay like you talked in conference your professors would despise you (unless they're into that). Life is a series of appointments you have to make to perform as well as you can and then move on to the next one. "See you tomorrow, Mr. Oscar."

But wait, none of this is necessarily a bad thing! Those performances can be fun and beautiful and a little heartbreaking. There's no point in striving for some kernel of truth in all of it, because let's admit it: we're all a lil' fake. In our postmodern condition the Self has been fragmented and split up and chopped and screwed and what we've realized is that there's no way to decide The Single Unified Self anymore, because that's just fascist. The history of film added up to what it is now for you to understand yourself (yourselves?) a little better in terms that are probably a little more romantic and more formulaic than real life. And who can fault *le cinéma* for that? Also the movie's really pretty and all that. But I could just be bullshitting you, so you should probably go watch it and decide what to make of it for yourself. *winky emoticon* 🙄

Miss Lonely Hearts

Dearest Miss Lonely Hearts,

I need your advice. You see, Honey came in and she caught me red-handed creeping with the girl next door. Picture this: we were both butt-naked, banging on the bathroom floor. How could I forget that I had given her an extra key? All this time she was standing there, she never took her eyes off me. But, Miss Lonely Hearts she caught me on the counter, she saw me kissin' on the sofa. Oh Miss Lonely hearts, she saw the marks on my shoulder; heard the words that I told her. She even heard the scream get louder. Miss, she stayed until it was over. Now, I told her it wasn't me. But she didn't believe a word I told her.

I don't know what to do. Miss Lonely Hearts, I am begging you on one knee, how do I get my Honey back?

—It Wasn't Me

Dear Wasn't Me,

Let's review the situation that you're caught up in here: you were having an affair with the girl next door and your girlfriend caught you in flagrante delicto.

And you tried to tell her it wasn't you?

Wasn't Me – you may think you're a player, but you're completely lost. Think about it: is your girl really going to believe that it wasn't your butt she caught a glimpse of? I guess you told her that it was your evil twin she caught in the bathroom with the neighbor.

“Really, he looks just like me, and he wants to ruin my life by wearing my clothes... and then taking them off... and making incredibly misguided decisions!”

If you're going to float that one you might as well try and tell her that day is night and you did all of the reading in Hum 110: she's not going to fall for any of it.

Really, I can only recommend one course of action – admit that she did, indeed, catch you red-handed and tell her that you're sorry for the pain that you've caused. I'm not going to promise that she'll forgive you, because I'm honestly not sure that she will. But drop the act; you're only embarrassing yourself.

Rubba-dubba,
Miss Lonely Hearts ♣

GRACEFUL GROUSINGS

Millennium Approaches

By GRACE FETTERMAN

I was born and raised in the town where everybody claims to be Somebody, 90 hours a year are spent seething in traffic, and if you look closely at the children careening through the park like horses, you will realize that they are not just being children, but are actually enrolled in “Prancercising Class,” a costly fitness regimen involving springy and rhythmic ways of moving, similar to a horse’s gait and “ideally induced by elation.” It is the land of the hallow-cheeked and proudly uninformed: The Westside of Los Angeles.

When the new millennium approaches, I am in kindergarten, attending a small progressive school where math is secondary to individuality, and kindness is always more relevant than science. We call our teachers by their first names, for they, like us, are life-long learners, our equals both in the classroom and on the handball court.

On a sunny December morning, the sky ever serene and fair, our teacher, earnest, enthusiastic, and not much older than his students, Phil, summons us outside for an impromptu meeting.

“Do you know now, more than ever, how exciting it is to be alive?” Phil asks us. It’s a strange question, really. Not quite sure how to respond to that one, we answer in a silent incertitude. Being alive never seemed like something we needed to contemplate. We were always excited. We were five.

Phil continues, “We are all very lucky that we get to witness the first year of the 21st century, the 3rd millennium, the year 2000!”

Adam Stern topples over on our shared bench and his head thuds on the pavement. A few kindergarteners laugh, while Kelly, Phil’s co-teacher, long-legged and vanilla-scented, tends to the rattled Adam Stern. Kelly and Adam scuttle off to the nurse’s office, while Phil delivers the big reveal:

There is going to be a party on the last day of school before winter break, but before any of you can start your vacations, you all must . . . EAT TWO THOUSAND DONUTS! THAT’S RIGHT, EACH OF YOU WILL EAT TWO THOUSAND DELECTABLE DONUTS BEFORE YOU CAN GO HOME FOR WINTER BREAK!

Everyone erupts in massive applause, except for the

ungainly girl with gauche bangs, sitting in the back, silently waiting to detonate. In her usual garb — plastic gloves, plaid pants, and a Babar the Elephant shirt — she realizes that she is going to die. It is her first memorable surge of panic, one that will oscillate for the next fifteen years. A vague anxiety that will hover within her, like a distant hum from an unknown source, forever there, never quite identifiable. From this moment on, she will always be a touch discomfited, never entirely present, and bring a sense of hyper-vigilance, insecurity, and tension to every situation. This neurotic, self-obsessed girl is me. Or *moi*, as Barbar the Elephant would say.

My grandmother Rea, the temporary caretaker while my parents are in Guatemala, picks me up at 3:00 PM from our school’s chaotic carpool, armed with a mini Babybel cheese and peanut butter filled pretzels. I resume my position in the back seat where I feign sleep in order to avoid conversation with this domineering and theatrical woman. All my life, people will comment on how my grandma is “larger than life” and “such a character.” I keep to myself how much she intimidates me. How she sucks the air out of the room. How she is always, subtly, impossible to please. My throat burns. I haven’t seen my parents since Thanksgiving. I have never felt so alone.

“My, you look awfully flushed,” she tells me. I shut my eyes and clasp my plastic gloved hands together. We can’t afford Prancercising class, so I have to rely on fantasizing for recreation and pseudo-cardio. I pretend I am pony, prancing through a field of flowers. But my dainty hooves are wearing plastic gloves, which make the prancing a bit slippery and dangerous. It’s OK, because pony-me has a risky side to her.

“I hope you aren’t getting sick. This would be a really, really bad week for you to be sick,” my grandma says, barreling through traffic, tapping her horn every few seconds, flipping the bird whenever deemed necessary.

When we get home, Rea rushes inside. We are expecting a call from my mother. The phone rings, and Rea picks up instantly.

Two years earlier, when I was three and a half, my mom endured a uterine rupture in labor, and gave birth to a stillborn. A nine-pound, full-term stillborn baby girl, who never took a breath of her own. (I am told years later,

far into this new millennium, that if the delivery had continued for another ten seconds, my mother would have died too.) When my dad returned from the hospital that night, he had planned on telling me about the baby, Ella, but before he could, I reminded him that it was the first night of Hanukkah, so we should light the Shamash, open a gift, and play dreidel. The gift that night was a Play-Doh Doctor Drill 'n' Fill Playset. My dad sat and played it with me all night, incapable of telling me what happened while I packed Mr. Drill 'n' Fill's head with Play-Doh, and carved shapes into his clay teeth with plastic dentist tools. I woke up the next morning to find my grandmother and dad sitting at the dining room table, the most distraught I ever have and ever will see them. Thinking I knew how to comfort them, I told them that as soon as my mom and the baby returned from the hospital, "I promise that I won't color Ella." I explained to them that the night before, I dreamt that I painted all over my new sister, "but I promise I won't." After placing a plastic bowl of cheerios for me on the table, his face the shade Mr. Fill 'n Drill's Play-Doh teeth, white and ashy, my dad told me that the baby didn't make it.

Now, adding to the family by adopting a seven-month-old from Guatemala, my parents are far away, and two thousand donuts haunt me. My grandmother hands me the phone.

"Hi, sweetie! I miss you so so so so much! We are meeting the lawyer, your future sister, and her foster mom today."

The choking feeling in my throat enlarges. I feel unreal, detached; about to keel over any moment.

"Honey, are you there?"

"Phil is making us eat two thousand donuts or we can't go home."

"What?" my mom's voice sounds like a cartoon to me. The room spins, my grandmother hovers.

"Two thousand donuts," I whimper.

"Juice and donuts?" my mom sounds so distracted.

"Two thousand," I try to explain.

"Well, that sounds so fun! You love donuts! Put Grammie back on the phone, will you, sweetie pie?"

The nights are insufferable. My grandmother sleeps an average of three hours, while I lie awake on the fold-out couch in her family room. With this newfound awareness of my looming death, everything feels even more unbearable. I close my eyes, and see Phil shove donuts down my throat, while my classmates laugh and cheer him on. Suddenly, I burst; my limbs explode in Technicolor. I am never going to see my parents again. This little girl from Guatemala is going to have to fill the loss of not just Ella, but me too.

Light from the living room casts patches of gold on the walls and the carpets of the family room where I lie. My grandmother is making strange sounds, like she is trying to clear her throat but can't. I climb out of the lumpy sofa

bed, and go into the living room.

She is sitting hunched over stacks of papers, writing furiously, both exhausted and frenzied. She does not seem to see me.

"Grandma, what are you doing?"

Her explanation is garbled and incoherent. She tells me that all the computers in the world are going to cease operating in the year 2000. "All the information will be lost. There will be no information. Everything will be gone. I am writing down all my records before they are lost forever."

And because I know sleep is unattainable, I am going to die before I can say goodbye to my parents, I will never meet my sister, hear her first words, watch her take her first steps, judge her boyfriends, the computers will crash and everything will be destroyed, I do nothing but write by my grandma's side for the next five nights. I make believe that I am a prolific writer. I need to write everything I possibly can in the little time that I have left. I write a letter to my parents, elucidating my "dough-death," telling them I love them more than anything in the world, and that they will "always be my best friends." I write a message to my future sister, letting her know that she "can have my room if she wants," and advise her to stay away from "lollipops she finds on the sidewalk." I write a somewhat shameful and taboo love poem to Mr. Shea, my friend Ruth's dad, and finally, a note to Phil, forgiving him for my demise.

The day has arrived. Phil approaches each of us, sitting patiently at our tables, delivering one pink pastry box per child. When everyone has their box of death sitting before them, he claps his hands, and grins.

"Go ahead," practically dancing at this point, he instructs us, "Open your boxes!" Even though my math skills are profoundly inadequate, I know this doesn't add up. There can't be two thousand donuts in my little, pink box. I feel a hand gently touch me on the shoulder near Babar's big ears. It's Phil. "Open your box, Grace."

And I do.

My heart sings when I see that there are only four small donuts, shaped like numbers: two, zero, zero, zero. The entire class boos and jeers, except for the girl with gauche bangs. Her face beams. She is going to live.

That Sunday afternoon, my grandmother and I sit on the living room couch, looking out the window, our writing strewn about like the first draft of an incoherent novel. A taxicab pulls up. We can see the top of my dad's head, big and bald, and my mom's, her wispy, blonde hair evoking such a forceful a sense of relief that, for a moment, I cannot breathe. And there is my sister, the smallest head, her dark brown hair done in little pigtails. My grandmother starts to sob. "We are five. There are five of us now." The world spins forward. My mom boxes up our writing, and stores it in the back of her closet. It's still there today. The millennium arrives. "We are five." "We are five." ▼

Cultural Calendar

By CHARLIE C. WILCOX

December 2

Concert — Thee Oh Sees at Doug Fir (AA/21+)

If the Meatbodies show last Friday wasn't enough for you (and I'm ashamed of all of you that didn't come) then make your way to the Doug Fir for a twofer of the godfather of all 21st-century psych-garage-rock bands, Thee Oh Sees. These guys kill it live, and they are playing two shows, one all ages and one 21+, so there ain't no reason not to come out. Last Thee Oh Sees show I went to, one of my friends almost got choked out by a grumpy dad-rocker, and now we shall return with a vengeance against all boomers that don't understand the concept of a "punk" show with one of those new-fangled "mosh pits"

the kids are talking about nowadays

Concert — Deafheaven at Holocene (21+)

Straight from the early Thee Oh Sees show to Deafheaven for me. This show came outta nowhere, and I am pumped to see Deafheaven again. You should know by now if you love or hate their massively popular 2013 album *Sunbather*, which divided the metal community last year just like *Yeezus* did to the rap community (I may be exaggerating a bit). Deafheaven brings a great live show and lead singer George Clarke is one goofy Superman-looking-ass dude, but man can he screech. This show is through Red Bull Sound Select, so RSVP on their website to get a

cheep cheep cheep \$3 tickets at the door. Deal of a lifetime!

December 9

Concert — Pallbearer at Hawthorne (21+)

When I saw Deafheaven earlier this year, Pallbearer opened up for them, and these dudes nailed it as well. This was before their "break-out" (as much as any metal album breaks out) *Foundations of Burden* came out later in the summer, to much acclaim; but I still find their live show much more compelling than their recorded stuff. That being said, Pallbearer has released one of the better doom albums of the year (that is, until Oregon-native Yob blew the competition out of the water). This show is only 9 bucks, so it is definitely worth your time.

So next issue, I'll be using this space to showcase my year-end lists. Be prepared for best albums, best movies, best books, and best concerts of the year! I'll be sure to bring some hot opinions to the table. Speaking of which, have a happy thanksgiving and remember those people who are less fortunate and can't spend their time going to concerts and all that. Love y'all. 🍷



The Oh Sees



Deafheaven

"Marisol" of the November 13th (volume II issue V) issue of *The Grail* stated that the play was performed in the Blackbox Theater, when in fact it was in the Diver Studio Theater. Additionally, the first quote in the article was misquoted, it should have read: "The moon carries the souls of dead people to heaven./ The new moon is dark and empty./ It fills up every month/ with new glowing souls/ then it carries its silent burden to God. WAKE UP." The show photographer, Stacia Torborg '07, is an alumna.