

# THE GRAIL

VOLUME IV NOVEMBER 12, 2015

ISSUE V



INSIDE

2C-B

## NO MO BROMO

Legend has it that a drug was first synthesized in Reed's chemistry building. Are the rumors true?

PAGE 1

WORLD PREMIERE

## EXILE AT REED

The story of an Iranian-American lesbian video game designer is told in the PAB. Read about Reed theatre at its nüest. Shows continue through November 14.

PAGE 4

FIXATION ON ADMINISTRATION

## #OCCUPYELIOT

On Tuesday a coalition of activists gathered in the President's office in the hopes of drawing the administration's attention. Did it work?

PAGE 7

# THE GRAIL

VOLUME IV NOVEMBER 12, 2015

ISSUE V

www.reedthegrail.com

## FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

“The coldest summer I ever spent was a November at Reed” — Steve Jobs. That’s how that quote goes. . . right? We can’t all be English majors, but you know what we’re getting at. Get off our backs. If you would like to see a catalogue of our varied and horrendous misquotes, you can find them all at reedthegrail.com. For this week’s issue, the big

history behind the small-ish molecule, 2C-B (1). The first ever performance of *Exile* (4). Uncovering the mysterious #OccupyEliot (7). Powell’s Welcomes *Welcome to Nightvale* (8). The De Sastre to end all De Sastres (9). A cultural conundrum (10).

Join us on Mondays in PAB 105 at 9 P.M.

Love,  
Jordan, Lauren, and Vikram

## CONTENTS

### News & Features

Public Mismemory, 1  
*Exile*, 4  
Occupy Eliot, 7

### Columns

*Welcome to Night Vale*, 8  
De Sastre, 9  
Cultural Calendar, 10

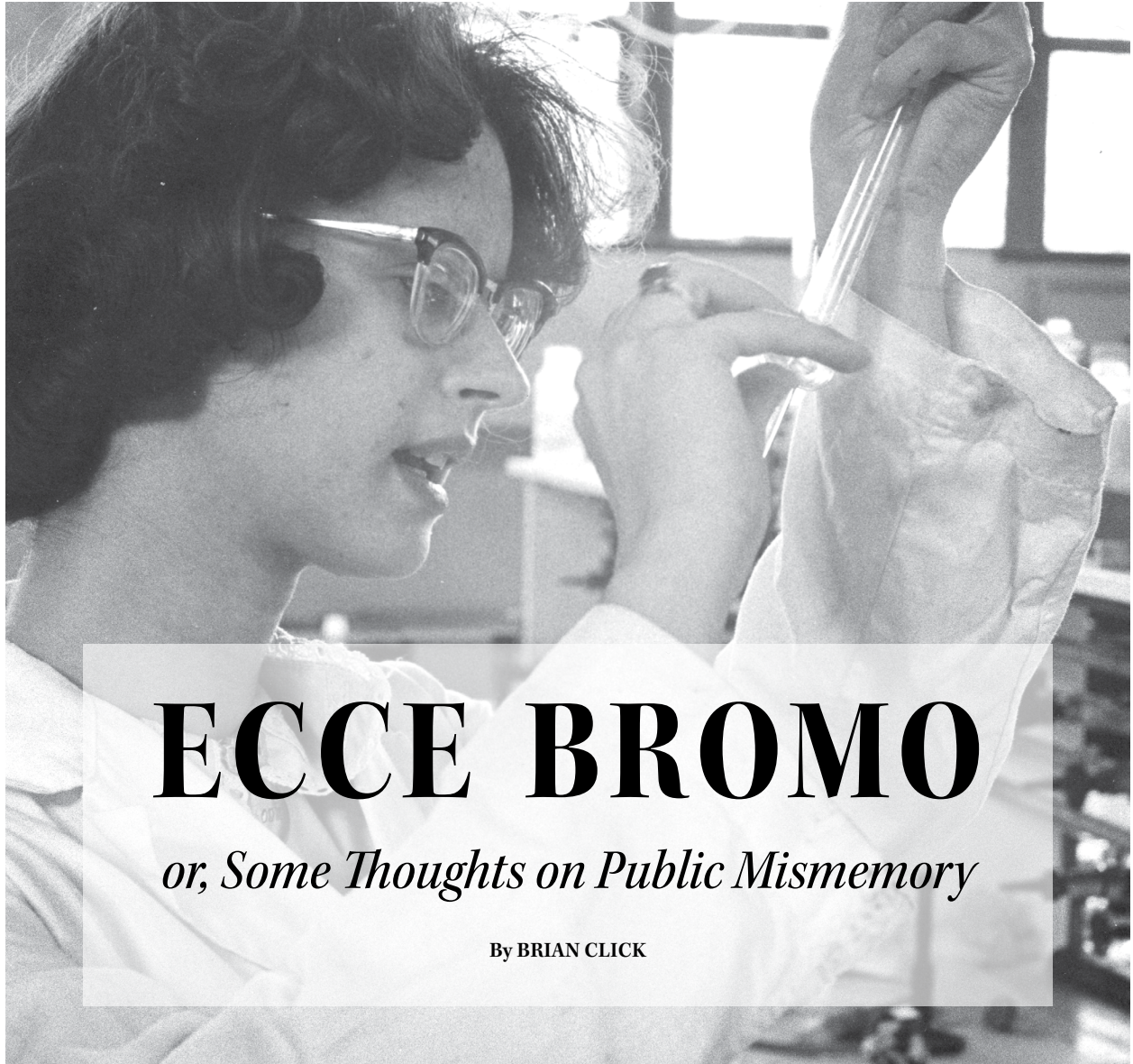
## CONTRIBUTORS

Alexis Angulo  
Maddy Appelbaum  
Jaime Archer  
Lyla Boyajian  
Max Carpenter  
Vikram Chan-Herur  
Katie Charney  
Thanh Chu  
Brian Click  
Lauren Cooper  
James Curry-Castillo  
Ruben de la Huerga  
Madeline Engelfried  
Grace Fetterman  
Mike Frazel

Guananí Gómez  
Ruth Hale  
Alexa Harris  
Maira Hicks  
Annelise Hill  
Dylan Holmes  
Erika Hurth  
Isabel Meigs  
Emily Merfeld  
Maria Maita-Keppeler  
Charles Nunziato  
Aysha Pettigrew  
Sam Ramirez  
Clara Rice  
Sarah Richmond

Zoe Rosenfeld  
Noah Samel  
Kevin Snyder  
Brendan Sorrell  
Claire Stevens  
Blake Stewart  
Mia Uribe Kozlovsky  
Charlie C. Wilcox  
Benjamin Williams  
August Wissmath  
Rémi Yang  
Jordan Yu  
Lia Zallar

Front cover photograph by Dale Peterson.



# ECCE BROMO

*or, Some Thoughts on Public Mismemory*

By BRIAN CLICK

*A Reed chemistry lab in the 1960s.*

*Reed College Archives and Special Collections*

You heard about that, right? Back in the '60s, a Reedie invented bromo-mescaline right over there in the Chem building.”

If you know any older alumni, especially from before the Internet era, you might've had that sentence thrown at you in casual conversation. They're trying to pass on a legend that hasn't had currency around these parts for a long time. Don't believe them — but listen anyway. Legends are lessons, and the story of “bromo-mescaline” is a perfect primer in

Reedies' self-image through the ages.

“Bromo-mescaline” is an archaic slang term for the drug 2C-B, a psychedelic phenethylamine. First synthesized in 1974, it was initially sold over the counter as an aphrodisiac before becoming popular among ravers in the 1980s and eventually being scheduled by the federal government in 1995. And as your drug-nerd friend can tell you, it was invented by the pioneering pharmacologist Alexander Shulgin, not by an undergrad killing time in between Hum conferences. So

how did the myth come to be? Are we really that self-aggrandizing?

Although it's difficult to find out exactly what happened — this is definitely going to be my most speculative *Grail* article so far — the myth seems to have been generated by a combination of several crystals of truth and a lack of reliable drug information, and was kept alive by the way it confirmed Reedies' preconceived notions of the past.

The myth has largely disappeared from campus in recent years. The

word “bromo” now appears only in the famed Immorality Quotient, where you’ll get points for even knowing what it means. It seems that increased knowledge through the Internet and harm-reduction campaigns, and a shifting sense of what “Olde Reed” means to us today, have put the legend to rest.

### The Legend (or 2C-BS)

I was first told the tale of bromo by a friend of mine who graduated in the early 1990s, whom we’ll call M. (Although 2C-B was not illegal in the United States at the time, it’s still probably best to keep everyone involved anonymous.) During his first few years at Reed, his suspicious parents tested his urine every time he returned home for the holidays, and so the only recreational substances he felt able to use without parental wrath were alcohol and LSD. Nevertheless, he wanted to explore other options, and he found one when a friend (who we’ll call F) offered him “a kind of synthetic mescaline.” F had synthesized this batch. It was a Reed-original drug, which M could get away with using because nobody else knew about it.

His recollection of the experience maps perfectly on to the effects of insufflated, or snorted, 2C-B. There was a sharp, overwhelming come-up after painful insufflation — he felt as if he were being “lit up on fire” — followed by waving, warping visuals and euphoria. Since he had never heard the term 2C-B and thus his memories couldn’t have been influenced by reading descriptions of it at a later date, it’s safe to assume that bromo and 2C-B are indeed the same thing.

M wasn’t the only one being told the dubious story of the drug’s origin. The tale was a firm part of campus lore in those years. The 1993 Student Body *Handbook’s* drug article lists bromo under its section on mescaline, as “a synthetic mescaline analog developed, at Reed, during the late sixties.” Its description also matches 2C-B. References to bromo can be spotted in *Quests* of the period, too.

Even a quick trip (no pun intended) into the archives makes it clear that during the late ’80s and early ’90s, there was a widespread sense on campus that bromo was our unique local flavor, part of Reed’s psychedelic reputation.

### Granules of Truth

M is unsure whether F actually told him that the drug was invented on campus, but he assumed at the time that it had been: “Was I told it was invented [at Reed], maybe. Was I told it was *made* there, yes.” F declined to speak to *The Grail* about any manufacture that may have gone on, but according to Logan Tibbetts ’18 of Reed’s chapter of Students for Sensible Drug Policy, the idea that students were making the drug themselves is not out of the question: “It doesn’t seem implausible — at the very least, it definitely isn’t as implausible as many other pharmacological escapades I’ve heard about back in Olde Reed.”

In addition to cooking it up, it’s also plausible that Reed students were among the first to use the term “bromo mescaline” to describe the stuff. The “bromo” part derives from its full chemical name, 2,5-dimethoxy-4-bromophenethylamine. The only 2C-B experience story on the drug information site erowid.com that calls the drug “bromo” was written by a Reedy in 2001 and includes a great recollection of our narrator puking on the SU porch outside a dance: “I saw my spout of vomit as a luminescent stream of gorgeous rich colors and rapidly spinning, rapidly ever-changing geometric shapes. I was humbled and awed by my vomit’s beauty.”

More recently, the 2004 Student Body *Handbook’s* drug article refers to the term “bromo” as a “nickname only really used at Reed.” The DEA does list the term as a slang name for 2C-B, but it does not seem widely popular. Other online sources seem skeptical of “bromo” being a real piece of drug slang. The overall impression is that someone who knew the full chemi-

cal name started calling it “bromo” at Reed when it first arrived on campus in the ’80s, and the term stuck around among Reedies and their friends. This was Reed’s only historical contribution to the creation of 2C-B — a short-lived, little-used nickname.

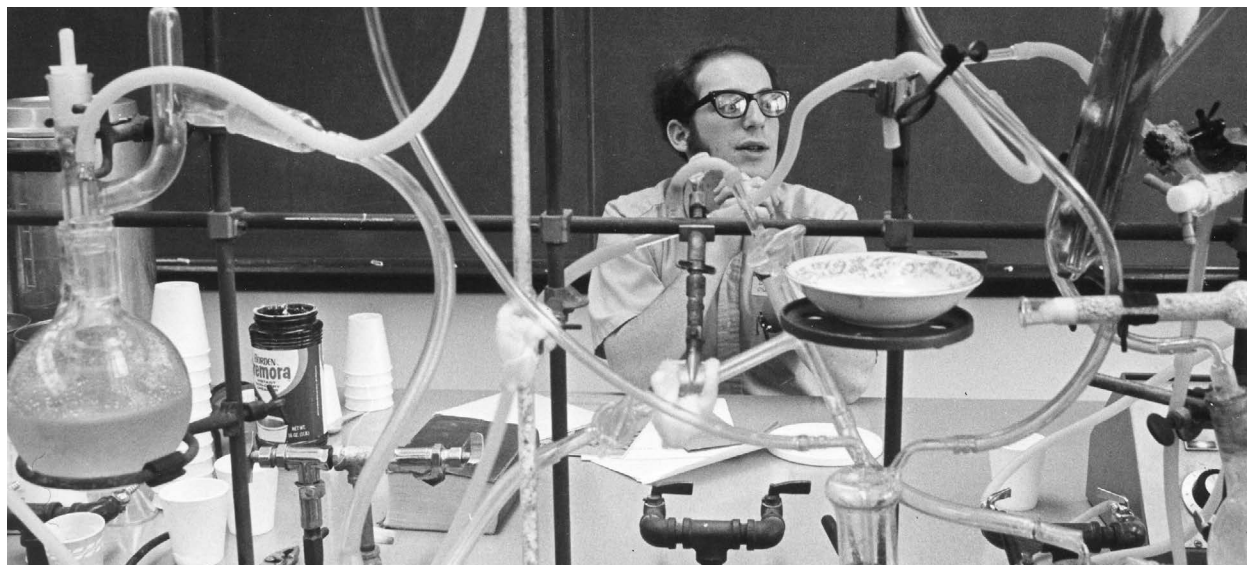
### The Weird Wide Web

I don’t think it’s a coincidence that the story of bromo has vanished from campus between the 1990s and now. Even if some students were to start manufacturing it again today, or the name “bromo” was to come back into fashion, it’s unlikely the myth would come back too — because should you try to pass it on, your skeptical buddy will take out her phone, pull up Erowid, and call you out as a sucker. The internet is home to plenty of rumors as well, but it has so widened the availability of information on once-taboo topics such as drugs that rumor has lost much of its potency.

Tibbetts, although admitting that this is just his “extraordinarily unscientific perception,” agrees: “On the whole, I would say the internet, internet literacy, and widespread dissemination of that information have had a positive effect on spreading truth and dispelling rumors like this,” he explained to *The Grail*. “People still gossip and talk and share obviously fake information which is taken as gospel, but the ability to fact check is made substantially easier by the internet and the communities that exist on it. Even with drug information, which has traditionally been a subject with a tremendous amount of gatekeeping, I’ve personally seen highly increased accessibility even just in the last few years.”

### Bromo and Our Nostalgias

Yet the story of the bromo myth’s rise and fall can be read as more than just a corrected miscommunication. Think of how Herodotus portrays non-Greeks as naturally tumbling into tyranny again and again even when they try to elect a leader. Think of the way conservatives redact Martin Luther King’s political goals, ig-



*A Reed chemistry lab in the 1960s.*

*Reed College Archives and Special Collections*

noring his fight for economic justice. The ways we misremember history reflect our worldview. Perhaps the same is true here.

Nostalgia has been a constant at Reed, yet what students are nostalgic for has changed over the years. Supposedly, the very first cries of “Olde Reed is dead” began when classes moved from an office building downtown onto campus — because the Woodstock neighborhood had not yet been paved and students now had to slog through the mud from the trolley stop to Eliot.

Today, laments for Olde Reed have become more specific as the student body has grown to recognize and discuss the ways the college has improved and still needs to improve: in faculty and student body diversity, in the availability of health and child-care services, and in curricular offerings. Nostalgia still exists, but only with regards to certain facets of campus life — all of which are outside the classroom.

That was not always the case. As you might remember from my Beer Nation article, the late '80s and early '90s — the time period from which the bromo myth dates — was also the era when Policy and Liability came to campus. The first drug and alcohol policies, the first smoking policy, the tightening of rules on dogs, and

so on, accompanied by an increase in administrative staff, were highly resented as intrusions on student autonomy and self-reliance. That attitude wasn't wrong per se, but it was coupled with an erroneous sense that those developments were stifling the intellectual character of the college to some degree. You can see the legacy of that fear in some of the remarks about trigger warnings and so on that alumni have made online. When pressed, it's often not specifically trigger warnings that bother them, but a more amorphous sense that liability and “coddling” have gotten in the way of a rigorous education by not letting students sink or swim for themselves.

In a sense, the story of bromo could be seen as an expression of the narrative of decline of Reed academics in the 1990s. Back in the old days, any student would be able to whip up an amazing new drug in the organic chemistry lab, but that was in the 1960s when *real* geniuses went to this school. For the record, M's not one of the pessimists from that era — he's told me that from what he can see, the student body is the same as it ever was. He likes us a whole lot.

Today, the bromo story would never be taken to suggest that Reedies of the 1960s were better students. It could potentially be used to lament the AOD policy — you can imag-

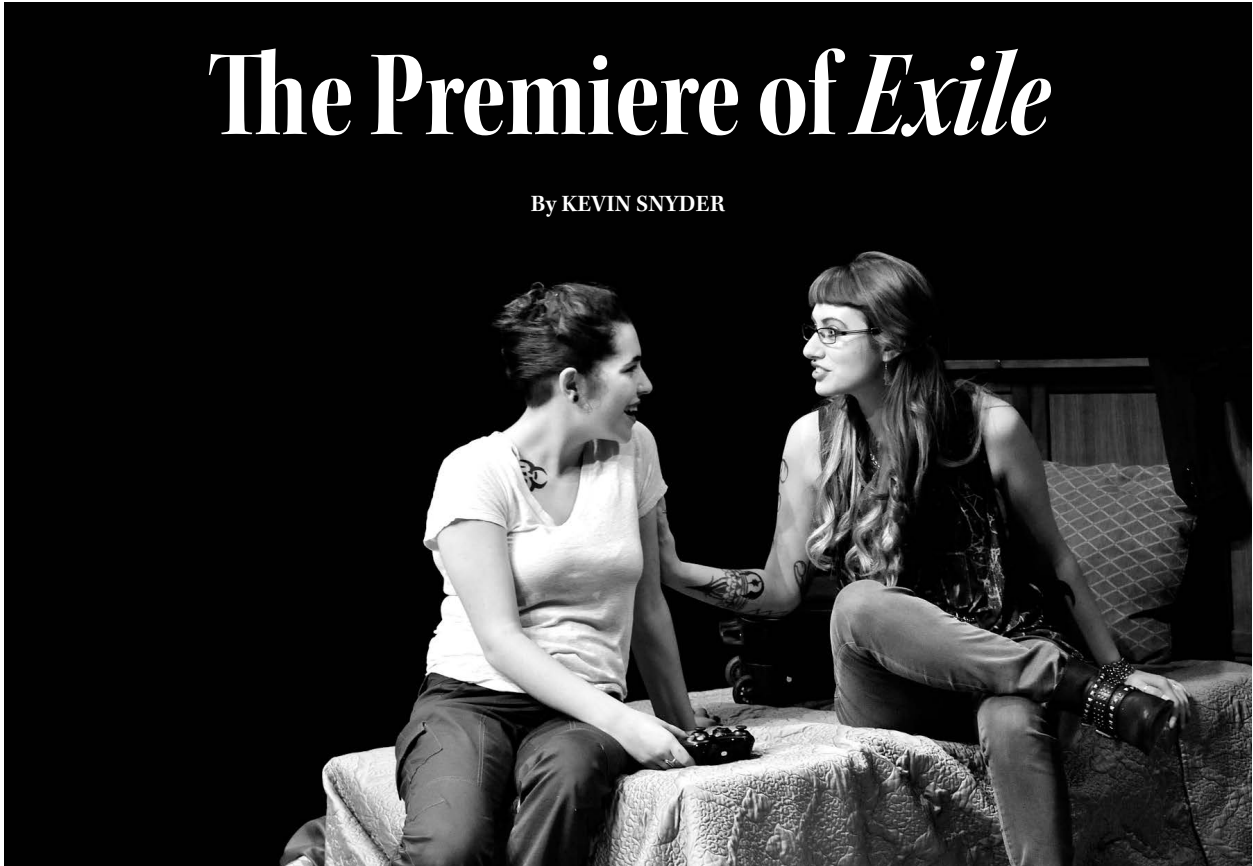
ine someone saying that back in the good old days, any student would be *allowed* to make drugs in the lab — but that's it. Our own historiography of Olde Reed has changed too much.

Many students, myself included, wish we could resurrect parts of the past: a less restrictive drug policy, more tolerance for nudity, less of an emphasis on corporate branding and PR, more money being spent on tuition and less on designer furniture. But nobody wishes that there was no Chinese department, or an “Old Guard” stranglehold over faculty hiring and curricula, or single-digit numbers of black students. Nobody thinks students were any smarter or harder-working in the old days — in fact, since we've got a broader range of perspectives among the faculty and student body, we'll probably get a broader education than they did.

As I admitted in my disclaimer at the start of the article, this is mostly my own speculation and perception. But as far as I can tell, students today at Reed acknowledge that the most important things have either stayed the same or improved, and we don't worry that we are dumber than the class of 1969. We could *totally* invent 2C-B right now, if we put our minds to it. ▾

# The Premiere of *Exile*

By KEVIN SNYDER



*Juliana Cable '19 as Sameera and Kate Johnson '16 as Elly.*

Dale Peterson

*Exile* by Nastaran Ahmadi, directed by professor Catherine Ming T'ien Duffly opened for a five-performance run November 6–14. It is the world premiere of the play and Duffly's third production at Reed.

*Exile* tells the story of Sameera (Juliana Cable '19), an Iranian-American videogame designer who lives with her partner Tamrin, a white American independent book publisher (Lily Harris '16). Sameera is trying to develop a video game also titled *Exile* about Iran and ends up cheating on Tamrin. Confusion and growth ensues. It's the story of someone who's dealing with an identity that's divorced from her current reality and investigating it through her creative process.

This is the first faculty show in the PAB to be set in the black box theatre, a smaller space where we can see the sincerity of the touches between Sameera and Tamrin, and the audience can hear the click of their stilettos

and mumbled apologies for infidelity. Upon entry, the audience is met with a rare sight — theater in the triangle. The audience sits on three sets of risers surrounding the set with screens behind each to project pre-filmed scenes, live video of actors, and even screenplay videos of the popular game *Portal* onto over the show.

As we watch Sameera develop her video game concept, of a lone survivor in a post-nuclear fallout Iran, the projectors bring us into another world. "Theater and video games are arguably very different mediums," says Lily Harris, class of '16, "but having multiple artistic mediums in play add layers of theatricality."

Each section of audience can see the other two sections sometimes even in bright light or up on the screens in live video. Between scenes, we see members of the run crew move furniture to set the upcoming scene all wearing black tee shirts with a half full loading bar and

the word 'LOADING' on their backs. These reminders that we're watching something artistically created involve us in the theatrical world and when the play goes into scenes from within Sameera's game, all projectors running, and even the floor of the stage projected on, we enter into a virtual reality.

The play opens to Sameera on her couch, having fallen asleep earbuds in watching Steven Colbert. Her partner, Tamrin, gently wakes her, getting ready for a business day. This is the core relationship of the play. The genuineness of emotion shines out of Cable's performance as Sameera and we root for her fiercely. Harris is superb as Tamrin — a force to be reckoned with. Her intentions are clear and her timing masterful. Their relationship onstage is intimate and effortlessly loving.

"The play is largely about one woman's early creative process; where she gets her footing on an idea that's

fermenting in the back of her head. To get at the idea clearly, she has to wade through her personal and emotional roadblocks,” says Ryan Wright, dramaturge, class of '16, “A year after the insanity that was gamergate it's more important than ever to see representations of women involved in the business of making games.”

As the play progresses we see Sameera meet game designer and personal hero Elly (played by Kate Johnson '16) at the E3 conference she attends. Elly and Sameera's costumes are true to life. The actors walk onto the stage with partially shaved heads and multiple tattoos: a sleeve of leaves and a cuff tat for Elly and two radioactivity warnings and the Farsi word for wheel on Sameera.

The two become entangled in conversation about E3 as a space for women and Sameera's game idea. Their entanglement becomes physical and the problems of the play begin in earnest. Elly's questions about the possible commercial value of Sameera's *Exile* game raises the issue of commodification. “She [Sameera] wants to make something that's meaningful to her,” says director, Catherine Duffly in interview, “She resists commodifying her identity, but also it's really what she's invested in — creating this game that's so attached to her own identity.”

Elly and Sameera also address the problems of the E3 conference and women's harassment and objectification in gaming culture. They call to mind game designers Zoë Quinn and Brianna Wu, two of the main targets of gamergate (a misogynistic harassment campaign against women that began in August, 2014) and creators of award-winning games such as *Depression Quest* (Quinn, online game) and *Revolution 60* (Wu, iOS game).

But unlike Quinn and Wu, Elly isn't the feminist hero that Sameera wants her to be. We see Sameera's surprise that Elly sees women's objectification as a venue for personal empowerment and that Elly doesn't act to reform the culture. In dialogue

about female cosplayers:

SAMEERA: And it doesn't bother you?

ELLY: It's harmless. They get paid to dress like fantasies, and the boys get to look at them.

SAMEERA: What do you get?

ELLY: I get a place to share my ideas where boys listen to me because their dicks and hearts are placated by women dressed in silver links and black metal.

By the time Elly becomes ‘the other woman,’ our empathy for her is somewhat lost. In the tense scene when Tamrin and Elly meet and face off, Tamrin emerges a clear victor.

We also see Tamrin's struggle with closing a book deal with an ex-CIA agent, Tony (played by Jack Jackson, class of '19) whose manuscript details his opinions of Iran and his predictions of its doom. “Tamrin and Sameera betray each other in different ways,” says Juliana Cable speaking to me in an interview, “Sameera cheats, but Tamrin betrays Sameera in pursuing this book that so obviously misunderstands something that's a big part of Sameera's identity. Tony is taking an ignorant and aggressive stance on Iran and commodifying it to turn a profit. In that scene, I'm calling Tamrin out. It's my favorite scene to act.”

Intermittently we see solo scenes of a character whose only name is ‘boy,’ (played by Ethan Sandweiss, class of '19) set in the Iran of Sameera's game. When Sameera enters into his reality and they communicate, in English and in Farsi, Sameera's questions of identity and home are, if not resolved, made peace with:

SAMEERA: I'm thinking I don't know what to say. . . I think about games on video and how I could make one to make sense of everything I think about. I think about how we're not strong like Hercules, but we try to be.

### Prescient Playwriting

*Exile* debuts at a moment entirely too appropriate. As a woman in gaming and an Iranian-American, Sameera is a rarely recognized figure

in the current cultural and political climate within the U.S. The trauma caused by gamergate and the national tension from the Iran nuclear deal has little space for reflection and dialogue. The magnitude of these problems were known by Nastaran Ahmadi, who finished the play in 2012.

“I wanted to write a play that addressed my feelings about what it is to be an Iranian-American in a country that's at odds with the region,” says playwright Nastaran Ahmadi, “I also wanted to investigate Iran's relationship to nuclear proliferation, but I didn't want that to be the sole topic at hand. What is a way to talk about violence that can be engaging and fun? For me that's videogames.”

Beginning with the image of an American flag burning in Tehran, the 1979 ABC news coverage of what was labeled in America as the Iran Hostage Crisis reported the story of how the residents of the U.S. embassy house in Tehran were taken hostage by protesters. From their report: “Several hundred young people, mainly students at Tehran University have taken over the embassy. ‘We are not occupiers,’ they said, ‘we have thrown out the occupiers.’”

The hostage-takers declared their solidarity with other oppressed minorities and released thirteen women and African Americans in November, 1979. After several thwarted attempts at rescue from the Carter administration, bitter failures in the eyes of the American public, the remaining fifty-two hostages were released after 444 days of captivity in January, 1981, with the agreement that the U.S. would not intervene in Iranian affairs.

The protest was partly in reaction to the news that the U.S. would allow Iran's deposed Shah, a pro-western autocrat ousted months before, to come to the U.S. for cancer treatment. The revolutionary overthrow of the Shah had ended Iran's cooperation with the U.S. on nuclear energy. The protest was a way for the Iranian revolutionaries to declare their independence from America and an end

to western influence in Iran's government.

In the 1950s, Iran was aided by the U.S. in creating its first nuclear energy facility as part of President Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace program, but after Israel acquired a nuclear weapon in the 60's and Saddam Hussein's attempts to obtain one in the '80s, Iranians rethought the need for their own.

Since a 2002 revelation that Iran's nuclear program was more advanced than previously believed, relations between the U.S. and Iran, still antagonistic after the hostage crisis, have been further stretched. This resulted in a four and a half year long international negotiation process completed this year on the Iran Nuclear deal, which blocks all venues for Iran to create nuclear weapons.

The agreement, a non-violent victory for war-weary Americans and a milestone in the movement toward building security through diplomacy instead of militancy, was hoped to improve relations. The deal has met fervent opposition in America and Iran,

where economic strife and political unrest following the allegedly fraudulent 2009 election abound and anti-American sentiment is prevalent.

To Iranian-Americans and their loved ones, as represented in *Exile*, this is not an unfamiliar history. The conflict that Sameera faces in *Exile* as someone who has never visited Iran and is not quick to identify herself as Persian is deepened as a queer woman in gaming.

### Theater's Responsibility

In the PAB's dressing rooms on opening night, costumers prepared actors' hair and retouched their air-brushed tattoos while the actors ran lines and anticipated the presence of the playwright in the audience on the second weekend.

Speaking about the moment she received the role of Sameera, Juliana Cable said, "I felt really honored and also terrified in a good way. . . I felt an immense responsibility to do a good job. A big part of my concern was that I'm not Iranian. In some ways I could relate it to my own experience be-

cause I'm biracial; I'm half Puerto Rican. . . Honestly most of my research for the role was less looking facts up and more learning about the experience of being an Iranian-American person in a culture that doesn't make that easy."

Tasked with representing multiple delicate subjects in their work and forging a path for the show as the actors of *Exile's* first full production, the cast prepared exhaustively. Their research was helped by professors from the political science department, Farsi pronunciation consultants, the playwright herself via a Skype interview, and the show's dramaturges.

Duffy explained that she chose *Exile* because: "When I'm thinking about what kind of plays to do I'm always thinking about what we're putting on our stages. . . I want to stage plays by women and people of color, who are telling the stories that don't often get told in the U.S. For me the theater is so compelling because of the potential that it holds in staging the world that we want to see. . . We get to make a world."

Duffy addresses theater's power to envision social change and challenge the status quo in her note in *Exile's* program. Considering the topics at hand and the questions *Exile* grapples with, our theater is where we can reflect politically and emotionally. In the words of feminist media critic Anita Sarkeesian in her speech "What I Couldn't Say" for the All About Women conference:

"Somehow we fooled ourselves into thinking that by expressing human emotions it somehow means that the harassers have won. . . but by denying ourselves the space to feel and to share those feelings, we're just perpetuating this notion that we all should suffer alone, that we should all just toughen up and grow thicker skin, which we shouldn't have to do." ♣



Juliana Cable '19 as Sameera and Lily Harris '16 Elly.

Dale Peterson





President John Kroger reclines with students during the Eliot Hall teach-in.

Jordan Yu

## Eliot Hall's One-Day Occupation

By JORDAN YU

Crimson flags adorned the third floor of Eliot Hall on Tuesday, November 10. From noon to 5 p.m., students from various activist groups gathered in President Kroger's office to demonstrate, converse, and workshop activism. A coalition of student activists representing the Reed Socialist Alternative, Blue Heron, DiversIFY, Fossil Free Reed, and Students for Sensible Drug Policy gathered in the office to workshop.

Shortly after three, Dagan Douglas '18 began his workshop by handing out sheets of printer paper, pencils, and asking the sitting group to write down the "problems that are in the world." No easy task. After a minute, he asked the group to stop writing; he planned to compile a master list. Systemic racism, religious intolerance, anti-blackness, lack of immigrant rights, slavery, climate change, poverty, and homelessness all made the short list. Someone asked, "What

about gender?" The participants nodded and began to add gendered and LGBTQ issues to the list.

After compiling the frightening list of problems, the students discussed how a Reed education faces those issues: specifically with regard to the Hum syllabus. Attendees brainstormed possible solutions for changing the curriculum. Many took issue with the fact that few non-eurocentric classes are available. "It's too exclusive" said Douglas. Sitting quietly on the floor was President John Kroger (2012–). After the main discussion ended, Kroger tried to address the students' concerns. He talked about the difficulties establishing new majors, the process of hiring new faculty, capital campaigns, and funding issues.

But why the sit in? According to Douglas "The purpose of this sit in is to address issues that the administration has been ignoring students on", and

"this was a show of student solidarity." When asked why little notice was given the demonstrations, Douglas said that it spoke "to students' relationship to the administration." The organizers thought it best to err on the side of caution; "We didn't want to get stonewalled once again" remarked Douglas. When asked about "#OccupyEliot" and lack of event announcement, activist Anthony Bencivengo '18 admitted "a lot of people complained about the confusion." But said the lack of prior activist-student communication was intentional. "We were not sure of how the administration were going to react," he said. As it turned out, the administration was receptive. "Kroger participated in full in several workshops," Bencivengo added. Douglas hopes the success of this demonstration may lead to more in the future. "Start being activists, start caring." ▼

# Welcome to Night Vale Comes to Portland

By GUANANÍ GÓMEZ

“Mostly void, partially stars,” read the T-shirt of the *Welcome to Night Vale* fan sitting beside me. More than four hundred of us filled the event space in the Beaverton branch of Powell’s Books, anxiously awaiting the appearance of the popular and deeply strange podcast’s writers.

*Welcome to Night Vale* is a fiction podcast. It takes the form of a news broadcast from a mysterious town somewhere in the Southwestern desert, where hooded figures roam the forbidden dog park, no one is allowed to believe in mountains, and a faceless old woman secretly lives in everyone’s home. Each episode lasts about twenty minutes, and includes segments such as existentialist messages from sponsors, updates from the Sheriff’s Secret Police, and the weather, which is actually a musical interlude.

Despite its unusual content, the podcast rose to the most downloaded on iTunes in the summer of 2012, and has continued to cultivate a dedicated fanbase since. On October 20, 2015, the writers of the podcast, Joseph Fink and Jeffrey Cranor, released a new *Night Vale* creation: a novel that takes place in the same strange world as the podcast. On October 28, 2015, they visited Powell’s for the book’s tour and answered questions about their collaborative process, working with voice actors, the unique benefits and challenges of the podcast format, and how

grateful they are to have such an enthusiastic audience.

The *Night Vale* novel maintains the unique style and tone of the podcast (poetic, creepy, often in second person) while introducing elements that the show lacks, such as deeper perspectives from minor characters and a more direct, complex plot. In true *Night Vale* fashion, the story provides plenty of strangeness and insightful emotional depth, often in the same sentence. It is a delight to read, and does not necessarily require familiarity with the content of the podcast to enjoy. I highly recommend it, especially if you feel that weirdness has been lacking in your life.

As I approached the signing table, I was amazed by how ordinary Joseph Fink and Jeffrey Cranor seemed. They looked like normal guys, yet they were people who had turned their strange and lovely ideas into a podcast and shared it with the world. Now they were speaking in front of a hall packed with fans, hundreds of people who were as proud and delighted by *Welcome to Night Vale* as its creators. I stepped up to the table and watched as each writer scribbled onto my copy of the book, smiling, real people from the internet right there in front of me.

“Thank you for living the dream,” I said. ▼



*Welcome to Night Vale* cover and narrator Cecil Baldwin.



pixel-slinger

# De Sastre Dapper 'Dro



Your girls here at DeSastre have taken to the style of Alejandro Chavez '16 since way back. Since the dawn of O Week, 'Dro has exhibited a taste in style, that although subdued, is adventurous in its subtlety. To this day we still talk about a fuzzy, beige, sheep-like sweater that he wore back in the day (RIP). Alejandro's style has evolved since then, favoring outfits that challenge the "rules" of men's style by employing pattern and texture within the context of a neutral color palette. He draws inspiration from his roommate, Josh Cox '17, and remixes with his thrift store finds; 'Dro is a stellar example of well cultivated men's style. 🍷

xoxo,  
aa & muk

# Cultural Column

By CHARLIE C. WILCOX

In a recent episode of NPR's *Pop Culture Happy Hour* podcast that I was listening to, one of the co-hosts remarked on how, as far as the cultural output calendar goes, October and November are relatively calm months. For them, that means that the fall months are a time for ruminating on the year and catching up on things that they may have missed in the preceding seasons.

This all leads up to the wintertime take-no-prisoners *mêlée* of year-end best-of list season, in which every columnist, blogger, and critic finally publishes their highly curated index of 2015's best offerings and scours their rivals' lists and furiously downloads whatever they've been foolish enough to ignore. Of course, this is coming from people inside the industry, who get albums, books, and screeners about three months early.

For us normies, the months of October and November can feel just as packed with content as the summer and spring seasons that came before. The fall TV season is in full swing, meaning that the best new shows have finally pulled ahead of the pack and we can begin whittling down our interest from the insurmountable mound of programming that the networks and streaming companies have dumped upon us. O veritable mount of fine hour-long dramas and ten-episode sitcoms! How would I ever conquer thee? New vital albums are coming out every week, some that you can't get enough of (hello, Arca) and some that you can't help hearing about all the time (oh hey Grimes). That pile of library books that you put on hold in August isn't getting any smaller. All those movies you heard about when they were getting rave reviews on the festival circuit are coming out.

And alas! It's the middle of November and the end of the semester is, believe it or not, in sight. But just because it's in sight doesn't mean you're anywhere near reaching it. There are thesis deadlines, and junior seminar work, and three final papers, and that gym class you can't miss any more if you still hope to get credit, and a couple tests to study for, and a damned group project, and a million other things. October and November may have a lot of cultural content being spurted out into the world, but as we descend into the bowel of the semester, it may slip by unnoticed.

Most of the time, when I write this, I'm exhorting you to get off-campus and do something, close the textbook

and pick up some pleasure reading, telling you it's okay to watch a couple episodes of this or that show before bed or stop working on your thesis for the afternoon to actually go to a movie theater for once. Today, I'm here to tell you the opposite. It's okay to miss out on a couple things that come out in these blustery weeks of November. See, there's a reputation with Reedies that they need to get out of the bubble more, take pleasure in what Portland and the greater world has to offer. I don't know about you, but for me it's sometimes the opposite. I get caught up trying to stay up to date on things that I end up wearing myself out. So today, I'm telling you that it's okay if you download a couple albums and then don't get a chance to listen to them until winter break. You don't need to watch that show right now, it'll be just as good when you are hiding out from relatives in your childhood bedroom over the holidays. In fact, it may even be better. Think of it as a little present to yourself.

I guess this is a long-winded way of saying that I don't have any new tidbits of media to bring to your attention this week, and I hope that's okay. Take it easy, folks, and I'll be back in the next issue, and maybe with a co-conspirator the next time around! ▼



Arca's album, *Mutant*.