



THE GRAIL

VOLUME V FEBRUARY 18, 2016 ISSUE II

INSIDE

RF1K968

SAME AS IT EVER WAS

Medievalism, watermelon baths, and Tweasly-wopping; piqued your curiosity? Discover the origins of Reed's famed blowouts.

PAGE 1

THESIS MIMESIS

IDENTITY & PERFORMANCE

Dancers, dreamers, and demons abound. See five thesis shows that explore identity in performance in this weekend's festival of shows.

PAGE 5

OSCAR BUZZ

CULTURAL CALENDAR

Charlie and Kasie discuss *Mad Max* and *Spotlight* and try to tease out what makes a film worthy of the little golden man.

PAGE 9

THE GRAIL

VOLUME V

FEBRUARY 18, 2016

ISSUE II

www.reedthegrail.com

FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

Remember when Renn Fayre was spelled Renn Faire? Neither do we, so put on your safety goggles and join us as we travel back to 1967... groovy man (1). Check out the five thesis shows in the PAB this weekend, but make sure to read the program carefully so you can follow along (5). De Sastre meets on the PAB balcony to showcase some eclectic '70s themed attire (6). Miss Lonely Hearts deals with

drifting hearts (7). If skiing is more your speed, check out Erika's Mount Hood weather forecast (8). Always last, but never least, this week's Cultural Column delves deep into awards season. Find out what's on the Oscar short list (9).

Join us on Mondays in PAB 105 at 9 p.m.

Love,

Jordan, Lauren, and Vikram

CONTENTS

News & Features

Renn Fayre, 1
Thesis Shows, 5

Columns

DeSastre, 6
Miss Lonely Hearts, 7
Mt. Hood, 8
Cultural Calendar, 9

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 courtesy of Reed College Archives and Special Collections.

THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF RENN FAYRE

PART I: 1967–1977

High Medieval —— TO —— Huge Party

By BRIAN CLICK & ALEJANDRO CHÁVEZ



Students watch Renn Fayre 1983 from the top of Eliot Hall.

“Venerable Reed’s College annual cataclysmic cathartic fantasmageria [*sic*] is but a scant fortnight away [...] We of the Central Committee urge all comrades to spontaneously activities [*sic*] expressing joy, brother/sisterhood, and general brou-ha-ha.”

— *The Quest*, April 26, 1976

“As these twenty-seven years have gone by, I have been reluctant to claim ownership of this spectacle which barely resembles the original festival. . .”

— Letter from Linda Howard ’70 to RF Czar Wendy Belt, 1995

You may have asked yourself: how did we get here? Sure, it makes *sense* for us to end the year with a brilliant celebration of our hard work and our mutual love that also serves as an ultimate expression of the freedom we have created for ourselves through our diligence and honor. But cataclysmic catharses don’t just happen because they make *sense*.

Any of you who have put in time working for the student body will recognize the way Reed traditions grow and survive; original flashes of inspiration are brought to reality by collective effort and then passed down to the next generation; who expand upon them and toil to keep them alive in a sort of simultaneous preservation, resuscitation and evolution.

This article, the first in a series, explores the beginning of that process. During its first decade, the wholesome Renaissance Faire Linda Howard ’70 designed was built upon (and gradually diluted) by more and more of the recognizable components of today’s Renn Fayre. We’ve chosen 1977, the year of the first Renn Fayre *Quest* and the first softball tournament, as a cutoff for this edition, but that’s somewhat arbitrary. Like everything at Reed, Renn Fayre has been cumulative; each year, everyone builds upon last year’s efforts. That means what *you* do this year might just shape its next forty-eight iterations.

Proto-Fayre: Watermelon Baths

Plenty of colleges end the year with a party, but the austere pre-1960s Reed was not one of them. According to *Reed* magazine, for the school’s first half century the completion of a senior thesis was an “uncelebrated, unmarked and solitary activity,” an occasion for numbed relief rather than explosive celebration. One’s Reed career ended not with a bang but with a whisper.

The first revels — a fleeting glimpse of what was to come — began in 1961. Deciding that a bit of spectacle was in order, the senior class organized a thesis parade. They marched from the library to the registrar’s office, theses in hand, cheering and playing “various unrehearsed tunes” on a ramshackle collection of musical instruments. The bonfire, kissing, champagne and glitter would not appear for many years, but the seniors finally had the recognition they deserved and Reed finally had an end-of-year tradition.

Thesis parade was the extent of the festivities for most of the decade. It wasn’t until 1967 that several students decided to follow up the parade with a campus-wide party. This proto-Fayre was called the “St. Cecilia’s Day Festival of the Arts,” and seems to have been largely forgotten — perhaps understandably so. The

mistakes started with the title of the event: Saint Cecilia, the patron saint of music name-checked throughout musical history from Gregorian chant to David Byrne, actually has her feast day in November.

The few accounts of St. Cecilia’s in the archives give an impression of chaos. Mark McLean ’70 recalls a “pagan feast” consisting of obscene amounts of fruit and vegetables and one roast beast (“some kind of deceased creature”). The unprepared students had no idea how to cook their beast and ended up with “about a five millimeter layer of actually edible meat on the thing.” Meanwhile, the organizers of the event bought so many watermelons that nobody could eat them all, so people began smashing them and pouring the juice into a bathtub — after which a naked woman hopped in and began serving watermelon chunks to everybody. Unfortunately, unplanned psychedelic trips gave a few St. Cecilia devotees a bad time, and to cap it all off, it rained.

There were moments of fun, but most of the party was a mess. “There was, of course, no karma patrol or anything like that,” McLean points out. “No official recognition that any of this was going on, which led to a couple of pretty nightmarish situations [. . .] But usually we’d watch out for each other.”

Enter Linda Howard

In the spring of 1968, Linda Howard, a sophomore math major, was head of the student body's Social Activities Board and acutely aware of the importance of those social activities. In her Oral History Project interview, she recalls observing the introverted and antisocial behavior of many Reedies despite the "enormous commonality that [they] all had" as scholars and as young maturing people. She describes in eerily familiar language how "Students arrived here, eyes wide open, head up, and within a couple of months people were sort of paired up with their buddies, it was raining, their eyes would be cast down towards the sidewalk [...] not really engaging that much with each other."

Something needed to be done to bring together "this community that [didn't] engage as a community, not socially anyway." And yet it needed to be something with a modicum of planning behind it — not an impulsive mess like St. Cecilia's had been.

Howard had been very fond of her Hum 110 conference leader, T. C. Price Zimmermann [history, 1964–77]. In those days, the Hum syllabus continued into medieval texts, and Howard had noticed her professor's eyes drifting dreamily away whenever they discussed the Middle Ages: "you just got the impression that he would rather be in a medieval village [...] than with us in that moment." It was Zimmermann's love of medieval Europe that inspired the form of Howard's community-building festival: a Renaissance Faire to be held at the end of the year, supplanting last year's pagan feast, just as the medieval Church had held its festivities on the days of pagan rites to ensure participation.

The first announcements for the "Gaye Faire" went out in the *Quest* in April. The schedule for the one-day event is totally unrecognizable to a modern Reedie. The main attraction was to be a midway of booths running through the quad, at which students could sell their medieval-style

handicrafts. Entertainment included a maypole dance, poetry readings, and a beauty pageant. The only continuities with today's Renn Fayre activities were the human chess game and a fireworks display. Yet the organization of the festival sounds remarkably familiar: "The Fair will not be a time for many to enjoy what the few have prepared; it will be something in which everyone will contribute as well as partake." The collaborative ethos of Renn Fayre was there from the start.

As she planned the festivities, Howard faced a problem of her own: as a black woman, where did she fit into the European Renaissance? "As this young black girl, I wasn't going to be the princess on the hill. I wasn't going to be one of the peasants in the field. Who the heck was I in my own village? So, I started doing some reading [...] and what I came up with was that I would be a Moorish woman. I learned that Moorish women were very active in commerce and very often were entrepreneurs, not necessarily attached to a husband or brother. They were very liberated women." She crafted a costume based on her research and readied herself for the big day.

The First Annual Renaissance Faire (as Howard demanded it be titled, to ensure there would be more) went off without a hitch. Students, faculty and family members sold their wares, all of which had been precleared for authenticity by a panel of history majors. One student dis-

tributed calligraphed letters of indulgence. At the festival's conclusion, a grateful Professor Zimmermann presented Howard with a bottle of wine. The whole day was "a dream and a fantasy and a wonderful thing," she recalls. The event's total cost came to two hundred dollars.

"Reluctant to Take Ownership"

The Grail attempted to contact Linda Howard to ask for further details, but she did not respond, and a quick glance at any of her public statements on the issue reveals why. While she doesn't regret founding our favorite party, she doesn't quite approve of the direction future generations have taken it, and is also somewhat disappointed that it has become her most well-known legacy. She opened her 1997 commencement address by remarking that "who would have guessed that after all these years, the one thing I have done that would most impress the seniors was that I organized a great party in the spring of 1968?"

Howard has done much, much more than organize a great party. The very next year at Reed she played a key role in the debate over Black Studies, negotiating with professors during the occupation of Eliot Hall to win them over to the Black Student Union's point of view. (She was not originally part of the BSU, but was offended by the fact that the faculty didn't respond to their list of demands: "From my point of view, right or wrong, one deserves a response. So I joined up to get an answer!")



Reed College Archives and Special Collections

Reed students play human chess at the Renn Fayre of 1973.

During the occupation, she was elected Student Body Vice President and ascended to the Presidency when that election turned up no quorum. She had been so busy that she had forgotten she had entered her candidacy, but decided to keep the position and keep up her involvement with the BSU since she believed her actions were in the interest of the whole student body.

After graduating, she went on to the University of Virginia Law School, where she was the first black woman to earn a degree and also the first to be elected student body president. After a long career as a legislative assistant, State Department lecturer and law professor, she became a legal counsel to the New York City government and a trustee of Reed College.

None of us want to see Renn Fayre revert to a Renaissance Faire, and future generations will no doubt continue to disappoint her in that respect. Yet, as we do so, perhaps we should honor her in another way, and remember Linda Howard as a lawyer, as an activist, and as a trailblazing woman of color as well as the founder of our favorite tradition.

A Tradition Accumulates

Regardless of her feelings about what it would become, Howard discovered that Reedies needed a collaborative end-of-year festival, and it was such a hit that it immediately gathered momentum of its own within the student body. She attended the next two — following her junior and senior years — and then never returned for Renn Fayre again. Yet it lived on. Throughout the early 1970s, the Renaissance Faire expanded year by year, slowly taking on more familiar aspects and becoming a bigger celebration while retaining the medieval theme.

In its first few years, Renaissance Faire events expanded to include a beer garden (then run by Professor Ottomar Rudolph [German 1963–98] and the German department), live music, sword fighting demonstrations from the Society for Creative Anach-

ronism, and a panoply of games. These included everything from tug-of-wars to inscrutably named contests such as “Tweasly-wopping” and “Clench a Wench, French a Mensch.” The event grew to two days — the Saturday and Sunday after Friday’s thesis parade. However, by 1973 it was still possible for the *Quest* to summarize the weekend’s events with a modest line: “The Renaissance Faire seemed to draw a favorable response from the student body.” That would be the grossest of understatements today.

The “Faire” became “Fayre” in 1973 after the student body received a cease-and-desist from a company that had copyrighted the term. It’s more difficult, however, to say what provoked the transformation of the Renaissance Fayre into a self-celebratory festival of debauchery — the high point of the year — rather than just a two-day spring funfair. It appears to have happened gradually in the middle of the decade: by 1976, the *Quest* was referring to it in fervent anticipation as a “cataclysmic cathartic fantasmageria [*sic*]”, which sounds a lot more like today’s Renn Fayres. Perhaps it had something to do with the perennial one-upmanship prompted by hearing Olde Reed legend (“We’ve got to make *our* mark, too!”), or with a rise in drug consumption, but there is a more subtle possibility: It may be because at some point in the mid-70s, the festivities expanded to Friday and the thesis parade started being considered part of the Renaissance Fayre.

There’s a lot of symbolism in the fact that Renn Fayre officially begins at 3 p.m. on Friday with the start of Thesis Parade. It’s the first and most spectacularly joyful event of the weekend, and it is all about the completion of a year’s hard work and the four years of the seniors’ Reed journey. It defines the whole festival as something we’ve earned: a culminating reward to ourselves. Once that’s what the Renaissance Fayre became, there was no longer any chance it would remain a tame costume party.

RF1K977 Huge Party

The first “Renaissance Fayre Supplement” to the *Quest* was published on April 22, 1977, and its exhaustive schedule now promised “Dionysian delights” and quite a few of the modern trappings of Renn Fayre. The first softball tournament, officially entitled the “Wild Turkey Challenge Cup,” was held that year. Chemistry was the only department to field a team — facing seven ad-hoc teams of students — but unfortunately posterity has not recorded who won the Wild Turkey.

That same year, 1977, was also the first year of another longstanding tradition: law enforcement interest in the weekend’s events. “NARCS ON CAMPUS,” trumpets a banner headline. “Yes — Neighborhood Hobbits. The big folk are mustering for an invasion of our territory [. . .] They are a nasty bunch. Their sweat is of the most offensive nature. They breed in muck yonder over the hills. They are racists. They are specially [*sic*] biased against Jews. If this invasion wasn’t a special operation, we might see them as they slip and ooze with virile valor along the asphalt paths of their beat...” (Gotta love the ’70s, am I right?) Apparently, after hearing reports of the previous year’s revels, the Portland Police Bureau planned to send several undercover cops to RF1977 to take a look. It seems as though no arrests were made — just as no arrests were made in either 2002 or 2010 when the FBI supposedly came to visit.

Perhaps the lesson to draw here is that law enforcement is really a lot less interested in what we get up to here than we think they are. Perhaps the lesson is that tradition is a lot more resilient than we think it is, and that Olde Reed spirit can’t be killed by occasional publicity and scrutiny. The most obvious conclusion, however, is that in less than a decade, Reed’s Renaissance Fayre had become a *really* great party. ♣

This history of Renn Fayre will continue in future issues of The Grail.

Five Thesis Shows

By CLAIRE STEVENS



Hannah MacKenzie-Margulies '16 performs in her thesis show.

Through Sunday the Festival of New Works is presenting five performance theses created by Reed seniors. Brianna Walker's piece, "Looking for Leon," opens the Festival by leading audience members from the second floor of the Performing Arts Building to the first. This floor-to-floor movement occurs throughout the festival as most of the performances are split up by their acts, the first act of one play being followed by the first act of another play before a return to the second act of the first play. This shifting back and forth between plays keeps up the pace of the festival. Five productions in one sitting might be too much to handle if there weren't these moments of moving between floors and cliffhangers between acts of the productions.

The first production, "Looking for Leon" by Brianna Walker '16, is more of an exhibit than a play in the traditional sense. On the second floor of the Performing Arts Building the actors stand frozen in a scene behind the glass display case. The actual thesis production is broken into three pieces separated by parts of other plays; the Festival begins with the first part of Brianna's work and ends with the third part. Four actors are placed into a scene in which they remain still as mannequins. This piece was successful in its critique of the

stereotypes in romance novels, due to its originality. Each of the three parts does a good job of presenting a clear picture.


"Em(Body) Utopia" by Liz Groombridge '16 is the second thesis and is presented in one sitting. This play calls binary gender constructs into question. It starts with a couch on one side of the stage and a projector on the other side. Throughout the play, the two halves flip. Despite this separation, the two halves are blended well, taking viewers from one side of the stage to the other without disrupting the flow of the play. For anyone interested in audience participation, this is the most participatory of all the plays. At one point an actor even speaks directly to the audience, giving a demonstration for the audience members to join in on.

"Ambiguous Figure" by Hannah MacKenzie-Margulies '16 is a dance and visual piece, beginning with videos and slides that project titles on the wall behind a single dancer. Besides Brianna Walker's piece, this presentation stands out as the most unique visual performance because it does not involve any "acting" in the traditional sense. However, the dancer's representation of the emotions, of the slide captions, videos, and voiceovers is extremely expressive. A powerful piece on what it means to

be American and how that idea has changed and evolved over time, this thesis was amazing to watch.

"Beneath Your Feet" by Kevin Snyder '16 is separated into two parts. The first is a period piece involving the life of a settler, the second an honest look into Snyder's feelings regarding environmentalism and the ways in which America has abused its power and environment. The second part of "Beneath Your Feet" is unique in the way Snyder switches between historical figures and himself, speaking honestly to the audience. The seemingly simplistic presentation of his views—it is just him on stage with the minimal amount of props—works in conjunction with the feeling of the piece as it allows the audience to focus on what he is saying. Snyder forces his audience to confront uncomfortable facts without alienating or reprimanding them.

"Call to Me" by Larry Drui '16 stands out among the other theses because it is a voice performance piece. For this piece the stage features only a table, flowers, and a radio. As a single spotlight illuminates the minimal props, the speakers come on. The entirety of Drui's piece is performed over the speakers, mimicking a radio play.

If you're looking for a great way to support fellow Reedies, the Festival of New Works is perfect for you! 

De Sastre

Oh! You Pretty Things



Bowie. Lennon. Twiggy. What do these three fashion icons have in common? Jake Gonnella '17. Not sure why? We'll explain. Drawing from '70s style, Jake incorporates pieces from the decade into a distinct brand of contemporary men's fashion. Although the pieces on their own each call to a different era, Jake fuses retro with current by mixing textures, patterns, colors, proportions, and a coy little pair of striped pink socks. Details like these are what make Jake's style all his own.

Miss Lonely Hearts

Dear Miss Lonely Hearts,

There's this guy I know who recently left Reed, who I lived with for a year. He dropped out and, while we used to talk every day when we knew each other, our conversation gradually became more infrequent after we stopped living together. Before he left we only really spoke in passing, nodding to each other on the blue bridge the way Reedies do when they want to acknowledge, but not engage. Since leaving, I know he's been pretty isolated. "Loneliness" was

the main reason he left Reed, and I can't imagine it has improved since he moved back in with his parents. Now it seems like he's trying reaching out to me. He keeps texting me. He wants me to friend him on Facebook. He wants me to add him on LinkedIn. I don't even have a LinkedIn. I don't really want to speak to him but I'm not sure quite how to tell him to leave me alone. It feels wrong to just keep ignoring him but I don't want to say "fuck off" either.

— Alonely

Dear Alonely,

I don't know much about your relationship to this guy, but it sounds like you were pretty good friends — or, at least, friendly — when you lived together. You don't mention any particular reason that you would have "broken up," friendship-wise, and it's possible that there wasn't really a reason at all. The ebb and flow of friendships is totally normal, both at Reed and in the larger world. The people who you don't work to keep close simply tend to drift away. Nothing wrong with that.

Miss Lonely Hearts, you might say, why should you care what our relationship was like a year ago? I'm talking about our relationship now!

Patience, Alonely! I was just getting to that.

I'm getting at the fact that he didn't seem to wrong you in any way. No big fight, no violation of the roommate code, no instance of him being a bad friend. You simply drifted apart — which, again, is normal. But if all this is true, Alonely, why not throw him a bone? It doesn't take any effort to friend him on Facebook or add him (link with him?) on LinkedIn. If you really don't want to see what he posts, simply hide him from your newsfeed. You'd be making him happy with essentially no effort on your part.

If you're willing to invest a little more effort on the well-being of your once-friend, consider inviting him to enjoy an activity with you. You may be worried about the endless hangout. . . you know, when you invite him over to your place for lunch, but he stays until dinner and drinks all your beer. I wouldn't want to be in that situation, either! Instead, do something together that gets you out of the house and off campus. Invite him to see a movie, grab a cup of coffee, go bowling, whatever. As well as breaking you out of the Reed Bubble, all of these activities have built-in timelines. When you finish your coffee, the date's over! There's none of the awkwardness of trying to politely get him off your couch — you're in a neutral space that you can simply leave when you're done.

This plan may worry you. You may think that you're giving this pushy friend an open door into your life, through which they will enter and never leave. I posit to you, however, that your friend is simply lonely and would love to do an activity with you once, maybe twice, a semester. If you can give up a couple of Saturday afternoons to the cause, you may find yourself having more fun than you'd anticipated.

Let my love open the door,
Miss Lonely Hearts.

Stumped yourself?


Ask Miss Lonely Hearts at www.reedthegrail.com/submissions/



Mount Hood Weekend Snow Conditions

Friday, February 19 to Sunday, February 21

By ERIKA HURTH

Some warmer-than-usual air this week has left Mt. Hood a little, dare I say, *moist*. Meadows Resort claims on their website, however, that the wet snow has been a blessing. As of this Monday, “Meadows has the deepest mid-mountain snow depth in the country,” which means all that moisture has been accumulating at the heart of the mountain, making for a thick base and more enjoyable conditions. For certain, more snow is on the way as a Pacific storm is set to move across the West coast by Wednesday and continuing through Friday (17–19). If you’re planning on hitting the mountain this weekend, wear a raincoat over your fuzzies because it’s going to be a wet one. That being said, this might be a great weekend to go for those of you who hate crowds, lines, packed lodges, noobs, and that one middle-aged skier who always whips out his Guy Fieri hat on sunny days. Check out this forecast and decide for yourself: 

Friday:



29 degrees
4 inches of snow

Saturday:



26 degrees
0 inches of snow

Sunday:



30 degrees
3 inches of snow

Cultural Column

By CHARLIE C. WILCOX



Hey buddies! This past weekend was Valentine's Day, so what better way to celebrate romance than to invite my partner in affection and movie-going to the column so we can argue about movies? This will be the last cultural column before the Oscars on February 28, so we thought we would discuss some of the movies nominated (and not nominated), so you guys know what you should catch up on. Kasie, what's good in this year's Oscars race?

Kasie: *Mad Max: Fury Road* is good. I don't know about you, but regarding the best picture nominees, I'm not really that excited for any of them to win. They are all fine, "good movies," but the only one I was really excited about was *Mad Max*. Even so, when I watched it with my mom and her best friend for a third time over winter break (the first time I had watched it on a small screen) the magic had worn off a bit. It greatly benefits from a theater.

Charlie: I would agree that *Mad Max* was the only re-

ally "exciting" movie in the race, it's basically a two hour long roller coaster — But this race seems populated with anti-excitement movies. No one is gonna come out of *Spotlight* feeling a rush. I guess maybe *The Martian* could be considered an action movie (excuse me, a comedy or musical) but that movie, much like the atmosphere of Mars, is a big vacuum. (Science majors, don't question me here.) It's pretty much nothing; it's fine, Damon is an affable fellow, but it did not generate a single strong feeling in me. Other movies, the 'anti-excitement' movies I speak of, don't necessarily excite me but leave me with a sense of contentment. Something like *Spotlight*, a procedural in many senses, ends with a slight feeling of justice in the midst of a cyclone of terrible crimes and societal cover-ups.

Kasie: I wouldn't agree. *Spotlight*, though very newsy and not perfectly fit for the big screen (you should watch it

on your laptop, or Apple watch), left me with a strong feeling of horror and slime. I felt a deep, kinda-postmodern sense of fear. The scene where Brian d'Arcy James's reporter sprints a block from his home to match a discovered photo of a priest/registered sex offender's house to one in the neighborhood, and subsequently posts a warning on the fridge for his own kids, is brilliant. But, although I felt emotionally affected as a spectator, *Spotlight* still wasn't a great movie; it's not the kind of movie I'd want to win an Oscar (mostly because you could watch it on your Apple watch).

Charlie: I don't know if I agree, although I understand where you are coming from. It's not a very cinematic movie, not something that I would want to watch several times over. But not many of these films were; it seems like one of the themes that is popping up a lot this year is abuse. This can be seen most starkly in a movie like *Room*, in which Brie Larson's character tries to figure out how to escape the room that a man has been keeping her and her son in for seven years and attempts to undo some of the awful abuse the man has put them through for so long. But this can be seen else-



Furiosa, the star of Mad Max: Fury Road.

where, too; a popular feminist reading of *Mad Max* is that it is a narrative of women overcoming their patriarchal oppressors, and that Max himself is the Trojan Horse this narrative arrives in. Other films attempt to portray the scope of abuse writ large over entire systems, whether religious (*Spotlight*) or financial (*The Big Short*). Or, in the case of *The Revenant*, how much a single man can abuse himself in order to earn a little golden man. Kasie, what do you think was unjustly excluded from this race?

Kasie: I'm not sure, honestly. I liked John Maclean's *Slow West*, which I think wouldn't be out of place on an Oscars-circuit. Though I understand that as a newish director with an off-center product, it's not really the kind of film that is promoted for awards. And that's probably the thing: it's heavily influenced by the institution certainly, but I have this nebulous-yet-strong idea of what an "Oscars movie" looks like. It looks like *12 Years a Slave* or *No Country for Old Men*: a crystallization of the cinematic, sweeping in its visual vocabulary with the right cultural moment and buzz transmitted around it. I don't mean like

Oscar-baiting biopics, but movies with an old-fashioned movie industry grandeur (in a way that I enjoy). I'm aware that idea is very particular and manipulated, but I definitely think it carries with it a certain feeling of movie-ness (like a Scorsesian "power of film" vibe) that this year's films just don't have.

Charlie: I also liked *Slow West*, and I think it's part of a reignited interest in westerns, especially weirder, more 'acid-western' type films. But if the Academy isn't going to really recognize *The Hateful Eight* (Tarantino isn't necessarily an Oscar darling, but he gets around) they definitely aren't going to pay attention to a delightful little western like *Slow West* or *Bone Tomahawk*. On your note about the "Oscars movie": Maybe we are seeing a gradual shift away from the visual vocabularies and content of traditional "Oscar bait"

movies, since that has become such a negative concept in certain film communities over the past couple years. Perhaps that sort of grandeur that you look for in movies (as I'm sure many of us do) might get rolled in with those sorts of aesthetic trappings of the award-baiting trash (such as *The Imitation Game*, *The Danish Girl*, *The Theory of Everything*, etc.). But it could have also

just been a low-key year in movies.

Kasie: Or maybe those "aesthetic trappings" were saved for big budget sequels and reboots—*Star Wars* and *Jurassic Park*—that aren't historically Oscars movies. Perhaps that's why I wouldn't be unhappy if *Mad Max* won; I felt movie magic when I first watched it.

Charlie: No, I totally agree. I think a lot of the movie world cleared out and took shelter from the unstoppable encroachment of the *Star Wars* hype. We can hope that Nate Parker's *The Birth of a Nation* (a favorite of many from Sundance, look it up and get stoked) is handled well and takes home all of the Oscars next year. On that note, time to wrap things up with this final sentiment we can probably both agree with: Kitana Kiki Rodriguez and Maya Taylor were robbed. *Tangerine* deserved the wins.

Kasie: Definitely. I think *Tangerine* is an example of queer-black-digital cinema so against the institution that it should be recognized by it. And I would be down for that despite my talk of "grandeur." ❧