

The Oscar speech we'd like to hear Sunday night: "Members of the Academy, what hypocrites and conformists so many of you are!"

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The 90th Academy Awards ceremony, ostensibly honoring the best films and performances of 2017, will be held Sunday evening at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

Given that over the past five months the American film industry—and not only the film industry!—has been dominated by a trumped-up sexual misconduct campaign, one expects this will play a significant if not dominant role at this year's awards ceremony. Presumably, no one will step out of line, no one will denounce the witch-hunt and spell out its right-wing character. That would be far too much to hope for. The event is generally as packaged and lifeless and embalmed as its organizers and producers can arrange it.

There are a few worthy films and performances up for awards, *The Shape of Water* (for best film, for Guillermo del Toro as best director, and for performances by Sally Hawkins, Octavia Spencer and Richard Jenkins), Steven Spielberg's *The Post* for best film, Denzel Washington in *Roman J. Israel, Esq.*, Willem Dafoe in *The Florida Project*, Mary J. Blige in *Mudbound*, Laurie Metcalf in *Lady Bird* and perhaps Sam Rockwell in *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, although the latter film is deplorable as a whole.

All in all, however, one "looks forward to" a spectacle of self-congratulation and self-absorption, heightened and policed by the #MeToo movement crusaders. Hollywood at its very worst!

But what if a quasi-miracle should occur, and some naïve, misguided performer or writer or animator or costume designer or composer, not a bit concerned with its impact on his or her career, should blurt out the truth? What if he or she should decide to throw caution to the wind and decide to let the public in on what the whole dirty sex scandal has been about?

We all have our dreams. This year this is mine. A presenter or winner ... perhaps, let's say, the more or less accidental recipient of some newly minted honorary award, whose remarks would ordinarily be ignored, steps to the microphone, a little nervously, clears his or her throat, and ...

"Members of the Academy [Fumbles for speech.] ... I have

written remarks here, somewhere. [Gives up.] Oh, never mind. It wasn't really what I wanted to say anyway ... Let's begin again. Members of the Academy, well, let's try to be honest with one another for a change. It's very difficult, the atmosphere is pretty foul, but let's try for once. Mark Twain suggested that when in doubt, tell the truth. Good advice, I hope you'll agree!

"What's going on here tonight and what's been going on since October is simply filthy and disgraceful. [Applause, boos.] Sexual assault is horrendous, a crime, but that's not what this is about. Harvey Weinstein was a convenient jumping-off point, that's all. And you know it. What began with Weinstein has become a full-scale witch-hunt, in some ways more pernicious than the McCarthyite purges of the late 1940s and 1950s.

"Individuals have been essentially criminalized and 'disappeared' on the basis of unsubstantiated, often anonymous accusations. Some of our more talented and intriguing performers have had their careers destroyed. Academy Award winners Kevin Spacey and Geoffrey Rush have been thrown to the wolves. Poor Louis C.K. has been turned into a non-person. You know your *Julius Caesar*, of course, don't you?:

You all did love him once, not without cause:

What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?

O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,

And men have lost their reason.

"Casey Affleck didn't dare show up here tonight. Only a few years ago most of you would have murdered a close family member to land a part in a Woody Allen movie. Now many of you are cheering on the sick and pathetic Mia Farrow. Shame on you! And where is Matt Damon, who had the audacity to point out there was a 'difference between patting someone on the butt and rape or child molestation'? Ben Affleck, Jeffrey Tambor, Garrison Keillor, perhaps James Franco, and Roman Polanski still! ... these are the new criminals, the new demons.

And as though it were not enough to destroy careers, you have nominated Christopher Plummer for best actor, which must be the first time someone has been honored for directly scabbing on a colleague.

“And the result of all this has been more repression and more censorship. Women haven’t benefited, except for a few at the top. The conditions of working women haven’t been affected in the slightest.

“What rotten hypocrites many of you are! Wouldn’t it be lovely if all the details of your sex lives, including from 30 or 40 years ago, came to light? Would they be so irreproachable? Has any artistic community ever been renowned for its moral firmness and self-restraint? Show me one! This new puritanism is as reprehensible as the original one. It’s the sanctimonious, censorious, self-centered upper-middle class in charge, God help us.

“This same affluent middle class had no ‘moral’ difficulty with Barack Obama’s 540 murderous drone strikes, “kill lists” and endless wars in Libya, Syria, Yemen and beyond. This same crowd, made rich and especially stupid by the stock market boom, has no problem with the endless suffering of the poor and the working class, men and women, in the United States or anywhere else. These self-pitying loudmouths, many of them multi-millionaires, would have us believe that their ‘daily torment’ is a world-historical occurrence.

“Pardon me, if I don’t take part in celebrating this well-promoted and well-remunerated ‘bravery.’ These allegations, some or even many of them may well be true—but I’ll stick my neck out, some of them are lies, self-serving, outright lies. [More applause, louder boos.]

“This is a Democratic Party-*New York Times* operation, it goes hand in hand with the anti-Russian hysteria and Internet censorship. [‘What are you talking about?’] Ashley Judd and Ronan Farrow, for example, are essentially Democratic Party operatives. They have no credibility whatsoever. All of these people supported Hillary Clinton, a warmonger in the pocket of Wall Street. Even if every allegation against Weinstein, for example, were true, he would not be one-hundredth the criminal that Clinton is, up to her elbows in the blood of the Libyan, Syrian and other peoples. [Gasps. Shouting in various parts of the auditorium. ‘You’re insane, get off the stage!’ ‘No, you have something there!’] Just a few more points—I’d like to finish, if you please. I realize you haven’t heard this kind of thing before, but it might be good for you.

“What odious depths of conformism and cowardice there are in Hollywood! After the infamous blacklist and the anti-communist purges, the studios, the media and the film unions said it could never happen again. They’d all learned their lesson, we were told. In fact, they learned nothing. Everyone here is once again toeing the line, chiming in with denunciations, scared to death, miserably trying to save their own skins. There doesn’t seem to be the slightest concern with democratic rights, due process. It’s revolting, and so sadly

predictable.

“You think your ‘sex life complications’ are so fascinating, but most of the population is paying no attention. They have more important things to worry about. [Voice: ‘What’s more important than us?’ ‘Oh! Oh, listen to that!’] Let me answer that.

“In West Virginia, 30,000 teachers and school employees are on strike, defying the state government, politicians of both parties, their own treacherous unions. The working class has been suppressed for years, big strikes have become a thing of the past, and the result has been a sharp lowering of wages, the destruction of conditions, the impoverishment of millions. It has also had a terrible impact on art and film, which is connected in complicated ways with popular moods and movements, and nourished by rebellion and resistance.

“When millions of workers break out of the straitjacket of the unions and the Democratic Party, it will have a shattering, healthy impact on the general atmosphere, including the atmosphere among the artists. From that point of view, what the West Virginia workers are doing is more important for the future of culture than 90 percent of the films honored here tonight. [‘Enough!’ ‘Finish, finish!’] One last word ...

“So, once again, dear members of the Academy, you ‘wonderful, sweet people,’ as Charlie Chaplin, driven out of Hollywood by the Red Scare, commented years ago ... Once again, allow me to register the strongest and angriest possible protest against the sexual hysteria and the entire effort of this rich, selfish crowd to impose their ‘morals’ on movie making and on the movie-going public. I urge others to speak up and help expose this reactionary fraud.

“And, as for this Oscar, I think you know what you can do with it!

“Thank you for your time.” [Stormy applause, violent denunciations.]



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