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2.20.20 THE STUDENT WEEKLY SINCE 1969



Inside: Deans, Muffins, and Films

The Harvard Independent

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The Indy is eating SO MANY muffins!

Cover illustration by Ava Salzman '23

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As Harvard College's weekly undergraduate newsmagazine, the Harvard Independent provides in-depth, critical coverage of issues and events of interest to the Harvard College community. The Independent has no political affiliation, instead offering diverse commentary on news, arts, sports, and student life.

For publication information, email subscriptions, and general inquiries, contact President Jilly Cronin (president@harvardindependent.com). Letters to the Editor and comments regarding the content of the publication should be addressed to Editor-in-Chief Marissa Garcia (editorinchief@harvardindependent.com).

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INDY NEWS

Thropping Hearts

Winthrop students express their love for their interim Faculty Deans

By JEN EASON

More than a little heartbreak was felt in Winthrop House when Dean Khurana officially announced two weeks ago that the College would soon begin the search for permanent Faculty Deans. The announcement encouraged Winthrop residents to participate in the search process by submitting nominations and attending meetings to contribute input about new potential candidates. Members of the community have responded loud and clear in favor of having Mark Gearan and Mary Herlihy-Gearan, interim Deans who have occupied the post over this past year, stay on permanently.

Many Thropians claim that their interim Deans' short stay has already led to a profound wealth of memories. Nick Fahy '22 says that almost everyone in Winthrop has a story about the couple, "times they've shown up for us in ways big and small: watched our performances, sat down next to us in the dhall, listened to our ideas and concerns, invited us over for open houses, and brought art into the House and student performers into the dhall." Iman Lavery '22 fondly recalls the couple "walking around the house chatting with people and getting to know them or, as they did just last week, bringing trays of snacks to students studying in the dining hall late at night." For Iman and many others in Winthrop, Mike and Mary "make us feel loved and they make Winthrop a home."

Chloe Saracco '21 says that their welcoming and supportive demeanor make them feel a little bit like stand-in grandparents.

She remembers enjoying all the little things they do: listening to Mark play the piano at open houses, reading their House emails congratulating students on their personal achievements, or learning everyone's names within the first few weeks. "I've seen my friends get emotional, like tears, at how welcoming they've made Winthrop feel," says Michael Yin '22. "I know that for many of my friends and myself, whatever we could

do to convince Harvard to make them our Deans, it would be worth it." Other students share similar attitudes, as demonstrated by their strong turnout at the House forum. One student reports that peers even led the creation of a petition to keep the Deans permanently, which half of the House has reputedly signed.

But what does Harvard look for in a permanent Faculty Dean? In the official job description posted by the College, the main responsibility is to "oversee all aspects of House Life," and work with the Allston Burr Resident Dean, who is in charge of the "academic and personal well-being" of the House's students. More importantly, though, they are held responsible for "setting [the House's] tone," facilitating an engaged and respectful community by being a visible presence in the House. Additionally, they manage most of the House's hiring and event planning. Though the job contains both personal and technical aspects, the posting highlights the need for the new Deans to foster an esprit de corps, a French phrase meaning "feelings of pride and loyalty." The job description also clearly articulates that "members of the House community" (e.g. students, tutors, and staff) will be consulted during the process.

However, one of the Faculty Deans must be tenured at Harvard, which technically disqualifies Mark and Mary from holding the permanent position. In their official statement on the matter, while describing their interim appointment as an honor and a privilege, the current Deans did clarify in their statement whether they wish to stay on as the Faculty Deans. While tenure might be an issue, some factors may potentially compensate for their lack of the official title. Mark '78 was a Thropian himself way back in the day. His eldest daughter Madeleine '15 was also a Lion in her time at the college. In regards to his academic qualifications, Iman says, "As Director of the IOP, Mark brings just as much if not more relevant intellectual vitality to the house as any faculty member." Additionally,

at a school where extracurriculars are so valorized as pre-professional opportunities, the role of directors at such organizations as the IOP may now be on level ground with tenured faculty, especially for students who do not envision a career path going into academia.

As for engagement and visibility, the couple is known to visit House Committee meetings to see how they can best support House life and tell stories about the histories of the different rooms in the House. They have also installed book nooks in the JCR, featured black authors during Black History Month, brought in Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative fellows for dinners and discussions with students interested in their fields, and have been consistent cheerleaders at IM sporting events.

Given these qualities, many Winthrop residents do not view the requirement of tenure status to be the utmost priority.

As the search for new Faculty Deans also begins for other houses, the disconnect between the opinions of Winthrop residents and the selection metrics established by university administrators may point to a need for further consideration as to how new Deans should be chosen. Some have suggested that a selection process may gain more traction with concerned students if it included the very popular couple. Resident Deans have a huge impact on House life and culture, and it is potentially cause for concern that a technicality in housing regulations may end up holding more sway over this crucial decision than a strong, proven track record in the position. The opinions of Winthrop residents open up a conversation: perhaps Harvard should focus less on arbitrary requirements, and more on finding Deans for other houses in a similar situation that can replicate the excellent results Mark and Mary have had in their brief tenure.

Jen Eason '21 (jeason@college.harvard.edu) was not allowed to diss Winthrop in this piece, against her will.

INDY NEWS

The Many Hats of Deborah Jo Gehrke *The life and times of a beloved Quincy House Dean*

By KILEY ALLEN

“**D**eb’s only goal was to make sure other people were happy,” said Elizabeth Jacobsen, a current Dean’s Aide in Quincy House. Eli met Deb when she started living in Quincy House her sophomore year at Harvard, and after graduating in 2016, began working as a Dean’s Aide. As someone who worked so closely for years with Deb, Eli had many stories to tell about Deb’s life and the lives she touched as a teacher, artist, prankster, planner, boss, wife, mother, and much more. “Deb wore many hats,” she said. “She used each of her roles to spread joy and happiness into other people’s lives.”

Deb did not only impact her existing community; she created one in Quincy House alongside her husband, Lee Gehrke. Together, they created an environment where students feel more than welcome.

Deb and Lee frequently hosted open houses with baked goods and music, which one student describes as “even homier than home.”

This included a standout: a Cake Boss-themed night in the dining hall where students were given a plain sheet cake and plenty of decorations to illustrate a story told by frosting.

Deb had the reputation of being an avid sports fan. Under her leadership, Quincy won the Straus Cup for the first time in 59 years. She loved supporting Harvard Athletics, no matter what sport, and joined students’ celebrations in the Quincy courtyard when the Patriots won the Super Bowl in 2017. Legend says that Deb tried to pop a champagne bottle outside. When it didn’t open at first, she lifted it in the air and spiked it on the ground, propelling it into the air. Students who witnessed the event say they will never forget it.

Deb would have maybe a hundred prank

ideas on a daily basis, and ninety-nine of them were great, but one of them would always be crazy, and that was always the one she had her heart set on. One, which immediately passed into Quincy legend, involved moving one of her co-workers entire rooms – including all possible furniture – into the dining hall. Another time, she gave out doughnuts and didn’t tell anyone that one of them was actually a bar of soap in disguise. Deb would do anything she could think of to shake up the monotony of work and stress, knowing as she did that the students and faculty needed it. She was this way every day, bringing unexpected laughs and excitement to everyone she was able to.

It is rare to see a person who is able to indulge in fun the way Deb did. She opened up her home for students to come and enjoy home-made cookies and cupcakes. On Halloween, she waited outside the elevator in a mask and a chainsaw just to give people a laugh. She held no reservations, took many risks, and because of this, created happiness every day of her life for as many people as she could possibly manage. Her spirit is missed, but she will not stop impacting lives because the traditions she began are being carried on. What cannot be replaced is her ability to continually spread joy.

Deb used her art as a way to connect to people and express her ideas of beauty, creating often abstract images filled with life and color. She loved painting with watercolor and experimenting with oil pastels, anything that let her create and combine vibrant colors. Most of all, she loved to share her art with the Quincy community, where some of it still hangs on display in the hallways of the House. But no one can describe Deb’s art better than herself. On her website, alongside more pictures, she writes, “My favorite thing

Flyer credit, Lee Gehrke



In memory of
Deb Gehrke
1953 - 2019

Please gather with us to celebrate the life and legacy of a loving wife, mother, sister, grandmother, mentor, visionary artist, and friend.

Saturday, February 29th 2:00pm
Memorial Church, Harvard Yard, Cambridge.

Reception to follow at Quincy House dining hall
58 Plympton Street, Cambridge.

to do is deconstructing a watercolor and bringing it back... to discover the beauty in unusual places.”

Through her elaborately planned House events, ridiculous pranks, and meaningful art, Deb helped create a community in Quincy House. Eli and the other Quincy Dean Aides will do as much as they can to continue her legacy. They decided to finish off the spring semester as strong as they had started it with Deb lighting the way. “It’s not going to be perfect, and it never will be because it’s not Deb, but we’ll do as much as we can to do right by her,” said Dean’s Aide Brett Biebelberg.

Deborah Jo Gehrke was a woman beloved by all. She passed away from breast cancer on Christmas Day, 2019. She was sixty-six years old, and is survived by her husband, one sister, and two married children.

Kiley Allen '22 (kileyallen@college.harvard.edu) is very happy to have been placed in Quincy.

INDY FORUM

Four Ways to See a Party

Finding love at the Adams House Valentine's Day party

By MICHAEL KIELSTRA

I went to Chocoholica, the annual Adams House Valentine's Day Party. Those are the facts. The rest is a story which, depending on where I center it, I could tell in any one of a hundred ways.

I could start with the apprehension of the crowd waiting outside the Adams JCR. Adams HoCo had been publicizing the event in a big way, even delivering physical tickets to Adams House residents. Some said it was technically supposed to be restricted to Adams residents and their plus-ones, but nobody was going to check IDs and nobody particularly cared either way. A group of twenty-odd eager students is forming around the couches at the base of the stairway. Thumping, muffled, and incoherent music filters through the locked wooden doors. Focus on this moment, and Chocoholica is another student party, a big one, sure, but nothing more than an excuse to drink a bit and hang out with friends.

But that is dull. I could start somewhere else instead. A 1999 article in *The Crimson* (the last year they seriously reported on this) quoted a student using the word "orgiastic;" the invitation cards this year described the party as "~erotic~" and featured a picture of a chocolate man, reminiscent of Michaelangelo's David, with his crotch blurred out. There were rumors that HoCo members would dress up in French maid costumes or tuxedos to serve chocolate to the guests. By reputation, Chocoholica could almost be a Sex Week event. It is decadent to the n-th degree, utterly depraved, and completely unashamed of itself.

Another moment, another vignette, flips this on its head. It's 9 p.m. exactly, and the doors are finally open. The lighting is the first clue that something is wrong here. It's on full, as bright as I would want it if I had to do a pset in the corner. It is not a light for orgies. There are no French maids, and only one person is wearing a leather collar with spikes. There is, however, a table full of chocolates shaped like male and female genitalia. I select a vagina in a little plastic baggie of the sort generally used

to hold much more interesting stimulants, unpackage it, and eat it in one gulp. The bar is staffed by a very polite man who tells me that he has no sodas but that I can get one from the dining hall, and, as if I need any more confirmation of how little genuine debauchery there is going on here, I notice someone I recognize from my Harvard College Faith and Action Bible Course tucking into a pair of chocolate breasts. I chat about the French existentialists with a Philosophy and Comparative Literature joint concentrator. Looked at in this way, Chocoholica is a fable with a moral: a Harvard party is always a Harvard party, and any efforts to elevate it are doomed to become self-parody.

So, let's not look at it that way. Let's start our story half an hour later, when Sean and Judy Palfrey, Adams House Faculty Deans, are handed a microphone to, in what is apparently a Chocoholica tradition, tell the story of how they met and fell in love. This, I quickly realize, is serious business. I'm with a fairly loud group of people who don't all immediately quiet down, and we are shushed almost angrily by the entire room. People outside of the JCR are chatting and walking around, so the doors are shut. One student, clearly The Chosen One who Understands the Sound System, positions himself to fight the inevitable feedback. Something is about to happen.

Sean goes first. He wears an Adams House tank top over a black T-shirt and tracksuit bottoms. He lists, first with slight humor and then with tenderness, the things Judy did through which he first realized she loved him. After Sean went to New York to study, we learn, Judy followed him. This was in defiance of her family, who held that Johns Hopkins was a better university than Columbia. He wraps up with "I never wanted to be the best actor. I wanted to be the best supporting actor," a line that could be the corniest thing to happen all night, but which, in his tone of simple sincerity, works perfectly. Judy then tells us that "A date [with Sean] could be just

a very special walk. A walk by the river. Or, as we were getting more serious, we would walk down Brattle Street, and Sean would say "Would you like to live in that house? Or that one?" Ten or so people have sat down on the floor in front of the Deans, legs crossed, like children at storytime. No-one says a word.

One more moment. I'm leaving the party. A man and a woman sit together on a couch outside. They kiss, once, briefly, chastely, on the lips. They smile at each other. They don't notice me and I don't intrude. Look at the right moments, and you can understand what Chocoholica is all about. It's not sex or cocoa beans. The Adams House Valentine's Day party is an earnest celebration of wanting to spend the rest of your life with someone. No wonder the promised orgies never materialized. If your relationship centers around vaginas, chocolate or otherwise, it has no place here.

Michael Kielstra (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) is very single this Valentine's Day.



Natalie Sicher '21

INDY FORUM

Top Muffin

The Independent ventures out into the Square to determine where you should enjoy muffins on National Muffin Day

By MICHAEL KIELSTRA, GRAHAM WALTER, LUCY HAMILTON, and JILLY CRONIN

Days celebrating random objects or actions are a dime a dozen. As you would expect from an internet used to making the same old jokes over and over, December 30 is International Bacon Day. February 7 this year was “Wave All Your Fingers At Your Neighbors Day.” National Muffin Day, refreshingly, is a little bit different.

In 2015, Julia Levy interviewed Jacob Kaufman, a San Francisco tech lawyer, about his muffin philanthropy. Every week, he baked a batch of muffins and ran through the city giving them to homeless people. Kaufman and Levy had the idea to take this nationwide, and National Muffin Day started raising money. They estimate that volunteers have baked and delivered more than 15,000 muffins across the country over five years. For everyone who makes and gives away a muffin, they donate money to charity. So far they have raised tens of thousands of dollars. Including his original weekly runs, Kaufman has so far baked over 4,500 muffins, and he shows no intention of stopping.

The timing of National Muffin Day is strangely vague. A source which Kaufman and Levy call only “the food dictionary” places it on February 20. This year, it falls on March 1. Whatever the timing, we at the Independent will always support reminders such as this: you don’t need to be a trillionaire to volunteer and make a difference. In celebration of this fact, and of the equally important fact that muffins are delicious, we have reviewed some of the most famous ones from around Harvard Square. (Muffins, that is, not trillionaires.)

DARWIN’S OUT OF STOCK - NO DATA AVAILABLE

I walked all the way to the Darwin’s on Mt. Auburn, and they were out of muffins. Apparently, the daily offerings are blueberry, morning glory, double chocolate, white chocolate, and orange cranberry. Severely disappointed that I didn’t get a taste.

PAVEMENT COFFEE’S PISTACHIO MUFFIN - 1.5 STARS

I give this muffin 1.5/5 stars. Yes, this is harsh, but I have standards, and paying \$3.50 for a dry muffin was not my expectation from an establishment of which I have a generally good opinion.

Before I went, it was recommended to me to try the Vegan Banana muffin. I stood in line with high hopes, even making small talk with my TF who had forgotten my name. On display, there were several flavors of muffins, and to Pavement’s credit, each sounded delicious and looked massive.

When I stood at the register, instead of asking for the Vegan Banana muffin, which my friend believes to be the best muffin on campus, I asked for the most popular flavor. The man at the register directed me to the pistachio muffin, so I bought that one on impulse.

Typically, I am a friend of pistachio, but the quality was honestly subpar. The texture was not great. My first thought was that the muffin was dry and borderline rubbery. There was a bit too much crust, implying that they had cooked it for too long. To cap it off, for a pastry promising pistachio, the flavor was disappointingly faint. Ironically, the best thing going for it was its massive size; however, the quantity was at expense of quality, as commented on above. Pavement would benefit from decreasing the size of their muffins to avoid compromising muffin-like texture. Paul Hollywood would not be offering a handshake on this one.

For your average muffin or morning hunger, this will suffice. Would I take my parents here for Junior Parents’ Weekend, though? No.

ATOMIC BEAN CAFE CORN MUFFIN - 2.5 STARS

Let’s face it: despite being gluttonous, buttery, and the keto-Antichrist, ~the muffin~ is an American institution; a time-honored classic. Today, on National Muffin Day, I have chosen to pay my respects in the form of a review, a meditation on the muffin, if you will. On this

special occasion, I have reviewed the Atomic Bean Cafe’s corn muffin. Upon ordering said muffin, the resident barista asked if I wanted it heated up, to which I enthusiastically responded, “Yes, please!” When the corn muffin arrived at the table, my eyes zeroed in on the muffin top: the physical and metaphorical “pinnacle” of the pastry, the *pièce de résistance*. (Note: This is also the trickiest element of the baked good to get right and thus has the power to “make or break” the muffin.) The Atomic Bean Cafe’s corn muffin-top to muffin-base ratio was severely lacking. In an ideal world, the muffin top dwarfs the base. In any case, the dome of any respectable muffin must be crusty on the outside and moist on the inside. In my humble opinion, this is what distinguishes the venerable muffin from its lowly cousin: the cupcake. I noted that the Atomic Bean Cafe topped their corn muffins’ domes with a sprinkle of coarse sugar – perhaps this was done to give the sensory impression of a well-baked muffin dome crust. At any rate, the differentiation between dome and base was meager, the dome lacked a robust crust, and the texture of the bake was disenchantingly monotone.

Although one dimensional, the muffin’s texture was acceptable. On the whole, it was appropriately buttery; not too wet, not too dry. I don’t have much to say regarding the flavor. It ticked all the right boxes taste-wise. The muffin was sweet, but not overly so, and while it edged on “cupcake territory,” I would still consider it to be well within the muffin category. Let it be known that baking the perfect corn muffin is surprisingly challenging; too little cornmeal and you have a cupcake, too much cornmeal and you essentially have a muffin-shaped brick. The coarseness of the cornmeal bits also plays a role in the texture. Unfortunately, the Atomic Bean Cafe’s muffin was certainly missing that characteristic cornmeal “bite.” As the muffin cooled, it hardened. At this moment, I realized the muffin would have been half as good (or rather, doubly as bad) if it wasn’t warmed up beforehand.

As a final note, to the credit of the Atomic Bean Cafe corn muffin, I did eat the entire thing, so it couldn’t have been that bad – a 2.5/5 stars

INDY FORUM

Top Muffin, continued.

rating will do.

THE HUDS CORN MUFFIN - 3 STARS

HUDS corn muffins have been a staple of my life for far longer than the Independent has. I first encountered them in Annenberg and was, for want of a better phrase, joyfully perplexed. What were these strange beasts, so perfectly sized to transform a breakfast that would otherwise have left me slightly peckish into one that felt just right? And they apparently had corn in them. I was instantly hooked.

What I did not know at the time was the cultural force behind this particular food. Later, I learned that the men's heavyweight crew team would have a plate of pastries delivered after every morning practice. The boats that got back first would have first pick, and those that returned later would have the rest, which were by this time fairly cold. Without fail, my sources confirmed, the corn muffins would be the very last pastries eaten. Cold corn muffins, I am told, have none of the attractive qualities of the warm ones.

A HUDS corn muffin, then, divides Harvard students into two very different camps. To some, it is always warm, crispy on the outside and soft on the inside, the perfect complement to a bowl of cereal or whatever it is that HUDS calls "eggs." To others, it is a shame: the expression of a coach's disapproval and the confirmation that you and your team have let the side down. It is a superior breakfast food, eaten by inferior breakfast eaters. I could never hope to bring about any satisfactory compromise between these groups, so I have no choice but to average 1 and 5 and give it 3/5 stars.

SLAM DUNK FOR DUNKIN' MUFFINS - 5 STARS

After the biting disappointment that was my journey to Darwin's (the only thing that saved it from being a complete loss was my discovery that they keep the flavor pumps available for customers to use with their *own* judgment), I decided to travel back to the most trusty of coffee shops in Harvard Square – Dunkin'. Though many Harvard students turn up their noses at the chain store, I have found Dunkin' to be the most reliable (and often most friendly) of coffee shops in the Square – particularly when my

good friend and Dunkin' store manager, Alaa, is on the clock. (I am, of course, referring to the Dunkin' on JFK, NOT the Dunkin' on Church Street. I cannot speak to any product sold at the Dunkin' on Church Street.) And so, in thinking how delicious the doughnuts at Dunkin' are, I figured that I would also give their muffins a shot – a pastry that I had never bought from Dunkin', neither at home nor in Boston.

Upon entering the orange-and-pink coated shop, I was immediately hit with the all-too-familiar scents of coffee, sweets, and cleaning supplies. As it was already 10am – practically dinner time for a store whose employees arrive at 4am – I first checked to make sure that they had a few muffins in stock. But, being famous for its doughnuts and not its muffins, there were plenty left from which to choose.

I ordered the blueberry muffin – sold at an economical \$1.79. I figured that since the only type of muffin that I ever eat is blueberry, I could best determine the quality of Dunkin's muffin in relation to similarly flavored treats that I have eaten (and think of often) from other locales. After receiving my muffin, I raced out of the store and headed back to Winthrop dining hall to eat and assess my prize with my blockmates, who I hoped might offer some of their own insight into the quality of the muffin...

The Dunkin' blueberry muffin is neither flashy nor delicate. Friend and peer Sage Nye '21 commented that she "thought it was a raisin bran muffin" when I first took it out of its packaging. It was, admittedly, browner and crispier on the outside than most blueberry muffins I have seen, but I didn't let that deter me. Once the top layer of the muffin was broken off and quickly consumed – I had skipped HUDS breakfast for this, after all – a sweet and perfectly moist bread was revealed. The blueberries seemed relatively fresh, and the dough was a wonderfully light – yet filling – consistency.

The center of the muffin was entirely enjoyable and definitely

satisfied my craving for the blueberry-flavored pastry – even with the slightly dry, overcooked outsides. But the fact that I paid only \$1.79 for this decently sized muffin, and that it was provided to me by the always-friendly Dunkin' staff – made my appreciation for it complete. And so, it is with ringing enthusiasm that I encourage all Harvard affiliates to branch out from the typical chocolate frosted doughnut the next time they enter the JFK Dunkin'. And please, tell Alaa that I say, "Hi!" The Dunkin' muffin takes the crown, with a seamless 5/5 stars.

Michael Kielstra '22 (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) grew up an hour away from Drury Lane.

Graham Walter '21 (grahamwalter@college.harvard.edu) should have taken the advice to order the Vegan Banana Muffin at Pavement Coffeehouse.

Lucy Hamilton '21 (lucyhamilton@college.harvard.edu) is the diabetic with a sugar addiction and will enjoy muffins at Atomic Bean Cafe anyway.

Jilly Cronin '21 (croninj@college.harvard.edu) just added \$10 to her Dunkin' app and may venture back to Darwin's in search of the elusive muffin.



Lucy Hamilton '21

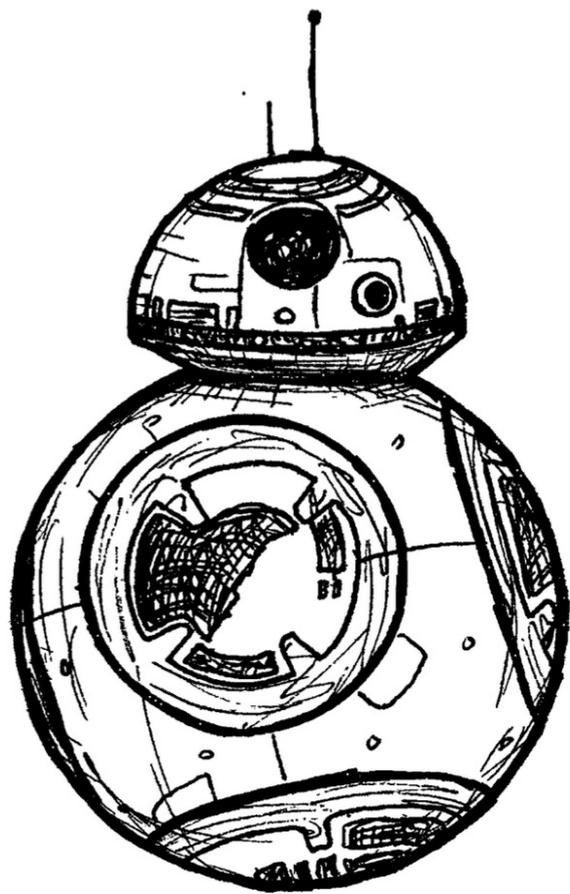
INDY ARTS

Enough of the Space Laser Sword Wizards!

A spoiler review of The Rise of Skywalker

By MICHAEL KIELSTRA

If you love *Star Wars* of any kind, then you have to watch *The Rise of Skywalker*. That's not because it's a good movie. It isn't. Considered as a movie, it's got a rushed first act, a contrived final act, dodgy relations to the other films in the franchise, disappointing characterization, entire scenes that painfully obviously exist only to provide excuses to sell action figures and Lego sets, and moments that just flat-out make no sense. (On the plus side, it is visually stunning and the action is well-choreographed and punchy. If you are going to see it, see it on the biggest screen you can.)



Natalie Sicher '21

As a prayer to any gods who might be listening, a desperate plea to end this madness before it destroys us all, it works incredibly well.

The Rise of Skywalker gives us a galaxy obsessed with wreckage from a long-dead war. The first and second acts consist mainly of Rey and her friends chasing a “Sith wayfinder,” a sort of space compass which will lead them to evil dark side secrets so they can destroy them. After coincidentally meeting Lando Calrissian, they locate a dagger covered in ancient writing. Adventures ensue until they realize that the dagger is pointing them to Endor and the gutted shell of the crashed Death Star, on which Rey and Kylo Ren have a confrontation. Han Solo arrives as a force ghost to give Kylo Ren a bit of advice before disappearing again. A giant laser weapon obliterates a planet, but none of our heroes are on the planet at the time, so it's fine.

The fanservice here seems at first to be an attempt to appease a famously angry mob. You want Lando? Here's Lando! There's no reason at all for him to be in the movie, he does nothing that couldn't have been done without him, he's only on screen for a few minutes, and it's never explained why he is where he is, what he's doing, or where he'll be going after this, but here's Lando! You want a Death Star? We've got the old, round one or the Star Destroyer with the planet-killer weapon! Take your pick! You were mad at the SJWs for shoehorning Rose Tico into *The Last Jedi*? She's only on-screen here for approximately thirty seconds! Please! We're trying to make a *Star Wars* for you!

If you look more deeply, though, these decisions take on a more com-

plicated meaning. At this point it's worth looking at the opening scene. Kylo Ren slaughters his way through the denizens of an unnamed planet (revealed in various companion books to be Mustafar, where Darth Vader got beaten up badly enough to need all that armor) to reach his own Sith wayfinder. It leads him to the planet of Exogol, where he meets none other than Emperor Palpatine. That's right: Palpatine, the big bad from the original trilogy, whose death bought Anakin Skywalker's redemption, is in fact alive.

By starting with this setup, *The Rise of Skywalker* tells the audience exactly what kind of movie it's going to be. This isn't new *Star Wars*. This isn't the continued adventures of people living their own lives in George Lucas's lovingly created universe. No, this is old *Star Wars*. This is *Return of the Jedi* but with a British woman instead of Mark Hamill. These aren't just new adventures hitting the same old fanservice-filled beats. These are meant to be seen as updates of the exact same adventures. Given that “Jedi Knight” and “Luke Skywalker” are practically synonymous in many peoples' minds, even the titles are pretty much identical. This cannot have been an accident. Bringing Palpatine back would have been a huge decision, and the writing team would have thought the consequences through carefully.

With this in mind, we can start to ask what points the movie was actually making. If we already had *Return of the Jedi*, why did we need *The Rise of Skywalker*? We needed it, I would argue, to show up precisely how little we needed it. *Star Wars* is a phenomenally profitable franchise, and Disney, until very recently, was not going to scale it back. At one point they planned to release one *Star Wars* movie every year, indefinitely. In *The Last Jedi*, Rian Johnson and his team made the case that at least these new movies should have new ideas in them. They added some shades of gray into the black-and-white struggle be-

Enough of the Space Laser Sword Wizards, continued.

between the Empire and the Resistance, threw in some actual jokes—jokes! In *Star Wars!*—and created characters with no real connection to the Skywalker dynasty. It wasn't a good movie either, but it wasn't as awful as the immense outpouring of hate would make you expect. If *Star Wars* were to succeed, the evidence showed, it would have to be the same old *Star Wars* with which the fans had grown up.

J.J. Abrams, in giving us *The Rise of Skywalker*, shows us exactly what that would look like and how awful it must necessarily be. The fanservice becomes sarcastic. You want to see all kinds of *Star Wars* planets and crazy aliens? Have a phenomenally rushed first act! You want Palpatine back? Take all the lazy storytelling that would entail, and all

the plot holes it would require! You want the Death Star? Well, too bad. The Death Star is waterlogged scrap, and I'll give you a pivotal scene right in that setting to prove it.

The grand finale offers us two paths out of this mess. At the pivotal moment in the battle against Palpatine's forces, a huge flotilla of people from all across the galaxy arrive. They aren't an organized Resistance; they're just people who have finally been gathered into a rebellion. It is possible, the film says, to stop accepting the fear and hate that those in power are feeding you, to band together, to demand something new and good and not just the same old leadership under a different name. Afterwards, though, Rey returns to Tatooine to bury Luke and Leia's lightsabers, and, when asked her name, looks into the middle distance

and replies "Rey Skywalker." We have not succeeded yet, the film says. The Skywalker dynasty is as strong as ever, and always ready to push more interesting and intelligent films away in favor of new bad *Star Wars*.

The Rise of Skywalker might, in some alternate universe, have been good. It's possible to write good *Star Wars* movies. However, we didn't need a good movie. We needed a reminder of what *Star Wars* was doing to our culture, and Abrams gave it to us. The emotional core of *The Rise of Skywalker* wouldn't have worked if the movie were any good at all. We've had enough *Star Wars*. All Abrams is saying is give *Star Peace* a chance.

Michael Kielstra '22 (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) *likes Star Trek better anyway.*

"Hair Love"

The Independent considers why this Oscar award winner is an important piece of film

By MAYI HUGHES

Earlier this month, Matthew Cherry and Karen Rupert Toliver's "Hair Love" won an Oscar for best-animated short film. The six-minute clip tells the tale of a black father learning how to do his daughter's natural hair for the very first time, while her mother is away at hospital. This narrative serves as a triumphant tribute to black womanhood, black hair, and the beauty of father-daughter relationships.

The short film begins with the main character Zuri excitedly waking up and rushing to prepare for the day. Adorned with a bright pink bonnet with a wide tooth comb in hand, she approaches the bathroom mirror to tackle her afro. Zuri selects a style from her mother's YouTube channel to copy, and a flashback is shown of her mother doing that style. Tug by tug, comb by comb, Zuri attempts to moisturise, part, and collect her hair into a four-knotted style, but to no avail. The camera pans to her shocked father walking into the room to see a disappointed Zuri. Her father, having never done his daughter's hair before, struggles to style it. After much tugging and pulling, he attempts to put a hat over his daughter's hair,

causing Zuri to run out of the room in tears. With time, effort and love, he successfully creates Zuri's chosen style, and they go to visit Zuri's mother in hospital.

While on stage at the Oscars accepting the award with producer Toliver, Cherry remarked: "We wanted to see more representation in animation [and] we wanted to normalize black hair." Cherry's film is an unapologetic representation of a young black girl in all of her frizzy glory, a long way away from the faces our screens have grown accustomed to. Historically, the scope of animated film has been restricted by the lack of diversity within the industry, resulting in stories like Cherry's – for characters like Zuri – failing to be represented in film. When Cherry first began crowdfunding for his film, only three animated films featured black protagonists throughout the genre's 100-year history.

Notably, Cherry's Oscar acceptance speech mentioned Barbers Hill High School student DeAndre Arnold, whose school suspended him due to his dreadlocks going against the district's dress code. Black hair can be charged with politicization, from schools excluding it

via dress code to colleagues petting it in the workplace. For many, this over-fixation with their hair within majority-white spaces and societies can be exhausting. The film triumphs in showcasing black hair in a space free of prejudice and politicization.

Zuri's mother – the film's only other female character – struggles with hair loss caused by her illness. This plot decision opens up discussions on the importance of hair within womanhood. In one scene, Zuri's mother self-consciously looks at her headscarf in the mirror and pats it with a tentative look on her face. With hair being such an integral part of women's identity – salons often being vibrant social hubs of the black community – Zuri's mother understandably seems lost as she stares at herself in the mirror. However, her mood is instantly lifted when Zuri shows her mother a picture she has drawn of her, with a crown on top of her bald head. Upon seeing the picture, Zuri's mother appears to become emotional and immediately takes off her hair scarf. For many women, their hair is a great source of value when it comes to their self-image. As Cheryl Thompson puts it in her 2009 essay

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"Hair Love," continued.

Black Women and Identity: What's Hair Got to Do With It, "For young black girls, hair is not just something to play with, it is something that is laden with messages, and it has the power to dictate how others treat you, and in turn, how you feel about yourself." Hair loss for many black women can be an isolating and confusing experience, with many feeling a sense of identity lost along with their hair. Cherry, through his inclusion of Zaya's mum, legitimizes a standard of beauty which is outside of these Eurocentric and sexist standards, one in which women can feel beautiful with thick, curly hair or no hair at all.

No matter how compelling the hair narrative is, viewers must not overlook the beautiful father-daughter relationship in the film. The journey Zuri's father undergoes from an intimidated, clueless beginner to a supportive hair-styling guru displays an unconditional and tender love between him and his daughter. With Zuri's mother in hospital for treatment, Zuri's father steps into doing his daughter's hair, a task typically deemed as a mother's role. It's not often films show the black father in a softer and more vulnerable state. Cherry affords a vulnerability which black men, often hyper-masculine and hyper-sexualized in Hollywood,

have not been able to show. His ability to admit defeat and try again leads to one of the most precious moments in the film. But even more precious is the final scene. Her father and Zuri visit her mother in hospital and present the work of art: Zuri's hair. Zuri's hair represents so much more than a hairstyle. It embodies a moment of growth, love, and bonding in their father-daughter relationship.

"Hair Love" affords representation to the millions of Zuris out there, and the Dads of Zuris, and the Mums of Zuris. It's refreshing to see a black family in the spotlight, in a plot devoid of trauma and struggle. When I first watched the film, I thought of the younger me, who begged her mum to perm her hair so as to not stand out from friends in high school. If younger me had seen Cherry's film, perhaps I wouldn't have been so ashamed of my natural curls. Perhaps I wouldn't have put them through endless years of harsh heat and chemical treatment. Perhaps I would have accepted the beauty of my afro, instead of trying to hide it. After watching the film, my heart leaps for all the young girls that will see themselves in Zuri and feel empowered. It leaps for all the hair love to come.

Mayi Hughes '23 (anandmayihughes@college.harvard.edu) *believes in Hair Love for all.*



Ava Salzman '23

"It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." Ralph Waldo Emerson

The rhythm of life is disruptive
And even so, "the independence of solitude" feels like a threat
When I can hear my own heartbeat
I feel all of my regrets
It's terrifying to be alone sometimes
But then sometimes it's great
A little drama every morning
And everything is at stake

Abby Koerner '21 (ajkoerner@college.harvard.edu) *writes Poetry for the Indy.*

INDY SPORTS

Fresh Feet on the Field

First-years drive the Crimson's success during the women's lacrosse season opener

By ELIZABETH GUMMER

All facets of this Sunday afternoon came together in perfect harmony this weekend for the Harvard Women's Lacrosse team to excel in their opening game against Niagara. Warmer weather than the week prior paired with a long weekend holiday made for the ideal conditions for Harvard to take on the first official play day of the 2020 season.

A moderate but enthusiastic crowd of parents, friends, and fans alike came across the river to Jordan Field to catch the fresh team in action. Their trek was not in vain, as the team did not once allow their score to dip below that of their opponent. Harvard only allowed one goal from the Niagara team over the entire first half of the game, as compared to Harvard's eight.

Out of the gates hot, Maddie Barkate '23 scored her first career goal within the first two minutes of the game. Following Barkate's opening goal was Madison Conklin '21 with an unassisted goal just seven minutes into the game. Still unchallenged by their competition at the time of the third goal, Grace Hulslander '22 scored her first of four goals in the game with an assist from teammate Charlotte Clark '22.

Contributing again in the first half were Hulslander, Clark, Conklin, and Barkate to close the half with a score of 8-1 for Harvard. Also aiding the eight goal domination was Tessa Queri '21 in the 26th minute with a free position shot. Continuing to dominate through the second half, Hulslander and Queri went on to score four goals a piece. Also getting a piece of the action was Hannah Keating '20 and Stephanie Hong '23 with a goal each to round out the game.

Goaltenders Grace Rotondo '21 and Hannah Valencia '22 each spent some time defending the Crimson's side of the field. Rotondo came away with three saves during her time on the field while Valencia blocked one.

The game against Niagara was the first time Harvard has taken on the team in recent history, resulting in a 15-3 win against the university.

Harvard has historically excelled in their

opening game, the past three years crushing the University of New Hampshire by a margin of at least seven goals each season.

For the upperclassmen on the team, the game was a jump back into the college lacrosse circuit that they have experienced for their past years at Harvard. Though exciting, nerve-wracking, and challenging for all, it is the first-year class who took great new steps this Sunday.

Nine fresh legs took to the field for their first ever in-season collegiate game.

Among the nine were newcomers Sierra Agarwal '23 and Maddie Barkate '23, hailing from Maryland and California respectively. Representing Harvard for the first time at a collegiate athletic level, the two women were eager to put forward their best efforts for the opening game.

Agarwal recounts her experience of preparing for her first game as a "rush of excitement" building up inside of her "from the moment [she] put her jersey on," experiencing an "amazing thrill." An all-around athlete in high school, Agarwal decided to focus on lacrosse during her time at Harvard, noting that it is "a dream come true to be out there with other college players playing the game [she loves]."

While the basics of the game remain the same, Agarwal was cognizant of the differences between her high school experience and the beginning of her collegiate career. She explains how the games differed, such that "college games are so much faster" than she has experienced in high school, and the "game is becoming more and more about speed and being able to endure a high amount of competitiveness throughout." Agarwal is enthusiastic about "the direction the women's game is taking" and "can't wait to see how the game keeps evolving" over the course of her career.

Looking forward to the coming games, Agarwal has "high expectations for this season." She emphasizes the "hard work, effort, and grit" the team has put in so far "in order to meet those expectations."

Fellow teammate Maddie Barkate had an outstanding first game. Barkate scored two goals in the first half, even taking the opening goal. In high school, Barkate too was a multi-sport athlete. Despite playing the sport for six years prior to Harvard, Maddie was "extremely nervous" in her first college game she "didn't know exactly what to expect" from the new arena. Noting both the increased pace and aggression of the collegiate level, Barkate reflects that "college lacrosse is the most fun [she has] ever had playing" due to the "higher level of speed and intensity that comes with it."

Despite prior nervous energy coming into the game, once play began Barkate felt "calm and ready."

Coming together for the first time in competition after months of hard work in the off- and pre-season, "it was so nice to finally get out there" and compete. Barkate feels that the team "executed the game plan" and despite having "things [they] can always improve on," the team was "happy with [their] first showing."

Both Agarwal and Barkate are anticipating a challenging week ahead as the team travels to Colorado this coming weekend. Both women spoke to the high expectations the team has for themselves this season, and this weekend will be a testament to the work they have put in thus far. Barkate hopes to "come away with two more wins" and is amped to "work hard to achieve those goals." Agarwal echoes these sentiments while also eager to have a "great team bonding experience" in their first away games.

The Harvard Women's Lacrosse team will play Colorado and Denver this coming weekend on Friday and Sunday, respectively. If for some reason you can't make it out to the West Coast to catch these intense matches, consider joining the team at home again this Saturday, February 29th for their next home game on Jordan Field against fellow Ivy League competitor Cornell.

Elizabeth Gummer '21 (elizabethgummer@college.harvard.edu) writes Sports for the Indy.

drawn and quartered



Dumped After Valentine's Day

By NATALIE SICHER