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Inside: Voting, Hedgehogs, and Championships

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Midterm season is eating the Indy alive.

Cover illustration by Ava Salzman '23

CONTENTS

- 3 Challenge Accepted
- 4 The Big Fish Finds His Pond
- 5 The End of Weinstein's Run
- 6 It's Comping Season
- 8 Race to the Starting Line
- 9 Work of the Week
- 11 Victories for Harvard Athletics

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INDY NEWS

Challenge Accepted

The Harvard Votes Challenge team looks to the primaries and beyond

By MICHAEL KIELSTRA

When I come in to his office, Dr. Mark Gearan's hands are straightening out a paper on his desk, and there is a moment when I am terrified that this interview will consist only of the former White House Communications Director reading from a prepared statement. This passes instantly as we begin to talk, and I realize that touching things is just something Dr. Gearan does: in the ten or fifteen minutes we spend together, his phone, his paper, and his notebook are each in turn turned around, set right, and squared away.

Gearan leads the faculty side of HVC, and, with primaries coming up, there is, in his words, "a lot going on." Specifically, HVC is focusing on providing information and resources to students who want to vote but aren't sure or don't have time to do it on their own. From the time a first-year student checks in for the fall semester and is introduced to TurboVote, through the rest of their Harvard career, HVC will provide advice, timely reminders, and forms for filing out-of-state ballots. During the 2019-2020 academic year, Gearan says, more than a thousand students were engaged in some sort of conversation, and many were registered to vote who otherwise wouldn't be.

But HVC is more than just canvassing outside the Science Center. Gearan is also Interim Faculty Dean for Winthrop House, where one dining hall table sports a box containing dozens of folders. Each holds absentee ballot forms for a different state. "Frequently," he says, speaking of Harvard houses in general, "conversations in the dining halls tend to [cover] public topics and politics." He mentions, in passing, a new HVC website. There are any number of ways for students to be encouraged to vote, and the HVC team is always looking out for more.

This search has taken them beyond the boundaries of Harvard's campus. Gearan mentions Northwestern and Stony Brook as colleges from which HVC has learned a lot and with whom the Institute of Politics is actively working to understand how best to engage

students in general and first-years and graduate students in particular. Under Teddy Landis '20, HVC organized a conference in 2019 in which undergraduates arrived a week before Opening Days to train in civic advocacy, led by, among others, one of Gearan's colleagues from Stony Brook. "We can all learn from each other," Gearan says. He is optimistic that HVC will soon have as much to teach as it is currently being taught.

However, to end on that note would be to only tell one half of the story. HVC, like many IOP initiatives, is led as much by students as it is by faculty. Gearan credits them with bringing in fresh ideas, and credits the success of HVC in part to "Experiences and histories that our staff colleagues bring... [that are] animated, in many ways, by the student side." Michelle Zhang '21, HVC Co-Chair is one half of that leadership. (The other half is Amanda Powers '21, whom we did not interview for this piece.) Like Gearan's, her hands are busy, playing with her rings while we talk. She joined in fall 2019 as the HVC Director of Communications, entering a team which focused on "laying the groundwork," as she describes it, before an election-filled spring.

HVC was founded in 2018 due to what Zhang calls "frustration with the low level of voter participation among Harvard students in the 2014 midterms." In the 2018 midterms, thanks to HVC's efforts, student turnout doubled. However, a few years of success have not

made either her or Gearan complacent. This year, as Zhang notes "ever-looming deadlines," they are pursuing an aggressive program of expansion. Gearan pointed out to me that there were twelve degree-granting programs at Harvard, but that so far HVC had focused mostly on the College, and that they aimed to change that this year. "The Harvard Votes Challenge is a University-wide movement,"



Natalie Sicher '21

INDY NEWS

Challenge Accepted, continued.

Zhang says. Through the IOP and the Ash Center, HVC has recruited coordinators to help duplicate HVC's efforts at all other Harvard schools. There are "nuances," she says, particularly centering around the higher percentage of international students outside of the undergraduate population, but she believes the basic idea is sound.

Zhang and her team are working on a number of smaller projects as well. Chief among these is the effort to appoint an HVC organizer for each house and almost every first-year dorm. This last initiative, unique to Harvard, will take the door-to-door campaigning that HVC rolled out for last semester's Cambridge elections and expand it, providing a single, local point of contact to help solve any problems prospective voters might have. Zhang also mentioned in passing that

HVC was working with certain other student organizations, and that they had supported the Undergraduate Council in providing the free stamps that now grace Building Managers' offices across the campus.

At the same time, HVC is looking to the future. They also view faculty leadership as crucial, but for different reasons to Gearan: to Zhang, faculty are valuable, at least in part, because they do not disappear after four years. "When all the great people that we have working on it graduate," she says, "we don't have to reinvent the wheel." This might seem a strange phrase to use, since Zhang and Gearan appear to be practically building the wheel as it rolls along, but both of them are very clear that the core of HVC is not about to change. "Harvard has a proud history of engaged citizens," says Gearan,

and defines their mission as one "to inspire students to politics and public service." When I ask about whether there are any challenges associated with doing civic engagement work at Harvard, this university famous throughout the world as a paragon of higher education, in particular, he mentions only the immense responsibility that the future citizen-leaders of the United States have. Zhang is even clearer: "What's important is not who you vote for, but that you are an active participant in our democracy." Harvard Votes Challenge, in the end, is not about making it easy to vote. It's about making it easy to vote for somebody, not just anybody, but the candidate who, in your mind, most deserves it.

Michael Kielstra '22 (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) is, as a journalist, the very lowest form of political life.

The Big Fish Finds His Pond

The forming of Harvard College graduate Pete Buttigieg '04 as a centrist presidential candidate focused on political participation

By ARSH DHILLON

Growing up in South Bend, Indiana, Pete Buttigieg was a typical "big fish in a little pond" before arriving at Harvard in the fall of 2000. However, entering such a new environment, surrounded by so many others just like him, Buttigieg was still able to find his niche – politics. And yes, so many Harvard students study government or history and join the IOP, eventually selling their souls to consulting firms post-graduation Buttigieg, however, had a different idea regarding where this path would lead him. "I have heard that no sensible young person today would want to give his or her life to public service. I can personally assure you this is untrue," he wrote in the winning 2000 Profiles in Courage essay. Pete Buttigieg, as an eighteen-year-old, had already decided his destiny: one day, he was going to run for president.

At Harvard, he spent his four years understanding the American government and how citizens interact with it, ultimately becoming the president of the Student Advisory

Committee of the IOP and working on the study of youth attitudes on politics. From his Profiles in Courage essay, it was clear that Buttigieg wanted to push for greater youth participation in the political sphere. Especially in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the beginnings of the Iraqi Wars, Buttigieg's centrist ideology was formed as a Harvard student. His political ideologies came from the fear that the American youth would soon completely disengage from the political sphere. He realized that our political actors' decisions have consequences and sway the public's view on the government. So, Buttigieg took on ideologies that pushed for bi-partisanship, reaching across the aisle, on Capitol Hill.

After graduating with a concentration in History & Literature, Buttigieg pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree at Pembroke College, Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship. There, he studied philosophy, politics, and economics and founded the Democratic Renaissance Project, a space for Oxford students to come together and discuss the ways in which

the Democratic Party should be rebuilt. In all his groups, whether they were at Harvard or Oxford, Buttigieg wanted to discuss politics among students, young twentysomethings who were on the brink of exiting the political sphere. He hoped to create a sense of urgency in his peers, pushing them to engage in greater political participation, to take hold of our democracy.

Thirteen years later, Mayor Pete found himself trying to take our democracy in his own hands. The youngest democratic candidate among the others, Buttigieg was easily still the most moderate one, which may have been his downfall. Even though Buttigieg dropped out of the Democratic race following his performance in the South Carolina Primary, this is not the end for him, for – like he promised before – he has dedicated his life to public service. It shouldn't surprise anyone to see Pete Buttigieg, however many years it takes, run again for the presidential office. It might be the only pond that fits him.

Arsh Dhillon '23 (asekhon@college.harvard.edu) looks forward to seeing what Pete Buttigieg

The End of Weinstein's Run

The significance of the Weinstein case in the #MeToo era

By MAYI HUGHES

Last week, Harvey Weinstein was found guilty of two felony sex crimes following a historic case which has spanned over four years. The jury found Weinstein guilty of felony rape and sex crime, but acquitted him of the predatory sexual assault charges - arguably the most serious ones. With Weinstein now awaiting his sentencing on March 11, 2020, which could be up to 25 years, many of us are left pondering the significance of this case within the scope of the #MeToo movement. A man who has seemed to operate above the law for decades on end has finally been held accountable; sexual assault victims are feeling heard. While many details of the case have faced criticism, it is undoubtedly a turning point for sexual assault cases.

Allegations against Weinstein came under the spotlight after the New York Times published a detailed story with multiple allegations from women across Hollywood. These allegations ranged from sexual assault, manipulation and harassment. Weinstein issued an apathetic statement and was later sacked by his company on the basis of 'misconduct'. Following this, an onslaught of more allegations and statements were made - including rape allegations. Among these women were successful actors such as Gwyneth Paltrow and Angelina Jolie. As investigations began in the US and UK, the media grabbed wind of the scandal and began to feature these victims, giving them platforms to share their stories. Weinstein turned himself in and was released on a \$1 million bail. The trial process finally began in early January of this year based on charges concerning two victims, but the jury also heard from multiple other victims. After five days of deliberation, the jury found Weinstein guilty of a criminal sexual act in the first degree and third degree rape. However Weinstein is acquitted of first degree rape, as well as predatory sexual assault - charges which would have led to a life sentence.

Annabel Sciorria, one of the victims of the sexual assault charges, has released a statement on what the charges signify to her. "My testimony was painful but necessary. I spoke for my-

self and with the strength of the eighty plus victims of Harvey Weinstein in my heart," Sciorria said. "While we hope for continued righteous outcomes that bring absolute justice, we can never regret breaking the silence. For in speaking truth to power we pave the way for a more just culture, free of the scourge of violence against women." Another victim, Zoe Brock, released a statement saying, "This changes everything for sexual assault victims all over the world. It proves that [Weinstein's lawyers] can no longer victim shame and blame and treat women on the stand as the guilty party and get away with it. It



Lucy Hamilton '21

proves you can be in a consensual relationship with someone and still be raped."

In 2006, Tarana Burke coined the phrase, "Me Too," as a tool to help women survivors of sexual violence. A decade on, the slogan caught on, with many high-profile celebrities using it in the anti-harassment movement which Weinstein's scandal sparked. The slogan has empowered women from all over the world, and from several different professions and industries

to speak out against the manipulation which is inherent in so many workplaces. Speaking to Ebony Magazine, Burke remarked, "It wasn't built to be a viral campaign or a hashtag that is here today and forgotten tomorrow. It was a catchphrase to be used from survivor to survivor to let folks know that they were not alone and that a movement for radical healing was happening and possible."

It's hard to come to a solid conclusion about the verdict in isolation. On the one hand, factually speaking, the goal of the prosecutors, to convict Weinstein of the five charges wasn't met. Weinstein was only convicted for two of his charges. The language around sex crimes is vague, and thus the more serious charge of first degree rape was not successful. Many say that the verdict was too soft - with the possibility that Weinstein comes out in a few years by the soonest. However, looking at the case from a wider viewpoint it signifies a turning point within the #MeToo movement. The case is monumental, as it sets a precedent for future sexual assault and harassment in the workplace, and it did so in a public way. The prosecution's case was mainly composed of victim statements, rather than physical and forensic evidence. Weinstein's defense used the common rebuttal that encounters were consensual, using the pretext of professional relationships as an excuse. The emotional testimonies of six women, however, triumphed over the defense's attempt to cover the assaults. The sheer volume of testimonials against Weinstein, outside of the courtroom too, undoubtedly played a part in the verdict. "These are eight women who pulled our justice system into the 21st century," Manhattan District Attorney Vance told a swarm of reporters after the hearing. It's rare for women to win such cases against powerful men, never mind in a case as large as this one.

What do Harvard students think about the case? A representative from OSAPR (Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response) commented: "Cases like Harvey Weinstein's create ripple effects in our communities, often gene-

INDY FORUM

The End of Weinstein's Run, continued.

rating reactions, emotions, and activism. In the midst of the larger national dialogue and response, we hope people find space and time for themselves and connect with appropriate resources, whether it be OSAPR at Harvard, friends and loved ones at home, or others in the community invested in healing. I hope the national attention that Weinstein's case garners continues to motivate society to reflect how we can do better." Nyasia Jordan '23 reflected, "Weinstein's conviction means that people cannot use him to try and absolve Bill Cosby and R. Kelly of their sexual assault records." The Harvard commu-

nity, similar to millions worldwide, recognizes the case as a step in the right direction to create safer communities, as well as systemic legal change.

But above all, Weinstein's case has shown how powerful the sharing of stories can be in the face of hardship. Women who had lived in fear and intimidation for decades suddenly felt empowered to share their stories, due to the existence of people with shared experiences. The knowledge of knowing you aren't suffering alone can be not only healing – it can be revolutionary. As the social advocacy group Time's

Up said: "Abusers everywhere and the powerful forces that protect them should be on notice: There's no going back." The Weinstein case shows how the law can fall short in certain areas, and how the credibility we give to shared experiences can suffice. Real change can be brought about when individuals share their stories. Real change occurs when the world is willing to listen.

Mayi Hughes '23 (anandamayihughes@college.harvard.edu) shares her thoughts on a historical case and movement rating will do.

It's Comping Season

A look into Harvard's favorite passion

By JULIO V. PARDO

Dear reader:

A few days ago, I woke up to an inbox full of emails. From the ten unread I had disregarded the night before, they had increased by the dozens, signaling unmistakably that the Spring Comping Season had begun. As the week progressed, there was no mistake about it, for even the dining halls' customarily amorphous noise pollution had suddenly acquired shape. Countless conversations about the new extracurricular endeavors awaiting undertaking sprung up at every dinner table, hallway, and entryway.

In my senior year of high school, I had thought that my acceptance into Harvard would signify the end of intense application processes in my life, at least for the immediate future. I was wrong. Back then I was an innocent adolescent ignorant of the degree to which Neo-Marxism dominated the forums of political discussions in universities, unaware of the fact that you do not wear Vans shoes during a snowstorm, and, most importantly, that student organizations at Harvard College love their comping processes and Harvard students love to comp.

Student organizations at Harvard College love their comping, and it is understandable. After all, they are led by members of the student body, which, in its plurality, is composed of concentrators in the social sciences. A large group of them know about market failures caused by information asymmetries. They are aware that not everyone who exhibits interest in their organizations will be deeply committed to their projects. The comping process for them is, in essence, an instrument to deal with these asymmetries, requi-

ring potential members to provide a signal, a costly indication that they want to be part of an organization. Hopeful members are often expected to enroll in class-like programs, commit a substantial amount of their time to meetings and other activities, and, sometimes, be the object of less conventional and generally deprecated traditions.

HFAC runs among the most popular of these comp processes. According to the organization's Chief of Education and former member of the leading board, Ahan Malhotra '21, the program boasts one of the largest pools of hopeful entrants – approximately 130. He described his program as serious and committed to the spread of financial literacy through its class-like structure. Students are expected to attend lectures, attend section, and complete problem sets. They cannot have more than three unexcused absences, and if they miss lecture, they must watch its recorded version and write a paragraph about the material covered in it. Malhotra explained that after admission, students become part of a team in charge of managing assets valued at \$40,000, which largely explains the excessive rigor.

I asked Malhotra for the one reason why his comping process is the best on-campus. He, without hesitation, provided five. He said, "We are super organized; our teaching material is relevant to today's world and provides factual information; we are inclusive and for everyone, not only for people who want to go into finance world; our lectures are well taught, employing case studies in the fashion of the business school; and our final project is a stock pitch that serves as a material testament of what our compers are capable of

doing once they finish with our process."

Other groups on campus famous for their selectiveness include HCCG, the Hasty Pudding, the Crimson Key Society, and OAASIS, but none responded to the Independent's requests for statements. I, however, was genuinely interested in learning what HCCG, an organization widely known for its professional dressing. I was also intrigued by the Crimson Key Society, wondering why it requires a comp. It was my understanding that showing up and sacrificing your free time for a noble community service cause would suffice to be admitted into a community service club – but not at Harvard. That is not to mention OAASIS, the Organization of Asian American Sisters in Service, for which identifying as an Asian American service-oriented woman is only one prerequisite.

Dear reader, I confess I am no longer that kid who arrived fresh and inexperienced at the Harvard gates two falls ago. I have been seasoned by snowy, cold winters and fierce ideological debates with my peers and professors. My understanding about the world has expanded greatly, but I still cannot rationally comprehend, now two years into my career, Harvard students' obsession for comping. I have had to give up and resign myself to popular wisdom as embodied by an adage from my old country: "to each madman his craze."

Truly yours,

A compers

Julio Pardo '22 (julio_v_pardo@college.harvard.edu) wonders how students who just got into their comp-heavy organizations are feeling.

INDY ARTS

My Experience With the Ghun-gods *A behind-the-scenes perspective from an Independent staff writer*

By GRAHAM WALTER

Ghungroo has been a wonderful experience for me for the past two years at Harvard. Practices twice a week are a lot but just as much fun, especially when first learning how to perform these styles of dance – as was the case with me. However, within a handful of practices, we learned about the physical components of dance as well as the cultural side of the show. Physically and culturally, the adventure requires opening yourself up to the new experiences.

The show itself claims around 350 performers, yet the community is much closer than that number reflects. In four performances, the producers and dancers gather in Agassiz Theatre over the course of nearly four hours. Each dancer chatters excitedly until the directors tell everyone to be quiet.

The show has so many dances that it would be tedious to list them all, but they include different styles and music scores from old Bollywood films, a mix of American rap and traditional song, “hype” songs in South Asia, all in different styles. It is no wonder that each year, all four shows are sold out and a special seat is reserved for Dean Khurana.

As the roommate of a producer, I watched him and every member of Ghungroo board pour in over 100 hours of their time in the preceding months to make the shows run smoothly. From

booking spaces to coordinating each dance rehearsal, to managing the tech and production staff, the SAA board required dedication to the cause. Additionally, the Tech team programmed everything from behind the scenes. Lighting, curtains, music, stage design all had to be aligned to the second. The entire show running smoothly is an incredible feat. This year, over 1,000 tickets were bought and sold to see the colorful costumes, intricate sets, and sheer energy that Ghungroo brought to Harvard.

Senior dance is another fun tradition that is only available to seniors. The excitement of the dance comes from several minutes of fast-paced choreography, dynamic transitions, and palpable energy – it is the finale for a reason. I am certainly excited for this opportunity my senior year.

The show itself celebrates South Asia’s culture and is produced in conjunction with the Harvard South Asian Association (SAA), one of Harvard’s largest cultural organizations. The annual concert takes place in late February or early March and for many, it extends far beyond dancing. Skits engage with both the global political environment and Harvard itself. They contain many inside jokes for the South Asian community, but they never fail to make me smile. On top of skits and dancing, traditional music also resonates through the theatre and within the hearts of the audience

members. Student players either adapt modern songs or revitalize traditional ones. The beauty emanating from the sitar and vocals alongside the hypnotic beat of the drum are always delightful to hear.

Through Ghungroo, Harvard SAA disseminates South Asian culture to the student body. Dancers who take part learn certain cultural aspects. In fact, many of the moves are popular in weddings and festivals depending on the region. Furthermore, representation goes beyond learning, but it also helps create general awareness and appreciation for the diverse arts on this campus. Ghungroo unites a community built around students who are excited to be involved in South Asian culture.

About half of the students who sign up for Ghungroo are of non-South Asian descent. An even larger proportion have never danced before. Through developing the skills and performing on stage, many students remain friends well into the future. In the audience, it is easy to spot the alumni section where nearly one hundred former dancers/producers show up to yell and cheer. I look forward to joining them one day.

Graham Walter '21 (grahamwalter@college.harvard.edu) writes Arts for the Indy.

Race To The Starting Line *A spoiler conversation about Sonic the Hedgehog*

By MICHAEL KIELSTRA and JONATHAN ZHANG

JZ: Hi, I’m Jonny Zhang.

MK: And I’m Michael Kielstra, and we just saw Sonic the Hedgehog. For context, I know next to nothing about *Sonic the Hedgehog*.

JZ: And I know almost everything about *Sonic the Hedgehog*. I have to say, even looking past nostalgia, it was a decent movie. It had its good moments.

MK: It had a lot of heart. People throw around the word “heart” a lot with kids’ movies, but I thought this movie had it.

JZ: Absolutely. It did not feel like a cash grab, for most of it, not at all.

MK: I thought all the character arcs could have

used five more minutes.

JZ: There were character arcs?

MK: The first half of them were really good. We have Sonic running because he’s scared, and then because it’s fun, and then to protect friends in bar fights, and then to protect people against the evil Dr. Robotnik. Between those last two, we just needed one more transitional scene so that the landing would properly stick.

JZ: The arc that felt really abrupt for me was – I can’t even remember his name – Donut Lord. The main human protagonist. He went from pretty much despising Sonic to being his best friend, in one scene.

MK: His five minutes could have just been So-

nic convincing him to have fun at the bar. That would have been great.

JZ: That was condensed into one line, one piece of dialogue. It was like “Let’s not do this. All right, let’s do this.”

MK: If they’d had a proper conversation about this, then that would have been a great scene. The writers seemed pretty willing to just change things as the plot demanded whenever they wanted to.

JZ: Sonic’s speed is also inconsistent. There’s no way around it. One second he’s moving fast in his slow time zone, like he is somehow moving fast within everyone else moving slow–

INDY ARTS

Race To The Starting Line, continued.

MK: I quite liked that. I got the idea that was Sonic pushing himself.

JZ: I can see that. But then a few scenes earlier he got shot by a dart gun. In fairness, I don't think it matters. It matters if it's absurd, but I don't think it hit absurdity if you discount the dart gun.

MK: That's an inciting incident, and we all know the plot stops for the inciting incident. They get away with it, though, and I think they get away with it for one particular reason: Sonic, the character, has a ton of style.

JZ: Sonic does have style. He absolutely does. The movie really plays up the immaturity or the naiveté of Sonic more than the video games have in the past. That's a good thing and a bad thing: it allows him to have a character arc, certainly. He still has that teenager attitude that he's well-known for.

MK: When they were in the fight, and Sonic slows down time, and that song plays "My feet go boom boom boom," I laughed. That felt like the kind of song Sonic would play, had he been editing this movie.

JZ: Oh yeah.

MK: I think that says good things about the characterization, that after only half a movie we agree on that integral part of his character.

JZ: I think that scene was one of a few that absolutely showcased Sonic as a character at his best, as a kid having fun.

MK: What would you say the other ones were?

JZ: Sonic living in his little cave was one. He was reading "Flash" comics, he was running in a washing machine like a hamster in a hamster wheel. His narration, even if it did feel "Dead-pool"-esque, was genuinely funny. Those are things that are connected to the video-game Sonic, but the movie Sonic also has a few moments where he gets to show off his personality. I always think about the baseball scene.

MK: That's actually a really sad scene. I saw one reviewer who claimed that the baseball scene was an expression of the unalloyed joy of the movie, and I think there's a lot of unalloyed joy in the movie, and I like that, but I definitely think there's a lot of poignancy in there.

JZ: One of the really little, subtle set-pieces that I want to talk about, because I keep forgetting about it but looking back I think it is one of

the most brilliant and unique uses of Sonic's speed, is the therapist, where he's playing different parts for himself and he's able to do that because he can jump back and forth between the personalities so fast. That's subtle but it's unique and it's so in line with what Sonic would do.

MK: I thought it was very powerful the way the movie used that to emphasize that he had been playing all the parts in his life this whole time, and in the therapist and the baseball game, the speed becomes, in more ways than one, an excuse to never settle down. Why should he? He can go fast.

JZ: He can literally talk to himself as if he were in two places.

MK: It's a movie about someone biologically optimized to be alone, realizing how crappy that is.

JZ: Those scenes might have been the saddest in the movie because they weren't part of a grand overarching story. When Sonic is down in the final battle, you know he's going to get up through the real superpower of friendship and he's going to win the day.

MK: Let's be honest, there's only one way the movie could have ever ended. But you don't get that same sense of things turning out right, not when he's playing baseball by himself.

JZ: And if we're going to empathize with him, we have to talk about his new design and how that helps. There are a lot of times where the movie relies on him looking like something the audience wants to enjoy. I don't see that happening with the old design.

MK: Most of the film was so well-animated. I thought that Sonic's speed was beautiful. With the blue streak and then when Robotnik had the red streak. There's no reason why he would have that particular color, but it was beautiful. And while we're on this subject, let's talk Robotnik.

JZ: Yes! Oh my gosh, yes.

MK: Jim Carrey knows precisely what kind of movie he's in.

JZ: Obviously Jim Carrey's take on Robotnik is different than the games', not only in terms of looks. They feel like very different ends of the mad scientist spectrum. I'd say Dr. Eggman in the games is closer to someone like Dr. Doofenshmirtz from Phineas and Ferb, but Carrey makes that character his own.

MK: You couldn't really do Doofenshmirtz in a movie because you need a genuine enemy for Sonic. You need someone a bit more unhinged. I think you mentioned to me that you liked the scene where he was doing the lab analysis and dancing in the back of his truck.

JZ: That was one of the best, if not the best, scenes in the movie. It was just two minutes of unabashed crazy.

MK: He does "unabashed crazy" very well. Tell me about that robo-tank that he sends after them.

JZ: In the games, the robots are called Badniks and their whole schtick is that they're a bit more stylistic. The robots in the movie were definitely more sterile – they had that white futuristic gloss on them – but, that said, that scene where the tank was chasing after them and it became a motorcycle and it became a unicycle and then it became a tiny helicopter and then it became a grenade: that perfectly captures what an Eggman robot is. It probably has very little practical purpose but makes you go, "I wish I had thought of that."

MK: Robotnik question: Agent Stone, the guy who pals around with Robotnik for no good reason. Does he come up anywhere in the games at all?

JZ: Nope. Neither does Longclaw, Sonic's owl mother. This movie had three existing characters and they were Sonic, Tails, and Robotnik. And only two of them got any airtime, really. It felt less like a Sonic movie and more like a movie with Sonic in it, and that was good and bad for a long-time Sonic fan like me.

MK: What would you say would have been a Sonic movie, if this is a movie with Sonic?

JZ: That's the issue with Sonic. His stories are very simple. It's good guy versus bad guy. It's hard to turn that into a movie. It's harder to turn that into a good movie. I see why they did what they did. This movie was great. It was a lot of fun as a Sonic fan. But one of the reasons why it might have been fun to me and less so to you was, because I know so much about Sonic, this movie did a lot that differed from my expectations. Things like, Eggman's whole schtick is different to his schtick in the games, Sonic's personality is different. Sonic games don't take place in the real world, for the most part, so that's another thing. The ending, having Eggman adopting the moustache and the bald look, Tails coming in... For all its good parts, the best part of the movie was how

INDY ARTS

Race To The Start, continued.

excited it got me for the sequel.

MK: By the way, is Tails like that in the games? A bit more nerdy and on the straight-and-narrow than Sonic?

JZ: Nerdy, yes. Tails in the movie, from the single line we got from him, seemed a bit more confident. A lot of Tails's story in the games actually is that he's the one who's alone, he's the one who's isolated, but they gave that to Sonic.

MK: There was some kid in the theatre with us who, when we saw Tails, just yelled "Tails!" from the back. This seven-year-old girl. Most wholesome thing I had heard that evening. I remember on the bus there was this ad for a church, and someone had scribbled "Lies" all over it. My personal beliefs notwithstanding, this is why we

can't have nice things. Parasite had just won Best Picture. I haven't seen Parasite, I hear very good things, but it's also a very dark, dark comedy, if it's a comedy at all. Martin Scorsese has just produced *The Irishman*, which is three hours of men behaving badly and being sad, and I wanted to see a movie about a happy hedgehog that runs fast and blows up bad guy robots. And I was not disappointed. It had enough of a plotline that I was happy to sit there, it had enough characterization that we can have a twenty-minute talk about it, and it just made me feel happy.

JZ: You bring up Scorsese. He recently said something like "The Marvel movies aren't cinema." He compared them more to amusement parks, and I think that's a self-defeating argument. If they make people happy, who cares?

MK: That's all Scorsese is trying to do: make people think, make people feel. I think Sonic hit a lot of the standard drama/comedy beats. I felt sad, I felt happy, I didn't have my philosophy challenged much, but I had it challenged a little. If this is an amusement park, I want a season ticket.

JZ: Exactly.

Michael Kielstra '22 (pmkielstra@college.harvard.edu) *might not have to go fast, but likes to anyway.*

Jonathan Zhang '23 (jonathan_zhang@college.harvard.edu) *thought "Shadow the Hedgehog" was a good game.*

Photo courtesy of Olivia Farrar '21



Liv Farrar is a Junior in Cabot House, originally from Rochester, New York. She studies English and the History of Art and Architecture, and spends most of her mornings and afternoons rowing for the Harvard-Radcliffe Varsity Lightweight team. Around campus, Liv can be found doodling, camping in Darwin's, and playing with dogs in the quad. Off campus, Liv is a big fan of hikes, drinking pina colodas, and getting caught in the rain.

"Tell us about your piece of art, and describe your source of inspiration."

"Things We Did on the Last Sunday of Existence," is an exaggerated, dystopian version of the bittersweet of nostalgia and memory. The story is supposed to say something about what it means to both remember—and forget—the people, the places, and the rituals that you love.

Stories are my way of accessing. They provide a medium for understanding and exploring moral questions. I believe that writing fiction is a lot like the "content effect" in deductive reasoning. For most people, thinking in terms of abstract symbols complicates logic;

Work of the Week

Spotlight OLIVIA FARRAR

but when you give a problem meat in the form of fleshed out details, it becomes more natural. More solvable. In ethics, "thought experiments" construct valuable generalizations from which overarching principles can often be abstracted. In many ways, however, they're closed systems; they map one size-fits-all answers onto ethical problems. Fiction, on the other hand, is constructed as its own disparately complete version of reality, where the logic of story is both internally-self consistent and boundless. Stories provide necessary particularization, which can offer really meaningful solutions to ethical problems. After all, every moral problem is highly context-dependent in the real world. Plus, we need "content" to be rational thinkers; in our daily lives, we never experience events as stripped-down systems, like the "trolley-problem" in ethics. We experience them as interwoven chains, with largely irreducible personal, social, and moral consequences.

That's why I study English. Romanticizing aside, I have always believed that stories have the capacity to offer us space for working out difficult moral and emotional questions. So, that's where "Things We Did on the Last Sunday of Existence" came from. Thinking about memory, religion, and ritual, and wanting to create an extended thought-experiment where these ideas had the space to grow.

INDY ARTS

Things We Did on the Last Sunday Morning of Existence

By OLIVIA FARRAR

On the very last Sunday morning in existence, Paul and I both woke up early.

In sleep, Paul's breaths were long and sure against my back, a patient metronome. In the darkened bedroom that morning, there was a stillness on my skin that told me he, too, was awake. For a long time, we laid there like that: both aware of each other, both unspeaking in the black. I knew what he was thinking, and somehow, I was sure he knew what I was thinking too. After this moment is broken, there will be no more like it. We will never awake to each other's bodies on a Sunday morning again.

After a while, I pushed the sheets off and padded downstairs. The sun was just beginning to rise, casting pale pink shadows of light across the breakfast-table. I hummed some inexact tune as I poured Cheerios into a bowl, a song my father had made up nearly a century ago. The milk carton was too heavy for me, and after three tries, I gave up. A brief, now-familiar sense of panic filled me; every day, my muscles fade like a dimming light. As the sense of helplessness expanded, I closed my eyes. I breathed. I put the milk back in the refrigerator next to the cream. Breakfast must go on.

As the song of the dawn chorus seeped through the screen door, I began to make a game out of my cereal. Like my father's song, the game is a fossil of a very distant past—one covered by layers of years, like the ever-building strata of sediment. One by one, I pressed the dry Cheerios onto the wrinkled pads of my fingertips, seeing how long they would stick before dropping them on my tongue. In my mouth, I let them dissolve slowly into chalky starches and sugar. Without the strength to do things like pick up cartons of milk, all I have now are these little games. They remind me what the past tastes like. Cheerios and rock dust.

Outside, the sun had climbed past the horizon line, and the last afterglow of sunrise was beginning to ebb away. The floorboards upstairs creaked with Paul's footfalls, and I put a pot of water on the stove for coffee. This was part of our ritual: there were always two hot mugs waiting on the breakfast-table when Paul came into the kitchen.

"Morning," he said in his sweet, gravelly monotone, and the changing tenor of his voice reminded me of a newly gnawing feeling. How have I lived with the same man for most of my

adult life, and yet allowed his aging to somehow slip past me? Paul seated himself across from me, and beneath the windowlight, his face was worn linen.

Over the years, our mornings have opened like this: Paul reads the newspaper. I don't. When I was young, the big black letters on the front of the paper seemed to twist themselves into the treads of shadowy stairs when I looked at them—stairs up to some dark attic full of dusty opinions and old-person thoughts, ideas entrenched in what Paul, a former history professor, called an "ethos of learning." Of past. How the narrative of today can be positioned within the framework of history. Now, no ideas are to be evolved from past ones: the New Secularists have forbidden it. Of course, they allow the progress of science and medicine and technology. How could they not? They were, themselves, born from the cradle of innovation. But, in philosophy and religion: there is to be no more past. The Now is all they permit. That's why—why today is to be the final Sunday in existence.

No one knows how long Sundays have existed, exactly. At the dawning of every new age there is a resistance movement, but there is only the thinnest of a counterculture today. The New Secularists are the Now. There is no freedom fight in opposing the present. Still, the few remaining scholars of the Before—people like Paul, who in the 21st century made their living off the records of previous things—say that the practice of continuous seven-day "weeks," removed from the phases of the moon or other natural markers of time, began somewhere in the 6th century BCE. Dates and numbers are slowly becoming meaningless to me; after all, the New Secularists have purged the world of timekeeping, of chronology that is unrelated to metrical science. Still, with what little shreds of memory even Paul retains, he tried to explain: yom rishon; al-ahad; yek-shanbe. These symbols, these shreds of language across place and time, have all meant "first." A beginning. The spool from which the week unwinds. At some point, these "first"s became "Sunday," a word derived from the astrology of a culture neither Paul nor I can remember the name of—still, a name which meant, simply, "day of the sun." Day of the sun, and Paul and I had seen our final Sunday sunrise.

There is no longer a need for Sabbath. Just as the New Secularists have disintegrated philosophy and religion from the Now, they will exorcise the Lord's Day from this reality. The days of the week have been renamed; the concept of finite, repeating six-unit stretches of time will be kept, if only for

practical purposes. But there is to be no past, no history, no fragments of ritual. There is only the ever-churning Now. Sundays, and the ritual of the "first," no longer fit.

Paul shook the pages of the Now Times, and I watched the blue veins of his hand and thought: how are we to fit within this new world? Together, we are only past. I looked into my coffee.

"What should we do today?" Paul asked me.

I knew what he was really asking: what did we do, on a today? On a Sunday today, a Sunday from our last forty years together?

"We should..." I began, and slowly, I remembered: yellow sunlight trickling through oak leaves, tracing lattice-works on bed pillows; soft touches, familiar shivers from the body laid beside me; grease burning at the edges of a black pan, the smell of frying bacon and johnnycakes; coffee-steam, sippy-cups of orange juice in little fingers; woodsmoke from a newly-stoked fire, twining through the shared laughter of full kitchen; book pages, the background burble of some game that is no longer played, on some early model of two-dimensional television that is long-out of date; the jumble of gathered bodies, piling into some car, some early model of transportation that is too slow for the incessant churn of the Now; incense and candlewax and the hushed breath of hundreds against my neck, in some old building the color of wood-pews and pooled light through stained-glass, a building of humbly repeating ritual...

The slow expand of a Sunday.

These things fell into place again in my mind. Bits of memory, crumbling like falling rock from the side of some great cliff. The cliff-face of a mountain Paul and I had climbed together.

I said:

"Go to church?"

Paul looked out the window.

"Okay," he said.

The New Secularists had allowed this one final Sunday. One last day to remember songs from a century ago, to remember the rhythm of family, to play the games of past rituals.

Somewhere outside the warm familiarity of our morning, of our coffee-mugs and breakfast-table, bells were tolling. Bones slow, I stood up and walked around the table. As Paul sat, staring out at some future he couldn't see, I kissed him. Softly: just the top of his head, covered in brown liver spots and moles. So few layers of skin between lips and skull.

INDY SPORTS

Victories for Harvard Athletics

Both the men's squash and men's swimming & diving teams bring home championship titles

By ELIZABETH GUMMER

College Squash Association National Collegiate Men's Team Championships

On the final day of the Potter Cup, the men's squash National Championships, Samuel Scherl '21 and Adam Corcoran '21 kept the crowd on their toes. Going point for point in their opening rounds against rival Penn, the two Harvard matches made for the most exciting court-to-court viewing experience.

The afternoon had begun with Sean Hughes '20, Harvard's number five and co-captain, taking on Penn's Yash Bhargava '21. The match was an easy 3-0 for Hughes. Never allowing more than 7 points from Penn's end, Hughes moved confidently to secure a 1-0 lead for Harvard in the National Championship. Following in suit was number nine, Ayush Menon '23 playing against Penn's Ryan Murray '21. With another round of 3-0 wins, Menon improved Harvard's record to 2-0.

Marwan Tarek '22, Harvard's number two, played next. The first round of the match was closer than any prior that day. Going 11-9 for Tarek, the crowd was on edge as the game neared its final points. Finally in his groove, Tarek dominated the next two rounds, going 11-6 and finally 11-2 for another 3-0 match win.

Next up playing side-by-side were Sam Scherl '21 and Adam Corcoran '21, number four and number eight for the Crimson respectively. As Harvard only had to win 5 of their 9 matches to claim the national title, the set of teammates had the opportunity to end the tournament then and there. Scherl had a packed stand of spectators overlooking his tight match. The first round went to his opponent, Penn's Dillon Huang '23, with a score of 5-11. Scherl, frustrated but not finished, came back on the next round unstoppable. Harvard took almost every point in the next round, going 11-1 for the set. Scherl maintained his inertia, having recovered so swiftly from the opening round, and took the next two rounds 11-3 and 11-2. Despite holding a straight face the entirety of the match, Scherl burst with excitement as he scored the last point, knowing there was only one match left until he was a two-time national champion.

The crowd only required a glance to the side to catch the progression of Corcoran's match on their left. Having gone 12-10 for Corcoran in the first round, there was a tense tone for the match ahead. Penn's Wil Hagen '20 matched Corcoran, point for point. The following set was all Corcoran, who managed to swiftly take control with an 11-5 win. Only a single round more needed to be won in order to boast the national champion title. To the crowd's shock and dismay, the third round win did not fall into Corcoran's hands. Hagen began to even the playing field, taking the next round 7-11 and sending the pair into a fourth round of play. Not entertaining the possibility of failure, Corcoran fired back strongly and sealed the national title with an 11-3 win.

The crowd erupted into cheers of excitement and pride for the Harvard team. This is the second year in a row the team has won the Potter Cup, and the 27th time in Harvard history. Ranked first in the nation, with a streak of 33 match wins, it was not that this championship win came as a surprise. The win rather acted as a testament to the incredible talent, efforts, and excellence that the team holds. Next for the team is the individual National Championship tournament, which will be held at Penn this upcoming weekend.

Men's Swimming & Diving Ivy League Championship

Cheers echoed at Blodgett Pool as the Harvard men's swimming & diving team began their Ivy League Championship this past Wednesday, February 26, 2020. The team has been successful at securing the championship title for the past three years running, so the pressure was on to repeat past performances and come out on top again. Co-captain Michael Zarian '21 reported that the team was well aware that "there was a target on [their] backs from the first day of the season" due to the previous record of wins, but the pressure only motivated them to step up, as they "embraced the challenge, and competed together as a cohesive unit."

The Crimson men started off strong in the first two events of the weekend, competing well in the 200 medley relay and the 800 free relay on Wednesday night. A relay team of Gunner Grant '23, Jared Simpson '23, Umit Gures '23, and Mahlon Reihman '22 set the tone in the first race of the weekend, taking second place in the 200 medley with a time of 1:26.34. Moving onto the next and only other event of the night, Reihman took to the pool again, now joined by fellow teammates Corban Rawls '23, Michael Zarian '22, and Marcus Holmquist '23 for the 800 free relay. Beating out the other teams by over three full seconds, Harvard took gold with a time of 6:20.96.

For Marcus Holmquist '23, the 800 relay was his first dive into a large collegiate conference meet. Despite the high stakes competition, Holmquist noted "not really feeling any pressure" due to it being his "first big college championship." His calm approach to the weekend proved successful, allowing him not only to race calm and confident, but to take in "the incredible atmosphere" of the meet. Holmquist remarks, despite the big win and several other big finishes, "What was most memorable was racing in front of the alumni, family and friends."

The competition rebooted the following morning at 11 a.m. with five preliminary races, followed by their respective finals that evening. Among the standout performances that night was Cole Kuster '23, who took the 500-yard freestyle title in the opening race of the night. His time of 4:18.17 bested that of second place by 0.49 seconds, bringing everyone to their feet as

Kuster managed to hold off his Dartmouth challenger for the final yard of the race. Across the board, Harvard maintained impressive scores throughout the rest of the finals Thursday evening.

On the third day of competition, Harvard maintained their excellence in the next round of finals. Again Kuster came through with a solid performance, swimming confidently to claim the 1000-yard freestyle win. Up next was Zarian in the 400-yard individual medley, taking second place in the competitive field. While Zarian reflected that he "thought [his] performances were solid," he was "thrilled to see Cole Kuster and Charles Vaughan step up and score major points this past weekend." Vaughan placed second in the 200-yard breaststroke later Friday evening.

In one of the most exciting races of the night, Umit Gures '22 broke the Harvard record in the 100-yard butterfly with his time of 45.13. Not only did the time best the program record, but additionally is the fastest time recorded in Blodgett Pool. Worth noting is the accomplishment of Corban Rawles '21, who took the win in the 200-yard freestyle finals, as well as Gunner Grant '23 who claimed second in the 100-yard backstroke.

For the final day of competition, Harvard swam strong in nearly every event. Kuster again proved remarkable as he fought for a silver place finish in the 1650-yard freestyle. Competing in a deep field of talent in the 200-yard backstroke, Grant, Zarian, and Simpson came away with first, fourth, and eighth place finishes. Aided by second, third, and sixth place finishes by Simpson, Chang, and Vaughan respectively in the 200-yard breaststroke, the Crimson men continued to rake in points. Jacob Johnson '22 proved powerful in the 200-yard butterfly, taking a second place finish.

Closing out the four days of competition with 1439 points overall, the Harvard team continued their streak as the Ivy League conference champions, beating out Princeton by 208 points. Holmquist spoke to the collective success of the team, remarking they "knew that [they] were fighting for the team and not necessarily individual success." Zarian echoed the sentiment, noting that "everyone on the team stepped up this meet" as they "competed together as a cohesive unit." On a more personal note, Zarian reflected that it was "easy to stay motivated to work hard" given the "countless hours" working towards this collective goal with his "best friends."

Those who have qualified for the NCAA National Championships will compete later this month in Indianapolis.

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

drawn and quartered



A Whole Latte Midterms

By NATALIE SICHER