

The Wheaton Wire

Volume LVI

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Issue #6

SGA repeals ranked-choice voting after realizing it never passed

BY DEREN SOZER

In a meeting on the evening of Feb. 20, Wheaton's Student Government Association (SGA) voted to repeal the use of ranked-choice voting in future SGA elections. The move comes just one and a half years after the system's initial adoption and after only one election using it.

The repeal comes not as a result of dissatisfaction with the system itself, but from a combination of factors. First, Wheaton lacks the proper resources to administer a ranked-choice voting system and second, it was never passed in the first place.

A proposal to use ranked-choice voting in SGA elections was first introduced in November of 2021. The idea was debated at the time with members expressing a variety of concerns, including whether it devalued peoples' votes. One issue was the so-called "ballot exhaustion phenomenon" which occurs if a person does not rank all the candidates, resulting in a situation where if the candidate they do vote for is eliminated, their vote is not counted at all.

The proposal was tabled after this first debate and returned to the agenda the next month. Arguments in favor included that ranked-choice voting may help students feel that their votes mattered more and encourage participation in elections. Concerns existed, however, about

the added time and workload to the counting process. Members also noted that most SGA elections did not include more than two candidates, rendering the entire system pointless.

The proposal was brought to a vote where it achieved a simple majority, but not the two-thirds majority it required to be added to the SGA bylaws. The proposal made another appearance in February of the following year when it was defeated again, splitting the vote evenly.

At the beginning of every year, SGA approves its bylaws, including any changes made from the previous year. For reasons that remain unclear, ranked-choice voting was included in the bylaws that were approved in one such routine vote in the 2022-2023 academic year. In this convoluted way, Wheaton students ended up using a voting system that had been debated, denied, and then unwittingly approved by SGA.

The implementation of ranked-choice voting after its tumultuous journey into SGA elections proved to be difficult. Wheaton does not have the budget to afford the software required to support such a voting system. As a result, the first election to use ranked choice voting was conducted using Google forms and required SGA's Cour Four to spend upwards of eight hours counting the votes by hand.



Image courtesy of Wheaton College (MA).

The logo of Wheaton College's Student Government Association.

When reached for comment about the situation, SGA Student Body President Meghan Lambert told the Wire, "The Core Four has been in talks about rank choice voting since the beginning of last semester. While I personally really love the idea and functionality of ranked-choice voting, it has proven to be very difficult to execute both efficiently and correctly. Alternative options were discussed, however, the administration pushed back against all of these options. So, before bringing the appeal to the Senate, I went back into the archives and saw that the rank choice voting proposal never actually passed!!! So, it should have never been adopted into the SGA bylaws to begin with! That is why it was 'repealed.' I would be happy to see rank choice voting come back in the future, but for this upcoming election we will use majority! But hey, if that's good enough for the United States government, then that should be good enough for Wheaton College SGA!"

SGA is also currently open to questions and comments from the student body about the repeal of ranked-choice voting and has kept open the possibility of returning to the idea in the future. For now though, future SGA elections will function using a plurality "winner takes all" approach. Voting will be straightforward with students selecting their preferred candidate on Engage.

The story of ranked-choice voting's brief foray into the arena of Wheaton College politics is an interesting one without doubt. Most likely it is the result of a simple mistake or misunderstanding, but it is important that it is not taken lightly. SGA has real power to shape the lives of students on campus in ways that many of us do not realize. We should all want the system to work properly should there be something we want it to do for us. The mistake has now been remedied and we can hope that it will encourage a more careful execution of responsibility by Wheaton's student government.

Macdonald Makes History

BY JACKSON WALSH

First year artistic swimmer Olivia Macdonald captured the National Collegiate Championship with her solo routine this past weekend, becoming the first-ever Wheaton Artistic swimmer to do so.

The Toronto native made Wheaton Athletics history with a monumental victory in the solo portion of Artistic swimming nationals. The competition was held at Westside Aquatic Center in Lewisville, Texas. As a team Wheaton placed fifth in the nation, while The University of the Incarnate Word captured the overall team championship.

Macdonald's impressive victory was not a nail-biting one, the rookie won the solo competition by over sixteen points with a score of 209.22. Sixteen points behind Macdonald, capturing second place, was former Olympian Lindi Schroder of Stanford University.

"I think what made this moment so amazing to me was

that not only was I making myself and the team proud, I was making history for Wheaton Athletics," said Macdonald. "Being able to represent a small school like Wheaton on the national stage and make my coach so proud amplified the fact that Wheaton is where I am meant to be."

It was evident Macdonald's win meant a lot to not only herself but to the team and head coach Rebecca Ercoli, who is in her fifteenth season with the program. After the results were announced, a video that was shared many times across Wheaton social platforms shows an emotional Ercoli and Macdonald embracing with the rest of the team poolside.

"The Collegiate Nationals was truly a memorable and incredible experience for us," said Hannah Halberg, a junior captain of the artistic swimming team. "Olivia winning the first-ever solo championship brought the team to tears. It shows that all of our hard work paid off."



Photo courtesy of Wheaton Athletics

Olivia MacDonald gracefully rises up from the water as she performs a solo piece. Her routine earned her first place at the Artistic Swimming National Collegiate Championship.

Macdonald's National Championship win was also the first national title for Wheaton in about a decade. Only a few in the Wheaton Athletics program have been around long enough to see the Lyons succeed so highly on the national stage.

Olivia winning the National Collegiate Championship in the Open Solo for artistic swimming is a tremendous accomplishment," said Alan Wickström, Wheaton College Director of Athletics Communications. "She is the first Lyon to earn an individual

national title since 2014 and, in the process, she defeated a pair of former Olympians... You really can't ask for much better than that. We are very proud of Olivia's accomplishment, which ranks as high as any achievement in the 83-year-old history of the Wheaton Artistic Swimming program."

March 22 is a day that will go down in Wheaton history for both Olivia Macdonald and the Wheaton artistic swim program, the longest-running program in the country beginning in 1941.

Letter from the editor

Dear Readers,

I write to you with an incurable case of classic American Bronchitis, two rounds of prednisone, an antibiotic, and a few nebulizers can't crack this one. I am currently watching President Biden rattle off his State of the Union Address on TV while I cough my guts out on the family couch. He looks strong. Stronger than me. The State of the Union in speech form isn't compulsory for the President, but it feels essential. The U.S Constitution requires that presidents, "shall from time to time give to the Congress information of the state of the union, and recommend to their consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient."

The Constitution does not specify when or how the information should be distributed. The

information does not have to be given in a speech- Thomas Jefferson's first address was distributed as written copies to Congress. So, like the tradition of the State of the Union, I present to you the Second Spring edition of the Wheaton Wire, rain or shine, because it feels essential. My Nyquil is kicking in and between me and Joe, I am becoming the sleepy one.

See you soon,
Madison Morin
Class of 2024
Wheaton Wire Editor In Chief

Have a question, comment, concern, or writing piece for the Editor or Wire staff? Email us at: thewheatonwire@gmail.com.

Unhinged horoscopes

BY RYLEIGH SEUFERT

Aries

(March 20-April 19)

A new era has begun for you.
Happy Aries season!

Taurus

(April 20-May 20)

Be less judgemental.

Gemini

(May 21-June 20)

Sometimes the things that annoy us most in others are the things that we're avoiding in ourselves.

Cancer

(June 21-July 22)

Stop trying to be a people pleaser all the time, you're allowed to say no.

Leo

(July 23-August 22)

You can't just take a nap every time you're sleepy.

Virgo

(August 23-September 22)

Try to be nice.

Libra

(September 23-October 22)

Stay on schedule!

Scorpio

(October 23-November 21)

Lock. In.

Sagittarius

(November 22-December 20)

Having your professor as your lock screen is insane.

Capricorn

(December 21-January 19)

Take your time, don't finish things too early :)

Aquarius

(January 20-February 17)

Keep him blocked.

Pisces

(February 18-March 19)

Spring is for self-care, try to chill out.

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So you like Science Fiction? A couple SciFi stories for your next read

BY LILY MAGUIRE

1. Microcosmic God by Theodore Sturgeon

Sturgeon's Microcosmic God is a short story that follows a scientist named Kidder, and the microscopic beings he has created called the Neoterics. Kidder's island, on which he lives by himself, is inhabited by a higher authority, Conant, as he builds a large power source. Although Kidder is a genius, he fails to see through Conant's plan and thus the story unfolds.

Among its suspense, the story assesses what a god is, and what defines one. In the work, there's a sort of trope of encirclement happening within, meaning that the Neoterics are at the center of a circle, and surrounding them is Kidder who acts as their god. To Kidder though, he is surrounded by a different god: the workers on the island, whom he must obey. The workers look up to their boss, and their boss looks up to another in this food-chain-like stack of gods. It's interesting that despite this "clear" hierarchy, this food chain is actually flipped and the Neoterics are the highest god on the list, with everyone looking up and worshipping them.

In general, all of the characters look up to the person they want to control, just as people on earth today try to control their gods and control what religion looks like. Going off of the idea that the narrator could be a god as well, it's especially interesting that at the end of the story, even they cannot see into the impenetrable shield. This narrator entity might look up to the Neoterics just as much as the other characters in the story because of their curiosity given in the last line of the story (about when the shield does eventually come down): "When I think of that I feel frightened" (112). This short story can be found either in Microcosmic God: Volume II: The Complete Stories of Theodore Sturgeon, or featured in Robert Silverberg's The Science Fiction Hall of Fame: Volume One, 1929-1964.

2. Dark They Were, and Golden Eyed, Ray Bradbury

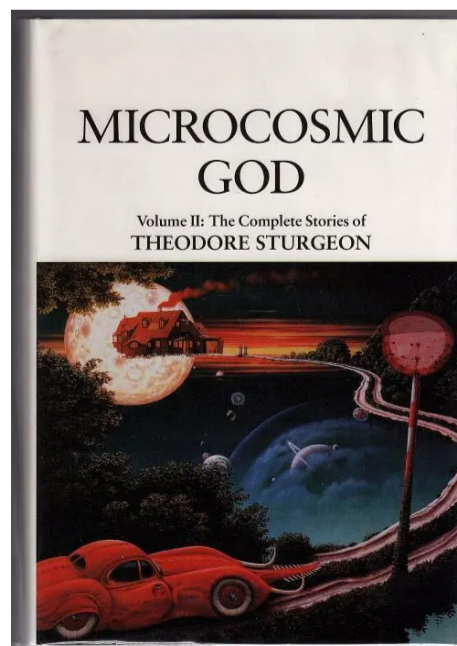


Image courtesy of The Internet Speculative Fiction Database website.

Theodore Sturgeon's Microcosmic God. The book is the second volume of a series of six short stories.

Dark They Were, and Golden Eyed by Ray Bradbury is set up as if the story is a loop. People go to Mars, turn into Martians, and then reject human culture. The next time people go to Mars, then, the cycle will repeat.

Within the story, there's an interesting detail that the new people who travel to Mars believe that the Martians must have either killed the people there already, or they died from a disease. (In a way the people did die from a disease, except they didn't die, they just evolved with the "sickness" that transformed their bodies into those of Martians.)

When the people transform into Martians they don't remember being human at all and don't remember why they liked being human—living in the houses, having their names, etc. It's as if their bodies are rejecting the human form, knowing they have to adapt to this new planet. Humans are made for earth, and it's as if the body knows that, so despite their attempts to make the planet adapt to themselves, they can't help but change instead.

One of my favorite aspects of this story, though, was the writing itself. I really loved the way Bradbury describes fear. "Sweat poured from his face and his hands and his body; he was drenched in the hotness of his fear," and "the fear would not be stopped. It had his throat and heart. It dripped in a wetness of the arm and the temple and the trembling palm" (132, 137). As a writer myself, these sentences itch a sore spot in my brain. They flow so beautifully, and are such great descriptions of an emotion that it makes me angry I hadn't thought of it myself. I think these are great examples of Bradbury's genius, in that he can paint such a vivid picture of the effects the fear has on the man — sweating, shortness of breath, etc. — and acts as if the fear itself is the monster of the story, and is coming after the man. The fear of being changed against one's will is the scariest part of the story for the main character; not changing into the Martian, but being unable to control if he changes or not.

This Bradbury short story can be found online in PDF format, or in Masterpieces: The Best Science Fiction of the Twentieth Century edited by Orson Scott Card.

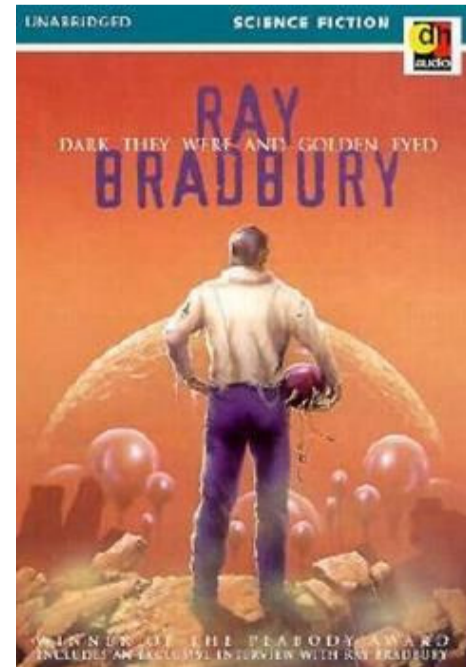


Image courtesy of the goodreads website.

Dark They Were and Golden Eyed by Ray Bradbury.

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From the mat to the boards: Coughlin-Doyle is making her mark on Wheaton's diving program

BY CADEN CHARPENTIER

Fueled by tofu, pineapple, and ice cream, junior Morgen Coughlin-Doyle (Topsham, Maine) has confidently become the standard of the Wheaton Diving program. Just a few years ago, the gymnastics stand-out from northern New England decided to trade the mat for the pool. Flash forward to now. After a stellar third campaign, Coughlin-Doyle is blazing a new trail of excellence on the diving board in Eastern Massachusetts. To say she has come a long way is frankly an understatement.

"I think I just kind of chose to do it myself," the Mt. Ararat High School graduate said, explaining how she opted to compete in diving collegiately. "I did gymnastics throughout middle and high school, and I still wanted to do a sport, but not gymnastics. A lot of gymnasts transfer to diving pretty easily, so then I just emailed diving coaches for college. I thought it would be fun to try it out, and then it worked out."

The Mainer described what has kept her going in the sport since freshman year. "It's just a lot of fun to flip and twist in the air," she stated. "Also the feeling of accomplishment when I do a good dive—it's really rewarding especially if I smack on a dive or I'm scared and I do it better."

Don't let the quiet demeanor fool you. The junior diver

is a force to be reckoned with in the New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference (NEWMAC). Topsham's own went into the final conference meet this year having finished first in four out of the five meets prior on both boards. In the conference championships in Cambridge, Massachusetts on the weekend of Feb. 22, Coughlin-Doyle was one of just four non-seniors to accumulate over 480 points in the three-meter diving finals.

Her score of 480.85 points shattered the previous school record set by 2020 graduate Maddy Morrison by almost 10 points. Within a year, the Maine native improved her score in the three-meter NEWMAC finals by an astounding 83.1 points. It was a larger improvement over the last year than the two divers that finished in third and fourth combined.

Coughlin-Doyle spoke on what usually goes through her head when all eyes are on her, the board, and the pool, stating, "I tell myself that I have maybe 3-5 things to focus on for each dive. Each dive, I focus on something different. If it's a forward dive where I walk down the board, I count to three, and then I start walking, making sure I keep my head up and throw hard."

The junior diver also set a new school high mark for the one meter, finishing in seventh place in the conference. Her point total of 436.60 in the one-meter finals was nearly 100



Image Courtesy of Wheaton Athletics

Wheaton College junior Morgen Coughlin-Doyle gracefully flying through the air mid-dive.

points more than she was able to compile in her first season as a Lyon. Her improvement since day one of picking up the sport is a testament to her drive to push the limits.

There's a new benchmark future Lyons have to meet. For Coughlin-Doyle herself, the reality that she is that standard is still something she is still digesting.

"It's really weird because I literally didn't know how to dive two years ago. I'm super proud of myself for how far I've gotten, and it's kind of motivating me to keep going," she said.

Coughlin-Doyle's excellence on the boards at NEWMACs punched her a ticket to the 2024 NCAA Division III Region 3 Diving Championships at Colby College up in her home state of Maine. The Environmental Science major was one of 50 divers, male or female, to have secured the right to compete on March 1-2. She didn't just participate—she balled out. Coughlin-Doyle was one of just six divers in that

competition from the NEWMAC to score at least 401 points in the three-meter championship. Her 16th-place finish at regionals was tied for the highest by a Lyon since Morrison, who did it back in 2019.

Her teammate, Isabella Barrett (Wakefield, Mass) explained what she has seen since the first day Coughlin-Doyle made the move to the pool.

"She's definitely very brave, and very strong," Barrett said. "I am very impressed with how she has picked things up so easily."

If you haven't made it over to see a swim and dive meet at Balfour Natatorium before, you're sorely missing out. There are some really talented Lyons who call the pool their second home. One of them is usually flying from above (without a cape) instead of gliding through the water. Coughlin-Doyle's growth is quite remarkable. Her journey in Norton isn't over just yet, though. One more year of flips, twists, and tucks.

The story of the American Woodcock that captured Wheaton's heart (or maybe just mine)

BY FINN TOWLE

If you have ever been out at night walking by parking lot 4 or if you are living, or trying to sleep, in Meadows, you have probably heard a strange noise. This noise comes from the American Woodcock who lives near the basketball courts. He has probably gotten your attention by his mating call, known as peenting. Although some might find his peenting annoying, I was entranced by it—so much so that I made it my mission to find the little fucker.

After watching many Instagram reels and YouTube shorts, I felt like I had the necessary research to find him. I set out before nightfall so I could try and get comfortable before the long wait to hear that wonderful peenting. I walked over to where I thought I heard the calls the nights before (the outdoor basketball courts), and I patiently waited to hear that sweet, sweet sound. I found myself laying on the ground belly down, butt up, looking into the deep thick-

et where the Woodcock takes a dirty, wet, and sticky territory and makes it a home. Eventually, I heard the peent and realized "this is the best night of my life." He wasn't too hard to find with his loud ass noise, and once I found him I couldn't stop watching him.

The Woodcock is about the size of a Mr. Potato Head, with a beak as long and the shape of a 2-week-old number 2 Ticonderoga pencil. It also has twig-like legs. Although I did not see those little twigs get to work, the Woodcock is known to have great dance moves that it uses to hunt earthworms. This bird proves it's not the size of the bird that matters but the motion that does. If I were a female Woodcock his peent would have me in a frenzy—his mating call takes so much force to make that he almost falls over just to make it. Although his peent is enough to impress just about anyone, he's got a lot more in his bag. I was lucky enough to see him do a display flight, where the Woodcock flies and makes a



Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Audubon.

A photo of an American Woodcock.

musical twittering with some sort of liquid it produces and its wings.

Although these mating calls have me flocking over and mesmerized by his noise, I think I am the only one he is attracting, as I have yet to see a female Woodcock lured by his peenting or footwork.

This is why I felt compelled to write this to give Wheaton campus notice and try to help him out. He is lonely and looking for love, he probably thinks that every Woodcock hates him and wants him to die alone. Of course, I don't know his background and he might be a jerk,

but from what I have seen up close he seems like a chill guy. So, the next time when you hear his peenting maybe don't think "omg that dumbass bird is so annoying" or "that bird is always talking at night, he needs to shut up." Maybe think "omg Pepper (that's what I named him) is shooting his shot and trying to find love" or "that tiny Woodcock is trying his hardest not to be lonely, maybe he will find his soulmate tonight." In conclusion, don't be mad at this little bird instead, go watch him from a safe distance to not stress him out and hope he finds love soon. I sure hope he does.

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Wheaton's new machines wash away laundry problems

BY ELSIE CARSON-HOLT

When Emmett Anderson '24 walked downstairs into the basement of his residential hall after spring break, his jaw dropped. He had spent the weeks before toiling with the laundry machines: a faulty washer meant that his clothes had been locked in the machine, soaking wet, for several hours. But no more — there, in the old ones' place, was a shiny new washer and dryer.

Anderson described the ordeal to The Wheaton Wire.

"The last time I used the old washing machines, I put my load of laundry in the dryer and let it go. When I went to get the laundry, it said one minute remaining and it just kept saying that for a really long time," Anderson shared. "When I went

to get my laundry, the door was locked. So I unplugged the machine and pried open the door, my clothes, of course, were soaking wet."

Anderson said that when he tried to wash them again, the same thing happened, but it took fifteen minutes longer to get the door open. This time, he looked to the laundry machine manufacturer for help.

"I called the [laundry machine] company and was like 'please fix this, please fix this, please, please fix this. My clothes are locked in the machine.'" They were unresponsive.

Anderson was eventually able to get the machine door to open by plugging and unplugging the laundry machines. Still, he was put off doing laundry while at school.

Over spring break, Residential Life Services replaced all the washers and dryers on campus with the exception of 1 Howard Street and The Guest House, so students will not have to deal with what Anderson dealt with.

Tim Jordan, head of Residential Life, said in an email to The Wire that "laundry equipment is replaced each time we renew our agreement with our laundry vendor in an effort to have the most efficient and effective equipment for students. The typical life of the contract and the equipment is eight years old."

The last time laundry machines were replaced was in 2015, except for Pine Hall which had new equipment as it opened in 2019.

Anderson is happy about the

laundry machine replacements but was surprised by their appearance.

"I was shocked they looked exactly the same," said Anderson. "But I was really happy and pleasantly surprised they decided to replace them."

Macey Poitras-Cote '25 feels the same way. She is the co-president of Outdoors House and is glad that theme houses were included in the laundry house replacement.

"I'm happy that we have them. It's nice to get recognition as theme houses, we've got a lot of new things this year, which has been great," Poitras-Cote said. "I do wish they came a little bit sooner, because last year we had a lot of plumbing issues. I am really happy they're here now, though."

All Too Familiar Actors

BY KATIE HODES

When was the last time you watched a movie and said "Oh god, this guy again? Is there anything he isn't in?" It feels like that happens to me more and more these days. I am constantly thinking about why certain actors are reused again and again and some are fantastic in one film and then never seen again.

After some research, I discovered that the practice of using the same actor or company of actors is not new. Before there was film and TV, most actors were part of a theatre company/troupe and would play a different role for every new show brought in, a practice that can be traced back to Shakespeare's original plays! Today this is referred to as a repertory company. In the NPR podcast Why filmmakers like Wes Anderson like to cast the same actors in their films, theatre critic Robert Brustein described repertory companies as "A company, a group of actors that work together like a ball team works together knows each other's plays and, therefore, can feed each other in a way that strange pick-up companies can't." The use of a repertory company still occurs today, although maybe not as often.

The most famous use of a repertory company in modern media is in director Wes Anderson's films, the subject of the aforementioned NPR podcast. If you have seen Anderson's film you've noticed the use of the same actors. Like many directors, Anderson likes to cast the same actors because he already knows what they are capable of and has an established working relationship. Directors who reuse actors like Wes Anderson, Orson Wells, Adam Sandler, James Gunn, etc, will often write their scripts with specific actors in mind, and often ones they have worked with before.

While this is not always the case, it does help to explain why

actors like Chris Pratt seem to be popping up in every major franchise nowadays. In a response to a tweet regarding this very topic James Gunn replied: "We know how they work, how they tick, we develop a shorthand. We know they're reliable, good people."

One of the most popular users of this "recycle cast" method is American writer and director Ryan Murphy. Murphy, known for shows like Glee, American Horror Story, Pose, and many MANY more, has such a habit of reusing the same actors that he has created what some call the Murphyverse.

As David Cornswet put it when talking about his anticipation of getting his role in Murphy's Hollywood, "Ryan Murphy makes a lot of television and he has an excellent reputation for keeping people in the family, so that's always the hope" And Ryan Murphy's "family" just keeps growing. A huge selling point of his show American Horror Story, is its anthology format, where the same actors take on different roles each season in a refreshed story. This practice may soon become apparent in all of his work with AT LEAST one familiar face popping up in each of his shows.

"...Murphy is also known for recycling his actors, both within his shows and between them. Sarah Paulson, Darren Criss, Evan Peters, and tons of other names have popped up in several of Murphy's work..." (Welcome to the Ryan Murphy Cinematic Universe)

One of my favorite games is to come up with 3 or 4 actors and try to connect them all through their work. Thanks to Ryan Murphy's work, this game just keeps getting easier! However, there is a new "cinematic universe" on the block, one that I am personally very excited about and that is the Rachel Sennott, Molly Gordon, and Ayo Edebiri cinematic universe!

"Rachel Sennott, Molly Gordon, and Ayo Edebiri have

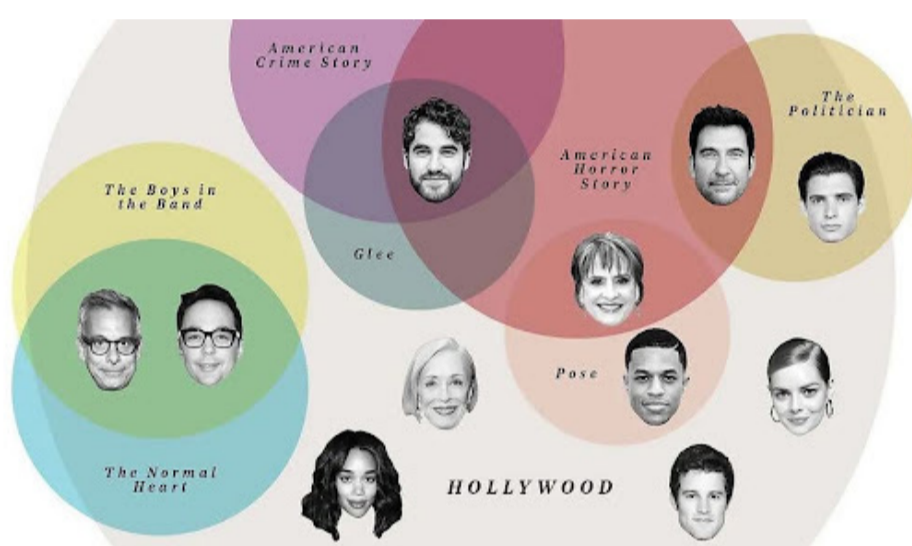


Image courtesy of The Hollywood Reporter.

A diagram of actor crossovers from Ryan Murphy's 'Hollywood': Meet the (Familiar) Cast of Netflix's Drama.

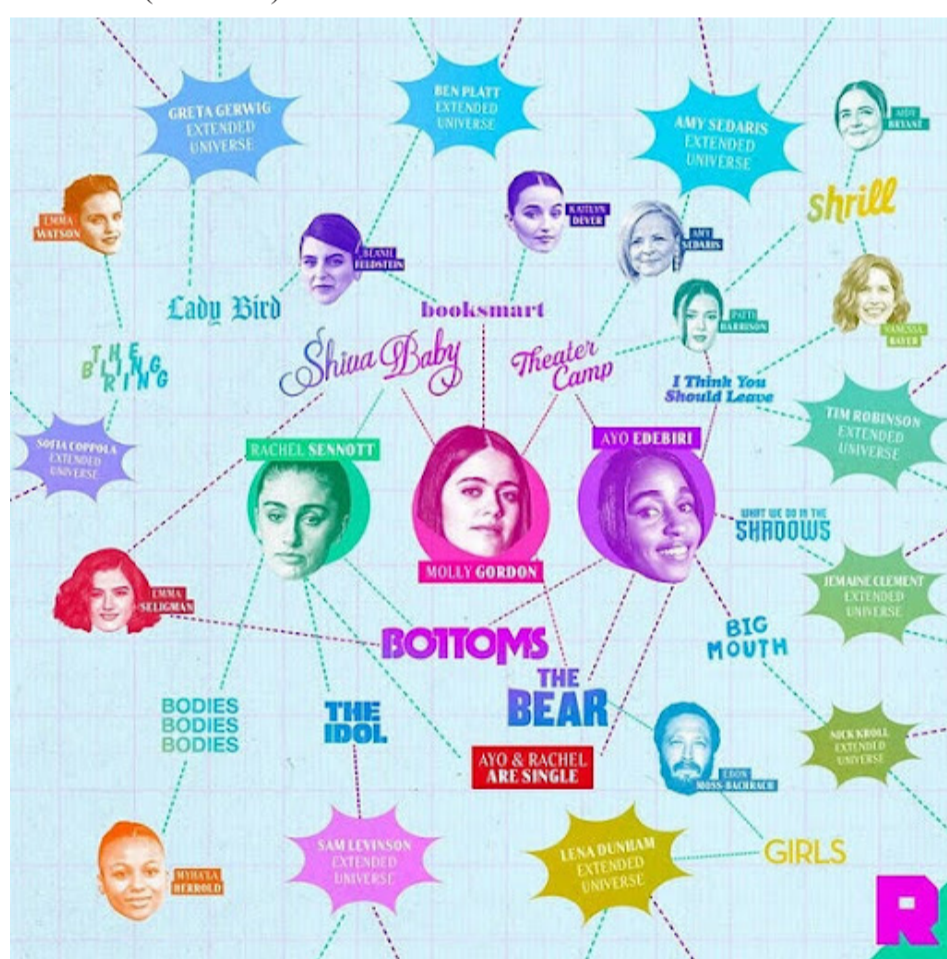


Image courtesy of The Ringer.

A diagram of the "Zillennial Cult Comedy Cinematic Universe."

crafted a comedic styling all their own, and over the past several years, they've started frequently overlapping to form a sort of Zillennial Cult Comedy Cinematic Universe."

While my support for this new group of actors may seem hypocritical, what is unique about these women is their freshness, not only on the Hollywood scene but in the work they are putting out. Where the recycling of Murphy's actors can feel elitist (despite their incredible performances), this new group of actors is still somewhat new to the scene and working together not only because the audience seems to enjoy it, but because their collaboration is

creating a new era of media. While it still bothers me when Timothee Chalamet pops up on my screen every five minutes, I will say that most of these "reused" actors are cast again and again because of their undeniable talent. While I could go on and on about how there are so many actors out there who deserve a chance, (that post is coming your way so don't you worry) there is a small part of me that likes to imagine first table reads feeling like big family reunions. And let's face it, watching Adam Sandler play around with his friends every year for an hour and a half is pretty fun.

The crisis of meaning: Singleness is not ‘empowering’

BY EMMA KIERNAN

This article is part of a column that addresses Generation Z’s mental health crisis by calling attention to societal attitudes that may cause us to lose sight of meaning.

Gen Z is very, very, single. 41% of younger Americans are not in a relationship, and compared to previous generations, people our age simply don’t date. Despite beliefs that loneliness increases with old age, it is the younger generations who are also increasingly lonely, with Gen Z leading the pack. A 2023 Cigna study found that 73% of Gen Z feel alone “sometimes” or “always,” the highest percentage of any age group. Committed romantic relationships can be a key factor in psychological well-being. Yet the beautiful, intimate connections that romantic relationships can bring into our lives are missing for so many young people—what was once a source of meaning is becoming increasingly rare.

Given the modern feminist understanding that women have been historically oppressed through the institution of marriage, a cultural narrative has developed regarding romantic relationships: singleness is empowering, particularly for heterosexual women. Singleness allows women to be sexually liberated and fully embrace their individuality.

But it’s a mistake to look at relationships, or singleness, through the lens of power dynamics. People who see relationships as power struggles are the ones who make a relationship toxic. Every gift is an attempt to manipulate and gain control, every argument is about winning. If you are doing that, or are constantly suspicious of it being done to you, you can ruin the potential of a healthy

relationship. You lose the common goal of building a loving relationship that works for both of you. The question becomes “What am I getting out of this?” or “How can I win?” instead of “Is what we are building together worthwhile?”

Relationships do require sacrifice and compromise, but these are voluntary acts of love, not a loss of power. You might go skiing with your partner even though you hate it, because you know they love it. You might take a lower-paying job because you and your partner want to spend more time together. A healthy relationship is a choice to put aside some aspects of your life for the sake of another person, to build something more meaningful through two lives lived together.

Compare this to the idea that it is ‘empowering’ to be single. It inherently suggests that you gain personal power by being single and lose it by committing to a relationship. This mischaracterization of romantic attachments (or lack thereof) as power struggles may cause young women to dismiss relationships as a source of meaning.

Some responding cultural messages regarding relationships have emerged and grown in concerning ways. Online movements like Men Go Their Own Way (MGTOW) encourage men to work on bettering themselves rather than seek relationships because women are now seeking singleness and sexual freedom. There’s nothing wrong with working on yourself while you’re single, but the idea that men should “go their own way” to do so is misleading and perhaps damaging.

For one, it seems unhealthy to say that men and women have such different interests that they should stop trying to date. It increases general animosity,

distrust, and unwillingness to understand one another. This lack of understanding can only worsen the growth of online communities of what many call male ‘incels’, or involuntary celibates. These men promote misogynistic messages, demonizing women as wicked seductresses or sluts. MGTOW might seem like a simple movement for men to improve themselves, but incel communities are also “men going their own way.”

Additionally, “I’m working on myself” quickly becomes an excuse to avoid relationships. We will all be “working on ourselves” for the rest of our lives; we can’t cut people off until we deem ourselves good enough because it’s an endless process. The prerequisite for any loving relationship, romantic or otherwise, is to be vulnerable enough to accept we cannot love someone else perfectly. All we can do is try to love others a little better each day.

But it seems people often don’t believe they are “good enough” to be in relationships. Videos of happy couples on TikTok have comments like “just bringing my toaster to my bath” and “let me jump in front of a truck real quick.” These comments are not too serious, but the despairing sentiment still indicates insecurities and low self-esteem. If people were confident that they could date successfully, the comments would likely be filled with compliments for the beautiful couple. Instead, people project their insecurity and loneliness through a joke. In an age where dating apps and online communication make it easier than ever to meet people, many feel that relationships are unattainable for them.

Perhaps it’s worth questioning the glorification of singleness on social media and being more aware of how you react

to seeing other happy couples. Bitterness or sadness might suggest that it’s time to consider whether you can commit to caring for someone else a little better each day. If not, how can you become a person who could? It usually means cultivating generosity, discipline, and fulfilling hobbies you can do on your own. It means not seeking a relationship from a place of dependency. Changing yourself to date isn’t about taking away your power or individuality. Rather, it’s about developing good character so that you can bring your authentic self to a relationship; and learning how to make sacrifices to share the gift of love with someone else.

A romantic relationship is forming a commitment based on the belief it will be more meaningful to be with one another. Actively caring for someone else, and being cared for, helps people grow as individuals, together. It’s not all butterflies and romantic feelings, but a relationship built on shared values and a few shared interests, mutual attraction, and genuine enjoyment of each other’s company, is worth fighting for. Both people must sacrifice temporary feelings to build a loving relationship. Both are made more beautiful by giving and receiving. It’s the joy of giving someone a meaningful gift and receiving one in return every day over and over for however long you date; maybe even a lifetime.

Not everyone wants a relationship. Some may want them during different stages of life and not in others. Regardless, it’s worth noting that societal narratives that diminish the value of romantic relationships or seek to divide men and women could be leading us away from potentially meaningful connections.

Brief thoughts on the 2024 election

BY JOHN MORRIS

I was asked to write something about Super Tuesday and the current Presidential race, and I’m afraid I don’t exactly have anything helpful to say. I was asked to write something because I served as the official Norton vote reporter for Edison Research on Tuesday. They gave me pizza, I wrote down some numbers, and I went home. Aside from a small mistake with displaying the vote counts that seemingly only I noticed (You’re welcome, Democracy), everything went smoothly.

The results of Super Tuesday were not at all surprising, to say the least. It’s clear that voters will once again have to choose between Trump, who is currently facing 91 felony counts across two states and federal

districts, and Biden, an “elderly man with a poor memory” (as per special counsel Robert Hur), who is seemingly more interested in sending arms to Israel than he is with fulfilling campaign promises.

There was no world where this wasn’t going to happen. The Republican Party obviously doesn’t care about having a twice-impeached, currently-on-trial charlatan as their representative, and the Democratic Party seems convinced that Biden’s “At Least I’m Not Trump” routine will be enough to carry him to the finish line.

Spoiler alert: it won’t.

Maybe I’m being pessimistic, but Biden is doing little to mobilize or even interest young-



Courtesy of Bethlem Museum of the Mind.

Indecision by Bryan Charnley

er voters, who are increasingly becoming disillusioned with the current political system. If Biden wins, he will be 85 by the end of his term, compared to Trump, who will be 81. Many voters, particularly from younger generations, feel as though their voices and best interests aren’t being heard or represented by the current crop of politicians. The Democratic Party is aware of this, and instead of finding a candidate with the power to mobilize this large, powerful base,

they have chosen to once again offer Biden, the ultimate “take it or leave it” candidate.

Who knows what will happen come November. Maybe Trump will succumb to the “fire and fury” of the American judicial system. Maybe Biden will summon the charisma of a young Jack Kennedy and idealistic Americans will swarm the voting centers like ants to honey. Maybe Trump will claim victory no matter what, and we’ll see what an actual insurrection looks like when it’s called for by a man with nothing left to lose. Maybe it’ll be a nice, normal election, or maybe it won’t. At least if there’s an insurrection we’ll get a half day out of it or something. It’s the little things that count.

So, this November, be sure to rock the vote and choose the lesser of two evils. At the end of the day, Biden isn’t Trump, but what does it say about the Democratic Party if that’s the best thing he has going for him?

Dune Part Two: A generational tour de force

BY CASEY DRURY

Letterboxd: CaseyDrury04

I have always had an utmost appreciation for films that facilitate meaningful conversations after viewing. Nearly all of my favorite films hold this trait. I love showing someone a film that I feel strongly about and afterward having that “what did YOU think” conversation. From what I’ve heard, Frank Herbert’s *Dune* is one of those kinds of books. For generations after its initial publication in 1965, it has been held to an extremely high standard in the science fiction genre for its dense subtext and colossal world-building. Despite David Lynch being my personal favorite director, I’ll be the first to admit along with other critics that his 1984 adaptation of *Dune* was not the adaptation the novel deserved (and as far as I know, Lynch would admit that too). However, from the very first sequence of *Dune: Part 2*, it became very clear to me that Director Denis Villeneuve not only understood the story of *Dune* but also understood what makes the sci-fi genre so engaging. Through a narrative tightly woven with politics, moral ambiguity, and visuals that fully deliver an experience that feels otherworldly, *Dune Part Two* succeeds in nearly every way.

Dune Part Two picks up immediately where the first film left off: Paul Atreides and his mother have been adopted by the Fremen, a religious culture of people who live on the desert planet of Arakkis after the Atreides dynasty was brutally overthrown by a rival

faction. In the last film we learned that Paul’s mother is part of a mysterious group of women called the Bene Gesserit who seek to take political control over the universe by controlling men. One way they’d done this was by fabricating a prophecy to the religious Fremen that a messiah will one day come to their tribe and save them from the harsh conditions of Arakkis and lead them to “paradise”. The messiah prophecy had been specifically made by the Bene Gesserit to be taken advantage of by Paul and his mother if ever needed. While Paul’s mother sees no problem with taking advantage of the Fremen to avenge their family, Paul is hesitant as he gets closer to a woman within the Fremen Tribe named Chani. From there, Paul and his mother adapt to the Fremen ways as Paul decides whether or not he should assume his contrived role.

If the above paragraph is a lot to understand, you’re not alone. *Dune* is very, very complicated. There are space witches, spice that turns your eyes blue, dreams about the future, massive sandworms that can swallow entire spaceships whole, and evil bald people. It is so hard to visually adapt a world so different from our own on film. Yet, this film achieves it magnificently with a budget lower than some Marvel movies. Nearly every shot feels ripped straight off of an ‘80s dark fantasy paperback cover, with entire planets, societies, and cultures that feel real. One scene in particular takes place on a planet that has a white sun, so every scene that takes

place indoors and away from sunlight is in full color, yet every scene outdoors is in black and white. Small details like this bring the film to such a grander scale of polish; I can only imagine this is what audiences felt like when they watched *A New Hope* for the first time in 1977.

So many of the actors in this film knew exactly what performance to bring to a point that I was honestly shocked. Timotée Chalamet, for example, has never particularly impressed me in a role. In *Dune Part Two* however, he brings what is without a doubt his most powerful performance; we see Paul rise from a young kid in a new environment who wants nothing more than to rightfully retake his prior position of power in the Atriedies dynasty to a fascist who uses religious syncretism to wage a holy war in his name. Paul is an intriguingly deep character because he is almost the reflection of heroes we know well like Luke Skywalker. We know of the hero’s journey at this point as moviegoers and we know the steps a typical good guy protagonist takes to “save the day.” Yet in *Dune* we see a different kind of protagonist, one who is forced to a crossroads: either avenge his family by manipulating the Fremen into believing he’s their savior, or live in the deserts of Arakkis forever. Paul makes his decision, and Chalamet perfectly portrays the loss of innocence that follows.

Another stand-out performance is Zendaya’s role as Chani. Chani has been a part of the Fremen all of her life and is skeptical of Paul and

the power he holds over her people. While loving Paul, she slowly detaches from Paul as she sees the evil things he will do to secure power. Chani is a very difficult character to adapt because, in the original novel, she doesn’t really question Paul’s morals at all. She even buys into the Messiah myth with the rest of her people. This unique take on the character from the movie not only gives her more depth and allows the audience to see firsthand just how devastating a parasitic invasion/manipulation of one’s religion and culture can be.

The last performance I’d like to discuss is that of Austin Butler’s as Feyd-Rautha, a violent and monstrous man who is sent to Arakkis to eliminate Paul and his religious crusade. Butler’s performance shines as he takes the reins of a much more palpable evil than Paul. While Paul pretends to be doing good, and even tells himself that he is to keep himself going, Feyd is disgusting, moralless, and brutal in his methods, delivering a haunting interpretation of the character.

Dune Part Two ends on a haunting note. Just before the credits roll, Paul attempts his final stand to avenge his family, and both times I’ve seen the film the audience has been at the edge of their seats. You’re left with a lot to chew on in terms of morality and positions of power. How far are people willing to go to become history? The film expertly portrays how dangerous charismatic leaders can be, as we’re briefly shown at the end of the film that Paul’s actions have serious consequences on the rest of the universe. Science fiction has always been fantastic at representing controversial themes in a low-brow way to urge its viewers to question their own world as they do a fictional one. After all, George Lucas confirmed that the rebels in *Star Wars* are to represent that of Vietnamese Rebels fighting a totalitarian Empire in the American-Vietnam war. *Dune* is a cautionary tale that warns its viewers about religious leaders and the power they hold on vulnerable people. It aims to show just how dangerous a person like Paul Atreides is in any universe. Walking away from the cinema, I knew that I had witnessed what is likely film history, and I urge any Wheaton student to catch *Dune Part Two* before it leaves theaters.



Photo courtesy of IMDB.

Paul and Chani embrace in the harsh deserts of Arakkis

SCORE: 5/5

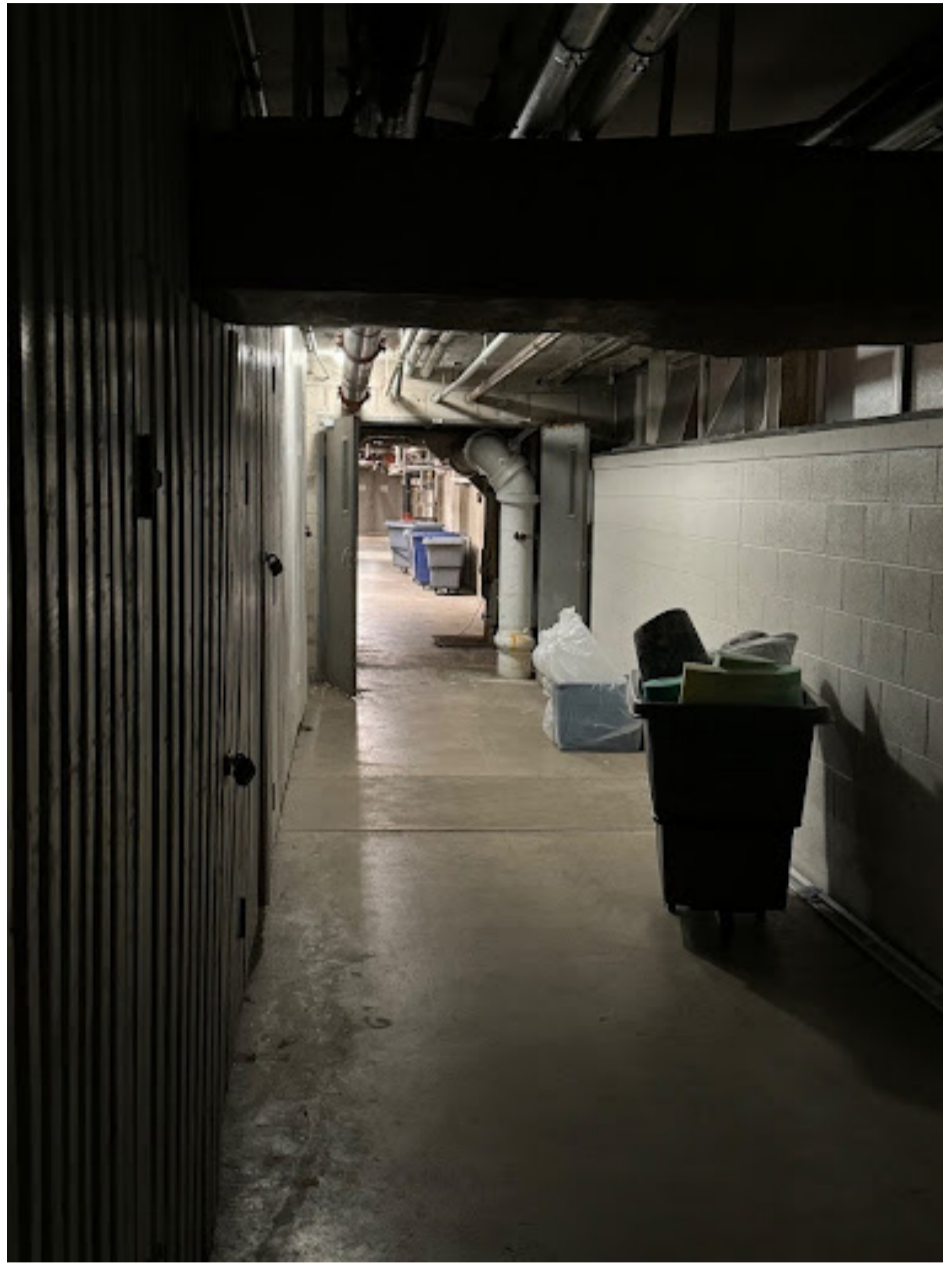
Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Wheaton's Secret Doors and Hidden Passageways

BY CASEY DRURY

As a first-year at Wheaton, I'm not nearly as familiar with this campus as I would like to be yet. Even in the second half of this spring semester, I'll find a beautiful walkway, a plaque I haven't read, or a quiet study spot that immediately has me kicking myself and questioning "Why didn't I find this sooner?" On a random Sunday night, the unexpected discovery took the form of a mysterious door on the first floor of Clark Hall. A sophomore friend of mine had challenged me to go through it, claiming that behind it was something I wouldn't expect. I'm usually not one to turn down a challenge, so I went beyond the door, and I did find something remarkable.

A dark and quiet tunnel is the first sight that greets anyone who opens the mysterious Clark door. Flipping a light switch will show that the other end of the tunnel connects to a door that has "Young" written on it. The corridor branches to a third hallway, a door that says "McIntire." Throughout the tunnels are unused bed frames and chairs, presumably from rooms that no longer need them, and rolling trash cans likely used by janitorial staff. I was so intrigued by the fact that YMC



was connected underground. All this time I had walked between the three dorms, while there were janitors below me?

I brought my findings to The Wheaton Wire during a meeting, describing dorms that connect to tunnels, but much of the veteran Wire staff laughed and simply said "Ev-

eryone's been in the tunnels at Wheaton." However, as I explained further their intrigue was piqued, as they had talked about how the YMC tunnels in particular have rarely been seen by students. I returned another night and took photos, exploring each corridor until I was met with a dead end or

locked door.

Wheaton College opened in 1834 as a female seminary. One hundred ninety years later and it seems its mystique may never wear away. My absolute favorite thing about going to such a historic school is learning about the generations of students before us. I'll sit at the desks at the very back of the stacks and see writings on the wall from bored students in the past. Their messages remain, and often their past disinterest steals me away from my own classwork.

We live on such a unique campus and have so much history to explore, which probably isn't used as a selling point by Wheaton College Admissions. Those groups of high schoolers on campus tours passing by when we're headed to class most certainly don't stop at the tunnels below YMC. Yet here we are as Wheaton students, with our intriguing campus stories, able to explore Wheaton's roots and even go through doors we shouldn't.

Any time you ever hear someone say "There's nothing to do in Norton," before you tell them they're correct I implore you to invite them to explore. There's a shocking amount to see below the surface.

Photograph of...

BY MARLEY REEDU



Photo created by Rebecca Norris Webb.

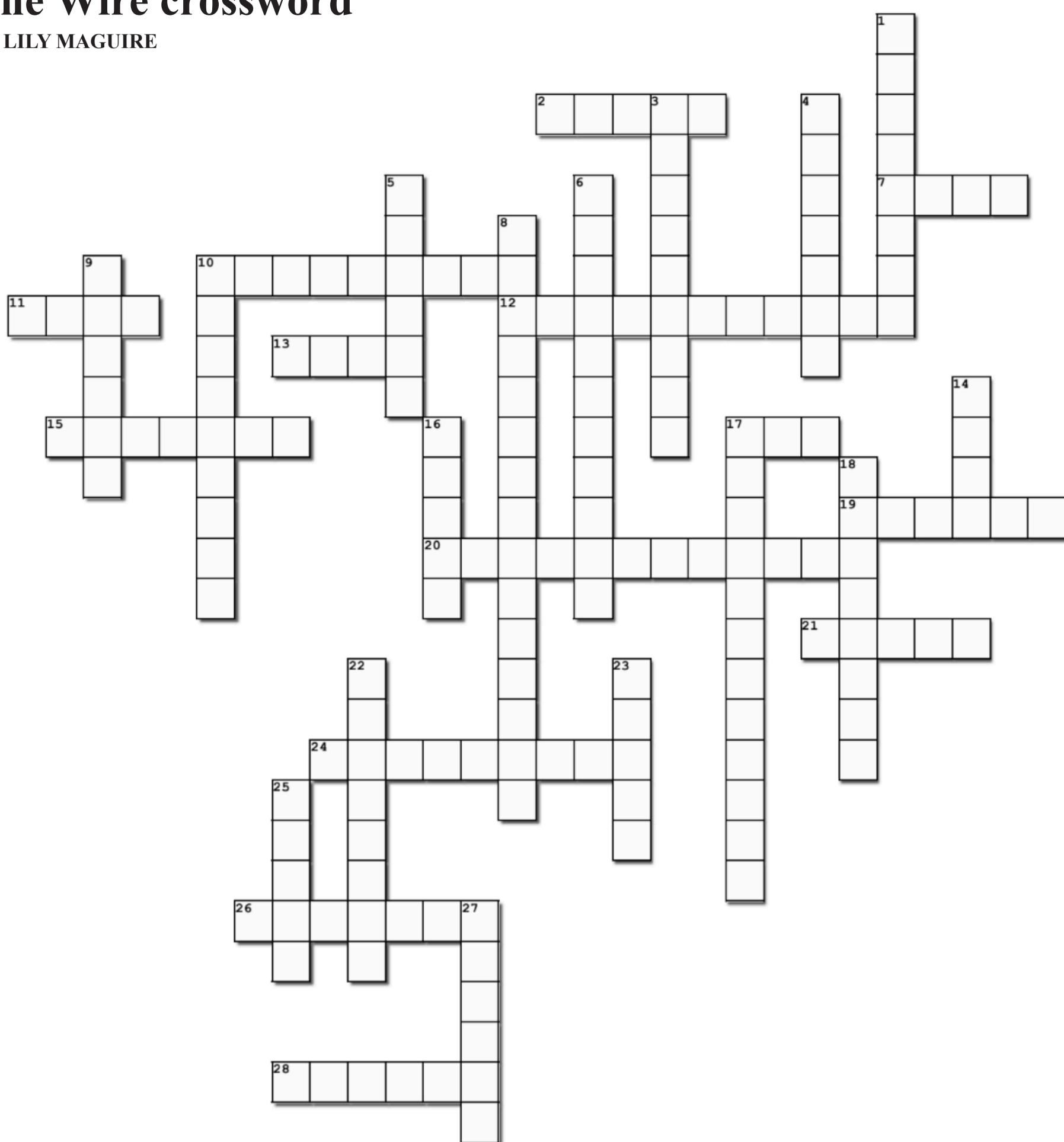
The photograph that served as inspiration for Marley Reedu's poem, *Photograph of...*

Human eyes/Caged despair and ticket stubs/
Many things can be wrong and more all at once/
Something was made to hang/Between two windows/
To gather dust/And be the object of the
piece of writing that isn't much anyway/Many
things can be human/Reflected by a wall of
glass/An animal became human/A girl became
a caged animal/Both are lonelier than ever/The
little girl has brown hair/And a face that is not
hers/Depends on the angle/Or if the stairs have
been swept/Will it rain today?/Will you cover
your face?/Depends on the camera lens/Her
day-time ritual/No sudden movements/No broken
dishes/Windows of themselves/Existing for
greed/As uniform as vertical glass/What a trick
of the light/A bleak commentary/Winters are
so depressing here/With no jacket no money no
name for yourself/Save this framed illusion/Two
things at once/An animal so human/A person
so lonely/Two people but only if you see it that
way/Crowded in empty delight/Tastes processed/
Dirty like the bottom of the cage with poor lighting/
Just enough to see/Enough for depression
to set in/Seep through stealthy behind the glass
wall/Rotten fruit at the bottom of the cage/Grime
everywhere it shouldn't be/Should be green/
Sprouting fruit on its own/Terrible things killed
both people in that photo/If not today then soon/
If not them then me.

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

The Wire crossword

BY LILY MAGUIRE



Across:

2. In like a lion, out like a lamb
7. The only appearance of the Devil on Easter is in this yummy snack
10. Birds need homes too. Advocate for the birds. Build for them.
11. The sky cries for warmth
12. Do you trust your friends not to prank you?
13. Tell Ben Franklin the weather's perfect for his activity
15. The tiny frogs call us at nighttime and it's joyful
17. Some thick, dirty water
19. Somehow these guys make it in every season, but they belong in Spring
20. The 4/20 Outdoors Haus Event of the Year
21. A springtime baby bird staple
24. The birds are back
26. March can get pretty crazy sometimes
28. This Wheaton spot is always popping in the springtime

Down:

1. The semester's half-way point
3. Get yourself some Wonka _____
4. Does anyone know if there's gold at the end?
5. Find four-leaves and you'll be lucky!
6. St. Patrick is looking very small... and green...?
8. Wheaton's best boat race
9. The Puzzle Master but Plural
10. The prettiest bug of the season
14. Would you still love me if I looked like this?
16. Rey in Disney's Star Wars franchise actress
17. Don't forget your Mama on this day
18. Eggs are hiding. They're in the brush. They're everywhere. Watch your back.
22. Crocheting's cousin
23. Peter Rabbit never stood a chance against this Easter legend
25. The semester's half-time
27. Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood's favorite kind of wine

Crossword answers from previous issue

Across:

1. Do you hate Mondays? Love Lasagna? → Garfield
3. Darn you meddling kids → Scooby Doo
5. I live alone in a cave. Don't bother me. I like it. → Batman
7. Young boy's best friend is a 28-year old dog I guess → Adventure Time
9. BoJack isn't a Ponyboy → Horseman
11. My grandpa's a mad scientist! → Rick and Morty
13. A lovely yellow family → Simpsons
15. Calvin's BFF → Hobbes
17. Bro's the biggest Menace → Dennis
19. Clear skin's enemy → Zits
21. The newspaper's favorite Viking → Hagar
23. It's not the close side → Far Side
25. Mother Goose sets him straight → Grimm
27. Eat your spinach, you! → Popeye
29. Lives in a clubhouse, plays all day → Mickey Mouse

Down:

2. Clifford's not the only big dog → Marmaduke
4. He's young, but a newspaper classic → Big Nate
6. Bunch a' witches aren't they? → Broom-Hilda
8. Jon Hamm's the new detective in town → Grimsburg
10. 1994's hit cartoon → Gargoyles
12. Fulu's biggest show → Futurama
14. Just a normal show really → Regular Show
16. One day he'll catch that Road Runner. Maybe not today or tomorrow, but one day. → Wiley
18. The mouse is really just playing hard to get if you think about it → Tom and Jerry
20. Pablo, Tyrone, Uniqua, Tasha and Austin → Backyardigans
22. Who lives in a pineapple under the sea? → SpongeBob
24. Angsty superheroes take on friendship → Teen Titans
26. What's in the pic-a-nic basket? → Yogi Bear
28. Big man wants little blue people → Smurfs
30. Larry and Bob are my homeboys for real → Veggie Tales