# OPINION

STAFF COLUMNIST

**SULLIVAN HO**

## What Yale tours get right

This past week, I went on a second tour of Yale.

I had forgotten a lot since my first tour, which was now over two years ago. I suppose that's why I decided to re-tour Yale in the first place. To try and remember what it was like to look in from the outside.

My tour group consisted mostly of parent-child pairs. After asking around, I learned nearly everyone was from the Northeast. I didn't ask where the kids went to school, but judging from parents' fashion choices — sunglasses, cardigans — I don't think it is unreasonable to assume prep schools were overrepresented. There was at least one extremely ambitious middle schooler in attendance.

Tours start at the Mead Visitor Center, which is located — if you, like me, didn't know — directly across from the New Haven Green. This makes the tour's goal of shielding visitors from the real New Haven difficult, but not impossible. After the first stop, where the tour guide acknowledges that Yale does in fact exist in some sort of city which contains apizza and assuredly many other interesting things to do, visitors never have to think about the outside world again. I suppose this, at least, is accurate to the true Yale experience.

Actually, much of the tour was accurate. The columnist in me wanted more salesmanship, a bit more obvious hypocrisy, something I could really twist into some grand statement on the way Yale appears versus the way it really is. The rest of our stops instead delivered a lot of correct, if not especially narrativizing, information on credit requirements, student-faculty ratios and building names. And of course, our walk past Cross Campus contained the obligatory story about Sterling Memorial Library's original design as a cathedral — which, after further investigation, I discovered to be false.

But I was struck by something I discovered on my tour. Or rather, by something I remembered.

I noticed it first in something the parents would do while the guide was talking. If there was a fun fact or a campus amenity that a parent thought their kid would especially like, they'd glance over and nudge them. "Honey," they seemed to say, "listen to that! Wouldn't this place be perfect for you?" The kids always stared forward, trying not to be embarrassed by their overbearing mom. But also, I think, trying not to get their hopes up.

I had forgotten that Yale used to get my hopes up.

Over the course of the tour, I learned that everyone else could see things I could not. They would point out paintings that I swear didn't exist before; they would read every plaque, ogle every etching. They would gasp when entering Sterling, or Beinecke, or Old Campus. I remember I used to gasp, too. I don't remember when I stopped.

This is the real difference between the inside and outside of Yale: the people touring Yale somehow see it better than we do. We students, with all our critiques of the administration and complaining about our lives, forget where we are. We forget that two or three or four years ago, we would have given anything to be here. And now, we are.

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Obviously, Yale isn't perfect. Our guide did not inform our tour about the L-Dub dorms, the Davenport rats or the inevitable impostor syndrome. I failed to mention that I had stayed up until 2 a.m. the previous night working on an essay. No one talked about the budget cuts. But would any of that have mattered? The high school girl who adoringly described Yale as "one of the best schools in the country," would she have rescinded her application if she knew her freshman year might come with a bit of stress and more than a few all-nighters? For some reason, I think not.

Rush past a painting. Ignore a beautiful etching. Get annoyed at the tour group standing in the walkway. These things are easy. What is much harder is to stop, and to choose. To choose to see things like it's your first time.

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STAFF COLUMNIST

**JESSE NEVINS**

## In praise of not pausing

When I can't fall asleep, I put on a movie I've already seen. Last week, scrolling through Netflix, I saw the familiar poster for "Inglourious Basterds." I made it through 20 minutes before closing my laptop, another 20 the next night, 10 the night after that, and by the end of the week I had technically seen it again. What I had seen was an assemblage of Tarantino's film: the farmhouse interrogation superimposed on the theater fire, the Bear Jew appearing before anyone had mentioned him, Brad Pitt saying "Gorlami" in scenes he isn't in.

At Yale, free time exists in a currency of 20-minute chunks: the gap between section and rehearsal, the stretch after a problem set and before sleep. We watch in installments, resuming over dinner or leaving the last act playing while we brush our teeth. Streaming has made it easier to fit films into our lives, but in doing so, it can change what we experience as a film. Some of cinema's meaning lies in the time we spend waiting for something to happen — and that time disappears when we treat a film as a sequence we can stop and resume at will.

This fall, Yale has made time for "You Can See Everything," Nathan Fielder and Lance Oppenheim's 174-minute documentary about Elizabeth Holmes. The film has drawn more than $60 million at the domestic box office, an extraordinary showing for a documentary of its length. At one point, the camera holds on Holmes' guileless face as she becomes tearful about leaving her children, and Fielder responds, with characteristic flatness, "That must be hard." The audience laughs. But at whom? Fielder, for his lack of social savvy? Holmes, for the peculiar vulnerability she has learned to perform? Or ourselves, for entertaining the possibility that we feel sorry for her?

The cinema emerged alongside a world already learning to live with distraction. At the turn of the 20th century, the modern city made looking a discontinuous activity, and film, with its close-ups and abrupt cuts, reproduced something of that experience. Walter Benjamin described the movie public as "an examiner, but an absent-minded one," a crowd that could take in a succession of images without contemplating each in isolation. The sequence, however, remained beyond its control. One could look away, lose the thread, but the film continued; the next image was projected all the same. Streaming has changed that arrangement. We can stop the sequence and jump to the next, or leave it suspended and return when we choose; it's beyond discontinuous. I had watched "Inglourious Basterds" this way, retaining its images while losing the time between them. I still had Landa at the farmhouse table, but I had lost the slow accumulation of dread as he stayed there.

The movie theater's offer is closer to a kidnapping. You give up the ability to stop the film, to check a message, to decide that 20 minutes is enough. David Lynch once called watching a film on a telephone an "extreme putrification of a potential experience in another world." It would be easy to hear this as a complaint about screen size, but Lynch was also concerned with the viewer's ability to interrupt the experience. He insisted that the DVD release of "Mulholland Drive" come without chapter stops, so viewers couldn't skip around. For Lynch, the film's experience depended partly on allowing it to unfold at its own pace.

The tavern scene in "Inglourious Basterds" stretches a small mistake into nearly 25 minutes of suspense. An undercover British officer, posing as a German, drinks with German soldiers and an SS officer. They joke and play a guessing game. Every gesture begins to carry weight: an accent, a glance, the way someone holds a glass. When the officer orders three drinks, he raises three fingers in the British fashion, using his index, middle and ring fingers rather than the German thumb, index and middle. His cover is blown, and gunfire follows. The scene functions because Tarantino makes us wait for a mistake we cannot immediately identify. We begin scrutinizing the small details alongside the characters, searching for the gesture that will give them away. Watching it in fragments, I remembered the gunfire but lost the waiting.

Holmes built a company on the promise that a few drops of blood could stand in for the whole body. As viewers, we make a similar wager on the clip: stop a film and you can, as Fielder's title has it, see everything, down to the tearful blue eyes or three raised fingers. What you can't do is spend three hours with Elizabeth Holmes. "That must be hard" would make a perfect clip, and in a clip we would know exactly whom we are supposed to be laughing at. But I watched the scene in the theater, and an hour in, I had begun to feel sorry for Holmes. Feeling compounds, but only if you leave it in. Stop a film every 20 minutes and your sympathy stays liquid, spread safely across the cast. I sat in the dark beneath Holmes' face, the size of a house, and felt sorry for her. I laughed anyway. There were nearly two hours left.

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STAFF COLUMNIST

**TOM DAWBER**

## This ain't no party

I was on campus two years ago when Donald Trump was elected to a second term, and I was on campus this Wednesday after the Democrats' historic midterm victories. One struggles to imagine two more starkly different vibes.

Two years ago I would have plotted the moods of my classmates along a spectrum from devastation to resignation. Both classes that day devoted time to discussing the results; some students were visibly shaken nearly to the point of tears. Others were cynically stoic as they opined that the American people were about to have the government that they deserved.

By contrast, this Wednesday felt like a victory lap: giddy enthusiasm infected old-fashioned liberals and leftists alike. I didn't notice as much discussion of the results as I did two years ago, but what I did hear has been universally positive and optimistic.

But this week's Democratic landslide should not be viewed as a single-party mandate. It's not only that the Democrats gained control of just one of the three branches of government that leads me to counsel moderating our expectations for what this party will try to achieve. It's the nature of the party that pulled off this electoral marvel.

Despite all the attention that DSA-aligned and other leftist Democrats get in the press, the national Democratic party of 2026 should be viewed as a coalition government. The Democrats won because the party met voters where they are by putting forward candidates that reflected the constituencies they sought to represent.

The race for Kansas' senate seat is a perfect example. Kansas didn't turn blue for the first time since 1932 because of a sudden upswell of progressivism. Kansas turned blue because the Democrats nominated Reverend Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of a mega-church and a registered Republican until this year. He is lukewarm at best on abortion rights. His recent claims that the government shouldn't regulate women's bodies contrast with earlier descriptions of himself as "pro-life with a heavy heart." Any attempts to nationally codify abortion rights will have to take Senator-elect Hamilton's "gray" view of the issue into account.

Iowa's Senator-elect Josh Turek is another Democrat who is far from being a progressive hero. Turek admitted on election day that he voted for three Republicans, showing the qualities of a nuanced thinker willing to put the good of his community over party allegiance. While in Iowa's statehouse he voted against an anti-transgender bathroom bill, he also opposes transgender women playing in women's sports and minors being allowed to surgically transition. Mind you, these views didn't only make him palatable to Iowa's electorate; they also placed him squarely in the mainstream of Americans' opinions on these issues, and the left would do well to remember this.

Even media darling James Talarico doesn't come without his share of right-wing policy warts. Talarico shares Turek's mainstream views of transgender issues, opposing the most extreme elements of the progressive stance. He has also voted to protect the oil and gas industry in Texas, and has promised to oppose his party in any efforts that would jeopardize Texan jobs.

Are these true representations of what these three newly-elected senators actually believe, or are they just examples of politicking — of saying what needs to be said in order to get elected? It doesn't matter. These Democrats have to face the same electorates again six years from now. They will have to govern within the parameters of the expectations their constituents hold for them.

All these words of caution are to say nothing of the Democrats already in Congress. Speaker-in-waiting Hakeem Jeffries said this August that he opposes Medicare for All. Senate Leader Chuck Schumer has repeatedly described himself as a Shomer Israeli, a guardian of Israel. And after Representative Haley Stevens' 11th hour betrayal of her party and Dr. Abdul El-Sayed, one has to wonder: how many more elected Democrats are ready to turn coat over a single issue? Senator Fetterman at least has the excuse of brain damage to explain his rightward turn. Representative Stevens and others like her are a dangerous, unknown quantity with the potential to torpedo any progressive agenda. Some progressive policy goals may be attainable, but they must be approached with a spirit of intraparty compromise.

As the Republicans leaned into being the party of white Christian nationalists, the Democrats pitched a huge tent and welcomed anyone opposed to that right-wing view. They successfully campaigned under this big tent, focusing on electability rather than ideological purity tests, and now they have to govern within it. Yes, Donald Trump's disastrous policies and the Republican Congress's abdication of its constitutional duty to check his authority were necessary preconditions for this blue wave. But by putting forth an ideologically diverse slate of candidates, the Democrats were able to swell what may have been just a ripple into a tsunami. It would be foolish now to expect this motley coalition of conservatives, moderates, liberals, progressives and socialists to march in lockstep on every issue. That's not what this party is. The Democratic party is at its strongest when its tent is at its largest.

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Yale Daily News

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Valley Publishing Co, Derby, CT

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