



# OBSERVER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY'S STERN COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

## At YUNMUN, Rwanda's Lessons for Today's Students

**BY MARGANIT RAUCH** University and High School Participants at the 22nd annual YU National Model United Nations were privileged to hear from Jacqueline Murekatete—a survivor of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, and a human rights activist who is currently reading Law at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.

Murekatete works for a non-profit organization called Miracle Corners of the World (MCW), and bracelets will be sold throughout the conference to raise money for the initiative. MCW hopes to end genocide by raising awareness, as well as helping to rebuild the lives of the many Rwandans who were affected by the genocide and still lack basic necessities.

In an introduction by

Undersecretary Gavi Lankin, SCW '12, the audience was informed of the secretariat's hopes that this year's conference would stress a real focus on current global issues so that the delegates would leave the conference with the motivation to effect change in their communities, and in the world.

The underlying message of Murekatete's speech was her conviction that genocide can be prevented, that it all too often stems from years of discrimination, and that it is never something that simply occurs one day, out of the blue. Murekatete believes that education is the key to ensuring that future generations will not live in a world where a human being can be massacred purely for belonging to a particular ethnic group; Murekatete's

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High school diplomats in the 22nd Yeshiva University National Model United Nations.

Gavriel Brown

## Talmud and Tiaras?

Peggy Orenstein visits YU with A Look at the New Culture of Girlhood

**BY AIMEE RUBENSTEEN** On February 6, Koch Auditorium filled more than 200 seats with professors and students from SCW and visitors from other universities to hear from internationally acclaimed author and commentator, Peggy Orenstein, in a discussion titled "From Princesses to Pop-Tarts: A Look at the New Culture of Girlhood," followed by a book signing of her New York Times bestseller *Cinderella Ate my Daughter*. The room's estrogen level rose and the anticipation became palpable as Assistant Professor of Psychology, Dr. Robin Freyberg, introduced Orenstein.

Freyberg began the event by explaining the importance of having Orenstein speak on our all-women's campus. "Peggy Orenstein's message about the prevalence of Disney's princess culture, and its wide-reaching, long-term impact on young girls' self-esteem, body image and development, resonates deeply with our students, in particular, as they navigate the challenge of developing into strong, independent, young women who may eventually raise daughters of their own."

Initially, many students, especially



Orenstein, left, with Rubenstein.

Aimee Rubenstein

female students, became nostalgic for their childhood days filled with hours of repetitive Disney movies and toys, but soon they began to question Disney's influence on their own psyches.

After years of research, book writing, and parenting a daughter of her own, Orenstein explains the long-term impact of Disney Princesses

and 24/7, 365-days-a-year of pink on female's femininity, sexuality and identity. She discussed how the princess culture of Disney has made children become more materialistic and image-conscious as they grow older. Girls begin to make choices between their feminine identity and feminism at a younger age. Orenstein

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## Who Runs This Place, Anyways?

**BY ELANA RASKAS** So you want to change something in Stern. You want the caf to have better hours. You want to have more history classes. You want more funding for your club. The question is, to whom do you turn?

In my past year and a half at Stern, I have asked myself this question numerous times. Who runs this place? If I want to change something here, who do I approach? The student leaders? They are fantastic, but how much power do they really have? Perhaps I should talk to the deans—but is my problem really important enough to bother them with? Maybe I should talk to the Office of Student Life...but I don't even know who they are or exactly what they do.

I do not think I am alone in feeling this lack of guidance on campus. Erica Pirak, a junior at SCW, recently expressed to me her interest in taking a Yiddish language course. She wondered, "Who should I talk to about this? Is there a head of a language department, or should I go straight to the deans? Do I need to have a certain amount of students interested before I talk to faculty members?" Unfortunately, I could not offer her much direction. I, too, am left in the dark as to how things

get done around here.

I should point out that I am neither a freshman, a part-time student, nor generally out of the loop. I am a junior and I live on-campus. I am a member of the Student Life Committee (SLC) and have the responsibility of talking to students about various problems or concerns that they have, and I am supposed to talk to different staff members to see what can be done to resolve and address students' problems. So, I might even know more than the average student about the people who work here at the university. The SLC is a vital asset to the student body, and the faculty we deal with are always very helpful and responsive. But being on this committee does give insight into the complicated hierarchy of employees that works at YU. When the SLC contacts a YU employee, he or she inevitably needs to contact someone else who talks to another person who talks to another person before reaching the right one, and we have to hope that word travels back along this broken telephone line to us, the students. Even being in touch with various faculty members has hardly helped me understand who is in charge of and who can accomplish what at this institution.

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**BY ELANA GOLDBERG** Last winter, the now-infamous e-mail sent out over break delineating the revised dress code rocked the Stern community, and had many women up in arms over what they perceived as a grievous violation of their rights. The turmoil resulting from the e-mail made its final aftermath all the more anticlimactic: after all the hyperbolic fuss, the dress code drama ended in, well...nothing. No reinforcements, no repercussions, and most notably no change.

So in light of last year's failed e-mail, what method did the Stern administration choose as a means of railing against the now near-iconic mini miniskirt that leaves very little to the imagination?

They sent out the exact same e-mail, naturally. Same time of year (does anyone else see the irony in sending out a message to adhere to the dress code specifically as temperatures drop and more layers come out?), same tone, and same text.

In truth, that's a bit of an exaggeration. This year's version introduces a "modest neckline" clause, as well as a "clear distinction of the times the dress code applies: 9a.m.-8p.m., whereas in the original e-mail the text simply states the dress code must be followed "at all times." The newer version also carefully applauds Stern women's cultural diversity before delicately insinuating that the concept of diversity apparently does not pertain to 215 and 245 Lexington.

I am not taking an official position on the dress code; I happen to comply with the general laws of tzniut (modesty) in dress, but that doesn't mean I encourage or expect others to do the same.

If the administration wants to initiate change in the university, my message is more power to them. I think they have the theoretical right, as this is a private institution and, no matter how many birthday parties end in drunken 2a.m. Tiberias

pigouts, the Stern community is—or if not, should be—well aware that we are not like other colleges.

However, if the administration is going to do something, then really do it. Don't hide behind noncommittal language and passive-aggressive phrasing; it's weak, and makes students believe they have the upper hand in cowering the administration into issuing a watered-down reminder echoing the past year's remonstrations, rather than taking real action.

The next question, obviously enough, is okay, smarty-pants, what action do you recommend us taking? Hiring police adjuncts to roam the halls with clubs and a whistle? Suspension? Expulsion? No mitzvah-note home every Friday afternoon?

I do agree that the concept of punishment seems infantilizing. The truth of the matter is I myself do not have a clear suggestion for negative reinforcement of the dress code. But what about positive encouragement?

Maybe following the dress code can amount to some kind of merit-based extra credit. Maybe compliant professors can introduce a component to their syllabi that suggests extra points, or even just more consideration, for students who follow all rules of the classroom, including dress code.

I know these suggestions sound meek, and I don't profess to have any concrete answer to the dress code problem. But I'm also not sending around a nearly replicate copy of last year's failed e-mail to the entire student body, blindly hoping that this time we'll read the fine print a little clearer, and something will click.

Take one glance around the school buildings since the e-mail's second go-around, and one thing is clear: it hasn't clicked. And if the administration wants to effect real, substantial change, they're going to have to get a little more aggressive, even if it means risking donor support and incurring a few people's wrath. I want the administration to come out from behind the computer screen. I

want a direct address. I want them to meet my eyes and tell me why this is so vital to the successful future of the school, instead of reading it on a monitor. If the administration came off as more personal and concerned, maybe we would assume a greater stake in the school's dress code

## Text Text Revolution: Why So Scared to Call?

**BY HANNAH DREYFUS** In the past, when a guy asked for your number, you used to expect a phone call. Nowadays, you expect a text message.

This is not an article to confirm your grandmother's doomsdays predictions. Rather, I pose the question: why have we turned to texting as a crutch when it comes to relationships, and is this a pattern we want to re-enforce or re-evaluate?

It is a most interesting phenomenon to watch a girl texting a love interest. Staring off absently into space (say, sitting in Hebrew class), her small, beeping, blinking device buzzes, urgently vying for her attention. Houston, we have problem. In a moment, she is at attention. Expertly, phone is obscured from view beneath her desk. You watch as a telling smile spreads steadily across her face. Morning has broken. She sits for a moment, beaming with self-satisfaction. Then, the brow furrows.

The moment of truth has arrived. Time to respond.

Rolling up her sleeves, she carefully gathers up all her powers of female intuition and emotional insight, preparing to compose the text that will utterly blow his mind; leave him incapacitated by her genius, wit, and charm. Another moment. Should I text that? Too suggestive. Should I tell him that? Too apathetic. She decides upon a perfectly-balanced, intriguingly-enigmatic, modestly-flirtatious, appropriately-caring happy medium and remains wholly distracted for the rest of class.

Perhaps my description tends towards hyperboles. I apologize if I have misrepresented the true stoic, unaffected nature of the female gender. My pure implications behind the observation: texting is often used as a crutch for our insecurities. It provides a means of obscuring flaws and mental stutters from the

appraising eyes of the person waiting on the other end. Real conversations don't provide timeouts between remarks to compose the perfect response. Real conversations involve missteps, blunders, jokes that fall sadly flat, sarcasm that soars over the other person's head, and the ever-dreaded, meandering trail into silence...

While texting may ensure safety from some of these hair-raising risks, it comes with a hefty number of its own. Risks with even more serious consequences than the unfortunate thud of a miscalculated joke. While the emoticon (:), ☐, :P etc.) has widely become the proverbial 'seatbelt,' protecting against all texting-relating disasters, the possibilities of miscommunication and misinterpretation remain vast. Daunting, when considered in full. There is no room for immediate justification, qualification, or

explanation. Interpretation is left up to the mercy and/or ignorance of the viewer, a tricky game to play (especially with males).

Yet, much like getting into a car, we blithely ignore the risks in light of the a) convenience and b) deceptive infallibility the medium seems to provide. Risk of awkward silence – eliminated. Risk of admission of ignorance – postponed (Google exists in the interim between text messages). Risks of saying too much, laughing too loud, or just sounding just plain stupid – supremely mitigated. Texting seems to provide an unbeatable insurance policy. So, just get in the car; just press send.

We fool ourselves into thinking, both consciously and subconsciously, that texting affords us protection from relationship risks. We conclude it is the 'safer' option—the option that provides the most protection

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DRESS CODE LETTER: WINTER BREAK 2010-2011 (differences are bolded)

*Dear Student,*

*We welcome you back for this new semester and wish you much success with your studies and your extra-curricular activities. At the same time we feel we must share with you a matter of some concern.*

*The Dress Code at the Beren Campus, in effect in the academic buildings at all times, requires students to wear knee length dresses/skirts and tops that have sleeves. Unfortunately some students have become careless about observing these requirements. This carelessness is a violation of our regulations and is resulting in the erosion of the tradition of respect that has been the hallmark of our campus. Therefore, we are reminding you of the Dress Code guidelines and are asking for your immediate and complete support. Thank you for your understanding and for your cooperation.*

DRESS CODE LETTER: WINTER BREAK 2011-2012

*Dear Students,*

*With the spring semester upon us, we hope this correspondence finds you well and looking forward to your new classes as well as extracurricular activities.*

*We are so proud of all that is special and unique to the Beren Campus of Yeshiva University. We invest tremendously in you—as students, as women, as Jews—and as the focus of University resources, time, scholarship, and commitment, you project the image of Stern and Syms.*

*We are aware and appreciate that our students come from varied backgrounds and bring those individualized expressions to the Beren Campus; we hope to encourage and empower the multifaceted face of our student body at Yeshiva University.*

*Nevertheless, in a show of mutual respect for each other and for our mesorah, and out of respect for our faculty, it becomes necessary to ask for your adherence and commitment to the regulations of the dress code within 215 and 245 Lexington Avenue during school hours (9AM-8PM). As an immediate reminder, women are required to adhere to the following while inside both buildings: knee-length skirts/dresses and tops with sleeves and a modest neckline. At Yeshiva University, our dress code is applicable throughout academic buildings (not just Jewish Studies classes), and is an expectation with which all students are asked to immediately comply.*

*We thank you for your understanding and cooperation, and wish you continued success in every endeavor as we look forward to a terrific spring semester.*



## Peggy Orenstein visits YU with A Look at the New Culture of Girlhood

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pointed out that Disney could only market several princess characters on one product if, and only if, each princess was looking in different directions; their eyes never meet and they never acknowledge the others' existence. If Cinderella and Belle, major role models for young children, are so self-obsessed that they can't even look at each other, how are children supposed to learn to share attention and recognition? She suggested that Disney is more concerned about their princesses than the children who are playing them.

Furthermore, Orenstein explained the impact of pink on girlhood. Every toy franchise has the opportunity to double its profits by duplicating a toy in pink. For example, if a family has a son and buys him blue toys, if they then have a daughter, they will need to buy her the same toys but in pink. Orenstein stated, "While pink celebrates girlhood it also fuses it with appearance." Girls are bombarded with everything in pink. The notion of pretty in pink, and only in pink, begins to limit girl's creativity, isolate girls from playing with the opposite sex with gender-neutral-colored toys and tell girls that appearance is *that* important. Juggling these dilemmas at an early age, girls naturally become aware of their position in society and usually fall into the marketing and



Julia Siegel

advertising trap below the glass ceiling. However, it is important to consider that pink toys do not force girls to become subordinate women, rather they are important factors to consider when teaching a child about the numerous other colors in the rainbow.

Orenstein urges the crowd that kids are getting younger older (KGOY), and somebody needs to step in and offer guidance. Numerous women feel the need to do it all, and look hot while doing it. Not only do women on campus feel the need to be getting the highest marks on their exams, but they also need to be president of

a club or participate on sports teams. Even though SCW is an all-women's campus, the pressure of effortless perfection is a common overheard topic in the halls, elevators and lounges.

A senior Stern College For Women student explained she was glad Orenstein was addressing this topic because "as a women's college, it is important for us to be constantly reminded about the factors undermining our emotional, psychological and physical health, hindering us from reaching our potential and contributing to the world."



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### The Seforim Sale: By the Numbers

**15,000** titles ordered  
among **20** sections,  
which take **2 weeks** to set up.  
**33** events planned,  
to entertain and enlighten **15,000**  
customers  
over **22** days.  
**\$1.6 million** raised in gross sales,  
also benefiting the **2** official  
charities.  
**1,287** views on a Youtube video  
showing **40,000** books  
being set up, in time lapse, by **130**  
employees,  
including **4** (to our count) who  
became couples,  
in a tradition going back at least  
**30** years.

In order to combat the pressure within our society and the information being fed to children, Orenstein alerted the audience to be aware of the agenda of marketing companies and the expectations we mold for ourselves. Orenstein proved her point quite clearly when she displayed a t-shirt that had crossed off "Future Princess" and scribbled "Future President" instead. Little girls should not have to be limited to dressing up as a princess, so too, women should not have to be limited to choosing between being a future princess or president. Women can do it all, and still have their happily ever after, they just have to learn to define it on their own terms.

## Text Text Revolution

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from our own flaws and imperfections, so much more easily unearthed over the phone. What we fail to realize, or at least fail to acknowledge, is the harm texting can and has been known to cause. It is not rare to hear about arguments, break-ups, and even broken engagements that can be traced back to one, fatal mis-text. One misinterpreted BBM. With the seeming benefits of obscurity run the high risks of miscommunication. We fancy ourselves beneficiaries of the convenient smoke screen provided by texting. Shielded from nervous laughter, unfortunate stutters, or awkward pauses, we fancy ourselves the better off.

What we forget is that there is something beautiful, exciting, and worthwhile about the raw imperfections that punctuate the beginnings of relationships. Getting to know someone is not supposed to be smooth and seamless. Real conversations are not composed of perfectly modulated humor and pre-meditated coquettish charm. Sometimes they involve dumb remarks, and sometimes awkward pauses are inevitable. Chick flicks even script embarrassing moments, however unconvincing and grossly unrealistic, into the plotline.

Does it not resonate as uncomfortable that texting is, by nature, contrived? Unless the other party is texting you after having one too many cocktails, texts are unlikely to be candid. Texting affords the time and opportunity to select and create an intentional persona. A text is usually the polished result of pre-meditation, contemplation, editing, rephrasing, and even outside consultation with friends (girls, we're guilty).

What has become of the subtleties of tone

and timing? The unaffected immediacy of response that tells you more about a person than any cold, smooth, confident, text ever could? The pronounced dis-ingenuity of texting has the ability to create castles in the sky—relationships built upon formulated concoctions of another person, rather than upon the unhindered reality of who that person really is. For this reason, meeting someone through text and meeting someone in person can be shockingly disparate experiences.

No, I do not think texting is the root of all evil. Texting, like any form of technology, can be an extremely constructive, helpful tool. I fully encourage taking advantage of the conveniences texting has to offer. Directions, lunch date information, a thoughtful good-morning or how was your day, an excellent method of evading lengthy phone conversations with elderly relatives, or even an abbreviated 'I'm thinking of you' when you're pressed for time – text away.

I simply encourage taking a moment to consider why you are so sorely tempted to text the next time you have something important, meaningful, or revealing to share with a significant other. If you find yourself struggling with a tinge of fear or apprehension, challenge yourself to make the call. Disclaimer: it very well might be awkward. You very well might say something dumb. Or snort when you laugh. But, so is the beauty of life. Embrace the awkward silences. Embrace the glorious, blundering imperfections that make relationships real and people human

And, once you're on the phone, why not ask him out? You pick the place.

I have a suggestion about life on campus, who do I talk to?

Who do I speak to about changing my rooming situation?

How do I find a chavruta?

Where do I make photocopies on campus?

QUESTIONS  
ANSWERS  
RESULTS

Students have questions. We have...  
**answers@yu.edu**

answers@yu.edu  
212.960.5411  
yu.edu/student-life/answers

How can I add or drop a class?

Where can I find out more about student clubs?

Who do I talk to about getting healthy food options in the caf?

How do I declare a major?



# FEATURES

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## Wheat Rhymes With Meat: Food Stereotypes and Why Everyone Thinks I'm Vegetarian

**BY CHANA BRAUSER** For a while, I was trying to avoid eating wheat, as per my doctor's suggestion to try and work out some digestive issues. Whenever people would inquire about my food allergies, I'd reply, "I don't eat wheat," to which they'd nod sagaciously, "Oh, yes, you don't eat meat. But of course." Well, um, no, actually that would be wheat. For some reason, this was a lot harder for people to digest (pun intended). Why didn't I eat wheat? If anything, I ought to be avoiding meat, they'd assert, because after all, I'm so the type to be vegetarian. Mind you, these conversations would often begin just as a fork carrying a piece of meat hovered mid-air, en route to my mouth. I would try to explain that meat and chicken were a large part of my diet and that I wasn't particularly interested in embarking upon an herbivorous lifestyle. "Well," came the disgruntled reply, "you look like you'd be a vegetarian. You're just so the type."

The hard truth: I love dolphins as much as the next person, but I'm not particularly inclined to go out and, you know, save them all. Not that there's anything wrong with those who do. To be sure, I respect the vegetarians and tree huggers of the world, but it just so happens that I do not count myself among them. While I do my best to eat healthy foods and keep my carbon footprint to a low roar, I'm just not the earthiest of characters. Yet for some reason, despite my best efforts, people persist on assuming these things about me – in particular, people often take my vegetarianism for granted, and it is sometimes only with great effort that I can grab the plate of chicken from those at the table who assume I'm just not interested before it is passed on and I am left with a limp veggie burger of some sort in its stead.

Does it have something to do with my predilection for wearing harvest colors? Hardly a day goes by without my sporting a scarf or sweater of some sort in a burnt orange or forest green, and it just so happens that a day doesn't go by without my sporting a red, curly, rather frizzy halo of hair. Could it be that there is a certain "look" that people associate with certain foods, a type of "food

stereotyping" that takes place based on a person's appearance? Based on personal experience, I'd believe it. As frustrating as it might be to forever apologize for my carnivorous ways, I'm certain that I too have judged a person's eating habits based on his or her appearance.

We all tend to mentally assign people various "types." Take a moment to picture a tall, hulking biker, his brawny arms tattooed with the classic mermaid and mom heart, rocking a buzz cut, and it probably wouldn't be too hard to imagine him ripping in to a big, juicy steak and washing it down with a couple fistfuls of greasy fries. Now, sit him down at the nearest vegan restaurant in front of a plate of stir-fried tofu, sautéed Brussels sprouts, maybe a few sprinkles of arugula for good measure, and a nice tall glass of iced green tea. We'd probably be just a bit more comfortable replacing our biker with a free-spirited hipster (head over to your local Trader Joe's for a quality selection), clad in clunky combat boots, oversized glasses, and a might-be-thrift-store-but-more-likely-Urban-Outfitters baggy sweater. Wouldn't you be surprised to see a towering, svelte model step off the runway and scarf down a couple of Dunkin' Donuts and half a pizza pie? To hear a rough-and-tumble high school jock declare that he's sworn-off junk food and is going totally organic? While it might not be surprising for a woman to order lettuce and cottage cheese (dressing on the side, please) on a date, who wouldn't be rather startled to see a man do the same?

A quick Google search for "food stereotypes" unearths a post on the somewhat plainly named [www.ireallylikefood.com](http://www.ireallylikefood.com) that offers a rather brilliant, rather facetious, and altogether unscientific take on the typical types of people we associate with certain types of food. For example, the author presumes that those who drink lattes are probably Mac users or English majors, that "green" yogis gravitate toward tofu, and that those with an Ivy League pedigree tend to engage in wine tasting. Reluctant to offend, the writer assures his readership that he knows many a proud SUV-owning carnivore who enjoys eating tofu. The writer links

**BY GABRIELLE HILLER** To an outsider, it may seem as if a group of 20 YU students choosing to spend their winter break sitting and listening to speeches for ten days is sort of like class. In reality, however, the CJF mission, Jewish Life Coast to Coast, was an unforgettable learning experience that challenged its participants to open their eyes and minds to new ideas experiences beyond Jewish life in the Tri-state area.

Every year, the Coast to Coast trip visits a different region of North America. This year, the CJF set its sights on the West Coast, with plans to visit the Jewish communities of the Bay Area in California, as well as Seattle and Vancouver.

What was the theme of the trip? Ask any participant for a one-word answer: innovation. Residing in the backyard of Silicon Valley, home to companies like Google and Microsoft, Jewish communities on the West Coast are affected by the innovative nature of these entrepreneurial enterprises. Our goal was to see how this mindset affected their daily lives and communal structure. Led by Eliyahu Rosen and Keren Simon, and joined at times by Rabbi Ari Rockoff and Rabbi Kenneth Brander along with his wife, Ruchie, we were ready for our mission.

First stop: Google Headquarters. No other place could have given a better insight into the innovative nature of the West Coast. There, we were privileged to see the Google



Google Headquarters. From left to right: Akiva Berger, Tzvi Goldfeder, Shimon Farber, Danny Am-balu, Moshe Rube, Daniel First, Isaac Gelbfish, Ephy Weinberg, Eliyahu Rosen (trip leader), Eleanor Carmeli (Jewgler), Deborah Bellin, Tal Meiri, Keren Simon (trip leader), Zahava Rothschild, Mindy Sojcher, Gabrielle Hiller, Elana Raskas, Katie Liebling, Naomi Friedman, Tamar Hochbaum, Alex Porcelain, Adam Goldberg, Yoni Weg

to a 2010 AOL News article about a study that revealed that just holding an alcoholic beverage "makes you look stupid." According to the study, a boss out to dinner with a prospective employee will consider the job-seeker less desirable if he orders a drink – or even if someone else orders the drink for him. Although this negative association with alcohol might not be surprising, it's certainly telling.

Food stereotyping works both ways: often, we might judge a person by appearance and immediately assume his or her eating habits, or, alternatively, we might associate a certain type of food with a certain type of person. While stereotyping is natural, it can inhibit room for individuality. Although it might be tempting to assume I'm a vegetarian because I tend to wear a certain burnt orange scarf and rather long, dangling earrings, you would, unfortunately, be off the mark. You might find yourself feeling a bit earthier, a bit more "hipster," when you sit down to a nice tofu stir-fry; but perhaps we ought to try defining ourselves less by the

food we eat. Not all vegetarians are hippies, not all carnivores are gas-guzzling bikers, and for all we know that stick-thin girl who lives next door subsists on a diet of hamburgers and full-fat ice cream. And that's okay. We live in a world where we are fortunate to have a seemingly endless supply of food choices. Perhaps it is because of this plethora of choice that we have



Julia Siegel

"campus" (everything a paradigmatic college campus would include, minus the dorms), and meet with "Jewglers," Jews who are employed by Google, to hear what it is like to be a Jew who works at Google.

Over the next few days, we met with numerous Jewish communal leaders, including rabbis of the local synagogues, the Stanford Chabad and Hillel rabbis, and educators at the local Oakland Hebrew Day School. At the Day School, we taught a session to the seventh and eighth graders about Judaism's view on protests. We were privileged to visit the generous sponsors of our trip, the Jim Joseph Foundation, an organization whose goal is to support and fund meaningful experiences in Jewish education.

We went off the beaten path as well. We visited Urban Adamah, a Jewish farm in the middle of a city, and met with Aryae Coopersmith, co-founder of the House of Love and Prayer, who exposed us to his own spiritual connection to Judaism. A wonderful Shabbat was spent in Oakland in Rabbi Judah Dardik's shul, Beth Jacob. There, we had the special opportunity to interact with his unique, diverse, and hospitable community, learning how to connect with Jews from all backgrounds.

Our next intended stop was Seattle, but a major snowstorm shut down the airport and impeded our plans. We delayed for a few more days in San Francisco, before re-routing to Los Angeles. Although this was not on

the original itinerary, LA ended up being a wonderful addition to the trip. Perhaps because LA is much more similar to our own communities than San Francisco, our time there gave us a chance see how the lessons we had learned applied to communities similar to our own.

The ultimate goal of the trip was to learn from Jewish communities on the West Coast with hopes of applying what we learned to our own communities upon our return home. I can say for myself that I learned a tremendous amount on this trip. This trip exposed me to the great diversity of the Jewish communities and showed me how we are all, essentially, one nation, despite our geographic diversity. To thrive as a nation, we must build upon our commonalities, not our differences.

started to turn to food as a way to signal to the world, and to ourselves, who it is we truly are; some food for thought.

As for me, you'll probably be seeing me scarfing down some chicken from the meat caf every now and again. But since you'll be focused on your own plate of food, I doubt you'll even notice.



## To Guatemala and Back: One Stern Student's Life-Changing Experience

**BY HANNAH DREYFUS** *While many of us were home, allowing our exhausted minds to lay gratefully fallow for a coveted few weeks before the return to the school-grind, 11 YU students, 6 women and 5 men, were having a vacation of a very different nature. A student-run initiative, these men and women traveled to Guatemala to volunteer in public healthcare clinics and educate underprivileged children about health, hygiene, and nutrition. Dani Schoenfeld, Shara Feltheimer, and Mark Elmann, leaders of the YU Global Health Club, organized the trip. Two trips of similar nature have been successfully run in the past. Giving of their time, care, passion, and dedication, what these students received in return was priceless: the experience of a lifetime. Below is a firsthand account from Daniela Garzon, Stern '14, an as-yet undecided major who self-pronouncedly "had no idea what this trip had in store for me." The Observer interviewed her to find out a little bit more about what she meant.*

**Observer:** What exactly was your mission in Guatemala?

**Daniela Garzon:** Our mission was to explore the healthcare system in Guatemala. We stayed in a hotel in a city called Antigua, a Spanish colonial town. Every morning we would wake up at six and travel, on the Guatemalan buses, to different health clinics in the area. We split up into five separate groups; each group went to a health clinic in a different town. I worked at a health clinic in a small town called Santiago. It took us about an hour on the bus every morning to get to our various clinics.

**OB:** What was it like using the Guatemalan public-transportation system?

**DG:** The buses were absolutely insane. The buses they use are retired American school buses that were either donated or purchased at a very reduced rate. There were two people manning the operation: the driver and the 'helper.' The job of the helper



Daniela Garzon

What medical privacy? Garzon took patients' blood pressure and other vital signs in a clinic waiting.

was to literally hang out of the door and scream where the bus is headed to passers-by.

The bus would only come to a complete stop for the popular stops. To pick up passengers at more remote stops, the bus would keep driving. There was a ladder in the back of the bus, and passengers would run onto the bus while it was still in motion. You know the emergency exit on the back of your average school bus? That's the entrance people used to board the bus.

**OB:** Sounds like quite an intense commute. What were your

responsibilities when you arrived at the clinic?

**DG:** We were in charge of triage, which is recording vital signs before the patient goes in with the doctor. We were in charge of taking blood pressure, height and weight measurements, temperature etc. and recording the information in the patients file.

**OB:** Sounds like pretty standard practice. What differences between the process we are used to here in America and the process in Guatemala stood out to you?

**DG:** Organization and privacy. I'll start with the latter. Basically, there was no privacy. All the work we did assessing the patients was done in the waiting room. Americans have a much more acute sense of privacy. We tend to forget that privacy is a luxury. In terms of organization, what stood out to me was the lack thereof. We were handling patients' medical history, and the documentation was extremely difficult to understand. Instead of every patient having a separate file, files are assigned to entire families. Our job was to record all new information ascertained from the check-up by simply writing it down on the last empty space available in the file.

One more difference: no strollers. Women carry their babies on their backs.

**OB:** Who were the predominant patients who visited in the health clinic?

**DG:** Mostly pregnant women, babies, and children. We only saw three men the entire week.

**OB:** In terms of birth control, were there any programs designed to encourage/educate patients about the different options available to them?

**DG:** Yes! A volunteer actually came right out into the waiting room and conducted a mandatory birth control information session for all the patients. He explained to the women about various different methods of birth control, both temporary and permanent in nature. He stressed the importance of discussing having children and how many children you wanted to have with your husband. He encouraged the patients to wait between births and stressed what a responsibility it was to have children....The women sat and nodded along.

**OB:** To ask a rather basic question: how did you communicate with both the patients but, more importantly, the staff?

**DG:** I actually speak fluent Spanish (I was born in Columbia, SA). In my clinic, I served as the translator. Most of Guatemala speaks native Mayan, but near the country's capital, Guatemala City, they speak Spanish.

**OB:** What was the most serious case you tended to while



Daniela Garzon

With a girls' orphanage. From left to right: Top: Samantha Selesny, Stephanie Weprin, Gigi Ben-David, Meir Szegedi, Philip Cohen, Solly Silverman, Jonah Wilkof, Rachel Kirshenbaum, Eliana Graber Bottom: Daniela Garzon, Dani Schoenfeld

working in the clinic?

**DG:** A woman came in with a rare snake bite. That was interesting. Another time, a little boy came in with a very severe burn on his hand. It was actually his teacher who brought him in to the clinic.

**OB:** How do the Guatemalan patients relate to you and your peers?

**DG:** Because we were wearing scrubs the whole time, we were related to as figures of authority, which was a bit intimidating at times. People assumed we knew what we doing. There was one instance where I was standing in the waiting room, folding gauze pads or something equally menial, when a man ran up to me and starting gesturing wildly. Turns out he had a serious bug-bite on his hand, and he was asking us what to do. Looking the part becomes a serious responsibility.

**OB:** Besides for working in the health clinic, did you and the group do anything else of interest while in Guatemala?

**DG:** Definitely. The town we stayed in, Antigua, is surrounded by four volcanoes. One day we took a volcano hike, which was incredible.

We additionally visited local communities to speak with children about general health (washing hands, sleeping, exercise), nutrition (eat from different food groups), and dental hygiene (brushing teeth). We did interactive skits and activities with the kids to get them involved.

One of the locations we visited was an orphanage that housed girls from abusive homes; another was an after-school program in a small town that didn't have running water because of administrative corruption. Working and playing with these kids was truly a highlight of the trip.

**OB:** What did you play with these children?

**DG:** We went out into a field and played soccer with them. With the girls, we let them braid our hair. At the orphanage we visited, the girls even taught us a game. It had something to do with water and land, and jumping a lot to stay on the land. Red-light/Green-light is a universal favorite.

**OB:** If there was one message you could take away from your trip, what is it?

**DG:** Even in a place with such extremely limited resources, people have a way of making life work. We shouldn't think that just because these people don't live like us, they're missing something or lacking something. In terms of equipment and funding, yes there is a definite lack, and that is hard to see. But in terms of way of life, they are not lacking. Their way of life, the way their society operates and functions, is different from our own, but that does not make it inferior. Where they don't have the material resources we take for granted, they fill in with personal care and warmth. The doctor dealt with the patients on a very personal level. When a pregnant woman came in, it wasn't just a nurse performing another routine ultrasound. It was the doctor actually feeling the baby's head with his hands, checking everything was ok the 'old-fashioned' way. Takeaway message: different does not mean inferior. Different means different. And if there were no differences, we would never learn.

## Who Runs This Place, Anyways?

continued from page 1

So why am I writing this article? For one thing, to express my frustration at the convoluted system, and secondly, to let other students know that they are not alone in feeling this lack of organizational guidance at Stern. Furthermore, another goal of mine is to somehow rectify this issue. Other colleges assign a faculty mentor to all first-time-on-campus students. Perhaps YU students could benefit from such a system.

Additionally, the word on the street is that RAs have an informative flow-chart of "who runs what" at Stern. Why not allow all students access to this information? It could only be beneficial.

There are surely many ways to address students' feelings of being lost and off-course.

Solutions must come from the administration; the administration must be proactive about ensuring that students know who exactly to turn to with a certain problem or with a given situation. We have Academic Advisement and the Career Development Center, but these resources only help students on a specific, case-by-case basis, and do not help students who have larger concerns than which classes fill the "Interpreting Languages and the Arts" section or what prerequisites they need for medical school. At the most recent Town Hall meeting, President Joel urged students to push for what they want. He put the responsibility on our shoulders to voice our needs. I just hope that we will soon know exactly to whom to voice them.

**Did you know?** Only a few blocks from Stern, at the Epiphany Branch of the New York Public Library on 23rd Street, hangs a letter from Andrew Carnegie, the famous industrialist and philanthropist, to the city of New York. In the letter dated March 12, 1901, Carnegie asserts that large cities have one library for every 60-70,000 residents, and New York would be the greatest of cities. As such, he promises \$5.2 million dollars for 65 new libraries in the city of New York, on the condition that the city maintains them. So how much money is that? Adjusted for inflation, the \$5.2 million that Carnegie gave would be worth upwards of \$134 million today.



## Chabad Connects its Scattered Children Virtually: A True School of the Future

**BY NAOMI SCHWARTZ** When Chabad Shluchim travel to obscure locations around the world as emissaries of the Jewish people, setting up shop near college campuses, large cities, and even tiny rural towns to share the vibrancy of our religion with just one more Jew, they must confront the logistical challenges of providing their children with a traditional Lubavitch education and interactions with Orthodox children their age. Until recently, *shluchim* had only two options: adding homeschooling duties to parents' already busy schedules, or sending their young children off to board on their own at out-of-state schools.

However, in September 2006, about a year after Skype added video-calling to their list of features, another method of Lubavitch education was introduced, one which has opened the doors to a whole new level of worldwide Chabad connection.

Through an organization known as "The Shluchim Online School," *shluchim* are able to enroll their children in virtual classes, connecting them via webcam to teachers and classmates often located hundreds of miles away. A project of the Connecting Yaldei Shluchim [children of *shluchim*] program (a division of The Shluchim Office, the international resource center for Chabad Lubavitch), the Online School connects teachers from places as varied as Omaha, New York, and Maryland, with children living anywhere from Texas to Vermont, South America to Australia. The children are able to see their teacher on their monitors, as well as any child in their class whose mike registers that he is speaking.

Combined, the Meyer and Lillian Nigri School

for Boys and the Shluchim Online School for Girls enroll over 500 students between ages 4-13. The Online School expects a high level of commitment: no slacking off is tolerated despite the school's unusual design. Absences and latenesses are recorded (excluding latenesses resulting from technical difficulties,) homework

### CHILDREN IN THE ONLINE SCHOOL LEARN TO READ HEBREW AS WELL AS YIDDISH. THEY LEARN TANYA AND OTHER CHASSIDIC THOUGHT IN ADDITION TO CHUMASH AND NAVI, HALAKHA, AND (FOR BOYS) MISHNAYIOT AND GEMARA.

is assigned on a daily basis, tests are printed, filled in, and faxed in to teachers by students, and report cards are sent out regularly. Students are encouraged to exercise outside during their recess as they would in a typical school, and the student handbook explains that in order to maintain a certain level of respect for the Torah learning that goes on in their classes, the school dress code is to be followed during school time. Girls must wear polos or button-down shirts in pink, blue, or white, and boys are required to wear button-down shirts of white or blue. Students have the option to purchase school vests and sweatshirts as well, giving the students a feeling of solidarity.

Children in the Online School learn to read Hebrew as well as Yiddish. They learn Tanya and other Chassidic thought in addition to Chumash and Navi, halakha, and (for boys) Mishnayot and Gemara. "The level of learning is phenomenal," attests Rabbi Avremel Blesofsky,

a *shaliach* at the University of Iowa who has several children enrolled in the Online School. "It's well organized, has a good curriculum... [and] is constantly improving."

When asked if he believes that his children are getting as good an education as those in traditional schools, he emphatically replied that,

"It may be even better!" His third and fifth graders spend many hours learning each day, from 8:30 until

2:00, and they love it: when given the option to skip school, they decline – they don't want to miss class.

Through this program, not only are these children able to study subjects which few others in their local surroundings have even heard of, they are also able to form friendships with children who are in similar life situations: the only Orthodox family in miles, constantly welcoming strangers into their homes, always expected to behave as perfect models of ideal Jewish children to the outside world. They often form such strong friendships with classmates that when the school meets up "in real life," which it does several times each year for *Shabbatonim* and other programs, the children feel "bonded instantly," as "they [already] kn[ow] each other but have never seen each other [face to face]," says Blesofsky.

The Online School platform utilizes various tools to make available the same

social opportunities present in a traditional classroom. Each student is equipped with a headset and microphone, and most use a webcam as well; they can ask and answer questions, see their classmates when they are speaking, use a "whiteboard," and learn in independent groups in smaller "breakout rooms" within the classroom. All the students gather for *Rosh Chodesh* assemblies, or rallies for other events. The school even offers after-hours homework help with volunteer high school students, and the eighth grade girls produce a yearbook and enjoy a graduation trip together. Many children go on to board in other communities for high school.

Much thought has been put into the school's design and technology: video tutorials explain which equipment is necessary, how to set it up, and even how fast an internet connection is required based on the number of children the family wants to teach online simultaneously (listing connection speeds for up to five children).

Distance learning has been common since the 16th Century (via mail courses), but with the advent of the internet and instantaneous video connections, online schooling has become a realistic way to bring learning and community to those who would otherwise have no access to a Lubavitch classroom. As technology progresses, increasing benefits become available to the Jewish community, limited only by the ingenuity of those who realize the opportunities surrounding them. The Online School helps these children feel connected and supported in their roles as *shluchim*, wherever they are in the world.

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## XLVI in Review

**BY MEIRA LERNER** The New England Patriots and the New York Giants fought hard for more than just a championship ring. When the two teams met on February 5<sup>th</sup> in Super Bowl XLVI, the Patriots played in the name of beloved philanthropist Myra Hiatt Kraft, while the Giants came to prove that defeating the 18-0 Patriots of 2007 was not a fluke.

Due to the heated rivalry between New York and Boston fans, the game promised to be nerve-racking. From Tom Brady's first throw, what the refs called an "Intentional Grounding" that resulted in a two-point safety, all fans were on the edge of their seats. The New York Giants refused to play on the embarrassing low level on which the Patriots began the game and turned Brady's mistake into a touchdown. By the end of the first quarter, the Giants led the Patriots 9-0.

Tom Brady, with his characteristic focus and ability to perform under great pressure, steadily brought the football down the field for a successful 29-yard field goal attempt. Though the game's start was disastrous for the Patriots, they managed to score a touchdown before halftime, leading the Giants 10-9.

Although the Patriots were on a role by halftime, the score was way too close for either team to feel secure. Fans, however, tried to relax by watching Madonna's halftime show,

which was reminiscent of a Lady Gaga performance. The halftime show featured Madonna, as well as a few other famous singers, dancers dressed as Roman soldiers, and a tightrope walker who was hopefully protected while bouncing on the rope. But who are we fooling? We were all listening to the YU Torah Halftime Show on

**THE HALFTIME SHOW FEATURED MADONNA, AS WELL AS A FEW OTHER FAMOUS SINGERS, DANCERS DRESSED AS ROMAN SOLDIERS, AND A TIGHTROPE WALKER WHO WAS HOPEFULLY PROTECTED WHILE BOUNCING ON THE ROPE. BUT WHO ARE WE FOOLING? WE WERE ALL LISTENING TO THE YU TORAH HALFTIME SHOW ON "TORAH AND SPORTS" TO MAINTAIN OUR INNOCENCE IN THE EVENT THAT 53-YEAR-OLD MADONNA ATTEMPTED HER OWN WARDROBE MALFUNCTION.**

"Torah and Sports" to maintain our innocence in the event that 53-year-old Madonna attempted her own wardrobe malfunction.

And then the third quarter began. Brady continued his successful passing in the third quarter, breaking a super

bowl record with sixteen completions in a row. As Patriots fans cheered the 17-9 lead and Giants fans moaned in defeat hoping for another 2007, the game turned around. A Giants field goal reduced the Patriots' lead to five points. Another Giants field goal, making the game 17-15 in the third quarter. Then, Brady almost miraculously evaded a sac to throw a long pass down the field that was caught by Giants linebacker Chase Blackburn. Although the Giants did not turn the interception into a scoring opportunity, Blackburn's interception effectively prevented the Patriots from increasing their lead.

The Patriots, given another chance to extend their lead in the fourth quarter, which would have almost definitely sealed the win, began driving downfield. With 2<sup>nd</sup> and 11 on the Giants' 44-yard line, Brady passed the ball to an open Wes Welker for what he hoped would be a first down. The ball, thrown slightly wide, slipped out of Welker's hands for an incomplete pass. The turning point of the game had arrived.

Down by two, the Giants would regain possession with less than four minutes to the game. In a play



that was all too similar to the Giants' final drive of Super Bowl XLII, Eli Manning passed the ball to Mario Manningham for 38 yards. A few more passes before Ahmad Bradshaw tried to down the ball at the 1-yard line with 1:04 left of the game, but Bradshaw lost balance and fell backwards for the touchdown. Had Bradshaw avoided the touchdown, the Giants would have run down the clock and kicked a field goal to seal the win. With Bradshaw's touchdown, however, Giants took the lead, 21-17, giving Brady a minute to work his magic.

With a four-point deficit, the Patriots needed more than a field goal to win the game. Brady quickly passed the football downfield, using timeouts and out-of-bounds to stop the play clock. With five seconds remaining on the clock, the Patriots had time for one last play. Brady was forced to throw a 51-yard Hail Mary that would decide the game. If the Hail

Mary were successful, the Patriots would win the super bowl. If not, the Giants would take another ring away from the Patriots. The pass, almost caught by injured Rob Gronkowski, fell incomplete, sealing the win for the New York Giants.

As New Yorkers celebrate the win, New Englanders will be asking "What if?" What if Brady had not given the Giants a safety on the first play of the game? What if Brady had not thrown an interception? What if Welker had made the first down on Brady's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 11 pass? In sports, "What if?" will always plague players and fans, forever causing those sleepless nights. Annoyed as we may be at a game's outcome, however, is it not that anxiety-inducing uncertainty – the ability for a game-winning touchdown, basket, or home-run to appear at the last moment when all was thought to be lost – what makes the games so intriguing and captivating?

## February Game Schedule

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
12 - 1:00 @ Baruch (Last Home Game) - EWFC Dual Championships	13	14 - 8:00	15 - 7:30 @ Stern College Macs Madness - 7:30 @ Rubin Gym	16 - HWWAC Quarterfinals
19 - HWWAC Finals - EWFC Individual Championships	20	21	22	23
26 - 8:00 @ NYU US Collegiate Squad Championships	27	28	29	

\*For more details and game recaps, visit yumacs.com.

## Sports Quotes

*"It ain't over til it's over." - Yogi Berra*

*"Nothing can defeat you if you make up your mind to fight, and nothing can save you if you have accepted defeat." - Apoorve Dubey*

*"I don't want to look back; I want to keep looking ahead. I'd hate for my defining moment to be my past." - Scott Hamilton (Olympic figure skating gold medalist)*

*"Even in the most impossible situations, stand tall, keep your head up, shoulders back, keep moving, running, looking up, demonstrating pride, dignity, and defiance." - Bill Walsh*

## Save the Date!

Be sure to catch the Lady Macs Basketball team's final home game at Baruch College on Sunday, Feb 12!

Note that fencing has a match in the Stern College 11<sup>th</sup> Floor Gym! If you cannot make that match, be sure to check out Macs Madness uptown in Rubin Gym.

# SCIENCE & HEALTH

SHULAMIT BRUNSWICK  
NAAMAH PLOTZKER  
SCIENCE@YUOBSERVER.COM

## How an Obsession with Coffee is Destroying our Rainforests

**BY SHULAMIT BRUNSWICK** It is difficult to believe that a bitter, black drink has spawned a nearly worldwide obsession. Coffee has quickly evolved from its humble origins to a multi-faceted drink consumed by the gallon by rich and poor. In the US especially, gone are the days where one could order a simple cup of coffee; instead consumers spout off long, rattling titles at their local Starbucks counter which all wind up to mean the same thing: “Coffee! Stat!” However, coffee’s status as one of the most consumed beverages in the world masks the very real truth that our beloved drink is the number one cause of rainforest destruction.

Legend has it that an Ethiopian goatherd discovered coffee when he noticed his goats frolicking around a bush with mysterious red berries which, when the goatherd tasted them himself, produced a feeling of euphoria. A monk, witnessing the goatherd, took some berries back to his monastery and that night, the monks were more alert to divine inspiration. Coffee soon crossed the sea into Arabia and the beverage as we know it today was born. In 1615, coffee was introduced to Europe and the race to grow and produce it was on, with the Dutch coming out ahead and growing a booming coffee business. Soon it crossed the Atlantic and by 1800, Brazil was the leading coffee producer in the West.

Today, with 500 billion cups consumed every year, coffee is a monster industry, boasting revenues exceeding \$10 billion. Brazil and Columbia lead the pack, producing 22.5 and 10.5 million 60 kg bags, respectively.

However, coffee’s booming industry comes

with a hefty price tag. Each single cup of this brown gold destroys three-square centimeters of rainforest. This staggering estimate makes coffee the leading cause of rainforest destruction. More and more rainforests are cleared to create the “sun drenched” environment coffee growers demand. Much of this destruction is in vain as more coffee is produced than is consumed.

Since coffee production is so valuable, the plants are heavily sprayed with pesticides. Many of these pesticides are not only poisonous to the wildlife and the farmers, but contaminate the water as well. Natural means of soil regeneration have been abandoned as the growers push the land to its limit. The results are reduced productivity over time, and soil erosion and acidification. The soil erosion rate around coffee plants is nearly double the rate of subsidence plots, the land a farmer will cultivate for his own needs, because there are broad expanses of bare soil under the coffee bushes which are vulnerable during the rainy season.

Finally, the emergence of coffee monopolies created an unfair distribution of wealth among the supply chain. From the berries to the finished product, coffee changes hands at least fifteen times before it reaches the roaster and the price increases at each step. The farmer may earn \$0.15/lb., which the roaster and retailer will earn \$5.00/lb. to \$20.00/lb. Small farmers cannot compete with large plantations and many small farmers live at subsidence level despite producing high quality coffee.

Despite the damage it causes, it seems unlikely that coffee production will slow; it is just too lucrative. Uganda exports just 3 million 60kg bags and they account for 75% of the country’s export revenue and provide employment for 80% of all rural workers. Uganda is not the only country to benefit economically from coffee. 100,000 small farms generate most Mexican coffee and coffee’s economic importance in Columbia has led to all cars entering the country to be sprayed for harmful bacteria.

It is clear that the solution will not come from the growers and so, it must come from the consumers. If people were made to realize that cutting down on their coffee intake would positively affect our disappearing rainforests, the demand for the “brown gold” would diminish, leading to decreased production and, more importantly, greatly decreased rainforest destruction.



Julia Siegel

## Bring on the Brain Games?

**BY NAAMAH PLOTZKER** Google “brain games” and you will find a host of websites featuring games that claim they will boost your mental capabilities – not *Halo*-style shoot-out action games, but visual and verbal puzzles. Huge amounts of money are invested into researching the legitimacy of the brain games industry. For brain games, like for many things that are not definitely proven, there is no one answer – their efficacy remains a fiery debate.

In the early 1990s, Dr. Richard Haier used positron-emission tomography (PET) scans to test glucose levels in the brains of individuals as they played Tetris. High glucose levels in the brain reflect hard thinking. When the participants of the study first began playing, their glucose levels were very high, indicating that their brains were working very hard, even at the game’s most elementary levels. However, significant reduction of brain glucose levels after several weeks of consistent play suggested an improvement in participants’ cognitive ability to solve the puzzles.

Dr. Torkel Klingberg of the Karolinska Institute in Sweden emphasizes positive neurological effects of playing “brain games.” By using brain-imaging, he has shown how the number of dopamine receptors is increased by “brain training” (dopamine is a neurotransmitter involved in learning).

A couple of questions researchers need to illuminate now are whether the improvement in skill at one game can apply to other games or to real-world skills, and whether all games are created equal in this regard.

Skeptics of the benefits of gaming consider studies such as the one published in the prestigious science journal *Nature* in April 2010 to conclude that the benefits of gaming are weak at best. The 2010 study tested 11,430 individuals who played “brain games” several hours each week and examined their improvements both on the games’ tasks they had been practicing and unrelated tasks. While improvement in the games’ tasks was observed, which the researchers attributed to the “practice makes perfect” phenomenon, no improvement was seen on “untrained” tasks, even when the two tasks were very similar.

Proponents of gaming point out potential problems with the 2010 study – quality-control issues and whether participants engaged in sufficient training to experience a brain boost.

Yet there is little evidence demonstrating positive effects of “brain games,” so far it appears that, though entertaining, they are basically a waste of time. Most of the data researchers have used to support gaming has actually been from studies of action games. Therefore, a better question to ask would be, can *action games* be good for the brain? A study of laparoscopic surgeons at Beth Israel Medical Center is one indication that playing action games can be positive for mental functioning. These surgeons perform hi-tech surgery in the abdomen using minute incisions, which requires the surgeon to have superior depth-perception and hand-eye coordination. Surgeons who played action games for more than three hours each week were found to make 37% fewer errors as compared to their nongaming counterparts due to better hand-eye coordination and depth perception, which may have been cultivated by gaming. A book published in 2006 by the Harvard Business

School Press notes that “gaming” professionals tend to be more social, confident, and proficient at creative problem solving than their non-gaming peers.

University of Rochester professor Daphne Bavelier and student Shawn Green published a study researching and reviewing skills

**DON'T HEDGE YOUR GPA ON HALO NIGHTS, BUT KNOW THAT THERE MAY BE A CHANCE PLAYING VIDEO GAMES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR MENTAL FITNESS.**

that seemed enhanced by regular gaming in *Nature* in 2003. The study reported that on standardized tests measuring attention span and information processing time, the gamers far outperformed the nongamers. Later studies also supported the possibility that the visual

precision of gamers was better than that of nongamers. Some examples of improved visual precision that the studies found are that gamers were better at visually tracking multiple objects simultaneously (and that gaming actually helped to improve this skill), that gamers were almost 60% better at distinguishing between shades of gray, and that gamers’ speed at making correct decisions in changing environments is faster than nongamers’ by 25%. For example, all these skills are useful for driving in traffic or nighttime conditions.

On the other hand, different studies show that gaming turns the brain off. Dr. Akio Mori of Nihon University in Tokyo, who has made something of a name for himself with his controversial claim that gamers have physical brain damage, measured the beta wave activity in the prefrontal lobes of gaming and non-gaming subjects. Beta wave activity indicates cognitive activity in that area of the brain, as opposed to alpha waves. Mori found that not only was beta wave activity lowered increasingly the more time subjects spent gaming, but that frequent gamers experienced low beta wave activity even while they were not gaming. Much research has gone into studying whether it is true that children who game frequently have difficulty separating fantasy and reality and practice the violent behavior they see in the games they play. In addition, studies have also linked gaming to decreased attention spans.

The recurring problem that studies of this issue run into is called *endogeneity*: is the alleged effect actually the cause, and the alleged cause the effect? For example, while the gaming surgeons may have acquired their superior depth-perception and hand-eye coordination from gaming, it is also likely that this group already possessed superior depth-perception and hand-eye coordination, and were therefore attracted to tasks, such as gaming, that require these skills. Or, those who enjoy video games may have been born with lower cognitive activity in their pre-frontal lobes and consequently turn to video games for stimulation, as opposed to their more thinking peers, who prefer to engage in more cognitive tasks, and therefore their beta-wave activity is low even while not playing video games. Drawing definitive conclusions is very complicated because in order to do so, rigorous longitudinal studies may be in order, but these are difficult to conduct on large groups. Subjects may need to be studied from the time they are young in order to see how people’s individual abilities influence their interests.

So don’t hedge your GPA on *Halo* nights, but know that there may be a chance playing video games can contribute to your mental fitness.



## You Are Not Too Busy For This

**BY RUTHIE HELLER** As college students, we have a common tendency to get into the habit of going to bed late, staying awake with barrels of coffee and munching constantly throughout the day. We have immensely packed lives: going to classes, tons of school work, upholding a social life and exploring the wonderful city of New York. With all of this on our plates, a healthy lifestyle tends to slip out the back door while sleepless nights, bingeing, and stressing become our primary habits even though they lessen our quality of life.

You are probably wondering, "What are easy yet effective ways to improve my health without having to really try?" It has been medically proven that a daily dose

of dark chocolate is a good way to improve your health. This seems like a myth or even a joke because of its fantastically delicious flavor, but no jokes here, folks, it is true! The three components that make it healthy are its antioxidants, its minerals, and its ability to release endorphins in the brain.

Antioxidants benefit us because they prevent oxidation which causes free radicals to damage our cells. Damaged cells could prevent the normal functions of our bodies to stop working, so antioxidants are crucial in healthy living. The antioxidants in dark chocolate are called polyphenols. These are found in a large variety of fruits and vegetables, but eating chocolate allows you to get the same benefit in a tastier way!

Some of the minerals in dark chocolate include iron, copper, magnesium and potassium. Magnesium and potassium help regulate blood pressure, muscle function and prevention of chronic

illnesses. Iron contributes to reducing stress, allowing more oxygen into the blood stream, increasing blood flow, which helps keep our cardiovascular system up to par. Finally, copper helps reduce cholesterol, elevate energy levels, and acts as a brain stimulant.

Lastly one of the greatest perks of dark chocolate is that it releases endorphins, hormones that make us feel good and happy.

These are all some fantastic reasons to keep snacking on chocolate, but it is important to keep in mind that these health benefits are strictly related to dark chocolate; milk and white

chocolate are not nearly as healthy and will only donate some extra love to your hips.

The key factor in keeping dark chocolate healthy is portion control. Dark chocolate may contain nutrients, however, it is also very high in calories and fat so make sure to take no more than the recommended daily dosage and, most importantly, savor every bite.

Another essential way to help improve your daily living is through sleep, and not just a few hours of it. Pulling all nighters or getting an average of 4 to 5 hours of sleep a night will have negative long term consequences. It is proven that lack of sleep can be the number one cause of weight gain, memory loss and lack of productivity.

These new resources will be great positive enhancements for your day-to-day living and make you feel more energetic and lively. Now you know you can grab life's sweetness at any moment of the day and shut out its stresses just by closing your eyes. So, bon appetit, good luck and good night!

The time is now to improve your old, and unhealthy sleep habits! Harvard sleep clinic gives 5 easy steps to help college students effectively and efficiently change their bad habits.

1. Make sure to create a routine of waking up and going to bed at the same time every day, so your body gets used to a certain schedule and will work more efficiently during waking hours.

2. Make sure that you are going to bed when you are sleepy. If you are unable to fall asleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing like reading. Do not use your computer or cell phone because the light emitting from them inhibit the production of melatonin, the "sleep hormone" which makes it even harder to fall asleep.

3. Set a comfortable sleeping environment prior to getting into bed such as turning off bright lights.

4. Avoid heavy meals and exercise close to the set time you chose to go to sleep. You might think exercise will tire you out, but it energizes your body, making sleep difficult. Exercise is important, but make sure it is done earlier in the day. Eating a heavy meal before bed causes your body to expend energy digesting it while you sleep leaving less time for the body to be totally relaxed.

5. Any stresses or anxiety of the day should be cleared from your mind before getting into bed. Relax and free yourself of all the stresses that college brings!

With these five steps you are now well equipped to start a new, healthy lifestyle.

## No More Turning a Blind Eye:

### Ocular and Visual Prostheses

**BY BATSHEVA KUHR** Randy, a young man of 20 years old and in the prime of his life lost his right eye while serving in Iraq. Randy was told that his eye was damaged beyond repair and nothing could be done about his facial disfiguration. Luckily, Randy was given an incredible opportunity on *The Doctors TV Show*. He was going to have a second chance at a "normal appearance" with an ocular prosthesis.

An ocular prosthesis is an artificial, non-functioning implement worn over a natural eye that has become disfigured, for reasons such as accidents or cancer. Ocular prostheses are made by ocularists. Colloquially, an ocular prosthesis may be referred to as a "glass eye", as they were originally made from glass. Interestingly, as of World War II, when glass was no longer as available, ocularists had to turn to another source for their craft: medical grade acrylic.

The process of receiving an ocular prosthesis is relatively simple, taking only about one to four days and not requiring surgery. However, the process of crafting the prosthesis is very specific to each patient. An impression of the patient's eye socket is taken if there is volume missing from the eye. The ocularist will use this mold to form the prosthesis. The iris is hand-painted onto the prosthesis to best match the patient's

functioning eye. The veins of the eye are imitated using frayed red silk thread. The white part of the eye (the sclera) is tinted using pigments. In the final steps, the prosthetic is sealed and polished.

While ocular prosthetics have been around for some time, exciting research is being conducted on a different kind of prosthetic: visual prostheses. This device serves an entirely different purpose than ocular prostheses. While the purpose of ocular prostheses is to cosmetically disguise a blemished eye, visual prosthetics are implemented to restore some form of vision to patients.

There are many different kinds of visual prostheses, including the artificial retina and the cortical implant. Pioneered in the early 1990s by Dr. Mark Humayun of University of Southern California, the artificial retina essentially serves to replace the area of the eye that is damaged. Specifically, it replaces rods and cones, cells in the eye that detect light and send information to the brain. The artificial retina device works by way of a miniature camera attached to eyeglasses which takes images and wirelessly transmits them via a microprocessor as an electric signal to the retinal implant. The receiver in the implant interprets the image and sends small electrical pulses to the cells leading to the optic nerve,

the "highway" for visual signals to reach the visual cortex and the area of the brain involved in interpreting vision. The model was approved in Europe and the procedure costs about \$100,000. The product awaits approval from the FDA to be sold in the US publicly.

In 2011, another, newer form of visual prostheses was developed: the visual cortical implant by Dr. Mohamad Sawan of Polystim Neurotechnologies Laboratory in Montreal. A microcamera, perhaps mounted on sunglasses or the like, picks up visual stimuli, transmits them to a processor which then transmits the signals, via radio frequencies, to a microchip that is implanted in the visual cortex of the brain. Essentially, the brain is directly stimulated by a microchip, altogether bypassing the eye and all its supporting structures.

At this point, the quality of vision provided by these prosthetics is fairly rudimentary. For example, reading and facial recognition are not yet possible, but identification of simple objects and motion detection are facilitated by visual prostheses. For those without vision, even these small steps can be pretty amazing. Be sure to keep an eye out for interesting new research on this front.

## Rwanda's Lessons for Today's Students

*continued from page 1*

family was killed solely for being Tutsi, not Hutu, in a country where being Tutsi was considered enough to sentence a person to death. Murekatete hopes that by teaching the younger generations about tolerance, there will never be a situation where a person will genuinely believe that a fellow human being deserves death just for being different.

Murekatete delivered an emotional speech, detailing her experiences during the genocide, and her subsequent arrival at her uncle's in Queens. She explained that her decision to speak up about the Rwandan genocide was inspired by

a speech given at her high school by David Gewirtzman – a survivor of the Holocaust – when she was in tenth grade. Answering a question by a delegate about why she had refrained from speaking about her experiences until then, Murekatete explained that it took her a great many years to process the events of her childhood, and that she would often wake up in the mornings thinking that it had been a nightmare, but that hearing another survivor of a genocide speak made her realize how important it is to educate people about genocide, however painful that might be.

Murekatete commented on her dismay at discovering – upon her

arrival in America – that, contrary to her assumptions, other countries had been all too aware of what had been going on in Rwanda, but that they had clearly not deemed the genocide of her people important enough to demand attention, or intervention. Murekatete stressed the importance of bringing genocide prevention to the fore of government attention, as genocide continues to take place in countries throughout the world. Murekatete ended with a word to the delegates, asking them to take her message home, and to spread awareness about genocide.

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# ARTS & CULTURE

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## Giant Turtles Mourn: A Landscape of Jewish Fiction

**BY RENEE KESTENBAUM** If you've ever cringed when a television show drags out a token Jew who is just completely wrong – *kippah* too bright, beard too square – you just may be delighted by Nathan Englander, an accomplished writer who gets it all completely right.



With appealing accuracy and defiant imagination, Englander portrays not “Jewish characters” but simply “characters,” complete with their own desires, conflicts and subtleties. Though he has left the Orthodox Judaism in which he was raised, Englander has reflected on religion, and on the ultra-Orthodox, with compassion and with dignity. This skill marks Englander's first short story collection, *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges*, and resurfaces in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank* in a new context.

*For the Relief of Unbearable Urges* won reviewers over with its title story about a Hasid

whose Rebbe gives him a *heter* [dispensation] to visit a prostitute in order to preserve his marriage. This particular situation is an extreme example of Englander's work, but the collection is full of characters whose Jewishness informs their lives without resorting to stereotype. There is Gitta, a 54-year-old *agunah* [woman waiting for a divorce] who exacts her own pressure on her boorish husband; there is Ruchama, a mother and sheitel-macher [wig maker] who wishes to be beautiful just once more; there is Reb Yitzhak who holds a job as a department store Santa Claus to pay the bills. There are also the scrutinizers of the neighborhood women as they appear at *shul* in their holiday-fines; one of Englander's most ingenious thought experiments in the collection is the imagined reactions of the Mekylim and Mahmirim [the lenient and the strict] of Chelm when their village is faced with an edict of “relocation” during the Final Solution.

Published 13 years later, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank* moves beyond individual pains and local interests; more is at stake this collection.

Among the jewels of these short stories is “Sister Hills,” an allegory chronicling the development of the State of Israel (complete with Arab-Israeli conflict) through the tale

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## What is Jewish Art, The Western Wall?

**BY AIMEE RUBENSTEEN** The Western Wall, or *Kotel*, is more than just a popular tourist site; its history is enriched with the Jewish experience throughout time. Located in the Old City of Jerusalem, the foundation of the Western Wall is 19 meters high and dates back over 2,000 years to Herod the Great. In its entirety, the *Kotel* stretches 1,600 feet, and continues to be one of the most sacred sites for the Jewish people, as well as a tourist site for gentiles looking for a historical, spiritual or aesthetic experience. The structure's history is embedded in every layer of every stone, but can the *Kotel* be considered a piece of art just because it is a symbol of the Jewish experience?



Aimee Rubenstein

If it is art, then what is the proper way to view it as a spectator? In order to understand the *Kotel* as a piece of art, one must consider American philosopher John Dewey's philosophy of art.

Art exists in order to create an experience for the viewer. Dewey believes that a work of art is

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## I Need A Doctor: Tracing the History of Doctor Who

**BY SHULAMIT BRUNSWICK** On November 30, 1963 six million people tuned in to a strange and exotic world that would revolutionize science fiction in ways few had ever dreamed of: Doctor Who. With a 48-year run and over 700 hours of TV time (and counting), this British television show has not lost its magic and continues to thrill and inspire people decades later.

Before we begin, introductions are in order. Who is the Doctor? Where does he come from?

The Doctor is one of last surviving members of the “Time Lords,” beings who have managed to unlock the secrets of time travel. He travels the universe in his time machine, the TARDIS. He sees it as his mission to right the wrongs he comes across. Any race of the universe, aliens included, may turn to the Doctor for assistance.

But where does he come from, really?

Doctor Who was born in the mind of Sydney Newman, head of the BBC's drama department, in the early 1960s. Newman collaborated with BBC executive Donald Wilson in an effort to create a children's science program that would fill an empty slot during family hour on Saturday afternoons. They hoped this new show would rival the ratings of Newman's hugely popular creation Target Luna. Newman hoped to create something that would engage younger children as well as adults, snagging both ends of the viewing spectrum. Newman thought to use the idea of a time traveler to educate children about various historical periods. He came up with the idea of an “alien” time traveler to incorporate the outer space theme that had made Target Luna so popular.

In his book, *A Critical History of Doctor Who on Television*, John Kenneth Muir quotes Newman as saying, “I dreamed of this old man of 760 years of age who fled from a distant

planet in a time space machine. Being so old, he is somewhat senile and doesn't know how to operate his machine.”

A brand new show needed a brand new sound: a theme song so unique that it would snare viewers the instant they turned on their TV sets. The Doctor Who theme music is unearthly, eerie, and exciting. Ron Grainer composed the original Doctor Who theme and intended it to be like nothing anyone had heard before. Delia Derbyshire of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop worked with Grainer to capture his vision.

Television composer Mark Ayres writes about the Workshop's innovative process in creating their masterpiece. At the time, there were no synthesizers; the sound for electronic music came either from pure electronic sources or from recordings of actual live sounds. The Workshop found the source of their electronic sound in a bank of twelve high-quality test tone generators, which usually function to output various tones (square waves, sine waves) for passing through electronic circuits for testing, and equalizers. Each sound in the Doctor Who theme was individually created using these instruments, and recorded to magnetic tape. Swooping sounds were created by manually adjusting the pitch of the oscillator to a carefully-timed pattern. Rhythmic hissing sounds were created by filtering white noise. Once they had all the sounds they wanted, the recording of each sound was trimmed and the pieces stuck together, creating the music that had to be “mixed”. Since there were no multi-track tape machines like audio engineers today use to mix music, the Workshop invented crude multi-track techniques: each length of tape was placed on a separate tape machine and all the machines were started simultaneously and the outputs mixed together. The resulting wails, “bubbles,”

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## Puzzle Corner: Plane Letter

**BY DAVIDA KOLLMAR** This winter break, my friends from Stern travelled to many different locations around the world, so I wrote each of them a plane letter to read on the long ride there. As I wrote the plane letters, I noticed that the name of each of their destinations was related in some way to geometry, as is the word plane letter itself. This puzzle is a cipher of all of my friends' destinations. Each letter is replaced by a different letter, the same letter throughout the puzzle. Happy solving!

WVQAK KYHODA

LAKW VXCVAK RZ WTA WDVXMHPOD WDOCA

FADQHCO WDVXMPA

ODNT RZ WVWHK

MOWALOG ODNT VX KW PRHVK

MDAOW JGDOQVC RZ MVUO

KJONAKTVJ AODWT KJTADA OW AJNRW

MRPCAX WDVXMPA RZ BHOPO PHQJHD

KWRXA NVDNPA OW KWRXATAXMA

JDVQA QADVCVOX OW MDAAXLVNT

ODNWN NVDNPA

WVOXOXQAX KYHODA

NRPHQFHK NVDNPA





## Presidential Manners: George Washington's Rules of Civility

**BY MEIRAH SHEDLO** When George Washington was around sixteen, he copied out over a hundred *Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation* as part of a schoolboy penmanship exercise. These precepts, based on a 16th century Jesuit tradition, were greatly influential in the future president's early years and formational in his later approach to behavior and leadership. They included instructions in how to dress, eat, speak, and interact with others. Historian and Washington biographer Richard Brookhiser emphasizes the importance of these rules to the leader, and underscores the significance of proper behavior and reputation in Washington's day.

In "The Civilizing Process in the West", a course offered in the history department last semester, students examined changing standards of polite behavior from 1530 to 1914. In the earlier period preceding the French Revolution, civilized behavior served as a marker of social distinction, setting apart the courtier aristocracy from the bourgeoisie class. Noted humanist Desiderius Erasmus wrote a popular treatise on proper societal behavior and manners in 1530, specifically to educate boys who would one day join the court. The 16th century origin of Washington's rules places the behavioral standards in this period; cultivating a distinguished reputation was a high priority for gentlemen of this era. By the 18th century, the rules had begun to be disseminated to middle class youth, including Washington.

Overall, there was a trend toward increased restriction of acceptable behaviors. The term "civility" itself, an ancestor of the term "civilization", specifically referred to manners, a major focus of Washington's rules. Some of the rules Washington studied seem very obvious to us today, but forms of conduct that are now second nature needed to be spelled out in the 18th century. For example, Washington's list included admonitions against cleaning one's teeth on the table cloth and talking with meat in one's mouth. Some rules are also a little picky by today's standards, such as number ten's instruction indicating how a person should sit: "When you Sit down, Keep your Feet firm and Even, without putting one on the other or Crossing them." However, these rules represented more than just manners; they emphasized correct moral behavior and consideration for others.

While fortunately most of us were not required to handwrite this list of over a hundred rules in high school, there is much we can learn from them, even in the 21st century. For example, the directives to treat all with respect and to be considerate of others

are well-accepted today:

"1st: Every Action done in Company, ought to be with Some Sign of Respect, to those that are Present"; "3rd: Shew Nothing to your Friend that may affright him"; "4th: In the Presence of Others Sing not to yourself with a humming Noise, nor Drum with your Fingers or Feet."

Furthermore, Washington's rules guide us to accept others rather than react judgmentally. Rule 44 says that if a person tries his best but does not succeed, others should not be quick to criticize him: "When a man does all he can though it Succeeds not well blame not him that did it." Also, according to rule 48, one should not blame another for an offense he is guilty of himself, for one's own actions speak louder than words: "Wherein wherein you reprove Another be unblameable yourself; for example is more prevalent than Precepts."

The final rule, the 110th, states: "Labour to keep alive in your Breast that Little Spark of Celestial fire Called Conscience." Even given all these rules, the true gentleman must have it within himself to discern between right and wrong. Washington himself internalized this teaching and is remembered for his character and exemplary presidency. He continues to set an example for us today and in future generations of the ongoing civilizing process.



Colonial Williamsburg website

## Giant Turtles Mourn: A Landscape of Jewish Fiction

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of two pioneer mothers who invoke superstition to save one's daughter's life. Our law is the heartbeat of "Sister Hills," which goes on to explore both halakha's life-guiding qualities and its varied, sometimes self-serving, interpretations.

"Free Fruit for Young Widows" is a rumination between father and son on evil and impossible choices, the narrative's weight settling on the young Holocaust survivor who returns to his home to find it occupied by Gentile friends. When he learns of their plans to kill him, the boy executes the five family members, including their baby girl, in a jarring comparison to the murders last year in Itamar.

In an interview last week, Englander told *The Local* that he is "obsessed, if not tortured, by the gray areas" because of his black-and-white upbringing. Exploiting the gray is certainly something Englander does in several of the stories in this new collection.

Shrewd at observing life and at distilling great tragedies and comedies with a few strokes of the pen, Englander can wrench your heart until it bleeds. In the title story (deliberately invoking Raymond Carver) a secular Jewish couple and an "Orthodox-turned-Ultra-Orthodox" couple get high together, flitting over several different heady topics before the visit culminates in a dark game of make-believe. One man tells of accompanying his Holocaust-survivor father to the gym and discovering that the numbers on his father's arm are just three digits off from the tattoo of the next man over on the bench. "So I say to my dad, 'He's right ahead of you,' I say. 'Look, a five,' I say. 'And yours is an eight.' And the other guy looks and my father looks, and my father says, 'All that means is, he cut ahead of me in line. There, same as here. This guy's a cutter, I just didn't want to say.' 'Blow it out your ear,' the other guy says. And that's it. Then they get back to putting on socks."

"Camp Sundown" showcases Englander's imaginative blend of comedy and urgency, with the eldercamp's director losing control to a gang of 70-year-olds convinced one of the campers was a Nazi guard.

*What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank* is not a Holocaust book. Englander moves towards universal relevance in this collection, including "The Reader," his first published work whose main character is not overtly Jewish. In the presumably auto-biographical "Everything I Know About My Family on My Mother's Side" a writer frantically examines his roots to discover his own identity, before his lack of self consumes him.

"Peep Show" (not *glatt*, for the discriminating) and "How We Avenged the Blums" are the low notes in this otherwise excellent collection, the first for its predictable, moralistic conclusion and the second for our non-involvement in the fates of the young yeshiva boys learning to defend themselves against the neighborhood Anti-Semite bully.

Reviewers have likened Englander to Isaac Bashevis Singer, Philip Roth, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, James Joyce, John Cheever, Nikolai Gogol, Franz Kafka, and Raymond Carver – a tough writer to categorize, and a tough legacy to live up. *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank* takes Englander in new directions, though going back to his writerly roots in *For the Relief of Unbearable Urges* will continue to delight.

consummation and fulfillment.

Since I was raised to believe that the *Kotel* is one of the holiest sites, I never considered it to be a work of art. I was always engaged with the structure, like a piece of art, but I never was able to articulate the aesthetic experience that I encountered because I was too focused on praying or connecting with the physical wall. After walking on the Temple Mount and viewing the *Kotel* from above, my entire outlook on the *Kotel* changed. Rather than experiencing a spiritual connection, at the closest spot to the Holy of Holies, I actually experienced what Dewey describes in his philosophy of art. I felt like I was living in the times of the Second Temple and reliving the experience of the pilgrimage of the Jews. According to Dewey, this experience parallels the way a viewer should recount the daily life of an Athenian when he looks at the Parthenon. I finally experienced the *Kotel* as a Jew, but also as an art history student.

## What is Jewish Art, The Western Wall?

*continued from page 10*

really what the physical art product does within experience, and specifically in the experience of the viewer. Dewey's philosophy of art explains the product of art as the conversation between the art and the viewer. In this regard, the *Kotel* is clearly a piece of art because it has such a strong connection with its visitors and spectators. Even non-religious viewers can have a religious experience with the *Kotel*. For example, Frenchwoman Colette Modiano had such "an experience" with the *Kotel*, despite the fact that she was not Jewish or religious. In her book "Turkish Coffee and the Fertile Crescent," Modiano writes, "Now I was able to see the Wall at close range. I am not a particularly reverent person by nature, but it stirred me." The *Kotel* enables its viewers to feel a sense of fulfillment when they engage, first-handedly, with the historical monument that holds the history of the Jews, Umayyads and Turks.

While a wall is not a conventional art form, it can actually epitomize art in that it interacts with human space. In his article, "On the Signification of Walls in Verbal and Visual Art," Michael Moore explains that architecture, and specifically walls, serve as an important art form. He writes that in Jewish religion and experience, the most significant wall is the Western Wall. When I was recently praying by the *Kotel*, during the High Holidays, wall's importance struck me. Hundreds of people around me, both Orthodox Jews and Gentile tourists, seemed to have conflicting ways of experiencing the holiness of the *Kotel*.

However, while the Orthodox Jews were worshipping at the religious monument with closed eyes, the Gentile (and Jewish) tourists were photographing the historic site with closed prayerbooks. I was captured by the *Kotel's* ability to simultaneously serve as a religious monument and an aesthetic site for its visitors.

I am not the only one to recognize the way that people worship the *Kotel*; Israeli philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz is known for cynically referring to the Western Wall as the Discotel. Leibowitz, a Zionist and an Orthodox Jew, is known for his strong belief in separating religion and politics. He specifically used a play on the words "discotheque" and "Kotel" because he disapproved of the veneration of Jewish shrines. Although his remark is radical, he makes a valid point because millions of visitors seem to be worshipping the *Kotel*, every day, even though Judaism prohibits idol worship. Judaism continually struggles with validating the prohibition of creating and worshipping graven images. The *Kotel* is not classified as a graven image, but people should not bow down to it. Clearly, while the *Kotel* generates a response in its viewers, it can also hinder viewers from recognizing the experience beyond the physical product of art.

While Dewey would agree that the *Kotel* is a great piece of art, he would also be concerned that many people get too caught up in the physical architecture of the structure, rather than experiencing it.

For example, Dewey considers the Parthenon,

a Greek temple dedicated to Athena and the surviving symbol of Ancient Greece and Athenian democracy. Dewey explains that the Parthenon's aesthetic experience depends upon the experience it creates for its viewers. When observing the Parthenon, the viewer can imagine the how the ancient Greeks interacted with the structure daily. According to Dewey's philosophy, the *Kotel* as a work of art depends on its viewers in the same way.

I have encountered this connection, almost camaraderie, many times in museums in New York City. At first, I look directly at the paint on the canvas and appreciate the texture or glaze. Then as I take a step back, I am awestruck by the image that the brushstrokes create, whether it is a painting from the Renaissance or from the Post-Modern movement. Finally, I am always intrigued by the sensation that the painting produces for me as a viewer; it is as if the painting begs me to put the image into my memory as if I had sat in this garden or at that café or considers the idea represented in the painting. A piece of art, especially the *Kotel*, embodies this tripartite relationship between a creator, a symbol and an observer. Even though, the physical product of art can interfere with the representation of the experience; a great piece of art, like the *Kotel*, actually succeeds to enable the viewer to experience the pinnacle of the artistic experience with the essence of



## Tracing the History of Doctor Who

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and swoops that make up the theme song hold a distinctly alien feel, immediately setting the viewer into the right "sci-fi" mood.

Doctor Who was to be aired for the first time on November 23, 1963, the day after US president John F. Kennedy's assassination. The coverage of the assassination played on England's television sets for hours; Doctor Who was the first entertainment show scheduled but its viewer turnout was dismal because of the international mood. The BBC, though suffering from a tight budget, decided not to scrap the show right off the bat. The gamble paid off. The next week, Doctor Who was watched by six million people and the show was up and running.

The script largely stuck to Newman's original plan of a historical, educational show until episode 16. There, the Doctor and his cohorts meet the Monk, a Time Lord who disregards the Time Lords' laws and attempts to change history. From then on, the show took on the alien invasion angle that became its bread and butter.

Newman and his team had to figure out how to keep their moneymaker on the air without William Hartnell, their lead actor, when his health began to deteriorate in 1966. To solve this problem, they invented regeneration. The last episode Hartnell appeared in

saw him stumble aboard the TARDIS after a huge alien battle, clearly badly hurt. He lay on the floor, suddenly, he changed, and Patrick Troughton was the new Doctor. Time lords do not die, they just regenerate into a new body. Same man, same memories, just a different person. The Doctor has been severe, eccentric, boyish, arrogant, and, at times, displaying a cold fury. To date, the Doctor has regenerated ten times; Matt Smith currently plays the eleventh doctor.

One of the most unique aspects about Doctor Who is its impact on the whole history of science fiction. In 1963, Doctor Who was the cutting edge of sci-fi. The show pioneered some of the aspects of sci-fi that most of us take for granted and may even find cliché.

In "A Critical History of Doctor Who on Television," Muir writes: "Many revolutionary aspects of the Doctor Who series such as time travel 'law', non-humanoid aliens, alternate dimensions, and living machines had never before been envisioned by the masses." Many of today's science fiction books, movies and television shows build on the ideas that Doctor Who introduced to pop culture.

Aside from the ingenious concept, gripping storyline, witty dialogue, and memorable characters, part of the reason Doctor Who has endured for decades is that it incorporates real life issues into the storyline.

Issues of morality, G-d, loneliness, companionship, responsibility, and obligation come up in nearly every episode. Furthermore, the aliens the Doctor fights parallel issues of the time. 1960s viewers recognized the Nazis in the Daleks, the growing plastic surgery trend in the Cybermen, and the off shore oil and gas industry in the Macra. Viewers today recognize the now-rampant plastic surgery trend in Cassandra, the dieting and health craze in the Adipose, and poorly paid, ill-treated foreign workers in the Ood.

In 1989, the BBC abruptly announced that they would sell the rights to Doctor Who to the highest bidder. No one took them up on their offer and Doctor Who was shelved indefinitely after 26 years on air. A made-for-television movie was released in 1996, but aside for reruns, the BBC decided not to bring the show back. However, in 2003, screenwriter Russell T. Davies began producing Doctor Who episodes again, after five years of petitioning the BBC. This time, it looks like its here to stay.

Doctor Who enjoyed immense popularity in England. However, when it arrived in the US in 1970, its reception was lukewarm. The show never garnered the sort of popularity here that it did in England.

Part of the reason is that, unlike other British produced sci-fi shows of the time like Space: 1999 or UFO,

Doctor Who did not cater to an American audience (In contrast, UFO had catered so much that it placed an American air force officer at the center of the action). Doctor Who made no concessions for its American viewers, and in many ways it still doesn't. Many of the jokes and references are ones that an English audience would understand, but fly right over the heads on American audiences, such as the Doctor's famous French catchphrase "Allons-y."

Furthermore, Muir states, American audiences like flashy gadgetry and technology, while British audiences prefer well-told, solid dramatic plots. For example, one of the most popular Doctor Who episodes is "The City of Death" which features more witty dialogue than alien attacks. This makes for great television in Britain. However, Americans prefer their sci-fi to look more like Space:1999 which featured more aliens than one could shake a stick at.

Doctor Who's gadgetry is understated, rather than flashy. The Doctor's time machine is a blue box, while his go-to gadget is the size of a pencil and makes a quiet whirring sound. It's no light saber. Alien worlds are also the exception rather than the norm for the show. Why? Doctor Who may be imaginative and well-written sci-fi, but it's imaginative and well-written sci-fi on a budget, and it always

has been. The TARDIS is a blue box that materializes and dematerializes because that effect is simple to create and avoids costly takeoff and landing scenes. Author Paul Parsons lets us in on a little secret as well. The third doctor was stranded on earth in the 1970s not because a Time Council was punishing him, but because due to budget constraints, the BBC found it easier to put aliens in London rather than create a costly alien landscape for each episode. Even today, most of the Doctor's adventures involve aliens coming to earth rather than the Doctor going to aliens.

Alien characters are also costly. The aliens seen on the show may be men in rubber masks, but those rubber masks have to be custom-made, which is expensive. The script writers found ways around this as well, by creating aliens in a variety of forms such as those that take over human bodies, are microscopic, only speak when deep in shadow, invisible, or disguised as humans. No matter their form, aliens are rarely absent from the plot.

Doctor Who has survived budget cuts, prejudiced producers, a disinterested public, and the changing times admirably. No matter the obstacle, fans always know that when the Earth needs saving, the Doctor is in.



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