

JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

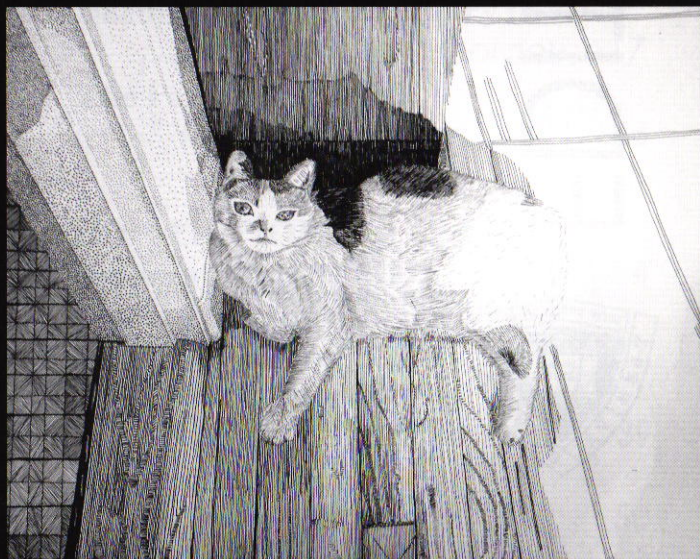
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Daniella Penn • Aaron Portman

DIGITAL ARTS

- Piano** • Yardena Pressner 21
Highway, Monumental Traffic
Moshe Blockman 22
Wrapped, Untitled
Navah Maynard 26
Electric Reflections
Abraham Gross 27
Grand Teton Sunset
Tzvi Levitin 28 - 29
Snowfall Unchanged
Yosef Hoffman 30
Sunset Over the Mediterranean
Joshua Gladstein 31
O₂ • Bayla Neren 41

POETRY

- I Have This Ring You Made For Me**
Miriam Rubin 5
Symphony • Joshua Blau 10
I Remember • Sora Gordon 31
The Paper Boat
Moses Dyckman 45

FICTION

- God Dammit**
Etai Shuchatowitz 7
The Toilet Just Kept On Flushing
Sarah King 16
Applying to College
Ari Schwartz 34

FINE ART

- Grant** • Ayelet Rosenbaum 6
Movie Still From *KIDS*
Riffy Levin 23
Silenced Repetitio
Rachel Gottlieb 28 - 29
Swallowed • Mina Hematian 24
Not Me Without My...
Leora Veit 25
Nine Figures • Sara Pool 38
Chrysler Studies
Makena Owens 52

LITERARY THEORY

- A Study of Objectification in
"The Tale of the Three Apples"**
Yosef Press 12
**Deconstructing the Binary in
*BATMAN*** • Sora Gordon 17
The Path Back to Self
Yardena Pressner 46

NON-FICTION

- Amherst** • Sara Olsen 4
**Confessions of a Shabbos Drama
Queen** • Chevi Friedman 32
A Runner Named Hedy
Sam Apple 39
One Puff at a Time
Abigail Bachrach 50

AMHERST

By Sara Olsen

There are two oak trees.

Never mind the white birches and pines and the earthy, coppery, leaf-strewn floor of the wood. Notice rather the bright loops of twisted, yellow rope that coil around the oak trees' upper trunks and run betwixt them like a bright, sunny tightrope. Hanging down from the middle of that tightrope, quivering slightly in the breeze, is a blue-green monkey swing. You were never sure why they called it "monkey" since it looked nothing like a monkey to you – more like a tethered flying saucer, waiting for you to jump aboard, grasp the rough, fibrous rope between your fingers and push off. Those hearty oak pillars kept you grounded while you spun, twirled, bounced, soared between them,

pumping higher and higher until the house with the turquoise shutters seemed upside down, and you could stand on the sun-dappled treetops.

Sometimes though, you would sit quietly, rotating slowly between the pillar oaks, listening: songs of birds, crickets and cicadas, the rustling of chipmunks and that other sound. Of a live wood breathing. The oak trees seemed closer to you on those days; you could trace the lichen on the bark and rub the soft moss with your fingers. The moss didn't mind wet, salty fingers. There you would hang like the pendulum of a grandfather clock, whose swing, no matter how hard you wished it, could not halt. •

I HAVE THIS RING YOU MADE FOR ME

By Miriam Rubin

I have this ring you made for me
When I was six.
It was so big then, I wore it on my thumb.
It still fits now, fourteen years later
In the winter, it slips around on my ring
finger.

Your hands were not so strong,
Your voice was not so strong,
Your vice was not strong either.
And all the things you left behind
Are precious relics of a precious era.

I drew with pastels that were once yours
The awful nylon brushes you didn't use—
Well I used them, and threw them out.
They didn't hold paint very well
I ought have saved them anyhow.

And nowadays I paint, roundabout.
The way this ring keeps spinning,
Absentmindedly on my finger,
The way my mind keeps running
That picture of you, standing next to a
tree, next to a girl, next to me.

I'd like to know, I suppose
What you would say
Of the things I've made
The way I think
I'm made of paint.

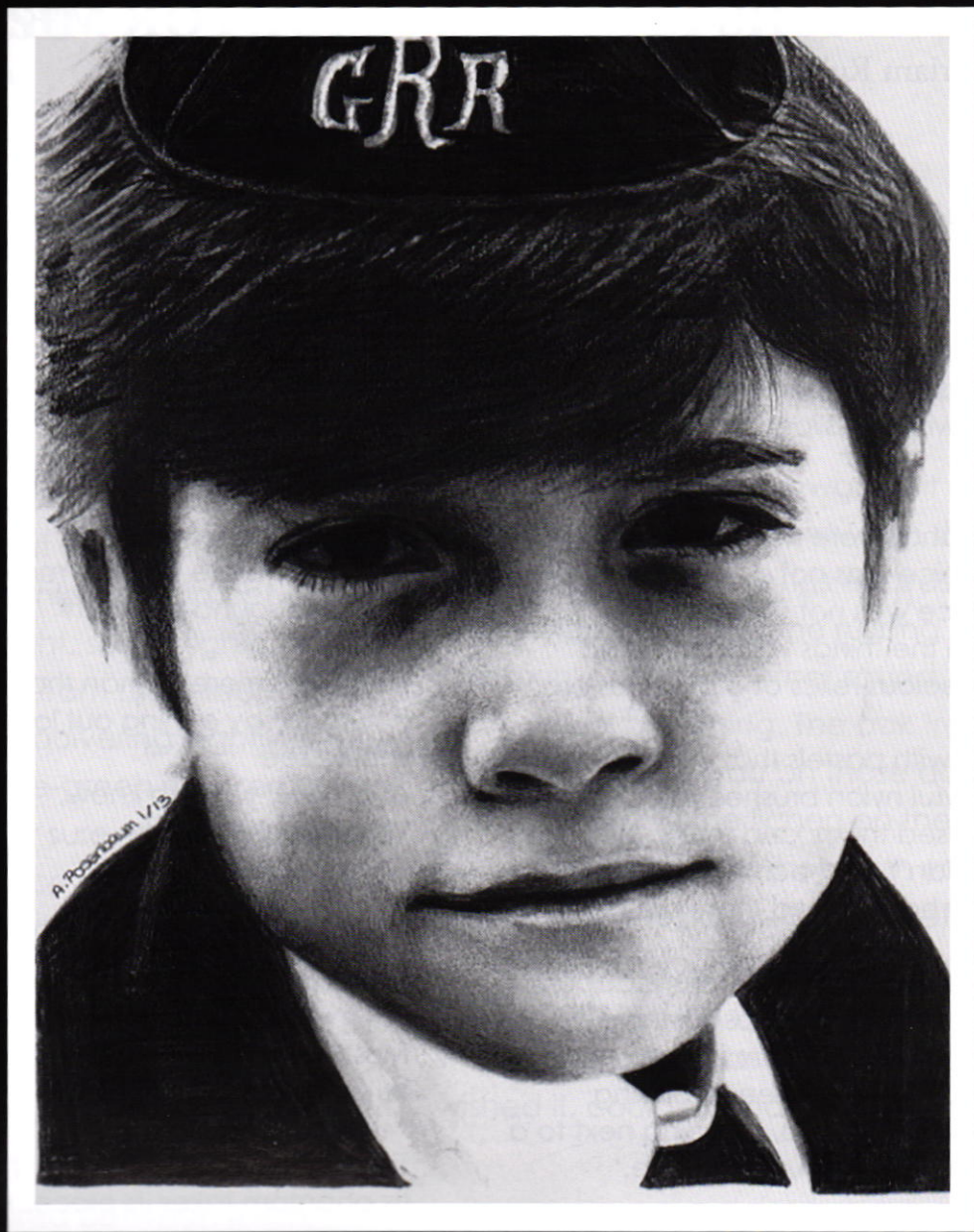
I cried the first time that I saw blue,
Real blue, pigment blue—the blue that
turned all other things to grey
Did you? Or would you even know what I
mean to say, when I say
Nothing is more quiet or more loud
Than the sound of paint?

Nothing is more human than the way
It hurts to say a thing out loud that you
should see
And now I want to know,
What would you say,
Or rather see.

Do we carry some trait or some disease
That can't let rest what the world would be
But must keep fiddling with the thing
Must not sleep or eat or breathe
Without this ring in place,

Till when removed,
Its phantom takes its place. •

GRANT • Ayelet Rosenbaum



GO
By Et

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GOD DAMMIT

By Etai Shuchatowitz

Father Joseph always looked both ways before crossing the street. People criticized him for doing it - said that it illustrated hypocrisy - but he always assumed that God wasn't there to intervene unless the universe needed it. But today, none of that mattered. Because today, as Father Joseph crossed the street, a big eighteen-wheeler came and knocked him over, killing him immediately.

He had never died before. He constantly spoke about it as if he had, but he had never actually experienced what it felt like. He assumed it was a very meaningful experience if ever there was one. He assumed that, you die, then you go to heaven, then you party with God and the angels. And then...well, he never thought that far in advance.

It was more painful than he imagined. It didn't feel significant in the moment, but then again, what does? It seemed to him that significance is a term only labeled to things in past tense. He struggled for life for a bit. And then, just like in the goddamn movies...his whole life flashed before his eyes. He saw his brother die of cancer again. He saw his son get taken by Social Services. He saw his wife leave him with nothing. And he saw himself become close to God.

When he finally got to the Pearly Gates, and saw Peter standing there, his heart almost...well, he no longer had a heart to stop. But, if he had, he was sure it would've stopped.

"Hello Father Joseph. Welcome to Heaven," Peter said with a smile. He looked different from the pictures. Darker skinned. And then there was the lack of any-

"You don't have a beard," Father Joseph remarked. Peter let out a loud, booming laugh. The kind that only nice people earn.

"I just shaved. That ragged thing looks horrible. Makes me look homeless. I figured I needed to be a little more presentable if I'm the one admitting people to Heaven."

"Wow. This is amazing. Is everybody here? Everybody from history?"

"Well, everybody was here at some point or another. But, not everybody stays."

"Why wouldn't they stay. It's heaven!"

"Some people can't handle it, I guess. Would you like to go in?" Father Joseph looked at Peter and didn't know how to respond. Turns out he didn't need to because as soon as Peter saw his face, he smiled and opened up the gates.

Father Joseph took a few steps forward and knew he was in the right place. Everything was light, it was warm, people smiled. Nothing like back on earth where people gave him strange looks for dressing like a priest. Nothing like back on earth where people were violent. Where people stole, murdered, lied and cheated. Everything was great here. He walked around and saw people talking and laughing. It made him glad that he was good his entire life and had devoted everything to being here. He had worked hard, and it had paid off. I guess it's true what they say, good things happen to those who wait.



It didn't take too long to learn the rules: you had to stay in Heaven as long as people on earth spoke about you. Once they stopped, you could leave whenever you wanted. But here was Father Joseph, three months in and wondering why anybody would want to leave. It was perfect here. There was no racism to sermon about. There was no hate. No violence. Everybody just agreed about everything because death gives you the perspective life never could.

This continued for months until one day it stopped being fun. It was just kind of boring. Day in and day out, always "enjoying yourself" - there must be something more. There's gotta be. Father Joseph looked around, wondering what everybody was doing. He decided to approach Peter. He would have the answers.

"Peter, sorry to bother you, but I think I'm ready to end the vacation part and start doing something."

"Oh, hello Father Joseph. What is it that you would like to be doing?"

"I don't know what there is to do."

"Well, did you go swimming today?"

"Yeah."

"You could go swimming again?" Peter said, clearly not understanding Father Joseph.

"No, I mean, on earth I was working towards heaven. I was fighting poverty and injustice and mourning my brother. Here, I can't do any of that."

"Well, maybe heaven isn't for you then."

Father Joseph couldn't believe what he was hearing. Heaven isn't for him?! What is that supposed to mean? He had worked his entire life for this. He was finally here. How could it be that heaven isn't for him?

"People are done talking about you, so it's up to you, Father," Peter said as if he knew what Father Joseph would pick.

Father Joseph thought long and hard. He wasn't giving up that easily. He would endure if he had to. He would spend an eternity if he -

He realized right then what was upon him. He wasn't here for a few minutes, days or years. This was forever. An eternity of swimming. An eternity of niceties with people who were friendly enough. An eternity of boredom.

"Alright, I think I want out," Father Joseph said with a tinge of pain in his voice. He swallowed hard. "What comes next?"

"Nobody knows. We've all spent eternity here trying to figure this place out. And nobody's been able to fully get it. But, we're certain there's something more here," Peter replied.

Nobody knows where I'm going. The gravity of the situation was much larger than he had anticipated. But, it didn't matter.

"I'm ready." Father Joseph looked into Peter's eyes as he pointed his fingers at him. He was scared, he would admit to that. He didn't know what was coming. Or even, if anything at all was coming. He didn't know anything. He closed his eyes, and all he could think was, *I really don't want to go swimming again.* •

SYMPHONY

By Joshua Blau

• I •

Subway stops, Yorkian denizens
Passing through the world
Of underground travel.
But they do not go where
You go, to the music.

Some follow, getting off
Where you stand at the doors
Of another world, up the ramps
And through the halls,
ticket counters:
Freedom.

But it has not begun,
For where are the players,
The commanders of attention
And reality? Now look,
Hereto trickle artists!

• II •

Conduct, O maestro,
wholesome dreams!
The march, the thrums and
Russian themes
Drawn out by endless ebb and flow
Of horsehair bows with hands in tow.

They dance at paced
conductor's wand,
Tossed here and there as
winded frond
While hips and torsos rock along
Their counterpart, the music's song.

• III •

Blacks and whites join now the fray,
Rachmaninoff they will relay
By hand and hand as feet connect,
The other world they must protect—

The other world the music strikes,
Realities, with so-sharp pikes,
Destroying what was there before,
Releasing only heard in lore.

Your sight is of no use—let free!
For sights do not exist to see
Where only tides and ripples are;
The seas of sound no man may bar.

You do not sit, no velvet lies
Beneath you as the music cries,
Nor is there anything to sense
But luscious lines, so fine, yet dense.

• IV •

No more run the woodwinds,
String, horn, and drum,
All hail the piano, shining
Light of a thousand applaudings.

Encore, bravo, once yet more!
Lo, he sits, hair over eyes—
It matters not
Long as fingers crawl,
Keys fall, jump.

A stream, deluge, the notes, the
chords!
It rains down beauty 'pon the fjords
Of thought and wisdom evermore
Until the lighting they restore.

Woe the stop of music grand,
These silent footfalls
Patrons of the arts
Trampling floors and stifling flows.
The instruments take leave...

• V •

Quiet waiting, casual talking
Worse than turbulent
Disturbance—coughing,
Whispers in the dim—
You never really noticed.

• VI •

Return, ye giants, march the stage
To calls of fate as old as age,
Create what else does not belong
In worldly places—bang the gong!

Once more let sleep what stays outside
Can never enter all the pride
Of life and living so bourgeois
When ears pick up more than La Croix

It makes you want to sleep yourself
Do not! Do not return to shelf
What you have now, or do not have—
Burdens, Atlas! —on the Ave.

Moments of breath
Stretched long, ere
There is nothing.
An instant passes; outside
It is cold. •

ARTICLES OF RECOGNITION: A STUDY OF OBJECTIFICATION IN “THE TALE OF THE THREE APPLES”

By Yosef Press

The *Arabian Nights*' "Tale of the Three Apples" advances its story through various items and objectifies its human narrators in relation to their effect on the plot. The Caliph represents the reader's normal perception of power, but it is ultimately a mere apple that serves as the impetus for the events that unfold. Although a superficial reading may afford the apples the broadest impact on the narrative's progression and identify Jafar as the passive, yet least objectified, protagonist, many other figures bridge the gap between the two. In doing so, the tale surpasses its limits and subtly reminds the reader of the potential impact of objects of recognition. In a story commenting on storytelling, the text ensures that the figures who act the least ultimately matter the most.

The bulk of the narrative is directed by silent "tokens" that elicit a slew of recognitions and misrecognitions from the more organic characters (Aristotle 60). Although they cannot speak for themselves, these artifacts operate as the embryo from which all other facets of the story emerge. After the woman's murderer has been revealed, the apple commandeers the remainder of the plot and occupies center stage. Three separate narratives, the husband's, his son's and the slave's, all revolve entirely around the whereabouts of the wayward apple. Consequently, the son cries specifically due the loss of the apple, inadvertently recognizing it, as opposed to the death of his mother, as the story's greatest tragedy.

The text makes an effort to assert that the apples' relevance to the plot isn't dependent on any intrinsic value. The husband's account epitomizes this fact by establishing the apple as an item with no inherent worth; it fails to cure

his wife and she ultimately recovers without it. However, it has vast implications for the overall tale as demonstrated by the fifteen-day journey preceding its acquisition. Subsequently, the apples become the sole determinant of many characters' fate, leading to the death of the wife and the threat of death for many other characters, including Jafar, the slave, and the husband. The apple is so significant in spite of- or perhaps because of- its lack of any extraordinary qualities, portraying a model of recognition that is completely detached from the essence of the item itself.

Similarly, the woman's body, not the woman herself, functions as a nucleus around which much of the story is structured. One would expect the murder victim to be substantially explored but this is not so. In a context where interrogation often evokes recognition, all the woman can respond to her husband's query regarding the missing apple is "wot not, o son of my uncle, where tis gone" resulting in faulty recognition and her transformation from organism to soulless prop (122). The description of the woman's mutilated body is laden with far more complexity than that of her live self. Its mention of being "cut into nineteen pieces", the many materials with which it is covered, and the "weighty" chest that contains it respectively succeed in emphasizing the corpse's status as an object, alluding to the many narratives it will generate, and drawing attention to the depth of the entire story (120). Conversely, the husband's description of the wife primarily draws attention to her relationship to others, her being "a maid" the only innate attribute that is mentioned (120).

Moreover, the tale's ancillary characters are greatly objectified yet they retain a superior capacity for controlling the story's flow. Whether their depictions of events are fabricated or factual, they maintain a connection to the core narrative. Functionally immobile, barring the instant when their stories are first heard, the husband and his uncle are "carried before the Caliph" by Jafar underscoring their status as objects (121). While the husband's account itself provides more personal detail, his immediate disappearance upon concluding his story renders him a plot device, discarded once its usefulness has expired, as opposed to a fully fleshed out character. Additionally, the slave is described as "long as a lance and broad as a bench"; an implement to be

handled and not a living, breathing individual (121). Moreover, the slave is treated as a commodity to be exploited when Jafar states "If ill betide thee through thy slave, make him thy sacrifice; A many serviles thou shalt find, but life comes once and never twice" (123).

However, while the text convinces the reader to view these men as mere scenery, they prove critical in providing additional paths through which the narrative can gain new levels of complexity. The husband's account of the murder refocuses the entire story enabling it to transcend the mystery of who killed the woman. It is no coincidence that Scheherazade interrupts the story specifically after his confession thereby informing us that the tale is about to embark in a new direction, one that would have been impossible to reach without the husband's testimony. The slave's importance dramatically increases as well, as the second half of the story is hinged on Jafar's need to discern his location, a far cry from his solely being a "great ugly black slave" unworthy of further notice (121).

Nevertheless, the text does not completely conceal these characters' true import, but instead offers glimpses of their identity, compelling the reader to refrain from conceiving of them purely as objects. The husband's physical appearance is described at length when he is originally introduced, shedding a fair amount of light on an otherwise unknown entity. The slave, too, experiences a surge of personification when his name, Rayhan, is finally revealed and Jafar opts to save him, thereby affirming his value as an individual. Unlike Jafar, they play a crucial role in advancing the plot through their own actions and observations. These characters have their own stories to tell and become heralds of recognition, yet their narrative ability is not absolute, as they too must rely on inanimate objects to achieve and induce recognition. Their ambiguous nature coupled with their portrayal as objects is indicative of an elevated narrative value.

Unsurprisingly, Jafar, the chief target of the plot's twists and turns, also stagnates in passivity for the duration of the tale. While not exactly depicted as an object, his will is suppressed by others for much of the story. He retains the ability to control his fate, exemplified by his uninhibited request, "grant me three

days delay", but often selects the path of least resistance (120). Even when given the opportunity to ensure his own survival, he opts to remain a sedentary figure in his home rather than search for the culprit. After narrowly eluding death due to a chance occurrence, Jafar remains entrenched in his belief and offers a testament to the value of inactivity: "In this manner craft and cunning are of no avail; but He who preserved my life the first time can preserve it a second time. By Allah, I will not leave my house during the three days of life which remain to me and let the Truth do even as he will" (122). Ironically, objects succeed where Jafar cannot, as they cultivate the narrative body and extend his life, while his efforts to imitate their immobility yield no success.

Alternatively, Jafar only breaks free of his submissiveness when he sheds his inert shell and evolves into a dynamic narrator. Initially labeled the "dog of Wazirs", Jafar reverses his lowly position by employing his narrative skills to rescue his slave from execution (120). Offering the Caliph an original story, Jafar utilizes his newfound abilities to captivate and influence others. Despite providing a glance of a human-driven narrative, "The Tale of the Three Apples" concludes on the cusp of this discovery reinforcing the notion that objects, contrary to their static nature, truly dominate the story.

"The Tale of the Three Apples" emphasizes the material elements of the story to convey an abstract theme. By objectifying human characters and placing items at the tale's center, the author is forcing the reader to recognize their capacity to prompt recognition despite their arbitrary nature. The text has woven a web where all the figures, human and nonhuman alike, are portrayed as they really are; literary devices manipulated by the author to drive the story forward. Accordingly, the human characters' faculties grant them no advantage over their inanimate counterparts. On the contrary, they are shown to be comparably inferior in diversifying the plot. The text, through the dominant voice of the Caliph, formally affirms the impact objects have on the story with its final act; naming the tale "that of the three apples" (123). •

Newton, Adam. Course pack: *1001 Arabian Nights*, "The Tale of the Three Apples" P.120-123:
New York, New York

Newton, Adam. Course Pack: Aristotle. *Poetics* P.60: New York, New York.

THE TOILET JUST KEPT ON FLUSHING

By Sarah King

The toilet just kept on flushing. The water rushed from toilet ceiling to bottomless toilet drain with an unstoppable force, rendering helpless both gods and men. Passers-by would pause to both admire the beauty of the thing and to wonder at its persistence. Its sound was deafening. Bathroom-goers who happened upon the ever-flushing toilet were struck by how unnoticed the roar of a toilet's flush went when its roar was but a momentary disruption. The toilet that wouldn't stop flushing, though, brought that roar to the fore of every toilet flusher's mind. Speech was rendered futile in the face of such loudness; thought, almost so.

The toilet that would not stop flushing one day vanished. The bathroom-goers were pleased at the restored quietude to their private plumbing abodes, sitting once more in silence,

save for the rumblings, whispers, whistles, and the ever-present sounds of water: a shy trickle or a hurried cascade.

But somewhere deep in the heart of the bathroom and its goers, the ever-flushing toilet was missed. The silence that yawned in its absence felt bereaved. Toilet flushers found themselves enjoying the momentary crash of the waves in the small porcelain bowl, sweeping with it their excess and their unwanted and their shame.

The toilet that wouldn't stop flushing remains. It has disappeared from one bathroom, but it always seeks another. Perhaps it will find its home in the human toilet – that small but vital plumber that sorts through the waste of emotions and thoughts. May the ever-flushing toilet always find a home in the heart. •

DECONSTRUCTING THE BINARY IN *BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS*

By Sora Gordon

In his iconic graphic novel, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, Frank Miller reimagines the classic superhero into a grim and gritty Gotham City of the future. Gone is the campy Caped Crusader of the sixties. In his place, Miller introduces an antihero that is just as morally ambiguous, if not more so, than the city he aims to protect. In this incarnation of Batman, Miller completely disregards the conventional binary of good vs. evil that is so often prevalent within the superhero genre. By utilizing a unique compositional style and color scheme as well as deconstructing the role of the hero, Miller aims to prove that the binary of good vs. evil is a false one.

The very first time that Miller uses his unique compositional style to shatter the good vs. evil binary is when he introduces the reader to Harvey Dent, undergoing rehabilitation in Arkham Home for the Emotionally Troubled. Dent is first illustrated within a split panel, as a means of foreshadowing his eventual

In this incarnation of Batman, Miller completely disregards the conventional binary of good vs. evil that is so often prevalent within the superhero genre.

return to his villainous alter ego, Two-Face (19). Although this seemingly indicates that Dent falls firmly on the evil side of the binary, the fact that Dent's image is distributed equally across both halves of the panel implies that he embodies both good and evil characteristics.

The split panel technique is employed to similar effect with the reintroduction of the Joker, when his iconic smile is portrayed within a split panel (41). Although the Joker

is usually traditionally depicted as being unequivocally evil, the split panel suggests that Miller's Joker is just like every other inhabitant of Gotham City in that he exists outside of the conventional good vs. evil binary. The Joker, like Two-Face, "assumed the role of ideological doppelganger to the Batman," (66) which is why he spent ten years in a completely harmless state and only returns to his villainous ways with the reemergence of Batman. His psychiatrist, Dr. Bartholomew Wolper, often insists that the Joker is not truly evil and that his villainy is actually inversely proportional to his exposure to Batman. The fact that the Joker's place in the "villainous" half of the binary is dependent on Batman assuming his conventional "heroic" role deconstructs the very concept of the good vs. evil binary, as it causes Batman's existence to be, in essence, a morally ambiguous one.

This depiction is representative of the darkness inherent in the evil half of the supposed binary, a binary further deconstructed by Batman's confession that he sees himself in his nemesis.

As a means of further deconstructing this binary, Miller paints his Gotham almost exclusively in muted tones and shades of grey, representative of the moral ambiguity of its inhabitants. This is best emphasized in the portrayal of the showdown between Batman and Two-Face (55). The top one-paneled tier is drawn in stark black and white images, seemingly in accordance with the subject matter. At first glance, all the panel seems to show is the heroic Batman facing off against the villainous Two-Face, a binary as starkly evident as its illustration. However, Miller uses the following two tiers to indicate that the expected binary portrayed in the above image is a false one. As Harvey Dent details his descent into madness, the color scheme once again slips into shades of grey, indicating that the good vs. evil binary is not as distinct as previously suspected. This becomes especially evident as Batman, a character that would ordinarily fall onto the "good" side of the spectrum, professes himself to be merely a reflection of his nemesis. As Batman exclaims "A reflection!" he is

portrayed as being completely obscured by his blacked-out cowl. This depiction is representative of the darkness inherent in the evil half of the supposed binary, a binary further deconstructed by Batman's confession that he sees himself in his nemesis. Miller continues to emphasize the deconstruction of

the flawed binary with the clearly demarcated line that cuts between the two shades of grey in the background of that same panel. These shades of grey are representative of the blending of both halves of the binary into one morally ambiguous whole in which good and evil cease to exist as separate entities.

This deconstruction of the good vs. evil binary is once again emphasized through the evolution of Batman's costume. The very existence of the costume and of the alter ego whose identity it protects conventionally indicates the existence of a good vs. evil, hero vs. villain binary. When Batman is first introduced, he is wearing the costume made iconic in the classic comics, supposedly to signify his traditionally "good" position within the binary (34). However, as the narrative progresses, his costume evolves into darker, more lethal territory. While Batman's utility belt first includes crime-fighting staples such as "Nerve gas ampules. Freezing compound. Cable. Grappling hook. Stethoscope. Pain killers," by the end of *The Dark Knight Returns*, it holds an arsenal capable of incapacitating Superman. Although the existence of Batman's costume would usually signify his conventional position on the "good" side of the binary, its darker evolution implies otherwise, continuing to deconstruct the conventional binary.

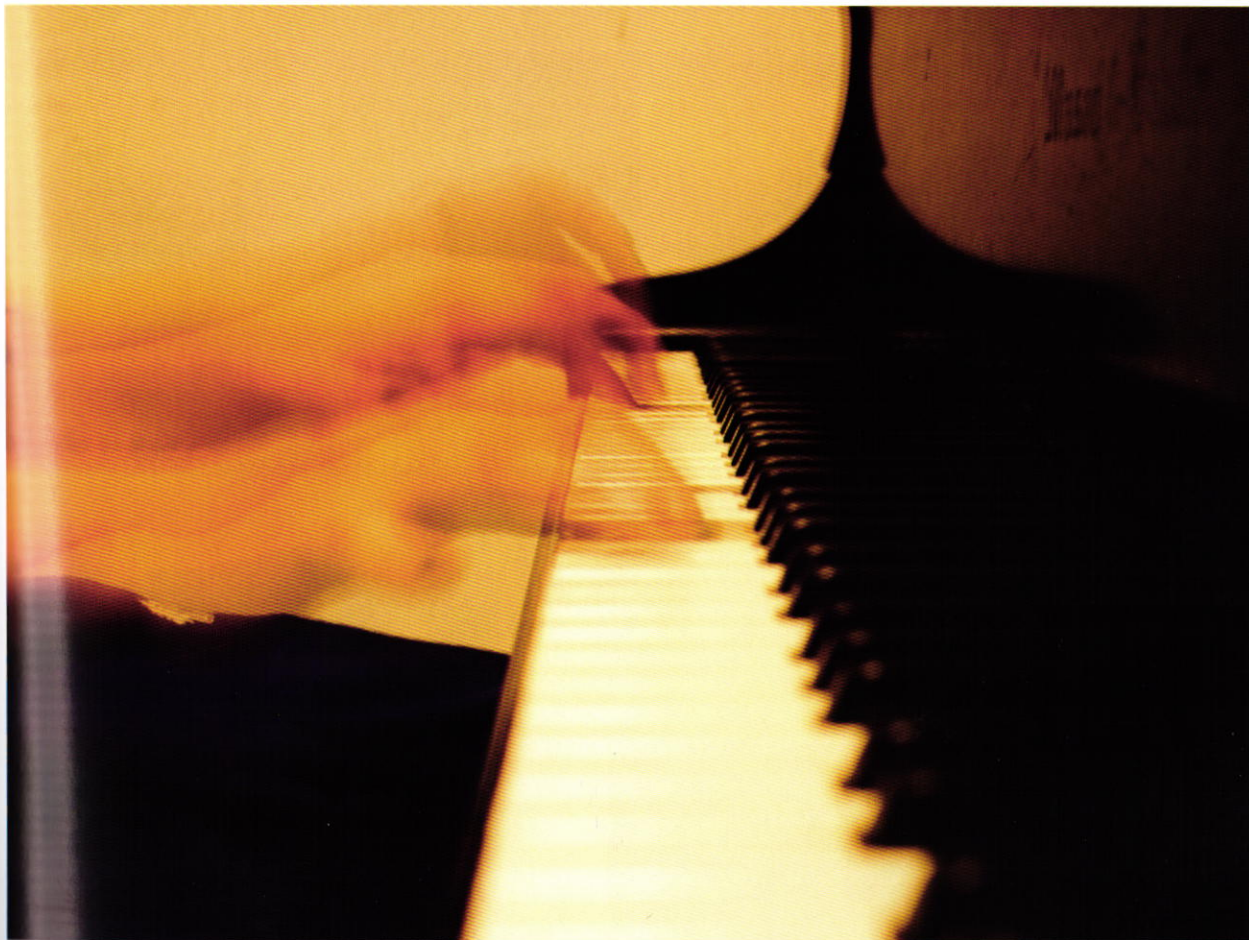
Miller then obscures the previously clear lines demarcating the conventional roles of the hero and the villain with the scene in which Batman battles the mutant leader in a mud pit (99-102). When Batman and the mutant leader duke it out in the pit, the mud causes them to become nearly indistinguishable from one another. Miller uses the cloak of mud to show that in this scenario, Batman and the mutants exist on the same moral level because Batman has no moral high ground that distinguishes him from the mutants.

...Miller is making it clear to the reader that once again, the "hero" exists on the same plane as the "villain."

By depicting Batman and the mutant leader as jumping into the mud pit together, Miller is making it clear to the reader that once again, the "hero" exists on the same plane as the "villain." They are both equally in the wrong just as they are both equally in the right. Neither comes out on top, as they both exist independently of the false binary, which is why the supposedly villainous mutants are able to transition into the role of Batman's vigilante crime-fighting sidekicks with an ease reminiscent of the supposedly heroic Robin. By depicting the ease in which the assumed "villains" of the piece are able to switch sides, Miller further solidifies the idea that these characters both exist and operate outside of this false binary.

In *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, Miller attempts to create a Gotham City that could feasibly exist within modern-day America by creating characters as believable as the city. By creating characters that operate outside of the conventional good vs. evil binary, Miller is able to portray them as interacting in realistic, morally ambiguous ways. Readers may not believe that Miller's Batman actually exists, but they may easily believe that in today's world, he certainly can. •

Miller, Frank, Klaus Janson, and Lynn Varley. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*. New York, NY: DC Comics, 2002. Print



PIANO • Yardena Pressner



HIGHWAY

Moshe Blockman

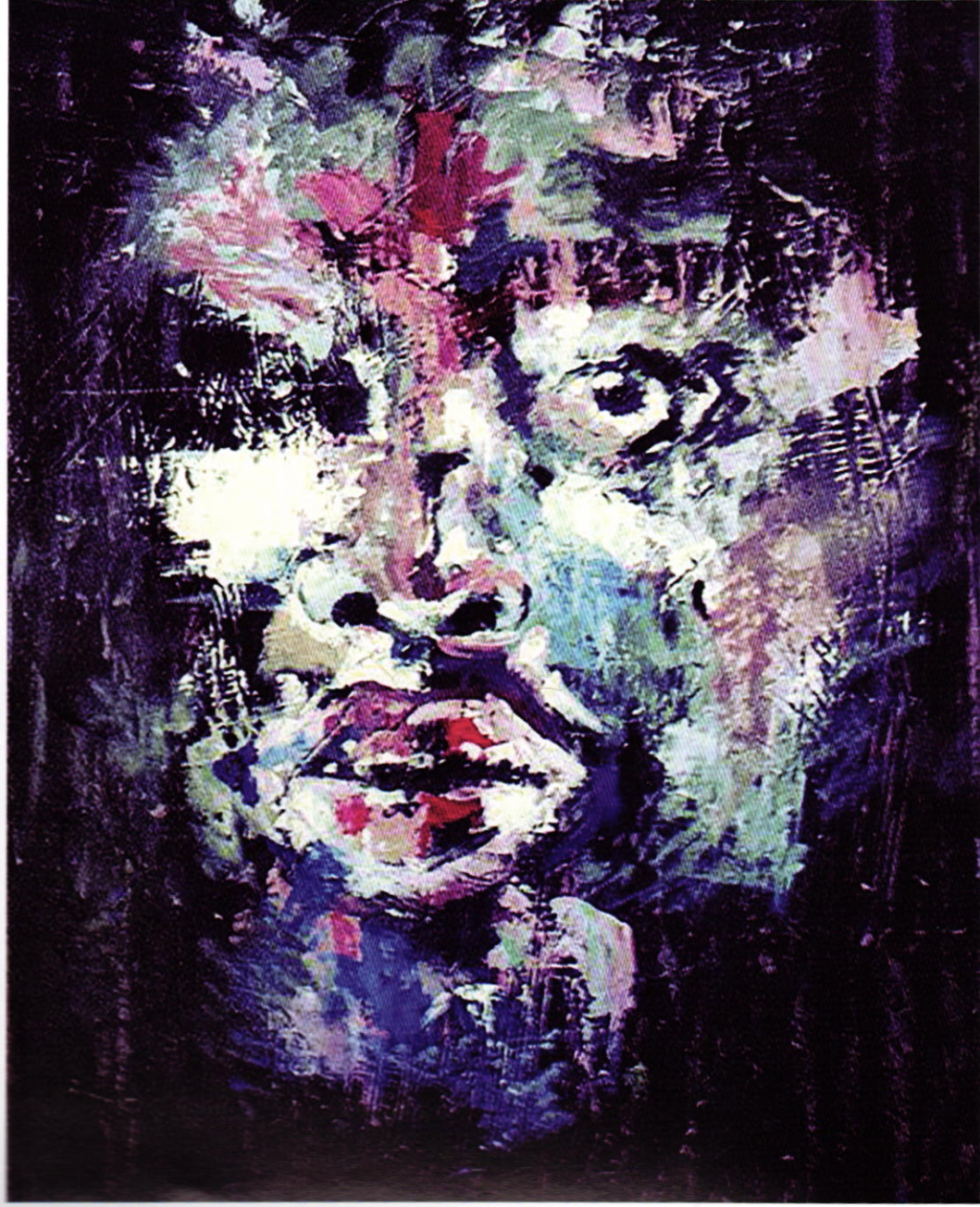
MONUMENTAL TRAFFIC





MOVIE STILL FROM *KIDS* (1995) • Riffy Levin

SWALLOWED • Mina Hematian

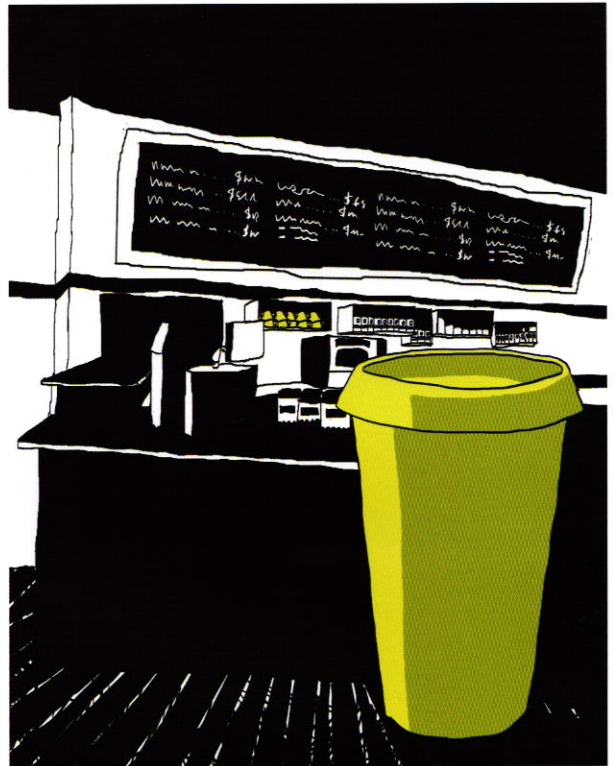




NOT ME WITHOUT MY PHONE

Leora Veit

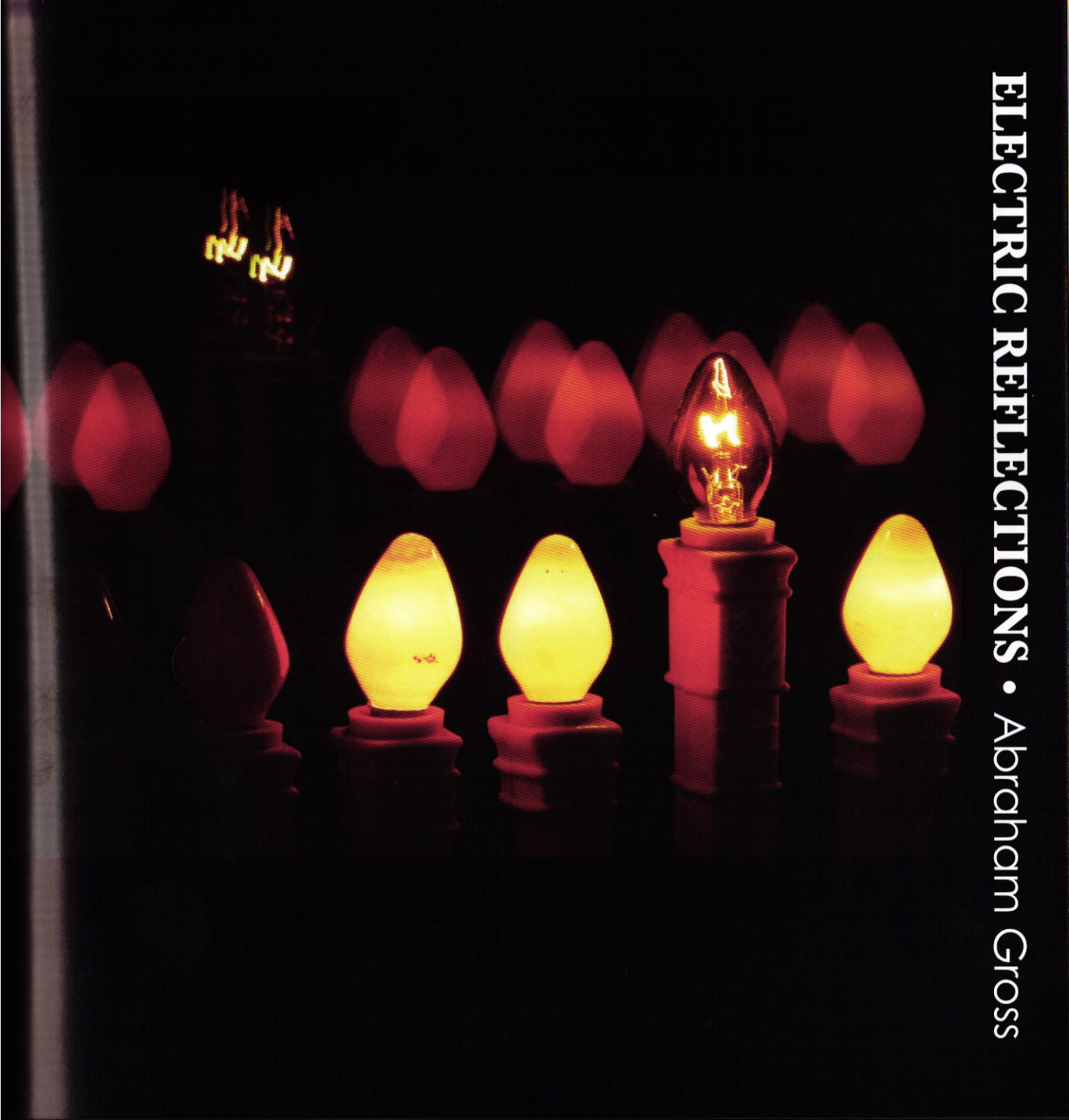
NOT ME WITHOUT MY COFFEE



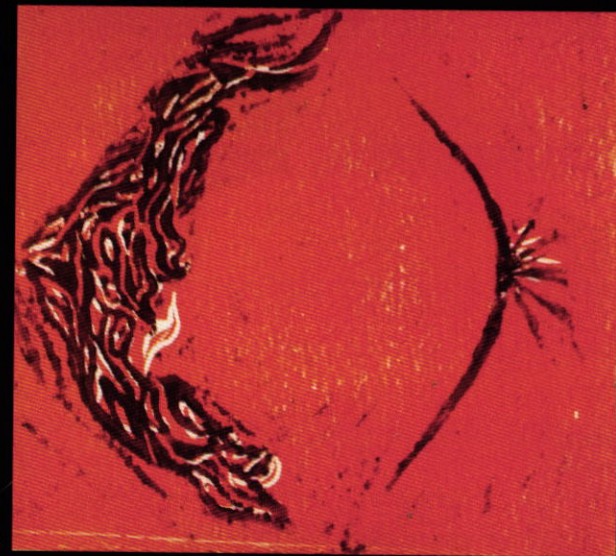
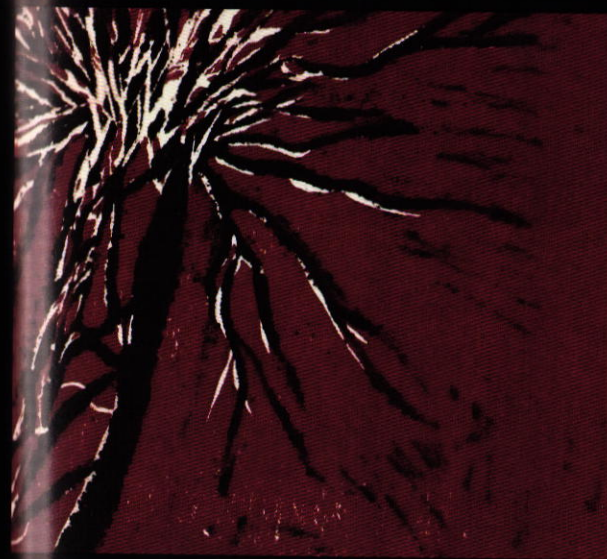
WRAPPED • Navah Maynard • UNTITLED



ELECTRIC REFLECTIONS • Abraham Gross



SILENCED REPETITION • Rachel Gottlieb



GRAND TETON SUNSET • Tzvi Levitin

SNOWFALL UNCHANGED • Yosef Hoffman



I REMEM
By Sora Go
I remembe
I remembe
I remembe
I remembe
I remembe
I remembe
I remembe

SUNSET

SUNSET OVER THE MEDITERRANEAN • Joshua Gladstein



I REMEMBER

By Sora Gordon

I remember the way those high heels pinched
 (but beauty is pain and those shoes? were hot)
I remember the sticky, sweaty heat of that old leather jacket
 (not quite, but almost, as hot as those heels, so)
I remember feigning exhaustion so I could lay my head on your shoulder
 (was it wishful thinking, or did you lean in too?)
I remember hearing your stories about falling in love
 (and knowing that is not at all what this is)
I remember walking home alone in the dark rather than hailing a cab
 (better uses for those eight dollars anyway)
I remember the dewy pavement on the dozing streets of the City
 (because it only dozes, never sleeps, or so its residents say)
I remember hoping you'd call so I'd know that you cared
 (you texted, I sighed, and pretended it was just as good) •

CONFESSIONS OF A SHABBOS DRAMA QUEEN

By Chevi Friedman

Boiling, bubbling, hopefully not burning, baking, cooking, cutting, rinsing, washing, watching, carefully to ensure optimal taste at your dinner table. The kitchen is your sanctuary, but it's also your own personal hell. No one is allowed in unless they're willing to peel some potatoes. You're frantic, running from stove to cutting board to oven to fridge. Your ingredients and recipes are strewn all over the kitchen and your mind is somewhere else entirely. You're keeping an eye on the kugel in the oven while pleading with the rice not to be (please God I'm begging you) overcooked this week. The bright, vibrant orange that is carrots are pushing their way to the brim of the soup pot, defying physics and fighting with zucchini and parsley for the top spot, but you lower the flame and cover the thing. The whole raw chicken you're trying to rub with spices and oil has flown the coop – it flops down into the sink with an oddly satisfying but disturbing squelch. The chulent, you realize with a horrified groan, has not even been assembled yet. It's 2:30 PM. And Shabbos begins at 4:00.

• • •

I am woken up at the ungodly hour of 8:00 in the morning on my only day off to "come downstairs and help." "Help" is a loosely defined term in the Friedman household. I get downstairs bleary-eyed, asking my mother what is left to do. "Well, I have to go get ready for work. So make the chicken, the chulent, the side dishes and desserts. Don't worry, I'll set up the soup. Also don't forget to pick up the food from Holon, get the challahs and take money out of the ATM for the cleaning lady."

No problem, let's get to work. I have roughly eight and a half hours until Shabbos starts – that's "plenty of time to get everything done with time left to spare," I tell myself. My mind plays tricks with time right from the get-go.

No one really understands how complex and intricate some recipes truly are. Chulent, for example, is quite a process to assemble. Trying to remember the correct order after watching my mother do it week after week, a layer of two different cuts of meat gets placed in the Crock-Pot, topped with a layer of potatoes. This is followed by sliced onions, seven various spices, beans, and barley, and then more layers of each, but in a new order this second time around. Gently, so as not to disturb the delicate ecosystem of ingredients I've created, I pour water over this stew-like mix and set the Crock-Pot to high.

I grab the raw chicken by the wings and begin picking out feathers that the butcher missed. Trying to keep a firm grip on the little guy, I think back to the time when I was seven or eight years old, a painfully shy and easily frightened little girl. I must have been deeply engrossed in whatever Nickelodeon show I was watching because I failed to notice my mother creeping up on me, one hand inside the chicken, the other hand under the wings, until it was too late. I can't say that screaming at the top of my lungs while being chased around the kitchen by my mother with a dead bird madly flapping its wings is one of my fondest childhood memories, but my family certainly loves to tell the story.

I snap out of my daydream and glance over at the clock. Upon seeing that the time is nearing 10:30, I quickly rub the chicken in spices, put it in a 9x13 aluminum pan and throw it in the oven. I grab my keys and bolt out the door. •

• • •

APPLYING TO COLLEGE OR, A FOOL-PROOF PLAN TO BECOMING A MANIC-DEPRESSIVE

By Ari Schwartz

Establishing You, the Applicant

You're a hopeful, optimistic, happy 17-year-old kid. Or, as happy as someone can be when they're the President of the Thespian Society, the Drama Club, and a founding member of the Musical Theater loving group, We Love Musical Theater (read: Let There Be No Mistake: We Are Extremely Metrosexual) as you've so subtly and cleverly entitled it. All of this while living in a homophobic agrarian Ohio town! But no matter. This is your senior year. Soon enough, you'll be graduating from high school, matriculating to college, and be miles away from this 1 horse town, living in a big city being exposed to all sorts of different people

and experiences, and, hopefully, a more diverse selection of English Idiom. You make a note to yourself: never say "1 horse town" again. Or, who knows? Maybe you'll be a bit adventurous and take advantage of the always-trendy gap-year program. That's sure to raise your interesting/mysterious/sex factor when you do arrive for your freshman year, non-challantly recounting on your life-changing experience staying with a family in Africa (just AFRICA. No specific country. Your average NYU co-ed will stop listening anyway once you show her that heartbreakingly vivid selfie you snapped on your brand new iPhone 5s with the blackest and most emaciated baby you could find, just to bump up the likes that it'll accumulate on the Facebook and Instagram markets when you post it with the always classy caption "We are the world. We are the children. #awareness #togetherness #peace #WeAreAllHuman #NoFilter. Finally, a post you don't have to delete after less than a day because it's embarrassing to keep up a picture that only garnered a meager two likes. Plus, no need to specify the country when all Africans are the same anyways, amiright??!!), or the six soul-stirring months you spent hiking the Italian

hill-side, playing the occasional gig at an Italian cafe, with only a trusty Rosetta Stone program as your companion (again, just flash the coords that photoshopped picture of you striking a classic Morrison pose, in what you say is an Italian cafe, but which looks suspiciously similar to your decrepit suburban basement, and then they won't ask you to speak any Italian past "Bonjourno"). Either way, life is gonna be great for you next year. The only thing left to do is actually apply to college.

You fire up your MacBook Pro, and immediately go to *US News and World Report's* website. Their annual College Rankings list will have just come out, and you want to see which colleges will have the Good-Will-Hunting-Game-Six-World-Series effect ("You were at that fucking game (school)?!"). Top results: Princeton, Harvard, Yale. To most, these names are daunting, prestige and pretention conveyed with the utterance of a single word. But you laugh in the face of this supposed "Holy Trinity" of Universities. You, after all, have secured for yourself a 3.9 unweighted GPA and an impressive 2310 on your SATs. Oh, and did you forget to mention those 7 scores of 5

on your AP exams, your near perfect SAT II's, and the fact that you've been published in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*? Silly you. You've got this locked up. You feel pretty good (read in *Anchorman* voice) about yourself when you receive that recruitment brochure from Stanford on September 1st of your senior year. It isn't until much later that you realize that every fucking kid on the fucking planet gets

**Princeton,
Harvard, Yale...you
laugh in the face
of this supposed
"Holy Trinity" of
Universities.**

one of those so-that-Stanford-can-astronomically-increase-the-number-of-applications-it-receives-thereby-lowering-their-acceptance-rate-which-automatically-makes-you-a-better-college-on-paper. But for now? Shit. Your confidence is so high you barely even notice the jocks calling you a faggot when you gallantly stride into school with your J. Crew polo shirt tucked a little bit too impeccably into your

skinny chinos. But you still do. Hear them, that is. Still, you think to yourself, this time you almost didn't. Things are definitely looking up.

Applying

By now it's late September and, with the help of your college guidance counselor (who lives in Arizona, visits the school maybe once a month, looks literally as old as dirt and about as charming as Barbara Walters will after her seventh face lift, and somehow missed the whole Civil Rights movement of the 60's. Rumor has it that he may have been in the USSR, or, more likely, locked in his bathroom for that decade. Like, he legitimately calls black people "negros", and doesn't even blink. The whole school faculty just feels really awkward about the situation. And this is the person who will be writing a letter of recommendation to your selected colleges. Fantastic. Still, nothing, not even this driveling, socially unaware, quite possibly alzheimers-positive excuse for a college guidance counselor can get in your way), you've compiled a list of the colleges that you will be applying to: the whole Ivy League, Stanford,

UChicago, and OSU as your safety school (applying to OSU was just a way to assuage your parents' concerns that you won't get significant financial aid to one of the aforementioned schools that you're bound to get into). The decision was based on two things: your stats, and the completion of a resume that he had your whole class fill out at the beginning of the year. A sly smile will appear on your face as you recall the long nights spent racking your brain for the most insignificant activity that you technically participated in, which you can then embellish into something noteworthy to compliment the slew of academic awards you've won. The time you raked the leaves on the front lawn of a house your mom was flipping became a year-long internship at S&K Realty. Stanford is gonna love your business know-how.

Rumor has it [your guidance counselor] may have been in the USSR, or, more likely, locked in his bathroom for that decade.

The colleges also won't know that the golf team you were supposedly captain of last year wasn't actually a thing, but was just a way for the editors of that year's yearbook to fill up some extremely conspicuous empty space. Or that all of the "Golf team in action!" pictures on file are, in actuality, just a bunch of teenagers with golf clubs screwing around in the school gymnasium. Or that even in the yearbook itself everyone on the team is listed as a captain. But no matter. You get an extra opportunity to artificially beef up your resume, and Chicago thinks they're getting a brilliant and cultured applicant, who oh-by-the-way is also a talented sportsman. Everyone wins. •

NINE FIGURES • Sara Pool



A RUNNER NAMED HELDY

By Sam Apple

He rises at dawn. The minty-fresh air of an early summer morning blows past his face as he runs in stride, confident and comfortable. Hedy, formally known as Eliud Ngetich, has only two weeks before his next big race, the Slow Mag Half Marathon in South Africa. It is the last in a string of races for which he is partially sponsored. In routine fashion he begins to taper down to a "relaxing, 90-mile week" to give his body more time to rest and store up strength. As usual, this anxious time of restraining and preserving before every important race makes Hedy feel restless; it is not in his nature to lower in intensity, as he has trained himself always to push, to rebel against the impulse to stop, to be moving. Yet he knows what he must do to achieve optimal fitness on race-day, especially considering the slight pain in his right shin that is beginning to worry him. Off he goes, running with his regular crew of fellow professional runners, making small talk in the first few moments before each one retreats into his own respective and respectful zone of concentration and focus. Hedy, together with the rest of his pack, runs in synchrony, unity and, as always, subtle and silent competition.



Down a hill in Kenya, towards an endlessly distant valley, a young boy fetches water for his father's farm. The high altitude of the region works to a runner's disadvantage, making the journey longer and more arduous. No matter for Hedy, who has grown accustomed to tending to his father's wide-ranging requests. Hedy's family farm, like most, survives off hunting, keeping livestock and growing crops. With manual labor the only option, Hedy and his siblings work while their father manages. With these rural tasks, independent from

organized society and infrastructure, the family promotes the children to the status of breadwinners, quite literally leaving the fate of their wealth, even the daily supper, in their young hands. A strong sense of trust and faith pervades their family dynamic. Heldy, the youngest male child in a polygamist family of 17 children, must carry his weight once his siblings start building their own families.

During his adolescent years, when Heldy wasn't in elementary school, running was a means of survival. Very often he was called upon to descend from his tall hill to take water up from the river. Water, the backbone of his family's livelihood, single-handedly sustained the farm's crops and livestock. Those water trips were simple errands, though, only a matter of motivation and will. Hunting, on the other hand, especially when lacking a weapon, was entirely dependent on the skill – both the chase and the catch – of the hunter. Like many boys in Kenya, Heldy had to run up and down hills to catch antelopes and jackrabbits to feed his family. These chases could last from a half hour up to two hours, depending on how effectively he ran, how strategically he decided to make one turn versus another, how ferocious he forced himself to become. Weaponless but for the faculties of the body he was born with, Heldy became as fierce as an animal, seeking, overpowering and conquering prey. His abrupt motions mimicked the jackrabbits he chased, his agility and sustained endurance mirrored the antelopes who taught him how to run. With nature as his sagacious trainer, motivating him to improve and run faster, Heldy reveled in the struggles of those first, hard runs.

Besides the tobacco and water runs, Heldy is also sent on missions across towns and villages to deliver messages to relatives. These trips sometimes extend to over 150 miles, mostly encompassed by tiresome days and rejuvenating nights. Sleep is a means to have energy to run, and running is a means of abiding by his role as a good son and family member. He lives with constant purpose, acts at the maximum of his capacity and chooses to live every moment at his apex. He does not challenge the life into which he was thrust at birth, but instead he accepts it with grace and equanimity, absorbing the precision and discipline that is required by all of his various duties into his very essence.

"Good job," Hedy hears over and over again, like a waterfall of never-ending noise and excitement. As the winner of his high school's 10-kilometer race, Hedy begins to deeply appreciate all of the hardships he endured growing up. He is stronger, faster and more determined than anyone else, though he had not previously considered any of his work for his father as "training." He was just being a good son, doing what he was supposed to do, what was required of him.

Nevertheless, Hedy now realizes the effects of his upbringing and considers what a career in running would be like. "It takes a lot of time to make it as a professional runner," Hedy speculates. "Could I survive... before I make it?" Resilient to fear and doubt he keeps racing, the wins translating into trophies to bring back to his family. These cheap metal figurines, however, are the least of the gratification for Hedy's victorious races, feats that are so overwhelmingly intangible, battles which are won more mentally than anything else. For Hedy, the greatest reward of races, win or lose, is the feeling of accomplishment and the transformation that incurs after the sustained effort of giving one's heart. "In the beginning," Hedy recounts,



O₂ • Bayla Neren

“...During the first few weeks, I kept thinking, ‘This is something I shouldn’t be doing.’”

“I loved to run because it gave me an opportunity to prove I am that toughest.” Sitting in a classroom towards the end of his senior year of high school, Hedy is entranced by the warm sunshine illuminating the grass outside, what registers in his mind as perfect running weather.

Nevertheless, by high school graduation, Hedy is enamored by the world of mathematics, hoping to, one day, turn his proficiency with numbers into a career. Running as a career path isn't being seriously considered, which, in retrospect, either reveals immense humility or a lack of understanding of the magnitude of his talent. In order to afford his two younger siblings the opportunity to receive basic education, however, he sacrifices attending university. With no job, school or much else, Hedy contemplates his life and considers his options given his lack of credentials or money. For a few months, Hedy stays at home and assesses what he wants to and can do with his life. Of course, he continues to run three times a day to maintain optimal fitness. Then, a kiss from God reaches down from the magnanimous heavens: the offer.

Like a beast that finally caught its prey after a long and treacherous chase, Hedy instinctively replies in the affirmative to the sports agents who came to his door and offer him opportunity in return for effort. He knows that this decision is the kind he will be able to tell his grandchildren about when teaching them the value of snap-judgments and intuition, the kind that will drastically change the trajectory of his life. Committed to reach his goal no matter the sacrifice, Hedy sells the bull he purchased with his life savings to fund the rest of his training and the races ahead of him. He remembers this scene as the first truly substantial step in his running career, this sign of approval and endorsement from the outside world that he had seen before with previous members of his community who became professional runners. The contract dictates that Hedy would go

to South Africa, compete in races about once a week for several months in addition to an intense weekly training routine with international runners.

Heldy looks back on that time with both amazement and unease. It was there, perhaps, that he first recognized the danger of forcing his body to endure stress beyond the threshold of its capability, of revolting against the barrier of his skin and bones a little too far beyond what he could handle. Heldy vividly recalls the training. "This level of intensity was new to me and it was exhausting. By the time I fell asleep, it was already time to wake up. During the first few weeks, I kept thinking, 'This is something I shouldn't be doing.'"



On April 17th, 2011 in the sixth mile of the final and most important race of his tour, the Slow Mag Half Marathon, Heldy feels a pain in his right shin exacerbate with each new step. He finishes strong, even achieving a personal record, but intuitively knows his body is beginning to crumble. An expert at understanding pain, Heldy diagnoses himself as injured, a fate that forces him, ever so reluctantly, to release and withdraw.

Arriving back to his home in Kenya a few days later, Heldy allows himself two weeks off to recuperate. Every running expert in his village advises him that he will need one or two months for his injury to completely heal. To facilitate his recovery, Heldy pays other running professionals for massages, using only natural forms of medicine to restore his health. Because he constantly believes that he will soon be healthy, Heldy never questions his decision to pursue a running career.

"I never knew it was going to take that long to heal," he says. "Every two weeks, I would try to run again and see if I was healthy. When I realized I wasn't ready to return, I waited another two weeks to run again." Eight months later, Heldy's patience is nearly spent and his eagerness to run is barely able to be contained.

But Hedy knows running is the only thing he wants to do. Running is his passion, the course is his home. He is compelled to return because he “couldn’t take it, didn’t know what to do with [his] time.” Races are the only time and place that make sense, perfect sense. Passionate and unstoppable, up and down the hills he runs more. The training continues.

Despite the injuries he has endured, there is nothing else in the world Hedy would rather be doing. Running formed his identity as a child, enabled him to survive and to become the person he is today. Hedy accepts this fate with a humble smile and a shrug of the shoulders, proud of his success and triumphs. His mental toughness is ingrained, inescapable even if he ever so desired. Positive psychology, unnerving focus and authentic confidence are the tools he uses to keep going amidst a fear of burning out.

Today, Hedy lives in Jacksonville, Florida, running three times a day with other professional runners and runs at least one or two races a month. The fear of pain was abolished within him; he realizes that challenges and pain present an opportunity to overcome, to surpass one’s own expectations. That is his definition of pure enjoyment. His past drives his present and his present is directed towards an unknown and indefinite future. Running as a means has turned into running as an end. Though he was unaware at the time, his experiences pushed him to choose the career path to which he is so evidently committed.

- A strange and mysterious force propelled his life in this very specific direction; Hedy acknowledges this fateful element of his life, and as always, adapts to the reality that is presented to him. He believes his greatest imperative is “to do anything that will make [him] faster and boost [his] career.” In his profoundly simple perception, everything besides for his passion is just background noise. He is in love with this sport in a way that characterizes the human yearning to adventure, to overcome limitations, to compare the distances inherent with this world and the measure of the heart within each and every one of us.

When Hedy runs, he carries his past on his shoulders. Fueled by the struggles he has overcome, he relentlessly treks on. •

THE PAPER BOAT

By Moses Dyckman

As the years twist and tear me,
Like a paper boat in a tempest.
I know not who I'll be tomorrow.
As the tide beats me against the walls

Like a paper boat in a tempest,
A little paper crew says their prayers
As the tide beats me against the walls
In a maze for the blind.

A little paper crew says their prayers
Every day and night.
In a maze for the blind
I have been given a candle.

Every day and night.
My three steps echo in the silence.
I have been given a candle.
What will shield it from the wind?

My three steps echo in the silence.
Now, nothing can uproot me.
What will shield it from the wind,
Will be nothing more than my own flesh.

Now, nothing can uproot me.
My name, covered with roses or
covered with mud,
Will be nothing more than my own flesh.
I stand for a greater purpose.

My name, covered with roses or
covered with mud,
Still grips the candle, the constant in a
flickering world.
I stand for a greater purpose
As the years twist and tear me. •

THE PATH BACK TO SELF

By Yardena Pressner

Both the story of "The Dead" by James Joyce and the story of "Good Country People" by Flannery O'Connor famously end in carefully calculated moments of epiphany, a transformation of character through a table-turning encounter. Joyce forms this epiphany through his character Gabriel's reaction to his wife's confession, while O'Connor arranges the epiphany through her handicapped character's loss of independence. Though these two stories hold the epiphany moment in common, the encounters discussed in each story are rather distinct from one another. Joyce's story depends on an intimate encounter with a spouse, while O'Connor's depends on an intimate encounter with a stranger. Not only are the individuals depicted as dissimilar from one another, but the effect thrown on the reader as a result of the epiphanous moment also differs from one story to the next in the form of "noise" or lack thereof. Following the shocking epiphany in "The Dead", the reader is left with a sense of quiet that both allows for reflection and takes his breath away. In contrast, the reader of "Good Country People" is left with a sense of loud bang. An examination of the epiphanous styles of both James Joyce and Flannery O'Connor reveals the differing views of each author as to the most effective process of effecting change upon the reader.

Epiphany can be achieved effectively from a number of paths, but only the truly successful transcend the text to touch the reader.

Intimacy requires a state of vulnerability. In order for an intimate moment to transpire, two parties must have insight into the core of one another, which in itself brings exposure to both parties. Hulga and Manley ("Good Country People") discuss their personal philosophies before delving into any physical intimacy with one another. Moreover, Gretta and Gabriel ("The Dead") as a married couple with children must have conversed about their most inner thoughts, discussions requiring exposure of self. A person may desire a connection with the world, but fear of weakness may be cause for hesitation. Until protective walls and arrogance are taken away through the state of vulnerability, no intimacy or mindset change can occur. Without this humble vulnerability, the moment of epiphany cannot come about and the person in need of stark realization about his or her way of life is not aware of the active change that must be made. Although epiphany, as commonly defined, is a moment of sudden revelation or insight, it can be further said that epiphany is a naked state for the character undergoing this process. The character in an epiphanous state is exposed to himself and must face the person standing across from him in the mirror. To be discussed more in detail, Gabriel's epiphany is quiet because of its emotional (below the surface) quality of his wife sleeping beside him and of the snow softly falling within him, while Hulga's epiphany is loud because of its physicality (stolen wooden leg, above the surface).



Whereas both authors employ self-reflection, intimacy, and vulnerability in their revelations of epiphany, they do not share views of most effectively portraying that life-altering moment to the reader. Each author employs his or her own method of inspiring self-reflection in the reader through the epiphanic moments thrust upon his or her character. Joyce's method of portraying the most effective epiphany begins with the loud party where he begins Gabriel's story and slowly quiets his scene, as the party guests leave, Gretta and Gabriel advance to their hotel, Gretta falls asleep, and Gabriel is left only with his own thoughts of falling snow over Ireland. He describes the snow at great detail:

...falling softly...softly falling, too, upon every part of the lonely church yard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried...His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

By implementing the repetitive sounds of the letters f and s ("falling softly", "softly falling", "falling faintly", and "faintly falling"), the author forms an almost silent scene where the only sound to be heard is that of the snow falling. As Gabriel falls into a deep slumber with these thoughts, the reader is left to contemplate the path to a life free of distortion of truth.

Contrastingly, O'Connor takes her reader on a different path to epiphany of soft, comfortable living, igniting a revelation where the character is left completely vulnerable and where it is not possible for life to regress to its former intellectually and spiritually closed state. The scene may be quiet in reality, but the explosion of the character's new reality rings in the ears of the reader. Before Manley lets himself down from the loft, taking with him Hulga's wooden leg, the two characters yell out their last words to one another. In their last moments of conversation, Manley reveals his true identity to Hulga: "'I many sell bibles but I know which end is up and I wasn't born yesterday and I know where I'm going...I been believing in nothing ever since I was born!'" (O'Connor). On the other hand, Hulga does not wish to release herself from her seemingly safe past to remove her mask of strength, as she screams, "'Give me my leg!'" (O'Connor). Each statement is highlighted by an exclamation. These exclamations echo in the mind of the reader as Manley Porter runs to his next victim. Unbeknownst to the world outside of the barn, including Hulga's mother (Mrs. Freeman) and her employer (Mrs. Hopewell), Hulga's world and all that she has forced herself to view as truth has been shattered by Manley's betrayal of her trust by leaving her alone and vulnerable in the barn. The sounds of the last scene of Hulga's demise and possible rebirth are formed, for the most part, in the mind of the reader in response to the shock of Manley Porter's actions and revelation of his true identity.

As examined, the method epiphany exposure in both "Good Country People" and "The Dead" discloses the authors' views of the most effective path to inspire self-reflection in both character and reader. While each method of epiphany formation is effective in arousing response from character and reader, Joyce implements a quiet building of snow and self-awareness, while O'Connor does not allow her epiphany to penetrate her character or the reader until the last moment, when it falls upon both with a bang. Epiphany can be achieved effectively from a number of paths, but only the truly successful transcend the text to touch the reader. •

Joyce, James. "The Dead." *The Story and Its Writers: An Introduction to Short Film*.
8th ed. Bedford, 2010. Print.

ONE PUFF AT A TIME

By Abigail Bachrach

On my twentieth birthday, I committed to a not-so-new New Year's resolution as 2013's end ominously approached. A dangerous smoking habit, complete lack of exercise and dispensation to disregard both mealtimes and ingredients in the food I did eat were all components of my wildly cliché goal, a healthier lifestyle. My resolution lasted, as they are wont to do, about a week. Maybe less. I became intransigent about my smoking; exercise reverted to its status as my *bête noire*.

When cold weather commenced and I frequently found myself short-of-breath, I paid no attention except briefly berating myself. Classic, I reprimanded, another resolution come and gone. That is until a momentous Octobertime walk home from a lecture in Chelsea. The theoretically short trip ended with my companion cabbing me home as I attractively wheezed, futilely attempting to catch my breath. Two hours later and no breath caught, she firmly suggested a visit to a specialist and I reluctantly complied.

To my shock and nobody else's, I was promptly diagnosed with severe dust

allergies coupled with acute, seasonally-induced asthma, inhaler not included. The trouble walking long distances, constant cold and respiratory issues and tightness in my chest were not just my unhealthy lifestyle. Instead I had a disease.

My diagnosis forced the drastic lifestyle change that never bore fruition. Asthma, declared the doctor, was my *fait accompli*. In his emphatic words, smoking of any kind was "completely out of the question." Exercise was banished with an order I carry around like the detective badge held by my favorite characters on *Law and Order: SVU*. It says in a group of connected squiggly lines that resemble English, "Abigail should avoid strenuous physical activity until her asthma attacks subside" and it is my favorite thing besides my inhaler.

Newly acquainted with my lungs, I now breathe the polluted air of NYC's Midtown streets through a Qvar cloud (twice daily) and Nasonex-ed nostrils (two squeezes in the morning). Sometimes I spice it up with prescription-strength Claritin (take out of package, swallow, discard packaging on floor) and on bad days I have Zatador-affected eyes (two drops, only every 24-hours) and generic cough spray (stare at box with bemusement, spray and miss mouth – does anyone really know what to do with cough spray?). Other New Yorkers can stand outside buildings and puff on their cigarettes, but two puffs of Albuterol

(shake, exhale, press down while inhaling, repeat) is the only thing my badass lungs crave.

“Take it slow,” said my allergist; my parents reiterated the same. Friends viewed my diagnosis as an amusing development in my life, a few offered pity, others less so. “Is that an inhaler?” classmates inquired when I let the incriminatingly crimson plastic peek out of a pocket. A caring friend who abhorred my smoking habit refused to indulge me. “You’re a walking statistic,” she cackled, “They should put your face on a billboard.” “Don’t use that in public,” snapped my teenage sister, “You’re embarrassing me.”

With the support of friends and family I embarked on my newly changed life, breathing never a challenge again. Or so I thought. My initial attitude, parts amusement, part dismissal, of my diagnosis lasted until I had what are colloquially referred to as asthma attacks. This lovely experience ranges from wheezing and coughing to an inability to breathe and can lead all the way to throat closing – sometimes in a public college library without one’s inhaler and surrounded by wholly useless undergraduates whose only idea of assistance is to request you “don’t die.”

I stopped forgetting my inhaler and began my search to recognize triggers. It wasn’t

hard to find them everywhere I went – the very air of the city I adored was polluting my lungs on the daily.

Having asthma is something I did not plan for. If I had been warned of my asthma before my diagnosis, I would have mocked the ridiculousness of the thought, blowing smoke in the air with my laughter or maybe swallowing my RedBull breakfast the wrong way. Way back when, my imagination envisioned the billboard mentioned by the friend who’d graciously deemed me a statistic. My mind conceptualized a (flattering) picture of my face, looming amidst a stark white background and ominous words that warn its viewer, “I am Avigayil. I am asthma.” My inhaler’s comforting weight in my pocket serves as a constant reminder of my place as a member of a growing statistic, yes a statistic. Because, like it or not, I am part of something bigger than me – I am Avigayil, but I also have asthma. •



nirosta steel [nayh-rohz-tuh steel] noun
 a german acronym for
nichtrostender stahl,
 meaning non-rusting steel
 experienced a boom in use
 in the early 20th century that
 declined after the depression

CHRYSLER STUDIES

Makena Owens



art deco [art 'dekou] noun



135

an assertively modern style of art and architecture favoring symmetry over asymmetry which flourished post world war one.

resp to technical progr advanced ma incorporating ne niques which represent in social advanc

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