

untitled

rewrite / 18 aug 2022

finding time... seeking time... looking for time... being in time... present. sleeping... stretching... turning... tossing... waking... snoring... sneezing... farting... aching... sleepy and napping... feet hurt and stretching... twisting... tired and resting. sitting... typing... reading... writing... eye strain... rubbing... standing up... walking... pacing... sitting... hunched over computer... at desk... sitting... standing... thirsty... drinking coffee and water and coffee and water... peeing... watching... reading... listening... seeing... eyes hurt and rubbing... and finding... and seeking... and looking... and uncovering... eating... scratching... opening... closing... hurting and stretching... and yawning... and stretching... walking... looking... talking... hearing... finding... and stumbling... and smiling... and laughing... and stretching... and tired... asleep... awake... sleeping... reading... and eating... and shitting... and stretching... and cleaning... and scratching... and rubbing... massaging... tickling... and finding... looking... stretching... and eating... buying... walking... making... drawing... typing... and interviewing... and researching. and getting ready... making food... grocery shopping... walking... riding... driving... sitting... laying... and stretching... coughing... wearing a mask... cleaning... and pissing... and drinking... and waking... and making coffee... and listening... and talking... and laughing... sitting... watching... reading... talking... laughing... resting... stretching... eating... peeing... standing... walking... sitting... laying... resting. and passing out... watching... sleeping... and watching... eating... sleeping... resting... talking... getting ready for bed... and sleeping... and talking... and laying down... and watching... reading... and sleeping...

9 years sober  
john ros  
rewrite / 18 aug 2022

001

it wasn't long ago  
i heard terri gross ask her guest  
something about alcohol's  
long term effect on the brain.  
i was on the train  
or was i walking down Lafayette Avenue  
just getting off the G train?  
or was i on the G train?  
either way, her voice resonated.

002

i drank since i can remember.  
it was high school.  
coping with gayness and queerness and ridicule.  
ridicule turned to violence  
and no one did anything.  
they laughed and pointed fingers  
as if what was happening didn't effect them.  
even counselors said they could do nothing.  
drones were helpless. they joined in on the assault.

003

i remember wondering what i would do with my time  
if i wasn't drinking.  
alcohol filled time  
reliable and convenient.  
consistent friend and foe.  
care — unknowing of codependence  
not caring through swirled nights  
and clouded floating mornings.

004

obsessed with thoughts of quitting  
a week  
a month  
a few months.  
need to prove i'm not an addict (or worse, an alcoholic).  
three months dry  
with return more committed than ever.  
oblivion followed steps  
into backward drift.

005

i would drink while i was out  
i would drink to find a lay  
i would drink at work  
i would drink on the train home from work  
i would drink on week days  
i would drink on weekends  
i would drink with my friends; my father; my grandmother  
myself.

006

the feeling of wanting to be drunk  
still fills in the gaps.  
skin alive with hangover  
pores full  
for less, then more.  
steamed dumplings and hot and sour soup  
to get through afternoons  
salt bombs  
to grasp onto sweat and saliva like dried up well  
of humming discontent.

007

exhausted ground hog days  
one step forward  
two steps back  
two steps forward  
three steps back.  
excuses and apologies  
protected me from me  
fertile  
distrust and resentment.

008

lucid thresholds of pain raise  
like lost reading or footing.  
apologized for nothing  
words and actions alike.  
my reflection stares back with less frequency  
as if i know myself better  
dr jekyll and mx hide as one  
hobbles along.

009

thirty-something

on Lafayette Avenue

seeks freedom from myself

like ants on a stick.

climbing upward and backward

taskers doing.

sighs and exhales of day

sounds of shift

alone and thirsty.

writing prompt: how do i remember...

smell... sound... taste... something pressing on my skin. these moments typically initiate a memory. at other times things flood my consciousness as if to infiltrate every aspect of thought — no matter how much i try to shake it, it does not recede. — this causes anxiety sometimes. memory typically comes in bits. small nuggets. fragments. i sometimes fill in the gaps with daydreams... other times i can remember what happened... or at least what i think happened.

*Epistolary Poem / 17 march 2021*

re-write / 18 aug 2022

dear apathy,

yes, i am speaking to you. the apathetic neighbor who refuses to say “hi” in the hallway. who leaves their junk mail on the mailboxes in the lobby. no, there isn't someone to clean up after you. the apathetic over-privileged neighbor who can't be bothered to sort their recyclables, or breakdown their cardboard, or put trash in the proper receptacle. waste — it's someone else's problem now. the apathetic over-privileged liberal person who doesn't see the connections between capitalism and systemic violence and injustice. this great country was founded on genocide, slavery and destruction — rampant capitalistic overconsumption still relies on slavery and destruction. how do we not make those connections? to the apathetically over-privileged person who thinks its ok to still shop at amazon and walmart. your town is crumbling and all you can think about is where to get more for less — not-to-mention the connections of supply-chains to colonialism and environmental destruction. you can't be someone who cares about black lives and the environment while in the same breath clicking “purchase” on your bloated digital cart. same day service? or will it be delivered tomorrow? and how does the delivery driver afford health care or child care? how does the warehouse worker protect themselves against illness, not to mention take a bathroom break? how can we continue to consume without regard to our local communities, our fellow human beings, our splendid earth.

to the apathetic christian's out there, i thought we were supposed to be stewards of the earth. we are supposed to take care of our land and each other. so many of you are the least christ-like people i have ever known. to the apathetic so-called libertarians and freedom fighters. your personal freedom cannot come at the expense of your fellow neighbor. when your freedoms impinge on my personal freedoms, we have an issue. we are not talking beliefs — we are talking the freedom to breathe — to be human — the dignity to make one's own choices. the common good requires diligence and care, but i don't suppose you give a damn. freedom and liberty for all means WE ALL have the same comforts that have been enjoyed by the social and cultural accepted norms. black and brown folx deserve freedom and liberty. our indigenous deserve it. our trans siblings and all those in the lgbtqi+ spectrum deserve to truly be free and liberated.

to the apathetic politicians, this is meant to be a government of the people, by the people, for the people ... now i know what good 'ol honest abe meant was all the *white, christian, land-owning, straight, male* people, but this is not a government of the rich, by

the rich, for the rich — or wait, is it? stop wasting your time seeking donations and get to work for your people. we must get money out of politics and fix our voting system. to the apathetic so-called liberals who were sitting on the sidelines when *your man* was in office. these are the times that matter most. nixon didn't become one of the most environmentally-conscious presidents because he was a good guy. we fought. we fought every day and night. we should have fought when billy was in office. we should have fought when barrack was in office — but we walked in our sleep. and so far, i see an awful lotta sleep-walking.

to the apathetic teachers. retire. to the apathetic students. go home. to the apathetic cop and military folx — open your eyes and your mouths! not saying something — not stopping someone from abusing their power is just as bad as inflicting the abuse yourself. to apathy, get lost. these are urgent times. our earth is figuratively and literally on fire. we must wake from our sleeping walks, give a damn and get back to work.

life in-between

constant pushing and pulling from a first-generation american, latinx, non-binary, queer, alcoholic, addict, artist.

a is for alcohol. my first love. my always friend. my worst foe. constantly in reach. heightened and numbed at the same time. life of the party long ago to hibernated dreams echoing empty rooms.

b is for body. big, bright, boyish stance moves momentarily urgent. inertia and friction can't stop — be your best. brace for failure. beat yourself up. repeat.

c is for color. sturdy blue-gray stare through dark white complexion. colorism from each, too dark for the québécoise, too light for the cubanas. would my saphardic north african tribe accept this body's color?

d is for depression. d is also for drink. one feeds the other the other feeds the one. a vicious cycle of never-ending longing. lust? dry days keep both away, but urges move like pendulum swings. violent. constant. pulse.

e is for erasure. erase gayness and queerness and femme and skin and latinx and socialist. neither here not there, square peg surrounds endless noise — racket to the top of hierarchical prisons all created to keep the riot at bay.

f is for faggot. worst fear in my youth — greatest strength these days. hidden memories of "take that faggot!" while they held me down. day dreams still haunt fathoms of forced fear thrown on my back like frowned fortresses built to protect my future self.

g is for genius. mom's cello instilled its c-string madness onto us. no room for error. no time for failure. keep working. be your best. no tv. finish your dinner. go study. you can do better.

g is also for gender. three boys, straight, would marry and have children of their own. circle of life broken — gender-bending — masculine facing mellow mushy mixture from within. yellow is for non-masculine and non-feminine; white is for all genders; purple is for masculine and femme genders; black is for non-genders.

h is for husband. i have one. i've been one. i am one. just like dad, how can this word escape gender? we re-make and re-classify and re-name all the time. spouse works, but so does husband, non-gendered.

i is for in-between. the space i retreat to. both my symptom and my cause. between sadness and joy. negative and positive. life and death. this in-between my shelter from nothing and everything. a land of grey where everything else seems to fall into place.

j is for juan. my namesake. my father. they called him johnny. they called me john-john. the last of three, john would be the jester turned judge. jocular journeys jointed just long enough to face the ancestors' pride. they held us up long enough to be brunt by sun and moon alike, flailing jagged thorns of yesteryears hum.

k is for kindling. as in faggot. as in the jeers from others sounding like early morning alarms awaking from dreamlike sleep, sweet simmering embers of sleepy eyes wandering over shadows and shapes and forms on the wall. i remember this place. like the witches that came before me, burning alive atop the dry, crackling twigs.

l is for lust. like every long late night out on the prowl. revenge fucks and lost time infiltrated from within. disconnect between who i was and who i wanted to be. revealed in the morning stuper back into daytimes watchful gaze.

m is for masculine. long ago wanting nothing more than to present as a male. to hide in myself. my skin cover-all wasn't sufficient. thin veil to macho queerness poking through, no cover would suffice. no male could penetrate.

n is for nascent. as in memories and dreams anew. like patterned dew drops falling amid smells of green and hope. January's snow melting into mud season and arms moving freely making a new season.

o is for omniscient. like the mourner. forever sound of loss. a single note hovering like fog's soul stretches over cascading soundscapes of hum. slow ticking pulse through vein reveals more than existence. life looms long like little earthquakes of sand and stone.

p is for painter. the artist i had always wanted to be. songs like saar's. strokes like krasner's. soaks like frankenthaler's. grids like martin's. colors like thomas'. woman epitomized heart beat, lost in the masculine world of drips and color field.

q is for queer. like knowing i never fit it. like telling mom that i wanted to kiss boys at the age of five. like finding love (or at least lust) in many different places. like not fitting into my body. like a fall from grace to so many.

r is for reading. protection from others. whipping tongue of protective veil. harsh. cold. clap back. created from necessity. survival. anxiety. stress. reading may be fundamental, but for many of us, it is like breath, like air, like exhale — extinguishing the mediocre flame of dominant cultural push.

s is for sibling. the in-between of all my trans and queer siblings fighting for survival. my chosen family. my blood siblings fighting for attention. white presenting males. blood may be thick, but it clots. seizes. slips away like drains of fear and hate diluted with water like the blood of christ. holy. just.

t is for truth. always in search as if there is some real truth out there. truth is determined by the storytellers. our truth is determined by the powerful. assuring any reaction erased by death or incarceration. truth is power and only the powerful control truth.

u is for undermine. like self-sabotage or lessening the value of self in a variety of ways. then compensating for these facts in countless actions and reactions. time lost. energy wasted. value forgotten.

v is for vexillologist. early interests to find who i was by where i was from. only, my ancestors would not be defined by some banner of power — elitist symbol of conquer or ownership. though i still love the possibility, not unlike the catholic ritual, i despise the hate and anguish that associates themselves with these symbols of today.

w is for witness. "Perhaps I did not succumb to ideology, as you put it, because I have never seen myself as a spokesman. I am a witness. In the church in which I was raised you were supposed to bear witness to the truth. Now, later on, you wonder what in the world the truth is, but you do know what a lie is." (james baldwin, 1984)

x is for xylograph. woodwork like blockwork. reverse meaning in stamp and ink and pressure. paper reveals the sound of chipping away messages for tomorrow's crowd.

y is for yield. yield to oncoming traffic. yield to dominant culture. yield to self (under the influence). yield. what might this word mean if we yielded to each other? to nature? to those who came before us?

z is for zenith. towering over like moments of feat — silky soft turned solid like fiberglass formed, secured, entombed. this was the almighty. the powerful — and prideful. made in the usa — like me — and soon extinct.

the body of christ

rewritten / 21 august 2022

raised catholic. immigrant parents. conservative. mom was a cello prodigy. we had to be our best at all times. never fail. always be productive. but most of all, fit in. that one came from dad, the cuban. be american. don't raise too many questions or others could become suspicious. but i had so many questions. thirteen years of catholic school — baptized, confirmed — the servile young alter boy. i struggled with the faithful identity even if the ritual and performance was magical. i can recite the liturgy by memory. i can smell the vacuous church and still see the patterns in brick and glass and light at old St. Chris. in college i found freedom, though my catholic demons still haunted. during my early years, through the support of a friend, i found my way to newman house where a hippy ex vet congregated. his anti-establishment reading of the scriptures allowed me to feel catholic for the first time. somehow this all connected. in memory of the simplicity of ritual, i decided to become an eucharistic minister. i went through the training. my world didn't feel right, but did this help? i felt like i belonged to something familiar and i wasn't yet ready to face my queerness. this one saturday night, as many before and after, i went out in the cover of darkness and in a cloak of drunkenness. the prowl proved fruitful as i stumbled home with my prey. mutual body embrace and release, my fingers danced their way into their ass. soft and warm — and hard. passed out, satiated, and comfortable, if for a moment. hungover with haze, my name appeared on sunday's schedule to perform my faithful duties at the nine o'clock mass. night on my breath, i tasted sex. barely sitting still, transubstantiation cued my task. "the body of christ..." "the body of christ..." "the body of christ..." as each utterance slipped through my parched lips like memorized notations, my eyes zoomed to fingertips and hand and sweaty arm. heart pounding with thick musk of ass play looped in my brain. "the body of christ..." "the body of christ..." "the body of christ...". i never returned.

pressed against wall

shadows of touch and sound

throbbing skin on skin

breath of inside warming outward

searching for more than release