

9 years sober
john ros

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 in 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 — into the void.
reliable and convenient.
the friend that always showed up.
caressing — not knowing it's codependent
harm
not caring through swirled nights
and cloudy vague mornings.

004
obsessed with thoughts of quitting
a week
a month
a few months.
i needed to prove i wasn't an addict.

i would get to three months dry
but i always return more committed than ever.
oblivion followed my 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
i would drink with my father
i would drink with my grandmother
i would drink by myself

006

the feeling of wanting to be drunk
still fills gaps and anxieties.
hangovers brought skin to life
made ever pore scream
for less, then more.
steamed dumplings and hot and sour soup
would lift my afternoon
comforting salt bombs
to grasp onto water as if for dear life.

007

living lucidly can raise pain thresholds
at a loss for reading or stumbling.
less time apologizing
or finding the right-wrong thing to say.
my reflection stares back with less frequency
knowing who 's doing the reading
or finding care
as dr jekyll or mx hide
my monster cobbles along.

008

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

009

young thirty-something
on Lafayette Avenue
wanted freedom
momentum to stick.
slowing down
sensing every last breath
exhale through
each sound and sift
still alone and thirsty.