

## YEAR THREE AND OTHER INTERRUPTIONS

## MOVING IN

Will I ever feel tired  
like a kid on the steps  
who can't help  
hopping  
from one to the next?

We floss our teeth,  
place files in folders,  
wipe off places up high  
lost in the corners  
of our gazing eyes.

Here and now,  
dust seeks new quarters  
while wind wonders why  
stillness is a blessing.

I want this to be always—  
seconds lonely  
for complacency in time,  
no board,  
only chalk,  
only go.

334554321123211<sup>1</sup>

How little I know  
you and the thoughts you had  
(lost like me  
growing up somehow  
between imagination and  
now).

Where are those witnesses now?  
Witnessing other things  
I suppose, like us,  
the tissue of time  
pre-systemization.

They say the beginning was beautiful  
moments after  
the big bang.  
Simpler,  
less atomic

It must have been like breathing  
with you  
when we first wake up.

---

<sup>1</sup> The numerical notes to the right hand of *Ode to Joy* on the Nintendo keyboard game I played when in my only-childhood.

## ACCOMPLICEMENTS

Tie me down  
to tie me up again  
I'll undress you  
and hold on.

What if we grow old?  
Will you be my accomplice in  
this accomplishment of life?

We shouldn't think  
about this now.  
Now is for  
accomplishments  
when not thinking makes  
things become so great  
to take us all around the world,  
on fireworks  
worth more  
than a light bulb.

But I still have these thoughts  
about life and growing old.  
That I'm embarrassed exist  
and I try to push away  
at the very least  
for the sake of today,  
so I'll notice how sun  
comes up  
on factory smoke  
that could have just rose  
if it weren't for the air  
that met it just there  
and took a powerful exhale.

I like your breath  
on my neck  
in the middle of the night.

## ADVICE

On the phone  
you say not to  
let my issues get me.

This feels like cake  
in front of a kid  
with a weight problem.

Not that the problems are weighty,  
just that my eyes are bad.

## AGORAPHOBIA

The catastrophic sun  
appears.

What a migraine it makes!

My sight goes gray.

Stimulus triggered,  
a perceived threat,  
apprehension mounting,  
my mind a mess.

## ANXIETY I

A lady  
turns the corner;  
a little boy bounces  
in the bike seat.

Something awful  
may happen.

My cabinet brain  
struggles with structure  
focused on pain.

Too bad the wind  
is louder than sirens;  
too bad  
I can hear myself think.

## ARCH AND KEYSTONE

I am the keystone  
(of four parents  
an isosceles arch,  
parts  
diametrically opposed)  
where my psyche dangles  
from vital voussouirs  
and when they battle  
I decay.

I wish I were a limerick  
so there was  
a clever solution.



## ATLAS (RUBIYAT)

If you were told to hold up the sky  
Would you do it quickly, willingly comply?  
Or would you have something else to do,  
Burdens common, the greatest seeming undue?

And would it be heroic to walk away?  
Not to worry oneself day after day?  
Why take on more strife just to gripe  
When the world spins on regardless anyway?

Whose skies do you hold?  
What complaints make you fold?  
(Quietly treasured in lieu of greatness.)  
Let your burdens go, dissipate, untold.

## BOLTS OF MELODY

Everyday is beautiful;  
everything will change.  
Every moment has its magic,  
can it be sustained?

Streams are born in mountains,  
fountains born in form,  
delirious deciduousness,  
forever is forlorn.

Parameters are built,  
experience is mad,  
hopefulness is predicated  
on never having had.

Meadows have many colors  
the sky can just reflect;  
buildings try to touch its threshold  
but never can connect.

How low on the horizon  
can you see the sky?  
What clouds and concepts intercede  
discouraging your try?

As far, as far, in front of you  
let your eyes roam free.  
Your dreams are sleeping just beyond  
what the eye can see.

## COFFEE ON A LAZY DAY

Procedure says  
unless you heat the milk  
and mix the sugar first  
it doesn't distribute as evenly.

Like closed windows of time;  
the palm of day  
fingers  
into pieces.

A battle of should  
and that  
which is  
unwritten  
brews.

## CREPE PAPER

Some balls bounce  
while others break.

Shards are not to be played with,  
remnants of mistakes.

Billowing crepe paper  
slowly comes undone  
revealing decoration's fleeting status:  
festive relics of once fun.

Are our days just like balloons  
gently deflating,

to sputter, collapse

then fall.

## BRAIN IMAGE SCANNER

Our brain imaging today  
is like Galileo's view of the moon  
ancient telescopes  
determining what we do.

We drive on through  
forests outskirting Reno  
discombobulated  
no common view  
finder.

You say, "I just want to know  
if he really loves me,"  
For hours we're replayed  
anecdotes  
like football plays.

At some point  
the call must be made

There is only one first step  
on the moon.

## DRIVING WITH DAD I

To make me on time  
to math class  
you took the shoulder  
of the Bronx Queens Expressway,  
me pressing my imaginary brake,  
averting our collision  
with the break lights ahead.

For the countless time,  
I put my life in your hands.

The music recedes to the background,  
as I brace for a crash,  
staring down the speedometer,  
silently telling it  
to not let you go  
too fast.

You joke  
about something not funny,  
like hydroplaning,  
teasing the tension  
of the mounting  
family vacation.

(Flashing behind my eyes  
my imagined image  
of you spinning  
over black ice alights.  
Standing by the phone  
you relayed this  
above my ears,  
I was only five  
but I remember  
the hushed tones  
of thankfulness.)

In the backseat,  
I stay silent,  
loyal to your knowledge  
to guide me.

## DRIVING WITH DAD II

By the docks on Third Avenue  
you try to teach me  
to drive stick.

Twice into third gear  
I switched  
when you confidently prodded me  
towards greater Brooklyn.

You sat faithfully casual  
by my side  
until a bus turned  
too wide  
and I had to reverse,  
stalled instead  
immediately cried  
with you shouting to turn back  
on the car  
to shift again  
the bus horn serenading  
our dispute.

I listened and shifted into reverse  
and into first too,  
crossed the street  
then pulled over and said,  
“never again.”

We switched roles then,  
continuing the two steps forward  
one step back  
of daughterhood.

Me perpetually tucked in  
the passenger seat,  
safely.

## EIGHT TRIANGLES

If people were made of pixels, they would not be triangular.  
If people were triangles, they would not be equilateral  
(for if they were, they could sit in a circle of eight  
and make an octagon).  
Most people can't even see where a person's three sides lie  
(that would do for me—being boxed into three,  
just not steam rolled).

Periodically triangles insert themselves  
into one another.  
If the triangles are too well matched  
you may get the full face reaction  
assimilation of two sides  
to the point of destruction  
rhomboidal creation  
codependent cubing  
selfless  
limiting your sides to two  
that might not be yours anyway.

Alternately,  
triangles make a symphony  
of tinkering by collisions.  
There is no give, just the plink plink  
of eating each other's varnish.

If we could instead  
be made of silicone  
(ah the breasts it would enhance,  
lips tighten, fake permission to take in  
other triangles for a moment alone.)



## EDUCATING AMY<sup>2</sup>

“The first thing is the subject matter, the second is to love those kids.”

The worst thing  
in any situation  
is to become systematical<sup>3</sup>.

In whatever fantasies you have  
there lies a schizophrenic line:  
what makes you        and        breaks you.

Everyday happens.  
You think you're eating donuts and coffee  
and really, you're dying.

It's all about where you enter the dialogue,  
*When I was twenty years old, I realized*  
*I had never missed a meal in my life.*

We enter the world without  
information about, where the beginning was  
or end is.

We need to be found,  
but we're just in the middle,  
with a lot of people getting hurt.

Acknowledge the need  
and you can still make it  
to first base.  
Who's on first until then.

---

<sup>2</sup> Wisdom from my wisest teacher, MSH.

<sup>3</sup> to become systematical  
is to die (a little).

## FIRE ALARM

Over a few beers  
we discussed immigration and  
marriage—the word  
a fire alarm  
to be ripped off the wall  
to let the fried chicken finish  
to not  
alarm me.

I rage against  
the institution,  
the ludicrousness  
of now, (we were  
just twelve  
in hydrants  
flooding was the gutter  
plumbers were not  
our concern).

You nonchalantly say,  
“Well I guess some people just know,”  
and I am lost  
in an oil fire  
throwing water,  
further igniting flames  
my mind has lost  
reason  
it rings the alarm  
that is not even there.

Later I behave badly,  
drunkenly taunting you to leave  
with someone else.

I cannot explain  
my immaturity.

I want to rip the wiring  
from the wall  
uncoil my brain  
like string cheese  
unfried.

“I was just talking about immigration,”

you offer, “we’re not immigrants.”

I want to turn the blue  
orange  
erase the escalation.

The next morning I think  
I should rescrew  
the fire alarm.

It sits on the table for days.

## FLYING BUTTRESS

The image of a dog  
comes to mind  
cold, wanting  
for supper,

or the secret that stays  
your eyes  
post jack-in-the-box  
renewal,  
demise

the inside-outside  
dichotomous desire  
to fulfill  
(accompanied by the useless  
mechanics of wanting  
to ask—  
an assemble it yourself kit  
missing one critical  
washer).

The number three  
fights gravity;  
spin an image,  
twist your already flipped vision.

## BIKING, HOW PRECARIOUS

When I pull  
white hairs.  
one by one,  
I do not cry.

When I cut myself  
over the avocado,  
I try  
not to scream.

I hope no one opens  
that street side door.

What could have been  
loses itself.

Drops in a puddle  
scream  
when they sleep.

INGRID ALEXANDER

My high school boyfriend and I  
decided on a name  
for our child to be.

It seems so naïve now  
I cringe to write it down,  
laugh nervously.

But this was not funny to us then.  
It was serious.  
We would get married,  
and be together, forever.

Like most hackneyed thoughts  
it too dissipated  
into other humdrum  
clichés of college romance.

After we separated,  
the moments gathered  
like streakers on a college campus  
exploding through my green  
mind when someone new laid me  
down, but now it's many more years later  
and even those images  
of flash photography  
fade.

Except I remember  
we were supposed to name her  
Ingrid  
Alexander.

Had she been real  
what else might I remember,  
have missed  
or forgotten?

What embers of hope  
would still glow  
in my thinned  
faith in love?

## LEAN-TO

### I.

Three walls and a sloping roof (sometimes tacked on).

The reverse of a peninsula (a hat).

Shelter enough (for a snack).

An add on.

Invented space,  
made of parameters.

### II.

To lean on

as opposed to stand up.

To relax

in contrast to continuing.

To float

instead of treading water.

### III.

To see

as opposed to analyze

To be

in contrast to competing.

Lean-to joy

to gratitude

to mercy.

## NYC AFTER VACATION

Ah! To return to  
the smell of exhaust,  
the sunset of smog  
the reason for late nights  
the rhyme of alarm  
the unnatural undulations  
of my urban lungs

A fondness I have  
random collisions' confusion,  
the exponential power  
of meaningless intersections.



## ODE TO JOY/VALENTINE'S DAY POEM

How little I know  
still of you,  
the thoughts you had,  
little boy,  
lost like me  
growing up someplace  
between imagination and  
now.

The tissue of time  
pre-systemizing  
us for today  
you in morning  
by my side.

They say the beginning was beautiful  
moments after  
the big bang.  
Simpler,  
less atomic mess.

It must have been like breathing  
when we first wake up.

## ONLY CHILD

I told my mother once  
that I liked summer camp  
because I could tell the counselors,  
yet unknown,  
all about myself  
from the beginning.

So much have I craved  
for someone  
to see things my way,  
to validate  
that those too  
would be the decisions  
they would have made.

That indeed  
in my wholeness  
I was worthy  
of being loved.

## PANGAEA

My body was yours  
once. I felt so little  
your hands  
drove my fathers stick shift,  
could move me swift, one armed  
and trying to champion  
the art of frozen vegetables  
you too, young  
with mystery,  
attempting authority  
like jumping waves.

The ocean roars  
of unknown,  
sand pipers  
scurrying its edge  
crab crabbing  
the border or safety.

What else is there of today  
but intention?

If only we had wings  
for skirmishes  
with what could be,  
if only there were no need  
for a plan.

For the love of crabs  
we cannot see  
the depths of ocean  
phytoplankton to whale  
complete  
(the way we played  
in the shower  
head to drain).

The piper grasps  
that waves do not repeat—  
I am just coming to understand this now  
I am happy  
but wonder  
if

seagulls leaves no footprints in the sand.

That we were once  
might not have been  
but for knowing  
you too must think of me  
when you notice the ocean

or that the world  
is connected.

## PURSUIT

Why the constant pursuit?  
You ask casually of yourself  
as if there were a good answer  
a fire truck responds  
speeding down my nice quiet street.  
Car alarms  
yell back.

Images are sparse  
of relaxation:  
my aloe plant on the window ledge alone.

The images here either  
deconstruct or move—  
the chipped yellow line  
or non-parking space,  
the woman begging  
in a high-pitched voice,  
or the turn of the subway turn style.

Pursuit spins,  
cycles.

## PYRAMID LAKE, NEVADA

We are tired    quiet in the car  
talked out  
compulsive concerns aired  
looming        third rail.

In the valley mountains rise    siblings unknown

They corral wild horses here,  
for adoption    I don't suppose  
I could take one  
home.

We speed to see  
the sun set the lake  
water never escapes  
terminal end of Tahoe's tears  
evaporating.

"Tufahs" rise  
towers  
calcium carbonate  
underground springs  
bubbling up  
minerals deposited out.

As the lake level fell,  
the deposits stopped  
became exposed  
around the lake  
marking places where fresh water escaped.

The cartography of what is underneath  
what once was full ocean  
now this.

Break neck speeds  
cars explore narrow roads of near collisions  
bubbling up ourselves  
futures yet  
unknown.

Once wild  
horses  
feed at trophs

At a light a man dances  
an intersection  
holding an ad.

We move cautiously  
across this connection  
towards fresh water  
amidst termination.

SEE

That naughty piece of hair  
you noticed  
is sticking up again;  
hydrogen bonds too crave attention.

Carry on  
miniscule elements  
amalgamate my desire

to be seen.



## RESEARCH METHODS

When researching oneself  
there is no directory of events  
from which to systematically select;  
there is no random  
survey of life  
things rise  
like cream  
reasons unseen  
who was in the room  
the time of day, the ray of light  
the unisolatable way we're hurt  
is rarely convenient

We are not malls of personalities  
sequestered on a clipboard  
conveniently differentiated  
by colors of tees  
we are one  
wardrobe  
to change  
is a challenge  
let alone  
stratify happenstances.  
It would be to know  
all the people you were  
on the corridor  
of your life  
that had no walls  
or classroom numbers.

What can we do—but digress—  
study if your relationship is failing  
by studying what feels bad  
(you want people who are into cock-fighting  
go to a cock fight).

The legitimacy of a sample  
depends on what you look for.  
Remember,  
if there is a plateau,  
it must involve time.  
Adore your square of land;  
learn to accept  
yourself.

## QUALIA<sup>4</sup>

When 12 Harvard researchers  
work tirelessly for years,  
gorillas say  
“Tickle, tickle, giggle, me, man,”  
that is not a sentence,  
no matter how much sense you speak,  
they see the sign, but not the string.  
If he could say  
“Dear researcher  
when you started to tickle me last year  
my depression ended,”  
this would be success  
of sorts.

.....

When they read  
independently  
I pace looking  
like I might kill  
if someone speaks  
(and smile encouragingly).

James flags me down,  
follows the no talking signs  
covers up half of the chapter one title  
so it reads: “Good day,”  
then he slides his hand left  
so now it says “Bad day,”  
inquires with his eyes  
which one I might be having.

I smile  
point at “Good,”  
and walk away.

This is only depressing 20 minutes later,  
when he’s on the same page  
asking the same question.

---

<sup>4</sup> The feeling of redness. Is it the same when a computer registers 51% of a screen is a given color and when you see a rose?

It slowly gets louder  
I gently bang my head  
against the board  
three times.

“Shut-up you’re gonna make her cry,”  
someone shouts.

“Don’t cry, you’re letting them get to you,” Kaila says.

“Come on, shut the fuck up, she’s banging her head on the board.”

“She’s always doing that,” Shyisha says.

....

Watch how  
bees can  
only discuss  
honey.

Try having umpires  
discuss Kierkegaard  
in baseball signs.

## POTTED PLANT

1. Plant seeds outdoors.
2. Plant seeds in rows (not scattered in a heart-shaped pot).
3. Thin after two-three inches growth (I'm not sure what this means).
4. Do not water excessively or use fertilizer (Plants are more capable than you think, do not micromanage or mother too much).

These are annuals.

There was only one chance.

They would have been edible.

Suffice it to say,

they will not be eaten—

perhaps they knew my designs

and out evolved me.

That tree in the window

breaking concrete thirty feet below

waves so casually,

confident in my need

for its seamless grace

constantly defying

my need for procedure.

## SPRAY PAINT

A picture is made  
(like sand leaves a hand  
in a rush).

Fits and decisions,  
triggers and deliberation—  
why does what spread where?  
How can you  
contain that thought?

The marks you make  
stay  
pieces of paint  
permeate permanence  
particle by particle  
paving  
the future.

Pursuit  
etched  
in each moment  
inked  
(nothing wasted).

## STEAL REINFORCED CEMENT

Where is my steel reinforcement?  
I plea brittle and needy  
of an architect  
to determine  
my maximum capacity.

Why am I not an elevator?  
My worst fate then  
could be plunging  
to a scrap metal lot  
where things just creak  
  
and no one talks.

## TELEVISION

Oftentimes it mews  
on and on  
begging to not off  
    (making the background  
    unaware  
    of its status)  
fighting some miniscule twig  
    (the thing you wish you did  
    yesterday)  
messing with  
the foreground focus  
of what you want  
to do right now.

“Turn me on,  
to turn it off,”  
it chants  
in digital pixels  
prancing the space between your face  
and the screen  
making real time seem  
irrelevant  
(the once shaking waves on which it transmitted  
sine, cosine, cosine, sine,  
erased to pieces  
without patterns  
precise representation  
invading with swiftness).

Quick, let it take you,  
take you away,  
escape the bombardment,  
of a very long day.

## THE DISTANCE AN ANT HAS TO CRAWL

The distance an ant covers is infinite  
(compared to it)  
you or I  
could take a few strides,  
but in whose steps can we  
aspire?

Young boys choose dinosaurs  
a scale there  
to compare  
the ultimate  
distance.



## THE HABANERO PEPPER<sup>5</sup>

Take a bite  
all teeth in.

Challenging  
senses  
to slowly explode.

Relax,  
the house is not on fire  
(our mouths  
simply aflame)  
under cover  
one another  
no sense  
too intense  
our dreams  
incensed spice  
never fades.

---

<sup>5</sup> Beware what you touch  
(afterwards).

## THE SUPER

Frankie tells me  
“Our building is like a church—  
not just nobody can come in.  
It’s my job to protect it.  
I live here 50 years.  
There was a young couple  
like you,  
but he was not one of us

she brought him from the street  
they fight a lot.

She come downstairs  
2:30 AM want to ‘use my microwave,’  
and I let her in,  
you know she’s in my building,  
but I don’t want no part  
of no domestic abuse  
but my building’s my building.

I take care of people.

Nick downstairs  
he stays to himself  
and people talk.  
But I pay him some money  
to help me with the garbage.

Me?  
I’m not a well man  
but God don’t want to take me yet.  
I got 70 years.  
It was a good life.

One time I knew a man,  
he had nowhere  
so I tell him  
‘come here,’  
but then he wouldn’t leave  
so I had to threaten him  
with my gun.

I worked for Nixon once,  
Kissinger’s Department of State,

man those guys could party!  
Good times we had  
up til three in the morning  
back up cleaning the next day.  
That's why God's gonna take me  
soon.

My wife, ay, I feel bad  
she has to get up  
the middle of the night  
my medicine, ay,  
God should take me  
soon.

I have a bad knee  
when it's raining.”

## THEY'RE ALL HERE

“They’re all here,” she would say  
when another odd thing took place.

Emphasis on the “aw” in “all”  
as if her mouth  
could enclose  
the oddity.

But it couldn’t.  
There was still the man  
playing flute on the subway stairs,  
the looming third rail,  
and Dorothy who lived downstairs—  
her mop, I remember vaguely her hair—  
she died and no one knew for three days,  
and too the doorman from Yugoslavia  
who owned a building and a black escalade.

Alongside  
she and me  
walking to school  
amidst stories.