

Obliterated
(after “buzzed”)

Andy sits
no
sprawls
no
flails
no
descends
in the hatchback of my car
he’s seeing stars? bugs? colors? God? god? *OH JESUS* (he yells)

I am at the CVS on the other side of town buying flashcards to study for AP U.S. History
Correction: I told my mom that I *am at the CVS on the other side of town buying flashcards to study for AP U.S. History*
I am actually at Avery Park
white knuckling the steering wheel
praying to g(G)od *ohjesus* that police don’t come
looking to break something already broken / punish a punishment already dealt out

My friends are expanding their vocabulary with words I have never experienced
They say

	obliterated	
buzzed		
smacked	cracked	blissed
wasted		
	stoned	baked

I don’t say anything
I just drive
StraightLacedUptightNoFunLameAssStoneColdSober
On call nurse with ambulance, 2007 third-hand bungled silver toyota (sirens off, always)

vomit encrusted white fragments of oxy
freeze overnight
in my backseat
I scrape them off the floor with an ice scraper in the school parking lot at 5 am (before the teachers get there)
It looks like the chunky cookie dough ice cream at the cornerstore we would all walk to after 5th grade let out

He used to get two scoops and let me have half

I may be young-old and clueless

but

I do not need a drug prevention ad

Pride Parade Inventory
(after “Collective”)

a party of pansexuals
a gaggle of gays
a beatitude of bisexuals
a quagmire of questioning souls

a congregation of non binary folx
a blessing of drag queens
an exaltation of trans women
a liberation of trans men

a grunt of lesbians
followed by
a curtsy of lesbians
trailed by
a sigh of “straight” women

a froth of preachers
a brood of police
a sneeze of corporate sponsors
a whisper of substance abuse

an invitation of supportive moms
a spark of wide eyed teens
an inspiration of queer parents, babies in tow
a delegation of fossils (survivors of generations and tragedies past)

i’ve never been referred to kindly in the plural form

if we want to stop being
an abomination of queers
a slur of fags
an exile of... a torment of... a vulgarity of...
we’d better come up with new words

Notes on Leaving Home

(after “ninth grade: my year of living stupidly”)

1. In the years after my coming out to my parents, my mom becomes less angry that I am gay and more angry about the fact that I lied about it for three years. A month before I leave home I repeat verbatim every homophobic thing she said while I was in the closet (except I wasn't in the closet—I was in the car, at grandma's house, at the dinner table). I lied, but she told the truth. We call it even before I leave.
2. I learn the definition of the word moderation: *noun, the avoidance of excess or extremes, especially in one's behavior or political opinions*. I forget that it is one of the funny nouns that is secretly a verb. I display “moderation” in a picture frame on my dorm room desk, I forget to take it out to practice at night.
3. When you leave and everyone else stays behind, you learn very quickly who was using you for a free ride/lunch/bailout/sympathizer/tutor/therapist/stand-in-mom and who actually gave a damn.
4. I was never considered “wild” in high school because I never “did anything.” Tall boy in a the dorm lobby puffs out his chest and tells a tale of getting high in his high school bathroom. Everyone laughs. I follow the form, puff out my chest, and tell a tale of having to walk to the second floor bathroom during lunch (because the girls bathroom in the cafeteria was off limits [because the boys started a paying girls for sex in there]). I wait for laughter and receive only stares. “*Where the fuck are you from?*” It turns out the things you've seen are just as much a part of you as the things you've done. “Wild” by association... I never “did anything” (right?)
5. I talk to my friends from my hometown who are now in colleges spread out across the state of Ohio and they tell me how the same things have happened to them. *I told that story about bumming cigarettes off our drama teacher... that story about crazy alex... about what happened sophomore year... the parking lot... Avery Park... behind the dugouts...* We grew up weird didn't we?
6. When you come home in November after being gone since August, you expect things to be different and are shocked by how much actually stayed the same
7. When you leave home in November to go back to your newly found normal to continue what you started, you expect things to be the same and are shocked by how much actually changed
8. I learn that having a funny story to tell means having to live through something less than funny to get it. A beautiful mess just feels like a mess until you can step back. Survival doesn't feel like survival until tragedy is in the rear view mirror. But the past tense is a powerful tool of softening edges and over saturating color. A story teller can use it to speed up the process—make other people laugh while they are wilting.
9. When you leave home in May to return to the place where you grew up, you expect things to be the same, and they are. But you are so so different.