

Autoethnographic Poetry on Bodily Autonomy: Watch the Womb

Description

The AutoEthnographer



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Authorâ??s Memo

â??Whatâ??s past is prologueâ?• (William Shakespeare). In *The Tempest,* Shakespeare writes and effectively utilizes this phrase to drive earnestly home that history indeed reasserts its fickle refrain in current times. In his play and across time, cultural examination and research has shown this to be true even as it relates to personal autonomy. This autoethnographic poetry is born of my personal experience and witness, as well as currently chronicled and ancestral lore. In addition to this, my personal and cultural lenses as a woman of color who matriculates and interacts within a variety of circles and finds herself in a diversity of difficult intersections equip me to reflect on the factors that influence many aspects of my being, as well as those with ways of being similar to mine.

As a result of these personal, cultural, national, and even worldwide realities, I have come to recognize the importance of voice throughout the width and breath of literary expression particularly as it relates to social justice and bodily autonomy. The three poems included in this submission reflect what, in this time, I perceive to be a historically reoccurring loss of control.

My first poem, â??Watch the Womb,â?• starkly reflects not only on my own particular concerns as a woman, but the massive outcry that occurred upon the return of abortion rights to the states; in this, the US Supreme Court rendered millions of women almost legally powerless to make their own choices regarding not only the choice to reproduce, but also their decision to prioritize their own lives over the development of thier unborn. This poem also offers stark warning of an increasing trend to limit freedoms, bodily and otherwise, to people of marginalized groups.

The second poem, â??Deeperâ?¦Furtherâ?¦Back,â?• offers a poetic snippet of the collective memory of women, and historically assesses from where these issues may have stemmed. The origin story of this poem comes from qualitative accounts of family members, narratives of women in history (particularly oppressed women of color), and the experiences related through writings and discussions of post-secondary students. The ideas in this poem reflect the legacy of oppression in several areas of life and ultimately, the voice in the poem connects this legacy to her current assessment of self.

Finally, the third poem, â??myth as latter life,â?• draws upon â??Pandoraâ??s Boxâ?• to set the stage of the revisiting of diminished autonomy and liberties. It asserts that what we currently are experiencing regarding the losses of autonomy and basic human rights is reflective of a continuing cycle except that in this time, the lid to contain our box of ills is lost. Ultimately, the voice in this poem insists that more and different approaches will be required for redemption. Therefore, we are charged to create stronger measures to bring us beyond this fear and fervor.

While these works reflect my encounters and observations, ultimately they also urge us to consider a past chocked full of miseries and reminds the reader that to cry is not enough. In history, cross-application and introspection is crucial in asserting laws and interactions that better the lives of the individual as well as society. To ignore this reality only creates greater chasms of disparities, resentment, ineffective and self-serving legislation, and ultimately violence, despair, and death.


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Watch the Womb

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Watch the Womb

wounded by five loathsome hands

gavels stretched forth

pointing, grasping, mocking

stripping the girl, the woman, of choice

naming themselves â??Gods of Allâ?• wombs

these New Day Constructors of Tombs

Watch the Womb

that bears the joy and the violence, the weight of all that grows, all that enters in, all that presses down on every side, yet in her born possessorâ??s mouth no longer resides

bodily right nor consent

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Watch the Womb

that which is coveted by the will of the robed

who have no desire to even empathize nor possess fairly informed framework

with which to think

They, that drum heavy fingers

roll resolute heads and sigh

and sign scrolls of condemnation

and death warrants to those

who live in The Now

that breathe in

then out

Watch the Womb

Shrinking in abject fear as rough

hands snatch her near

her rights as crumpled as

the hard fought protections

pages of care are

shredded and tossed

Watch the Womb

and wonder why it is so coveted

yet so villified

and feel as it recognizes

that it will not lie on the altar alone

Love, Education, History, Equality, Equity

will soon make that fiery shrine its home

She becomes a herald who cries, cautions â??There will be more!â?•

Watch the Womb

Cry

Remember who did her wrong

dry your tears and then

from your lips and actions

employ urgent and passionate

Dissent

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Deeperâ?¦Furtherâ?¦Back

A womanâ??s tale

Starting here

going deeper

down deeper

Past petty

small sadness

Past last cursing

self-cursing

Steadily looking

Further deeper

Lower torture

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Years before

Auto-maiming

Mental maiming

lived the renamed

formerly named

shame named

love named

birth named

ancient names

Buried bones burrowing

deeper in scorched earth

Back before

Pulled bellies

Stretching hanging

Distorted jelly

Roads back

Time back

Lives back

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Back before

when simple

never was simple

Lost time

Long time

Dark hearts

made darker times

Before thenâ?¦

Before thenâ?¦

When was it?

What trauma-

skinned knee

changed us?

Changed me?

What wordless words

blamed me?

Why wonâ??t they

release me?

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Look further back, Woman

Woman beforeâ?¦

Woman beforeâ?¦

Woman beforeâ?¦

Interference

everywhere


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myth as latter life

Pandora revisited

box flung wide

out crawls the solid form of

what has been living

as essence

as whisper

as rumor

as silent talk in corners

it puts on clothing garish red

calls it â??blood oâ?? Jesusâ?? and paints

it across the annals of a familiar menacing history that births

again and again

and it boldly announces an

â??extra comingâ??

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we watch wince feel

the latter day mist shards descend as we silently erroneously patiently dangerously wait for it to dissipate that we might welcome our solemn rain of reason

back again

again

but fleshed out fear and rage is

not easily contained

remains uncaptured

positions while it can

destroys what it will

even when a

gentler face emerges

it becomes clear

the lid is lost

our strategy must change

now calling for sun spells

that will evaporate

this ever slicing

shower of despair

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1. All Content
2. Autoethnographic Poetry
3. Bodily Autonomy Special Issue, 2022-23
4. Special Issues

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