



## Autoethnographic Poetry: “The Wrong Kind of Theme Park”

### Description

My ability to be creatively vulnerable with my mental illness as well as the experiences which contributed to it will serve as a method of self-healing.

### Author’s Memo

Autoethnography can offer multiple therapeutic benefits. Not only does it allow those with mental illnesses to express themselves, which contributes to a better understanding of self, but it offers a method of healing. Duchin and Wiseman state, “Individuals’ ability to describe traumatic events in their lives is connected to the processing of trauma and healing” (280). As these poems illustrate, my ability to be creatively vulnerable with my mental illness as well as the experiences which contributed to it will serve as a method of self-healing.

2020 was a trying year for a lot of people, and for me, in a multitude of *clusterfucks* kinda way. I lost a beloved pet, moved across the country, separated from my spouse of 11 years, started my graduate degree, had to make a difficult decision to re-home my other pets, and had a miscarriage.

*Don’t forget the abusive relationships...* Yeah—I wish I could. Sometimes in life, we do stupid shit—like that time I got out of one abusive relationship just to get into another. Although, to be fair, I didn’t even realize it was abuse because it resembled the environment where I was raised. It’s funny how that works—how you can’t see something for what it is until you’re away from it.

I’ve written poems here and there before, but something about all of these events happening really drew me to put words to paper again—or in this case, text to phone screen. When I was writing, I went back from time to time and reviewed the previous poems, but it never occurred to me just how dysfunctional I was until I “retired” them, completed some grueling therapy work, and later read them from start to finish. Being in an abusive situation is difficult, and although it was painful to endure and it’s still painful today, I am thankful I escaped. I still struggle some days—but the struggle I have

independently is much preferred to being around someone who is purposely trying to destroy you.

We all have trauma and the only way we can stop projecting our trauma onto other people is to heal. We heal by sharing our stories—vulnerability is powerful.

The AutoEthnographer





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I'm at the top and it's a long way down, but if I fall, I know the wind will carry me away

Like a dandelion

And I'll float and fly over the water until the earth pulls me back down

Then I'll flutter down and dig deep in the soil  
Sprout my seed  
Ground my roots  
And even if they try to pull me from the dirt, they won't be able to  
Because I'll be strong, steady, planted

Thought loops are like Froot Loops so let me take you on a colorful ride  
Sometimes it's a fucking mess inside  
One minute I want to die and the next I want to live  
But what's living?  
I don't want to meet over coffee—that shit's lame  
I don't do wine Wednesdays or get a thrill from playing chess  
What I really need is a distraction—you know, stimulate my brain  
Sometimes I eat the good candy just to turn the lights out  
Why is it always night out when I feel most alive?  
Chain smoking keeps me coasting through the minutes  
                    hours  
                    days  
And I close my eyes and pray "please take me away"  
Because I want to go right in this moment while everything's okay

I've been trying to think of what to do with you but I had too much candy and can't think clearly  
I guess it's the better alternative to an electric current running through my cerebrum  
Fuck feelings  
Maybe I should just be brain dead  
This mind is a beautiful thing to waste but it's always been treated like trash anyways

You're like the fish that I keep throwing back but my bait's too good and I hook you again  
And again. And again.  
And each time, it gets a little harder to throw you back  
And every time I cast my line again, you bite a little sooner  
I guess this will be the little game we play until I break down and take you home with me









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It's complicated, right? I am complicated. You are complicated. This, we, us, them—is complicated. There are some complications. I hope if I say it enough, it all becomes meaningless.

Your heart is a muscle—it keeps you alive, but as it beats, you're dying. That's what it's like. Like having your heart in a glass box where no one can touch it. But I feel it beat in me...



It's a sweet misery. It kills me a little bit more every day, but it keeps me wanting to wake up the next. I'll dream of all the things that could be, only to open my eyes to the empty space in my bed. But, somehow, you're still here with me...

How do you wait when you don't even know what you're waiting for—or if it will ever come? But I know I can't walk away, because I want to hear you call my name. Please, will you please just call my name?

I've always wanted ECT because it helps with forgetting, but your brain can actually work in this way—on its own. Einstein said time is relative and now it all makes sense; my brain took out the garbage, so what was many calendar years is now just a small sliver in my mind.

How do you stay when it kills you? Because you don't want to lose it. How can you leave it behind? You can't. And all the frustrated crying in the world can't change a damn thing, but you let it out anyway.

So I'll live each day in a dichotomy; I guess sometimes there's pain in pleasure. And I'll keep dreaming of scenarios in my head that may never happen, but I'm hopeful. Or am I just stupid? I guess being in love is like that...

Feels like being ripped apart from the inside

Right in the solar plexus

Who do you talk to when the person you would normally talk to doesn't want to talk?

You talk to yourself

And what do you say?

You try to make sense of it even when nothing makes sense

You could lose your shit but what does that do?

It can't change anything. It certainly won't make it better

So you just keep holding on

What do you hold onto?

Yourself. Don't lose yourself

This phlegm in my throat chokes me up and I can't speak for days

Truth is there's so much I want to say but you're not always there like I need you to be

I try to think of all the good times but the bad is bad bad

Like I want to run and never look back bad

But you keep holding on

And so do I

Why do we both keep holding on?

The AutoEthnographer







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You said you were happy it happened—how could you say that?

Extasy

I'm pretty sure that's when I obtained

One night—two hours—ecstasy

And we didn't even know until it was too late



You were an asshole—first rate  
Stressed me out and made me feel like I wasn't perfect—even though you told me before that I am  
And then there was the drinking  
And the smoking  
Was it your fault or mine?  
You said you were happy it happened—how could you say that?  
It was like being stabbed in my pelvis with a skewer  
For a week—every day  
I thought I just wasn't drinking enough water  
Until I saw the fragments floating in the water of the porcelain bowl  
Blood clot—a little heart  
Gray tissue—a little face  
White tissue—tiny limbs  
You said you were happy it happened—how could you say that?  
And when the passing was finally over  
I was so relieved until I had to scrub the blood stains from my underwear  
And I was reminded all over again that all the love and support I needed were flushed just like the life  
that once lived inside me  
That was our baby. My baby. Your baby.  
Your child.  
You said you were happy it happened—how could you say that?

Beautiful disaster

There's a version of you that I love and adore  
And another one that I hate  
I don't think it's your fault  
But you have to be ready to let yourself be free  
I know you said you like that feeling but do you know what being free really feels like?  
Because I don't think you've ever healed from all of your pain  
And you can take as many trips as you like, but they're not going to get you any closer to your destination  
The experts say narcissists and empaths are actually the perfect pair  
But I think that only applies if both are up to the challenges they're going to face  
And they're both ready  
It always drove me a little crazy that you knew me so well, so I can understand why it drives you crazy that I can see right through you, too  
It's terrifying to be so transparent, isn't it?  
Most people I know can't understand my feelings towards you  
And I think that's only because I've seen your soul where others are stuck on your exterior  
You were right when you said we're all alone in this world  
But I'm starting to see that everyone is at least a little damaged  
And it's still possible for two lonely, damaged people to come together and get things right where everything else was always wrong  
I'm being a little hypocritical right now because while that's my hope, I've also lost hope  
I'll be alright, though, because I've been fulfilling my own dreams for a long time  
I am a fortress now  
Like the cement marker at Clinton Lake—right now I'm watching the waves crashing against it and yet it's unmoving  
I so badly want to go out and stand on it so I can be one with my metaphor

I don't know who they are, but they say two people who are meant to be together will always find their way back to each other

I always wondered how that's possible because the world is so big

But it's really not that difficult to find who you're looking for if you're determined

You can find anything on the internet—especially once you know someone's real name

Yes, I know everything, and yes, I'm still here

I don't hate you

I just hate what you've let other people make you

You're better than that but it doesn't matter how many times I say it, you have to believe it

But, for good measure, you're so much fucking better than that

Don't be lost. Don't be gone. You've been found—now find yourself

Catch a wave and ride it into the sunset, and if you ever get yourself together, you can come find me

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### Category

1. All Content
2. Autoethnographic Poetry
3. Volume 2, Issue 1 (2022)

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