

RESPONSE TO EL PASO AND DAYTON SHOOTINGS AUGUST 2019

By Aimee Nicole

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: *These are bewitching, bothered and bewildered. Perhaps Rodgers should compose the melodies with Hart in a netherworld. Still, Nicole's words are chanting, captivating and uncompromising: 'In 1989 this body was birthed fierce and ready at 7:17AM.' Her words ring-out for all advocates having encountered the aggressions of Men. I heard a good line once, I am more attracted to someone who is interested in me than I am attracted to [italic]—dangling propositions are almost always edited out. (I am too hard on the eyes and strange in the face not to insist on a chance to know someone better. Just lucky that way, women are not so stuck on looks; they have evolved beyond and can see inward.) Instead of editing poetry, I feel I am coming to offer advice for the lovelorn—it is probably the same thing. Still Nicole's language and themes should not be missed even by a waning misogynist. I have not done her justice. "In Death" is a pleasant diversion from her pain 'the pews hardened by decades of / silent suffering.' Once again, I have gone on too long..(Spacing is poet's own). HS*

Response to El Paso and Dayton shootings August 2019

In 1989 this body was birthed fierce and ready at 7:17AM.
Nurses and doctors made to work overtime to bring this
7-ounce body screaming, already knowing when to fight, safely to my mom's arms.
My body learned the rules
(a.k.a learned the danger of men)
young like a good woman does.
This body dragged across the yard by its hair by her father.
This body held down by a boy, mouth hot as wax,
his body weighted like a dead body, my body's words rejected,
shelved, reserved for him to tongue later when alone.
Not long after, this body betrayed by itself, unable to carry the weight.
Disc tissue crunching itself down to nothing.
Head spinning out of control as vertigo took all the power this body had left.
Unable to walk to the bathroom without clinging to walls,
unable to open its eyes, unable to keep its eyes open.
The irony of having PCOS was not lost of me.
Every time a man wanted to shove a dick inside without permission,
I could bear it because I am a woman and that's what women do.
And he would not have to deal with the consequences because that's what men do.
My body was born to be political, this body was born to bear your vote.
You don't keep me safe in school or in my home.
You worry what my body will do with itself after a man grabs my
body by the throat and slams it against a wall.
You worry what my body will do with itself after a man grabs my
wrists and holds me down for hours.
You don't worry about the man.
You give the man a gun, publish his name in the paper
so his name lives on forever.

Light Internet Stalking

I looked up my sexual assaulter online today.

It's such a mouthful to say "the man who sexually assaulted me"
so I'm taking the liberty of paring down and creating new language.

To my surprise, I re-learned he's blocked from my Facebook
so I had to get creative with tax assessment websites.

Still living in town, I see.

At least I made it out for a few years with a failed marriage
and even more trust issues to show for that adventure.

I notice the white truck parked outside the house and chastise myself
for scanning the roads for that old black Ford all these years.

I don't know what you look like in 2019. We're both 30. I hope the
years are weighing on you, your face weathered and worn.

I'm surprised to see your voter affiliation is democrat.

Does this mean you believe in a woman's right to choose anything for herself?

The Burden

Working with so many women has its ups and downs.
The downs: that devastating, sickening crunch of breaking bones
walking over my body in the lunchroom as blood gushes from the gut.
Babies visit on a Tuesday morning, fresh from the womb, warm with wonder.
Becky from Finance is pregnant with twins and that lady
whose name starts with "T" is out on maternity leave.
There are a dozen grandmothers with 5 on the way,
shoving sonograms in my face at the front counter.
I swallow thickly, smile with teeth, and say how cute the grey shapes are.
Then lock myself in the handicapped stall for 15 minutes surrounded by quiet.
My busy mind regretting being born in this bruised body.
My silent tears leaving ghosts on the tiled floor.

Second Chances

Why do you have insomnia? They ask.

I'm falling in love, I say.

Lying in the dark I think about your soft lips molding against mine,
melty candle wax hot to the touch.

Your hand searching for mine from the passenger's side.

Mine, pulled quick to yours like a magnet.

Out darkest secrets revealed under moonlight one Saturday.

How we weren't afraid to see, craving blood stained corners of the past.

Days ticking by like sticky syrup until our next meeting.

Irritating. An unsolvable crime.

When we meet again, will it be cinematic magic?

Will my skin burst into flames at your touch?

Is the phoenix that rises from my ashes be our love?

Youth at 30

For the first time in years, my body is sore and it's not from physical therapy or chronic pain.

I sit up straight and tilt my head gently to the right, then the left.

Adjusting my scarf as needed to cover up the gift that keeps my cheeks blooming.

When I bend down to tie my sneakers, my legs moan with memory.

My cat steps over my knees, swollen from your Ford Focus, and I yelp scaring her into the closet.

I hunch over, my shoulders feeling like I swam laps for hours like I did in my younger years.

This pain is comfortable.

This pain reminds me my body can move in beautiful ways.

This pain is proof that I'm still able to wow a man to his knees.

In Death

At your funeral, people will come. The real and the fantasy. There will be flowers birthed to wither in a blanket, all for you. It will be held in a church — the pews hardened by decades of silent suffering. Everyone able to advocate for you was pushed away before the end. Someone, a stranger to you, will order the food. It won't all be vegan. The mindless chitter chatter...something you abhor on a good day. At the close, everyone will slide into their cars and glide away. Say what a nice young man you were. Lying through their teeth.

The things I get from online dating that aren't dates

Edward is visiting his parents for the weekend in the area and is only seeking hookups. Somehow he ended up in the hospital and is giving me a play-by-play. Cocktail of antibiotics/steroids/morphine=party. I talk to him all night so he isn't alone, wondering where his friends are...or the family he came to visit.

Constant blur of demands telling me who and how to be:

Loyal.

Trusting.

Fun.

Cool.

Hot.

Fishing is life.

Hiking is life.

Must love guns.

So many opinions about pineapple on pizza.

Telling me that you love poop jokes isn't a strong lead.

Once I saw a picture of a tree and the bio said:

"I am a tree, I love wood."

The tree had two stones eyes and a stone mouth.

I'm 95% sure it was a fake profile...but couldn't help being intrigued.

Why do all the men want me to camp outside,

hike up mountains,

and think flipping me off is sexy?

Are they trying to find a woman or a bro to go boating with?

Constant bio boohooing about no one responding to their messages

but I'm stacked with no replies and I'm sleeping fine at night.

Women have their own issues, good conversation until

they don't show up for our dates or let me in on the secret that

they are just looking for me to bankroll their lifestyle.

Let me get right on that after I pay of a million dollars in my student loans.

Also, I'm the femme queen here. Didn't you see my pretty dress in that first pic?

The Appointment

For an hour, I sit on a plush purple couch
with many unicorns looking down on me from all angles.

Unicorns in heat.

Unicorns in romantic gesture.

Unicorns in childlike frolic.

Unicorns in metal band garb.

Unicorns in rage.

The artist is running late, yet I
blame myself for booking a same day appointment.

The healing process is jagged and rough.

Today, I'm trading in my wedding ring
for a semi-colon and I'll wear it for everyone to see.

Life with Mental Illness

Mental Illness lays its cards on the table every hand.

It brags about a flush when there are 2 black cards and 3 red cards.

It screams out loud for hours about a full house that is really a run.

It begs you to accept the run of 2, 4, 6, 8, King or else it will die.

Mental Illness is in despair over its hand when it wanted all black cards and there is a red king.

It cannot bear when you need to take a 5 minute coffee break in the middle of a hand.

Forget about a bathroom break or needing to make a meal in the kitchen.

You need to see everything Mental Illness does while playing and congratulate every move.

Mental Illness Speaker

You don't know me at all.
You think you know me, but you don't.
You don't know me as well as everyone else.
We should have never met each other.
We should not even know each other.
We're never going to work, are we?
Everyone else thinks I'm fine.
Everyone else thinks I'm normal.
You make me feel crazy.
You're the worst thing that's ever happened to me.

I never said that.

THE POET SPEAKS: *My poetry is very organic and often written on napkins and the back of receipts. If you notice someone driving very slowly on the highway with a pride flag bumper sticker, it's probably me and inspiration hit inconveniently. The human connection influences me heavily. How do we treat others? How do we expect to be treated? How do our actions send ripples out into our surroundings? We are becoming distant from each other, the communication already faltered and broken down. Poetry and art can bring us together by sharing our stories. Even if we don't believe in all the same things, our experiences are human. Our struggles are our own. It's important to listen to each other, to support each other, and to show up for each other. We can do that by sharing our own stories and by having the humility to hear other voices that are being lost.*

You don't have to put your finger on good poetry and feel its heartbeat. That beating heartbeat is jumping right off the page. Something inside you shifts and a bond forms between you and the poet. Recently, I've been so inspired by Sam Sax, Blythe Baird, Melissa Lozada-Olivia, Danez Smith, José Olivarez, Yesika Salgado, and Sabrina Benaim. I enjoy poetry that is messy and raw. A poet with the courage to show you their bleeding heart, still pulsing in their hand.

BIO: *Aimee Nicole is a queer poet currently residing in Rhode Island. She holds a BFA in Creative Writing from Roger Williams University and has been published by the Red Booth Review, Psychic Meatloaf, and Dying Dahlia Review, among others. For fun, she enjoys attending roller derby bouts and trying desperately to win at drag bingo.*

