

Origin Stories

As with many families that formed in the mid-1900s, mine is rife with secrets and half-remembered truths whispered by the older folks who'd lived through 'stuff'. Hanging out in kitchens while the woman chatted, laughed, tasted, and served platters of steaming comfort foods – fried chicken, roast pork, oxtail stew with fluffy dumplings, rice, and black-eyed peas with gravy, sauteed beet greens, pies, and fancy cakes – germinated plenty of story-fruit. The long drapes of dining room tablecloths were excellent hiding places if you could avoid the shifting feet.

Crouching near where the adults congregated after dinner was better than snooping on a confessional, even when we didn't fathom much of what they were talking about. We heard their words. We witnessed their emotions and expressions and absorbed them into our genetic makeup. Today, some call that generational trauma. For us, it was simply the way life was.

My mother died twenty-five years ago, a few months before she would have celebrated her 78th birthday, and I'm aware of the clock ticking for me as I approach that milestone. My two remaining aunties – aged 95 and 93 – are the youngest of the four siblings who survived to adulthood. I am the oldest of four children, all of whom are over the age of sixty-five. My cousins are in the same age group. My children are in their fifties. My eldest grandchild is in her thirties.

I am destined to play a memory-carrier role for my generation, curating the more-or-less of realities that we collectively recall, but frequently don't agree on. Most of the photographs that have been amassed over the last 100 years will become meaningless to coming

Possibilities

“I dwell in possibility.” (Emily Dickinson)

As he leaves, the doors unbolt themselves
for fear of losing out on new visitors.
If they come or not is not the issue.

They’ll come in the thousands
and fill up the domed arena
with chatter and roar.

We sit calmly, counting the minutes, the seconds,
on our outmoded watches. No tick tok follows the
smothered tunes.

From a distance, we hear the swords and ankle chains
clicking and falling behind. The best option now
is to duck and await other promising sounds.

But when we sing along, words and melodies consummate
a marriage of possibilities. As long as we hold the tune,
the horizon's crimson lights repel the darkness.

Strong Words

With words strong I speak, with my letters and my notes,
I write not for ascribed readers only, I write for
confused and lost persons.

Have you noticed that it was easy to gain an audience?
I also think it is easy to lose, letters are damned in the same spirit in
which they are scripted.

I sing and play for the condemned,
I hail through my pen my purest and deepest for them.

Hurrah to those who have lost!
And to those whose inkwells dried in the process!

And to those themselves who were aborted in the process!

And to all writers that lost letters, and all beaten writers!

And the countless nameless writers *equal to the greatest* writers
renowned!

(Inspired by Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*, #18, P.43.)