

Making Love to Our Mothers' Mothers: Black Skins, White Masks

*This piece is dedicated to my loneliness and desire to die...and hers too.*

“Culture of dissemblance - appearance of openness and disclosure but (a life that) actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves.” Darlene Clark Hine

November 2009

Your kiss was your accumulated air to make air in my lungs.

Wild winds, my breath inconsistent, revealing your disturbance of the skipped record.

Though veiled, my gratitude is still evident at this unwrapped gift.

November 2009

I am hungry for you.

So I eat myself from the inside.

Gorging on memories knotted in my soul

Travelling my heart and my throat

Clogged with knots, false passageways and traps disguised as escape routes

When they release, clumps and tiny pieces let loose

These I pile together

It falls or broken

Pieces of your clothing

Loneliness.

Strength.

Desperation.

Beauty

Abandonment.

I promise to take care of you

After I make you.

November 2009

I am hungry for you.

So hungry I eat my memories from the inside.

Grabbing hold of the mess, my ignorance

Licking the stickiness off my hands

I am a clown

Dance

Fantasize

And you move

Me

Confused tongue tied again and again.

Clogged memories, I gather

Knots

October 2009

Fast girls.

Corset.

Bra.

They are the inheritors of their ancestor's dreams and nightmares.

August 2009

My grandmother let herself die.

Or in fact it's analytically explained that my grandmother really did not want to stay here. So the story is that she wanted to die.

Whether she wanted to stay or not I feel broken. There always seemed to be something broken to me because my grandmother was not here. As if she was supposed to be here. Perhaps stories from the books I hungrily read taught me that a complete family had grandparents. But I never mourned my father's mother, only my mother's mother.

My family tells stories at parties, in front of the television, cars, barbecues, funerals, everywhere. One place was the table in the kitchen. My parents bought a long brown wood table, which I sat at while people talked, laughed and cooked. From this and other family times, I knew stories, big stories, big stories of what happened yesterday and before I was born. (1)

Her stories existed in a vacuum a hellish pit, separate from the rest of our other stories. Rarely, was she presented as fully human, there were few stories of her day to day, likes, dislikes obsessions and love, but when she is "storied on" she is described as beautiful, desired and engaging.

I didn't understand this gap, there is a part missing. I did not articulate it at that time but now I understand I could not imagine her and her place in my family's story, she is not woven into us but – she is, in my gasping for air.

I was a child. I have a family that lets children participate in stories. The babies build family memories too with their stories. Their stories, our stories become carvings - gestures, in one story that yes, we have decided to stay, knowing there is danger.

In my family they are called kids, cousins or children. I now as an adult call them all babies, sweet babies, babies whether they are teens or toddlers or newborns.

I call them babies because I know that there is danger, there, out there somewhere, in front of us all around and they don't know ...yet. I hope when they learn, they do not go and "run and hide." (2) When I was younger I did know of danger of too sharp fences, broken pieces of iron, playing with fire and mad dogs. But as I became a woman I learned that there is a danger, not in a material form, but it sits heavy and permeates my being like a gas.

I was raised knowing that there was an option to go. I knew this because they said that my grandmother let herself die. I know because I knew and know people who are sleeping even though they are in fact alive.

Parts of them are dead or want to go, or maybe they are just sick of the danger, unseen, stinking their bodies, on their neck.

(1) Luisah Teisch, JAMBALAYA: THE NATURAL WOMAN'S BOOK OF PERSONAL CHARMS & PRACTICAL RITUALS, 1985.j

(2) Soul II Soul

October 2009

Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes and the Myth of the Slut (Hardcover)

October 2009

We make one oath to our mother.

It is an ancient oath, we promise that we will take care of us like she did for us

I promise to take care of you.

I promise to take care of her.

I promise not to let you starve.

I promise that I will not let you hurt yourself.

I am the hunter.

There is a danger.

I promise to protect you.