

Three Generations After:

Rhymes & Rhythms of Remembrance (Part 1)

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Why does trauma instantly fragment the interior connections in the realm of our most personal and intimate space? Does revisiting that time-space to take a 'second look' repair the shredded fabric of our traumatised mind? Until recently such questions were shrouded in mystery. Three generations after, Survivors' testimonies speak to that mystery, and beyond, to the numinous rhyme and rhythm of their remembrance.

Those split-second moments that splintered the continuity of their being, and ours if we listen with empathy, reveal the disruption to their delicate fabric of consciousness. Located at the convergence of episodic, procedural and autobiographical memory, ruptures in the fabric of consciousness reveal themselves in conversation as silent gaps, the glazed look of lost self-awareness, frozen expressions words fail to grasp, the wordless sigh. These fleeting moments punctuate a life where traumas' echoes compound the original disruptions to the rhythm of life.

Trauma disrupts rhythms from the pulse and the pause of a beating heart, breath held against its will to inhale, to fluid and flexible exchanged glances that defy defining 'you' and 'me'. Trauma dissolves these life-sustaining rhythms, redefine what constitutes the boundaries of self 'outside' and 'inside' in the 'post-Auschwitz *homo sapiens*' (George Steiner).

Such new rhythms demand a second look at the unexplored depths of both 'outer' and 'inner' landscapes in order to put ourselves 'inside' who we really are. The second look affords a second chance to find new experiences of coherence and contours as the excess fragments, traumas legacy, are transformed into new rhythms of remembrance, the reality of the rhythm of a continuity of being.

Only that 'second look' has the generative power to vitalise enough energy to reintegrate life's ceased rhythmic ebb and flow, to repair the

ruptured boundaries of self and other. Ruptured and fragmented parts of the self fill that monumental land-space.

The *Adult March of the Living* provides survivors, (adult and child), second and third generation a 'second look', to discover revitalising moments of grief, to transform those fragmented, fleeting memories that ruptured the rhythm of being, when memory froze into sweet sorrow, three generations before. And then to embrace life anew.

After extreme trauma, outward behaviours driven by 'reasoning' and 'feeling' may indicate well-being and high level functioning, even very high levels. Yet, as mental health professionals aware of traumas lasting effect on the fabric of memory, the disruption to the rhythm of being, we must remain cautious, we must judge such 'performance' with care not to overlook the gaping, silent wounds beyond.

Mental health professionals take pains to remain mindful of the power of trauma to transform life's rhythms. Traumas legacy, frozen continents of the inner landscape, are governed by the ubiquitous rhythms of silence and secrecy. We know such rhythms may persist generations after trauma ravages the psyche and the soul. We are concerned to truly grasp the inner nature of these transformations.

To repair such frozen continents where minds can not juxtapose the fragments of past and present, reality and fantasy, minds incapable of finding the word to tell it like it was demands that we take pains. We need to exercise caution and care if we are to nurture those delicate strands of self that seek a new rhythm of being, daring to relate anew, three generations after.

To take a 'second look', to revisit, to renegotiate that frozen mental landscape, to unleash disrupted rhythms demands ongoing sensitivity and tact, three generations after. The gatekeeper to consciousness will give permission, or not, to enter, to dare to reawaken those critical moments when life froze, three generations before. If permission is granted we must take pains to not rush in psychologically impatient.

We must take pains to not offer to word or to structure those emerging rhythms, but await for signals, fleeting signals that give permission to ...

Along the way the rhythm of sobbing rage and grief heralds relief from aching silence, life's rhyme, rhythm and reason may be gradually reclaimed, three generations after. Beyond awareness, these tears will

flow in new rhythmic currents, streams that weave to repair the shredded fabric of the intimate spaces.

What will trigger these moments of repair? Who knows the map of that most private and intimate landscape where senses were lost, the mind's eye blinded by frozen tears, 'you' and 'me', past and future all frozen in chaos. To survive demanded that the fabric of consciousness be ruptured, to remember no more.

To counter that intuition to forget, to once again dare to confront, to open that moment the mind would prefer to obliterate, is to reclaim experiences of desires dashed, cherished loves crushed. Now memory's frozen landscape is about to defrost to floods of tears, three generations after.

It is unlikely that immersion in such awareness is sustainable, survivable, without the witnesses, the three generations after. Such thoughts during the weeks before departure for the *Adult March of the Living* prepare us to face those generational injuries that repair only generation after generation, three generations after.

The ordinary mind does not desire to revisit, to bear witness to that psychic landscape of half obliterated memory. But then the participants on the *March* have minds beyond the ordinary. They prepare to immerse in that personal and intimate space where three generations before trauma fragmented intimate, interior connections. They prepare to immerse in that personal and intimate space in order to repair the ruptured rhyme and rhythm of intimate remembrance, the fabric of consciousness, three generations after.

I dedicate this essay to Judith Kestenberg (of blessed memory), Paul Valent, Tania Nahum and Amelia Klein who generously continue to teach me, three generations after.