

Weaving Voices Article (Aug-Nov 2000)

Contributions of the Members of the C. G. Jung Society of Sydney

We are always on the lookout for material for Weaving Voices. If you would like to submit an article of 1700 words or suggest something, please contact one of the committee members.

Dreamwork: My Sister Dancing

BY FRANCES PATERSON

I DREAMED I saw my elder sister dancing in our house in Saltpan, dancing.

Her long hair is falling down her back and she dances in a whirlwind, her face flushes with ecstasy, her head thrown back in joy. She is celebrating betrothal to a wonderful man. She wears a long crimson dress, with no sleeves, like the one my friend was wearing yesterday. "Look at this dress," she said, "isn't it lovely, it's like a rainbow", smoothing it out over her legs as we sat on the rock shelf above the waves at Bronte, watching fishermen withstand the sucking waters and hoicking black bream out of the surging troughs.

My sister is dancing in a room in our old house in Herbert Avenue, and now I am remembering clearly, for the first time since we left, bits of my childhood. Some of the walls have tumbled overnight, while I indexed my first book, Gemstones and Minerals of Australia, complained about my aching back, while I walked and talked and went about obviously in the upper world, all that time the walls were falling down, like the walls of Jericho, like the roses of Madeleine's weary heart, and here is my sister dancing, she is going to be a bride.

Her arms and feet are bare and her head is tilted back and laughing joy. She whirls her brown arms around and around and fills that space which I might otherwise have left in silence and echoes, filled with the reek of alcohol and cigarettes, the stain of last night's dinner plate hurled against the wall, a snoring, unhappy house, which must open its eyes, drag itself out of bed, and look with reproach or remorse or rekindled anger, each upon the other, no exemptions, all of us whirlpooled in, while outside in the light, the bush goes on streaming its song, the insect song of millions. It's hard not to think they all have glad hearts, like my dancing sister revolving in this little room.

The eldest daughter in a dress in a room in a house, pinned in place by my imagination, turning out of the freeze-frame, revolving around and around, lifting her arms, throwing back her head, laughing with joy, her long hair streaming down her back, my Leo sister's thick dark mane, a curtain of hair that always made her head look small and burdened by its weight. I remember a book from my childhood about three girls named after their beautiful hair, Copper, Silver and Gold, alchemical sisters, with not just names and pretty faces but vital, transformative hair. I see their tresses standing out around to look for Gemstones and Minerals, so recently indexed, but the pages have been sent off to the publisher, and I have to stay down here in a world without facts but only ripe intuitions like the one I had about those three sisters and the substance of their hair.

I've woken up remembering tiny bits of my childhood, the place where our family life was lived. An anthropologist from National Parks & Wildlife Service told me the other day that Aboriginal families want to record all finds of sites,. Not only secret, sacred sites, and keep alive their memories of places where important events took place – births, deaths, marriages – of the dreaming spirits and of themselves. On the computer, there is a symbol for 'add sum', and when I think about it, that is how our lives and memories must be. Why would we want to diminish that?

Some white people want to forget the past, but the blacks don't, they won't and they can't, because it simply isn't possible to do. We can't obliterate the past; history gets re-written, but not forgotten.

My dancing sister in that gloomy room in Saltpan reminds me that I did forget my past. I think about the nature of a forgotten memory. It seems like a glacier, a moraine of mess, an ice-flow through which on clear days you can see the outlines of buried shapes and on grey, scummy days, you can see nothing at all. But even the glacier is not rock solid to the last; it inches forward dripping into icy rivulets and some time or other will finally release its jaws and let its secrets out.

Still she dances, she is high, she is so happy she can't stop laughing. She will marry the other, and of all things in the world, this will make her the most happy, the most hopeful, the most optimistic.

***“Cuando mas larga la espera,
mas herosa l’alegría.”***
**The greater the hope,
the greater the joy.**