The Dance of the Ritual Scar

Sean Whalen*

*Iowa State University

Copyright ©1999 by the authors. Sketch is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress).
http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch
Today I wrote a poem,
new father to new daughter,
and having delivered it in class,
knees up, blood on the floor,
each peer sawing at the umbilical cord,
they demanded to see a picture
of my child.
I took her image from my bag,
placed her gently into the web of hands
suddenly woven by her Stygian sisters
as they arranged themselves subtly
into the triangle of power.
Concerned I leaned into the synapse
to tell her be careful but the ground
was moving like a snake
the undulations carrying me away
until the drumbeat cat-wail
of their chanting grew distant and hard
to discern over the cracking
of branches against my back
as they pushed me to the fringe of primal woods
away from the fire away from the dance.
As distant as galaxies the glow rising
from the picture of my daughter
lit their faces orange and vitriolic
a strong bubbling caldron smoking and black
with the burn of their slow sonorous song.
I could see her essence spring from the paper
like new leaves winding up their forearms
nosing into armpits across taut breasts
tasting painful nipples down smooth sides down
full hips angling up soft bellies and down
into the triangle tangle of hair sniffing
at the familiar forbidden sex
remembering their smell her smell her mother’s
smell twisting in the damp garden over the pudenda
down the rigorous slit sensing for the nick
of scar from birth canal to perineum that stitches
each together
the permanent scar in all women
barren or full,
the scar on no man, the scar no man has,
the scar no man has seen, the scar
my daughter has and will have ritual or no,
the scar that separates her forever
from me and binds us closer
than any bond of men.