

Changing Subjects, Changing Places

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Changer le sujet, changer de place

Les textes se propagent en réseau à partir des sujets d'énonciations multiples, décentrés. Le labyrinthe des mots, des métaphors – tant de médiations – trahit la douleur du corps souffrant d'endométriose. Cette maladie nommée les rêves se manifestent en tant que représentations du corps. Les codes du genre fonctionnent dans le flux des hormones. Mais c'est encore une réduction. Plutôt, le sujet de l'énonciation a decodé les signes selon une autre herméneutique. Tout comme le kaléidoscope, ils se déploient dans beaucoup de récits. Avec chaque nouvelle formulation des signes, le sujet change de place, se divise, se dédouble à l'infini. Du sujet à l'objet, de l'objet en sujet dans le jeu du signifiant.

I,I,I,I, the cry of pain, ay ay, the blink of an I. There's a kaleidoscope of subjects in this me, each one sure of her position when she is at the throttle of consciousness. At the threshold, each one vows to accommodate the others, and then when she achieves control forgets the shadows behind her. Ahem. Attention, please. Writing for me is a process of remembering the others in me. No, that's wrong. Each voice writes her own concern. And then is recognized as singular when read back later. By whom? Another voice. Is there no central subject? I admit a confusion of voices, so far from integrated that they don't even believe in that possibility.

The assorted voices' idea of centre is just a hit of circumstance, and that by luck. Can you tell I'm bluffing, putting in time, fishing? The words come of their own accord, pulled up by a cord from the well of association. Circus, so come, circumvent, you can't make me! —circumference, that's it! Their idea of centre is a hit on the circumference. That's what I meant to say, I say with relief and a glance askance at the

time line. Has anyone noticed? The posture of wit is desperation, post sure. Letting the language lead has become a necessity these days.

The I who is writing feels begrudgingly betrayed. Also glad, grateful, to be able to get words down coherently—sometimes. And why? I am white, in the middle of life, educated, in a relationship of partners, almost (even) middle class (again). No-one out there is constraining me, comparatively. But I have been wrong. Poetry has betrayed me. Metaphor has betrayed me. My body dominates me. For fifteen years the pain I felt translated immediately into image, which I tried to get down on the page. Get down, it's got me down. So much for sublimation. I cannot walk. I cannot think. Meditation smoothed the pain, but the process in my body went on subliminally. One I must have known what the others did not.

I don't mean there isn't the usual horrible medical story: I went to my family gynecologist with all my symptoms listed, time after time, for years. He laughed at my partner's suggestion of endometriosis and suggested I see a psychiatrist. Moving to Toronto, I changed gynecologists. Four days after my first visit, my new doctor had given me a laproscopy and found endometriosis. My symptoms were classic. Particles of menstrual blood had escaped my womb and implanted themselves outside on my womb, on my bladder. So there is that reality. Four months later, after trying Chinese medicine, anabolic steroids, I can't wait, imagine, I am praying for a hysterectomy. I am on the call list.

The medical reality undiagnosed, my body unrepresented. The coding unread. Creativity gone amuck. Those little red endometriosis spreading through my body cavity. Now it is easier to interpret the following dream, from 1986:

'The little red devil lives in a secret closet in the front hall of my house. Deciding to confront him, I climb into his hovel and grapple with him fiercely. But I have bitten off more than I can chew, the devil has transformed into a tiger. The contest is too intense and I am in danger of losing, transformed with the tiger into swirling ghee. Suddenly, I become a monkey, excitedly chittering, teasing the roaring tiger below. Leaping from cupboard to cupboard, I scold as he lunges full force, never quite high enough. Glowering and balefully intent, he tries to stare me down, tail waving ominously. Impasse. Slowly, smoothly, the gorgeous tiger stripes fade away into the tall, dark

image of an old lover of mine. Dapper, the man reaches out his arms for me, and I allow myself to be coaxed down from the ceiling, seduced, a woman once more.

Suddenly, the scene shifts to my bed, as if I have awakened. But I haven't. I am aware of my lover, fully present, his body pressing into mine. He tells me he loves me deeply and will always be a part of me. 'But I need to be away from you, not to see you.'

So now I have reduced the relationship between male and female to the shifting balance of hormones. A new reductionism. My own shifting metaphor has ruled my subjects. I have lived by the prevailing metaphor of my dreams. As if it were real. Yesterday, I dreamt a molar fell out with a clunk: and that prepares my body to accept the shock of a hysterectomy. You see?

So alright, it is not the failure of metaphor per se. My body was trying to tell me all those years, dream after dream. The little red dogs yapping at my heels, the red monkeys swinging from trees, the barnacles clinging to the dolphin: perfect metaphors for the endometrial blood that has escaped the uterus. Demon lovers ride the fluctuating tide of progesterone. So clear in hindsight. But hermeneutics let me down. My perception let me down. I have not been able to walk five yards for over a year and a half; something let me down.

Let me give the kaleidoscope another whirl, into laboroscope, her/story. My life has been changing the subject. A new explanation, and my shape shifts again. My (w)hole definition of myself has been through birthing as creativity. While the metaphor holds, my body could not. I forgot to ask, births what? At what cost? My pelvis split giving birth to my first child, and seven times since. In many ways that split reflects profoundly a change in self/shape from child/woman to woman with child who splits ad infinitum. Am I subject to objectification; that nothing is wholly good. And I object, but the subject shifts the shape around and

subject shifts shape shift

sub text

sup press

ex stant

ex press

ex plain

happen stance

predictable predicate
the past a ghast
store up sort of
hurt but too
confused to
notice

so many of us home
I don't know who to call

subject to change
without notice
change the subject
no certainty need apply
surely

explain as the no's
on my face
effaced by
wrinkles
who could foresee?

'the trick is to act as act if could if active would apply'
pass if the am you knit shun
unravelling sleeve of
care

carry on
I carry
Icarus via
us
vye
carious
carrion
dead meat

carry on the race
is to the quick
erased in
dead heat

merry we meet and

merry part

'a nation of women with wings'

we are

weary

let down defences

I have needed explanations, stories to explain predicaments not predictable . Look to the physical, what is the simplest. Here I am, flat, having invested myself in rationale. Because of misdiagnosis, because doctors don't take women seriously. I take a clear body signal and translate it into emotional pain and make myself guilty for it. Guilt for feeling pain, for not being able to rise above the signals of my own body, of having to interpret my own body language into metaphor when what I needed was to give what for to the con/man doctor who laughed at my stories and left me in pain.

shape shifting from round limbs of childhood to round belly of twelve to round breasts to rounder bellies to split pelvis to sprained pelvis to strained pelvis, salmon fall apart in the brooks where they spawn cartilage splayed, and now

Fifteen years ago, my shape was shifting, and I had an abortion, a tubal cauterization. Fire charred those wings and I fell. That is another story, clipped. Shall I sharpen Occam's Razor? During this procedure, some tissue from my endometrium escaped from my uterus and implanted itself in tiny colonies in my body cavity, and on my pelvic ligaments. Each month, these colonies would respond to the hormonal signals, and shed blood, tissue. This caused pain which was at times so debilitating that I could not stand or walk. To cope with the pain, I relied on meditative techniques that took me out of my body. Over time, the endometrial implants interfered with my body's production of hormones.

One of the results of the abnormal hormonal flow was that I experienced vivid hypnagogic images. Because I am a poet, I took these visions as a blessing, and used them as guides. Whole poems came to me in this state. Other visions also came. I translated the pain from endometriosis into horrifying dreams in which I was ritually tortured and abused by men. So many of the visions had blood and red in them. I read *The Wise Wound* and thought I was blessed with extraordinary vision. I now believe the visions to be attempts to cope with unremitting pain.

The prose before my world view shifts once again. My whole system crosses signals. These June days of perfection mist, I drift across some enormity, shawled and coiffed, the images I drew for years of gap, of poignancy for the past and the future, the present. These red poems talk to me now. Re-reading them, I am astonished at the clues in them I couldn't decipher at the time of writing. 'I!' said The Little Red Hen and she did. 'Off!' said the little Red Queen and she did.

Swampy terrain indeed!
My body the jungle,
the slough of despond.

The cruelty of metaphor
the vision I couldn't share now released

out of the shift once more
into the breech

last will and test a manny

breech that birth!
I've been wrong!
wronged and
rung out
the barrels

bring out the
arrows, Eros
danazoi, dazzling anabolicsly
testestaronone a test

progesterone
pro jest? you must be
joking. This project
is a test.

toss her among
imposters among
these thieves,
small honour.

the Goddess within is
turning out
to be

way
ward
endometrium

endo, I learn to call it
in the support group,
the endo support group.
The end of

disparity
the depths of this
pair

her suit
strong suit
nirsuite bear, an ox
ymoronic pun

Who's to say when another reality, another (realized) birth, will suddenly pop alive and kicking into our lives? It would sometimes seem to take forever to translate. Sometimes it's been there all along and I never noticed it until now. And yet I've been trying to think the relationship intra subject through for years.

Bits of paper,
snippets and segments.
Pages add to pages
an aesthetic.

Hypnogogic state.
The spell. The voice reels by my mind
on tickertape, left to right.

I wonder what its direction would be
if I spoke Hebrew or Chinese.

I remember the process
and lose the words.
Those words loom so large,
the billboard of mind.

They resonate. How could
they drop into the word forever?
Irretrievable. But the process,

I catch, and cotton on to.

Glimmer.

An emotion too bare to say.

Light explodes as I go under.

The end of the tunnel
become the means.

I remember the empty brilliance
of a page imagined.

I remember sleep, slipping
back

to sweet
nothings, no

syllables chime
into chords.

Murmur I promise
to remember, to re-
collect recall

down the long red hall of
memory

revisited

the poem parts
the poem leaps
synapse, the poem
appropriates

all as proper
for its own
soi-propre
soi-disant

distant
relative

blood
kin

kindling

how we claim all
as metaphor, image
of that yearning fashion
calls desire

red and ribbed, blood
vesselled, we have been
here before

the poem repeats old
patterns even after
years, yearning for
the new

the new physics, theories
out of chaos, the dissipative
structure leaps to a new
order

my, mind, mined

red and ribbed, blood
vesselled, re/membered

as mother culture, my blood
red wine has soured.

Vinegar in my wine skin.

Red and white goddesses
terracotta
so easy to crack.

Crack the code,
the egg cossetted.

Culled.
Sure.
Be tray.

Last night I dreamt
the Fyfe's cat cracked
open. Inside sat blinking

a giant toad that could only
be born by cracking the clay.

I cant keep up
appearance
shifts
I cant keep up

The Goddess this Lammas wants
blood and she has
mine

so far benign.

Creativity berserk, my womb
shot endo's out to far walls.

Womb out you must now represent all
the loss I leave bleeding

free flow
flaw