

With a Carving Knife: Unearthing the Feminine

A Prelude to Digging Oneself Out of a Grave

How to disrupt. Said that the root must be found before it can be analyzed, so go to the root. Note how closely it twists with other roots, how shoots and nodular networks tentacle and tangle with it, a deep meshy blanket of flesh and woody tendrils, a scrapheap of nerves, ideas, sloughed cells, letters, numbers. Note how you can't quite pull a shoot without some clumped matter coming with it; how you can't yank a single hair without a whole head coming up somewhere, attached to it. Help this head. Sever its connection to the mass, hold it up and let it examine the root it came from - its eyes will be flitted with mud and will need rinsing. The clots of soil and blood must be unplugged from its mouth and throat. Let it look around, assess, embody itself, realize it is not only a head but already a body, and that she doesn't have to stay in the ground, bound to squirming, writhing earth and all the mythical and cosmological rotting baggage held there in the vines and nodework like a still yet to be realized object of Dreamtime.

Earth is not soft and pretty but there lies Woman, believing herself to be comfortable in her natural surroundings, fingering fistfuls of dirt and cosmic interconnectedness and accepting her role as part of the ground that is walked on. The metaphor connecting the feminine and the Earth, wet and easy, is always available and frequently drawn on. Consider how it rots. How it is oversimplified and deeply-rooted in a primordial muck that we cling to because it's of the same stuff we stand on. Earth. Ground. *If it's in the ground, it must be solid. Must be unmovable, must be a permanent bundling of sticks and nerves that define the great Mother we wish to form in/of it.* Gaia's generous hips and belly still preside, even in a world that feels

doomed by the phallic: when the Man gets you down, pride in femininity can be reassured by leaning back on a doughy goddess and re-connecting with the beauty of biological function. There be treasure. The easiest way to be respected as female is still to maintain the supposedly inherent gentleness of femininity, an automatically intimate relationship with the lush and peace of Nature, the delicacy of the fruits and flowers that line the life and womb of every Irigaraian two-lips goddess. No real lady would fight; no strong, confident woman need indulge in boy games like war. The feminine pretends power in its passive mode of difference to the phallic; it eschews what it assumes to be male attributes, such as power, competition, violence, and, for those women who run into trouble with the law, the female position guarantees their softness, their innocence, and thereby their lack of responsibility for any action deemed to be unfeminine.

How to disrupt, for something's not right with the use of land as stand-in for a woman, though both have been property, are useable, and the body of one fits into the other. *She* doesn't belong there. She is a concept that decomposes in a specifically passive way, yet everywhere, she already cuts and screams and brings death tête-à-tête with the other pronouns. She abuses, batters, murders, speak and writes acid. That doesn't sit quiet with pretty *Earth*: simply clashes. She is not Earth, can't be grounded, seeded, farmed, happy nurture pit. Dig up, cu(n)t out.

The digging is hard, of course, because so many of us are lonely, want the docile arm-flesh to be reality, can't understand that arm's relationship to a fist. Boys may be boys, but the humiliation of being struck by a woman smacks of darkness no one cares to see. How to disrupt. How to get in that darkness, see a face there - see that it is in every face - when we refuse to admit femininity is no guarantee of

sugar and spice, no fruity orchard full of rosy cheeks and bountiful hips. Consider gender a booby-trap, a false set of boundaries erected to discourage wandering, exploration, improvement, growth. Consider fear of the dark a phobia that discourages wandering, exploration, improvement, growth. Face dark, grit teeth, look. Navigation begins therein, an attempt to address what may have been more pleasant and safe to *not* see, and speak of it. Speak *to* it. Find words, because to express is to have agency; to verbalize is to make visible.

Here I come in and start to play with what terrifies and terrorizes me, see how what I don't understand hurts me. How to disrupt is somewhere in the language, in the tactical games of poetics. If I dig and yank the feminine from it's root, it's grounded position, I stand with torn clusters of language that is at times vulnerable, generally vicious, and potentially irresponsible. Vulnerable because I have literally refused to have ground to stand on; vicious and potentially irresponsible because that is the nature of violent behavior, the effect of an energy unleashed without full knowledge of what it will do, never mind where it came from. The poetic experiment carries the hope of channeling that energy by finding a way to express it: the giving of a name, the granting of a face or bodily referent, or at the least, simply an entry into a space where language begins to come to terms with what it can't express - specifically, the relationship between the feminine and violence where the feminine is not soft and Earth-bound. The poems thus far are marked by deceptiveness, accusation, jaggedly (under)narrated unfortunate events with uncertain victims, and fluid movement between positions of defensive and offensive behaviors. The language in any case is always fraught with and indulgent of physical violence translated into verbal assault as well as a heavy dosage of nauseating cliché. The language

taunts and flexes in devious ways, but as of yet has no certain strategy except to inflame and arouse, to aggressively suggest or even dare engagement with its content. Its form is violent to the extent that it means harm via trickery and misinformation, a technique that is arguably another stereotype of the feminine, but is perhaps more reasonably understood as a key means by which the less-visibly empowered subject undercuts and loots those above them.

As the project is in an early stage of what will be a lengthy development process, I present here a small sample of the poems I will perform live at the conference.

*

you call it evil
i must touch it

tongue
intension
forking

the serrated underbelly
o burped flesh bits called lip
split by quick hiss pop
silence
b/n one alveolar
blossom n the next
a series of wintered blooms
scratchy n lung gobbed

the thing you didn't
make gurgles n auto
sucks
an intricate fluff
only smelling
b/c you proclaimed the name
odiferous pit where scum
dump shit n blame
ground for spewing
filth
its dirt
poisoned
hot waste glown in laps n gumlines
gooped in the tarry origins
of your facehole spread in
stiff tendon panic
skull
gaping lonely for all this lack
you invent

*

now is a time to storm. Shall I speak for thee
though rhetoric dismembers the very
reality it would portray.

gets worse.

tongue twigged
n flickered to dirt to twitch
to batter itself in s'miecie & bloto
so you must

mouth sorry my hole

 is bleeding i've lost it

 i've nothing
 to say

and meanwhile with no place in scummy
bandages to tuck a pen
no words
for golem just empty
crumples when he wakes:
there's nothing
to do

but wave your stumps
as if to perfume the room

untouchable & unable
to touch sure,
Speak like hands

when you're all bound & bleeding
squirrel-flopped
useless shuddering
cuts
in This tedious sampler means
A body

 stopp'd neither
 use
 nor ornament

 blocked nothing
 but blows
tho even blows come
 through

*
material girl

lie there

what fists
mean when

the web tears

and you can't blame a rich man
his thick wad

don't gag you

have nothing but cancer
in your pocket

and if not a victim will you make one

admit

that's what
you're here for

*

try me
i squeal

when your spine pops
and out lolls tongue
 tinned meat of the mouth
so hungry for pink you lick
the papers
eat celebrity in print
for current moves about
punched up tits
 your face now spreads
the front page darkens
from your head leaks
the sashy sound of stuff through punctured
vessels deflate that skull at last
a freshly exposed
mind
over
un mattered body
lifeless twat shots
soak your dribbled
content

*

easy living room scene

come in
her split duct gloops pus
 all masking, all crocodile
 dreaming the next oops-i-slipped
 by the water's edge
 peering up from under

that streak of grime aspiring
 to the dopey
 support of any wish
 full meatling that offers a tilted head
 or houndish gait
 despite the gaudy
 backsplash n titillating
 odour of tendon

 she's spread warm -
steam still haunts a miss calculation
 a bit of broken grammar
 in some body's sunken pelvis
 the mash in his pants
 his runny bunch of perforations

souped about
 her

floor A hand wants taking & soothing
 now strokes
 & sympathy for her lack
 of organs lie
 empty as the shells she's scraped

clean
 lines of defense
 under cover
 that pretty smile n

freshly battered
 look
 mean