HEATHER SPEARS

Every Woman’s Guide to Hysterectomy

Little pieces of the uterine wall
are meandering all over the body
I am guilty of at least five
mutually exclusive illnesses
all situated down below
none studied
in Health at Lord Byng High
where year after year we coloured in
the Digestive Tract from oesophagus to, well, anus
and the other, called by my aunts
curse in a firm rejection of euphemism
was the subject of just one animated film
its pastel voice, embarrassingly, male.
And even now on graphic TV
fluids absorbed by delicate pads are blue
not red, as they are blue
(more understandably) in diaper ads
recalling potteblå, a dye
made from kids’ piss in the old days.

Little pieces of the uterine wall, it seems,
wander and fix in bladder, belly, lung
bleeding there every month, on cue,
crazed little hormones simmering.
Fistulae like tiny fingers
feel out of one organ, fasten in another,
ominous pressures build, great fibrous balls
like twine grow eyeless in the dark
“as large as a twenty-week fetus”
the whole lot hangs
in a drooping hammock of tired flesh
the plug’s loose / prolapse
threatens like a sock turned inside out
I may not be able
to contain myself
much longer, I will become
this aspect, with a mind of its own, even
facial expressions, yawns,
grins, and other mouthy blatherings.
Meanwhile the ovaries
plugged in at each side like earphones
pick up the distant tick of death.

Oh my body, how awful,
You bore children faultlessly
and from these territories
loved, love and are made happy.
How can I read
this book in which everything possible goes wrong
nothing stays where it ought
inside the tidy lines of diagrams,
bits of the uterine wall
wander away, and a cell
I never heard of casually ignites.