
The Embodied Female Subject: The Hand-Brain, Multiple Identities, and the Beast in Her: “The Girl at the Mental Stop I, II”

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Abstract:

This case study examines the embodied female subject through a phenomenological approach to illness, based on a critical analysis of two narratives by a female author-patient, *The Girl at the mental stop I, II* (Torres- Caro, 2025, 2026). It explores how women’s neurological illness is often socially misunderstood and reduced to psychological explanations. In response, these narratives show how storytelling enables the reconstruction of an embodied identity. Through She-Storytelling Identity, literature becomes a space where the fragmented self is reconfigured beyond medical and social misrecognition.

Building on this framework, it is used a qualitative literature comparative methodology to examine “the hand” as a narrative and phenomenological marker of neurological illness. In both narratives compared with *Brain on Fire*, (Cahalan, 2012), the first neurological sensations are described through embodied metaphors—*bedbugs* in Cahalan’s account and *ants* in *Torres-Caro*, which first occurred in 2018—before being recognised. This narrative pattern exposes the gendered dynamics of diagnostic naming. The analysis is structured around the concept of the “other her”: the first rupture, represented by the protagonist’s coma in 2006, self- consciousness; the second, epilepsy, 2023, repeatedly destabilizes bodily agency through behavioural, emotional and absence seizures changes in self-perception. These experiences generate a process of She-Storytelling Identity, through which fragmented feminine selves are reconstructed across multiple subject positions, including patient, victim, and the perceived “Beast in her”. This further highlights how the female body becomes a contested site where medical discourse, and epistemic recognition converge, revealing the complexity of women’s lived experience of illness.

Keywords:

She- storytelling, identity, hand- brain, embodied female body, illness narratives.