The Language in My Tongue

Susan Hawthorne

La langue dans ma langue
Poèmes de la parole épileptique, ces textes visent à nous faire saisir combien parler est une performance. Quand on est une femme, les mots nous tombent de la bouche, ils nous mettent souvent en colère, en transes et nous les vomissons. Le rapport entre le langage qui nous annule et l'être-femme que nous tentons de devenir serait-il une maladie dont nous souffrons toutes?
GRAND MAL

I am an electrical impulse.
I dance.
I jump.
I leap across the abyss of the synapse.
I am an excessive and disorderly discharge.
I defy definition.
I recur from time to time.
I am random.
I am entirely cerebral.
I am at the threshold of a seizure.
Grand mal.
Idiopathic.
I give no warning.
I have no aura.
I leap from synapse to synapse.
I create disorder.
    She cries out.
I dance.
    She waves her arms about.
Everything is in a state of flux.
    She falls.
    Her pupils dilate.
    Her teeth bite into the tongue.
I am dancing.
    Her face is blue.
    Like the blue of cyanide.
I rampage.
I rage.
    Her muscles contract.
    She is seized.
    She is prone.
    She convulses.
    Saliva dribbles from her mouth.
    Saliva mixed with blood.
    Her arms are bruised.
    She is comatose.
    She is unrousable.
    She has lost consciousness.
TRANSFORMATION

She said to you:

I turned round to see what you were staring at. There was nothing.

That's when you fell. When I wasn't watching.

When I turned back your body was quivering, shivering, shaking.

I don't know how long it lasted. Two minutes or ten.

It felt like an hour. I let you be. When you stopped shaking, I held you.

It was a while before you woke. Your eyes empty, not sparkling as they usually do. They closed again and inside some transformation took place. When they opened again they were alive. Then you slept, breathing like a baby.
FIRST BREATH
The first breath I took
was late.
I’ve been holding it ever since.
An amniotic sea pushing me forwards.
But something was holding me back.
The doctor was late, so I was late too.
He breathed his lunch on me.
MINIATURE DEATH

I dream of drowning
swimming upwards from the seabed
of unconsciousness.

My mouth opens
gasping for breath
like a fish near death.

I drown in my own held breath,
no water, no sea
just a miniature death.
FALLING WOMAN

I am the subject of my subject.
I fall.
I, the subject,
am subject to falling.

I fall in any old way.

I fall
sitting on a mattress
(the best way to fall)

I fall
sitting on a bicycle
sitting on a chair
sitting between people

I fall
standing in the shower
making a phone call

I fall
already lying down
sleeping in my bed

I fall in any old place

I fall
in bed with my lover
in the milk bar with unknown people
at home over breakfast
at work over my desk

I fall
in a meeting
in a hotel room
in a strange city

I am a woman who is
subject to falling
NO NAMES

There are days when time falls away from me.
I cannot answer questions you put to me.
I have no words to answer with.
I see things.
I know there are names attached to the things.
I know I know them.
But the names are not there.
I have no name.
You have no name.
You are simply there.
TONGUE WITHOUT WORDS

I have no words to answer with

words
fall
into the void
echoes
empty;
of meaning
simple
sounds
stroking my waxy ears

I have no words to answer with

the tongue
furled
and hollow
the tongue
grasping
to feel meaning
the tongue
flat
out to speak

I have no words to answer with

the grey matter
without
static
no
electrical charge
to spark meaning
no
thing
to
matter
no thing matters
nothing matters
I mutter
something
something
  explodes
    in my brain
in my grey matter
something matters
my tongue
  stretches
    for the word
my tongue
  lifts
    presses against teeth
my tongue
  curls around a word
    a hollow of meaning
a sound
  escapes
    the hollow curve of my mouth
a word
  I have a word
    I have found the words
the words fall
  in a rush
    spitting
      frothing
words rush out
    filling the void