

## 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