

Dreaming the Page: a Trilogy

Solo Performance Script
Written* and Performed by
Elise Kermani

I: Mother Tongue premiered at P.S. 122, NYC, in September of 1993.

II. Oh, oh, oh Fricative at the Knitting Factory, NYC, May 1996.

III: My Father Fell from the Sky, at the Dia Arts Space, NYC, September 1994

Various other performances of excerpts at DiverseWorks Artspace, Houston, TX;
Cleveland Performance Art Festival, Links Hall, Chicago, IL.

*The text was inspired by Carlton Laird's "Miracle of Language", 1953.

All the character and stage notes are suggestions, the performer should be completely free in the interpretation of this text.

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**Part One: Mother Tongue**  
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Narrator:

(with background music-made by motion sensor picking up movement)

Chapter Fourteen- the bugs and imps in our language.
BBBbbb-UUuuuGgggs. i-m-p-s, imps in our language.

Page 213. Boustropheden. Boos-tro-feed-on boooooos
(kissing sound)

Boustrophedon the going back and forth on a page – as an ox plows.
As the ox plows-like this *(use hand to gesture going back and forth)*
(whispered) The origins of A
alpha, ox
(hands to pelvis) woman

(walk to microphone with heavy reverb setting-cathedral room, sing:)
Hammers have heads, rivers have mouths.
Saws have teeth. Match boards have tongues.

(roll tongue-extend breath out for as long as possible)

(low and breathy-spoken)

We must now consider the results of the second great Anglo-Saxon invasion. . .

Child (sung)

Ppppppitchers have ears. Tables have legs.
Mountains have feet. Chairs have backs.

Mother (sung)

AAAAA-Ox, house camel door, window.....Ah, beh, ceh, deh, eh. . .

Child (sung)

The earth has bowels. Matters have hearts.
(cut reverb delay-speak:)
Heart of the matter. Matter, muter, mutter, motor, madres, mati, meter.
(repeat 2x in sing song, then with a wide smile:)
Mother.

Mother

(click tongue into digital delay to set up and capture a background rhythm for the following text to go over)

Alpha, beta, gamma, delta, Jimmy made a mud pie.
Jimmy made up a mud pie.
Jimmy made the mud into a pie
Jimmy made up his mind about the pie
Jimmy made a face on the mud pie
Jimmy made a face at the mud pie
Jimmy made a face when he ate the mud pie
Jimmy made a mess of the mud pie
Jimmy made a mess *with* the mud pie
Jimmy made a fuss over the mud pie
Jimmy made trouble with the neighbors
Jimmy made trouble for his mother
Jimmy made his mother angry
Jimmy made the place a shambles
Jimmy made a mistake

Jimmy made up with his mother.

(mother begins to click in a scat following the background, climax and cut sharp.

change to Cathedral reverb setting. Sung as a hymn in a high voice:)

The god who troubled waters of our voice stream.

Child

The BBbbbugs come out at night mommy

(repeat 3x and melt into mother's voice, segue:)

Mother

the infinitesimal bugs...those lice, mites, nits, knats, ticks, spikder, scabies,
cccccockroach. These infinitesimal bugs
(feed the last words into delay and manipulate rhythms and then bypass)

You're making me feel like a mother and I hate it!
You're making me feel
You're making me
You're making me feel like a mother and I hate
And I hate it
I hate.

(takes a drink of water-take time for transition into;)

Hook, fence, hand *(2x and then into delay)* f, g, h
The boys lie down.
The boys like down there.
The boys lie down on the beach
The boys lie down where they can be seen from the kitchen window
The boys like down for hours.

The boys *(into vocoder/three part harmony)* <LIE> *(melt into)*

I gotta get outa here...*(un bypass the bug/delay)*
These fuckin' bugs are crawling all over the place.
Here baby wash your hands-and wash your hands again. Clean
your behind, your buttocks, your rump, ass, breach, fundament,
rear-Clean it! And clean it again. Why are you still smellin? Why do
you do this to me? Stop it! Stop eating. Drink it. Shut up. Close your
mouth. I'm not listening – no, I'm not listening anymore. La, la, la, ll,
ala, No, I can't hear you
(rhythmic sing-song)

And now I'm going to leave *(into vocoder)* <YOU>
I leave, I left, I have left *(voice rises)*, I had left.
I shall leave, I was just about to leave.....I leave tomorrow
I was just going to leave,
I am off to leave,
I am on the verge of leaving
I am on the verge of leaving
I am now in the position to leave.
(click fingers in rhythm into delay)
I am considering leaving, I have decided to leave,
I am determined to leave, I expect to leave, I am scheduled to leave

This requires me to leave
(claps hands above head-arching back-add into delay)
It would seem best to leave
I am bound to leave
There will be the leaving
And then there is – what is left. (cut effects)

(in a soft regular voice)
And now I'm going to leave you, right now. This is it! I'm gone-BYE!

(into vocoder and reverb)
H O L D O N !

Mamman, mmamman, dussett daray, modar Mutter liebe dich,
(say "Mommy loves you" in many languages and as quickly as possible)

You don't need that.
You don't need to eat that. Stop that. Stop eating-you re going to get fat!
Shut up. Stop that. Drink it.
Come over here. Com eover here right now...Let me give you a big hug. Just rink this for me baby.

(whisper slowly)

don't wash anything.

The boys lie down.
The boys lie down at the beach
The boys lie down where they can be seen from the kitchen window...

Kappa, lamda, mu, nu, omicron pi – I don't care *(clap hands)*
I don't care about you
I don't take care of you- take care- be careful-be careless-be carefree.

I should care less.
I could care less. *(stop clapping-tired of the game)*
I –I just don't care anymore.
Just leave me alone

(laughter)

Child

Don't leave me mommy! Do you like this? Do you think its pretty? I made it for you. It says (*strangely sing song*) "I love you mommy"

Mother

How much honey, how much do you love me?

Child

I love you (*into vocoder and reverb*) <INFINITY>

Mother

I think it's, it's very, very pretty darling.

My child, my little one, my bambino, my bantling, bud, chick, chit, sprat, brat, tad, tot, tyke, whelp, cherub, pickaninny, neonate, urchin, suckling (*begin feeding words into delay*)

Mite lice, nit, gnat, scabies, spider cccc-cockroach, these bugs (*sing*)

They're in your haird, your skin, hour house your clothes, they're traveling inside your body now and makin you itch!

Ooooooohhh! Scratch it.

Scratch it for me baby, will ya? Scratch it baby. (*vocal scat into delay*)

Child

Hammers have heads,
Rivers have mouths,
Saws have teeth,
Matchbooks have tongues.

Mother

Drink it for me baby, willya? Drink it!

(*swallow marbles that feed into microphone and catch in delay. Let marbles roll in mouth, and spit into cup, one by one*)

Janice

I'm gonna hurt your baby lady, you get her away from me. Better take her away, I'm tellin' you lady-have a nice day-imight do somethin' to hurt her- you better to away-I might hurt her..You don't believe me? She's such a pretty little things and I don't want to have to-have a nice day-do anything to her-so if I were you I would just take that cart and get outa here-get outa this section. This is my sections, and I have to get some grapefruit juice. Have a nice day. What time is it? Yeah you better leave me alone cuz I might do something and then we'd both be really sorry.

Mother

Please get me outa here fast-she threatened my baby.

Cashier

Who, Janice? She all right. Aren't you Janice. She wouldn't hurt a fly.

(whispers to mother) she come in here all the time.

Mother

Just get me outa here-hurry up and give me my food.
Are you all right sweetie, did she scare you?
It's all right, honey, nobody's gonna hurt you.

(into reverb)

Ah, beh, seh, deh, eh.. *(dry)* ox, house, camel, door window

(reverb) Pi, koo, air, ess tay ooh

(dry) palm, whip, water, fish, eye

(reverb) kah, el em, en, oh, pay

(dry) Mouth, monkey, head, teeth, mark, post

(reverb) Ooh veh, ex ooh zayta

(Dry) Weapon, weapon....zehta, zehta.

Pi, qoo, err ess tay ooh...

Ox, ox, alpha, alpha

Ooh veh ex teh ooo

Pi qoo err, ess teh ooh. Pi qoo err....ess tey ooh....pi qoo...

(lights fade, motion triggers bacground sounds, mother squats and gurgles like a primitive creature)

GGGGGGggggg -k-k-k-k

GGGgggggK-k-k kkk kkk

~end part one~

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Part Two: Oooh, ooh, ooh, Fricative  
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Narrator

You'd better start doing something about getting the tire blown up
You Had had start, had doing, had start doing
Had better start doing something

Get up! Get out! Get out! Get out! Get up, GET UP, getup!

Blowing up, blowing (*repeat and make a box with hands*)

Mama was peeling apples by the window.

Now, for apples.

By the window.

Of Johnny, he he (*stutter*) HHH- (*laughter*) h-he Johnny, a
nnn-noun.

He (*in/out breath*) in the second sentence – a fricative.
Johnny is my nephew. He, the boy is a brat. Johnny,
In place, in place of, Johnny the boy. "he" (breath) is a Pronoun.

The sea has arms. The hills have shoulders, boats have ribs, sails
have bellies.

God made, Jimmy made
(*dry*) (*vocoder Ab and Db major chords*)

God made a goldfish
Jimmy saw a goldfish-goldfish

Jimmy wanted the goldfish
Jimmy grabbed the goldfish-goldfish

Jimmy weighed the goldfish
Jimmy swallowed the goldfish-goldfish.
(*trap in delay*) SSSSHHHHHHHHHH

(*overlay in serious voice*)

Some serve the king and count his silver questioning his debits in
the countinghouse and treasury.

(whisper)

Jimmy looked at	the goldfish
Jimmy thought about	“ “
Jimmy had a desire about	the goldfish, goldfish
Jimmy made a grab at	“ “
Jimmy determined the weight of	the goldfish
Jimmy gulped down	the goldfish, goldfish.

God Made

Jimmy made

God made

Jimmy made

God made Jimmy made God ,ade God made Jimmy made God

And so it goes, His company, your community, our so-called possessive,
not within reach of his senses-the affricative-immediate possession.

Can he be reached by sight? His constituents-his continents-m-n-ng-his
childhood-

Our party.

<He said he would go, and go he did, went he> (trap in delay)

Departed then over the billowing driven by the wind, the floating one
foamy-necked, most like to a bird...

(horn song)

I'll drive

I'll drive tomorrow

I was just about to drive

I am now in the position to drive

I was considering driving

I was scheduled to drive

This requires me to drive

I am bound to drive

There will be the driving

And then there is the drive....

(end of part two)

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**Part Three: My Father Fell From the Sky**  
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(begin under the sound of the train which has become a grating noise. The train sound can be made from performer blowing pipe into a vocoder. The following hymn should also have reverb and harmonization through the vocoder)

Older Child

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices
Who wondrous things has done
In whom this world rejoices
Who from our mother's arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love

(trap last verse into delay)
And still is ours today

With Countless

(H)ours

(manipulate delay into different rhythms until it makes a buzz with the train sound.)

mmmmmy fffather, he ffffell ffff from the sky
The coulds. Wwwwwww(*gurgle*) wispy blue. FFFfffal. He fell.
Fall: to move under the influence of.
Of. Of. Aaaaof . . . under the influence of . . . gravity.
My Dad Who art ... the eternal-he fell.
Fall: to drop from an erect position—to a,a,a,a, uh less erect position.

He Fell from the FFFFirmament. The celestial. The everlasting, the all-powerful-
the all knowing.

You see my father...he was painting and the rope broke and he fell down. Dead.

(play chopsticks into delay)

THE A AN BY IN ON UP ARE IS
Or WAS THAT WHICH WHEN HE HER IT
EAT LIVE DIE LOVE HATE FIGHT KILL WORK REST
(repeat and transpose one whole tone higher)
EAT LIVE DIE LOVE HATE FIGHT KILL WORK REST

(lower minor 3rd)
EAT LIVE DIE LOVE HATE FIGHT KILL WORK REST

(raise minor 3rd)
EAT LIVE DIE LOVE HATE FIGHT KILL WORK REST

He is a boy.
He lives.

(Inward breath) What? What?

(glottal) Why?

He lives his life.
He lives his life at 421 23rd street.

(inward) What? What?

(glottal) Why? *(lower pitch, glottal)* W-h-y?

What do the boys do?
What do they do on the beach all day?

What What?

WWWHHhhhy *(inward glottal completely slowed down.)*

WWWWWWWWWHHHHHHHHHhhhhhhhhhhhyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy

The boys lie like troopers.
They just <lie>
(Slap chest into delay, then legs and other parts of the body: face, cheeks, changing the shape of the mouth for different pitches-feed into delay.

Read the following list vertically repeatedly:

- 1) dry
- 2) with duet in vocoder
- 3) trio

- 4) 4part harmony
- 5) transpose)

vivid	if	church	when	papa	or	sleek
sissy		mama		baby		ill
dizzy		judge		tat		ate
this		song		did		tell
think		nanny		kick		cat
she		water		gag		not
pleasure		bull		fit		have
how		youth				road
		roar				full

(cut in these words between the growing chours of words)

Papa had a red face. Papa had. He had. Papa had a very red red face. Page Fourteen

Bell sound takes over until that is all that is heard. Then trap the bells alone into the delay for the following hymn)

But the pains which he endured

Alleluia

(trap sections into delay)

Our salvation has secured

Alleluia *(hold and manipulate sounds)*

Now above the sky he's king *(change to a dom7 chord)*

Alleluia *(slowly manipulate the sounds.*

Bypass all delays and sing in a pure choir boy's voice with cathedral reverb)

Where the angels ever sing

AHHHHHhhh

(don't finish-get stuck on the throat—and click back of tongue imitating footsteps in hallway.)

~end part three~