

*'Everything depends upon the way in which language is thought.'* – Gilles Deleuze

*'Thought is made in the mouth.'* – Tristan Tzara

At its base level, *blert* is a text written to be as difficult as possible for me to read. Poetically, the tempo of *blert* (like the pace of my mouth) is of suspension and falter, clinical and personal. Written as a spelunk into the mouth of a stutterer, *blert* is a trek across labial regions, a navigation of tracheal rills, and a full bore squirm inside the mouth's wear and tear.

When I was a boy my father would let me play hooky on 'bad speech days' and take me fishing. On one particular day, while watching the tide undulate against the shore, my father offered a precise ecological equivalent to what had been going on in my mouth: 'You see how that water moves, son? That's how you speak.' Since then I have always imagined my mouth suctioned to all that mimics its movements. I construct thick glossaries of tongue protrusions and rogue waves, enamel grinding and plate tectonics, chin spasms and plankton swarms. I stock up hefty vocabularies to balm the lexical timber that piles in the cortex as a result of muscular difficulties and evade the brash mouth stumble (like all those *who do*) by honing a detailed vocal portfolio of tics and tricks: hem, haw, ditty, hum, *but um*, hum, *like*, croon, trill, avoid, forget, pretend, duet, *hum*, *ho hum*, sing, whisper, eat, tune, chew, hum, yell, quiet, choir.

Whether aerobic in these tics or exhausted by the habit, a stutterer's interaction with language is remarkably different from that of persons who don't stutter. Socially, the stutterer is deviant, a facial acrobat whooping in the throes of 'Good morning' or 'One cheeseburger please.' Stutterers dread words: they are obsessed and possessed by their painful shapes and technoed beats.

Consonants, gutturals and plosives zombie throughout their dreams. Perversely, they prepare in advance of every conversation. They are permanently drenched – anticipatory – suspended between the thought and its utterance. While all individuals are dysfluent to some extent, what differentiates stutterers from non-stutterers is the frequency and severity of their disfluency and, most importantly, that those hiccups regarded as 'stutters' are accompanied by an acute awareness of a loss of control.

The stutter here appears on its own terms, rejecting the metaphoric, thematic, graphic (a-a-a-a) or representational aspects of this language disturbance. The text is written as if my own gibbering mouth chomped upon the language system, then regurgitated the cud of difference. My symptoms are the agents of composition. Each furious millisecond of personal struggle colliding with language as a rolling gait of words hidden within words, of syllables in cleavage and breach, all erupting as palpable lava on the palate. The burn and crush in your *own* mouth is dysfluency – animating the bobble of your tongue's slight erosions, of glossary grapple and your now-constant ache for smooth. *blert* is written as a threat to coherence, as a child's thick desire to revamp the alphabet, as an inchoate moan edging toward song.