

Re spir ing
Lydia Davies

I saw you the other day, and unknowingly you placed a seed on my tongue.

One woman reassures the other with emphatic and practical speech. The other talks in whispers. Their hands are both equal in volume, animated, choreographed, splicing the air into particulars as they speak, handling each other's words, transforming them into theatrical gestures, and by doing so, changing their weight.

You know when you go swimming underwater, the first woman says, you have that splashing-around sound. They both gesture to their ears, and gesticulate their palms at the side of their heads. Weightless in water, they are suspended.

It's the seed of a ghost, a body without one, and it's resonating like the unfurling scales of a pine cone. Filling my mouth like a second tongue, it's rolling over my own words. Passionately rolling, with and against, my own words. In effect, I am speaking in tongues. But none of these words were mine to begin with, anyway. The ghost-seed and I are sharing a haunted body, our weights counteract, we are suspended.

Don't you know the compost under your soles is full? Of lives lived and indeterminate future fruits, of whose labour? Seeds and labouring bodies and 'a labour of love', the labour of doves escaping a magician's handkerchief, all the trickery in the world won't make you laugh, all the trickery in the world can be, simply, standing bodies. Pulling away from one another, but held up by their intertwining fingers, each finger gently nestled inside the sloping gullies of the other's in-between-fingers, suspended.

The ghost-seed on my tongue is held like the breath in a kiss. Lips set like fly wings sealed in amber. Tongues that want time to hold like there are no 'moments', like there is just this moment, suspended.

Sloping gullies, and gaps, and cracks, and absences. An opening *to say*, a vessel that has the potential to hold words, in suspension.

We are seeking and channelling new ways of speaking, the ghost-seed and I.

Against the density of the water, the first woman slowly connects her thumb and index finger into a circle. The second woman, with lips set, returns the gesture.

And you - holding your mouth in stillness in the act of reading - are held in suspension. A suspension which motivates a voicing of unspeakable words. A suspension which allows silence to speak, allows silence to reanimate a coiled tongue.