

Mother Tongue

by Nora Nadjarian

Which language do you dream in,
swear in, cry in, asked the questionnaire.
How many languages do you swim in,
drown in, breathe in, mime in?

Do you know how many tongues have adopted
your voice? And when at night you stare
at dark walls and one pair of lips
comes closer, whispering in perfect German

Ich bin deine Mutter -

Or the night shadows enlarge into a Fritz Lang
open scream and *Muttersprache* appears
on the silent movie screen, then:
what do you reply? In which language,

and how clearly, do you say: my mother tongue
is somewhere in the recesses of my mind.
I am not an orphan. I have a mother.
She put me to bed one night

and went away. The film we made
together has long been silent. But I still
hear her voice in the keyhole of my heart.

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