

FLINT TONGUE

Lorena Duarte

when I was 4
I nearly cut off my own tongue
slipped and neatly pierced it with my teeth,

hung on by two little bits.

If you don't believe me, kiss me and you will feel the scar.

was reminded of this recently when a friend told me that
according to the Mexica calendar, the year of my birth is called Tekpatl,
Tekpatl, which means flint,
which is a metaphor for tongue, words, especially words that are
piercing.

the stars then, devised me
a flint tongue,
a split and shattered tongue
a patched up, miracle tongue
a survivor tongue
a grateful tongue, aware of its nearly mute destiny
an urgent tongue
made of words that are piercing
made for words that are piercing
a biting tongue, a bitten tongue

LORENA DUARTE

a tongue made for lashings
and for pleasure.

the blades are sharpened
and ready,

the bloody mouth
she, ready to speak:

the Bible says that the stroke of the tongue breaketh the bones
many have fallen by the edge of the sword;
but not so many as have fallen by the tongue.

though I don't believe, I do agree
because after all, the tongue is the strongest muscle in the body
in technical terms,
it is a muscular hydrostat, similar to the arms of an octopus,
and just as clingy
able to suffocate, crush, and grab

this, this, this—is a battling tongue
a honey tongue—
a tongue ready to renounce traitors and fools
or to mediate peaceful endings
tell the stories of those whose tongues have been cut out and silenced
a surrogate tongue
a tongue tied up in knots,
dumb and frozen

by the world's weeping.

a tongue that screams
a tongue that keens
a problem tongue for mothers, preachers, and politicians,
who gets told
young lady hold your tongue

as if.

though I will admit, at times
the cat's got my tongue and
I become
a confused tongue
a border tongue
she—who speaks in two tongues
and forgets what she is saying
forgets which one she is speaking
forgets which is the common tongue for that day
polite and smooth?
or peppered and stewed?

because I am a chameleon tongue that will
unroll, unfurl,
unhinge—you—

tongue-twisted
tongue-tied

LORENA DUARTE

tongue chopped up and fried,
which is my favorite kind of taco by the way,
but I digress and so
allow me also to confess that I love boys with bold tongues,
fierce tongues, brave tongues,
tongues not afraid to say
I want you
I'm sorry
I lied
without you I would curl up and die
so curl that tongue then, because not everyone can
open up and say ahhhh
stick out your tongue
because I love a teasing tongue
how does the tongue taste—
sweet?
salty?

the love, the shit, it all just comes rolling off this tongue.

my loose tongue will remind you that with your tongue
you eat, you cheat,
you chew, you screw,
you swallow, you follow,
you taste, you waste,
you talk, you balk,
you zing and you sing.

my mother tongue is double-edged and gleaming,
truly a flint tongue
with metaphors always ready at the tip of my—
tongue—an acid tongue
a tongue made for kissing,
loving, pleading
a forked tongue
a noble tongue

the blades are sharpened
and ready

the bloody mouth
she, ready to speak.