

Tongue

by Bobbi Lurie

My mother's tongue still brings her pleasure
I watch her licking the ice cream from the cone
Stare into her profile smooth and distant as the moon
And when the ice cream drips down her chin
I pick up a napkin
Clench it in my fist

Every Monday my mother boiled cow's tongue
It would sit mute in the middle of the plate
In the middle of the table waiting
Its taste buds accusing us
I chewed the tongue with difficulty
Swallowed because I had to

My mother used to sigh in the kitchen
Sometimes crying sometimes telling me why
She could not love that other man
Whose face lay prized inside the photo album
She'd scrape the mustard-stained remains of cow's tongue
Into the trash

My mother used to say she'd rather die young
Have the image of her poreless skin
Pressed neat in the photo album
Her lithe figure framed in black
She believed other people would preserve her through their
memories
Banish her from time as if...

I watch my mother
No longer beautiful or charming

Her left arm shaking
Her mind a gone thing no longer doing her wrong
Wandering away from me in the mall
To kiss the hands of strangers...

The people who would have remembered her
Are dead now themselves
What remains is the shape of the ice cream cone
The feel of its crusty texture
The taste of Rocky Road
The fleeting sweetness

