

Huitlacoche

Go ahead and call me what I am,
call me: faggot, homo, joto, pinche puto.
Unhusk me if you must, call me
acquired, call me dirty, call me corn smut.

Though it looks like a prostate rolled in soot, huitlacoche
at the farmer's market sells as Mexican Truffle.
Yet farmers in your heartland treat it like a sickness.
And because disease can decimate a monoculture,

they are afraid. That's why they bundle and they burn it,
a literal faggot. I said it and I'll say it.
Call me what I am, and if you can't pronounce
my surname, I'm supposed to say don't sweat it.

Don't sweat it, because even huitlacoche is a corruption
of the Nahuatl cuitlacochein, which is a corruption
of cuitlacoichi. Tongues make mistakes
and mistakes

make languages. Like I was saying, for a long time
I couldn't pronounce them either, the things I like.
As with any delicacy, it's best
to start slow. Sound it out. Huit—

la—co—che, an—u—lin—gus, mas—
tur—ba—tion. When you master
saying them out loud, it's time to rub any two
syllables together: cock, suck; pussy, fuck; ass, lick.

Relax. They are only words. They are the only words
you need to insult someone
or to have sex with them
no matter what country you find yourself in.

Words have their luggage like immigrants
have their customs. Huitlacoche, mariposa, maricón.
Now that I have put it in my mouth,
I am proud to be a faggot.

But it sounds so hateful when you say it.
A coworker really said this to me. I said

because that's the way I always heard it.

How do you speak such good English anyway?

Smile—say nothing—don't sweat it—he aimed it as a compliment.

Faggot, wetback, huitlacoche, all my life I've heard it.

Learning English, *it hurted* is what I would say

when I wanted to say *it hurt*. Not anymore. I know

all about tense agreement, just tell me where to conjugate

and I will. Shut your mouth—when I'm talking

spores come out in droves like mosquitos

birthed for blood—or I'll give you what I got.