

## Teeth

My father and I find ourselves mute and in darkness.

Pursuing distant voices that we vaguely recognize as ours, we stumble upon our detached mouths. My words come from his mouth, and his from mine. We talk it over, our liberated apertures opening and closing like wind-up chatter teeth, and decide to switch.

I love my father, but his mouth feels disgusting inside of me, with his old, yellowing teeth, his soar gums, riddled with gingivitis, and his numb lips that had always collected droplets of food without his noticing.

Why had I not, instead, kept my own mouth, but with his words: vital words that were at once mystical and practical; sane words that always brought peace to the household whenever the insanity of business and the insanity of art were careening towards war?

My words had only been mourning words, tragic, elegiac words that honored the dead, and carried with them, always, the musk of death.

It was not through my words, but through my lips which life breathed. Life was in my lips and in my jaws and in my teeth: young, piercing, latching, rending flesh, making fruit gush.

Aiming to retrieve them, I look hopelessly for my father, finding only darkness. I call out with my own voice, meek and desperate. Where has father gone? My father has absconded with my teeth!