

On the Condition of our Teeth

Because our teeth were falling out, actually collapsing in, onto our tongues, our syntax was severely limited. Forming hard consonants all but impossible, we spoke only in vowels and I had come to be known as *Oooo*. You were *Aaaaa*. In the midst of all these hardships, we met among the strafed walls, the bare I-beams and charred plaster of an abandoned building, wandering the floors for signs of who might have lived there before. But what we found we couldn't really name, or rather couldn't say. We could really only *say* what we could hold in our hands. To express any other idea we were forced to fall back on infantile postures and gestures such that it distinctly felt we were collectively crowding a brief paragraph, a parenthesis, in the opening pages of a biography. We came to a forgotten bathroom with rust stained toilet and crude peach enameled sink basin into which our teeth clattered as we guffawed and snorted through toileting scenarios and scatological pantomimes that arose spontaneously from the dense crowding-together and inadvertent but somehow sexually suggestive collision of bodies in the dim and gutted cubicle of a room. Somehow, though, it all stopped. It was the mirror -- we stood transfixed. We pressed our heads together and opened our mouths to watch our teeth slide inward upon our palates into two neat, symmetrical rows like saw blades.