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On the Ovarian Nature of the Mouth // On the Places We Have Lived, with Children Not Quite Born

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SAVANNAH SKINNER

On the Ovarian Nature of the Mouth

There are little match girls striking the insides of all our ovaries.
Organs enamel & disintegrate in the sink like baby teeth
umbilical inside our skulls—digest us through an awakening
cathedraled & façaded,
a peristalsis like marbled malá strana.

Hips—the narrowness now waxing—rise so lethargic
from the damp menarche: ulcer a space as solemn.
We pendulum from doorknobs & clot drains with vacancies of incoming molars.

Down the hall, my sister's mouth brims with cotton fields.

A young boy's cuspids crown between her jawbones & they're just bodies
inside bodies inside themselves:
a matryoshka so skeletal, a cavity
so filled & swollen.

O, how our thighs have gaped for them, as if curtains made windows
any less transparent. Rib cages replicate
& nest further within our chests.

We anticipate the hollows of bras to see
if all our areolas swell like first kisses
in some other family's basement.
Like mouths inside other mouths.

Molars give way to more molars & molt—
 removal as an expansion
 of the borders of the body. Rust rings

 in the satin & ceramic of the little coffins where
 my mother cherishes our eyeteeth:

still-fleshed extractions strung up for thirteenth birthdays.
Our ovaries are mimicry, fresh-gummed & released.
 As if organs incubating teeth were any less horrific.

SAVANNAH SKINNER

On the Places We Have Lived, with Children Not Quite Born

Lust through doors & vibrate screens like humming paper nests.

Say you don't believe in ghosts
of a before-life
though the bedskirts rustle, & I
have smelled you burning
sage beneath the windows. This is an old house
with no refrigerator
& we can hear them laughing in empty bedrooms.

Imagine life before kitchen cabinets:

My father chewing
jars of pig knuckles, brined & coaxed

sardines between his blunt teeth:
five sisters learning to honeycomb
the anatomy of the absorbed twin
sized beds where we slept—

I emerge from the mouths
of my sisters & become incarnations of all our mothers
: un-fossilization of a firstborn, crowning

of the wasp queen. A father marrows
in your baluster spine—waiting
 & your ulnas, they vellum—filmy
as the pregnancy of radiator air, of me:
Crystallize a hive in my abdomen
 & I'll fill the cavities of my sister's molars.

You were the wasps living in our walls,
a welcome stinging—
 a harvest of clover & carrion:
my ovaries staining the hardwood with a
 we've been waiting for you.