



After the good doctor finished suturing my gums—  
 periodontal deus, ex-machina of scalpel,  
 thread, a trapdoor flap of cadaver flesh  
 stitched to the eroded ridge of my incisors,  
 he paused. As if to let me ponder,  
 consider the foreign meat  
 he'd just served  
 to the upper room of my mouth—  
 jellied tidbit, a red membrane morsel  
 some kind donor pledged  
 before exiting this life.

I said nothing. Spit the last mucous stream  
 into his paper cup, my tongue  
 finally at rest in its numb cheek tomb.  
 What was there to say? Hadn't I  
 been taught to taste the blood,  
 eat the body of an unknown brother?  
 And to what purpose  
 if not for mystery,  
 for human communion  
 with every sister  
 roaming this frail and fallen planet?

Here's to you, nameless one,  
 for inking the little O  
 on your DMV form,  
 for prettying up my smile,  
 giving me a sturdier bite.  
 We're family now.  
 May the words of my mouth  
 be worthy of your end,  
 your great gingival sacrifice.  
 Asleep in the earth  
 chewing dust,  
 or at sea, drunk  
 on the watery abyss,  
 may you decay  
 in all the right places  
 and be glad  
 as I am, for the feeding.

## Michelle Bitting

Michelle Bitting has work forthcoming or published in *Glimmer Train*, *Swink*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Narrative*, *Poetry Daily*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Small Spiral Notebook*, *Nimrod*, *The Southeast Review*, *Passages North*, *The Comstock Review*, *2RiverView*, *Valparaiso Review*, *Many Mountains Moving*, *Poetry Southeast*, *Boxcar Poetry Review*, *Rattle* and others. She has won the *Glimmer Train*, *Rock & Sling*—Virginia Brendemeuhl Award and been an award finalist multiple times. Her chapbook "Blue Laws" is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press, December 2007. Visit her at: <http://home.earthlink.net/~verarose/michellebitting/>

