

ROOT CANAL AT TWENTY SEVEN

DORSEY CRAFT

The endodontist peers into my molar, *necrotic*
he says. Necrotic, I say. Thick packed black
like I used to picture smoker's lungs, Texas plates
fished out the stomach of catfish, chicken raw

under plastic. *It means dead*, he says. I know
what it means, I say. I'm sorry, I say,
like when my dermatologist flicked the white
patch of thigh she sliced six months ago

and asked, *who did that?* Bitch, you did that.
We can fix it for you. I'd like watch them smooth
me with hot light, beams unlike the ones
that raised the brown mole misshapen

from my leg, just as I'd have liked to see
whatever leaves of me the endo tweezed
from the deep of my jaw, and like Kristeva
says, abjection draws the gaze, the longing

to look/look away at shit or clot-raw tampon
because it's me, or it was me, but it's not quite,
the unnecessary expelled, waste dumped off,
death pushed out so we can keep on trucking,

just like I'll do, look/look away at my half still
novocaine face in my rearview. A witch in my mouth,
a cackle fragment sharp as my tongue,
don't eat any apples this week they say, like fruit

got me here instead of corn syrup. My dentist thinks
I'm an idiot. He's not wrong, he's just a man
who's solved his Oedipal Rubix cube, sided
with his father and now gazes into silent red

of women's mouths to pry out decay, the not quite
dead but not quite young, his microscope lenses
homed in on the coffee-stain. Instruments whine.
Cement tacks into crown. I floss with mint

green plastic picks. I wish not to have thought
bitch at the dermatologist. I look/look away at the trash
the spittle soaked pile of string. Which parts
will biodegrade? Which parts of me belong to me,

and which parts of me are dying? Before, I laid
the red of my cheek on the grimy tile at three AM
when my tooth shrieked me awake, uncanny banshee,
a pulp throbbing a hymn for the ground down.