Jared Smith
Once, Beneath The Moon

Shelby, he said, learn to think with all the space
that is contained within the spherical orb of your eye,
and if you want a second opinion, use the other one.
Then, you puts your money in and takes your choice:
you lowers your monetary mechanical arm in and
takes home with you whatever gaudy thing grabs, and
hope to god it's bigger than whatever moment held it
so that it keeps on expanding beyond your body rags.

This is what's passing in the other direction
as you turn up the light, raising an eyebrow.
It is my way of checking out; saying so long, ciao,
I have copped my last feel. The grass
on a Colorado mountainside is the last
thing I will think of. My ashes will enter the food chain
and sure as life needs water will become a part of your children
but I won't remember your name while you are reading this.
I never knew for sure that you were going to pick it up.

Nobody can pay you enough for this
time you spend inside an institution when
trout are fanning in the fern laid pool
with lowered brows and swollen lips
contemplating an endless stream of food,
I will be among them, along their gills,
inside their dappled, frothy universe
with no idea or feelings at all beyond our own.

The Majority of his Life He Could Reduce to Movie of the Week

He scribbled many slogans inside his head
in that cerebral graffiti without paint
          "Desperation is simply life
                    without the sales pitch."
                              "He hoped his misery was more
                                        marketable than the next guy's."
                                                  "Hey did you happen to see …"
but the slogans often disappeared just as birds do
strange for himself to quote himself to himself, while looking for inaccuracies in himself
was this enough of himself or did he need to get a few more of himselves in edgewise;
but as he began to understand, the quotation marks he attributed to himself
faded like crows feet in a nervous mother's smile.
And the crow's feet became his oafish, Walgreen's stigmata feet
which each morning he anointed with cornhuskers lotion
mistaking the stinging for companionship
the cracks and fissures for experience,
pretending his calluses told stories
not even Dr. Scholl's on a good day,
would believe.

Each afternoon he went shooting
without a gun
knowing emotion like the spray of buckshot
had to nick a past love
 or bleed into t.v. dinners,
sooner or later,
for the heart can be felled
with one smooth clean shot
from deep inside yourself.

He rode solipsistic shotgun
on the jet-stream of vague recollections
took his own stupidity, wadded and shaped it into spit balls
that had no curve
but found their way to the backs of heads
who urged him into therapy
where he lip-synched such potential hits
as "How Does It Make You Feel"
how do you feel about that"
does that feeling sound familiar"
 Still they never quite made it as explanations
or songs for that matter.
And when he examined it, scraped off the answers
he felt lighter than toast, the idiot myth.

Narcissus on the ice pond,
whose very reflection created a weight
about to give
way.

He wondered where were the cupie dolls
one was supposed to win with insight.
Why were realizations
                           as bare as branches.
Though grown children still live off of trust funds
could he live off the lone fat of his brain?

Half his thoughts tended to wear wigs,
the other half shed mascara tears
he would lick up faithfully
but sensitivity leaves blackened tongues
and a possible make-up overdose to boot.

He sought the women just leaving
because skin had its own distance
its own logic
impossible to figure or touch.
But imagination had its own skin
you could always touch
without figuring
so "go figure"
he told the hatchet faced greeter at Wal-Mart.

The majority of his life
he could reduce down to Movie of the week
bad dialogue. A movie that is never made but made up as you go along.
Lines you don't speak but speak through you.
 Cliches you babble like the gaudiest of fountains
and your dignity lands you as the cherub facing East peeing on the lawns of suburbia.
 "Do you choose solitude or does solitude choose you?"