

KATHERINE SMITH

Modesty

She's almost ready to read philosophy,
cup of good coffee beside her,
turning the pages of Adorno
and Wittgenstein before the children
wake for school and remind her of the movie
they watched the night before. Buckets
of pig's blood poured over a teenage girl.
The twins couldn't be comforted by the encyclopedia
she read them after: black holes
like garbage disposals sucking planetary debris,
an infinite universe that will one day crumple
to the size of a period. Sarah yawned.
The twins screamed and couldn't sleep.
Past midnight Sarah sang lullabies—
Shenandoah, Down in the Valley.
Alone in bed, undisturbed by excessive
feeling, she waits for the sun to light up
her son's jar of glass marbles on the dresser.
She doesn't know if the beauty of a few bright stones
is an arbitrary construct or not, only that
for a few minutes of lulled consciousness,
long enough for an hour of thought,
she's indifferent
to the sun's insentience,
to the grief of her children's dreams.