

SAY CHEESE

You force a smile until
you think you look the way
you think you look.

The man
behind the camera wants
a bigger smile, and you comply
as to a dentist's, "Open wider."

For smiles to qualify as smiles,
the eyes and lips must rhyme,
but now your eyes resign
from the equation.

Plain vanity
sustains the shot, and authenticity
be damned.

You hold the pose.
Since posing is what posing
does, you learn that all
that posing does is mold you
in a pose the poser wants.
For just that long, you're who
you're not.

When you unpose
and are yourself again,
you see what made the Iroquois
believe that being photographed
permitted the photographer to steal
your soul.

The Iroquois were right.