ELENA KARINA BYRNE

Farewell Face & One of Picasso’s

…it is rather the form of the impossibility of fleeing.
—Catherine Malabou, The Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity

You like to drink
water from the neighbor’s army-green hose
because it still smells like summer hitting the hot ground. Here,
you are whipped wind, a statistic, always one age: long before you
can be at all a woman. Before dusk’s late curfew
sleepover or simply because Mom was pill-happy home with
Dad, you boot-break her oval makeup mirror without anger, scatter its new
scant face shapes into the far yard earth between a petting zoo of plants that
needed to see sky’s fresh violence…dirt-colored hair stuck to your cheek.

From the d’Avignon room
of one spectator, Mom tried, for her sake, not yours, to stop your bad
side that seemed unstoppable, an inebriated sea breaking itself apart, the form
of you, unrecognizable & disappearing over & over into summer’s darkening
olivine body of sand…Mother was always staring at her beautiful face
in mirrors as if it might change.

Her rear-view one, half-cocked
back at her while driving, terrified me. Faces slowed or sped by us: back
of a redhead, an apple’s half facing forward, floating baby nose, eyes
aligned with ears, or only sunglasses like twin poker cards, turned.
Picasso knew so well what he had in front of him: women neither
affirmed nor denied belonging. That’s why his painting could destroy them.
I really didn’t know which Mother face was reflected in the windshield
ahead, which bottle-blue eye was open on the moving road.