

Five Picasso Heads

At Avignon, he scarred my right cheek
with a black slash of paint,
pulled my nose in a violent curve
down to a horseshoe mouth,
bugged my blind eyes - one egg yolk,
the other brown - archly calculating,
beheaded me on planes of muddied earth:
a grotesquerie, the first of his line.

He crowned me with a circlet of summer flowers,
drew me from a red wicker basket -
a charmer calling his snake at the bazaar -
floated orange blooms like chromosomes
before the tumour he made my forehead
a jar was enough for my nose: his mockery,
this resembling unlikeness.

I'm in profile, linocut, ink and crayon
displayed bamboozled; from brow through nose
a thick red line's my surest feature,
my blue flat eye a smudged explosion.
He's hung me with lank weeds
of green, blue, black, as if I'd risen
from his gut and dragged
the entrails with me.

I'm in pastel, but for all that,
so round, so monumental, I could be stone,
my mouth a pretty bow but prim,
dark, unplanted furrows in my hair,
heavy lidded, maybe deep but slow,
my eyes beseech like covered buttons.
I could be Greek
but for his distorted vision.

He took just a slice of my face,
bent it in metal to a thin facade,
punched my sharp mouth disapproving,
opened blank round eyes on nothing
and folded through my nose and forehead.
I look both ways at once, as did he,
revealing himself to you in me.

Brook Emery