Picasso’s Self-Portrait at Twenty-six, 1907

Cheeks stabbed with dark lines.
Tender mouth
any woman would want.

Hair slashed
in broad black strokes. His mother said If you become

*a soldier, you’ll be a general.*
A Spanish Napoleon, don’t you think? Face a bold triangle. Wide nose and brow.

His mother said, *If you become a monk, you’ll end up as the pope.* Yes, wouldn’t he have been Leo X with mistresses and power?
But his eyes, oh, my dear,

you can’t turn from those eyes.
Large and oval with black centers that absorb the world.
Picasso said, *Instead I became a painter and wound up* as Picasso.

— Diana Pinckney