

'Making Up'
John Wheway

At the mirror, she takes a step back,
like an artist changing places

for a different angle, absorbed
not in herself

but in the portrait's subject, dabbing
pigment over each cheek, circling

with the tip of her pinkie to reveal
unseen depths.

He'd never seen his mother in her,
but now he's like the boy who watched

the woman in the strapless dress, lips kissed
with Rouge Noir, hurrying

downstairs to the street, bowing
into a waiting taxi. He'd peer

between the curtains, noticing
the eagerness in her pace,

not knowing what it meant,
though he knew she loved to dance,

and that the Polish captain
who gave him that red fire engine

was not his father's friend.