

◆ AMIT MAJMUDAR ◆

Françoise and Her Lovers

Pablo—oh, loving *him* was an infectious paralysis.
Jonas, who hated fame, made iron lungs open like graves.
Françoise was never the lover of either. They were hers.

Jonas found her late in life, in her blue period.
Pablo found her as a teenaged virgin. When he groped
Françoise on a terrace in occupied Paris,

Pablo told her he painted women by shattering them.
Jonas described bodies slackening in polio's febrile embrace.
Françoise knew: Women love a Picasso and marry a Salk. Yet she loved

Jonas's pipette as much as Pablo's paintbrush. Body, antibody.
Pablo once asked her to strip so he could check if
Françoise's breasts matched the ones his artist's eye had foreseen.

Françoise was nineteen. She was forty-eight when she met
Jonas; by then, she was the painter Françoise Gilot, not just
Pablo Picasso's replacement for Dora Marr—

Pablo's own prediction about her future, this dispensable
Françoise just one more ruined Guernica of a muse.
Jonas talked architecture with her in 1969.

Pablo, still at it, was painting jigsaw puzzles having sex.
Jonas, smitten, sketched her an icosahedral poliovirus.
Françoise knew great art when she saw it.