Tammy Robacker

MOTHER, MORGUE

My mother had the chance
to leave early. By way of Auto-
bahn. A happy accident

driving with boys and liquor
on her sweet 16. Doctors picked
crushed windshield chips

from her cheeks. They plucked
eye teeth, some thigh and
a knee. Then they parked her

on the cooling rack.
Nothing more they could do.
It was ordered—orderly

death. Medical machinations
powering down. The journeying
gurney bottomed out

in the hospital
basement. Blood still seeping
at her snaggle teeth.

For her,
all the world could do
was done.

She could have gone
under. She could have drowned
the mere idea of me

way back then: Ophelia
of Europa. Perpetually mythic
and pre-conceived

in the brackish River
of Forget. Instead, she sat
up. Jarred

and unfinished
in the pickling liquid. Disoriented
by her own
importance. Her broken face reckoning at the glass to come back in.