



The only others in the rose garden
are arguing about Blake, whatever slept
in their heads struggling awake. The roses
are anything but blasé yet they stay asleep,
so few of them in November there seems
an unlikely plentitude. No one
will ever want to kiss me now, thinks
the girl in the burn unit and No, no,
shout the sleeping roses, some with thorns
eyelash soft, others beetle cankered.
Why aren't we more terrified by sleep,
of consciousness extinguished and no
guarantee of return? Because
of consciousness extinguished and no
guarantee of return? The roses
never wake either, they lie in plastic sleeves
atop the coffin asleep, take their part
in brazen backseat sex asleep,
whatever secret whispered into their labia
they'll never repeat. And when they wither
like fire made of water, you will wither too
pestered by contradiction. A world so full
of detail yet so vague, a spot
of blood so red rubbed away.