

Rats

Rosanna Warren

As if you rose out of your coffin—as if
my heart was your coffin—you rose
yesterday in the turquoise faceted light
of syringes, hospital sheets, and toxic Niagara mist
you painted into a glossy forever.
I felt again your weight upon me
that Manhattan night in our quasi-childhood.
You moved lovelessly upon me, almost angry—
anger I almost allowed myself to know—
as we lay on a borrowed floor trying to make
what might be called love. You broke
each spell. The way Proust discovered love
in captured rats squealing as the hat pin probed
their vital organs. I was a slow student, I learned
dumbly, blindly. And graduated
to my own destructions. The white rats scamper
through your landscapes of pill bottles and blood,
chopped trees and massacred Adirondack deer
and I dream of knocking all the books off my shelf
so that in the light breaking from those pages
I might behold, not hold, your broken face.