

## Fall Canker

In October, rose blight  
overran the roots and stems,  
flecks infecting the skin  
like scabs or tiny cancers.  
Still, the night he died,

your crimson-tipped buds,  
pronged the vitiated light.  
You hovered in the dark hush  
of a room filled with flowers  
and the presence of the dead,

and everyone marveled.  
But, young, at odds with life,  
and bewildered by such easy  
grace, how could I accept  
your faith, unless I'd seen

your pain, your terror?  
Two years now. Mother,  
the canker this fall  
has taken the rose buds.  
Only so much corrupt life

can be cropped away by cold,  
well-meaning shears.