

Rosemary Ann Davis

The War

*And in the cold morning over the dark surface of the earth
Echoes of my voice drift, whiteness steadily absorbed into darkness
—Louise Gluck*

On the street where I live

Victorians rest from annihilation disorder

One can be seen as the virus enters

People with AIDS wilted magnolias

Eating one death at a time

San Francisco

with graduate students lying in death houses
carried away by seduction

death masks along with blue jeans and carefully
placed handkerchiefs gather handfuls of oysters for
sustenance along the way

to be seen by intermittent glances walking corpses
never to be replaced for artistic and erotic purposes

By moonlight John is smothered by morphine

The virus runs its course down these steep hills

in astonishing speed accuracy

Gay men entwined guarded by others
washed fed sung to

until washed out with the tide

Paul ambushed by a dormant

poison held at bay

by AZT humor alcohol

Life to those who love as they are told

On the street where I live

Act-Up shouted demands in blood

born of governments

that blasted them with silence

Naked torsos to be laid among

trees by the faithful not their

shameful families

Two years three months that was the sentence

a clock began life ended without delay

the timing was exact

Bodies betrayed and relentless go unclaimed

yet their faces shine like candle light

ashes flung in anger

amid camellias and

wave of their souls