

Peter Hammill, Naming The Rose

He had worked on this for years
since they know they'd be childless:
to hybridise a thornless
and deep-scented damask rose.
She was always by his side
in the lengthening shadows...
this case is closed.

Ena Harkness, Constance Spry,
Emily Grey, Margaret Merrill,
Zepherine Drouhin, Aimee Vibert and Blanche Moreau
all these spirits still survive in the act of the grower
(in peace and compassion he's...)
naming the rose,
naming the rose in the memory of sweetness.

Dedication to the call
and he offers up the hope
that love conquers all.

It's not easy to explain
how he felt at her passing
the very day on which
the most perfect bloom was full-blown;
tender cruelty that she'd
never share in this moment,
naming the rose.

He takes her ashes to the seed-bed
and works them in gently
so that her soul will rise like sap
in the plants as they grow
and then whispering her name
writes it out on the label,
naming the rose,
naming the rose
for the sake of her sweetness.

Naming the rose
in the memory of sweetness.