

Tapestry

It is difficult to separate the tapestry
From the room or loom which takes precedence over it.
For it must always be frontal and yet to one side.

It insists on this picture of "history"
In the making, because there is no way out of the punishment
it proposes: sight blinded by sunlight.
The seeing taking in with what is seen
In an explosion of sudden awareness of its formal splendor.

The eyesight, seen as inner,
registers over the impact of itself
Receiving phenomena, and in so doing,
Draws an outline, or a blueprint
Of what was just there: dead on the line.

If it has the form of a blanket, that is because
We are eager, all the same, to be wound in it:
This must be the good of not experiencing it.

But in some other life, which the blanket depicts anyway,
The citizens hold sweet commerce with one another
And pinch the fruit unpestered, as they will,
As words go crying after themselves, leaving the dream
Upended in a puddle somewhere
As though "dead" were just another adjective.

- *John Ashbery, 1979 (1927-2017)*