

ELEGIES ON THE PASSING OF CELEBRITY

Darken the house lights – time for the montage.
The stars watch the stars, and us, we look on
from our world separate, ageless, a kind of admiring.

Here's a dead cowboy. His hat a ghost town, a tumble
of brush, a haunted player-piano, scrolling
those holes, tinkling jubilation to the wind.

This one, born the same year as my mother.
They play your songs and I use your voice,
the one with swagger, before the rattle of pills.

And you, my father thought you beautiful.
I listen for magic. You speak frozen flowers.
Why does a man tell his wife another is pretty?

They say you hailed from Nebraska, but those curtains –
all California. The jokes and smirks, the way the men
pinched their slacks. You made sunny all those dark-home nights.

You, my mother said, weren't pretty. You should have stayed
small-town. Those kind of men and their business cards
must be refused. You were a lesson to be learned.

Now the dancer: the boy, the man that never was.
It's your shrieks we love, the way your body cuts
the air, the way your feet light what here can't be lit.

All of you, so easy to love, so easy to tarnish.
Drink and drugs, sex and guns, fiery crashes,
and one spectacular leap from a building.

Popping light bulbs. White-hot moments. All the flickers.
Let us all celebrate – every high and low light. Clap for us,
in some dark, velvet theatre. And when we exit,
let us all exit with a little shatter and dazzle.