

Celebrity

Having like the night attendant at Lowell's madhouse for the rich,
grown drowsy over *The Meaning of Meaning*, with one eye open
I watch the stars twist slowly on their eccentric axes,
the costumed years dance hand in hand backwards
down institutional corridors, fairly certain
that what appears to be is by and large projection,
even the light or dark or whatever at the end of the tunnel.

It's a wonder we're not all mad, if we're not,
and how, if we are, we manage to imagine
such sanities as number, order, progress,
self, communication. Bells are ringing somewhere,
it must be midnight again. Time to make the rounds.

The princess and the soon-to-be-sainted nun,
medieval icons *par excellence*, are dead.
Both were mostly good at putting the touch
on wealthy men, raising not the dead but money,
and making the news, each in her own way
renouncing the crown without in any way
threatening the structures underpinning
inequity, that stage they played on.

Disease and suffering, the one in white habit
said, are just God's way of making us
ready for Heaven, bringing us into the Church,
the important thing being, as always,
spreading The Word, building The Order.

The press has gone ecstatic with media orgies
featuring its own crocodile tears
scapegoating its own *papparazzi*,
sheer overexposure providing if not
forgiveness, at least brand recognition,
what passes these days for public reverence.

The funeral as festival. Just like the old days.
The one with the Paris couture also vouchsafed
ascension, proclaimed in checkout counter tabloids
to be the Angel on our Christmas tree.
The Triple Goddess *rediviva*: Virgin,
Mater Dolorosa, *Great Whore of Media*.
Celebrity: the meaning of nothingness.

