

Sicilian Music Box

(for my grandmother)

Five diminutive dancers locked in a liminal moment,

Wild applause forever pending...

What will-power lies coiled, unsprung, behind each mute smile?

Bright void, childless orb, stilled in pretty postures

A narrow story to tell. Or is that so?

Perhaps your stone gaze offers more generous territory:

a hidden desire, some burning salt of the earth, bipolar goddess or venal go getter?

Or are you just as you appear: thistle thin, ceremoniously beautiful, like

Snow White bell-jarred in her glass casket

Yet ...I cannot deny you disappoint me

Sad tutus mimic outmoded flowers – roadside pink and white carnations

Mocked by twisting Baroque columns and gilded lacquered curtains

Strangely, you put me in mind of small hungry birds

Captive together on the dusty side table, sharing your spotlight

with frayed paperback and bedside lamp,

What can we learn of art, of love, from this?

To resist the illusion that all must be a certain way?

That beneath immediate perception,

lurks hidden currents of conflicting truths?

Or simply the startling ambiguity of everyday things?

The banal knob on the side of your world instantly moves you to life,
Spectral stage lights spot your routine and
a thin metallic orchestra launches Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty
with a riotous upswing
Willing yourself into purpose through eventless movement
Persuasive at first, then, once again – an emptiness, a snag, a grief
The innate loneliness of dull perfection
A curious trick of the light distorts your shadows
as they swell, hover, then vanish behind you
Lost in time like lapsed souls, you revolve slowly, hypnotically,
Acquiescent of the terms of your own existence
Your world winds down, mute, unattended,
Expiring once more with a twist of my imperfect hand.