

MY FUNNY VALENTINE

to Times Square would begin remembering a matinee of that movie about the nun who befriends the murderer on death row, you know the one

when he's brought in for lethal injection the nun says in a way that would make an old building weep *When they strap you down, look at my face. It will be filled with love.* We wept

through the credits and back into daylight somewhere around 42nd St. and Seventh, mid to late spring 1996. The nun was sworn to poverty, the criminal born dirt-poor

and we didn't make enough for first-run cinema back then much less live theater, but there we were: on Broadway picking up tourists' dropped playbills from the sidewalks

just to see what we were missing. The theater doors burst open onto streets that teemed with people bright with energy and a song against our heads still swallowed by the movie's

death after death. We needed something more. We stopped at a shop crammed with t-shirts and statuettes of Liberty for an orange soda for the subway home. That's when I saw

the morning paper on the rack: ELLA FITZGERALD DEAD AT 78. All that beauty stopped.

I couldn't speak. That perfect human voice. And the city around us perfectly

committed to going on. We let it take us where it wanted to sharpened by heartache up Broadway to 44th, east to Sixth, and into the Oak Room for one credit-card martini after another.

We knew how little we had and therefore what we couldn't afford to let slip away. We ate peanuts till twilight when the neon kicked on and drew us back in, the one place on earth

LINE

by Timothy Donnelly

we knew we could live forever, braced in tearful architecture,
dizzy with its ghosts and directing the lost out-of-towners
for the first time feeling we fully belonged where we were

and we were thankful for it. We were broken with gratitude.
To think of the history that we had walked ourselves into
and which hadn't spat us out, and which still hasn't, one season

sliding into the next, one grief into the next, one linden tree
on the street growing leaf to bare to flower.

My valentine
to Times Square would begin there and end, remembering a day

six years before we married, the clear voice of Ella singing
Stay little valentine, stay, and the thought of a loved face
turning to the face that loved it to say *Thank you for loving me*.