

Along the Leie, fields full of the memory

of flax, night turning now to August, dark
sky's small lights doubled in the river;

under our sleeping windows where the hush of air
is crossing low lands from the ocean, the beautiful
boy comes with his hair shining in the headlights

like gold.

Nothing but cliché can be spoken
of the dead, who live in their own distant cities,
who are whole and perfect and singly battered

by death, the smallness of the body surrounded
by its corona of broken windshield. All that remains
to say is a shrine our words will not

approach—so we plant trees, lay thin white
stones, leave candles in red jars, say novenas, make
up the sense of something missing

with bears and ribbons, roadside photographs, credible
apparitions, letters, avoidance, a small *x*
on a map—but there *is* something missing,

regardless of belief, and we know it: in the cool
night air which bears its stars dispassionately,
with no thought for our need or lack

of language, the bodies of boys outline themselves
in roadside grasses, where water will pool
in late winter, where red and pink poppies will blow

among cornflowers, wild roses; where the tiny, pale blue
star-shaped earthly blossoms of the flax spell out their names
in multitude, in languages beyond the ones we know.