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## At the Museum of Funeral History

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CRAIG BEAVEN

AT THE MUSEUM OF FUNERAL HISTORY

In the back, encased in glass,  
on a pedestal like a shrine: the original filament

from JFK's eternal flame:  
thin wire heated by electric,

gas breath sighs over, igniting,  
just a coat hanger or piece of trash, filament

from his original fire. A strand of genes  
is also a filament,

holding your blood's  
code, the element

that will form  
your bones. How many wept at this fire?

Who came to pour their lament—  
and then it began to falter, new element

installed, this one boxed up,  
sealed in its own coffin,

we no longer even know  
what these elements

help us remember: They have the programs  
from Lincoln's funeral—small element

of history; they have the bill of sale  
for McKinley's embalming, fiber

weave paper burning yellow at the edges.

A new two inch wire filament

burning at Kennedy's grave,

surviving the elements,

wind ruffles its glow, snow melts in a circle, rain

cannot douse its light. You must know

by now what I'm talking about.

You must know what I mean by filament,

element, strand of DNA. In one there is a thin wire flame

at a grave in Virginia. The other heats up

inside a bulb, and the bulb—frosted—emits light.

In one it is all the elements

that make a body. In another, it is all the elements

that do not.