

## The Thousand Year Crawl

## 1. San Sebastian

Three days of whiskey and rain--  
(which gives life  
and which takes it again?)  
swaying under orange,  
huddling under gray,  
dreaming in black  
and white.  
And asking empty waves  
which way the future might be.

Makes me sad, to leave something  
without looking away from it.  
A magisterial eclipse  
which taught me this:  
sometimes it's better to be blind.

Sometimes.

So the question left in my mind  
is what, about great happiness  
(then great sadness),  
is so polarizing?

One hops the fence  
and opens the gate for the other.  
One pries off the manhole,  
and the other follows it in;  
Consider all the convincing  
that happens at kitchen tables,  
sunken couches, and cat's cradles.  
Is that fucked?

A covered moon still  
shines the same, I suppose.  
Light begins to bend  
as you drift further back  
towards the origin. I've been  
feeling happiness begin,  
with every labored blink,  
to sink and to shrink.  
And I think that to think  
about its loss  
is also, somehow,  
its cause.

## 2. Manhattan, New York City

My grandfather kissed a woman here once.  
No, he did not know her.  
No, she did not know him.  
They'd just heard the war was over--  
(something I have never known)  
The gratitude in going home.

He watched his world through a porthole--  
wave crest reflections and gun barrels;  
She saw it all through  
hourglass eyes, tourniquets and  
flowers for all those who'd died,  
until a nameless sailor gave her  
the sky above Times Square--  
(something I was never shown)  
the life behind a life unknown.

This was back when it wasn't a sin  
to live with a bit of conviction,  
he used to tell me--  
as he thumbed through photos,  
and I sat on his knee.

When they heard his claim,  
they hooked him up to polygraphs.  
Had him in metal folding chairs,  
talking to TV audiences and  
interrogations with two-way mirrors.  
A forensic artist contended  
by the bridge in his nose  
and the bones in his hand,  
yes, it must be this man.  
And it was always her.

So then they put him  
in front of more audiences again--  
(something I have always equivocated)  
to be talked about or to be venerated.  
He played some golf after that,  
and got married three times,  
never saw her or another war.  
She died screen-door poor  
in a rocking chair on a porch.

He had a few cancers,  
some heart attacks,  
gangrene, pancreatitis, and  
now, instead of polygraphs,  
it's all saline drips  
and tasteless rolls with  
fake butter and fake hips.  
Bed pans, fucking Pall Malls,  
and heart rate monitors--  
(something I have yet to hear)  
the steady sound of death in my ear.

He skips activity hour  
and Singles' Bingo Night  
to ask the television  
if they'll bury him in his uniform.  
I suppose, he says to the nurse  
who checks his pulse,  
it could've been worse than this.  
I would've killed a hundred more men  
if it weren't for that kiss.

## 3. Galway

Been wondering if  
there's a word for when  
very little is still  
way too much--  
and as such,  
if I don't feel like  
being sober,  
then I sometimes let the rice  
boil over.  
Does that make sense?  
I started assigning reasons  
to accidents; and compliments  
are always in the past tense.

I spoke with an old friend,  
but she didn't understand  
that when it rains, it pretends.  
It's all about being convinced  
that something  
does or does not  
exist--Whether it be reasons or  
rain drops.  
And it makes no difference  
whether it actually  
does or does not.

I awoke with an old friend  
and that ocean-made balustrade  
already in my mind:  
poison to the waking grind.  
Yes, grind, grind, grind.  
And soon your hands shall overflow  
with an abundance of time unspent.  
Ah, what a curious event!  
life's latest riddle:  
how far too much still  
feels like very little.

## 4. Ourense

At morning, the thousand year crawl  
over profound truths  
scribbled in yellow sidewalk chalk.

In the corner booth at the nameless café  
The nameless waitress walks with café  
con leche, and something I can't explain.  
Dostoyevsky left me angry,  
I leave myself confused,  
the rain leaves me feeling used.

She can open that can't of worms  
But I have to warn her first:  
They've felt the clench of a  
warm first and the turn of the earth.  
They've been steeped in self-doubt,  
shown their reflections, and poured out.

At morning, the thousand year crawl  
over profound truths  
scribbled in yellow sidewalk chalk.

I leave her something extra:  
a wordless poem I wrote in a moment,  
between all the flightless hesitation  
and self-serving aberrations.  
Here is my life in a series of numbers.  
Please be so kind  
as to leave me unencumbered.

## 5. Oslo

I'm standing sober in front of the fountain  
watching Lilli roll a joint  
in this weird eastern style--  
where she ties it off  
like bubble gum while  
strawberry alarm clocks buzz.

In the background,  
the radiator hums.  
The heat drums  
out in pulses, and  
someone stole a doormat.  
They're going to toss it  
into the fountain.  
I walk up to watch.

In the belfry, the ringing of bells.  
In the water, reflections that tell  
me of a past that still awaits  
beyond this lack of language,  
which makes things strange.  
Or maybe it's just a lack of contrition;  
some grand assuage:  
this collection of change,  
now that I've stopped making wishes.