

## *The Circuit*

Oh ring, ring, open wide and let us out!

—ANNE FRANK

### I. ANNE FRANK'S HOUSE

From the blacked-out upper windows we can see  
the gauzy 1940s, a barge parked  
in a neat canal, a girl going past on a bicycle.

Walls no longer hold their breath, they talk,  
flickering on each cleared-out floor, a further part  
of the looped story, while the tourist file unwinds  
to wander the dim levels.

Where I can find  
no trace of the irrepressible being whose kiss  
would crumple the walls, send ripples, sparks, connections  
down train tracks, shivery lines of canal water.

### 2. THE RIJKSMUSEUM: REMBRANDT SELF-PORTRAIT

She has joined us after all, dark-haired, one step  
ahead, as we shuffle past and graze with our eyes  
the curls' lit filaments, warm burrow of his gaze  
tailing us downstairs into the cooling sun.

### 3. SKATING RINK

Beneath the museum, a walkway, echoing arch  
of train-tunnel dimness, then unshuttered day, re-entry.  
At the edge of some acres of open grass, an eddy  
of swirling laughter and faces. I miss her glance  
again, but she'll come round again, her line  
woven freehand into those joyous orbits.

#### 4. VAN GOGH MUSEUM

Each one a handprint, whorl of a furious decade.  
Tall, red leggings, black skirt, grey fleece jacket,  
white hair in a short ponytail, she's elegant  
and still as a stork, a witness looking in  
at apples, lemons, pears, a frothy platter  
of ochres, leafgolds airy as blown glass  
blazing and brimming its borders to spill and colour  
the flat wood frame

*sky-billowing, open wide*

a window for us to fly through, thumbled with light.

### *From Blackrock*

Here's to you, ghost, father alive or dead,  
your surname's reserved seat, your vast  
library of the unsaid;  
to your one image, slip of the past

in blurred grey and white;  
a soldier, sitting with my mother,  
your smile sleepy, hers bright  
as the ghostlight blowing your cover;

to the curse or gift you bestowed:  
abstraction, my soft spot for absences,  
cloud-watcher, sea-watcher, open to the slow  
shift of light, the waves' always present tenses;

to the given, darkening, Dublin Bay almost black  
except, nearby, where a wave splits a rock.