

Journeys (I-IX)

I.

Crossing  
the railway,  
down through Meadowbank,  
along South Street to  
climb up the steep path  
called, The Struggle (there's a metaphor).  
She warned, *don't eat the yew berries*.  
A stranger offers sweets from inside his car  
at the corner. Or did I only imagine that?

II.

Parents up front with the back seat folded down.  
Small bodies, side by side, in sleeping bags,  
my brother and I lay throughout the  
night, cocooned by tightly stacked baggage.  
We didn't feel the hours,  
miles or border pass  
while we slept,  
arriving at  
dawn.

III.

She  
called it  
*our evening constitutional*:  
circling around the town  
on long Fife summer days,  
when night never truly gets dark.  
Nostrils filled salt fresh with the haar,  
keeping a pace with whatever she was walking  
out of her head, before turning back toward home.

IV.

1st September, 1987: Mum stayed back another week while  
we emigrated ahead. Dad, brother, me. In the  
night was the sea. On the sea  
was a ship. In the ship  
was a cabin. In the  
cabin was a bunk.  
In the bunk,  
I was  
bleeding.

V.

Up  
the stairs  
in the church -  
sneaking to escape notice.  
Always alert, without a door.  
Finally escaping down, to  
be out of  
it, still  
ongoing...

VI.

Driving  
back through  
France from our  
holiday in Provence in  
the car. Jude, Mark and  
that Canadian girl that looked Swedish  
and a sister just like her. Karen?  
I'll call her Karen. I remember the song  
we were singing. I was happy. Hurt. But happy.

VII.

Tour bus. Middle of the night. Car park of  
The Roundhouse in London after the gig. I  
don't remember where we were headed next  
(and of all things to remember)  
but I'd never seen anyone  
paranoid high on coke  
before. Or since.  
Wide eyed.  
Terrified.

VIII.

Connolly  
Station, Dublin:  
We board the  
near empty Belfast train.  
I had reserved our seats -  
window seats to see the sea.  
There's another couple seated in our place.  
*We get on wherever, sit wherever.* I seethe.  
They alight at Drogheda. I feel ~~principled indignant~~ petty.

IX.

Before he drove me to Walgreens, where I bought  
enough to fill every bathroom shelf in the  
South — with a capital S and all  
that means — I first flew out  
here alone across an ocean,  
moving further west, chewing  
gum so hard,  
my jaw  
ached.