

Journeys (I-IX) *revised version

I.

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.

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.

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?