

coalfield dementia

*Daniel I was happy with you
yet a dirty waiting room on Darlington Station
confettied with crisp packets and used tickets
was all we ever knew of a home together¹*

1)

the fire-crowned terrain as the sea burns²
is cold today is desolate today
people zipped up tight inside their houses
Horden and the streets dropping down into
an absence the way the shore drops into
the sea heavy with the weight of its
nothingness of its blank everything
when it rains it rains glue it was lovely
back then remember the boy who fell
into the combine harvester limbs
seeded over the fields skin falling
like autumn leaves *at the pit-head local*
idlers waited for the news

2)

Darlington 2004 high
cathedral of a station curved ceilings
of industry we'd spend our days walking
around the city testing the limits
of our togetherness we met four times
on the last time as I sat on the lip
of the chair in the waiting room I had
my first kiss then never saw you again
do you remember the body in your
grandad's shed? I used to think you broke
my heart but back then I didn't have one yet
its that you dug so deep inside my chest
its had a faultinefracture ever since

3)

my grandad couldn't walk down to the end
of the driveway without needing to stop

¹ the epigraph rewrites part of Paul Durcan's 'sally'

² The lines in italics are from Barry MacSweeney, 'Wolf Brother'

for breath I can't remember the things
I wish I'd asked him I want to return
to feeling I want to return
to the heart not the body the ground
is always slipping like skin does as it ages
living is just the managed decline of the body
you have reluctantly shaken gold
over my nakedness you swelling
inside with the sweetness of air always
we love the men who left us more
I wish I could remember all their names
it is raining glue all their forgotten
bodies are fossilised beneath our feet
I will stand at the coal-face like Hamlet and strike a match