

What's the Weight Allowance?

The bag rises and falls, as a petal
Its seams like dimpled knuckles
Carry nappies and lullabies and a patchwork teddy
First words fall out of its zippered mouth
It's stitched into a satchel
For your gym shoes and First Readers and the travelling apple
Keyrings jingle playground rhymes
Which become childish, to your ears
Now, remove the school books and set them aside
Take this debt
Fold it neat and flat, place it at the bottom; you'll be carrying this one around for a while, Son
You can ignore it for now, with the textbooks pressing down on top
Add to it each term
If you roll the small ones up tight, they can fit down the sides, see
It's heavy, I know, that big rucksack on your shoulder all day
But you'll get used to it
Look, just leave your bag here while you going interrailing
I'll keep it in your old room
With the patchwork teddy and the gym shoes and the textbooks
When the trains bring you home, the rucksack has grown
Squatting behind the door
Feed Me
It chews up your paycheques and scatters the droppings for you to collect
For rent and food and electricity and other luxuries
You know most of your friends have one too
Secret now, hidden underneath a trapdoor
Its straps slithering out if it's not locked down tight
Controlled
You invest in an upright expandable suitcase
You could fit a holiday in there
Maybe even a car, if you use the front pocket
Check the weight allowance
After a while, you need more storage
You upgrade to a four-piece luggage set
In middle-class navy
Filled with windows and bricks
That gives you mid-life lumbago
You fill in the tag and give your eldest the carry-on size bag,
You're eighteen, this is yours now
Sorry, son