

## ABANDONED RAILWAYS

Whether the rusty tracks  
lead to an abandoned station  
or into the mouth of a mine  
they show that something  
used to be here and people  
wanted to visit or travel  
to elsewhere. This county's  
full of the past, reminders  
of how it never moved on,  
preferred to become derelict  
and defunct, detached from  
contemporary meaning.

Whether time passes  
quickly or slowly, it moves  
on around us, behind us,  
beyond us, wherever it is  
that time goes, before  
we have nothing left,  
only memories and ideas  
of what could or might  
have been, things we  
should have done or wish  
we had. We betrayed  
our own intentions,

left ourselves behind  
with our dreams and  
settled for what looked like  
an easy life but turned out  
to be a branch line with  
few passengers travelling  
through. Time passed  
even quicker having  
at first seemed slow;  
we never caught up  
with ourselves or found  
out how to get back

to where we left or  
wished to go. There  
were no connections  
when we needed them,  
no-one knew the way,  
least of all ourselves,

busy earning the fare  
and turning to face  
the sun to stay warm.  
We left the tracks  
to rust and forgot about  
ourselves and others,

let life be lived elsewhere,  
forgetting ours was also  
a sort of life if we decided  
that it was. The rails  
are hidden under flowers  
and there's been  
a small landslide  
along the track.  
I don't know how to be  
anywhere or anyone else,  
have shunted myself  
into this siding.

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#### THE SHORTEST STORY EVER TOLD

We sat and watched the evening fade, the colours of the fields and woods changing across the creek, accompanied by soft prosecco and olives rolled in herbs.

The book of essays finally arrived. One of the editors asked us to contribute four summers ago in New York; it has been a long slow process to arrive at publication.

In the distance a foghorn calls, persuading self-expression from the stereo's speakers: abstract vocals and gentle hum.

It took me over 20 years to find a copy of this album on vinyl. I only ever had a cassette copy, recorded for me by one of the musicians. Now, of course, it is readily available on CD.

Inertia is all. Time has slowed and stopped; I walk through a mist of effort and despair and achieve nothing. I play music and write very little.

The sky has lowered and may fall at any moment. I would be on sick leave now, if I was sick. Or sicker.

'Your last pack of many things more than gratefully received. I liked your words.'

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### 'IF THERE'S ONE THING I COULD DO FOR YOU'

'I was a wing in heaven blue'  
– Patti Smith, 'Wing'

The garden smells like early morning summer  
in Italy, before the burning starts: still a hint  
of green and damp, still shade to sit in

and find out how the book ends, the day  
starts, how I could focus on something  
instead of flitting from paintings to words

to painting to music and back again,  
with depression at my heels. If there's  
one thing you could do for me it's this,

to sweep me up under your wing  
and transport me somewhere else.  
Give me the world, even if it isn't

always enough. I want to be  
unforgettable, love and promises  
poured out into each electric night.

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