

# Trains

Al Stewart

In the sapling years of the post war world  
In an English market town  
I do believe we travelled in schoolboy blue  
The cap upon the crown  
Books on knee  
Our faces pressed against the dusty railway carriage panes  
As all our lives went rolling on the clicking wheels of trains  
The school years passed like eternity  
And at last were left behind  
And it seemed the city was calling me  
To see what I might find  
Almost grown, I stood before horizons made of dreams  
I think I stole a kiss or two while rolling on the clicking  
wheels of trains  
Trains  
All our lives were a whistle stop affair  
No ties or chains  
Throwing words like fireworks in the air  
Not much remains  
A photograph in your memory  
Through the coloured lens of time  
All our lives were just a smudge of smoke against the sky  
The silver rails spread far and wide  
Through the nineteenth century  
Some straight and true, some serpentine  
From the cities to the sea  
And out of sight  
Of those who rode in style there worked the military mind  
On through the night to plot and chart the twisting paths of  
trains  
On the day they buried Jean Juarez  
World War One broke free  
Like an angry river overflowing  
Its banks impatiently  
While mile on mile  
The soldiers filled the railway stations arteries and veins  
I see them now go laughing on the clicking wheels of trains  
Trains  
Rolling off to the front  
Across the narrow Russian gauge  
Weeks turn into months  
And the enthusiasm wanes  
Sacrifices in seas of mud, and still you don't know why  
All their lives are just a puff of smoke against the sky  
Then came surrender, then came the peace  
Then revolution out of the east  
Then came the crash, then came the tears  
Then came the thirties, the nightmare years  
Then came the same thing over again  
Mad as the moon  
That watches over the plain  
Oh, driven insane  
But oh what kind of trains are these  
That I never saw before  
Snatching up the refugees  
From the ghettos of the war  
To stand confused

With all their worldly goods, beneath the watching guard's disdain  
As young and old go rolling on the clicking wheels of trains  
And the driver only does this job  
With vodka in his coat  
And he turns around and he makes a sign  
With his hand across his throat  
For days on end  
Through sun and snow, the destination still remains the same  
For those who ride with death above the clicking wheels of trains  
Trains  
What became of the innocence  
They had in childhood games  
Painted red or blue  
When I was young they all had names  
Who'll remember the ones who only rode in them to die  
All their lives are just a smudge of smoke against the sky  
Now forty years have come and gone  
And I'm far away from there  
And I ride the Amtrak from NewYork City  
To Philadelphia  
And there's a man to bring you food and drink  
And sometimes passengers exchange  
A smile or two rolling on the humming wheels  
But I can't tell you if it's them  
Or if it's only me  
But I believe when they look outside  
They don't see what I see  
Over there  
Beyond the trees it seems that I can just make out the stained  
Fields of Poland calling out to all the passing trains  
Trains  
I suppose that there's nothing  
In this life remains the same  
Everything is governed  
By the losses and the gains  
Still sometimes I get caught up in the past I can't say why  
All our lives are just a smudge of smoke  
Or just a breath of wind against the sky