

THE TRAIN HOME

High tide in Dawlish but low tide at Plymouth. Between red rocks, each beach contains the same swimmers, sunbathers and a kayak out at sea. Every park and green space is empty; it is too hot for football but there is probably a match on TV.

The longer we travel the fewer there are of us. Every town has abandoned factories with roof tiles missing and dead grass between paving stones. I try to imbue the scenes with meaning – melancholy, decay, decline – but it's all too familiar.

The book I am reading suggests memory contains traces of happiness amongst facts and figures, certainties and stories told over and over again, moments we repeat, convincing ourselves they mean something.

I cannot remember what I remember and what I do seems rooted in the photo album curated for me when I was young, events I have been shown. The rest is gone: weddings, parties, trips and meetings all in the wrong order.

I think events happened before they did. Oliver sometimes seems more sure, offers specific dates yet is confused about others. I do not know my end or beginning, am not very good at living in the now.

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