

Death Along the Jersey Rails

by Robert Salley

Nobody falls in love near train tracks
It's dark... where animals go to die
and teenagers go to fuck awkwardly
in the middle of the night.

Trees decompose more rapidly
surrounded by gaunt bushes and
naked to eyes on billboards
selling real estate and promoting radio stations.

They're doused in cigarette butts and used condoms
like old discarded snake skin
dry and coarse after the bite
immortally tortured by broken glass bottles.

Tattered with wayfarers walking along these rails
footprints planted long before the rust settled in
carrying their faded images of a childhood
and mother's arms that could hide a shameful memory.

Filthy windows show an infomercial
of defeated towns racing by
with chain-link fences and taverns
keeping the locals from escaping.

Their heads angled with regrets
of wasted time they let slip away
and the wasted encounters with saviors
somewhere between New York and Trenton.

