**Pilgrimage**

There’s a soft-gravelled misery
here, at Ebbsfleet Int’l
where the ‘railway station’ has gone
in favour of dry riser inlets
and I am stuck
here, two months late
for my pilgrimage
but it’s ok
because the climate is two months behind

Grumble-voiced uvulars
wheel undercarriage-grey vowels
across tandem tannoys
and a grim mirage of weeds
vein the tracklined sojourn
before Ashford Int’l and then Canterbury West

Black lichen florets slab the rail-verge:
sow-thistle and chickweed seem lost
so far in the South
and white-clover, ribwort, bittercress, tansy
toadflax, flixweed, and ivy-leaved speedwell
all sound as medieval as Chaucer--
Taraxacum and ranunculus
sound better in Latin
but under this ‘new town’ nucleus of brownfield earth
it is said
lie the remains
of a Pleistocene straight-tusked elephant.