

## **Travelling with Ashes**

**By Sheenagh Pugh**

On the outskirts of town, we passed a dead factory,  
windows all gone and the light pouring through,  
airy and bright, a red-brick filigree.

At a disused halt, the edge of the platform  
had blurred back to grass, and willowherb grew  
through gaps in the flags and the crumbling asphalt.

And crossing the bridge, the stretches of mudflat  
shone like lead sheets as the tide withdrew,  
not looking as if it were planning a comeback

to float the bleached boat, an empty ribcage,  
bones standing out as old men's do  
when appetite's gone and flesh is wreckage.

Rust in the scrapyards was engraving  
on heaps of silver and black and blue  
some cryptic message to do with leaving,

and sunlight's morse sent answering flashes  
off broken windscreens, a code he once knew.  
Ciphers read clear, when you travel with ashes.