

A walk when the rain stops.

The Fell still dribbles past the houses. Liquid, shining  
over tarmac drives collects in every shape of puddle  
and brims onto pavements, angling its ribbons into drains.

Rainwater carves landscapes in the path we walk up.  
The allotments are pinned to the fell by rusty chain-link  
and framed by creative shuttering of old doors and table tops.

The dog inhales like a hungry gourmet, sniffing  
flattened onion stems, rotted leaves, and sprouts keeled over,  
green on dark earth - a sluiced banquet of vegetables.

A sudden foul smell meets us. And over a corrugated iron fence,  
the brown devil head, with eruptions of ears and horns,  
appears. Its irate, side-slot, goat eyes stare.

I've seen it elsewhere, scraping front hoofs on a wall top  
as it teetered to reach people entering its atmosphere:  
the feral-cat, condemned building, dossers' corner stink.

Then, at a run full of white chickens, we set off some calls.  
The birds watch, not fearful of us, or their future.  
Two stand fixed, red and white, glaring at each other.

In other runs, black and gold hens, dry from their sheds,  
scratch and peck morsels, clucking faintly, round-shaped  
and diligent, in this lit space between showers.

No-one else here. No gardeners. No pigeon-men chatting by lofts  
while their birds roof the site, flights whispering back and forth.  
I'd have liked to see that against this washed, darkening sky.