

GEORGIE EVANS

Up Brackenbed

I begin to climb. I cross the road —
cross it back. The sides of the hill are different
the way dusk is different to dawn.

At the farm's gates, a dog stretches
and trots over to sniff the hand
I hold out to him. He does not bark,

but neither does he let me scratch behind his ears.
He steps back; I walk on. Dry brambles pull
at my arms and my hair, as if urging

me to stop here, to go no further.
I push past them.
They're too winter-brittle to fight more.

The landmarks on this path
are the bitter cans, the coffee cups,
a banana peel hoping for comedy.

Rain hits glass bottles in percussive drips
and I find myself marching to their beat,
breath clouding in front of my face.

A learner stalls on the harsh bend,
a horn blares, an engine panics. It rains
harder. Under Hebble Brook,

weeds cling snake-like to the stone.
A storage box sits in the patch of land
just further, the bridge behind me.
Then the climb is done. Like reward,
the sun arrives. I head off past the chippy
into Pellon, bracken on my shoes.
