

ALISON BRACKENBURY

Greenfinch

It is pale and neat as a leaf
In half-dark, the star-dark, beneath

The whitethorn, blackthorn. Loll of head,
Stillness to hand's heat sing out dead.

Its breathy whistle fluttered, spun.
The cat heard. All those light lives, gone.

I shift it, swiftly. Do not cry,
See seven finches swoop from sky.

Tess

I hate the book, except the end
In which the lovers break
Into an empty house and lie
In dust and warmth and ache

Inside the endless minutes.
The clothes sleep on the floor.
The soft old woman sent to clean
In silence shuts the door.

She is half-deaf and yet she hears
Men tramp with steady feet.
The rider thuds the clearing's shade.
The black cars block the street.