

## **Fallen**

**ZOË BRIGLEY**

Some things are only explained by words  
used in prayers or mysteries. How she failed  
to flourish as a girl, but turned captive  
in her own skin. How she swang to loving  
a man who could only defeat her.

The dark shadows her: a great black muzzle,  
its jaws dripping on the eaves and windows  
of the alehouse. They call her “the poor lass,”  
the “unhappy maiden upstairs,” the one  
who trains the ivy, blighted on its trellis.

She ate the black fruit on Michaelmas,  
a day when blackberries are the devil’s own,  
the flesh so gorgeous: purpling and smarting;  
but later no sweetness, only fear  
and horror frothing white on her lips.

She walks out nightly: she still has the moor,  
unkenneled and mute, falling behind her:  
a broad space in pursuit . Now it follows:  
a great, black hound shaped to pass  
even that which accepts no advance.

## The Shave

ZOË BRIGLEY

That night, he nailed her plaits to the floor,  
split the dull cotton of her skirt and vest  
to shave from her the coppery threads.  
The hair wound around his lithe left hand:  
his right held a blade—snip-snap at the best  
of her golden head and off it came on the bedsheets.

The severed hair spelled a ladder  
with rungs that could carry a man.  
Smeared and shucked like an oyster,  
bald and grey like gristle, jellied and numb  
as masticated food, she had nothing  
to keep from him and nowhere to hide.