

ALICE OSWALD: Candidate for Oxford Professor of Poetry
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A Short History of Falling

It is the story of the falling rain
to turn into a leaf and fall again

it is the secret of a summer shower
to steal the light and hide it in a flower

and every flower a tiny tributary
that from the ground flows green and
momentary

is one of water's wishes and this tale
hangs in a seed-head smaller than my
thumbnail

if only I a passerby could pass
as clear as water through a plume of grass

to find the sunlight hidden at the tip
turning to seed a kind of lifting rain drip

then I might know like water how to
balance
the weight of hope against the light of
patience

water which is so raw so earthy-strong
and lurks in cast-iron tanks and leaks
along

drawn under gravity towards my tongue
to cool and fill the pipe-work of this song

which is the story of the falling rain
that rises to the light and falls again

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.. I cannot think of any poet who is more
watchful or with a greater sense of
gravity... *The Guardian*, 24 July 2016

Fox

I heard a cough
as if a thief was there
outside my sleep
a sharp intake of air

a fox in her fox-fur
stepping across
the grass in her black gloves
barked at my house

just so abrupt and odd
the way she went
hungrily asking
in the heart's thick accent

in such serious sleepless
trespass she came
a woman with a man's voice
but no name

as if to say: it's midnight
and my life
is laid beneath my children
like gold leaf

from *Falling Awake* (Cape Poetry 2016)

...Oswald is one of our most unabashed
interlocutors with the long-dead voices of
centuries past... *LA Review of Books*, 3
January 2017

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