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Wir arme Leut' !

But nothing lets me have it as it has it
all the broken little words
you and I can never fix

we have the house with no lights on
we listen to a piece of asphalt
broken off the side of the road

anything you pick up knows how to talk
where are we coming from
what happened to me all those years ago

Alban Berg Opus 1 sonata for piano
from that stumble I am still falling
still traveling and all those young men are old

the ten fingers of the mind
We who are poor! already he can sing
because that's the only truth music knows.

15 December 2007

IN THE CLINIC

But I don't think I know
the date of anything.

Sparrow doctors cluster at my chest
as if already on the other side
or chilly little birds that ride the Styx.

Medicine is moonlight in a bottle,
medicine is mostly dream,
medicine is mostly a science of forgetting
medicine is an animal who runs away.

Let the ink sink in
the paper is sick
with silences.

Let the blue nurse
run her fingers over the cool sheet
and make you live.

15 December 2007

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Playing doctor was the old way
to touch you.

Now we have miracles instead:
assents, and aftermaths,
the very blue afternoon.

15 December 2007

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A leaf without a vein
a mirror no scratch on it
a sheet of steel
small enough for your skirt or your shirt.
But why would you want
to pocket it there?
Do you think you have a magnet in you,
the wind whistles in the pine wood
but can't play the clarinet
any more than I can. But I can whistle.
Can you whistle? Can you hold a leaf?

15 December 2007

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The trouble with names is having one.

What I see
and what I say I see
and what you say you see
outside the window

one image
one name

The trouble is having only one.

Pessoa's solution:
but he had to *speak* in all his different names

couldn't we have many
and be silent in each?

A landscape thick with snow, is there something here to remember, a landscape
thick with saying so?

And what does what is seen
say for the one who sees it?

Everything you see spells your name.

16 December 2007

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The sleep factory
is on strike.

Last night
I brought scabs in
and slept

the price I paid
was living other people's dreams

my word lost in their lips.

16 December 2007

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Watch out!
but I have no watch,

the sky is blue
but we have no sky,

Take care
but all the care is gone,

be well
but the water is all dried.

16 XII 07

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These days everything's short.
Too nervous to breathe.
I send myself postcards
of what I see. Look,
there's another tree.

16 December 2007

JESUS

Jesus watches
from the lowest part of the sky
we call a 'book'—

he passes in and around us
with no more fuss than wind
passing over the prairie—
a Swainson's hawk starts up from stubble
a thousand miles from here he also is.

He is a word we read once and can't forget,
a face we met in a book and every now and then
we meet someone else who reminds us of him
and there he is, squirrel-cunning,
hawk-high, dangerous with love.

16 December 2007

[The love that makes him stay with us still, a bodhisattva, though long ago he had *risen* into the rainbow word, the vanishing, the empty sky.]

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A bird to be about to be

found the grammar of the wind
to lift her or him
into the permanent summer of the air
“inward upon” the other,

the old lion asleep in his handwrought chair
dreaming my dreams for me again,

Omar over Ezra over
the soft dwindling New Jersey light
fed me all I knew of westernness back then

whenever. And a daisy.
And a slaughtered hog.

A war was on and all the music spent.

16 December 2007

GAP

1.

A gap
 is thought
presides
over the chateau,
alarmed with hares and who
dares to harry them—

a thought aloft will never taste [this] flesh

2.

it helps to be a flower,

give a flower a lung
do you get a nun?

No, un homme,
bi-gendered, complete.

Do you come
if no one listens?

3.

Better that way—
shadow of a jet
delicately soundless
swoops along our snow
while sad passengers
study out the window
an emptiness from which
they must summon
fabulous cities to rise
into which they will fall,
will fail to conquer,
dream of all their lives

4.

while my snow
stays clean, is just
as it is, as it was,
not a wing on it,
going nowhere.

Spring

comes to it.

17 December 2007

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Do you really think that answers the question?
I don't think there are such things as questions,

the mind clearing its throat is all it is,
ready to speak some absolute answer.

Or another way of saying it
(saying what?) is to say.

Or say that only the one who asks
a question could ever answer it,

a question is a shadow
cast by the future on the present
where all the answers lie.

And you dare to talk about calculus!
I dare to talk about dust.
The last rhyme and the first.

Today the clouds are broke,
sun came falling through
and stuff looks barely possible again.

17 December 2007

SILHOUETTE

The woman cast a shadow on my mind
as if I had eaten questionable meat
in a midtown diner late one night,
neon in my liver, a taste of everything
you ever wanted and didn't get
you suddenly got, listen,
did you ever feel like vomiting for love?
If her shape hurts me what would her body do?

17 December 2007

ON THE ISLE OF SHOALS

On the Isle of Shoals
something hard repeats.
Unattended to,
the new is always new.
A little magic lifted
from the bemused Atlantic
mists up a mystery temple
made all of gardens
and fussy poet types from Boston
roused a new age in
that no one listened to
thank god except the flowers.

17 December 2007

ANTISTROPHE

The opposite
of everything you mean
I mean to bring

cartloads of it
up the rue Mouftarde
or any other ancient street
all African with light, with fruit

I bring you some name
which was the face of tragedy
a bottle broken on my grave.

17 December 2007

WAITING

But even waiting doesn't take long enough
and there is no "what
are you waiting for?"

to help you focus.
Just weather.

But always another sentence beginning 'but'
but weather is always a question
isn't it.

don't you feel that every day
as you stagger down the hallway
into the increment sunlight

that you and you alone
have to answer.
Answer?

All that light isn't just sitting there,
it needs you, do something,
say something at least,

language that old shadowplay,
that sleight of breath.

And rain is no better,
maybe a little subtler, *la pioggia*,
rain is a beautiful lady with unkempt hair

whispering into your ear
news of an island you will never reach.

18 December 2007

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All the things I love you for
are right here in your name

I hold them in my mouth,
the shape of saying you

the sound to come.

18 December 2007
Olin (hearing LvB Op.69)

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Say God once breathed
the single word that is the world

He might one day
breathe it back in

and all we are
love and war and Beethoven

would be a spell of sound
held in His mouth

and we would hold His silence.

18 December 2007, Olin