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FIFTH NOVEMBER ELEGY

I didn't know he knew
the man I'd never know—
friends have such short
shelf-lives, sea level rising.
Osiris died today. The sand
is rising too.

Russian words
float by on streams of mind
just out of reach—
what
was your father's original name?

We all change our religion here.
Fact. In the new life
unless you work hard in your last
you'll always get born
into a different faith, or none. Fact.
Ovid's Metamorphoses
are a thinly veiled chronicle
of reincarnations,
how they are formed,
how karma shapes your inclinations
and your inclination shapes
the one you will be,
your mindstream
in the world to come.

Fact.

Ha-olam ha-ba,

his name
is Samuel, what can I tell you,
we belong to our names.

Plato told the matter limpidly. In his account that closes the *Politeia*, he tells of Er the Pamphylian, mortally wounded on the battlefield, who experiences death and the judgment chambers of the afterlife, then comes back to life knowing something of what befalls the dead. How a man's dominant impulse, his *liust*, his *prounikos*, determines the form he takes in his next life. So that Odysseus, who famously said he was No Man, and whose dominant urge was curiosity is reborn as a monkey—they get in everywhere and grasp everything.

We belong to names,

Samuel tried to break free.

Jamais.

Or as we said
in Italy, fat chance!

when I was young.

And I still am,
at least compared to pyramids
or that mockingbird by the quarry
who knew the song of every ever sung,
you heard him at the monastery

for all the music
we neglect to hear,
 the actual tones
stored in every tree
 or in Hannover once
on a mile-long tree-neat avenue of park
I heard Handel's anthem
 — he was still Händl then—
celebrating the Elector, his patron, the king
who founded the school I went to,
I greeted his statue in the park,
 heard trumpet,
heard bassoon and human voices
on that empty summer esplanade—
the dead never ever stop talking.

Fact.

Who is that now
speaking in your throat?
And what was your mother's maiden name?

17 November 2014

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**We come from those who spoke
a different language
no articles and no verbs
just an endless parade
of this then this then this.
We learned to move around
and hoped the words would
follow everywhere we went.**

17 November 2014

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**His hands are where
the pirates are
digging in the treasure chest.**

17.XI.14

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**Call that a pyramid?
That's an old man lighting his pipe
long after he stopped smoking.**

**Or it's a sycamore tree
late to leaf and early autumn'd
but so white against the white sky.**

**Once in a movie: wings
wider than a man's arms could spread.
screaming blue lightning**

**close to the wave crests.
I saw it, I don't know its name.
Unless its name is pyramis—**

**a loaf of bread in Phrygia,
a stone mountain some Egyptian
heaped up and polished smooth**

**to puzzle us ever after
but somehow also comfort us
like a man happily smoking his pipe.**

17 November 2014

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(introit, for C's photographs)

**I want my words
to hide in water**

**in this stream you gave me
by seeing it**

**Words want
to flow away, who**

am I to make them stay?

17 November 2014

AT A VIOLIN RECITAL

(Miranda Cuckson and and Blair McMillen)

(Meltzer's Kreisleriana)

**The matter does not fit the meter
so it can't be water.**

(Lutoslawski's Partita)

An animal that fits inside its skin.

A bear, or because.

Ad Libidinem?

**The forces
magnify
our almost posthumous
neglect
of what we hear,**

**Light in the sky.
Poached egg on a white saucer.**

**Partita, a partition
of what, a sermon, a wall
between us.
I hear someone stirring
on the other side.**

**A ripe pear lying on the ground
wasp on its ooze.**

***Be true to me things say
to one another, Be you,
be you all the time
so I can be me.***

(Schnittke, *Sonata No. 2*)

**A bat flying round the concert hall
high, close to the ceiling, never
condescending to come close or scare
the patrons listening below.
His flight is far away, impregnable,
he's more afraid of us, he clings
to the excelsitudes, the altitudes,
dreams us in his sleep.**

O yearn at last to be continuous.

17 November 2014,
Bito Auditorium

THERE IS A PLACE

**There is a place
where all these things are known.**

**It is the crisis
the middle of the book
the crow above the battlefield.**

**Printers call that inner edge a wordless
space the *gutter* of a book.**

**Nothing is printed there,
down there the stitches run
that hold the book or signature together.**

**It is the vital silence
shown to our mechanic hands
to hunt out where the knowing is**

**You can tell a book by its gutter:
read the first words in the line
on a recto page, last words
on its facing verso
and understand.**

**As Jane Brakhage years ago
deciphered the secret name**

**of every book: read the first
word then the last.**

**But were we being whimsical today,
just now?**

**No, there is a place
where all these things are known.
I haven't gotten there yet,
I got distracted by the book,
this notebook pale strings it's sewn with,
books have always been my downfall
read my eyes out
now find my way by light alone,
the hands of color leading me along.**

**Yes, yes, but tell us
where this place is
of which we have so long
heard you speaking
but not telling,**

you never told.

**I can show you only what I've seen,
I've ehard there is a place
where all these all things can be told.**

18 November 2014

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The neosexual.

Sex is wasted on people.

There are better things to do

with it, better things to do.

Being itself is a sexual disease.

Ah, to be beyond being!

18 November 2014

RADIO

**goes on upstairs
hear him sing *sangu*
blood. I see a queen
in sluttish majesty
stumble from the bathhouse
and Agamemnon slain.
Old poem, older story.
Things lead to one another
inescapably. Karma
is the train of thought.
We are chained by associations,
are led to where we are
over and over. This music
we will hear again.**

19 November 2014

THE CAR

for/from Tamas

**There is an empty car
parked in front of every
diner in America.
It is the same car.
It is 27 years old and beige,
the light doesn't show
its license plate ever.
It is locked
but if you look through
the untinted glass
you'll see three empty candy wrappers
on the passenger seat floor.
On the driver's side
a paper coffee cup is balanced
precarious on the dashboard.
Put your ear to the window
hear the radio sounding softly,
a glow from its little dial
strange slow music and slow words
you don't understand.**

**It is the same car. In front
of every diner, all the time.**

**In every city, on the edge of town,
edge of the gravel,**

always empty.

**You try again to listen
to that music inside,
you conclude the radio is tuned
to a station in some other
condition, like language,
or heaven. A noise behind the sky.**

**And you can hear it only here
everywhere. Whether the diner
is open or closed**

the car's still there

humming in the empty lot.

**You rest the palms of your hands
firmly on the hood, feel
the honest cold metal, faintly
yielding to your weight.**

This is where you know you have to be.

19 November 2014

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**But there were problems with me too
it wasn't just the recalcitrant (dragging
the heels) angel (angels have no heels,
just toes, always moving forward, angels
have no backwards, they leave nostalgia
to us — we who have, compared to them,
so little to remember), the angel was patient,
sat cross-legged on the nearest notion
waiting for me to begin. It was all my fault.
I let the sun rise without me, the air moved
all round the house trying to be breathed in,
but I was lying there nursing my anxiety,
a mother I was to my sick thoughts, daring
the dratted articulate sunlight to come in.**

20 November 2014

PRECATIO

Cure me of caring
so much about so little,
soup on the stove,
leaves on the porch,
no time to read the paper.
Our friends are lounging
in a floating fishing village
in Vietnam for some reason.
Other friends are closer,
breathing on the door almost
ready to come in. I fret.
Say that in French: *je fret*.
It feels no better, makes me
a frightened animal. See
my eyes deep in the cave,
see me looking out in dread
of what has to come. Whatever
is the strangest language.
It creeps up on me like geology,
metamorphic am I from once simple
strata of my one time lovely mud.
The trope eludes me, the cave
only seems safe, the way rocks
are soft as everybody else
when you really get to know them.

20 November 2014

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**For example a whistle
heard on a crowded street
is it meant for me?
or meant at all,
there's so little meaning going on.
Women are shouting nearby out of sight
comfortable hysteria of the marketplace
nothing worse. Could it be music?
Could anything be?**

20 November 2014

NOISE

**The loud leaf-
blowing crew outside
is working for us.
The sound is not so bad
when you own it.**

**Which is the solution
to all annoyance—
own everything.**

**Acknowledge this as your world,
everything belongs to it
as is. Everything where is should be.
You own this place.**

21 November 2014

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**This is how to learn things:
pull the shower curtain back,
watch the performance in there:
invisible man taking no shower.
Now you know what art is for.
No wonder people spend
so much time in the bathroom.**

21 November 2014

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**If things made less noise
wouldn't they frighten us
with their stealthy presences?
Thank god for air, thank
god for molecules, for motion.**

21 November 2014