

8-2007

## augG2007

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Giving a clear account of something  
is somewhat like the moon  
shining in the windows of an empty house.  
We stop the car outside, nervous  
walk through uncut grass. The porch.  
Ear to the door. Listen to the wood.  
Hear the old moonlight in there.

29 August 2007

## MONKEY BUSINESS

The monkey stands on the elephant's back.  
Spine. Information highway. Reaches  
fruit hanging from a roadside tree. Exhibit A:  
an image. Exhibit B: the mango  
itself, your tooth marks at one end.  
Exhibit C: Yellow dribble down your chin.

The monkey slips down the trunk and runs away.  
The elephant, pale for this time of year,  
sneezes. Exhibit D: the elephant doctor  
hurries forward with a bottle of pills.  
He wears a replica Rolex and a nylon shirt.

Why did God do this to us. Messages  
everywhere we're dumb enough to read.  
Then we're stuck with all that information.  
Education. You can't bite a coconut.  
The monkeys are all on strike. Mahler  
died in 1911 before anybody was born.  
Exhibit E: a grave marker in Vienna.  
Exhibit F: photo of an elephant, caparisoned,  
in front of the old Masonic Temple in Bombay.

29 August 2007

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Show me the man born before his father.  
Show me the silver locket that loops  
all by itself through the air  
searching for the most accurate neck.  
Tell me how light can be everywhere at once.

In this story we learn to breathe light  
and eat darkness for our food. Dark  
is a substance, not an absence – did you know that?  
The woman born before her mother told me so.

29 August 2007

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Sometimes it's a word.  
Sometimes not even that.  
An old friend with a smile  
like barnacles on driftwood.  
It hurts to touch, it  
hurts to be close.  
Everything is a closed café.

29 August 2007

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*man ist selbst schuld*  
—Thomas Bernhard

And suddenly didn't care  
about the temperature outside.  
A bad sign.  
The alchemist is responsible

not just for the fire in his ridiculous furnace  
but for the weather all around.  
That's why it's so hard,  
alchemy. He has to keep  
the country's weather under control  
to cook his crystals and cool his soup.

What a job! So many try it,  
so many give up at the first heatwave  
or April blizzard.

You have to care  
about all these things.

Touch your toes eight times and kiss the moon.  
Hang mistletoe from noon time, open  
with your silver wrenches  
fire hydrants in poor neighborhoods so kids can play.

Alchemy is hard.  
You are responsible.  
Everything is your fault.  
Even the flowers.

30 August 2007

*“Tradition ist Schlamperei!”*

—Mahler

Mess is lore.

30 VIII 07

## JUDGMENT DAY

An R-less American  
standing before a European God—

in my dialect, no difference between law and lore,  
hence I was born guilty,

everything I learned was a sin.

Scraps of sarcasm  
left over from a life  
more bitter than I commonly disclosed.

30 August 2007



## PORTENT

A hawk overhead!

—No, it was a crow, sir.

But still we're dead.

30 VIII 07

## DEBUSSY

or when music went wrong—

why do I fight him so?  
It is the *privilege of the private*,  
the dream spilled  
into the street  
like a burst cistern,  
spoiled milk  
gushing down the gutter  
and I have to follow,

ignoring on every side  
the structures of ordinary life?

And I do, I think  
because it *is* beautiful  
I turn against it, strive  
for a music that doesn't claim  
a pre-existent drug of mood,

the allurements of across the street  
more specious than  
the allure of the obvious at hand.  
The milk before it turns.

[from notes of 18 VIII 07, Olin]

30 August 2007

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Now let another speak my hand.  
Red uniform we wear  
inside out against the dark in there.

Something shines in us—  
enough to say so.  
Another age will set it free.

30 August 2007

## TIME

Time is a shelter  
where we hide from space.

Nothing touches us  
in the elapsing.  
The present  
is safe as the past.

Invisible congeners of  
personal perceiving.  
I is a grid, me  
is an intersection.

30 August 2007

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The pretty nanny  
hurls the child downstairs

as if flesh and hair and bone  
were all together one more Act of God.

A lawyer can forgive  
anything a body can do.

30 August 2007

## URBAN LEGEND

People die and are buried in the ground.

This is the oldest myth of all.

30 VIII 07

= = = = =

But what comes after?

There is no after, my Arabs,  
there is only this.

Don't waste your breath on hypotheticals.  
Anyhow, there are no questions,

only answers. Women  
in the market arguing about fish.

30 August 2007

**The blue light in my mother's diamond ring**

and that's all the memory you'll get from me  
because it's not about remembering it's about blue.

30 August 2007  
as epigraph to my next book

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**Usually something's waiting.**

It could be shoes  
or the Mongolian army.  
It might be just a handkerchief  
hung out to dry,  
red bandanna say, a flag  
of vernacular humidities.

Or a shoe. So often  
it's a shoe, with its mate nearby or not,  
you have to scrounge through dark closets  
to find the missing one.

But that's where things are,  
the enemy already at the gate,  
you hear their horses snorting.  
Your wife, disguised as a shepherdess,  
flees over the hill with her lambs.

31 August 2007

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What a trivial uneventful man I am  
to take a girl walking down the street  
as a glimpse of God. And yet

31 August 2007

(a poem ending with an absolutely necessary ellipsis...)

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When you offer a feather to the sky  
your mind goes with it  
and says what you mean.

31 VIII 07

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Slow portolan consulted  
to find my own land

follow this straight line  
to touch the curve  
the natural

and a wave (you)  
no longer welcome  
on my shore.

late August 2007

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I could catch the other rocks  
sun tumbled  
                  a gleam  
spit-flavored sucking agates—

you've Ore-gone native.  
Pale Mingo settler dodging flies.  
Civilization is cracking wide.  
The birds have started laughing at the sky.

late August 2007

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Happiness takes no chances.  
All the blue children  
who came riding on the moon  
slip down and stand around me  
forming a ring of suddenly  
solemn personages. Where  
did your youth go? What dreary  
judge is childhood gravid with?

late August 2007

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Do prayers to the Moon go unanswered?  
At full, the red  
of last night's eclipse still  
pink in her cheek?

When the Moon draws  
our humors up  
do prayers come with them  
dissolved in moistness

lost in that upward tilting sea?  
I need to ask the shortest questions,  
say surefire prayers.  
Already there's too much if in the world.

late August 2007