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Mel dat rosa apibus

All the vowels
and a star.
The give of things
made clear, all sweet and slow
in the loveliest places,
roses from the East,
beware the stings.

The rose gives honey to the bees
it said. It takes much longer
to say what it means.
The alchemical maxim woke me, I tried to let the pillow stifle it but words will have their way. And which star? Did it mean all the words breathed out through its vowels, Ishtar, Tara, a star? I thought of Duncan walking with Levi up 19th Street, poet on the young poet’s arm, the honey of his speech never pausing long, the sweetness is the accurate is what he meant, what it means,
I thought
of alchemy again, of all the meanings wrought
we still don’t fully understand, yes, what this meant in the soul
and this in the love-life, yes,
and this in the test tube, yes,
and this in neurons, blood, bone.

And the bees still feed on
what they feed us
and the rose still thorns,
hands and birds be careful,
the rose still sports its heraldry
in vases on lovers’ tables, yes,
and honey bears the secret healing powers of the place itself in which its flowers grew the bees gathered, ripened, the place we share, we still can bring it home in glass jars and heal our subtler maladies if we know how, hint, hint, Hahnemann, hint, hint Dr. Jung.

So much of what we do endangers bees, O cure the bees of us, this disease we sometimes are
even to the simplest flower,

we think they’re simple.
Winter now, and no bee flies.
And before the alchemists even
the poet said *Quando ver venit meum?*
And when does my spring come?

1 December 2022
Now linger
like a stinkbug
asleep inside
a lampshade
glad of the warmth,
sleep with closed eyes,
wake with winter.
Shelter. Time too
hs its quiet walls.
Walks. Waiting,
Writing is waiting
turned into energy.
They told us young:
everything means, 
we have a life to learn 
what they mean, 
as many as you can, 
what else is time for?

1.XII.22
Blib rejoinders
from outside,
finch or phoebe?
What’s the weather?

1.XII.22
NEWS OF THE DAY

A little brighter today than yesterday. Hint of blue even, pale as can be? Trust the north horizon? And a grey cloud turning white! The west is new!

1.XII.22
I never climbed a tree, 
never learned to swim, 
never rode a bike, 
never skied or skated. 
And et I claim to know 
the fact of earth, 
the truth of water, 
learned the taste 
of gravity in little sips.

2 December 2022
Learning lapses
but a dead leaf
is still a leaf.
Louis Napoleon
comes to the throne,
there are no subways yet.

But soon. The wind
picks up, the leaf
whoever he is slips
away on the current,
the currency of air,
they begin to dig,
tunnels come to mind,
and down the Brenner Pass peaceable invaders come.

Cold water run fast. Pick the words up as you hurry past.

2 December 2022
Grace before acts
doing music,

gratitude
for learning when
to turn around
and when to face
the voice or let
her go on speaking
quietly behind you
facing what comes.

2.XII.22
How have they come to rely on me, these shadows? Isn’t my own weight enough to carry?

And yet light does this to me. Or maybe the shadow actually bears some of my weight away!

Now I need to find a scale that measures light and shade while weighing me.
I look at the shadow on my wrist right now, lick it, then shove it into the light, good-bye shadow, lick again, tastes the same. Science is so difficult! No wonder they don’t teach it in school.

2 December 2022
Honor the elder, 
man or tree, 
Honor everyone.

2.XII.22, lune
I lived on Brown Street
but who was Brown,

Haring Street next over
and who was Haring?

Then we moved to Crescent Street but who is the moon?

You see, bafflement doesn’t end with childhood.
Some mysteries linger lifetimes.

What was the name of lame
Mr Hoffman’s friendly collie?

Who owns those two white horses in the trees all these years down River Road?

2 December 2022
No answer from the void.
But the emptiness
is answer in itself,
adequate, resonant,
a concert hall all
ready to begin.

Let the blessing
come from me,
come from thee,
come from the inmost
nature of any I am.,

3 December 2022
A dream like Scrabble
but the letters
all had to fit in one
direction, one long line
only the breath
could make shorter,
lines of a poem,
rules of a game.

3.XII.22
WHAT I LEARNED IN QATAR

The years run round me
like a soccer team,
circles and dashes,
two teams, no ball in sight
and yet they tumble,
memories crashing
against me till I win
some refuge, get
the red card of sleep.

3.XII.22
after R.C.

Why do we need any kind of pet? Couldn’t we learn to love direct?

Why is fur required for us to learn to revere who they are from whom we come

in whom we live, womb-whispers of every mortal thing?

3.XII.22
When poets turn moralists
shove them off in a rowboat
with only one oar,

shout: Learn balance,
baby, any shoe
will take you home.

3.XII.22
The paradox of going there becomes here—what happens now?

*ossia : qua lune:*

Paradox. Going makes there here so what happens now?

3.XII.22
ALBORADA OF THE GREY TREES

left to me
but I left my lute
in dreamless sleep

so there, so where
can I fetch a tune
to tell the morning
how much I love
this day she gives me
even though she hid
the sun away,

    a tune
demanded, I hear
already the wheels
of silence stirring,
soft rain still, listen,
pale sky, soft bed.

3 December 2022
Yes I can
Yes we can
Ues you can
yes I can
hear the words
words you don’t have to say,
don’t want to say,
need to say,
that is what language is for
to cast its ardent light
out of our crimson bodies,
ut of you to me from me to you
to cast shadows, 
remember shadows, 
meaningful shadows 
thrown on the mind 
of the other, 
you hear me, I hear you 
in your sleep 
wide awake, 
walking up the street, 
our fear, our fire, our fantasy

3 December 2022
It’s not a novel
it’s now.

And that means
up, as in get,
but not too fast,
fast is strain
and strain is sin.
Every nerve
shouts that.

Where was I?
O yes, I was now.

3.XII.22
Being in the right place is what time is for. Moon over Ferncliff forest last night, crystal, small, surprisingly bright.

There is an obligation in being anywhere at all. She’s playing cards with us, we look down to see what we have in our hand as they used to call it, the set of symbols by which we learn or lose. What I see is the close-cut cornfield,
winter waiting. I look up again, but the car has me in its clutches, it has taken the whole moon away.

3 December 2022
AFTER APULEIUS

She comes across the water and we see her. Seeing her changes everything.

Philosophy, at least after Parmenides, is selfish. Intensely selfish. All that seems to count is what goes on in the mind. Matter outside, mind inside, schluss.

In the aridity of post-Renaissance we see a progressive reluctance to care about or even pay heed to the possibility of the Other. Otherness is
reduced to politics, us & them, schools of thought against schools of thought. Even Nietzsche, who knew better, and who invented a prophetic voice (from Otherland, in Othertime) and made it speak, even he grew restive, angry at Wagner for hinting at an other Other.

Philosophy still does not love an Other. The Existentialists (almost a century ago now) tried at least to reckon with the concept, and loved the Other in the person of the other human at the table, wife worker, someone at least else.
But religion posits an Other, an Other to whom we are somehow relevant, an Other the religious mindset even dares to suppose speaks to us. It appears to us. Walking across the sea in splendor to take away our false sense of self, our asinine delusion.

It pleases me that Stein includes Lucius’s radiant and poignant poetic refutation of all philosophies as we have come to understand them.
Stein sets it in verse, tacit acknowledgement that we can still get away with things in poetry denied to us in academic discourse. Try to imagine any thinker you value on his knees before the Temple or the Cross. Then look up and see Her coming across the sea. When you see her everything changes.

Even when you see her in your mind’s eye. Or even in the pages of a book.

3 / 4 December 2022
In the middle of memory
a puddle—not
a pretty word
but it gleams,
and on it floats
a big dead rose
or is it a living
lotus? Look close,,
the pool laps large,
more flowers
float, you can’t
know the names
of all of them but
there they are
and sometimes even
in memory the
sun rises too.
4 December 2022
Lift the latch—
only garden gates
have latches now
so this must be a place
where things choose to grow.

I go inside to breathe in
my share of growing.

This must be real, it can’t
be a dream, if this were dream
I’d be in a car, passenger seat
counting the bare trees
as the car moves ever faster
through anything I ever knew.

I lift the latch.
I hear the creak of now.

4 December 2022
Quick, give something fast to the whole world— all you need to do is want to. The rest flows by itself.

4 December 2022
All I want to do is what a mountain does, connect earth with the sky to let the living ones of both rise up and come down to us. Beloved readers, we build with the same stone.

4 December 2022
BAD DREAM

Wanted to leave book by a tree but I was hungry and the door is locked a young man said when I went round the back to come in. I was angry, not very, more disappointed that this place always open was not, not my but ours. What will they close next? Will Earth close for the season, so we have to hang out in space with our books and appetites and memories of trees?

4 December 2022
TENETS OF DAYBREAK

Hold the railing of light, follow it, firmly, bow to your table and make the promises each day demands,

and only then slip on your clothes, cincture of that old leather belt softened by years of you.

Be what you have always been, that way you’ll be always new. Swallow your doubts
or spit them out, whichever feels better in the mouth now clear enough to say, the first words begin you.

5 December 2022
Sleep onslaught but then
wake again
good to taste the light.

5.XII.22  lune
She sings with two voices
the song makes one,
the words free from language
seep into pure feeling.

5.XII.22
Go back to Jordan
start singing again,
the wetter your feet
the truer your words,
we learned that from
a heron in a bend of stream,
stand there and sing,
leap up and fly, blue
as the sky you seem to become.
Pound your opinions till they crack—what oozes out of them might just make sense, might even be music, and music always runs the risk of coming true.

5.XII.22
= = = = = =

Got the name wrong
the smile at least correct—
what day is it,
and why? Anyhow,
didn’t we meet
once at a concert,
some pianist playing Schubert
or was it Schumann?
She was blonde, and you
were wearing a green coat.
Some things you can’t forget.

5 December 2022
One thing I do know:
you never
know, you never know.

6.XII.22, lune
The alarm has struck, the caliphs of dream pull back their armies, peace feels like dim light in sore eyes. We are all crusaders now losing day by day our holy war against Capitalism—but still we sleep on through the bright sunshine buying as fast as we can hoping one day to drain the well of stuff. Unlikely. Sleep on. The subway helps,
we know that nothing below the ground is real, fairy tale and goblin saga, and not much clearer out here.

6.XII.22
Woke too early
that’s my woe,
got to get back
to that nightclub
twixt billow and sheet,
see who that chanteuse
is who sings such songs.

5.XII.22
What I say today will only make sense tomorrow. That is what architecture means, marble cliffs, ancient script of shadows on the breakfast table.

6.XII.22
The brick man and the starling sat on the old wall thinking. Stone is best the bird was sure, the man edgy, a little proud, give me mud and straw and I can make my own stone, red, rugged, lines on it you can almost read. The bird agreed, whistled it’s good magic, helped a world where stone was rare or too heavy for louts to lift and after all, mud is everywhere.

6 December 2022
Worry water
but a loop of white flowers
with a rose here and there
tossed on the wave.
She saw it in her mind thar way,
dark pool, pale blossoms,
hope. Stone wall
along the zoo, Fifth Avenue
she heard the actual lions
growling as she walked.
Or whatever they were.
How wonderful to walk
between cars and busses
on her left side, wild animals
on her right and still be safe,
all the growling in the world,
she still had flowers in her mind.

7 December 2022
Every staircase leads into a museum. Fact. Even the steps up from the subway leads into this diorama called here and now, the unseen curators forever changing the display. And in this old house of yours or mine we climb the stairs to where dreams are stored.
Thousands of fans at World Cup match whistling all at once. Why? Contempt I guess, like the Devil at the end of *Mefistofele* whistling at God’s angels. Or are they just trying to get their own breath busy in that hour and a half of grown men running around trying to master a scoundrelly little ball? Exhausting, losers weeping on their knees,
the winners whistling. Sometimes I can’t help getting mad at what we are.

7.XII.22
COLOR CODE

When I was a kid
all the cars were black,
now so many I see
are white, especially
at morning, going uphill,
why? The angel answered:
Because you’re looking,
counting, noticing– we
will always give you things
to see, sleek anxieties
to fit in busy schedules.
Think white means something?
Who knows, you may be right.
7.XII.22
Clam shell ashtray
once upon a time,
your grandmother had one
though she didn’t smoke,
it was a sign, a loyalty,
of living near the sea,
believing in the sea,
the ocean religion
before religions,
mother womb and holy place, holy
speaking
and this little shell
a curve of wave upwelling
fixed in space, the sea
you hold in your hands, the sea
that holds the ash of our breath,
marrige of ocean and air.

8 December 2022
What is time to a pig?
Punch line of an Irish joke
too long to explain.
But what is time to anyone,
to you say, with your long hair
needing so much brushing, or you
with your thoroughbred
all day groping, or you
with you iPhone playing
Scrabble with a girl in Cathay,
or me closing one more book
and sighing like a girl in love?
2. I suppose that’s why they built Stonehenge, spent all those years of effort to get time out of themselves and set it up out there, in plain sight, daylight all sides, out there, so we can be free of it and watch the Sun come and go as She pleaseth, and She is pleased always to come through the same door.

3.
Or later
when we were lazy
almost as lazy as now
we were content
to fashion sundials
of bronze
to guide the Sun around our yard
and a child would stand there
with his finger on the point
of the upright blade and think
Now I am Time, I twist
the metal in its base, be dawn again!
I don’t have to go to school.

6 December 2022

= = = = = =
for M.I.


2. he meant but didn’t say so simply said but said encaustic, words thick with time’s wax, soft indeed to fingertips but hard to read for those who’d read and run. Any teenager knows that, you get more love
by being hard to get.

8 December 2022

THE FIG TREE
1. How far north can a fig tree grow? Gaze into this egg of polished onyx and guess the truth. O night, you tell me everything, then I forget. But you come again, bring me to mind.

2. I swear we had one
even in the Brooklyn snow, wrapped in burlap till early summer then a tree again. Or was it peach? Magyars planted it, and they knew.

3.
Name all the cities where you’ve been long enough to have slept at least one night and let the place in the way sleep gathers. The sandman is not
strewing, he’s collecting all the grains you need for the day to come. So name them carefully, those burgs and citadels, those monorail suburbs, those shacks on riverside.

4. For example take any word and solve the letters of it into the initials of people, ones you know or love or just heard about in books. This is the cabala of the names, this is what a word really means
to you, and maybe just to you. Try it, an shiver with fright. A good scare is good for the soul.

5. It is the ninth of December. That mens something too—but you get tired of meanings, of meaning this and that at all. Think what a child things at the window: looks OK out there, but I’m OK right here.

6. Where does this road leave? I used to ask, getting the words
wrong already. They’d laugh and change the subject. Where does a word leave me after it has been spoken? Roads, words—so hard to tell some things apart. I’m not much smarter now.

7.
So it comes down to spelling yet again, gematria and birthday cards, get the year right, spell the numbers, numbers are the smallest alphabet but sometimes the words are long, too long to live to the end,
evening gloom on sunny morning, 
Friday is Venus’s day, 
emerald Her stone but green 
polished onyx will do, 
see all it told already, see 
what evening brings 
shen the blue sinks down 
back into the trees, 
you know what I mean, 
count your blessings, 
go to shul, the night is waiting 
to tell you every blessed thing.

8. 
The dried figs on my table 
are chewy choky, sweet.
They come in plastic wrapper from Smyrna, a place I do not know, though I flew over Turkey once. Red hills, no tree in sight. So I know nothing about its tree, this ig I nay soon be chewing, who can I ask if I have forgotten all the night told me? All we really know is what we retain from our sleep, the sleep called school and the sleep called night, I’m wandering away from my tree, Crescent St, bus roaring north, the War about to end and then
who will I be?

9 December 2022
Robust, as with onions, one-pointed, as with swords. But Tarot cards are made to bend to flip across the table and tell what’s going on in that dark intriguing cellar, your mind. Asleep beneath the wakefulness. Here’s the Three of Crows—now you are safe to walk by the river and come home. And here’s the Nine of Books, room for a kitten on your knee as you read. A cat? Well, let a hand rest there until
a page needs to be turned. Four fingers and a thumb, four paws and a tail, *uguale* as Pound says. But you’re not reading poetry. What book did you slip from the shelf? At times you can’t trust anybody.

9 December 2022
HIS SON SANG

Old men like themselves the best
Time took away all the rest

Now they sit in December
Trying not to remember

is how he started
a youngish man standing by my table,
and suddenly i just knew
he was the son of my old friend
who taught and musick’d
so many years in this school, 
sat in the faculty dining room 
so many lunch times, 
right here, with me,

and my eyes filled with tears 
and I wanted to ask the son 
about his father, couldn’t 
suddenly remember his name, 
we were so close 
that names didn’t matter, 

tell me what happened 
I wanted to say, tell me
everything that came after.
I reached out for his arm
but he had already
too deep in his song to hear me.

10 December 2022

{The first two lines are verbatim from, in, the dream that woke me. The rest tries to narrate what happened in the dream. I don’t know of whom the dream tried to remind me.]
The lion force of sheer analysis runs in our fingertips when we touch an object, thing or being, live or sleeping, and then the Knowledge rushes up our arms, swells in the heart, distributes its researches in the brain. Try it sometime—touch something as if your hands were virgin, and had never touched anything till now.

10 December 2022
I am he noblest character I know, my father was Duke of Devon and my mother Queen of Kerry, they got married in mufti on Old New York and sang of it frequently, pretending to be just Maggie and Jim but I know better, I could read through their silences at suppertime, the faraway look in his pae eyes, the quiet warmth of her own silences, so very much her own, so articulate, gentle
as a fur collar. I could tell. They left me everything, except the silence. I still am searching for my own.

10 December 2022
I used to answer politely when called by nicknames. No more. Haughtiness is best. Honor the name your wise or witty parents gave you. The name is sacred! *Nomen numen!* So John don’t be Jack. And please, Ricardo, don’t be a Dick.

10.XII.22
Take a sliver of white pine
soak it in hot black coffee,
leave it there for a month,
take it out, dry it in the sun,
polish it or wax it till it shines.
Coffee wood, timber
of an absent tree, color
of someone’s hair, or eyes,
or a message scribbled
on a Christmas card, brown
trying to be black, wood
is always trying to talk.

10.XII.22
AZOTH

Solomon on his sickbed
tried to, had to,
remember all his wives,
thousand wives,
their names at least,
from aleph to tav,
that’s what the alphabet
is for, so we don’t forget
all those who gave us
what they give, life and love
means and meaning, all
the glorious whatevers
of being together, if only
one night a year, one day
of a life. Hours he spent arranging their names, constantly distracted by their faces features, dialects their bodies spoke. A thousand wives! And when he had finished his remembering only then would the Lord let him pass away. Or live—let the king if he so chose name himself among the living.

11 December 2022
Mist in the trees drifts into mind.
No. Shake the head, clear the skull—bones are white for a reason, see clear, see the real structure of things.
Breathe out now. Let brightness linger.
Was it snow
or someone else?
O wake-up is a fearful time,
who dark’d the window,
who spoke the sudden silence?
Fear is common,
it lasts to be alive
is to be afraid.
Or so the morning said,
snow on the phone lines
nothing on the ground.

11 December 2022
Brave enough to be wrong, 
belted with pondweed, 
cowl’d in cloud, 
ever hoping, ever fearful, 
what else is new 
but to be and be you?

11.XII.22
SNOW DAY

Snow on the ledger
lines of white
across and through the trees
write the journal of this day,
voyage of the k light
just begun,
the journey.

2.
The word comes from French,
jour, a day, Latin diurnus,
daily, from dies, two syllables,
a day. That’s how it looks.
Sunset, a day dies in Latin,
one syllable now, because they always do.

3. Not yet. It is morning now, first light weltering in snow, windless the infinite inscriptions in the bare branches. See. See, I am describing what I see, what more can it ask of me?

4. If I could just let myself look at the sudden beauty of it,
everything
turned white,
patterns everywhere
I look, why
can’t I just delight
in what is seen?
Worry what’s
to come? Why
isn’t now enough
always and always?

5.
So, doctor, the anxiety
doesn’t go away,
coiled or slithering
it undercuts the day.
No, doctor, I don’t want to take a pill to make it sleep or go away. I want the day to cure me, reassure me, this is how it is, and this is me seeing it, and all I have to do is witness. So teach me delight. Start with the pure white.
The storm comes in, the snow, and suddenly we understand we are intruders in this place, vermin the usually patient earth puts up with or doesn’t notice and then the weather comes. We are outsiders, not built for cold, this immobility. What is our real homeland? Tomorrow or the next day we’ll ease up, and once again forget to find the answer.

12.XII.22
Hair on the head
for a reason?
I can see it on the back
and arms and chest
but why just up po top,
up here, where I try
to figure such things out,
hairy problems as they say,
mysterious as dandelions
any month now.

12.XII.22
White as it was it’s
brighter now
but trees still quiet.

12.XII.22 lune
Lopsided energy,
to talk about what is seen—
shouldn’t I be shouting
about what nobody knows,
least of all me?

We are tools against ignorance,
the process uses us
to make things up, tell lies
that turn into truth, why not,

they know what’s in our faces,
no need to tell them
what everybody knows..
Time for new languages, of tree bark and nau5ilus, time for the sun to come out of the snow.

12.XII.22
I’m dreaming of a green Christmas
where no trees get chopped down
and carted home with ornaments
then burned. A season when
no bird or beast is murdered
to grace the festive table,
when nothing is bought and nothing
is sold,
where we walk on gentle fields
or quiet streets and listen
to the world itself alone.
No ice, no snow, no jingling bells—or
maybe far off one church bell booms
for those
who pray in special places.
I’m dreaming of a green world where we pray everywhere and all the time so all we do and think and say becomes our prayer.

13.XII.22
Everything writes.
Snow on branches,
suns noble scrawls
of shadow on snow.
The alphabet itself
is just a beginning.

13.XII.22
Using the animal part of the soul to rest in sunshine, a trick so many of us find so hard. Be still. Be here. And all that wisdom trembling underneath the jitters of all the way things are. Or seem. Be soul instead.

13.XII.22
When you hear a voice
but no one there
it’s likely to be a tree.
Or is that just me?

13.XII.22
Amour, amor,
what’s always beginning,
love is a womby thing
s pregnancy of mind
from the world is born
fresh and messy, full of wonder.

14 December 2022
A technicality, not
winter yet, a week away
and I yearn for spring,
I want to stand
outside my house
not wrapped like a mummy,
smoke billowing out of my mouth
without even a cigarette.
But that they say about children,
always wanting what is not?
Adulthood seems a shaky state,
any minute now I’ll start to cry.
Assignment: write a poem long enough to fit Pennsylvania in all the way to Ohio and from Lake Erie down to the Mason-Dixon Line. Be rectangular about it so we can tell north from south, Quakers from Poles in Scranton, hear the liberty Bell even in quiet synagogues of Squirrel Hill. I’m just giving you the size, not the subject, what the poem is about is up to you,
those ballet dancers prancing in your mind, the lion hunters prowling through your woods. Don’t ask me what poems are supposed to be about—you know all the answers. What you lack are the questions.

14 December 2022
Waiting for
the winter wildflower,
you know what I mean,
the lovable unlikely,
the frem in daylight,
your hand in mine
under the blanket,
quiet morning
free of all necessities.

14.XII.22
Through brushstrokes of light
I see a landscape
that needs me
if only to behold it
from where I am, I am its other
in its parlor, the guest
I feel like whenever I see trees.

14 December 2022
for G.C.

You must understand this is not a poem, this is a cartoon. These words appear floating in a big balloon over a whole chain of little bubbles arising from a brain. We do not see the brain. We do not see the mind of waking person or sleeping beast from which these words
are being thought out here, where you can see them, clear, nothing to distract from what they say, nothing to prevent you from reading between the lines the way we do, all of us read the special meaning that only you can see, the one that tells you these words are meant for you.

15 December 2022
It is immoral to read a newspaper outdoors, act of denial of all the real news all round.

15.XII.22
I’ve said it all
so many times
all that’s left
is to say it again.

That’s what the opera is,
basso buffo and French horn,
soprano squeal, lecherous duets,
and here’s me in the dark
adoring everything I hear
and was born to listen.

I mean music, I mean
yhat first wild man on his
bone flute singing with one puff of Neolithic breath all the songs that ever were or will be, every music from the breath donated to the silent world.

15 December 2022
Gurdjieff says the moon runs on us, we are the battery from which it fuels its light, maybe fades with us, grows full with what we do and say then fades again. Our fault. Our floundering midnight glory.

15.XII.22
The grain of wood
guides the eye. 
We read the lines
without consciously knowing
what they’re saying. 
But we will still reach
the ______ they are pointing to.

15 December 2022
When the south said to the azimuth I love thee Sarah, the raincloud was shocked into silence.

Some things we mustn’t utter, the ancient truths of tone don’t have to be spoken, they’re there for all to hear just by being here.

But south protested, everyone must have a name and names are what I love,
names parse us through each other, without them who would I be, and she, and east, and the pale moon?

16 December 2022
Call it September
live in denial,
the tumult of witness
lock out of the courtroom.
your bleak auditorium
with a mural of the sun at noon.
Fear is the oxalic acid
nibbling away at your bones.
Revise! Be now! Kiss the snow!

16 December 2022
AFTER BUSONI

Arbeit,
heilende Welle,
in dir
bad’ ich mich rein

Faust sings,
so hard
to say it right
in our tongue,
“Work,
healing wave,
in you
I wash myself clean”
is one way
but clean meant pure
and I don’t wash,
wash is common,
bathing is solemn,
total immersion,
I bathe myself pure
in you,
you healing wave,
ocean of all we make
and sing and do,
the Work.

16.XII.22
The woman looks across the table at the man and asks Who would you be if you could be me?

But only asks silently, it’s the real question, watches his eyes to catch the answer—the only way to know who he really is.

16 December 2022
North sky white word,
light washed the rain away.
Now that my report is finished
I can go on sleeping deep
into what it says, whoever it is.

17 December 2022
Trees and rivers
both have branches
climb the one
and swim the other
either way will work
reach the sea or else
that upside-down ocean
we live deep down in
and breathe it all in.

17 December 2022
I murmur now what I sang before and that sounds sad and old but maybe more polite. Murmuring makes you listen close, hear intensely, but only if you want. Otherwise I’m just landscape no harm I hope to man or beast.

17.XII.22
The little boy stood on the tank car in Callicoon while the train paused. Hard to scramble up there brave to stand. Photo shot and down he came. So much for childhood. Later he read some books. Even in winter the day is long.
I want everybody to be a priest, every meal a Mass or seder, every tune a sacred hymn, sleeper’s snore an organ drone. No more boxed-in crowds on Sunday morning, no more pilgrimage but the livelong day, apocalypse of sunset, gospel that birds chant to us, holy holy holy right at home, we’re there already, look up, smile, say Amen.

17 December 2022
Walked a line of East Germany, walked on the frozen Baltic, Kant in the distance, saw old Hansa ships in Wismar not just in mind, that place more dangerous than mines or ice, a swoon of remember, images, I still hold my breath as I cross the empty field.

17 December 2022
Brightness, come back to be day. Let me sit here shaping silence, count without numbers, send my love letters in envelopes with no name or address on them this sweet answerless morning.

2.
Yes, sculpt the silence till even your fingers begin to understand the world.
3. The chorus takes over, the soloist sits down. Now everybody talks at once—how else could we make a word? And we have to say something, don’t we?

17 December 2022
Who shields their eyes
a little from the rising sun
understands the dialect of stone,
to be here, just be here,
to be walked on, slept on,
built on, prayed on, and ever
echo clearly every thought
that passes by. Then see.

18 December 2022
Echo the garden,
echo the stream.
There is a statue
for each month of the year
nudes cared in ancient times,
they walk among us now
politely clothes. See if you can
recognize a few of them
as they wanderin your crowd.
They smile at you often
but their skin is very cold.

18 December 2022
= = = = =

See the green again,
our meadow
throws off its blanket.

18.XII.22, lune
If a name means what it says
I have a good reputation
but walk a little lame,
go to church and like to quarrel..
Is this me? I need a new mirror.

18.XII.22
Coaster sticks to bottom of glass, falls ff when you drink. Coaster skims to the floor, lies flat on turkish carpet. Now what’s gravity done to me, isn’t climbing the stairs or carrying rock salt from te car paying tribute enough to a force that sends cardboard sailing?

18.XII.22
Love lace but wear wool—December is so logical.

18.XII.22, lune
They speak Selfish but I speak Youish. At least I try, accent gets better by the day, but still has traces of that bad old lingo—I come from a Self-speaking town.

18 December n2022
All night watching in sleep a continuous film, an examination, a test?, images carefully drawn in detail, like old-time serious comic books, monochrome though, Il a dusty bluish grey, images passing and sometimes stopping, stop, looked close, yes detail, some connection felt, but no touching, not allowed to reach out, don’t stroke the elephant, admire the fluffy pair of gloves but don’t touch to feel the soft, don’t put them on. I had to go on watching, that’s all I know. Someone or some
ones were watching, don’t ask e who, they were supervising, judging, diagnosing, my every sensation a sign of something, every emotion a proof. Then they swept all the evidence away and I woke.

19 December 2022
A fox in the yard last night,
I should have known it was you,
we lend our minds to
all sorts of birds and animals
so they can keep an eye
o those we love far away,
distance is nothing to birds,
they speak the air and the air
is everywhere, and the fox
whispers to the whole earth
soft beneath her paws
Your friend is well, now go to sleep.

19 December 2022
Weaponry on paper
neat on shelves—
whpo now dares to read
all these books today?

Don’t we know that all
who wrote them are gone,
what did their wisdom
serve them?

Live words
of the dead—we are taught
that they live on.

So does
a stone, a river, an oyster shell.

Which should we choose to read, or to believe?

Skeptical afternoon in winter sun. But I will believe the song.

19 December 2022
Two sticks
stuck in the ground.
Stakes. String
a rubber band between,
pluck and sing.

It begins, but only
the earth hears
it clearly, song
lost in the air
sounds everywhere.

20 December 2022
You have to start somewhere. Or do you? Isn’t there a start without a place, just as there might be a road that has no end?
Every morning a complex equation, it solves itself while you worry your head with calculus and pebbles, garnet gravel of Gore Mountain, minnows of Minetta Brook, all the shimmering maybes.

20 December 2022
She leaned on the windowsill and poked her head out, looked down at the street three floors down. So this is Brooklyn, a car parked in every space, others cruising by. An umbrella over somebody but it’s not raining—it seems to float all alone over the sidewalk. Suddenly she wants, really wants, to know who’s under that umbrella or is it a parasol? People
can be afraid of the sun. She wonders what her own true feelings are. Across the street a kid walks bouncing a basketball—ugliest sound she knows. But why? And why here? She closes the window, sits down on the couch, works to find her answers.

20 December 2022
Sometimes when you can’t see the road through foliage or through mist, a car going uphill seems to be flying slow into the sky, slower than wasps or stinkbugs, but straight up they go. Am I the only one who can’t fly?

20 December 2022
ACTS OF HUMILITY

1.
I have built my pyramids, my Stonehenge.
Now it’s time to arrange my spoons and forks neatly in the kitchen drawer.

2.
My wife does the real work, turns one language into another teaches Dharma, feeds the birds.
3.
I sit in the car,
watch her roll
a shopping cart
full of birdseed bags
out of the Agway store.

3.
Or I crouch at the window
and try in this lovely sunlight
where one tree ends, where
the next begins,
I’ve always loved edges,
boundaries you can leap across
or sneak past in the night.
4.
Now i cup my eyes,
hands cupped
over cheekbones and brow,
never dress on the eye itself,
a trick I learned from Huxley.
I do it to relax in private dark
but people watching think
I’m grieving. They may be right.

21 December 2022
Sometimes lies are the only way to tell the truth. Think of Proust.

21.XII.22
Late this afternoon
the solstice moment.
Then even in the dark
Sun begins to come back.
Tomorrow will be longer
but be winter. Is weather
a real part of the truth
the way the Sun is, or
is it just the muzak of life,
sometimes glorious,
sometimes try
to turn the thing off?

21.XII.22
Keep me away from calendars, I don’t want to know when it is, I want toe girl across the room, a cottage on the coast, the bird to perch on my rooftop and sing. Leave me free to name everything it my own way, I just have to figure out which way is that.

21.XII.22
The immigration policy has failed
the sleeper woke, stumbles
over the border into a new day.
Now what should he do?
No work for him here,
rusty images weigh him down,
the only tools he has.
The landscape around him,
looks so strange, so familiar.
No human person insight.
Slowly the light increases.

22 December 2022
Look out the door.
Yes. Walk
out the window. No.
Reasonable apertures
can frequently be found.
Scale the fence. Swim
the Delaware. Go
no further. Safety sings.
I hear it even now, a hum
heard best sitting still
with my dear old stringless lute.

22 December 2022
I was walking briskly on a street and there on the sidewalk an upright piano just dumped there as junk, old, painted greyish blue or bluish grey, hard to tell.

I aimed to flip the keyboard open a play how it sounded but someone had placed two stones to keep the it closed—

I respected the intention and kept going, but let
my finger trail along the top
in case there was some
music still left. Interpretation:
I want a piano. I can’t play.

22.XII.22
When Time comes home
she’ll tell her spouse
I stoo naked in the window
and no one saw me,
I ran through the crowds
and no one even glances at me—
what can I do to make
people aware of me as I pass?
But her wife will have fallen
asleep on her daybed
and their child Space
will be off playing outside.

22 December 2022
Waiting for reason or a reason. Waiting for or waiting on. Morning has so many options, believe me. Deceive me. The child’s tower of alphabet clocks topples, the words breathe easy, go back to sleep. They’re made of the same wood we are.

22.XII.22
The look of things
borrow from the Greeks
the island blood
the taste of sun.
I am is a shadow
over this shoulder
worrying the morning
word after word
to wonder, only wonder
and never know,
o let me not know.
2. Deft translation from the unsaid. A cow flies past, that’s proof enough, scandalous mercies, touch of a hand.

3. The mystery may solve the crime but never understand the reason for it all. But in The Magic Flute the opera can end
when the ordinary 
prospers, lad and lass 
unite, birds fly, 
priests triumph. 
The ordinary 
is the glory. story 
lives in all music, 
democracy, every 
ear knows to hear.

4.
And so Sappho 
on her island could 
make the rocks 
remember, o not
every word but just
the gist of her song
and ocean understood.

23 December 2022
HER SONG

Came here
a hundred years ago
did what he had
todo, now here
I am, his
consequence
with yellow hair.

24.XII.22, dreamt
Living by treaty, accepting the meaning of words as in the thickest book, never swayed by their sound or how they swim together. The treaty tells the sky is blue the grss still green most of the snow is gone. And we believe, i guess, like everybody else but I want ri raise a challenge,
lift my shield, shout
against the tyranny of meaning–
the Christ Child will be born
again tomorrow and we still
have not found the words to say.

24 December 20
I wanted to tell you a story but it got too short.

I had to lengthen it, work in Minerva and reverence and Rome and long empty rods, birder skirmishes, sudden rose gardens in late spring.

And still the story wasn’t long enough to reach you. So I bought an ocean and blessed it with seagulls, pelicans, dolphins saving
swimmers from the wave.

I go on working, where work means bringing things in till it’s all full enough for you. I hope you’ll hear from me soon.

24 December 2022
I write what I wish U could read, mysteries, beautiful solutions never quite convincing but still breathtaking for a moment until you think again. Pilgrimages to Tibet! Watching seals off Oregon! Where should I begin again?

24.XII.22
The trouble with arrows—
they can hit the target.
Cupid fires warning shots
to let us know. Pray they miss.
Marksmen mar marriages
it said on the wall in Swedish
but nobody speaks that here.

24 December 2022
A CHRISTMAS CARD

Dear B,

Miriam has had her child! I know you’d want to know how they’re doing. She says it was an easy birth, but there’s some pain in her eyes, when she speaks of it. But the child is healthy and peaceful, sleeps a lot, but also lies there with big eyes wide open. Never a whimper.

Joe is busy all the time—when he’s not busy fixing someone’s chair or building a table, he’s sitting at one
writing away steadily. From what I glimpsed, he’s writing the whole story of traveling down here and finding a place, and then an account of the birth. As usual, he doesn’t mention his own role in the proceedings—he always leaves himself out.

They are both a little worried though—there’s a lot of social unrest in the district, so they’re planning to move again, south this time, better weather, safer conditions, maybe as far down as the Gulf. They’re leaving in a few days, as soon as some people from out East get here for a visit.
Don’t know who they are, not sure Joe knows ether. But politeness obliges.

And our dear Miriam! Lovely as ever, keeps busy, watches the baby constantly but doesn’t fuss over him. She seems happy and healthy. We talk a lot when I come by late afternoon. I’ll tell her I’ve written to you, and she’ll be pleased. You know how she cares about you.

Yours,

R.

24 December 2022
Why is the jewel in the lotus? Because Buddha nature is in you and me and everyone, all of us borne on the same vast lake, unfold all our petals to find Christians call it immortal soul.

Christmas 2022
The orchestra keeps playing
Don Giovanni screams as he falls
into hell and the orchestra keeps playing, friends and foes
sing their heads off, then softer, then almost simple, as if song
could be part of opera too
and the orchestra keeps playing. Are they making all this happen,
are all the poor sopranos just slaves of the string section,
the man waving his arms with his back to the audience, is he
the real devil who makes all this
happen, sorrow and vengeance, even a tear of orgieveness?
What will happen if the orchestra ever suddenly stops?

25 December 2022
In her dream she rode a tiger. When she told it at breakfast all the men at the table suddenly had to be somewhere else they said, so she was left alone with her soft-boiled egg, a slice of toast with damson jam.

25 December 2022
THE ISLAND I’M AFTER

can float by night,
seek out the latitude
appropriate for my day.
The island I mean
is on such good
terms with the sea
that waves come in
and wash every
coast at once. I’ll
walk and hear what
the cliffs have to say
and try to tell
you as well as I can.

25 December 2022
In our summer place
we have a fireplace
but here in winter
the walls are solid, cold
and we make do
with stem pipes
and buzzing heaters.
Paradox on all sides,
and windows let
all the birds look in.
Cardinal now demanding food,
sterne look in a bird’s eye.

25 December 2022
The roads scary white
under salt
nobody on them.

25.XII.22, lune
A piece of paper, write on it.
Nothing more to do.

25.XII.22, lune
I folded the flame back to inspect the fire itself, found nothing but brightness and it just hurt my eyes. The tree knows how to protect its leaves—we’re the ones who need lessons in common sense that rarest of natural gifts.

25 December 2022
= = = = =

Smoking is good for you—just leave out the tobacco, the paper, the fire. The real pleasure of the habit is shaped breathing.

25.XII.22
Some people go to church today, fewer and fewer, I guess, from what the media reveal or conceal. Some people come to church right here in the heart, or in the house—no numbers available for such worshippers. Give us more mysteries!

25.XII.22
PARACLETE

for J,N.

The comforter. Is in every one of us. Id very one of us. Given that grace from above, we comfort one another. Self comforts other. Every bird is the dove. Comfort means being strong with. The flickering light above s friend’s head tells us the comforter is near.

25.XII.22

= = = = =
Yes, shepherds,  
for the sheep.  
Wise women  
for the oil they bring,  
pressed from unknown fruit.  
Visitors from the East  
to show us where we are.

We need all this  
just to begin—  
the fleece of time  
soft round our newish skim.  
Now tell me your dream too  
so I can try to understand  
not what the story says,
those sorry bones, 
but what it means 
to think them, feel them 
wake on the other side 
and still be sad. 
Then let me be your tears.

26 December 2022
I read my own palm
or would if I could
but all I see is white
bones bulging up
from under snow.
Five fingers, each
pointing a different
direction. It takes
my breath away—
I have to follow all
of hem at once or
not move at all.
Philosophy has to get born.

25.XII.22
Om the way there
a leaf blew off the windshield,
whipped in the updraft.
gone. I missed it,
didn’t even catch its name,
maple? locust? I suppose
the mind is the place
where such things go,
patiently assembled
into what we are.

26 December 2022
Sky. Clearing
is nearing.
Mound on earth
music meant
all the minds
that minded here,
minding earth
as we mind a child
and being minded,
amount and maintain
it’s all in the sound
it says in you.

27 December 2022
Yellow coat
running fast up the hill
don’t sk me who
or why, the sky
is relaxed, even blue
here and there,
I see no one in pursuit.
Nothing up here
and only here down here.
Yellow coat, human
running into mystery.

27 December 2022
I said to the scientist
what color are you?
He said he was now,
and now is a color
between yellow and blue.
I’m sorry, I sad, I really meant what
tree do yu come from,
or who wove your wool
or where the stone is buried
and will you help me
rise it up? He barely smiled.

27 December 2022
IN SANTASTAN PRESENTS GROW

along both sides of the road. Elves come by and gather them, wrap them in paper leaves from the temporary tree. sunshine obligatory, and all round the fields a special kind of cold-free snow. Every year the country’s exports multiply, folk all over the planet wants aoost anything hat comes from there and comes on time. bionic reindeer quiver in their pen. 27.XII.22
After all we all come from the middle—of the est, tht is, not from the west, that huge open window on the empty sky.

27.XII.22
A Russian woman walking towards me over the ice.
There’s an opera.
Or through the cornfield, crows adoring.
And there’s another.
They’re all around and always, just waiting for our music, our brash glorious Rossinis.
Now there’s a man with a spade studying ground at his feet.
He starts to dig. I mean sing.

27 December 2022
Then now happened and it was gone whatever it had been, rose or rams horn, something the eye heard from the mind, childhood, chalk, crushed gingkoes on the sidewalk o rose my last religion.

28 December 2022
Don’t we live for this
this sky at morning,
the blank horoscope
where all lore is stored
we read by blinking
our eyes and saying
with love’s excitement
whatever comes to mind?

28.XII.22
Watching over the alphabet the snow geese fly slow, calling out the correct pronunciation of each sign.

From Cruger’s Island to the Sawkill’s bend they circle over the vast empty fields of Elmendorph, right by the village school where they’re needed.

But they’re needed everywhere—listen, listen! They write
the letters as they shift
in their formation, they cry
what they’ve tried to make
clear to us so many \ years,

28 December 2022
CORDYCEPS

The mushroom that looks like an animal and means us well. 
Why do I think of you, Himalayan pet? We take you in as pills or unashamedly just as you are. 

But why do I think of you this bright morning when it (that famous it we live in) almost lets us stop freezing? Is it my memory of your mountain long ago? Is it somehow your own voice,
the voice of what we need, 
telling me to take?  
The sun is coming out  
and that always means yes.

28 December.2022
The river’s waiting for you like an old song, the river wants you back, nobody like you to walk beside her, she trusts you most of all with her reflections as you walk with her, sometimes fast but mostly slower, the river misses you, she wants you back.

28.XII.22
Look into my eyes, you see better than I do, look into my eyes and tell me what I see, tell me what I should be seeing when I see you, don’t tell me the sun is shining, I know that kind of thing, tell me where the moon went last night and what he saw in the flooded cellars of Dhaka or when he glared down on Baku. Tell me too what I remember, remind me of my mind,
where the gondolas are drifting and the old Pope bows his head. But tell me most of all how I can see you better, understand my understander, please the one love most of all.

28 December 2022
But there in December
that tree had leaves,
vaguely heart-shaped
but not linden, each leaf
with tiny pin holes all over,
by nature, not by damage.
And the trunk, rugged,
I tried to get my phone
to stick to the bark, no go,
wanted to hear what it said.
Who are you, standing so
close to the porch I used to have,
talking to the man I used to be?

29 December 2022
Earth uploads the Sun.
We live well
in this old program.

29.XII.22, lune
THE EXPEDITION

The expedition set out a little after daybreak—a few overslept but no big worry. The first stage was an old road, Roman maybe, layers of gravel, layers of stones, layer of time.

2.
But that led only to the base of the cliff they meant to climb, let alone to the great marsh they hoped to glimpse up there. Now the scramble began,
silently, by prior agreement
no talk up Vulture Peak,
too close to the sky, don’t
want to be overheard.

3.
A day later they were there,
looking everywhere seeing
what amounted to their whole
universe, this and only this.
A river they never knew—
go there some day. And that
amber glowing marsh, the one
they needed, clear at sunset.
4.
So they knew which way to go, only one day more and they’d be among the reeds, hear the bitterns booming, taste the tassels of the grasses, settle down.

5

Logic led them here. If all this is here, then there is room for us too. Tentative settlement—they built a hut and thatched it over, sat inside, talked freely
but a little nervously, waited. They were where they met to be. But were they really meant to be there? They took out their notebooks and begin to write the answer.

29 December 2022
The skeleton shows through the skin—no sense in hiding.

29.XII.22, lune
She comes across the vast field
naked and slow,
her pale skin
the sacred vestments of truth.
This is who we are,
this is where we walk,
and someone is always
coming towards us.
Look up and praise.

29 December 2022
No eggs in Rotterdam
it said today, and
people born on New Year’s
have the softest skin
it said, but only if the day
remembers, so I woke
and found my slippers
the same color as the rug,
we live in colors, so much
information. No eggs
in Rotterdam, so I will obey,
I’ll eat my eggs in Annandale,
barefoot if need be,
depending on the news.
and I’d better do it soon before the next message comes, maybe High Mass in Assisi.

30 December 2022
Evolution is a pest
he said, in a million
years we’ll have no toes,
no appendixes at least,
but probably no hair.
Why can’t we manage
just as we are, or seem,
or strive, or fail? Who
wrote this program anyhow?
Are we just prisoners
of our chemistry? Go back
to bed I told him–
you’re safe fora while.

30 December 2022
I FEEL MY SKULL

lurk behind my face,
wor...
What I want is bad enough
but what I get is even worse.
Sing that song at the bank and in the parliament, brothel, butcher shop, jet to Oahu. O isn’t there a joy without wanting, a wave that comes in all by itself and laves our toes clean of where we’ve been, look to the clean horizon, not een an island in sight.

30 December 2022
Waiting on the corner for the coroner to arrive driving his old Mercedes up to the traffic light and waiting there for all the living and the dead to cross. Then last I can stand still and watch them cross and slowly learn the difference between them.

30.XII.22
oral experiment

AERIAL
Flying over the city is residence enough. I live in the sky as long as I can, I feed on vistas, swoops of drone flight through arches and angles, high over the problematic, the populous, the built.

2.
Riyadh. Dhaka. Lagos. You’ve seen them all. Every citypokes a finger into the sky,
or more than one, more fingers than hands.

3.
Did it begin in Chicago, or the Woolworth Building, our island with a Man Hat On, puffed up, almost innocent, pride to pile up our bricks, pointed spires, spindles, steeples with no bells. To build a house no one can live in at the top, an empty room pointed at heaven? Did they mean
Come fill me with God?

4.
Maybe it’s simple—they all like big.
Big spread. Big head.
Streets stretched to the horizon, office buildings you strain your neck to see the top from the land you’d stand on the m only nwaay to go in, trap yourself breathless in elevators. rise and still hope to walk on earth again.

5.
Not for me. I see it all I need through other people’s eyes (that’s what culture means), see it from the smart little drone who leaves me a radiant video. Technology is part of theology.

41 December 2022
You don’t have to walk far off the road to be in the woods. The woods are big by nature—a few dozen trees close growing make sudden wilderness enough. Not far away you hear cars go by—they could be bears growling, wind in the Black Forest.

Stand still is all you have to do, be in amity with what you see and don’t be insolent, don’t look too close. Trees
show what they choose, and woods are the all of them not each one. Nothing on earth is like the intelligent silence of standing alone in the trees..

31 December 2022
Where did the light come from before it came here and what did it see along the way?

I asked the scientist politely but I had come with Jesus and the man in the white coat gave a sketchy answer, barely polite. The next day I came with a bodhisattva and the scientist was of course polite to Asians, but still give no real answers. Is it possible
that he doesn’t know? What’s the point of his big zillion dollar telescope if he can’t see the albatrosses of Aldebaran, the billion sacred athletes of the Pleiades at play? I’ll try again, and next time bring a rabbi with me

31 December 2022