

THE WINTER OF LISTENING
By David Whyte

No one but me by the fire,
my hands burning
red in the palms while
the night wind carries
everything away outside.

All this petty worry
while the great cloak
of the sky grows dark
and intense
'round every living thing.

What is precious
inside us does not
care to be known
by the mind
in ways that diminish
its presence.

What we strive for
in perfection
is not what turns us
into the lit angel
we desire,

what disturbs
and then nourishes
has everything
we need.

What we hate
in ourselves
is what we cannot know
in ourselves but
what is true to the pattern
does not need
to be explained.

Inside everyone
is a great shout of joy
waiting to be born.

Even with summer
so far off
I feel it grown in me
now and ready
to arrive in the world.

All those years
listening to those
who had
nothing to say.

All those years
forgetting
how everything
has its own voice
to make
itself heard.

All those years
forgetting
how easily
you can belong
to everything
simply by listening.

And the slow
difficulty
of remembering
how everything
is born from
an opposite
and miraculous
otherness.

Silence and winter
have led m to that
otherness.

So let this winter
of listening
be enough
for the new life
I must call my own.

Every sound
has a home
from which it has come
to us
and a door
through which it is going
again,
out into the world
to make another home.

We speak
only with the voices
of those
we can hear ourselves
and the body has a voice
only for that portion
of the body of the world
it has learned to perceive.

It becomes
a world itself
by listening
hard
for the way
it belongs.

There it can
learn
how it
must be
and what
it must do.

And
here
in the tumult
of the night
I hear the walnut
above the child's swing
swaying
its dark limbs
in the wind
and the rain now
come to
beat against my window
and somewhere

in this cold night
of wind and stars
the first whispered
opening of
those hidden
and invisible springs
that uncoil
in the still summer air
each yet
to be imagined
rose.