THE PEACE OF WILD THINGS

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

THE SYCAMORE

In the place that is my own place, whose earth
I am shaped in and must bear, there is an old tree growing,
a great sycamore that is a wondrous healer of itself.
Fences have been tied to it, nails driven into it,
hacks and whittles cut in it, the lightning has burned it.
There is no year it has flourished in
that has not harmed it. There is a hollow in it
that is its death, though its living brims whitely
at the lip of the darkness and flows outward.
Over all its scars has come the seamless white
of the bark. It bears the gnarls of its history
healed over. It has risen to a strange perfection
in the warp and bending of its long growth.
It has gathered all accidents into its purpose.
It has become the intention and radiance of its dark fate.
It is a fact, sublime, mystical and unassailable.
In all the country there is no other like it.
I recognize in it a principle, an indwelling
the same as itself, and greater, that I would be ruled by.
I see that it stands in its place, and feeds upon it,
and is fed upon, and is native, and maker.
A BRASS BOWL

Worn to brightness, this bowl opens outward to the world, like the marriage of a pair we sometimes know. Filled full, it holds not greedily. Empty, it fills with light that is Heaven’s and its own. It holds forever for a while.

[Untitled]

Learn by little the desire for all things which perhaps is not desire at all but undying love which perhaps is not love at all but gratitude for the being of all things which perhaps is not gratitude at all but the maker’s joy in what is made, the joy in which we come to rest.
 HOW TO BE A POET  
(to remind myself)  

Make a place to sit down. 
Sit down. Be quiet. 
You must depend upon 
affection, reading, knowledge, 
skill—more of each 
than you have—inspiration,
work, growing older, patience, 
for patience joins time 
to eternity. Any readers 
who like your poems, 
doubt their judgment.  

Breathe with unconditional breath 
the unconditioned air.  
Shun electric wire.  
Communicate slowly. Live 
a three-dimensioned life; 
stay away from screens.  
Stay away from anything 
that obscures the place it is in.  
There are no unsacred places; 
there are only sacred places 
and desecrated places.  

Accept what comes from silence. 
Make the best you can of it.  
Of the little words that come 
out of the silence, like prayers 
prayed back to the one who prays, 
make a poem that does not disturb 
the silence from which it came.