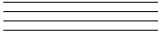


D E C E M B E R M O R N I N G



W . S . M E R W I N

How did I come to this late happiness  
as I wake into my remaining days  
another morning in my life with Paula  
taking me by surprise like the first one  
I know it is rash to speak about happiness  
with the Fates so near that I can hear them  
but this morning even the old regrets  
seem to have lost their rancor  
and to harbor shy hopes like the first grass  
of spring appearing between paving stones  
when I was a small child and I see  
that each step has been leading me  
to the present morning that I recognize  
before daylight and I forget that  
I am almost blind and I see the piles  
of books I was going to read next  
there they wait like statues of sitting dogs  
faithful to someone they used to know  
but happiness has a shape made of air  
it was never owned by anyone  
it comes when it will in its own time