



SELF-PORTRAIT OF A SOLITUDE

There is the pain of loneliness, no doubt.
But my life has been all about the gain
and glory of solitude, of aloneness.
Oh there have been months, even years
on end of living with others—childhood

with parents and a brother, a year of working
in a refugee camp—sharing meals and
housing with fellow relief workers.
There was a decade of marriage,
but those years would fade as I gave

my heart and soul to the next
solitary venture. There were hours
spent with students, travel
expeditions on small vessels
interspersed with hours when I became

well-versed in being alone in my home
full of space and time to read and write,
listen to and meditate on jazz at night.
So you see, in the end it's all
turned out right. Solitude

is the axis on which my life has spun.
And I have hung on tight because glory
has been the highlight throughout my story.
Also grace and peace. Being alone
is to hone in on the brink of possibility.

It is to take a leap of faith and wait
for imagination to kick in, to begin
again after divorce or the death
of that best friend. It is to enter
into a deeper relationship with words

and nature—with all of creation.
It is finally to come home as if
to an ecotone where two biomes overlap,
like estuaries and marshes—
to learn to flow between social graces

and solitary spaces.
Ultimately, it is to be still
and know that in the end,
it is no sin to be singular
and whole.

—Diana Woodcock