

Classic Poetry Series

**Wallace Stevens**  
**- poems -**

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# Wallace Stevens(October 2, 1879 – August 2, 1955)

Wallace Stevens was regarded as one of the most significant American poets of the 20th century. Stevens largely ignored the literary world and he did not receive widespread recognition until the publication of his *Collected Poems* (1954). In this work Stevens explored inside a profound philosophical framework the dualism between concrete reality and the human imagination. For most of his adult life, Stevens pursued contrasting careers as a insurance executive and a poet.

Wallace Stevens was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, as the son of Garrett Barcalow Stevens, a prosperous country lawyer. His mother's family, the Zellers, were of Dutch origin. Stevens attended the Reading Boys' High School, and enrolled in 1893 at Harvard College. During this period Stevens began to write for the *Harvard Advocate*, *Trend*, and Harriet Monroe's magazine *Poetry*.

After leaving Harvard without degree in 1900, Stevens worked as a reporter for the *New York Tribune*. He then entered *New York Law School*, graduated in 1903, and was admitted to the bar next year.

Stevens worked as an attorney in several firms and in 1908 began working with the *American Bonding Company*. He married Elsie Kachel Moll, a shopgirl, from his home town; their daughter, Holly, was born in 1924.

Influenced by Ezra Pound, Stevens wrote 'Sunday Morning', his famous breakthrough work. It starts with 'coffee and oranges in a sunny chair' but ends with images of another reality, death, and universal chaos.

She hears, upon that water without soud,

A voice that cries: "The tomb in Palestine,

Is not the porch of spirits lingering;

It is the grave of Jesus, where He lay."

We live in an old chaos of the sun,

Or old dependency of day and night,

Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,

Of that wide water, inescapable.

(from Sunday Morning)

His first collection of verse was , *Harmonium* (1923), at the age of forty-four. Although it was well received by some reviewers, , it sold only 100 copies. Currently the collection is regarded as one of the great works of American poetry. *Harmonium* included 'The Emperor of the Ice Cream', one of Stevens's own favourite poems, 'Le Monocle de Mon Oncle', 'The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad', and 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird'.

In the mid-1910s Stevens moved to Connecticut, where he worked as a specialist in investment banking of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. Insurance business took most of Stevens's time and he published very little. Stevens's next collection of poems, was published in 1935, and received mixed critics, with accusations of indifference to political and social tensions of the day from the Marxist journal *New Masses*. However, according to Joan Richardson's biography from 1988, Stevens was a closet socialist during the 1930's, but did not make his views a public issue In *Owl's Clover*(1937) Stevens meditated on art and politics.

From the early 1940s Stevens entered a period of creativity that continued until his death in Hartford on August 2, in 1955. He turned gradually away from the playful use of language to a more reflective, though abstract style. Among his acclaimed poems were 'Notes toward a Supreme Fiction', 'The Auroras of Autumn', 'An Ordinary Evening in New Haven', and 'The Planet on the Table'.

Before gaining national fame as a poet Stevens enjoyed a high respect among his colleagues. His life as a corporate lawyer did not impede his creativity as a lyric poet.

In 1946 Stevens was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters, in 1950 he received the Bollingen Prize in Poetry, and in 1955 he was awarded both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award.

I know noble accents

And lucid, inescapable rhythms;

But I know, too,

That the blackbird is involved

In what I know.

(from *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*)

# A Disillusionment Of Ten O'Clock

The houses are haunted  
By white night-gowns.  
None are green,  
Or purple with green rings,  
Or green with yellow rings,  
Or yellow with blue rings.  
None of them are strange,  
With socks of lace  
And beaded ceintures.  
People are not going  
To dream of baboons and periwinkles.  
Only, here and there, an old sailor,  
Drunk and asleep in his boots,  
Catches Tigers  
In red weather.

Wallace Stevens

# A High-Toned Old Christian Woman

Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame.  
Take the moral law and make a nave of it  
And from the nave build haunted heaven. Thus,  
The conscience is converted into palms,  
Like windy citherns hankering for hymns.  
We agree in principle. That's clear. But take  
The opposing law and make a peristyle,  
And from the peristyle project a masque  
Beyond the planets. Thus, our bawdiness,  
Unpurged by epitaph, indulged at last,  
Is equally converted into palms,  
Squiggling like saxophones. And palm for palm,  
Madame, we are where we began. Allow,  
Therefore, that in the planetary scene  
Your disaffected flagellants, well-stuffed,  
Smacking their muzzy bellies in parade,  
Proud of such novelties of the sublime,  
Such tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk,  
May, merely may, madame, whip from themselves  
A jovial hullabaloo among the spheres.  
This will make widows wince. But fictive things  
Wink as they will. Wink most when widows wince.

Wallace Stevens

# A Postcard From The Volcano

Children picking up our bones  
Will never know that these were once  
As quick as foxes on the hill;

And that in autumn, when the grapes  
Made sharp air sharper by their smell  
These had a being, breathing frost;

And least will guess that with our bones  
We left much more, left what still is  
The look of things, left what we felt

At what we saw. The spring clouds blow  
Above the shuttered mansion house,  
Beyond our gate and the windy sky

Cries out a literate despair.  
We knew for long the mansion's look  
And what we said of it became

A part of what it is ... Children,  
Still weaving budded aureoles,  
Will speak our speech and never know,

Will say of the mansion that it seems  
As if he that lived there left behind  
A spirit storming in blank walls,

A dirty house in a gutted world,  
A tatter of shadows peaked to white,  
Smearred with the gold of the opulent sun.

Wallace Stevens

# A Rabbit As King Of The Ghosts

The difficulty to think at the end of day,  
When the shapeless shadow covers the sun  
And nothing is left except light on your fur—

There was the cat slopping its milk all day,  
Fat cat, red tongue, green mind, white milk  
And August the most peaceful month.

To be, in the grass, in the peaceullest time,  
Without that monument of cat,  
The cat forgotten in the moon;

And to feel that the light is a rabbit-light,  
In which everything is meant for you  
And nothing need be explained;

Then there is nothing to think of. It comes of itself;  
And east rushes west and west rushes down,  
No matter. The grass is full

And full of yourself. The trees around are for you,  
The whole of the wideness of night is for you,  
A self that touches all edges,

You become a self that fills the four corners of night.  
The red cat hides away in the fur-light  
And there you are humped high, humped up,

You are humped higher and higher, black as stone—  
You sit with your head like a carving in space  
And the little green cat is a bug in the grass.

Wallace Stevens

# Anecdote Of The Jar

I placed a jar in Tennessee,  
And round it was, upon a hill.  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
The jar was round upon the ground  
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.  
The jar was gray and bare.  
It did not give of bird or bush,  
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

Wallace Stevens

# Another Weeping Woman

Pour the unhappiness out  
From your too bitter heart,  
Which grieving will not sweeten.

Poison grows in this dark.  
It is in the water of tears  
Its black blooms rise.

The magnificent cause of being,  
The imagination, the one reality  
In this imagined world

Leaves you  
With him for whom no phantasy moves,  
And you are pierced by a death.

Wallace Stevens

# Bantams In Pine-Woods

Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan  
Of tan with henna hackles, halt!

Damned universal cock, as if the sun  
Was blackmoor to bear your blazing tail.

Fat! Fat! Fat! Fat! I am the personal.  
Your world is you. I am my world.

You ten-foot poet among inchlings. Fat!  
Begone! An inchling bristles in these pines,

Bristles, and points their Appalachian tangs,  
And fears not portly Azcan nor his hoos.

Wallace Stevens

# Continual Conversation With A Silent Man

The old brown hen and the old blue sky,  
Between the two we live and die--  
The broken cartwheel on the hill.

As if, in the presence of the sea,  
We dried our nets and mended sail  
And talked of never-ending things,

Of the never-ending storm of will,  
One will and many wills, and the wind,  
Of many meanings in the leaves,

Brought down to one below the eaves,  
Link, of that tempest, to the farm,  
The chain of the turquoise hen and sky

And the wheel that broke as the cart went by.  
It is not a voice that is under the eaves.  
It is not speech, the sound we hear

In this conversation, but the sound  
Of things and their motion: the other man,  
A turquoise monster moving round.

Wallace Stevens

## Contrary Theses (Ii)

One chemical afternoon in mid-autumn,  
When the grand mechanics of earth and sky were near;  
Even the leaves of the locust were yellow then,

He walked with his year-old boy on his shoulder.  
The sun shone and the dog barked and the baby slept.  
The leaves, even of the locust, the green locust.

He wanted and looked for a final refuge,  
From the bombastic intimations of winter  
And the martyrs a la mode. He walked toward

An abstract, of which the sun, the dog, the boy  
Were contours. Cold was chilling the wide-moving swans.  
The leaves were falling like notes from a piano.

The abstract was suddenly there and gone again.  
The negroes were playing football in the park.  
The abstract that he saw, like the locust-leaves, plainly:

The premiss from which all things were conclusions,  
The noble, Alexandrine verve. The flies  
And the bees still sought the chrysanthemums' odor.

Wallace Stevens

# Disillusionment Of Ten O'Clock

The houses are haunted  
By white night-gowns.  
None are green,  
Or purple with green rings,  
Or green with yellow rings,  
Or yellow with blue rings.  
None of them are strange,  
With socks of lace  
And beaded ceintures.  
People are not going  
To dream of baboons and periwinkles.  
Only, here and there, an old sailor,  
Drunk and asleep in his boots,  
Catches Tigers  
In red weather.

Wallace Stevens

# Domination Of Black

At night, by the fire,  
The colors of the bushes  
And of the fallen leaves,  
Repeating themselves,  
Turned in the room,  
Like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind.  
Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks  
Came striding.  
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.

The colors of their tails  
Were like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind,  
In the twilight wind.  
They swept over the room,  
Just as they flew from the boughs of the hemlocks  
Down to the ground.  
I heard them cry -- the peacocks.  
Was it a cry against the twilight  
Or against the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind,  
Turning as the flames  
Turned in the fire,  
Turning as the tails of the peacocks  
Turned in the loud fire,  
Loud as the hemlocks  
Full of the cry of the peacocks?  
Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?

Out of the window,  
I saw how the planets gathered  
Like the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind.  
I saw how the night came,  
Came striding like the color of the heavy hemlocks  
I felt afraid.  
And I remembered the cry of the peacocks.



# Farewell To Florida

I

Go on, high ship, since now, upon the shore,  
The snake has left its skin upon the floor.  
Key West sank downward under massive clouds  
And silvers and greens spread over the sea. The moon  
Is at the mast-head and the past is dead.  
Her mind will never speak to me again.  
I am free. High above the mast the moon  
Rides clear of her mind and the waves make a refrain  
Of this: that the snake has shed its skin upon  
The floor. Go on through the darkness. The waves fly back

II

Her mind had bound me round. The palms were hot  
As if I lived in ashen ground, as if  
The leaves in which the wind kept up its sound  
From my North of cold whistled in a sepulchral South,  
Her South of pine and coral and coraline sea,  
Her home, not mine, in the ever-freshened Keys,  
Her days, her oceanic nights, calling  
For music, for whisperings from the reefs.  
How content I shall be in the North to which I sail  
And to feel sure and to forget the bleaching sand ...

III

I hated the weathery yawl from which the pools  
Disclosed the sea floor and the wilderness  
Of waving weeds. I hated the vivid blooms  
Curled over the shadowless hut, the rust and bones,  
The trees like bones and the leaves half sand, half sun.  
To stand here on the deck in the dark and say  
Farewell and to know that that land is forever gone  
And that she will not follow in any word  
Or look, nor ever again in thought, except  
That I loved her once ... Farewell. Go on, high ship.

IV

My North is leafless and lies in a wintry slime  
Both of men and clouds, a slime of men in crowds.  
The men are moving as the water moves,  
This darkened water cloven by sullen swells  
Against your sides, then shoving and slithering,  
The darkness shattered, turbulent with foam.  
To be free again, to return to the violent mind  
That is their mind, these men, and that will bind  
Me round, carry me, misty deck, carry me  
To the cold, go on, high ship, go on, plunge on.

Wallace Stevens

# Final Soliloquy Of The Interior Paramour

Light the first light of evening, as in a room  
In which we rest and, for small reason, think  
The world imagined is the ultimate good.

This is, therefore, the intensest rendezvous.  
It is in that thought that we collect ourselves,  
Out of all the indifferences, into one thing:

Within a single thing, a single shawl  
Wrapped tightly round us, since we are poor, a warmth,  
A light, a power, the miraculous influence.

Here, now, we forget each other and ourselves.  
We feel the obscurity of an order, a whole,  
A knowledge, that which arranged the rendezvous.

Within its vital boundary, in the mind.  
We say God and the imagination are one...  
How high that highest candle lights the dark.

Out of this same light, out of the central mind,  
We make a dwelling in the evening air,  
In which being there together is enough.

Wallace Stevens

# Frogs Eat Butterflies, Snakes Eat Frogs, Hogs Eat Snakes, Men Eat Hogs

It is true that the rivers went nosing like swine,  
Tugging at banks, until they seemed  
Bland belly-sounds in somnolent troughs,

That the air was heavy with the breath of these swine,  
The breath of turgid summer, and  
Heavy with thunder's rattapallax,

That the man who erected this cabin, planted  
This field, and tended it awhile,  
Knew not the quirks of imagery,

That the hours of his indolent, arid days,  
Grotesque with this nosing in banks,  
This somnolence and rattapallax,

Seemed to suckle themselves on his arid being,  
As the swine-like rivers suckled themselves  
While they went seaward to the sea-mouths.

Wallace Stevens

## Gray Room

Although you sit in a room that is gray,  
Except for the silver  
Of the straw-paper,  
And pick  
At your pale white gown;  
Or lift one of the green beads  
Of your necklace,  
To let it fall;  
Or gaze at your green fan  
Printed with the red branches of a red willow;  
Or, with one finger,  
Move the leaf in the bowl--  
The leaf that has fallen from the branches of the forsythia  
Beside you...  
What is all this?  
I know how furiously your heart is beating.

Wallace Stevens

# Hymn From A Watermelon Pavilion

You dweller in the dark cabin,  
To whom the watermelon is always purple,  
Whose garden is wind and moon,

Of the two dreams, night and day,  
What lover, what dreamer, would choose  
The one obscured by sleep?

Here is the plantain by your door  
And the best cock of red feather  
That crew before the clocks.

A feme may come, leaf-green,  
Whose coming may give revel  
Beyond revelries of sleep,

Yes, and the blackbird spread its tail,  
So that the sun may speckle,  
While it creaks hail.

You dweller in the dark cabin,  
Rise, since rising will not waken,  
And hail, cry hail, cry hail.

Wallace Stevens

# In The Carolinas

The lilacs wither in the Carolinas.  
Already the butterflies flutter above the cabins.  
Already the new-born children interpret love  
In the voices of mothers.

Timeless mothers,  
How is it that your aspic nipples  
For once vent honey?

The pine-tree sweetens my body  
The white iris beautifies me.

Wallace Stevens

# It Must Give Pleasure

I  
To sing jubilas at exact, accustomed times,  
To be crested and wear the mane of a multitude  
And so, as part, to exult with its great throat,

To speak of joy and to sing of it, borne on  
The shoulders of joyous men, to feel the heart  
That is the common, the bravest fundament,

This is a facile exercise. Jerome  
Begot the tubas and the fire-wind strings,  
The golden fingers picking dark-blue air:

For companies of voices moving there,  
To find of sound the bleakest ancestor,  
To find of light a music issuing

Whereon it falls in more than sensual mode.  
But the difficultest rigor is forthwith,  
On the image of what we see, to catch from that

Irrational moment its unreasoning,  
As when the sun comes rising, when the sea  
Clears deeply, when the moon hangs on the wall

Of heaven-haven. These are not things transformed.  
Yet we are shaken by them as if they were.  
We reason about them with a later reason.

Wallace Stevens

# Jasmine's Beautiful Thoughts Underneath the Willow

My titillations have no foot-notes  
And their memorials are the phrases  
Of idiosyncratic music.

The love that will not be transported  
In an old, frizzled, flambeaud manner,  
But muses on its eccentricity,

Is like a vivid apprehension  
Of bliss beyond the mutes of plaster,  
Or paper souvenirs of rapture,

Of bliss submerged beneath appearance,  
In an interior ocean's rocking  
Of long, capricious fugues and chorals.

Wallace Stevens

# Le Monocle De Mon Oncle

“Mother of heaven, regina of the clouds,  
O sceptre of the sun, crown of the moon,  
There is not nothing, no, no, never nothing,  
Like the clashed edges of two words that kill.”  
And so I mocked her in magnificent measure.  
Or was it that I mocked myself alone?  
I wish that I might be a thinking stone.  
The sea of spuming thought foists up again  
The radiant bubble that she was. And then  
A deep up-pouring from some saltier well  
Within me, bursts its watery syllable.

## II

A red bird flies across the golden floor.  
It is a red bird that seeks out his choir  
Among the choirs of wind and wet and wing.  
A torrent will fall from him when he finds.  
Shall I uncrumple this much-crumpled thing?  
I am a man of fortune greeting heirs;  
For it has come that thus I greet the spring.  
These choirs of welcome choir for me farewell.  
No spring can follow past meridian.  
Yet you persist with anecdotal bliss  
To make believe a starry connaissance.

## III

Is it for nothing, then, that old Chinese  
Sat tittivating by their mountain pools  
Or in the Yangtse studied out their beards?  
I shall not play the flat historic scale.  
You know how Utamaro’s beauties sought  
The end of love in their all-speaking braids.  
You know the mountainous coiffures of Bath.  
Alas! Have all the barbers lived in vain  
That not one curl in nature has survived?  
Why, without pity on these studious ghosts,  
Do you come dripping in your hair from sleep?

#### IV

This luscious and impeccable fruit of life  
Falls, it appears, of its own weight to earth.  
When you were Eve, its acrid juice was sweet,  
Untasted, in its heavenly, orchard air.  
An apple serves as well as any skull  
To be the book in which to read a round,  
And is as excellent, in that it is composed  
Of what, like skulls, comes rotting back to ground.  
But it excels in this, that as the fruit  
Of love, it is a book too mad to read  
Before one merely reads to pass the time.

#### V

In the high west there burns a furious star.  
It is for fiery boys that star was set  
And for sweet-smelling virgins close to them.  
The measure of the intensity of love  
Is measure, also, of the verve of earth.  
For me, the firefly's quick, electric stroke  
Ticks tediously the time of one more year.  
And you? Remember how the crickets came  
Out of their mother grass, like little kin,  
In the pale nights, when your first imagery  
Found inklings of your bond to all that dust.

#### VI

If men at forty will be painting lakes  
The ephemeral blues must merge for them in one,  
The basic slate, the universal hue.  
There is a substance in us that prevails.  
But in our amours amorists discern  
Such fluctuations that their scrivening  
Is breathless to attend each quirky turn.  
When amorists grow bald, then amours shrink  
Into the compass and curriculum  
Of introspective exiles, lecturing.  
It is a theme for Hyacinth alone.

#### VII

The mules that angels ride come slowly down  
The blazing passes, from beyond the sun.

Descensions of their tinkling bells arrive.  
These muleteers are dainty of their way.  
Meantime, centurions guffaw and beat  
Their shrilling tankards on the table-boards.  
This parable, in sense, amounts to this:  
The honey of heaven may or may not come,  
But that of earth both comes and goes at once.  
Suppose these couriers brought amid their train  
A damsel heightened by eternal bloom.

#### VIII

Like a dull scholar, I behold, in love,  
An ancient aspect touching a new mind.  
It comes, it blooms, it bears its fruit and dies.  
This trivial trope reveals a way of truth.  
Our bloom is gone. We are the fruit thereof.  
Two golden gourds distended on our vines,  
Into the autumn weather, splashed with frost,  
Distorted by hale fatness, turned grotesque.  
We hang like warty squashes, streaked and rayed,  
The laughing sky will see the two of us  
Washed into rinds by rotting winter rains.

#### IX

In verses wild with motion, full of din,  
Loudened by cries, by clashes, quick and sure  
As the deadly thought of men accomplishing  
Their curious fates in war, come, celebrate  
The faith of forty, ward of Cupido.  
Most venerable heart, the lustiest conceit  
Is not too lusty for your broadening.  
I quiz all sounds, all thoughts, all everything  
For the music and manner of the paladins  
To make oblation fit. Where shall I find  
Bravura adequate to this great hymn?

#### X

The fops of fancy in their poems leave  
Memorabilia of the mystic spouts,  
Spontaneously watering their gritty soils.  
I am a yeoman, as such fellows go.  
I know no magic trees, no balmy boughs,

No silver-ruddy, gold-vermilion fruits.  
But, after all, I know a tree that bears  
A semblance to the thing I have in mind.  
It stands gigantic, with a certain tip  
To which all birds come sometime in their time.  
But when they go that tip still tips the tree.

XI

If sex were all, then every trembling hand  
Could make us squeak, like dolls, the wished-for words.  
But note the unconscionable treachery of fate,  
That makes us weep, laugh, grunt and groan, and shout  
Doleful heroics, pinching gestures forth  
From madness or delight, without regard  
To that first, foremost law. Anguishing hour!  
Last night, we sat beside a pool of pink,  
Clipped with lilies scudding the bright chromes,  
Keen to the point of starlight, while a frog  
Boomed from his very belly odious chords.

XII

A blue pigeon it is, that circles the blue sky,  
On sidelong wing, around and round and round.  
A white pigeon it is, that flutters to the ground,  
Grown tired of flight. Like a dark rabbi, I  
Observed, when young, the nature of mankind,  
In lordly study. Every day, I found  
Man proved a gobbet in my mincing world.  
Like a rose rabbi, later, I pursued,  
And still pursue, the origin and course  
Of love, but until now I never knew  
That fluttering things have so distinct a shade.

Wallace Stevens

# Looking Across The Fields And Watching The Birds Fly

Among the more irritating minor ideas  
Of Mr. Homburg during his visits home  
To Concord, at the edge of things, was this:

To think away the grass, the trees, the clouds,  
Not to transform them into other things,  
Is only what the sun does every day,

Until we say to ourselves that there may be  
A pensive nature, a mechanical  
And slightly detestable operandum, free

From man's ghost, larger and yet a little like,  
Without his literature and without his gods . . .  
No doubt we live beyond ourselves in air,

In an element that does not do for us,  
so well, that which we do for ourselves, too big,  
A thing not planned for imagery or belief,

Not one of the masculine myths we used to make,  
A transparency through which the swallow weaves,  
Without any form or any sense of form,

What we know in what we see, what we feel in what  
We hear, what we are, beyond mystic disputation,  
In the tumult of integrations out of the sky,

And what we think, a breathing like the wind,  
A moving part of a motion, a discovery  
Part of a discovery, a change part of a change,

A sharing of color and being part of it.  
The afternoon is visibly a source,  
Too wide, too irised, to be more than calm,

Too much like thinking to be less than thought,  
Obscurest parent, obscurest patriarch,  
A daily majesty of meditation,

That comes and goes in silences of its own.  
We think, then as the sun shines or does not.  
We think as wind skitters on a pond in a field

Or we put mantles on our words because  
The same wind, rising and rising, makes a sound  
Like the last muting of winter as it ends.

A new scholar replacing an older one reflects  
A moment on this fantasia. He seeks  
For a human that can be accounted for.

The spirit comes from the body of the world,  
Or so Mr. Homburg thought: the body of a world  
Whose blunt laws make an affectation of mind,

The mannerism of nature caught in a glass  
And there become a spirit's mannerism,  
A glass aswarm with things going as far as they can.

Wallace Stevens

# Madame La Fleurie

Weight him down, O side-stars, with the great weightings of  
the end.

Seal him there. He looked in a glass of the earth and thought  
he lived in it.

Now, he brings all that he saw into the earth, to the waiting  
parent.

His crisp knowledge is devoured by her, beneath a dew.

Weight him, weight, weight him with the sleepiness of the  
moon.

It was only a glass because he looked in it. It was nothing he  
could be told.

It was a language he spoke, because he must, yet did not know.

It was a page he had found in the handbook of heartbreak.

The black fugatos are strumming the blackness of black...

The thick strings stutter the final gutturals.

He does not lie there remembering the blue-jay, say the jay.

His grief is that his mother should feed on him, himself and  
what he saw,

In that distant chamber, a bearded queen, wicked in her dead  
light.

Wallace Stevens

# Metaphors Of A Magnifico

Twenty men crossing a bridge,  
Into a village,  
Are twenty men crossing twenty bridges,  
Into twenty villages,  
Or one man  
Crossing a single bridge into a village.

This is old song  
That will not declare itself . . .

Twenty men crossing a bridge,  
Into a village,  
Are  
Twenty men crossing a bridge  
Into a village.

That will not declare itself  
Yet is certain as meaning . . .

The boots of the men clump  
On the boards of the bridge.  
The first white wall of the village  
Rises through fruit-trees.  
Of what was it I was thinking?  
So the meaning escapes.

The first white wall of the village...  
The fruit-trees...

Wallace Stevens

# No Possum, No Sop, No Taters

He is not here, the old sun,  
As absent as if we were asleep.

The field is frozen. The leaves are dry.  
Bad is final in this light.

In this bleak air the broken stalks  
Have arms without hands. They have trunks

Without legs or, for that, without heads.  
They have heads in which a captive cry

Is merely the moving of a tongue.  
Snow sparkles like eyesight falling to earth,

Like seeing fallen brightly away.  
The leaves hop, scraping on the ground.

It is deep January. The sky is hard.  
The stalks are firmly rooted in ice.

It is in this solitude, a syllable,  
Out of these gawky flutterings,

Intones its single emptiness,  
The savagest hollow of winter-sound.

It is here, in this bad, that we reach  
The last purity of the knowledge of good.

The crow looks rusty as he rises up.  
Bright is the malice in his eye...

One joins him there for company,  
But at a distance, in another tree.

Wallace Stevens

# Nomad Exquisite

As the immense dew of Florida  
Brings forth  
The big-finned palm  
And green vine angering for life,

As the immense dew of Florida  
Brings forth hymn and hymn  
From the beholder,  
Beholding all these green sides  
And gold sides of green sides,

And blessed mornings,  
Meet for the eye of the young alligator,  
And lightning colors  
So, in me, comes flinging  
Forms, flames, and the flakes of flames.

Wallace Stevens

# Not Ideas About The Thing But The Thing Itself

At the earliest ending of winter,  
In March, a scrawny cry from outside  
Seemed like a sound in his mind.

He knew that he heard it,  
A bird's cry, at daylight or before,  
In the early March wind.

The sun was rising at six,  
No longer a battered panache above snow...  
It would have been outside.

It was not from the vast ventriloquism  
Of sleep's faded papier-mache...  
The sun was coming from the outside.

That scrawny cry--It was  
A chorister whose c preceded the choir.  
It was part of the colossal sun,

Surrounded by its choral rings,  
Still far away. It was like  
A new knowledge of reality.

Wallace Stevens

# Oak Leaves are Hands

In Hydaspia, by Howzen  
Lived a lady, Lady Lowzen,  
For whom what is was other things.

Flora she was once. She was florid  
A bachelor of feen masquerie,  
Evasive and metamorphorid.

Mac Mort she had been, ago,  
Twelve-legged in her ancestral hells,  
Weaving and weaving many arms.

Even now, the centre of something else,  
Merely by putting hand to brow,  
Brooding on centuries like shells.

As the acorn broods on former oaks  
In memorials of Northern sound,  
Skims the real for its unreal,

So she in Hydaspia created  
Out of the movement of few words,  
Flora Lowzen invigorated

Archaic and future happenings,  
In glittering seven-colored changes,  
By Howzen, the chromatic Lowzen.

Wallace Stevens

# Of Modern Poetry

The poem of the mind in the act of finding  
What will suffice. It has not always had  
To find: the scene was set; it repeated what  
Was in the script.  
Then the theatre was changed  
To something else. Its past was a souvenir.

It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place.  
It has to face the men of the time and to meet  
The women of the time. It has to think about war  
And it has to find what will suffice. It has  
To construct a new stage. It has to be on that stage,  
And, like an insatiable actor, slowly and  
With meditation, speak words that in the ear,  
In the delicatest ear of the mind, repeat,  
Exactly, that which it wants to hear, at the sound  
Of which, an invisible audience listens,  
Not to the play, but to itself, expressed  
In an emotion as of two people, as of two  
Emotions becoming one. The actor is  
A metaphysician in the dark, twanging  
An instrument, twanging a wiry string that gives  
Sounds passing through sudden rightnesses, wholly  
Containing the mind, below which it cannot descend,  
Beyond which it has no will to rise.  
It must  
Be the finding of a satisfaction, and may  
Be of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman  
Combing. The poem of the act of the mind.

Wallace Stevens

# Peter Quince At The Clavier

I

Just as my fingers on these keys  
Make music, so the self-same sounds  
On my spirit make a music, too.  
Music is feeling, then, not sound;  
And thus it is that what I feel,  
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,  
Is music. It is like the strain  
Waked in the elders by Susanna;

Of a green evening, clear and warm,  
She bathed in her still garden, while  
The red-eyed elders, watching, felt

The basses of their beings throb  
In witching chords, and their thin blood  
Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

II

In the green water, clear and warm,  
Susanna lay.  
She searched  
The touch of springs,  
And found  
Concealed imaginings.  
She sighed,  
For so much melody.

Upon the bank, she stood  
In the cool  
Of spent emotions.  
She felt, among the leaves,  
The dew  
Of old devotions.

She walked upon the grass,  
Still quavering.  
The winds were like her maids,  
On timid feet,  
Fetching her woven scarves,  
Yet wavering.

A breath upon her hand  
Muted the night.  
She turned --  
A cymbal crashed,  
Amid roaring horns.

### III

Soon, with a noise like tambourines,  
Came her attendant Byzantines.

They wondered why Susanna cried  
Against the elders by her side;

And as they whispered, the refrain  
Was like a willow swept by rain.

Anon, their lamps' uplifted flame  
Revealed Susanna and her shame.

And then, the simpering Byzantines  
Fled, with a noise like tambourines.

### IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind --  
The fitful tracing of a portal;  
But in the flesh it is immortal.

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.  
So evenings die, in their green going,  
A wave, interminably flowing.  
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting  
The cowl of winter, done repenting.  
So maidens die, to the auroral

Celebration of a maiden's choral.

Susanna's music touched the bawdy strings  
Of those white elders; but, escaping,  
Left only Death's ironic scraping.  
Now, in its immortality, it plays  
On the clear viol of her memory,  
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

Wallace Stevens

# Phases

I.

There's a little square in Paris,  
Waiting until we pass.  
They sit idly there,  
They sip the glass.

There's a cab-horse at the corner,  
There's rain. The season grieves.  
It was silver once,  
And green with leaves.

There's a parrot in a window,  
Will see us on parade,  
Hear the loud drums roll—  
And serenade.

II.

This was the salty taste of glory,  
That it was not  
Like Agamemnon's story.  
Only, an eyeball in the mud,  
And Hopkins,  
Flat and pale and gory!

III.

But the bugles, in the night,  
Were wings that bore  
To where our comfort was;

Arabesques of candle beams,  
Winding  
Through our heavy dreams;

Winds that blew  
Where the bending iris grew;

Birds of intermitted bliss,  
Singing in the night's abyss;

Vines with yellow fruit,  
That fell  
Along the walls  
That bordered Hell.

IV.

Death's nobility again  
Beautified the simplest men.  
Fallen Winkle felt the pride  
Of Agamemnon  
When he died.

What could London's  
Work and waste  
Give him—  
To that salty, sacrificial taste?

What could London's  
Sorrow bring—  
To that short, triumphant sting?

Wallace Stevens

## Poem Written At Morning

A sunny day's complete Poussiniana  
Divide it from itself. It is this or that  
And it is not.  
By metaphor you paint  
A thing. Thus, the pineapple was a leather fruit,  
A fruit for pewter, thorned and palmed and blue,  
To be served by men of ice.  
The senses paint  
By metaphor. The juice was fragranter  
Than wettest cinnamon. It was cribled pears  
Dripping a morning sap.  
The truth must be  
That you do not see, you experience, you feel,  
That the buxom eye brings merely its element  
To the total thing, a shapeless giant forced  
Upward.  
Green were the curls upon that head.

Wallace Stevens

# Poetry Is A Destructive Force

That's what misery is,  
Nothing to have at heart.  
It is to have or nothing.  
It is a thing to have,  
A lion, an ox in his breast,  
To feel it breathing there.

Corazon, stout dog,  
Young ox, bow-legged bear,  
He tastes its blood, not spit.

He is like a man  
In the body of a violent beast  
Its muscles are his own...

The lion sleeps in the sun.  
Its nose is on its paws.  
It can kill a man.

Wallace Stevens

# Repetitions of a Young Captain

A tempest cracked on the theatre. Quickly,  
The wind beat in the roof and half the walls.  
The ruin stood still in an external world.

It had been real. It was something overseas  
That I remembered, something that I remembered  
Overseas, that stood in an external world.

It had been real. It was not now. The rip  
Of the wind and the glittering were real now,  
In the spectacle of a new reality.

II

The people sat in the theatre, in the ruin,  
As if nothing had happened. The dim actor spoke.  
His hands became his feelings. His thick shape

Issued thin seconds glibly gaping.  
Then faintly encrusted, a tissue of the moon  
Walked toward him on the stage and they embraced.

Wallace Stevens

# Sea Surface Full Of Clouds

In that November off Tehuantepec,  
The slopping of the sea grew still one night  
And in the morning summer hued the deck

And made one think of rosy chocolate  
And gilt umbrellas. Paradisal green  
Gave suavity to the perplexed machine

Of ocean, which like limpid water lay.  
Who, then, in that ambrosial latitude  
Out of the light evolved the morning blooms,

Who, then, evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds  
Diffusing balm in that Pacific calm?  
C'etait mon enfant, mon bijou, mon ame.

The sea-clouds whitened far below the calm  
And moved, as blooms move, in the swimming green  
And in its watery radiance, while the hue

Of heaven in an antique reflection rolled  
Round those flotillas. And sometimes the sea  
Poured brilliant iris on the glistening blue.

## II

In that November off Tehuantepec  
The slopping of the sea grew still one night.  
At breakfast jelly yellow streaked the deck

And made one think of chop-house chocolate  
And sham umbrellas. And a sham-like green  
Capped summer-seeming on the tense machine

Of ocean, which in sinister flatness lay.  
Who, then, beheld the rising of the clouds  
That strode submerged in that malevolent sheen,

Who saw the mortal massives of the blooms

Of water moving on the water-floor?  
C'etait mon frere du ciel, ma vie, mon or.

The gongs rang loudly as the windy booms  
Hoo-hooed it in the darkened ocean-blooms.  
The gongs grew still. And then blue heaven spread

Its crystalline pendentives on the sea  
And the macabre of the water-glooms  
In an enormous undulation fled.

### III

In that November off Tehuantepec,  
The slopping of the sea grew still one night  
And a pale silver patterned on the deck

And made one think of porcelain chocolate  
And pied umbrellas. An uncertain green,  
Piano-polished, held the tranced machine

Of ocean, as a prelude holds and holds,  
Who, seeing silver petals of white blooms  
Unfolding in the water, feeling sure

Of the milk within the saltiest spurge, heard, then,  
The sea unfolding in the sunken clouds?  
Oh! C'etait mon extase et mon amour.

So deeply sunken were they that the shrouds,  
The shrouding shadows, made the petals black  
Until the rolling heaven made them blue,

A blue beyond the rainy hyacinth,  
And smiting the crevasses of the leaves  
Deluged the ocean with a sapphire blue.

### IV

In that November off Tehuantepec  
The night-long slopping of the sea grew still.  
A mallow morning dozed upon the deck

And made one think of musky chocolate  
And frail umbrellas. A too-fluent green  
Suggested malice in the dry machine

Of ocean, pondering dank stratagem.  
Who then beheld the figures of the clouds  
Like blooms secluded in the thick marine?

Like blooms? Like damasks that were shaken off  
From the loosed girdles in the spangling must.  
C'etait ma foi, la nonchalance divine.

The nakedness would rise and suddenly turn  
Salt masks of beard and mouths of bellowing,  
Would- But more suddenly the heaven rolled

Its bluest sea-clouds in the thinking green,  
And the nakedness became the broadest blooms,  
Mile-mallows that a mallow sun cajoled.

V

In that November off Tehuantepec  
Night stilled the slopping of the sea.  
The day came, bowing and voluble, upon the deck,

Good clown... One thought of Chinese chocolate  
And large umbrellas. And a motley green  
Followed the drift of the obese machine

Of ocean, perfected in indolence.  
What pistache one, ingenious and droll,  
Beheld the sovereign clouds as jugglery

And the sea as turquoise-turbaned Sambo, neat  
At tossing saucers- cloudy-conjuring sea?  
C'etait mon esprit batard, l'ignominie.

The sovereign clouds came clustering. The conch  
Of loyal conjuration trumped. The wind  
Of green blooms turning crisped the motley hue

To clearing opalescence. Then the sea  
And heaven rolled as one and from the two  
Came fresh transfigurings of freshest blue.

Wallace Stevens

# Six Significant Landscapes

□

An old man sits  
In the shadow of a pine tree  
In China.  
He sees larkspur,  
Blue and white,  
At the edge of the shadow,  
Move in the wind.  
His beard moves in the wind.  
The pine tree moves in the wind.  
Thus water flows  
Over weeds.

□

The night is of the colour  
Of a woman's arm:  
Night, the female,  
Obscure,  
Fragrant and supple,  
Conceals herself.  
A pool shines,  
Like a bracelet  
Shaken in a dance.

□

I measure myself  
Against a tall tree.  
I find that I am much taller,  
For I reach right up to the sun,  
With my eye;  
And I reach to the shore of the sea  
With my ear.  
Nevertheless, I dislike  
The way ants crawl  
In and out of my shadow.

□

When my dream was near the moon,  
The white folds of its gown

Filled with yellow light.  
The soles of its feet  
Grew red.  
Its hair filled  
With certain blue crystallizations  
From stars,  
Not far off.

Ⅶ

Not all the knives of the lamp-posts,  
Nor the chisels of the long streets,  
Nor the mallets of the domes  
And high towers,  
Can carve  
What one star can carve,  
Shining through the grape-leaves.

Ⅷ

Rationalists, wearing square hats,  
Think, in square rooms,  
Looking at the floor,  
Looking at the ceiling.  
They confine themselves  
To right-angled triangles.  
If they tried rhomboids,  
Cones, waving lines, ellipses --  
As, for example, the ellipse of the half-moon --  
Rationalists would wear sombreros.

Wallace Stevens

# Study Of Two Pears

I

Opusculum paedagogum.  
The pears are not viols,  
Nudes or bottles.  
They resemble nothing else.

II

They are yellow forms  
Composed of curves  
Bulging toward the base.  
They are touched red.

III

They are not flat surfaces  
Having curved outlines.  
They are round  
Tapering toward the top.

IV

In the way they are modelled  
There are bits of blue.  
A hard dry leaf hangs  
From the stem.

V

The yellow glistens.  
It glistens with various yellows,  
Citrons, oranges and greens  
Flowering over the skin.

VI

The shadows of the pears  
Are blobs on the green cloth.  
The pears are not seen  
As the observer wills.

Wallace Stevens

# Sunday Morning

1

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late  
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,  
And the green freedom of a cockatoo  
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate  
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.  
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark  
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,  
As a calm darkens among water-lights.  
The pungent oranges and bright, green wings  
Seem things in some procession of the dead,  
Winding across wide water, without sound.  
The day is like wide water, without sound,  
Stilled for the passing of her dreaming feet  
Over the seas, to silent Palestine,  
Dominion of the blood and sepulchre.

2

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?  
What is divinity if it can come  
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?  
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,  
In pungent fruit and bright green wings, or else  
In any balm or beauty of the earth,  
Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?  
Divinity must live within herself:  
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;  
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued  
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty  
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;  
All pleasures and all pains, remembering  
The bough of summer and the winter branch.  
These are the measure destined for her soul.

3

Jove in the clouds had his inhuman birth.

No mother suckled him, no sweet land gave  
Large-mannered motions to his mythy mind.  
He moved among us, as a muttering king,  
Magnificent, would move among his hinds,  
Until our blood, commingling, virginal,  
With heaven, brought such requital to desire  
The very hinds discerned it, in a star.  
Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be  
The blood of paradise? And shall the earth  
Seem all of paradise that we shall know?  
The sky will be much friendlier then than now,  
A part of labor and a part of pain,  
And next in glory to enduring love,  
Not this dividing and indifferent blue.

4

She says, 'I am content when wakened birds,  
Before they fly, test the reality  
Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings;  
But when the birds are gone, and their warm fields  
Return no more, where, then, is paradise?'  
There is not any haunt of prophecy,  
Nor any old chimera of the grave,  
Neither the golden underground, nor isle  
Melodious, where spirits gat them home,  
Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm  
Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured  
As April's green endures; or will endure  
Like her remembrance of awakened birds,  
Or her desire for June and evening, tipped  
By the consummation of the swallow's wings.

5

She says, 'But in contentment I still feel  
The need of some imperishable bliss.'  
Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her,  
Alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams  
And our desires. Although she strews the leaves  
Of sure obliteration on our paths,  
The path sick sorrow took, the many paths

Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love  
Whispered a little out of tenderness,  
She makes the willow shiver in the sun  
For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze  
Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet.  
She causes boys to pile new plums and pears  
On disregarded plate. The maidens taste  
And stray impassioned in the littering leaves.

6

Is there no change of death in paradise?  
Does ripe fruit never fall? Or do the boughs  
Hang always heavy in that perfect sky,  
Unchanging, yet so like our perishing earth,  
With rivers like our own that seek for seas  
They never find, the same receding shores  
That never touch with inarticulate pang?  
Why set pear upon those river-banks  
Or spice the shores with odors of the plum?  
Alas, that they should wear our colors there,  
The silken weavings of our afternoons,  
And pick the strings of our insipid lutes!  
Death is the mother of beauty, mystical,  
Within whose burning bosom we devise  
Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly.

7

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men  
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn  
Their boisterous devotion to the sun,  
Not as a god, but as a god might be,  
Naked among them, like a savage source.  
Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,  
Out of their blood, returning to the sky;  
And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,  
The windy lake wherein their lord delights,  
The trees, like serafin, and echoing hills,  
That choir among themselves long afterward.  
They shall know well the heavenly fellowship  
Of men that perish and of summer morn.

And whence they came and whither they shall go  
The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

8

She hears, upon that water without sound,  
A voice that cries, 'The tomb in Palestine  
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.  
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay.'  
We live in an old chaos of the sun,  
Or old dependency of day and night,  
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,  
Of that wide water, inescapable.  
Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail  
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;  
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;  
And, in the isolation of the sky,  
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make  
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,  
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

Wallace Stevens

## Table Talk

Granted, we die for good.  
Life, then, is largely a thing  
Of happens to like, not should.

And that, too, granted, why  
Do I happen to like red bush,  
Grey grass and green-gray sky?

What else remains? But red,  
Gray, green, why those of all?  
That is not what I said:

Not those of all. But those.  
One likes what one happens to like.  
One likes the way red grows.

It cannot matter at all.  
Happens to like is one  
Of the ways things happen to fall.

Wallace Stevens

# Tattoo

The light is like a spider.  
It crawls over the water.  
It crawls over the edges of the snow.  
It crawls under your eyelids  
And spreads its webs there--  
Its two webs.

The webs of your eyes  
Are fastened  
To the flesh and bones of you  
As to rafters or grass.

There are filaments of your eyes  
On the surface of the water  
And in the edges of the snow.

Wallace Stevens

# Tea At The Palaz Of Hoon

Not less because in purple I descended  
The western day through what you called  
The loneliest air, not less was I myself.

What was the ointment sprinkled on my beard?  
What were the hymns that buzzed beside my ears?  
What was the sea whose tide swept through me there?

Out of my mind the golden ointment rained,  
And my ears made the blowing hymns they heard.  
I was myself the compass of that sea:

I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw  
Or heard or felt came not but from myself;  
And there I found myself more truly and more strange.

Wallace Stevens

# The Auroras of Autumn

This is where the serpent lives, the bodiless.  
His head is air. Beneath his tip at night  
Eyes open and fix on us in every sky.

Or is this another wriggling out of the egg,  
Another image at the end of the cave,  
Another bodiless for the body's slough?

This is where the serpent lives. This is his nest,  
These fields, these hills, these tinted distances,  
And the pines above and along and beside the sea.

This is form gulping after formlessness,  
Skin flashing to wished-for disappearances  
And the serpent body flashing without the skin.

This is the height emerging and its base  
These lights may finally attain a pole  
In the midmost midnight and find the serpent there,

In another nest, the master of the maze  
Of body and air and forms and images,  
Relentlessly in possession of happiness.

This is his poison: that we should disbelieve  
Even that. His meditations in the ferns,  
When he moved so slightly to make sure of sun,

Made us no less as sure. We saw in his head,  
Black beaded on the rock, the flecked animal,  
The moving grass, the Indian in his glade.

## II

Farewell to an idea . . . A cabin stands,  
Deserted, on a beach. It is white,  
As by a custom or according to

An ancestral theme or as a consequence

Of an infinite course. The flowers against the wall  
Are white, a little dried, a kind of mark

Reminding, trying to remind, of a white  
That was different, something else, last year  
Or before, not the white of an aging afternoon,

Whether fresher or duller, whether of winter cloud  
Or of winter sky, from horizon to horizon.  
The wind is blowing the sand across the floor.

Here, being visible is being white,  
Is being of the solid of white, the accomplishment  
Of an extremist in an exercise . . .

The season changes. A cold wind chills the beach.  
The long lines of it grow longer, emptier,  
A darkness gathers though it does not fall

And the whiteness grows less vivid on the wall.  
The man who is walking turns blankly on the sand.  
He observes how the north is always enlarging the change,

With its frigid brilliances, its blue-red sweeps  
And gusts of great enkindlings, its polar green,  
The color of ice and fire and solitude.

### III

Farewell to an idea . . . The mother's face,  
The purpose of the poem, fills the room.  
They are together, here, and it is warm,

With none of the prescience of oncoming dreams.  
It is evening. The house is evening, half dissolved.  
Only the half they can never possess remains,

Still-starred. It is the mother they possess,  
Who gives transparence to their present peace.  
She makes that gentler that can gentle be.

And yet she too is dissolved, she is destroyed.

She gives transparency. But she has grown old.  
The necklace is a carving not a kiss.

The soft hands are a motion not a touch.  
The house will crumble and the books will burn.  
They are at ease in a shelter of the mind

And the house is of the mind and they and time,  
Together, all together. Boreal night  
Will look like frost as it approaches them

And to the mother as she falls asleep  
And as they say good-night, good-night. Upstairs  
The windows will be lighted, not the rooms.

A wind will spread its windy grandeurs round  
And knock like a rifle-butt against the door.  
The wind will command them with invincible sound.

#### IV

Farewell to an idea . . . The cancellings,  
The negations are never final. The father sits  
In space, wherever he sits, of bleak regard,

As one that is strong in the bushes of his eyes.  
He says no to no and yes to yes. He says yes  
To no; and in saying yes he says farewell.

He measures the velocities of change.  
He leaps from heaven to heaven more rapidly  
Than bad angels leap from heaven to hell in flames.

But now he sits in quiet and green-a-day.  
He assumes the great speeds of space and flutters them  
From cloud to cloudless, cloudless to keen clear

In flights of eye and ear, the highest eye  
And the lowest ear, the deep ear that discerns,  
At evening, things that attend it until it hears

The supernatural preludes of its own,

At the moment when the angelic eye defines  
Its actors approaching, in company, in their masks.

Master O master seated by the fire  
And yet in space and motionless and yet  
Of motion the ever-brightening origin,

Profound, and yet the king and yet the crown,  
Look at this present throne. What company,  
In masks, can choir it with the naked wind?

V

The mother invites humanity to her house  
And table. The father fetches tellers of tales  
And musicians who mute much, muse much, on the tales.

The father fetches negresses to dance,  
Among the children, like curious ripenesses  
Of pattern in the dance's ripening.

For these the musicians make insidious tones,  
Clawing the sing-song of their instruments.  
The children laugh and jangle a tinny time.

The father fetches pageants out of air,  
Scenes of the theatre, vistas and blocks of woods  
And curtains like a naive pretence of sleep.

Among these the musicians strike the instinctive poem.  
The father fetches his unherded herds,  
Of barbarous tongue, slavered and panting halves

Of breath, obedient to his trumpet's touch.  
This then is Chatillon or as you please.  
We stand in the tumult of a festival.

What festival? This loud, disordered mooch?  
These hospitaliers? These brute-like guests?  
These musicians dubbing at a tragedy,

A-dub, a-dub, which is made up of this:

That there are no lines to speak? There is no play.  
Or, the persons act one merely by being here.

## VI

It is a theatre floating through the clouds,  
Itself a cloud, although of misted rock  
And mountains running like water, wave on wave,

Through waves of light. It is of cloud transformed  
To cloud transformed again, idly, the way  
A season changes color to no end,

Except the lavishing of itself in change,  
As light changes yellow into gold and gold  
To its opal elements and fire's delight,

Splashed wide-wise because it likes magnificence  
And the solemn pleasures of magnificent space  
The cloud drifts idly through half-thought-of forms.

The theatre is filled with flying birds,  
Wild wedges, as of a volcano's smoke, palm-eyed  
And vanishing, a web in a corridor

Or massive portico. A capitol,  
It may be, is emerging or has just  
Collapsed. The denouement has to be postponed . . .

This is nothing until in a single man contained,  
Nothing until this named thing nameless is  
And is destroyed. He opens the door of his house

On flames. The scholar of one candle sees  
An Arctic effulgence flaring on the frame  
Of everything he is. And he feels afraid.

## VII

Is there an imagination that sits enthroned  
As grim as it is benevolent, the just  
And the unjust, which in the midst of summer stops

To imagine winter? When the leaves are dead,  
Does it take its place in the north and enfold itself,  
Goat-leaper, crystallised and luminous, sitting

In highest night? And do these heavens adorn  
And proclaim it, the white creator of black, jetted  
By extinguishings, even of planets as may be,

Even of earth, even of sight, in snow,  
Except as needed by way of majesty,  
In the sky, as crown and diamond cabala?

It leaps through us, through all our heavens leaps,  
Extinguishing our planets, one by one,  
Leaving, of where we were and looked, of where

We knew each other and of each other thought,  
A shivering residue, chilled and foregone,  
Except for that crown and mystical cabala.

But it dare not leap by chance in its own dark.  
It must change from destiny to slight caprice.  
And thus its jetted tragedy, its stele

And shape and mournful making move to find  
What must unmake it and, at last, what can,  
Say, a flippant communication under the moon.

## VIII

There may be always a time of innocence.  
There is never a place. Or if there is no time,  
If it is not a thing of time, nor of place,

Existing in the idea of it, alone,  
In the sense against calamity, it is not  
Less real. For the oldest and coldest philosopher,

There is or may be a time of innocence  
As pure principle. Its nature is its end,  
That it should be, and yet not be, a thing

That pinches the pity of the pitiful man,  
Like a book at evening beautiful but untrue,  
Like a book on rising beautiful and true.

It is like a thing of ether that exists  
Almost as predicate. But it exists,  
It exists, it is visible, it is, it is.

So, then, these lights are not a spell of light,  
A saying out of a cloud, but innocence.  
An innocence of the earth and no false sign

Or symbol of malice. That we partake thereof,  
Lie down like children in this holiness,  
As if, awake, we lay in the quiet of sleep,

As if the innocent mother sang in the dark  
Of the room and on an accordion, half-heard,  
Created the time and place in which we breathed . . .

## IX

And of each other thought—in the idiom  
Of the work, in the idiom of an innocent earth,  
Not of the enigma of the guilty dream.

We were as Danes in Denmark all day long  
And knew each other well, hale-hearted landsmen,  
For whom the outlandish was another day

Of the week, queerer than Sunday. We thought alike  
And that made brothers of us in a home  
In which we fed on being brothers, fed

And fattened as on a decorous honeycomb.  
This drama that we live—We lay sticky with sleep.  
This sense of the activity of fate—

The rendezvous, when she came alone,  
By her coming became a freedom of the two,

An isolation which only the two could share.

Shall we be found hanging in the trees next spring?  
Of what disaster in this the imminence:  
Bare limbs, bare trees and a wind as sharp as salt?

The stars are putting on their glittering belts.  
They throw around their shoulders cloaks that flash  
Like a great shadow's last embellishment.

It may come tomorrow in the simplest word,  
Almost as part of innocence, almost,  
Almost as the tenderest and the truest part.

X

An unhappy people in a happy world—  
Read, rabbi, the phases of this difference.  
An unhappy people in an unhappy world—

Here are too many mirrors for misery.  
A happy people in an unhappy world—  
It cannot be. There's nothing there to roll

On the expressive tongue, the finding fang.  
A happy people in a happy world—  
Buffo! A ball, an opera, a bar.

Turn back to where we were when we began:  
An unhappy people in a happy world.  
Now, solemnize the secretive syllables.

Read to the congregation, for today  
And for tomorrow, this extremity,  
This contrivance of the spectre of the spheres,

Contriving balance to contrive a whole,  
The vital, the never-failing genius,  
Fulfilling his meditations, great and small.

In these unhappy he meditates a whole,  
The full of fortune and the full of fate,

As if he lived all lives, that he might know,

In hall harridan, not hushful paradise,

To a haggling of wind and weather, by these lights

Like a blaze of summer straw, in winter's nick.

Wallace Stevens

# The Death Of A Soldier

Life contracts and death is expected,  
As in season of autumn.  
The soldier falls.

He does not become a three-days personage.  
Imposing his separation,  
Calling for pomp.

Death is absolute and without memorial,  
As in a season of autumn,  
When the wind stops,

When the wind stops and, over the heavens,  
The clouds go, nevertheless,  
In their direction.

Wallace Stevens

# The Emperor Of Ice-Cream

Call the roller of big cigars,  
The muscular one, and bid him whip  
In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.  
Let the wenches dawdle in such dress  
As they are used to wear, and let the boys  
Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.  
Let be be finale of seem.  
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Take from the dresser of deal  
Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet  
On which she embroidered fantails once  
And spread it so as to cover her face.  
If her horny feet protrude, they come  
To show how cold she is, and dumb.  
Let the lamp affix its beam.  
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Wallace Stevens

# The High-Toned Old Christian Woman

Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame.  
Take the moral law and make a nave of it  
And from the nave build haunted ,  
The conscience is converted into palms,  
Like windy citherns hankering for hymns.  
We agree in 's take  
The opposing law and make a peristyle,  
And from the peristyle project a masque  
Beyond the , our bawdiness,  
Unpurged by epitaph, indulged at last,  
Is equally converted into palms,  
Squiggling like palm for palm,  
Madame, we are where we ,  
Therefore, that in the planetary scene  
Your disaffected flagellants, well-stuffed,  
Smacking their muzzy bellies in parade,  
Proud of such novelties of the sublime,  
Such tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk,  
May, merely may, madame, whip from themselves  
A jovial hullabaloo among the spheres.  
This will make widows fictive things  
Wink as they most when widows wince.

Wallace Stevens

# The House Was Quiet And The World Was Calm

The house was quiet and the world was calm.  
The reader became the book; and summer night

Was like the conscious being of the book.  
The house was quiet and the world was calm.

The words were spoken as if there was no book,  
Except that the reader leaned above the page,

Wanted to lean, wanted much to be  
The scholar to whom his book is true, to whom

The summer night is like a perfection of thought.  
The house was quiet because it had to be.

The quiet was part of the meaning, part of the mind:  
The access of perfection to the page.

And the world was calm. The truth in a calm world,  
In which there is no other meaning, itself

Is calm, itself is summer and night, itself  
Is the reader leaning late and reading there.

Wallace Stevens

# The Idea Of Order At Key West

She sang beyond the genius of the sea.  
The water never formed to mind or voice,  
Like a body wholly body, fluttering  
Its empty sleeves; and yet its mimic motion  
Made constant cry, caused constantly a cry,  
That was not ours although we understood,  
Inhuman, of the veritable ocean.

The sea was not a mask. No more was she.  
The song and water were not medleyed sound  
Even if what she sang was what she heard,  
Since what she sang was uttered word by word.  
It may be that in all her phrases stirred  
The grinding water and the gasping wind;  
But it was she and not the sea we heard.

For she was the maker of the song she sang.  
The ever-hooded, tragic-gestured sea  
Was merely a place by which she walked to sing.  
Whose spirit is this? we said, because we knew  
It was the spirit that we sought and knew  
That we should ask this often as she sang.

If it was only the dark voice of the sea  
That rose, or even colored by many waves;  
If it was only the outer voice of sky  
And cloud, of the sunken coral water-walled,  
However clear, it would have been deep air,  
The heaving speech of air, a summer sound  
Repeated in a summer without end  
And sound alone. But it was more than that,  
More even than her voice, and ours, among  
The meaningless plungings of water and the wind,  
Theatrical distances, bronze shadows heaped  
On high horizons, mountainous atmospheres  
Of sky and sea.  
It was her voice that made  
The sky acutest at its vanishing.  
She measured to the hour its solitude.

She was the single artificer of the world  
In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,  
Whatever self it had, became the self  
That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we,  
As we beheld her striding there alone,  
Knew that there was never a world for her  
Except the one she sang and, singing, made.

Ramon Fernandez, tell me, if you know,  
Why, when the singing ended and we turned  
Toward the town, tell why the glassy lights,  
The lights in the fishing boats at anchor there,  
As the night descended, tilting in the air,  
Mastered the night and portioned out the sea,  
Fixing emblazoned zones and fiery poles,  
Arranging, deepening, enchanting night.

Oh! Blessed rage for order, pale Ramon,  
The maker's rage to order words of sea  
Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred,  
And of ourselves and our origins,  
In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds.

Wallace Stevens

# The Man On The Dump

Day creeps down. The moon is creeping up.  
The sun is a corbeil of flowers the moon Blanche  
Places there, a bouquet. Ho-ho...The dump is full  
Of images. Days pass like papers from a press.  
The bouquets come here in the papers. So the sun,  
And so the moon, both come, and the janitor's poems  
Of every day, the wrapper on the can of pears,  
The cat in the paper-bag, the corset, the box  
From Esthonia: the tiger chest, for tea.

The freshness of night has been fresh a long time.  
The freshness of morning, the blowing of day, one says  
That it puffs as Cornelius Nepos reads, it puffs  
More than, less than or it puffs like this or that.  
The green smacks in the eye, the dew in the green  
Smacks like fresh water in a can, like the sea  
On a cocoanut—how many men have copied dew  
For buttons, how many women have covered themselves  
With dew, dew dresses, stones and chains of dew, heads  
Of the floweriest flowers dewed with the dewiest dew.  
One grows to hate these things except on the dump.

Now in the time of spring (azaleas, trilliums,  
Myrtle, viburnums, daffodils, blue phlox) ,  
Between that disgust and this, between the things  
That are on the dump (azaleas and so on)  
And those that will be (azaleas and so on) ,  
One feels the purifying change. One rejects  
The trash.

That's the moment when the moon creeps up  
To the bubbling of bassoons. That's the time  
One looks at the elephant-colorings of tires.  
Everything is shed; and the moon comes up as the moon  
(All its images are in the dump) and you see  
As a man (not like an image of a man) ,  
You see the moon rise in the empty sky.

One sits and beats an old tin can, lard pail.

One beats and beats for that which one believes.  
That's what one wants to get near. Could it after all  
Be merely oneself, as superior as the ear  
To a crow's voice? Did the nightingale torture the ear,  
Pack the heart and scratch the mind? And does the ear  
Solace itself in peevish birds? Is it peace,  
Is it a philosopher's honeymoon, one finds  
On the dump? Is it to sit among mattresses of the dead,  
Bottles, pots, shoes, and grass and murmur aptest eve:  
Is it to hear the blatter of grackles and say  
Invisible priest; is it to eject, to pull  
The day to pieces and cry stanza my stone?  
Where was it one first heard of the truth? The the.

Wallace Stevens

# The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad

The time of year has grown indifferent.  
Mildew of summer and the deepening snow  
Are both alike in the routine I know:  
I am too dumbly in my being pent.

The wind attendant on the solstices  
Blows on the shutters of the metropolises,  
Stirring no poet in his sleep, and tolls  
The grand ideas of the villages.

The malady of the quotidian . . .  
Perhaps if summer ever came to rest  
And lengthened, deepened, comforted, caressed  
Through days like oceans in obsidian

Horizons, full of night's midsummer blaze;  
Perhaps, if winter once could penetrate  
Through all its purples to the final slate,  
Persisting bleakly in an icy haze;

One might in turn become less diffident,  
Out of such mildew plucking neater mould  
And spouting new orations of the cold.  
One might. One might. But time will not relent.

Wallace Stevens

# The Man With The Blue Guitar

The man bent over his guitar,  
A shearsman of sorts. The day was green.

They said, 'You have a blue guitar,  
You do not play things as they are.'

The man replied, 'Things as they are  
Are changed upon the blue guitar.'

And they said then, 'But play, you must,  
A tune beyond us, yet ourselves,

A tune upon the blue guitar  
Of things exactly as they are.'

## II

I cannot bring a world quite round,  
Although I patch it as I can.

I sing a hero's head, large eye  
And bearded bronze, but not a man,

Although I patch him as I can  
And reach through him almost to man.

If to serenade almost to man  
Is to miss, by that, things as they are,

Say it is the serenade  
Of a man that plays a blue guitar.

## III

Ah, but to play man number one,  
To drive the dagger in his heart,

To lay his brain upon the board  
And pick the acrid colors out,

To nail his thought across the door,

Its wings spread wide to rain and snow,

To strike his living hi and ho,  
To tick it, tock it, turn it true,

To bang from it a savage blue,  
Jangling the metal of the strings

IV

So that's life, then: things as they are?  
It picks its way on the blue guitar.

A million people on one string?  
And all their manner in the thing,

And all their manner, right and wrong,  
And all their manner, weak and strong?

The feelings crazily, craftily call,  
Like a buzzing of flies in autumn air,

And that's life, then: things as they are,  
This buzzing of the blue guitar.

V

Do not speak to us of the greatness of poetry,  
Of the torches wisping in the underground,

Of the structure of vaults upon a point of light.  
There are no shadows in our sun,

Day is desire and night is sleep.  
There are no shadows anywhere.

The earth, for us, is flat and bare.  
There are no shadows. Poetry

Exceeding music must take the place  
Of empty heaven and its hymns,

Ourselves in poetry must take their place,  
Even in the chattering of your guitar.

## VI

A tune beyond us as we are,  
Yet nothing changed by the blue guitar;

Ourselves in the tune as if in space,  
Yet nothing changed, except the place

Of things as they are and only the place  
As you play them, on the blue guitar,

Placed, so, beyond the compass of change,  
Perceived in a final atmosphere;

For a moment final, in the way  
The thinking of art seems final when

The thinking of god is smoky dew.  
The tune is space. The blue guitar

Becomes the place of things as they are,  
A composing of senses of the guitar.

## VII

It is the sun that shares our works.  
The moon shares nothing. It is a sea.

When shall I come to say of the sun,  
It is a sea; it shares nothing;

The sun no longer shares our works  
And the earth is alive with creeping men,

Mechanical beetles never quite warm?  
And shall I then stand in the sun, as now

I stand in the moon, and call it good,  
The immaculate, the merciful good,

Detached from us, from things as they are?  
Not to be part of the sun? To stand

Remote and call it merciful?  
The strings are cold on the blue guitar.

### VIII

The vivid, florid, turgid sky,  
The drenching thunder rolling by,

The morning deluged still by night,  
The clouds tumultuously bright

And the feeling heavy in cold chords  
Struggling toward impassioned choirs,

Crying among the clouds, enraged  
By gold antagonists in air-

I know my lazy, leaden twang  
Is like the reason in a storm;

And yet it brings the storm to bear.  
I twang it out and leave it there.

### IX

And the color, the overcast blue  
Of the air, in which the blue guitar

Is a form, described but difficult,  
And I am merely a shadow hunched

Above the arrowy, still strings,  
The maker of a thing yet to be made;

The color like a thought that grows  
Out of a mood, the tragic robe

Of the actor, half his gesture, half  
His speech, the dress of his meaning, silk

Sodden with his melancholy words,  
The weather of his stage, himself.

### X

Raise reddest columns. Toll a bell  
And clap the hollows full of tin.

Throw papers in the streets, the wills  
Of the dead, majestic in their seals.

And the beautiful trombones-behold  
The approach of him whom none believes,

Whom all believe that all believe,  
A pagan in a varnished care.

Roll a drum upon the blue guitar.  
Lean from the steeple. Cry aloud,

'Here am I, my adversary, that  
Confront you, hoo-ing the slick trombones,

Yet with a petty misery  
At heart, a petty misery,

Ever the prelude to your end,  
The touch that topples men and rock.'

XV

Is this picture of Picasso's, this 'hoard  
Of destructions', a picture of ourselves,

Now, an image of our society?  
Do I sit, deformed, a naked egg,

Catching at Good-bye, harvest moon,  
Without seeing the harvest or the moon?

Things as they are have been destroyed.  
Have I? Am I a man that is dead

At a table on which the food is cold?  
Is my thought a memory, not alive?

Is the spot on the floor, there, wine or blood  
And whichever it may be, is it mine?

XXIII

A few final solutions, like a duet  
With the undertaker: a voice in the clouds,

Another on earth, the one a voice  
Of ether, the other smelling of drink,

The voice of ether prevailing, the swell  
Of the undertaker's song in the snow

Apostrophizing wreaths, the voice  
In the clouds serene and final, next

The grunted breath scene and final,  
The imagined and the real, thought

And the truth, Dichtung und Wahrheit, all  
Confusion solved, as in a refrain

One keeps on playing year by year,  
Concerning the nature of things as they are.

XXX

From this I shall evolve a man.  
This is his essence: the old fantoche

Hanging his shawl upon the wind,  
Like something on the stage, puffed out,

His strutting studied through centuries.  
At last, in spite of his manner, his eye

A-cock at the cross-piece on a pole  
Supporting heavy cables, slung

Through Oxidia, banal suburb,  
One-half of all its installments paid.

Dew-dapper clapper-traps, blazing  
From crusty stacks above machines.

Ecce, Oxidia is the seed  
Dropped out of this amber-ember pod,

Oxidia is the soot of fire,  
Oxidia is Olympia.

XXXI

How long and late the pheasant sleeps  
The employer and employee contend,

Combat, compose their droll affair.  
The bubbling sun will bubble up,

Spring sparkle and the cock-bird shriek.  
The employer and employee will hear

And continue their affair. The shriek  
Will rack the thickets. There is no place,

Here, for the lark fixed in the mind,  
In the museum of the sky. The cock

Will claw sleep. Morning is not sun,  
It is this posture of the nerves,

As if a blunted player clutched  
The nuances of the blue guitar.

It must be this rhapsody or none,  
The rhapsody of things as they are.

XXXII

Throw away the lights, the definitions,  
And say of what you see in the dark

That it is this or that it is that,  
But do not use the rotted names.

How should you walk in that space and know  
Nothing of the madness of space,

Nothing of its jocular procreations?

Throw the lights away. Nothing must stand

Between you and the shapes you take  
When the crust of shape has been destroyed.

You as you are? You are yourself.  
The blue guitar surprises you.

XXXIII

That generation's dream, aviled  
In the mud, in Monday's dirty light,

That's it, the only dream they knew,  
Time in its final block, not time

To come, a wrangling of two dreams.  
Here is the bread of time to come,

Here is its actual stone. The bread  
Will be our bread, the stone will be

Our bed and we shall sleep by night.  
We shall forget by day, except

The moments when we choose to play  
The imagined pine, the imagined jay.

Wallace Stevens

# The Planet On The Table

Ariel was glad he had written his poems.  
They were of a remembered time  
Or of something seen that he liked.

Other makings of the sun  
Were waste and welter  
And the ripe shrub writhed.

His self and the sun were one  
And his poems, although makings of his self,  
Were no less makings of the sun.

It was not important that they survive.  
What mattered was that they should bear  
Some lineament or character,

Some affluence, if only half-perceived,  
In the poverty of their words,  
Of the planet of which they were part.

Wallace Stevens

# The Plot Against The Giant

*First Girl*

When this yokel comes maundering,  
Whetting his hacker,  
I shall run before him,  
Diffusing the civilest odors  
Out of geraniums and unsmelled flowers.  
It will check him.

*Second Girl*

I shall run before him,  
Arching cloths besprinkled with colors  
As small as fish-eggs.  
The threads  
Will abash him.

*Third Girl*

Oh, la...le pauvre!  
I shall run before him,  
With a curious puffing.  
He will bend his ear then.  
I shall whisper  
Heavenly labials in a world of gutturals.  
It will undo him.

Wallace Stevens

# The Poem That Took The Place Of A Mountain

There it was, word for word,  
The poem that took the place of a mountain.

He breathed its oxygen,  
Even when the book lay turned in the dust of his table.

It reminded him how he had needed  
A place to go to in his own direction,

How he had recomposed the pines,  
Shifted the rocks and picked his way among clouds,

For the outlook that would be right,  
Where he would be complete in an unexplained completion:

The exact rock where his inexactness  
Would discover, at last, the view toward which they had edged,

Where he could lie and, gazing down at the sea,  
Recognize his unique and solitary home.

Wallace Stevens

# The River Of Rivers In Connecticut

There is a great river this side of Stygia  
Before one comes to the first black cataracts  
And trees that lack the intelligence of trees.

In that river, far this side of Stygia,  
The mere flowing of the water is a gayety,  
Flashing and flashing in the sun. On its banks,

No shadow walks. The river is fateful,  
Like the last one. But there is no ferryman.  
He could not bend against its propelling force.

It is not to be seen beneath the appearances  
That tell of it. The steeple at Farmington  
Stands glistening and Haddam shines and sways.

It is the third commonness with light and air,  
A curriculum, a vigor, a local abstraction . . .  
Call it, one more, a river, an unnamed flowing,

Space-filled, reflecting the seasons, the folk-lore  
Of each of the senses; call it, again and again,  
The river that flows nowhere, like a sea.

Wallace Stevens

# The Sense Of The Sleight-Of-Hand Man

One's grand flights, one's Sunday baths,  
One's tootings at the weddings of the soul  
Occur as they occur. So bluish clouds  
Occurred above the empty house and the leaves  
Of the rhododendrons rattled their gold,  
As if someone lived there. Such floods of white  
Came bursting from the clouds. So the wind  
Threw its contorted strength around the sky.

Could you have said the bluejay suddenly  
Would swoop to earth? It is a wheel, the rays  
Around the sun. The wheel survives the myths.  
The fire eye in the clouds survives the gods.  
To think of a dove with an eye of grenadine  
And pines that are cornets, so it occurs,  
And a little island full of geese and stars:  
It may be the ignorant man, alone,  
Has any chance to mate his life with life  
That is the sensual, pearly spuse, the life  
That is fluent in even the wintriest bronze.

Wallace Stevens

# The Snow Man

One must have a mind of winter  
To regard the frost and the boughs  
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time  
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,  
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think  
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,  
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land  
Full of the same wind  
That is blowing in the same bare place  
For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Wallace Stevens

# The Well Dressed Man With A Beard

After the final no there comes a yes  
And on that yes the future world depends.  
No was the night. Yes is this present sun.  
If the rejected things, the things denied,  
Slid over the western cataract, yet one,  
One only, one thing that was firm, even  
No greater than a cricket's horn, no more  
Than a thought to be rehearsed all day, a speech  
Of the self that must sustain itself on speech,  
One thing remaining, infallible, would be  
Enough. Ah! douce campagna of that thing!  
Ah! douce campagna, honey in the heart,  
Green in the body, out of a petty phrase,  
Out of a thing believed, a thing affirmed:  
The form on the pillow humming while one sleeps,  
The aureole above the humming house...  
It can never be satisfied, the mind, never.

Wallace Stevens

# Thirteen Ways Of Looking At A Blackbird

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,  
The only moving thing  
Was the eye of the black bird.

II

I was of three minds,  
Like a tree  
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.  
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman  
Are one.  
A man and a woman and a blackbird  
Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer,  
The beauty of inflections  
Or the beauty of innuendoes,  
The blackbird whistling  
Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window  
With barbaric glass.  
The shadow of the blackbird  
Crossed it, to and fro.  
The mood

Traced in the shadow  
An indecipherable cause.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,  
Why do you imagine golden birds?  
Do you not see how the blackbird  
Walks around the feet  
Of the women about you?

VIII

I know noble accents  
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;  
But I know, too,  
That the blackbird is involved  
In what I know.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,  
It marked the edge  
Of one of many circles.

X

At the sight of blackbirds  
Flying in a green light,  
Even the bawds of euphony  
Would cry out sharply.

XI

He rode over Connecticut  
In a glass coach.  
Once, a fear pierced him,  
In that he mistook  
The shadow of his equipage  
For blackbirds.

XII

The river is moving.  
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.  
It was snowing  
And it was going to snow.  
The blackbird sat  
In the cedar-limbs.

Wallace Stevens

# To The One Of Fictive Music

Sister and mother and diviner love,  
And of the sisterhood of the living dead  
Most near, most clear, and of the clearest bloom,  
And of the fragrant mothers the most dear  
And queen, and of diviner love the day  
And flame and summer and sweet fire, no thread  
Of cloudy silver sprinkles in your gown  
Its venom of renown, and on your head  
No crown is simpler than the simple hair.

Now, of the music summoned by the birth  
That separates us from the wind and sea,  
Yet leaves us in them, until earth becomes,  
By being so much of the things we are,  
Gross effigy and simulacrum, none  
Gives motion to perfection more serene  
Than yours, out of our own imperfections wrought,  
Most rare, or ever of more kindred air  
In the laborious weaving that you wear.

For so retentive of themselves are men  
That music is intensest which proclaims  
The near, the clear, and vaunts the clearest bloom,  
And of all the vigils musing the obscure,  
That apprehends the most which sees and names,  
As in your name, an image that is sure,  
Among the arrant spices of the sun,  
O bough and bush and scented vine, in whom  
We give ourselves our likest issuance.

Yet not too like, yet not so like to be  
Too near, too clear, saving a little to endow  
Our feigning with the strange unlike, whence springs  
The difference that heavenly pity brings.  
For this, musician, in your girdle fixed  
Bear other perfumes. On your pale head wear  
A band entwining, set with fatal stones.  
Unreal, give back to us what once you gave:  
The imagination that we spurned and crave.

Submitted by Adriana C

Wallace Stevens

## Two Figures In Dense Violet Light

I had as lief be embraced by the portier of the hotel  
As to get no more from the moonlight  
Than your moist hand.

Be the voice of the night and Florida in my ear.  
Use dasky words and dusky images.  
Darken your speech.

Speak, even, as if I did not hear you speaking,  
But spoke for you perfectly in my thoughts,  
Conceiving words,

As the night conceives the sea-sound in silence,  
And out of the droning sibilants makes  
A serenade.

Say, puerile, that the buzzards crouch on the ridge-pole  
and sleep with one eye watching the stars fall  
Beyond Key West.

Say that the palms are clear in the total blue.  
Are clear and are obscure; that it is night;  
That the moon shines.

Wallace Stevens

# Valley Candle

My candle burned alone in an immense valley.  
Beams of the huge night converged upon it,  
Until the wind blew.  
The beams of the huge night  
Converged upon its image,  
Until the wind blew.

Wallace Stevens

# What Is Divinity

What is divinity if it can come  
Only in silent shadows and in dreams?  
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,  
In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else  
In any balm or beauty of the earth,  
Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?  
Divinity must live within herself:  
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;  
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued  
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty  
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;  
All pleasures and all pains, remembering  
The bough of summer and the winter branch,  
These are the measures destined for her soul.

Wallace Stevens