

HARMONIUM

Wallace Stevens



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PUBLISHED: 1923
SOURCE: WIKISOURCE

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Earthy Anecdote

Every time the bucks went clattering
Over Oklahoma
A firecat bristled in the way.

Wherever they went,
They went clattering,
Until they swerved
In a swift, circular line
To the right,
Because of the firecat.

Or until they swerved
In a swift, circular line
To the left,
Because of the firecat.

The bucks clattered.
The firecat went leaping,
To the right, to the left,
And
Bristled in the way.

Later, the firecat closed his bright eyes
And slept.

Invective against Swans

The soul, O ganders, flies beyond the parks
And far beyond the discords of the wind.

A bronze rain from the sun descending marks
The death of summer, which that time endures

Like one who scrawls a listless testament
Of golden quirks and Paphian caricatures,

Bequeathing your white feathers to the moon
And giving your bland motions to the air.

Behold, already on the long parades
The crows anoint the statues with their dirt.

And the soul, O ganders, being lonely, flies
Beyond your chilly chariots, to the skies.

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

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

The Paltry Nude Starts on a Spring Voyage

But not on a shell, she starts, Archaic, for the sea. But on the first-found weed She scuds the glitters, Noiselessly, like one more wave.

She too is discontent And would have purple stuff upon her arms, Tired of the salty harbors, Eager for the brine and bellowing Of the high interiors of the sea.

The wind speeds her, Blowing upon her hands And watery back. She touches the clouds, where she goes In the circle of her traverse of the sea.

Yet this is meagre play In the scurry and water-shine, As her heels foam— Not as when the goldener nude Of a later day

Will go, like the centre of sea-green pomp, In an intenser calm, Scullion of fate, Across the spick torrent, ceaselessly, Upon her irretrievable way.

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.

Infanta Marina

Her terrace was the sand And the palms and the twilight.

She made of the motions of her wrist The grandiose gestures Of her thought.

The rumpling of the plumes Of this creature of the evening Came to be sleights of sails Over the sea.

And thus she roamed In the roamings of her fan,

Partaking of the sea, And of the evening, As they flowed around And uttered their subsiding sound.

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.

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.

The Ordinary Women

Then from their poverty they rose, From dry catarrhs, and to guitars They
flitted Through the palace walls.

They flung monotony behind, Turned from their want, and, nonchalant,
They crowded The nocturnal halls.

The lacquered loges huddled there Mumbled zay-zay and a-zay, a-zay. The
moonlight Fubbed the girandoles.

And the cold dresses that they wore, In the vapid haze of the window-bays,
Were tranquil As they leaned and looked

From the window-sills at the alphabets, At beta b and gamma g, To study
The canting curlicues

Of heaven and of the heavenly script. And there they read of marriage-bed.
Ti-lill-o! And they read right long.

The gaunt guitarists on the strings Rumbled a-day and a-day, a-day. The
moonlight Rose on the beachy floors.

How explicit the coiffures became, The diamond point, the sapphire point,
The sequins Of the civil fans!

Insinuations of desire, Puissant speech, alike in each, Cried quittance To the
wickless halls.

Then from their poverty they rose, From dry guitars, and to catarrhs They
flitted Through the palace walls.

The Load of Sugar-Cane

The going of the glade-boat Is like water flowing;
Like water flowing Through the green saw-grass, Under the rainbows;
Under the rainbows That are like birds, Turning, bedizened,
While the wind still whistles As kildeer do,
When they rise At the red turban Of the boatman.

Le Monocle de Mon Oncle

I "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 Yangste 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.

VIIIf 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 intro-
spective exiles, lecturing. It is a theme for Hyacinth alone.

VIIThe 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 re-
veals a way of truth. Our bloom is gone. We are the fruit thereof. Two gold-
en gourds distended on our vines, We hang like warty squashes, streaked
and rayed, Into the autumn weather, splashed with frost, Distorted by hale
fatness, turned grotesque. 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-vermil-
ion 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.

XII 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, Clippered 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 side-long 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.

Nuances of a Theme by Williams

It's a strange courage you give me, ancient star:

Shine alone in the sunrise toward which you lend no part!

I Shine alone, shine nakedly, shine like bronze, that reflects neither my face
nor any inner part of my being, shine like fire, that mirrors nothing.

II Lend no part to any humanity that suffuses you in its own light. Be not
chimera of morning, Half-man, half-star. Be not an intelligence, Like a wid-
ow's bird Or an old horse.

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. . . .

Ploughing on Sunday

The white cock's tailTosses in the wind.The turkey-cock's tailGlitters in the sun.

Water in the fields.The wind pours down.The feathers flareAnd bluster in the wind.

Remus, blow your horn!I'm ploughing on Sunday,Ploughing North America.Blow your horn!

Tum-ti-tum,Ti-tum-tum-tum!The turkey-cock's tailSpreads to the sun.

The white cock's tailStreams to the moon.Water in the fields.The wind pours down.

Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges

Ursula, in a garden, found A bed of radishes. She kneeled upon the ground
And gathered them, With flowers around, Blue, gold, pink, and green.
She dressed in red and gold brocade And in the grass an offering made Of
radishes and flowers.

She said, "My dear, Upon your altars, I have placed The marguerite and co-
quelicot, And roses Frail as April snow; But here," she said, "Where none
can see, I make an offering, in the grass, Of radishes and flowers." And then
she wept For fear the Lord would not accept.

The good Lord in His garden sought New leaf and shadowy tinct, And they
were all His thought. He heard her low accord, Half prayer and half ditty,
And He felt a subtle quiver, That was not heavenly love, Or pity.

This is not writ In any book.

Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores

I say now, Fernando, that on that day The mind roamed as a moth roams,
Among the blooms beyond the open sand;
And that whatever noise the motion of the waves Made on the sea-weeds
and the covered stones Disturbed not even the most idle ear.
Then it was that that monstered moth Which had lain folded against the
blue And the colored purple of the lazy sea,
And which had drowsed along the bony shores, Shut to the blather that the
water made, Rose up besprent and sought the flaming red
Dabbled with yellow pollen—red as red As the flag above the old café—
And roamed there all the stupid afternoon.

Fabliau of Florida

Barque of phosphor On the palmy beach,
Move outward into heaven, Into the alabasters And night blues.
Foam and cloud are one. Sultry moon-monsters Are dissolving.
Fill your black hull With white moonlight.
There will never be an end To this droning of the surf.

The Doctor of Geneva

The doctor of Geneva stamped the sand That lay impounding the Pacific
swell, Patted his stove-pipe hat and tugged his shawl.

Lacustrine man had never been assailed By such long-rolling opulent
cataracts, Unless [Racine](#) or [Bossuet](#) held the like.

He did not quail. A man so used to plumb The multifarious heavens felt no
awe Before these visible, voluble delugings,

Which yet found means to set his simmering mind Spinning and hissing
with oracular Notations of the wild, the ruinous waste,

Until the steeples of his city clanked and sprang In an unburgherly apoca-
lypse. The doctor used his handkerchief and sighed.

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.

Homunculus et La Belle Etoile

In the sea, Biscayne, there prinks The young emerald, evening star, Good light for drunkards, poets, widows, And ladies soon to be married.

By this light the salty fishes Arch in the sea like tree-branches, Going in many directions Up and down.

This light conducts The thoughts of drunkards, the feelings Of widows and trembling ladies, The movements of fishes.

How pleasant an existence it is That this emerald charms philosophers, Until they become thoughtlessly willing To bathe their hearts in later moon-light,

Knowing that they can bring back thought In the night that is still to be silent, Reflecting this thing and that, Before they sleep!

It is better that, as scholars, They should think hard in the dark cuffs Of voluminous cloaks, And shave their heads and bodies.

It might well be that their mistress Is no gaunt fugitive phantom. She might, after all, be a wanton, Abundantly beautiful, eager,

Fecund, From whose being by starlight, on sea-coast, The innermost good of their seeking Might come in the simplest of speech.

It is a good light, then, for those That know the ultimate Plato, Tranquillizing with this jewel The torments of confusion.

The Comedian As the Letter C

I

The World without Imagination

Nota: man is the intelligence of his soil, The sovereign ghost. As such, the
Socrates Of snails, musician of pears, principium And lex. Sed quaeritur: is
this same wig Of things, this nincompated pedagogue, Preceptor to the sea?
Crispin at sea Created, in his day, a touch of doubt. An eye most apt in
gelatines and jupes, Berries of villages, a barber's eye, An eye of land, of
simple salad-beds, Of honest quilts, the eye of Crispin, hung On porpoises,
instead of apricots, And on silentious porpoises, whose snouts Dibbled in
waves that were mustachios, Inscrutable hair in an inscrutable world.
One eats one pate, even of salt, quotha. It was not so much the lost terrestri-
al, The snug hibernal from that sea and salt, That century of wind in a single
puff. What counted was mythology of self, Blotched out beyond unblotching.
Crispin, The lutanist of fleas, the knave, the thane, The ribboned stick, the
bellowing breeches, cloak Of China, cap of Spain, imperative haw Of hum,
inquisitorial botanist, And general lexicographer of mute And maidenly
greenhorns, now beheld himself, A skinny sailor peering in the sea-
glass. What word split up in cllickering syllables And storming under multi-
tudinous tones Was name for this short-shanks in all that brunt? Crispin was
washed away by magnitude. The whole of life that still remained in
him Dwindled to one sound strumming in his ear, Ubiquitous concussion,
slap and sigh, Polyphony beyond his baton's thrust. Could Crispin stem ver-
boseness in the sea, The old age of a watery realist, Triton, dissolved in shift-
ing diaphanes Of blue and green? A wordy, watery age That whispered to the
sun's compassion, made A convocation, nightly, of the sea-stars, And on the
clopping foot-ways of the moon Lay grovelling. Triton incomplicate with
that Which made him Triton, nothing left of him, Except in faint, memorial
gesturings, That were like arms and shoulders in the waves, Here, something
in the rise and fall of wind That seemed hallucinating horn, and here, A
sunken voice, both of remembering And of forgetfulness, in alternate
strain. Just so an ancient Crispin was dissolved. The valet in the tempest was
annulled. Bordeaux to Yucatan, Havana next, And then to Carolina. Simple
jaunt. Crispin, merest minuscule in the gales, Dejected his manner to the tur-
bulence. The salt hung on his spirit like a frost, The dead brine melted in him

like a dew
Of winter, until nothing of himself
Remained, except some stark-
er, barer self
In a starker, barer world, in which the sun
Was not the sun be-
cause it never shone
With bland complaisance on pale parasols,
Beetled, in
chapels, on the chaste bouquets.
Against his pipping sounds a trumpet
cried
Celestial sneering boisterously. Crispin
Became an introspective voy-
ager.

Here was the veritable ding an sich, at last,
Crispin confronting it, a vocable
thing,
But with a speech belched out of hoary darks
Noway resembling his, a
visible thing,
And excepting negligible Triton, free
From the unavoidable
shadow of himself
That lay elsewhere around him. Severance
Was clear. The
last distortion of romance
Forsook the insatiable egotist. The sea
Severs not
only lands but also selves.
Here was no help before reality.
Crispin beheld
and Crispin was made new.
The imagination, here, could not evade,
In po-
ems of plums, the strict austerity
Of one vast, subjugating, final tone.
The
drenching of stale lives no more fell down.
What was this gaudy, gusty
panoply?
Out of what swift destruction did it spring?
It was caparison of
wind and cloud
And something given to make whole among
The ruses that
were shattered by the large.

II

Concerning the Thunderstorms of Yucatan

In Yucatan, the Maya sonneteers
Of the Caribbean amphitheatre,
In spite of
hawk and falcon, green toucan
And jay, still to the night-bird made their
plea,
As if raspberry tanagers in palms,
High up in orange air, were bar-
barous.
But Crispin was too destitute to find
In any commonplace the sought-
for aid.
He was a man made vivid by the sea,
A man come out of luminous
traversing,
Much trumpeted, made desperately clear,
Fresh from discoveries
of tidal skies,
To whom oracular rockings gave no rest.
Into a savage color he
went on.

How greatly had he grown in his demesne,
This auditor of insects! He that
saw
The stride of vanishing autumn in a park
By way of decorous melan-
choly; he
That wrote his couplet yearly to the spring,
As dissertation of pro-
found delight,
Stopping, on voyage, in a land of snakes,
Found his vicissi-
tudes had much enlarged
His apprehension, made him intricate
In moody
rucks, and difficult and strange
In all desires, his destitution's mark.
He was
in this as other freemen are,
Sonorous nutshells rattling inwardly.
His vio-
lence was for aggrandizement
And not for stupor, such as music makes
For

sleepers halfway waking. He perceived
That coolness for his heat came suddenly,
And only, in the fables that he scrawled
With his own quill, in its indigenous dew,
Of an aesthetic tough, diverse, untamed,
Incredible to prudes, the mint of dirt,
Green barbarism turning paradigm. Crispin foresaw a curious promenade
Or, nobler, sensed an elemental fate,
And elemental potencies and pangs,
And beautiful barenesses as yet unseen,
Making the most of savagery of palms,
Of moonlight on the thick, cadaverous bloom
That yuccas breed, and of the panther's tread.
The fabulous and its intrinsic verse
Came like two spirits parleying, adorned
In radiance from the Atlantic coign,
For Crispin and his quill to catechize.
But they came parleying of such an earth,
So thick with sides and jagged lops of green,
So intertwined with serpent-kin encoiled
Among the purple tufts, the scarlet crowns,
Scenting the jungle in their refuges,
So streaked with yellow, blue and green and red
In beak and bud and fruity gobbet-skins,
That earth was like a jostling festival
Of seeds grown fat, too juicily opulent,
Expanding in the gold's maternal warmth. So much for that. The affectionate emigrant found
A new reality in parrot-squawks. Yet let that trifle pass. Now, as this odd Discoverer
walked through the harbor streets
Inspecting the cabildo, the façade
Of the cathedral, making notes, he heard
A rumbling, west of Mexico, it seemed,
Approaching like a gasconade of drums.
The white cabildo darkened, the façade,
As sullen as the sky, was swallowed up
In swift, successive shadows, dolefully.
The rumbling broadened as it fell. The wind,
Tempestuous clarion, with heavy cry,
Came bluntly thundering, more terrible
Than the revenge of music on bassoons.
Gesticulating lightning, mystical,
Made pallid flutter. Crispin, here, took flight.
An annotator has his scruples, too. He knelt
in the cathedral with the rest,
This connoisseur of elemental fate,
Aware of exquisite thought. The storm was one
Of many proclamations of the kind,
Proclaiming something harsher than he learned
From hearing sign-boards whimper in cold nights
Or seeing the midsummer artifice
Of heat upon his pane. This was the span
Of force, the quintessential fact, the note
Of Vulcan, that a valet seeks to own,
The thing that makes him envious in phrase.

And while the torrent on the roof still droned
He felt the Andean breath. His mind was free
And more than free, elate, intent, profound
And studious of a self possessing him,
That was not in him in the crusty town
From which he sailed. Beyond him, westward, lay
The mountainous ridges, purple

balustrades, In which the thunder, lapsing in its clap, Let down gigantic quavers of its voice, For Crispin to vociferate again.

III

Approaching Carolina

The book of moonlight is not written yet Nor half begun, but, when it is, leave room For Crispin, fagot in the lunar fire, Who, in the hubbub of his pilgrimage Through sweating changes, never could forget That wakefulness or meditating sleep, In which the sulky strophes willingly Bore up, in time, the somnolent, deep songs. Leave room, therefore, in that unwritten book For the legendary moonlight that once burned In Crispin's mind above a continent. America was always north to him, A northern west or western north, but north, And thereby polar, polar-purple, chilled And lank, rising and slumping from a sea Of hardy foam, receding flatly, spread In endless ledges, glittering, submerged And cold in a boreal mistiness of the moon. The spring came there in clinking pannicles Of half-dissolving frost, the summer came, If ever, whisked and wet, not ripening, Before the winter's vacancy returned. The myrtle, if the myrtle ever bloomed, Was like a glacial pink upon the air. The green palmettoes in crepuscular ice Clipped frigidly blue-black meridians, Morose chiaroscuro, gauntly drawn.

How many poems he denied himself In his observant progress, lesser things Than the relentless contact he desired; How many sea-masks he ignored; what sounds He shut out from his tempering ear; what thoughts, Like jades affecting the sequestered bride; And what descants, he sent to banishment! Perhaps the Arctic moonlight really gave The liaison, the blissful liaison, Between himself and his environment, Which was, and is, chief motive, first delight, For him, and not for him alone. It seemed Illusive, faint, more mist than moon, perverse, Wrong as a divagation to Peking, To him that postulated as his theme The vulgar, as his theme and hymn and flight, A passionately niggling nightingale. Moonlight was an evasion, or, if not, A minor meeting, facile, delicate.

Thus he conceived his voyaging to be An up and down between two elements, A fluctuating between sun and moon, A sally into gold and crimson forms, As on this voyage, out of goblinry, And then retirement like a turning back And sinking down to the indulgences That in the moonlight have their habitude. But let these backward lapses, if they would, Grind their seductions

on him, Crispin knew It was a flourishing tropic he required For his refreshment, an abundant zone, Prickly and obdurate, dense, harmonious Yet with a harmony not rarefied Nor fined for the inhibited instruments Of over-civil stops. And thus he tossed Between a Carolina of old time, A little juvenile, an ancient whim, And the visible, circumspect presentment drawn From what he saw across his vessel's prow.

He came. The poetic hero without palms Or jugglery, without regalia. And as he came he saw that it was spring, A time abhorrent to the nihilist Or searcher for the fecund minimum. The moonlight fiction disappeared. The spring, Although contending feately in its veils, Irised in dew and early fragrances, Was gemmy marionette to him that sought A sinewy nakedness. A river bore The vessel inward. Tilting up his nose, He inhaled the rancid rosin, burly smells Of dampened lumber, emanations blown From warehouse doors, the gustiness of ropes, Decays of sacks, and all the arrant stinks That helped him round his rude aesthetic out. He savored rankness like a sensualist. He marked the marshy ground around the dock, The crawling railroad spur, the rotten fence, Curriculum for the marvellous sophomore. It purified. It made him see how much Of what he saw he never saw at all. He gripped more closely the essential prose As being, in a world so falsified, The one integrity for him, the one Discovery still possible to make, To which all poems were incident, unless That prose should wear a poem's guise at last.

IV

The Idea of a Colony

Nota: his soil is man's intelligence. That's better. That's worth crossing seas to find. Crispin in one laconic phrase laid bare His cloudy drift and planned a colony. Exit the mental moonlight, exit lex, Rex and principium, exit the whole Shebang. Exeunt omnes. Here was prose More exquisite than any tumbling verse: A still new continent in which to dwell. What was the purpose of his pilgrimage, Whatever shape it took in Crispin's mind, If not, when all is said, to drive away The shadow of his fellows from the skies, And, from their stale intelligence released, To make a new intelligence prevail? Hence the reverberations in the words Of his first central hymns, the celebrants Of rankest trivia, tests of the strength Of his aesthetic, his philosophy, The more invidious, the more desired. The florist asking aid from

cabbages, The rich man going bare, the paladin Afraid, the blind man as astronomer, The appointed power unwielded from disdain. His western voyage ended and began. The torment of fastidious thought grew slack, Another, still more bellicose, came on. He, therefore, wrote his prolegomena, And, being full of the caprice, inscribed Commingled souvenirs and prophecies. He made a singular collation. Thus: The natives of the rain are rainy men. Although they paint effulgent, azure lakes, And April hillsides wooded white and pink, Their azure has a cloudy edge, their white And pink, the water bright that dogwood bears. And in their music showering sounds intone. On what strange froth does the gross Indian dote, What Eden sapling gum, what honeyed gore, What pulpy dram distilled of innocence, That streaking gold should speak in him Or bask within his images and words? If these rude instances impeach themselves By force of rudeness, let the principle Be plain. For application Crispin strove, Abhorring Turk as Esquimau, the lute As the marimba, the magnolia as rose.

Upon these premises propounding, he Projected a colony that should extend To the dusk of a whistling south below the south, A comprehensive island hemisphere. The man in Georgia waking among pines Should be pine-spokesman. The responsive man, Planting his pristine cores in Florida, Should prick thereof, not on the psaltery, But on the banjo's categorical gut, Tuck tuck, while the flamingos flapped his bays. Sepulchral señors, bibbing pale mescal, Oblivious to the Aztec almanacs, Should make the intricate Sierra scan. And dark Brazilians in their cafés, Musing immaculate, pampean dits, Should scrawl a vigilant anthology, To be their latest, lucent paramour. These are the broadest instances. Crispin, Progenitor of such extensive scope, Was not indifferent to smart detail. The melon should have apposite ritual, Performed in verd apparel, and the peach, When its black branches came to bud, belle day, Should have an incantation. And again, When piled on salvers its aroma steeped The summer, it should have a sacrament And celebration. Shrewd novitiates Should be the clerks of our experience.

These bland excursions into time to come, Related in romance to backward flights, However prodigal, however proud, Contained in their afflatus the reproach That first drove Crispin to his wandering. He could not be content with counterfeit, With masquerade of thought, with hapless words That must belie the racking masquerade, With fictive flourishes that preordained His passion's permit, hang of coat, degree Of buttons, measure of his salt. Such

trashMight help the blind, not him, serenely sly.It irked beyond his patience.
Hence it was, Preferring text to gloss, he humbly servedGrotesque appren-
ticeship to chance event,A clown, perhaps, but an aspiring clown.There is a
monotonous babbling in our dreamsThat makes them our dependent heirs,
the heirsOf dreamers buried in our sleep, and notThe oncoming fantasies of
better birth.The apprentice knew these dreamers. If he dreamedTheir
dreams, he did it in a gingerly way.All dreams are vexing. Let them be ex-
punged.But let the rabbit run, the cock declaim.
Trinket pasticcio, flaunting skyey sheets,With Crispin as the tiptoe cozener?
No, no: veracious page on page, exact.

V

A Nice Shady Home

Crispin as hermit, pure and capable,Dwelt in the land. Perhaps if
discontentHad kept him still the pricking realist,Choosing his element from
droll confectOf was and is and shall or ought to be,Beyond Bordeaux, be-
yond Havana, farBeyond carked Yucatan, he might have comeTo colonize
his polar planterdomAnd jig his chits upon a cloudy knee.But his emprise to
that idea soon sped.Crispin dwelt in the land and dwelling thereSlid from
his continent by slow recessTo things within his actual eye, alertTo the diffi-
culty of rebellious thoughtWhen the sky is blue. The blue infected will.It
may be that the yarrow in his fieldsSealed pensive purple under its
concern.But day by day, now this thing and now thatConfined him, while it
cosseted, condoned,Little by little, as if the suzerain soilAbashed him by
carouse to humble yetAttach. It seemed haphazard denouement.He first, as
realist, admitted thatWhoever hunts a matinal continent May, after all, stop
short before a plumAnd be content and still be realist.The words of things
entangle and confuse.The plum survives its poems. It may hangIn the sun-
shine placidly, colored by groundObliquities of those who pass
beneath,Harlequined and mazily dewed and mauvedIn bloom. Yet it sur-
vives in its own form,Beyond these changes, good, fat, guzzly fruit.So
Crispin hasped on the surviving form,For him, of shall or ought to be in is.
Was he to bray this in profoundest brassAointing his dreams with fugal re-
quiems?Was he to company vastest things defunctWith a blubber of tom-
toms harrowing the sky?Scrawl a tragedian's testament? ProlongHis active
force in an inactive dirge,Which, let the tall musicians call and call,Should

merely call him dead? Pronounce amen
Through choirs infolded to the out-
most clouds? Because he built a cabin who once planned
Loquacious columns by the ructive sea? Because he turned to salad-beds again? Jovial
Crispin, in calamitous crape? Should he lay by the personal and make
Of his own fate an instance of all fate? What is one man among so many men?
What are so many men in such a world? Can one man think one thing and
think it long? Can one man be one thing and be it long? The very man de-
spising honest quilts
Lies quilted to his poll in his despite. For realists, what
is is what should be. And so it came, his cabin shuffled up, His trees were
planted, his duenna brought Her prisms blonde and clapped her in his
hands, The curtains fluttered and the door was closed. Crispin, magister of a
single room, Latched up the night. So deep a sound fell down It was as if the
solitude concealed And covered him and his congenial sleep. So deep a
sound fell down it grew to be A long soothsaying silence down and
down. The crickets beat their tambours in the wind, Marching a motionless
march, custodians.

In the presto of the morning, Crispin trod, Each day, still curious, but in a
round Less prickly and much more condign than that He once thought neces-
sary. Like Candide, Yeoman and grub, but with a fig in sight, And cream for
the fig and silver for the cream, A blonde to tip the silver and to taste The
rapey gouts. Good star, how that to be Annealed them in their cabin rib-
aldries! Yet the quotidian saps philosophers And men like Crispin like them
in intent, If not in will, to track the knaves of thought. But the quotidian com-
posed as his, Of breakfast ribands, fruits laid in their leaves, The tomtit and
the cassia and the rose, Although the rose was not the noble thorn Of crino-
line spread, but of a pining sweet, Composed of evenings like cracked shut-
ters flung Upon the rumpling bottomness, and nights In which those frail cus-
todians watched, Indifferent to the tepid summer cold, While he poured out
upon the lips of her That lay beside him, the quotidian Like this, saps like the
sun, true fortuner. For all it takes it gives a humped return Exchequering
from piebald fisci unkeyed.

VI

And Daughters with Curls

Portentous enunciation, syllable To blessed syllable affined, and sound
Bubbling felicity in cantilene, Prolific and tormenting tenderness Of music, as it

comes to unison, Forgather and bell boldly Crispin's last Deduction. Thrum
with a proud douceur His grand pronunciamento and devise.

The chits came for his jigging, bluet-eyed, Hands without touch yet touching
poignantly, Leaving no room upon his cloudy knee, Prophetic joint, for its
diviner young. The return to social nature, once begun, Anabasis or slump,
ascent or chute, Involved him in midwifery so dense His cabin counted as
philactary, Then place of vexing palankeens, then haunt Of children nibbling
at the sugared void, Infants yet eminently old, then dome And halidom for
the unbraided femes, Green crammers of the green fruits of the world, Bid-
ders and bidders for its ecstasies, True daughters both of Crispin and his clay.
All this with many mulctings of the man, Effective colonizer sharply
stopped In the door-yard by his own capacious bloom. But that this bloom
grown riper, showing nibs Of its eventual roundness, puerile tints Of spiced
and weathery rouges, should complex The stopper to indulgent fatalist Was
unforeseen. First Crispin smiled upon His goldenest demoiselle,
inhabitant, She seemed, of a country of the capuchins, So delicately blushed,
so humbly eyed, Attentive to a coronal of things Secret and singular. Second,
upon A second similar counterpart, a maid Most sisterly to the first, not yet
awake Excepting to the motherly footstep, but Marvelling sometimes at the
shaken sleep. Then third, a thing still flaxen in the light, A creeper under
jaunty leaves. And fourth, Mere blusteriness that gewgaws jollified, All din
and gobble, blasphemously pink. A few years more and the vermeil ca-
puchin Gave to the cabin, lordlier than it was, The dulcet omen fit for such a
house. The second sister dallying was shy To fetch the one full-pinioned one
himself Out of her botches, hot embosomer. The third one gaping at the ori-
oles Lettered herself demurely as became A pearly poetess, peaked for rhap-
sody. The fourth, pent now, a digit curious. Four daughters in a world too in-
tricate In the beginning, four blithe instruments Of differing struts, four voic-
es several In couch, four more personæ, intimate As buffo, yet divers, four
mirrors blue That should be silver, four accustomed seeds Hinting incredible
hues, four self-same lights That spread chromatics in hilarious dark, Four
questioners and four sure answerers.

Crispin concocted doctrine from the rout. The world, a turnip once so readi-
ly plucked, Sacked up and carried overseas, daubed out Of its ancient purple,
pruned to the fertile main, And sown again by the stiffest realist, Came re-
produced in purple, family font, The same insoluble lump. The
fatalist Stepped in and dropped the chuckling down his craw, Without grace

or grumble. Score this anecdote
Invented for its pith, not doctrinal
In form though in design, as Crispin willed,
Disguised pronunciamiento,
summary, Autumn's compendium, strident in itself
But muted, mused, and perfectly revolved
In those portentous accents, syllables,
And sounds of music coming to accord
Upon his law, like their inherent sphere,
Seraphic proclamations of the pure
Delivered with a deluging onwardness.
Or if the music sticks, if the anecdote
Is false, if Crispin is a profitless Philosopher,
beginning with green brag,
Concluding fadedly, if as a man
Prone to distemper he abates in taste,
Fickle and fumbling, variable, obscure,
Glozing his life with after-shining flicks,
Illuminating, from a fancy gorged
By apparition, plain and common things,
Sequestering the fluster from the year,
Making gulped potions from obstreperous drops,
And so distorting, proving what he
proves
Is nothing, what can all this matter since
The relation comes, benignly,
to its end?

So may the relation of each man be clipped.

From the Misery of Don Joost

I have finished my combat with the sun; And my body, the old animal,
Knows nothing more.

The powerful seasons bred and killed, And were themselves the genii Of
their own ends.

Oh, but the very self of the storm Of sun and slaves, breeding and death,
The old animal,

The senses and feeling, the very sound And sight, and all there was of the
storm, Knows nothing more.

O, Florida, Venereal Soil

A few things for themselves, Convolvulus and coral, Buzzards and live-moss, Tiestas from the keys, A few things for themselves, Florida, venereal soil, Disclose to the lover.

The dreadful sundry of this world, The Cuban, Polodowsky, The Mexican women, The negro undertaker Killing the time between corpses Fishing for crayfish . . . Virgin of boorish births,

Swiftly in the nights, In the porches of Key West, Behind the bougainvilleas, After the guitar is asleep, Lasciviously as the wind, You come tormenting, Insatiable,

When you might sit, A scholar of darkness, Sequestered over the sea, Wearing a clear tiara Of red and blue and red, Sparkling, solitary, still, In the high sea-shadow.

Donna, donna, dark, Stooping in indigo gown And cloudy constellations, Conceal yourself or disclose Fewest things to the lover— A hand that bears a thick-leaved fruit, A pungent bloom against your shade.

Last Looks at the Lilacs

To what good, in the alleys of the lilacs, O caliper, do you scratch your but-

tocks And tell the divine ingénue, your companion, That this bloom is the
bloom of soap And this fragrance the fragrance of vegetal?

Do you suppose that she cares a tick, In this hymeneal air, what it is That
marries her innocence thus, So that her nakedness is near, Or that she will
pause at scurrilous words?

Poor buffo! Look at the lavender And look your last and look still
steadily, And say how it comes that you see Nothing but trash and that you
no longer feel Her body quivering in the Floréal

Toward the cool night and its fantastic star, Prime paramour and belted
paragon, Well-booted, rugged, arrogantly male, Patron and imager of the
gold Don John, Who will embrace her before summer comes.

The Worms at Heaven's Gate

Out of the tomb, we bring Badroulbador, Within our bellies, we her chariot. Here is an eye. And here are, one by one, The lashes of that eye and its white lid. Here is the cheek on which that lid declined, And, finger after finger, here, the hand, The genius of that cheek. Here are the lips, The bundle of the body and the feet. · · · · · Out of the tomb we bring Badroulbador.

The Jack-Rabbit

In the morning, The jack-rabbit sang to the Arkansaw. He carolled in caracoles On the feat sandbars.

The black man said, "Now, grandmother, Crochet me this buzzard On your winding-sheet, And do not forget his wry neck After the winter."

The black man said, "Look out, O caroller, The entrails of the buzzard Are rattling."

Valley Candle

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

Anecdote of Men by the Thousand

The soul, he said, is composed
Of the external world.

There are men of the East, he said,
Who are the East. There are men of a
province
Who are that province
There are men of a valley
Who are that valley.

There are men whose words
Are as natural sounds
Of their places
As the
cackle of toucans
In the place of toucans.

The mandoline is the instrument
Of a place.

Are there mandolines of western mountains?
Are there mandolines of northern
moonlight?

The dress of a woman of Lhasa,
In its place,
Is an invisible element of that
place
Made visible.

The Silver Plough-Boy

A black figure dances in a black field. It seizes a sheet, from the ground, from a bush, as if spread there by some wash-woman for the night. It wraps the sheet around its body, until the black figure is silver. It dances down a furrow, in the early light, back of a crazy plough, the green blades following. How soon the silver fades in the dust! How soon the black figure slips from the wrinkled sheet! How softly the sheet falls to the ground!

The Apostrophe to Vincentine

II figured you as nude between Monotonous earth and dark blue sky. It made you seem so small and lean And nameless, Heavenly Vincentine.

III saw you then, as warm as flesh, Brunette, But yet not too brunette, As warm, as clean. Your dress was green, Was whited green, Green Vincentine.

III Then you came walking, In a group Of human others, Voluble. Yes: you came walking, Vincentine. Yes: you came talking.

IV And what I knew you felt Came then. Monotonous earth I saw become Illimitable spheres of you, And that white animal, so lean, Turned Vincentine, Turned heavenly Vincentine, And that white animal, so lean, Turned heavenly, heavenly Vincentine.

Floral Decorations for Bananas

Well, nuncle, this plainly won't do. These insolent, linear peels And sullen,
hurricane shapes Won't do with your eglantine. They require something ser-
pentine. Blunt yellow in such a room!

You should have had plums tonight, In an eighteenth-century dish, And petti-
fogging buds, For the women of primrose and purl, Each one in her decent
curl. Good God! What a precious light!

But bananas hacked and hunched . . . The table was set by an ogre, His eye
on an outdoor gloom And a stiff and noxious place. Pile the bananas on
planks. The women will be all shanks And bangles and slatted eyes.

And deck the bananas in leaves Plucked from the Carib trees, Fibrous and
dangling down, Oozing cantankerous gum Out of their purple maws, Darting
out of their purple craws Their musky and tingling tongues.

Anecdote of Canna

Huge are the canna in the dreams of X, the mighty thought, the mighty man. They fill the terrace of his capitol.

His thought sleeps not. Yet thought that wakes
In sleep may never meet another thought
Or thing. . . . Now day-break comes. . . .

X promenades the dewy stones, Observes the canna with a clinging eye, Observes and then continues to observe.

Of the Manner of Addressing Clouds

Gloomy grammarians in golden gowns, Meekly you keep the mortal rendezvous, Eliciting the still sustaining pomps Of speech which are like music so profound They seem an exaltation without sound. Funest philosophers and ponderers, Their evocations are the speech of clouds. So speech of your processions returns In the casual evocations of your tread Across the stale, mysterious seasons. These Are the music of meet resignation; these The responsive, still sustaining pomps for you To magnify, if in that drifting waste You are to be accompanied by more Than mute bare splendors of the sun and moon.

Of Heaven Considered as a Tomb

What word have you, interpreters, of men
Who in the tomb of heaven walk
by night, The darkened ghosts of our old comedy? Do they believe they
range the gusty cold, With lanterns borne aloft to light the way, Freeman of
death, about and still about To find whatever it is they seek? Or does That
burial, pillared up each day as porte And spiritous passage into
nothingness, Foretell each night the one abysmal night, When the host shall
no more wander, nor the light Of the steadfast lanterns creep across the
dark? Make hue among the dark comedians, Halloo them in the topmost dis-
tances For answer from their icy Elysée.

Of the Surface of Things

IIn my room, the world is beyond my understanding;But when I walk I see
that it consists of three or four hills and a cloud.

IIFrom my balcony, I survey the yellow air,Reading where I have
written,"The spring is like a belle undressing."

IIIThe gold tree is blue.The singer has pulled his cloak over his head.The
moon is in the folds of the cloak.

Anecdote of the Prince of Peacocks

In the moonlight I met Berserk, In the moonlight On the bushy plain. Oh,
sharp he was As the sleepless!

And, "Why are you red In this milky blue?" I said. "Why sun-colored, As if
awake In the midst of sleep?"

"You that wander," So he said, "On the bushy plain, Forget so soon. But I
set my traps In the midst of dreams."

I knew from this That the blue ground Was full of blocks And blocking
steel. I knew the dread Of the bushy plain,

And the beauty Of the moonlight Falling there, Falling As sleep falls In the
innocent air.

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.

The Place of the Solitaires

Let the place of the solitaires
Be a place of perpetual undulation.

Whether it be in mid-sea
On the dark, green water-wheel,
Or on the beaches,
There must be no cessation
Of motion, or of the noise of motion,
The renewal of noise
And manifold continuation;

And, most, of the motion of thought
And its restless iteration,

In the place of the solitaires,
Which is to be a place of perpetual undulation.

The Weeping Burgher

It is with a strange malice
That I distort the world.

Ah! that ill humors
Should mask as white girls.
And ah! that Scaramouche
Should have a black barouche.

The sorry verities!
Yet in excess, continual,
There is cure of sorrow.

Permit that if as ghost I come
Among the people burning in me still,
I come as belle design
Of foppish line.

And I, then, tortured for old speech,
A white of wildly woven rings;
I, weeping in a calcined heart,
My hands such sharp, imagined things.

The Curtains in the House of the Metaphysician

It comes about that the drifting of these curtains
Is full of long motions; as the ponderous
Deflations of distance; or as clouds
Inseparable from their afternoons;
Or the changing of light, the dropping
Of the silence, wide sleep and solitude
Of night, in which all motion
Is beyond us, as the firmament,
Up-rising and down-falling, bares
The last largeness, bold to see.

Banal Sojourn

Two wooden tubs of blue hydrangeas stand at the foot of the stone steps.
The sky is a blue gum streaked with rose. The trees are black.
The grackles crack their throats of bone in the smooth air.
Moisture and heat have swollen the garden into a slum of bloom.
Pardie! Summer is like a fat beast, sleepy in mildew,
Our old bane, green and bloated, serene, who cries,
"That bliss of stars, that princox of evening heaven!" reminding of seasons,
When radiance came running down, slim through the bareness.
And so it is one damns that green shade at the bottom of the land.
For who can care at the wigs despoiling the Satan ear?
And who does not seek the sky unfuzzed, soaring to the princox?
One has a malady, here, a malady. One feels a malady.

Depression before Spring

The cock crows
But no queen rises.

The hair of my blonde
Is dazzling,
As the spittle of cows
Threading the wind.

Ho! Ho!

But ki-ki-ri-ki
Brings no rou-cou,
No rou-cou-cou.

But no queen comes
In slipper green.

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.

The Cuban Doctor

I went to Egypt to escape The Indian, but the Indian struck Out of his cloud
and from his sky.

This was no worm bred in the moon, Wriggling far down the phantom air,
And on a comfortable sofa dreamed.

The Indian struck and disappeared. I knew my enemy was near—I, Drows-
ing in summer's sleepest horn.

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.

Exposition of the Contents of a Cab

Victoria Clementina, negress,
Took seven white dogs
To ride in a cab.

Bells of the dogs chinked.
Harness of the horses shuffled
Like brazen shells.

Oh-hé-hé! Fragrant puppets
By the green lake-pallors,
She too is flesh,
And a breech-cloth might wear,
Netted of topaz and ruby
And savage blooms;

Thridding the squawkiest jungle
In a golden sedan,
White dogs at bay.

What breech-cloth might you wear,
Except linen, embroidered
By elderly women?

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.

Sunday Morning

I 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.

II 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 measures destined for her soul.

III 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.

IV 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 prophesy, 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.

V 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 fulfilment 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.

VI 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 the 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.

VII Supple and turbulent, a ring of men Shall chant in orgy on a summer mom 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 mom. And whence they came and whither they shall go The dew upon their feet shall manifest.

VIII 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.

The Virgin Carrying a Lantern

There are no bears among the roses,
Only a negress who supposes
Things false and wrong

About the lantern of the beauty
Who walks, there, as a farewell duty,
Walks long and long.

The pity that her pious egress
Should fill the vigil of a negress
With heat so strong!

Stars at Tallapoosa

The lines are straight and swift between the stars.
The night is not the cradle that they cry,
The criers, undulating the deep-oceaned phrase.
The lines are much too dark and much too sharp.

The mind herein attains simplicity,
There is no moon, no single, silvered leaf.
The body is no body to be seen
But is an eye that studies its black lid.

Let these be your delight, secretive hunter,
Wading the sea-lines, moist and ever-mingling,
Mounting the earth-lines, long and lax, lethargic.
These lines are swift and fall without diverging.

The melon-flower nor dew nor web of either
Is like to these. But in yourself is like:
A sheaf of brilliant arrows flying straight,
Flying and falling straightway for their pleasure,

Their pleasure that is all bright-edged and cold;
Or, if not arrows, then the nimblest motions,
Making recoveries of young nakedness
And the lost vehemence the midnights hold.

Explanation

Ach, Mutter,
This old, black dress,
I have been embroidering
French flowers on it.

Not by way of romance,
Here is nothing of the ideal,
Nein,
Nein.

It would have been different,
Liebchen,
If I had imagined myself,
In an orange gown,
Drifting through space,
Like a figure on the church-wall.

Six Significant Landscapes

I 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.

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

III 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 the ants crawl In and out of
my shadow.

IV 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.

V 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.

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

Bantams in Pine-Woods

Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan Of tan with henna hackles, halt!
Damned universal cock, as if the sun Was blackamoor 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.

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.

Palace of the Babies

The disbeliever walked the moonlit place,
Outside of gates of hammered serafin,
Observing the moon-blotches on the walls.

The yellow rocked across the still façades,
Or else sat spinning on the pinnacles,
While he imagined humming sounds and sleep.

The walker in the moonlight walked alone,
And each blank window of the building balked
His loneliness and what was in his mind:

If in a shimmering room the babies came,
Drawn close by dreams of fledgling wing,
It was because night nursed them in its fold.

Night nursed not him in whose dark mind
The clambering wings of birds of black revolved,
Making harsh torment of the solitude.

The walker in the moonlight walked alone,
And in his heart his disbelief lay cold.
His broad-brimmed hat came close upon his eyes.

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.

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, flambeued 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.

Cortège for Rosenbloom

Now, wry Rosenbloom is dead
And his finical carriers tread,
On a hundred legs, the tread
Of the dead.
Rosenbloom is dead.

They carry the wizened one
Of the color of horn
To the sullen hill,
Treading a tread
In unison for the dead.

Rosenbloom is dead.
The tread of the carriers does not halt
On the hill, but turns
Up the sky.
They are bearing his body into the sky.

It is the infants of misanthropes
And the infants of nothingness
That tread
The wooden ascents
Of the ascending of the dead.

It is turbans they wear
And boots of fur
As they tread the boards
In a region of frost,
Viewing the frost.

To a chirr of gongs
And a chitter of cries
And the heavy thrum
Of the endless tread
That they tread.

To a jangle of doom
And a jumble of words
Of the intense poem
Of the strictest prose
Of Rosenbloom.

And they bury him there,
Body and soul,
In a place in the sky.
The lamentable tread!
Rosenbloom is dead.

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.

The Bird with the Coppery, Keen Claws

Above the forest of the parakeets,
A parakeet of parakeets prevails,
A pip of life amid a mort of tails.

(The rudiments of tropics are around,
Aloe of ivory, pear of rusty rind.)
His lids are white because his eyes are blind.

He is not paradise of parakeets,
Of his gold ether, golden alguazil.
Except because he broods there and is still,

Panache upon panache, his tails deploy
Upward and outward, in green-vented forms,
His tip a drop of water full of storms.

But though the turbulent tinges undulate
As his pure intellect applies its laws,
He moves not on his coppery, keen claws.

He munches a dry shell while he exerts
His will, yet never ceases, perfect cock,
To flare, in the sun-pallor of his rock.

Life Is Motion

In Oklahoma,
Bonnie and Josie,
Dressed in calico,
Danced around a stump.
They cried,
"Ohoyaho,
Ohoo" . . .
Celebrating the marriage
Of flesh and air.

Architecture

I What manner of building shall we build? Let us design a chastel de chasteté. De pensée. . . . Never cease to deploy the structure. Keep the laborers shouldering plinths. Pass the whole of life earring the clink of the Chisels of the stone-cutters cutting the stones.

II In this house, what manner of utterance shall there be? What heavenly dithyramb And cantilene? What niggling forms of gargoyle patter? Of what shall the speech be, In that splay of marble And of obedient pillars?

III And how shall those come vested that come there? In their ugly reminders? Or gaudy as tulips? As they climb the stairs To the group of Flora Coddling Hecuba? As they climb the flights To the closes Overlooking whole seasons?

IV Let us build the building of light. Push up the towers To the cock-tops. These are the pointings of our edifice, Which, like a gorgeous palm, Shall tuft the commonplace. These are the window-sill On which the quiet moonlight lies.

V How shall we hew the sun, Split it and make blocks, To build a ruddy palace? How carve the violet moon To set in nicks? Let us fix portals, east and west, Abhorring green-blue north and blue-green south. Our chiefest dome a demoiselle of gold. Pierce the interior with pouring shafts, In diverse chambers. Pierce, too, with buttresses of coral air And purple timbers, Various argentines, Embossings of the sky.

VI And, finally, set guardians in the grounds, Gray, gruesome grumblers. For no one proud, nor stiff, No solemn one, nor pale, No chafferer, may come To sully the begonias, nor vex With holy or sublime ado The kremlin of kermess.

VII Only the lusty and the plenteous Shall walk The bronze-filled plazas And the nut-shell esplanades.

The Wind Shifts

This is how the wind shifts: Like the thoughts of an old human, Who still thinks eagerly And despairingly. The wind shifts like this: Like a human without illusions, Who still feels irrational things within her. The wind shifts like this: Like humans approaching proudly, Like humans approaching angrily. This is how the wind shifts: Like a human, heavy and heavy, Who does not care.

Colloquy with a Polish Aunt

Elle savait toutes les légendes du Paradis et tous les contes de la Pologne.
Revue des Deux Mondes

She

How is it that my saints from Voragine,
In their embroidered slippers, touch your spleen?

He

Old pantaloons, duenna of the spring!

She

Imagination is the will of things. . . .
Thus, on the basis of the common drudge,
You dream of women, swathed in indigo,
Holding their books toward the nearer stars,
To read, in secret, burning secrecies. . . .

Gubbinal

That strange flower, the sun,
Is just what you say.
Have it your way.

The world is ugly,
And the people are sad.

That tuft of jungle feathers,
That animal eye,
Is just what you say.

That savage of fire,
That seed,
Have it your way.

The world is ugly,
And the people are sad.

Two Figures in Dense Violet Night

I had as lief be embraced by the porter at the hotel
As to set no more from the moonlight
Than your moist hand.

Be the voice of night and Florida in my ear.
Use dusky 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-sounds in silence,
And out of their droning sibilants makes
A serenade.

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

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

Theory

I am what is around me.

Women understand this.

One is not duchess

A hundred yards from a carriage.

These, then are portraits:

A black vestibule;

A high bed sheltered by curtains.

These are merely instances.

To the One of Fictive Music

Sister and mother and diviner love,
And of the sisterhood of the living dead
Moat near, moat clear, and of the dearest 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 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 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.

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.

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,
And 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.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

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

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

II The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pan-
tomime.

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

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

VII cicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass. The shadow of the
blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro. The mood
Traced in the shadow An indeci-
pherable cause.

VIII 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?

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

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

XI At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of eupho-
ny
Would cry out sharply.

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

XIII The river is moving. The blackbird must be flying.

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

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 be-
holder, Beholding all these green sides And gold sides of green sides,
And blessed mornings, Meet for the eye of the young alligator, And light-
ning colors So, in me, come flinging Forms, flames, and the flakes of
flames.

Tea

When the elephant's-ear in the park Shrivelled in frost, And the leaves on
the paths Ran like rats, Your lamp-light fell On shining pillows, Of sea-
shades and sky-shades, Like umbrellas in Java.

To the Roaring Wind

What syllable are you seeking, Vocalissimus, In the distances of sleep?
Speak it.

THE END



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