

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

## IV

Beauty is momentary in the mind—  
The fitful tracing of a portal;<sup>4</sup>  
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<sup>5</sup> 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.

1915

## 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.<sup>6</sup>  
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.

1915

## The Worms at Heaven's Gate

Out of the tomb, we bring Badroulbador,<sup>7</sup>  
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.

4. A reference, perhaps, to the gates of dreams of classical mythology: one was of ivory, the other of horn. (Stevens, *Collected Poems*, p. 251.)

5. Hood on a monk's or nun's habit.

6. Belts or girdles.

7. Name coined by Stevens, perhaps to suggest the name of a town in Connecticut.

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.

5

Out of the tomb we bring Badroulbador.

10

1923, 1931

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird<sup>8</sup>

## I

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

## II

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

5

## 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.

10

## V

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

15

## 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.

20

## VII

O thin men of Haddam,<sup>9</sup>  
Why do you imagine golden birds?

25

8. "This group of poems is not meant to be a collection of epigrams or of ideas, but of sensations" (*Letters*, p. 251).

9. A town in Connecticut. "The thin men of Haddam are not black, but they are thin."

ago one of the citizens of that place wrote to me to ask what I had in mind. I just like the name. It is an old whaling town, I believe. In any case, it has a completely Yankee sound" (*Letters*, p. 295).

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<sup>1</sup>  
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<sup>2</sup>  
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.

1917

## 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.

1. "What was intended by X was that the bawds of euphony would suddenly cease to be academic and express themselves sharply: naturally, with

pleasure, etc." (*Letters*, p. 340).

2. That is, coach.

## Bantams in Pine-Woods 289

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.

5

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

10

1923, 1931

The Snow Man<sup>3</sup>

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

5

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

10

For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

15

1923, 1931

## Bantams in Pine-Woods

Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan  
Of tan with henna hackles,<sup>4</sup> 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.

5

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

<sup>3</sup> I shall explain The Snow Man as an example of the necessity of identifying oneself with the poem in order to understand it and enjoy it" (*Letters*, p. 464).

<sup>4</sup> "Iffucan" and "Azcan" are Stevens's coinages, perhaps intended to be suggestive of

Aztecs or Mayans; a "caftan" is an ankle-length robe, commonly worn in the Near East. The rooster being addressed (the "bantams" of the title are small fowl) has "hackles" or neck-feathers of a reddish-brown color. *Let.*