



## Henry Zhang

### A Translation of Wallace Stevens's 'Notes Towards a Supreme Fiction', section 1

1.

Don't think. Look. Just look, look around! Don't be blinded by preconceptions that pretend to be the foundation of things. 'Reality' is clean, simple and purely luminous. It is difficult to look and experience life in this way. It has no name, it exists, it shines outside of language and concept.

2.

After a little while, looking in this way becomes annoying. It just comes and goes—we are forever anxiously on the edge, on the look out; never can we rest and say that: we have it now. Philosophers and priests have all succumbed to this ennui. They redirected themselves and pursue the desire that's generated by this ennui: the desire for Truth, something that doesn't change and they can have. Consequently, they died as they lost touch with true vitality of nature.

3.

But poets have not given in to this ennui. The poem restores us to the experience of reality, if only for a brief moment. This reality is coextensive with 'unconscious will', 'pure power', 'exhilaration' 'beating heart' and 'fresh blood'. This reality is primitive, musical, and Dionysiac. Nature chants in nonsensical monosyllables; its nonsense pierces us at once with an unease and vitality.

4.

Modernity is wrong. We cannot control nor predict anything. They preceded us, autonomous. Poetry is not made by Man, as you might think, but by It. Poetry came from It, as we do not really know how to create poetry or account for its spontaneous creation. Look, really look—we are nothing, we have nothing, everything swims and wills around us.

5.

For example, in my mind: here comes a lion, then an elephant, and presently, a bear. I did not ask them to come, I did not even want them to come. You feel this too don't you: in your sleepless nights, clutching your pillow case, wishing those 'thoughts' away, thoughts that are not yours. In your ennui, you tried to control them, restrict their frivolous dance, and escape from their transcendental intrusion,

of You.

6.

Let It come freely, and look what nonsense it writes! How it is determined by sound, rhythm, and repetition rather than by thought. Just like in nature's murmuring, Dionysus rules and Apollo is asleep!

7.

The awkward heavy giant is the figure who succumb to Its challenge. He slows down, stops, waits, pontificates. Time and flux goes ahead of him, leaving him in the dust. He revels joylessly and mechanically in the perfection of his thought. Who can help this helpless man? Perhaps only the ecstasy and the trembling of love could awake him from his fantasy. True awakening floats on the ocean of sleep.

8.

MacCullough must be ridiculed!