

**CONVERSATION BETWEEN
A PEAR AND A PEIGNOIR**

“After the leaves have fallen,
we return to a plain sense of things.”
– W.S.

I.

Wallace Stevens,
struck by the beauty of your language,
infused with metaphysical reflections,
I wondered.

There are limitations
to any perspective—
but there’s no poetry
without one.

Is there anything
without perspective—
anything at all?

I heard you asking,
Wallace Stevens.

I heard the question echo
in your large imagination.

II.

The tree itself.

Well—are its leaves green?
And does that bear no relation to me?

We might perform a test:
compare the tree-with-me
to what it would simply be.

What’s the result?

III.

And what you call a branch—
the beetle, who has no difficulty

with verticality,
climbs its trunk
and says, "Tree!"

Now, moving horizontally,
feels no difference
from what you feel vertically.

IV.

And what of lumber?

Well—no creature would
call "lumber"
what is, for them,
domain of slumber.

Who would dare cut down a tree?

V.

And anyway—why "tree"?

Was the label spoken
through the roots,
or was it a name tag
stuck with sloppy goop?

VI.

But a thing! A thing, indeed!
The thing itself!

But now compare a thing
to not-a-thing—
that is, to a nothing.

I'd be very curious to know
how you did it.

Did you compare a gray blob
with a knotty hole in the trunk?

You're not alone
if you feel stumped.

VII.

Well, perhaps through God's eyes,
the thing's shown in true color, shape, and size?

Yes, the grandest temptation!
The first idea!

And which God do we have in mind?

Zeus, Yahweh, Vishnu, Ra,
Odin, Allah, Isis, Thor,
Brahma, Inanna, Baal, or Buddha (in his mythic mode),
Father of Christ, Marduk, or the Toad
whom Jerry witnessed on rain-soaked road.

With each remains that tricky *is* and *seems*,
as each partakes of separate dreams,
each follower's fiction most supreme—
though fiction's surely not their diction.

VIII.

"But then it's all my mind,
and not the world!"

Ah yes—that is
the classic final try,
withdrawal from all that mystifies.

And yet, here we go again...

When you carved things up
into mind and world,
I'd be curious to know
how that all goes.

Were there no labels, no adhesives,
no gerrymandered puzzle pieces?

When I point and say "tree",
you point and say "image-to-me",
and life looks on indifferently.

IX.

We've spoken tangentially,
veering away from poetry—
what of that?

Don't worry about *be*
and *seem*—not too much, at least.

The philosophers can take the job
of restless nights for us.

Just let the poem
stand tall,
drinking in the sun,
so easy to enjoy:
poēsis, poēsis, poēsis—
a thing that's made
just as much
as a thing that is.

The tree too
makes its branches,
and clutches the ground
with its roots.

X.

I suggest that we
step barefoot into the poem—
though perhaps this
new way of knowing
was already known,
and I didn't notice, while
you hid behind the tree.

I can only guess,
since I've yet to meet you,
and did not find you waiting.