

Wallace Stevens



LARGE RED MAN READING

There were ghosts that returned to earth to hear his phrases,
As he sat there reading, aloud, the great blue tabulae.
They were those from the wilderness of stars that had expected
more.

There were those that returned to hear him read from the
poem of life,
Of the pans above the stove, the pots on the table, the tulips
among them.
They were those that would have wept to step barefoot into
reality,

That would have wept and been happy, have shivered in the
frost

And cried out to feel it again, have run fingers over leaves
And against the most coiled thorn, have seized on what was
ugly

And laughed, as he sat there reading, from out of the purple
tabulae,

The outlines of being and its expressings, the syllables of its
law:

Poesis, poesis, the literal characters, the vatic lines,

Which in those ears and in those thin, those spended hearts,
Took on color, took on shape and the size of things as they are
And spoke the feeling for them, which was what they had
lacked.

