

THE COLOR SYMPHONIES

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The Color Symphonies by Wade Stevenson

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LIGHT OR DEATH
for Geoffrey Gatza

In the beginning was the word,
The word was light,
Light bursting in ripples and waves,
Flowing over continents, oceans,
The word was light,
Light became the world,
And the world was light,
Light as a wild world word,
Scattering darkness, creating
The language of man,
Giving birth to color,
The myriad manifestations,
Blood red, relaxing yellow,
Calm green, seductive blue.

FIRST LIGHT

Love, light,
Liquor of the day,
Longing for you —
All the brightness,
The chaos of colors —
I came out, screaming.

DOG DAYS

The sky is hammered with blue.
Here is a gate called the moon through
Which you can walk into silver.
We rocked in a rowboat of yellow,
Whirred through patches of white.

We walked alone in the light.
We tried to separate the shimmerings.
Clouds stretched out like chorals
As we shook in colors like a dog
Leaping out of water, full of splash and sun.

LITTLE MURDERS

Little colors live and speak
Softly among themselves.
Green scarcely touches on blue yet both
Find themselves merging in a tongue of yellow.
The trees withdraw,
The space lies open,
The air murmurs to itself,
Nourishes itself on its own whispers
Which vibrate in little ribs and rims
Of color. So much blue everywhere,
Yet time keeps repeating itself,
The butchering weeks chop up the unity
Of something that by itself
Might last, prismatic, pure.

ALWAYS

The sun takes off its shirt,
Clouds their pants,
Secret forms creep out of the stones.
Suspended from a tree,
A lush green sways.
The water is a brother to light,
A flower urges its fullness
Upon the things around it.
A man sweats. Wild berries taste sweet.
And coffee... The touch of things,
Blades quiver , silence hums.
It's never happened before,
Yet it is happening now, always, always.

BLUE SILENCE

A mild blue that has conquered all anxiety
Wavers above a circle of green lines.
A slight sigh, a door opens,
A woman comes out and presses
Her forehead against the air.
Insects demonstrate how much they are alive,
A tongue darts out like a gunshot.
A spongy blue absorbs a silence
So silent it is almost unbearable.

SHEER WHITE

Watch a great whale of white plunge
into a deep ocean of dark
where colors lurks like restless sharks.
White contains all, knows all, is all.
But each color is revolutionary, seeks
to convert, stain, and steep
in its particular glow. Only glass
is pure, stained glass sometimes
like love permits a radiance
to shine evenly through it,
while the thirsty colors cling
like paint to everything they touch.
Above this gaudy wasteland
of complex and conflicting hues
sheer white shines and flirts with blue.

HIDDEN STRUGGLES

Under the grass purple mates with green,
Diamond dots dapple the surface,
A pastel blue writhes by itself. Trees, stretched
Flat on their backs in the lake, stare
At the sky where the past is buried.
Black is tied to a trunk and stoned.
Red bites. Cats shriek. Violence swells
Beneath a nonchalant exterior that refuses
To be penetrated, where roots are fusing
With fires. There is a complicated intertwining,
A chaotic but imperceptible wrestling match.
The road burns. A cow moves into the shade,
Sensing that soon it will rain.

IN THE VACANT HEAT

Dusty colors churn. An aimless
Intensity beautifully wastes itself.
Nothing has been defined or settled.
The flatness is obscured by question marks.
What significant sparks will emerge?
What color take shape and impose itself?
In the vacant heat of a random dusk
Green, red, black, orange: any one could win.
Or a hurricane of combined forces chase
Away any hope of equilibrium.

WHITE WORLDS

The presence of white
Leaves behind it no traces,
Like a blank photograph
Of what's not saved, what
Will never return.

No distraction in white,
No entertainment or amusement,
Only a mute, austere confrontation
Of one thing with itself,
A plenitude that absorbs,
Containing seeds of light
That arrived light years ago.
White is not crowded, has no multitude
Of subtle feelings each struggling for
Pre-eminence. Only one thing is given —
The total rapture of white,
Broadening itself, billowing out,
White roads leading up into white skies,
Generating whiter and whiter worlds.

THE SECRETS OF COLORS

There is a palette of unexplored hues,
Exultatory flashes that scarcely graze
The edges of the mind;
They lie buried in earth and sky,
Concealed in translucent strata.
If you dig deep into green,
You will find a more elusive shade,
So volatile that glimpsing it,
It disappears, vanishing into a band
Of red. Do you feel it? The obvious
Lies. Fulfillment comes from finding
Something deeply personal and rooted,
Like a light that swims below the surface,
Flashing on and off, mirroring perceptions
Too quick and slippery to hold on to,
Where blue fades into beige, silence
Drops into dusk, the sun runs
The danger of dying, and bones are too bare
To believe in. Try to stay on your feet,
Keep your eyes from being blinded by what is,
By the knowledge of all the secret colors below.

WHAT ARE YOU?

Nothing has lived till you live it.
Crowds pass, colors flash, but nothing
Has ever happened until you see it, know it.
The air plays with the horizon;
Colors, like houses, can be inhabited.
Black may be beautiful but orange is
Always approaching, declaring only
The absurd and hysterical have some chance
Of being true. Have you ever tried to live
Red? To fuse at high speeds,
To break the thin red streak
Of all known thermometers? Today
You stick your head out the door,
Periscope, for the first time
You know exactly what things are, as they
Know you, as your flesh suddenly enters
Into the texture of bark, grass, fields.
Green sees you and fertilizes your bones.
Are you red, blue or brown? Visible? Invisible?

LIGHT SPEAKS

In the midst of space a copper snake
Is born as light whispers, "No one
Has ever known about me, where I come
From, where I am going. I'm
Always moving. I walk on stilts
At night through the trees, disguising
Myself with various masks of darkness.
I can't be penetrated or touched,
I give birth to what is and ever
Give birth to myself. Thus like
A fountain I'm always being renewed,
Made fresh out of my own transparent flesh.
Men can go blind or die but I never fade
Away, and I don't have to talk
Or do anything in order to be."

BLACK AND BLUE

Black begins. A blank unity that blunts
age, perception, form.
Large, smooth, oblong, all colors fit
easily into it. Carrying stones,
Men descend into tunnels; black glints
here and there around them,
Somber, menacing, terrible. If only
extremes mean or matter
Then black and red alone, maybe orange,
have some value. The moment
It is born, black begins to be,
never changing, altering, or going forward,
Never being born again, or dying.
If life were different, perhaps black
would never have been, but how
For instance, can blue be judged
if not on the scale of black?

CONFRONTATION

Blue grass, golden trees,
Fields round like breasts.
The sun stares eye-to-eye
At me. I stand in the heat
Of being here now —
So many multicolored things.
A door opens and takes
Me into an oak. Farther away, a red
As harmonious as love begins to sing.

AS A COLOR

As a color needs a surface
If it wants to shine,
My love is red,
My love is blue,
My love needs your body
In order to be true.

NURSERY RHYME COLORS

Grass is green, birds are white
roses are red, violets are blue
against dominant black
and nail polish red
despite all the changes of hue
I am desperately in love with you.
Orange is nice, orange is ice,
in a solitary space
in a bare blank room
I dream of a tiger in a tulip,
a purple god emerging from a cloud,
thoughts turning to shock orange,
the myriad variations by which music
is filtered through the spirit
into the magic of light waves,
radiant aura around your nude body —
indigo born of blue and violet,
turquoise the daughter of green and blue,
a love that contains all visible colors,
a fruit that will never be understood.

ALL THINGS BLUE AND BEAUTIFUL

Streaming through clouds of open space
Blue, absorbing light, seeks
A summer love it once lost.
Blue is deathly afraid of white,
Fearful of the changes it brings.
So, remembering the words of a text
Where each vowel was a color
Blue embraces the earth,
Like rain disappears in the ground.
Soon even the blades of grass
Spring up blue, then the blue grass
Joins and reflects the blue sky,
Turning this dream world
Into a blue house of blue mirrors.

BACK TO BLACK

Blue dots, leave me alone!

White circles, scam!

Die, scarlet shimmers

And cloudy, voluptuous blues —

Leave me alone with my black!

TROPICAL COLORS

Forms melt like ice cubes,
Leaving nothing but splashes, pools, glints.
A car crunches over the pebbles,
A man stops and lights a cigarette.
The sea dissolves into its own shine.
A child is nothing but eyes.
Roads advance parallel.
White neighbors on an opal grey
Without confusion; the wild roses lurk
Dangerously out from the fences.
A butterfly jitters before disappearing
Into a cluster of African violets. A web
Of darkness, almost invisible
Begins to mark the base of a eucalyptus tree.

EVENING RED

Hot, crowded sky. In
One corner an orange sun
Is playing the violet violin
With sparkling virtuosity.

Clouds walk to and fro
Through the blue buffet.
Colors cook and simmer.
On the horizon a faint shimmer

Announces evening red.
Drunk with light, the afternoon
Stumbles into a darkening bed.

HAPPENING

Life grinds to a halt, the purest of substances is twisted
Beyond recognition, a violent bolt
Of electric orange streaks down the leaves,

Illuminating them. Like a stag at bay
A man struggles with several women large
Enough for the circus. Breathing stops,
Black is split in two as a white

Too theoretical to be true steps
Out of a grass carpet and becomes practical
Enough for birds to skate on. Thus
The air. Then the stones are sewn together

Just in time, for magnetic darkness
Pulls all its lost children into its arms,
Even mechanical brown knows the lips.
The great furrows yawn, the red ruts fade.

RED LADY

Our lady of red,
Lady of the hills, the fields,
Our lovely lady of storms and tempests,
Suddenly turns purple.
Brilliant white light gasps
As the brown potatoes ripen in the heat
And white comes riding bareback
Down the beach, fantastic!
That will teach you to cultivate the sky
Just like the sun, which ploughs
It every day. There is no relief
From intensity, our lady of red
Is always getting redder.
She, too, can astonish with her blaze,
But she is in love with white,
With the white winds that sweep her hills,
The little white breezes of the evening.
How to integrate her deep and ancient redness
With ripples of incomparably luminous white?

SOUNDS OF COLOR

The sound of feet going away,
One day tumbling, acrobat, into another;
The sound of an ardent blue coming back
Before a diffuse atomic redness that abruptly

Out of nowhere makes its entrance.
The sound of birds swerving up and down,
The sound of someone listening
To the way the various colors spark

Each other's interplay: taciturn blacks,
Loud reds and dull reds,
Ice blues flattened out, smooth
Oceanic whites, almost absent;

Pale warm climates of gold that occur
At special moments; harsh ridges, soft
Slopes, now and then the honking of geese
And always the echo of footsteps going away.

EVENING PRAYER

When things halt, time suspended,
When white changes gear,
Slips shyly into silver,
Or slowly slides back into grey;
When purple prowls around the flowers
And judicial darkness awaits
The result of all the conflicts;
When dusk gives birth to monsters,
Rejoicing in the shadows that fall
On windows, faces and walls.
Goats wander alone in starlit fields,
In one sudden moment of blackness
Past-present-future are blessed.