

Wallace
Stevens

*The
Palm at the
End of
the Mind*

*Selected Poems
and a Play*

Edited by Holly Stevens

THE
PALM AT
THE END
OF THE
MIND

Selected Poems and a Play by

WALLACE
STEVENS

Edited by
HOLLY STEVENS



VINTAGE BOOKS
A Division of Random House / New York

VINTAGE BOOKS EDITION, FEBRUARY 1972

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ISBN: 0-394-71768-6

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 75-136350

"Bowl, Cat and Broomstick," a play, was originally published in the Quarterly Review of Literature, July 30, 1969, Princeton, New Jersey.

Manufactured in the United States of America

13579C8642

"The palm at the end of the mind,
Beyond the last thought, rises
In the bronze decor . . ."

—"Of Mere Being"

PREFACE

The poems included in this selection have been chosen to represent my father not only at his best but also in the full range of his imagination. They have been arranged in chronological order, determined from manuscript evidence, correspondence, or date of publication. It should be noted, however, that poems dated only by publication must have been written earlier; when date of acceptance by a magazine is known, it helps to limit the gap, but is not definitive. The present order can therefore be debated and, hopefully, improved on in the future as further chronological evidence appears. One exception has been made: "First Warmth" and "As You Leave the Room" are printed together for easy comparison. The first appears to be an early version of the second, which Samuel French Morse dates "1947-55?". Neither poem was published during Stevens' lifetime.

Because no manuscript of poems that appeared in earlier books was submitted for *Collected Poems*, and because certain discrepancies in manuscript and magazine publication versions have not been resolved, minor changes have been made in punctuation, spelling, and line spacing without comment. Where more extensive variations occur, brief explanatory notes appear at the back of this book, although limitations of space preclude a full textual apparatus.

That same limitation has made the final choice difficult, and I am grateful to those scholars and teachers of my father's poetry whose generous comments and suggestions have been helpful. And to those others who assisted in the preparation of the manuscript, my sincere thanks.

—HOLLY STEVENS

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

WALLACE STEVENS was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, on October 2, 1879, and died in Hartford, Connecticut, on August 2, 1955. Although he had contributed to the *Harvard Advocate* while in college, he began to gain general recognition only when Harriet Monroe included four of his poems in a special 1914 wartime issue of *Poetry*. *Harmonium*, his first volume of poems, was published in 1923, and was followed by *Ideas of Order* (1936), *The Man with the Blue Guitar* (1937), *Parts of a World* (1942), *Transport to Summer* (1947), *The Auroras of Autumn* (1950), *The Necessary Angel* (a volume of essays, 1951), and *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (1954). Mr. Stevens was awarded the Bollingen Prize in Poetry of the Yale University Library for 1949. In 1951 he won the National Book Award in Poetry for *The Auroras of Autumn*; in 1955 he won it a second time for *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, which was also awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry in 1955. From 1916 on, he was associated with the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, of which he became vice-president in 1934.

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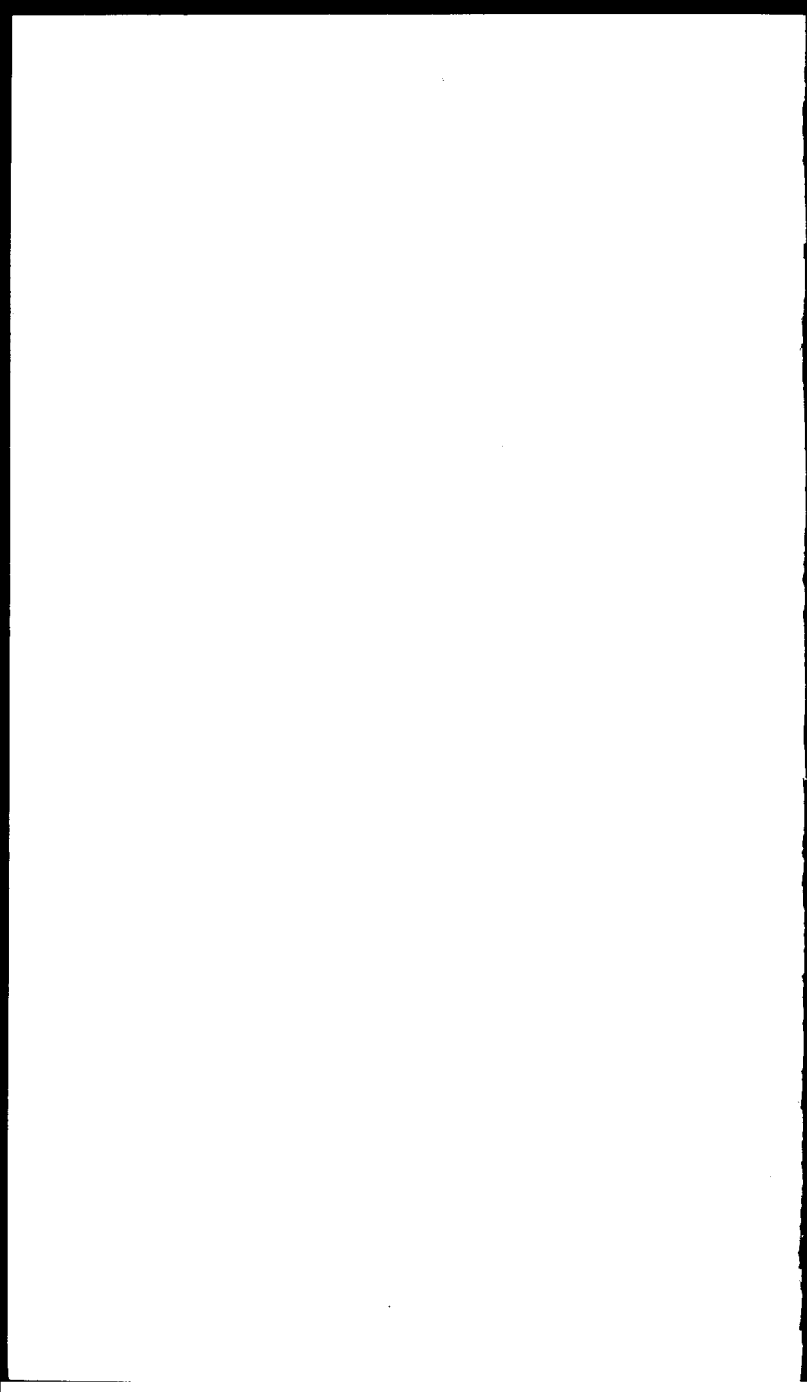
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**See Preface*

*THE PALM AT THE END
OF THE MIND*



Blanche McCarthy

Look in the terrible mirror of the sky
And not in this dead glass, which can reflect
Only the surfaces—the bending arm,
The leaning shoulder and the searching eye.

Look in the terrible mirror of the sky.
Oh, bend against the invisible; and lean
To symbols of descending night; and search
The glare of revelations going by!

Look in the terrible mirror of the sky.
See how the absent moon waits in a glade
Of your dark self, and how the wings of stars,
Upward, from unimagined coverts, fly.

Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges

Ursula, in a garden, found
A bed of radishes.
She kneeled upon the ground
And gathered them,
With flowers around,
Blue, gold, pink, and green.

She dressed in red and gold brocade
And in the grass an offering made
Of radishes and flowers.

She said, "My dear,
Upon your altars,
I have placed

The marguerite and coquelicot,
And roses
Frail as April snow;
But here," she said,
"Where none can see,
I make an offering, in the grass,
Of radishes and flowers."
And then she wept
For fear the Lord would not accept.

The good Lord in His garden sought
New leaf and shadowy tint,
And they were all His thought.
He heard her low accord,
Half prayer and half ditty,
And He felt a subtle quiver,
That was not heavenly love,
Or pity.

This is not writ
In any book.

Tea

When the elephant's-ear in the park
Shrivelled in frost,
And the leaves on the paths
Ran like rats,
Your lamp-light fell
On shining pillows,
Of sea-shades and sky-shades,
Like umbrellas in Java.