

Where Do You Think You Are?

Instead of asking 'Who am I?', a more fruitful question might be 'Where am I?' Looking beyond ourselves can bring us closer to what really matters. How do we begin to notice the details of places that touch us in ways we can't always understand and learn to see how they connect with all the different facets of where we find ourselves, inside and out? In this workshop we'll attune to the ecological and explore approaching Place as relationship and ongoing process, rather than as static external object, riffing off or recycling the strategies in Wallace Stevens' *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*.

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Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird
Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

Wallace Stevens
From *Collected Poems* (Knopf, 1954)

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Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Glacier

recycling Wallace Stevens

XIII

Among starving polar bears,
the only moving thing
was the edge of a glacier.

XII

We are of one ecology
like a planet
in which there are 200,000 glaciers.

XI

The glacier absorbs greenhouse gas.
We are a large part of the biosphere.

X

Humans and animals
are kin.
Humans and animals and glaciers
are kin.

IX

We do not know which to fear more,
the terror of change
or the terror of uncertainty,
the glacier calving
or just after.

VIII

Icebergs fill the vast ocean
with titanic wrecks.
The mass of the glacier
disappears, to and fro.
The threat
hidden in the crevasse
an irreversible clause.

VII

O vulnerable humans,
why do you engineer sea walls?
Do you not see how the glacier
already floods the streets
of the cities around you?

VI

I know king tides,
and lurid, unprecedented storms;
but I know, too,
that the glacier is involved
in what I know.

V

When the glacial terminus broke,
it marked the beginning
of one of many waves.

IV

At the rumble of a glacier
losing its equilibrium,
every tourist in the new Arctic
chased ice quickly.

III

Shell explored the poles
for offshore drilling.
Once, we blocked them,
in that we understood
the risk of an oil spill
for a glacier.

II

The sea is rising.
The glacier must be retreating.

I

It was summer all winter.
It was melting
and it was going to melt.
The last glacier fits

in our warm hands.

Craig Santos Perez

From *Habitat Threshold* (Omnidawn, 2020)

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You might like to read these poems/books named for Place(s) too:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/55476/islands-56d23720d8640>

<https://merwinconservancy.org/2015/04/place-by-ws-merwin/>

https://joriegraham.com/place_uk