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# **Visual Arts' Manifestation in Poetry**

## **"Interdisciplinarity and Reshaping Approaches and Techniques in Wallace Stevens's Visual Poetry" (\*)**

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### **Abstract**

Interdisciplinarity crosses boundaries of thinking, and reflects a creative process of an artist's thinking. Interdisciplinarity also reshapes a work of art through analyzing, examining and understanding it from different perspectives. The concept of interdisciplinarity contains three basic principles. The first is the relationship between literature and other different fields such as cultural studies, history, psychology, sociology, etc. The second is the one between a literary text and other artistic fields such as visual arts. The third is the application of certain theories and methodologies on a work of art. Interdisciplinarity produces new forms of aesthetics, disciplines, comparisons, perspectives and appreciation. An interdisciplinary work of art expresses a unity of knowledge, and reshapes art.

The paper focuses on the relationship between Stevens' poetry and the different fields of art such as painting and film. Stevens treads many visual fields. His relationship with the arts is developed through his connection with certain artistic movements. Stevens' poems have features from different schools like those of imagism, experimentalism and cubism. For instance, in the light of post-modernism, Stevens' poems become experiments and adventures, lacking heroism and characterization.

Stevens sheds light on other kinds of visual and aural fields. He presents the relationship between literature and films- which is difficult to be arranged. The first started since four thousand years while the second since one hundred and fifteen years. Written poems express sounds and ideas, while films introduce characters, images and lights. The presentation shows how turning poetry into painting and film is an interdisciplinary art, as well as mentally challenging and creative. Interdisciplinarity reshapes the approach to Wallace Stevens' visual poetry.

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## تداخل التخصصات وإعادة تشكيل المناهج والتقنيات في الشعر البصري لوالاس ستيفنز

يتخطى تداخل التخصصات حدود التفكير ، وتعكس العملية الإبداعية لتفكير الفنان والشاعر . وتقوم الدراسات المتداخلة أيضا بإعادة تشكيل العمل الفني من خلال تحليله وفحصه وفهمه من وجهات نظر مختلفة. ويحتوي مفهوم التداخل على ثلاثة مبادئ أساسية: الأول هو العلاقة بين الأدب والمجالات المختلفة الأخرى مثل الدراسات الثقافية والتاريخ وعلم النفس وعلم الاجتماع ، إلخ. الثاني هو العلاقة بين النص الأدبي والمجالات الفنية الأخرى مثل الفنون البصرية. والثالث هو تطبيق بعض النظريات والمنهجيات على العمل الفني. وتنتج الدراسات المتداخلة أشكالاً جديدة من الجماليات والأنظمة والمقارنات والمنظورات. فيعتبر العمل المتداخل عن وحدة المعرفة وتعيد تشكيل الفن.

ويركز العرض التقديمي على العلاقة بين شعر والاس ستيفنز والمجالات الفنية المختلفة مثل الرسم والأفلام. فتطرق ستيفنز في شعره الي العديد من المجالات البصرية. وتتطور علاقته بالفنون من خلال علاقته ببعض الحركات الفنية. فتحتوي قصائد ستيفنز على ملامح من مدارس مختلفة مثل التصويرية والتجريبي والتكبيبية. فعلى سبيل المثال ، في ضوء ما بعد الحداثة ، أصبحت قصائد ستيفنز تجارب ومغامرات ، مفتقدة البطولة والتشخيص.

ويلقي الشاعر الضوء على أنواع أخرى من المجالات البصرية والسمعية. فيعرض العلاقة بين الأدب والأفلام والتي يصعب ترتيبها. فالأدب بدأ منذ أربعة آلاف سنة والأفلام منذ مائة وخمس عشرة سنة. وتعتبر القصائد المكتوبة عن الأصوات والأفكار ، بينما تعرض الأفلام الشخصيات والصور والأضواء. ويُظهر العرض التقديمي كيف أن تحويل الشعر إلى لوحة فنية وفيلم يعتبر فن تداخلي ، فضلاً عن كونه تحدياً عقلياً وإبداعياً. وتعمل الدراسات المتداخلة على إعادة تشكيل فهم القراء وتقديرهم للشعر البصري لوالاس ستيفنز.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تداخلية التخصصات - الشعر البصري لـ والاس ستيفنز - الرسم والسينما - الدراسات الثقافية

Interdisciplinarity crosses boundaries between subjects and fields, and reflects a creative process of thinking. The concept of interdisciplinarity contains three basic principles (*Zepetneck* 79). The first is the relationship between literature and other different fields such as cultural studies, history, psychology, sociology, etc. The second is the one between a literary text and other artistic fields such as visual arts and music. The third is the application of certain theories and methodologies on a work of art. Interdisciplinarity produces new forms of aesthetics, disciplines, comparisons, perspectives and appreciation. An interdisciplinary work of art expresses a unity of knowledge. According to Joe Moran, interdisciplinarity postulates “connections across different disciplines” (14). The term interdisciplinarity forms flexible and borderless borders.

The paper focuses on the relationship between Wallace Stevens’ poetry and the different fields of art such as painting, photography and cinema. Stevens treads many visual and aural fields. His relationship with the arts develops through his connection with artistic movements. Stevens’s poems have features from different schools like those of imagism, experimentalism, surrealism and cubism. Stevens sheds light on visual and aural fields. These include film and painting that give Stevens a chance to enjoy aesthetics in art and literature and to examine and analyze characters and objects. He presents the relationship between literature and films. The former has existed for thousands of years while the latter since one hundred and fifteen years. Written poems express sounds and ideas, while films introduce characters, images and lights. The paper shows how turning poetry into painting, music and cinema is an interdisciplinary art, as well as a mentally challenging and creative activity.

The aim of introducing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Wallace Stevens’s poetry is to construct an integrated and broad understanding of his poems, based on certain principles and methods of each interdisciplinary field. This method leads to interactive multi-levels of thinking, discussion and analysis. The study encourages readers to read and examine poetry from new perspectives.

So poetry becomes more relevant to contemporary life in light of different social and cultural conventions. The methodology of this paper is to shed light on Wallace Stevens's poetry from different perspectives, on the account of different disciplinary interpretations. There is a need to understand the crucial role and relationship between different disciplines. William Newell illustrates that interdisciplinary studies express inquiries which critically draw upon two or more disciplines and which lead to an integration of disciplinary insight (*Defining and Teaching Interdisciplinary Studies* 25). An interdisciplinary study helps to sharpen and renew the influence of familiar disciplines. Understanding the concepts, methodologies, and theories of an interdisciplinary approach can relate to another field of study efficiently.

Classical writers were interested in the relationship between the visual and the verbal. For example, Horace describes poetry as a speaking painting (*Horace* 361). A poem becomes a painting made with words. According to Karl Michael, there are three steps for turning poetry into paintings: illustration, interpretation, and reaction (*Art Education* 12). These variable levels of meanings present various ways of perception, feeling and awareness. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the interaction between poetry and visual arts was fashionable in postmodernist poetics. Modern poetry embodies a multi-dimensional content which cannot be expressed in a single unified context. In a changeable world, poets use forms, techniques and styles from various cultures and languages (*Yeh & Lin* 101). When a poet sees poetry in the light of painting, this process involves complex interdisciplinary concerns. Painting becomes an experimental artistic tool, a major metaphor for aesthetic approach. Basic elements such as colors, lines and forms lead to visual reality of objects and characters (*Wassüy* 162). Poetry represents a form of verbal art that shows aesthetic beauty of language. Costello says, "Poets find a way to break poetry's reliance on statement and formal convention and to re-center their project on abstract designs" (167). Imagism marks certain innovations such as the use of free verse, technical idioms, and distinctive vocabulary and cubist forms (Moody, 15). Stevens uses

these characteristics successfully. He is aware of adapting certain forms, styles, and techniques from diverse fields in his poetry. Stevens' "The Snow Man" (*CP* 9) shows a creative expression consisting of cubist and abstract designs produced by the application of colors and dimensions. The poem stirs readers to appreciate the beauty of nature, and asks them to look at the beauty in tough situations. Here, a person becomes miserable because of a snowstorm, and asks viewers not to be unhappy because of the sound of the snow. The poet creates a cubist vision through the use of different perspectives, "One must have a mind of winter" (l.1). The reader sees the winter world through a cold eye. People see winter with the eye of discomfort and melancholy.

One must have a mind of winter  
To regard the frost and the boughs  
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time  
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,  
The spruces rough in the distant glitter (l- 6)

The poet is influenced by imagism, and has an imagist eye, "pine-trees crusted with snow" (l.3), "junipers shagged with ice" (l.5), "spruces rough in the distant glitter/ Of the January sun" (ll.6-7). He gives readers a bare description of a scene. He paints the image regardless of rhythmical requirements, and captures a single moment in life. Stevens describes very realistic details, and invokes a series of emotions and perspectives in the reader's mind. The verb, "crusted" (l.3) has a geometrical connotation. The title itself is an abstract metaphor of winter and its essence. The poem is one sentence; it proceeds through the activity of the mind. The verb "behold" (l.5) manifests the fact that the viewer and listener are aware of the essential bareness of winter. To behold nothing is to understand the bare reality. The bare scene is maintained by the repeated word

“nothing.” In a mind of winter, one can “regard” (1.2), “not to think” (1.7), and “behold” (1.5) only through the imagination. The parallelism in “The sound of the wind” (1.8), “the sound of a few leaves” (1.9) and, “the sound of the land” (1.10) suggests that everything is faded into “the same bare place” (1.12). By the end of the poem, the speaker, the listener and the reader have become the snowman. They see through his eyes without the thoughts of discomfort.

Soon, avant-garde movements like Imagism and Vorticism began to highlight the new interdisciplinary relation between poetry and the visual arts. Patea Viorica says, “The poetry of the modernist avant-garde shows a filial relationship with abstract art, especially with Cubist painting” (272). Modern poets forsake the standards of figurative painting, and favor abstract one. The reader's eye and ear move over the scene, words, syllables, searching for clues to movement in the landscape, and focus on the blackbird's different angles. In his *Letters of Wallace Stevens* (1996), Stevens said of the blackbird sequence, “This group of poems is not meant to be a collection of epigrams or of ideas, but of sensations” (279). The poet was also a collector and connoisseur of Asian art, like painting, pottery, and jewelry. He seeks the principles of Cubism such as the use of multiple perspectives to alter perceptions and create the imagination. Stevens wants readers to see more than one perspective or meaning in his painted poems, and creates visual and psychological experiences. In “Sea Surface Full of Clouds,” (*CP*, 98), the changing moods of a speaker are presented by the various aspects of the sea and clouds and metaphors of the landscape and colors. These moods express an experimental painting. Stevens's compositions are visual texts in terms of their formal design and structure. A poem does not represent reality, but rather composes it.

According to Paul Cézanne, a work of art should be seen “in terms of the cylinder, the cone, the sphere” (*Cézanne* 18-19). These three forms have a geometrical shape. Cummings says, “The symbol of an Art is the Prism. The goal is unreality. The method is destructive. To break up the white light of objective realism into the secret glories it contains” (*Selected Poems* xvi). Cubism seeks broken images of non-fixed objects that are combined in a structure of collage. Stevens believes that nature and its components should be viewed through the lens of fragmentations, various perspectives and juxtaposition which are basic

elements in cubism. An object becomes a system of relationships. Stevens creates a multi-dimensional reality free from the common scope. A work of art has an impersonal theory of perception. This allows Stevens to present different levels of feelings and cultural and social representations. In his poem, "Study of Two Pears" (*CP* 196), the poet says,

I

Opusculum paedagogum.

The pears are not viols,

Nudes or bottles.

They resemble nothing else.

II

They are yellow forms

Composed of curves

Bulging toward the base.

They are touched red.

III

They are not fiat surfaces

Having curved outlines.

They are round

Tapering toward the top.

IV

In the way they are modelled

There are bits of blue.

A hard dry leaf hangs

From the stem.

V

The yellow glistens.

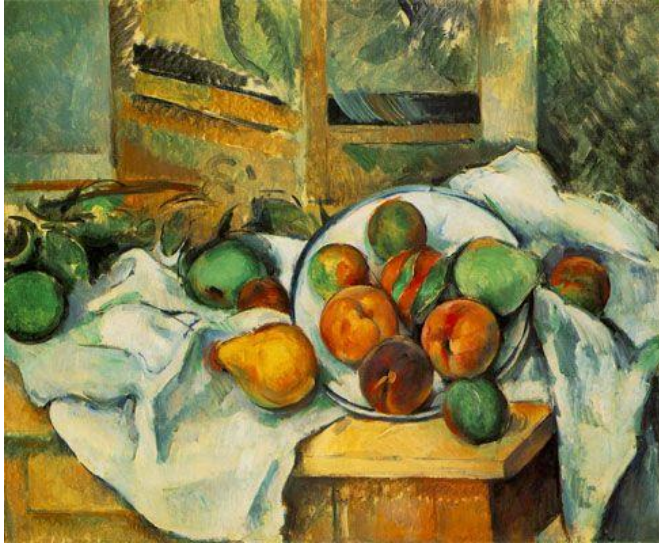


It glistens with various yellows,  
 Citrons, oranges and greens  
 Flowering over the skin.

## VI

The shadows of the pears  
 Are blobs on the green cloth.  
 The pears are not seen  
 As the observer wills. (1-24)

This poem is a painting of real pears. The phrase, “Opusculum paedagogum,” (l.1) refers to Latin pedagogy. The poet defamiliarizes the pears by correlating them with unconventional objects. They resemble a cubist painting where the actual shape of the pears does not look like “yellow forms” (l.5), “viols/ “Nudes bottles” (l.2-3) or “fiat surfaces” (l.9). The sculptured shape has a precise appearance, “Having curved outlines” (l.10). The shape of the pears is asserted by the use of the negative, “The pears are not viols,/ Nudes or bottles.” (ll.2-3). Their shape has no resemblance with anything else. The fragmented, “modeled” (l.13) structure of the pearls is illustrated by the use of colors- yellow, red, blue, green. Following Cezanne’s approach of cubism, Stevens uses geometrical forms- “outlines” (l.10), “round” (l.11), “modeled (l.13) to describe an object. The gerund verbs, “bulging” (l.7), “tapering” (l.12) and “flowering” (l.20) give life to the objects. The verb, “flowering” is a metaphor for the activity of the pears. The verb, “glistens” (l.17) helps the reader to see the pears in a wholly position. The metaphor in “The shadows of the pears/ Are blobs on the green cloth” (l.21) forms these sculptured and colorful pears. García Lorenzo says, “The Symbolist legacy is present in the attention he [Stevens] paid to color and sound imagery” (76). Nevertheless, the poet admits the formless form of the pears; they resist human imagination, “The pears are not seen/ As the observer wills” (l. 23-4).



*Table, Napkin, and Fruit (A Corner of the Table) (1895-1900)*

Cézanne painted his own semi-sculptural theory to still life. On a table, Cézanne's pears, peaches, and other pictorial elements rest on a solid, wooden plank and yet float across the surface of the canvas. A viewer can see chairs, wooden screens, water pitchers, and wine bottles. His eyes rise vertically up the canvas, rather than focusing on any implied corner of a real table. The painting has multiple viewpoints. From the left, a viewer sees the green apples. He cannot decide whether it is a table or bricks at the end left of the painting. From the center, there is the tilted plate full of peaches and apples. The pear is solitary in the center. A viewer can see a tablecloth from the right. Colors spread everywhere and dominate the scene.

Wallace Stevens's "The Man with the Blue Guitar" (1937) is inspired by Picasso's painting *The Old Guitarist* (1903). Picasso draws an elder blind musician, who is haggard with threadbare clothing while playing in the streets of Barcelona, Spain. Paul Mariani, a biographer of Wallace Stevens, presented his analysis of the painting as a counterpoint to objections raised by Stevens concerning the origin of his own poem stating,

"Despite his repeatedly denying it, Stevens

does seem to have a particular painting in mind here: Picasso's 1903 *The Old Guitarist*, which portrays an old man with white hair and beard sitting distorted and cross-legged as he plays his guitar. If Picasso attempted to portray the world of poverty and abject misery, it was because that had been his own plight as a struggling young artist in Barcelona, where he painted many pictures including this one, of the poor. The painting is almost entirely done in monochromatic blues and blue-blacks, except for the guitar itself, which is painted in a slightly warmer brown. The man is blind but, no longer seeing the world around him, he sees more deeply into the reality within" (226).



*The Old Guitarist* (Oil on Panel) (1903).

The two dimensional forms of the man and the guitar with blue and yellow colors control the scene. While the blue color reflects sorrow and melancholy, the light brown mirrors the man's world of music. The use of oil colors accentuates the effect of poverty and the misery life of an artist. The little light which comes from the guitar suggests hope and survival. In a similar way, the poet uses stream-of-consciousness to show the essence of being, "Things as they are/Are changed upon the blue guitar." The persona speaks through his guitar. Stevens' "The Man with the Blue Guitar" (*CP* 165) consists of thirty-three short stanzas in four-beat couplets, mostly unrhymed. The poem is introduced through the voice of the first and third persons. Through the artist's voice, a new meaning is created through his understanding of the world. But the audience wants to hear only what they already know, "They said, 'you have a blue guitar,/You do not play things as they are'" (ll.3-4). The artist asserts that he is not able to create the real world, "I cannot bring the world quite round/ Although I patch it as I can" (11-12). He claims that art is a new form of representation. As in Picasso's painting, Stevens makes changes in music with high and low pitches. Both artists believe that art changes the way we perceive life and natural processes. The image of ivy is changed into stones, women become cities, children are changed to fields, and men are transformed into the sea. The poet uses a tune, "a serenade" (l.17) to destroy, "bang" (l.29), and rebuild, "mold" (l.83), his masterpiece. The guitar does not express reality, but rather demolishes and then creates a new perception of reality and truth.

In another poem, "On Floral Decoration for Banana" (*CP* 53), Stevens introduces another work of art. The poem consists of four stanzas; each has seven lines. The speaker uses a narrative voice with descriptions and justifications. The poem is a painting in which a speaker does not want bananas for decorating a table. He sees them fit only for a room full of women, who have shanks and bangles and slatted eyes, "The women will be all shanks/ And bangles and slatted eyes" (ll.18-20). He rather likes plums in an eighteenth-century dish;

they exist in the center of the room where there are women of primrose and purl.

Well, nuncle, this plainly won't do.

These insolent, linear peels

And sullen, hurricane shapes

Won't do with your eglantine.

They require something serpentine.

Blunt yellow in such a room! (1-6)

**The painting is full of simple, precise, and realistic descriptions, “these insolent, linear peels/and sullen, hurricane shapes/ won’t do with your eglantine” (ll.2-4). E. Gombrich says, "The recognition not of reality in a painting but of a painting in reality" (32). Stevens uses a cubic abstract painting, and gives a precise description of banana leaves and banana flowers just beginning to set fruit. This image is illustrated by the use of the verbs, “hacked and hunched” (l. 13)**

And deck the bananas in leaves

Plucked from the Carib trees,

Fibrous and dangling down,

Oozing cantankerous gum

Out of their purple maws,

Darting out of their purple craws

Their musky and tingling tongues (20-6)

Twentieth-century Modernist poetry uses visual imagery effectively, “By calling attention to its physical premises, visual poetry insists on the autonomy of the text, on its integrity as an expressive form” (*Bohn* 67). The poet gives a live description of the bananas by using gerund verbs, “dangling” (l.22) and “oozing” (l.23) and “darting” (l.25). He also uses metaphors in “their purple maws” (l.24) and “tingling tongues” (l.26). These elements and details form a 3D painting.

Furthermore, Stevens’ “Anecdote of the Jar” (*CP* 76) imitates with words a real jar from the perspective of visual arts. When Stevens started writing this poem, he had in mind a fruit jar he saw in

Tennessee (1918). The jar was called the "Dominion Wide Mouth Special" (Roy 56). It was made in Canada, and was widely distributed around the world in 1913. In this poem, the speaker places a jar on a hill in Tennessee. It is surrounded by the wilderness. The focus of the poem is on the jar itself and its relationship with the external world, the imagination and senses. Stevens's main theme discusses the relationship between objects and the outer world. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "The eye is the first circle; the horizon which it forms is the second; and throughout nature this primary figure is repeated without end" (279). Stevens' jar is placed by the speaker in a conscious action and decision on a hill in Tennessee. The landscape spins around this simple jar.

I placed a jar in Tennessee,  
And round it was, upon a hill.  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill. (CP, 76)

The poem is written in iambic tetrameter. It consists of three stanzas; each is a quatrain. The repeated and rhyming words "surround," "around," "round" and "ground" in the first two stanzas come from the circular lens of the artist's camera. The adjective, "slovenly" (l.3) describes the uncultivated nature. The wilderness does not introduce creative power. The jar is placed in an unfunctional and impractical deserted area. Although it lacks purpose or order in itself, it imposes order on its surroundings. Despite being "gray and bare" (l.9), the jar controls the scene, "It took[s] dominion everywhere" (l.10). The round shape of the jar, "rounded" (l.2) asserts its authority. The jar symbolizes art and mind which control nature. It is "tall and of a port in air" (l.8). The jar has power from its imperfection; it is empty and "bare and gray" (l.9). Although the jar is inanimate, "It did not give of bird or bush" (l.11). Stevens' jar imposes order on the chaotic world. This is illustrated by the repeated and rhyming words, "round" and "ground" (ll.2). The lines have rigid iambic meter, except in "slovenly wilderness"(l.3). Then the irregularity of nature becomes regular. The jar itself is round and the

wilderness surrounds it. This represents the conflict between the mind and the external reality. Stevens transforms his own imaginative activity into an aesthetic stillness. In a similar painting, *Face* (1955), Pablo Picasso draws a jar in a painted pottery. The jar has a human face looking at the viewer. It expresses inner feelings.



### Picasso's *Face* (1955)

The face of the jar dominates the scene. Picasso introduces an experimental work of art through the use of a geometrical shape and clay material. He transformed the craft of pottery into an art. The created painting has an authority over the surrounding environment. Like Stevens, Picasso transforms his own imaginative activity into an aesthetic stillness.

Stevens' interest in music is obvious in his collection, *Harmonium*. A similar transformation through music can be seen in Stevens's poem "Peter Quince at the Clavier" (CP 89).

Music is feeling, then, not sound;  
 And thus it is that what I feel,  
 Here in this room, desiring you,  
 Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,  
 Is music. (4–8)

Quince changes from an amateur player to a pianist. He says, “Just as my fingers on these keys/ Make music, so the selfsame sounds/ On my spirit make a music, too” (ll.1-3). The biblical story of Susanna and the Elders is introduced in terms of music. The poet depicts the story of Susanna who is sentenced to death because she is suspected of being disloyal. The ones who have tried to rape her are judges. Nevertheless, Prophet Daniel suspects them and accuses them of being false witnesses until he sends them to death. Sound and music are turned into a visual imagery, “what I feel,/ Here in this room, desiring you,/Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,/Is music” (ll.5-8). Audiovisual scenes are introduced through musical elements. The elders feel “The basses of their beings throb/ In witching chords, and their thin blood/ Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna” (ll.13-5). Emotions and actions of Susanna and her watchers are interpreted in musical phenomena. Their activities arouse from Susanna’s memory like a “clear viol” (l.63). This phrase reflects the girl’s chastity and pure feelings. The poet uses paradox in “Beauty is momentary in the mind... But in the flesh it is immortal. / The body dies; the body’s beauty lives’?” (ll.50-2) He sees beauty in the girl’s body shape. Sidney Feshbach says,

Stevens’ poem itself makes a constant sacrament of praise both to the beauty of Susanna and to the immortality created by the artistic imagination when it embodies human feelings in enduring works of art (189).

Suzanna moves from a materialistic world to a heavenly one. If the body dies, beauty lasts forever. Music expresses emotions. The poem has four musical movements. Rhythm and rhyme are introduced through the sounds of strings, horns, cymbals, and tambourines. In the fourth stanza, music lasts forever, “Beauty is momentary in the mind— / The fitful tracing of a portal; / But in the flesh it is immortal” (ll.50-2). The fluency of music and feelings are expressed by the use



of “going,” “flowing” and “scenting.” The sound of music is heard in aural sound, “choral” (l. 58). The color in "green evening" (l.10) and "green water" (l.16) describes the honest Suzanna and in "red-eyed elders" (12) conveys the judges’ sexual desire. The image, “bawdy strings/ Of those white elders” describes those elders’ wicked and evil spirit. The harsh sound of cymbals and noisy horns reflect their lustful attitude. This is also supported by the repeated consonant ‘b’ in “The basses of their beings throb/ In witching chords, and their thin blood/ Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna” (ll.13-5). Through music, Stevens manages to introduce a visual story. This interdisciplinarity between music and poetry is creative and refreshing.

The relationship between painting, cinema and poetry is very effective and interdependent. In “Disillusionment of 10 O’ Clock” (*CP* 66), Stevens introduces how middle-class people would clothe themselves in terms of art. The word “Disillusionment” (l.1) refers to their lack of illusion. The poem is influenced by Expressionism in a way that the speaker tries to search for a new way of expression. The self is trying to escape from traditionalism to unfamiliar expectations. The roving camera moves through various families who wear white gowns so that the viewer or the reader can see their expressions and dreams. The **internal rhyme** in "White" and "night" suggests ordinary people’s common dress for night. The **alliteration** in "Houses" and "haunted" expresses the limited imagination of human mind.

The houses are haunted  
 By white night-gowns.  
 None are green,  
 Or purple with green rings,  
 Or green with yellow rings,  
 Or yellow with blue rings.  
 None of them are strange,  
 With socks of lace  
 And beaded ceintures.

People are not going  
To dream of baboons and periwinkles.  
Only, here and there, an old sailor,  
Drunk and asleep in his boots,  
Catches tigers  
In red weather. (1-15)

The image, “white night-gowns” (l.2) describes the boring, bland pajamas. The verb, “haunted” (l.1) implies that people have uninteresting and bland dreams. The visual camera moves to other people with interesting outfits; they have wondrous dreams, full of “baboons and periwinkles” (l.11). The poem is a call for imagination. What would happen if people become untraditional and wear colorful gowns? Stevens wants readers to look at the world from a different perspective by using a different lense. The readers’ five senses are engaged in reading such a poem. The viewers can see the scene, feel the atmosphere, dream about animals, smell flowers, taste wine, and touch tigers. Stevens sees that humans have infinite possibilities, yet are limited by their weak imagination. He loves vivid and precise colors and their precision and clarity. The adjective, “red” (l.15) suggests the vivid imagination of the poet. The use of colors has an aesthetic end in itself; these colors also refer to the variations of life’s definitions and interpretations. The descriptive objects, "socks of lace / And beaded ceintures" (8-9) decorate the blank landscape. This is supported by the use of **anaphora in** “Or purple with green rings,/ Or green with yellow rings,/ Or yellow with blue rings” (ll.4-6). The different colors assert that life has more than one concept. The adverb, "here and there" suggests that there are more than one sailor. They are old and drunk; they stay in ecstasy because of wine. The imagery of catching tigers expresses the delightful dreams of an imaginative mind. The poet uses free verse to express his creativity and freedom of the imagination.

Poetry film is a subgenre of [film](#) that combines the use of spoken words and visual images with sound. It creates an effective

presentation and interpretation of the delivered message. This integration of image and spoken word creates an interdisciplinary and interdependent area of study, which William Wees calls the "Poetry-film" genre. He says,

A number of avant-garde film and video makers have created a synthesis of poetry and film that generates associations, connotations and metaphors neither the verbal nor the visual text would produce on its own(5).

Poetry responds to imitation, harmony and rhythm. Interdisciplinarity between poetry and film produces new forms of aesthetics, perspectives, comparisons, disciplines and appreciation. Roland Barthes says, "Interdisciplinarity is always transformative in some way, producing new forms of knowledge in its engagement with discrete disciplines" (155). The interdisciplinary approach leads to new areas of explanation and interpretation. For Stevens, he creates modern filmic innovations in his poetry, a challenging and unconventional language and form.

Stevens' film-poetry examines new ways of understanding the world. The poet presents avant-garde literary texts that are read and interpreted from a modernist point of view. William Verrone claims that avant-garde film suggests alternative perspectives that permit spectators to question reality (95). A new work of art is created from the combination of sounds, words and images.

Stevens's poetry highlights the principles of time, stream of consciousness, imaginary place, montage, direction of light, and aural effects. Montage develops through the combination of shots, and uncovers meaning through continuous visual moments and forms. As in modern films, Stevens explores fragmentations and collages. Stevens' modern filmic techniques and avant-garde poetry introduce a critical view on the modern society. There are five methods of montage: Metric, rhythmic, tonal and overtonal, and intellectual (*Eisenstein* 72). Metric montage is cutting shots to exact meaning,

length and beat. Rhythmic montage is cutting according to the action and content of the shots. Tonal montage depends on the tone of the scenes. The over-tonal montage focuses on the various tones and large sequence of shots. Intellectual montage sheds light on abstract ideas, such as using symbols of religion and corruption.

In Sergie Eisenstein's film *Battelfield Potemkin* (1925), a fight started between rebellious working-class sailors and their tyrannical officers who killed innocent people mercilessly. The sailors tried to defend their rights. Contradictory images are illustrated by scenes of murdered children and women and those of Tsarist forces. The opposing binaries between justice and oppression, virtue and cruelty are regarded as means of intellectual montage. The violent appearance of the attackers contradicts the frightened faces and distorted bodies of the victims. *Battleship Potemkin* is filled with different levels of light and colour. The scenes change from people, ocean mist, and water to objects. The camera moves between sailors' faces and their hammocks that are strung across the sailors' quarters like entanglements of their lives. In a related film poem, Stevens' "The Death of a Soldier" (CP 97), the analogy between the death of soldiers and the stopping of winds represents visual metric montage. The personification of death adds to its mystery and superiority, "Death is absolute and without memorial" (l.7).

#### THE DEATH OF A SOLDIER

Life contracts and death is expected,

As in a season of autumn.

The soldier falls.

He does not become a three-days personage,

Imposing his separation,

Calling for pomp.

Death is absolute and without memorial.

As in a season of autumn,  
 When the wind stops,  
 When the wind stops and, over the heavens,  
 The clouds go, nevertheless,  
 In their direction. (1-12)

The poem begins with a factual tone of frustration and depression. The metric imagery of death parallels that of autumn. The short line, “The soldier falls” (1.2) resembles the rhythmic short scene of falling sailors. The tonal montage focuses on the stopping sound of the wind. The repeated lines, “When the wind stops,/ When the wind stops” (1.9-10) have a rhythmic influence. The imagery of the wind symbolizes an intellectual montage. Here the readers respond to death peacefully as an ending point while in “Battlefield Potemkin,” viewers are full of distress, sorrow and shock.

In another film, *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), the director Dziga Vertov presents urban life in the Soviet cities. There are no actors in the film except the camera man or the film editor. Throughout a whole day, Soviet citizens are shown at work and play, interacting with modern machinery. The film highlights various cinematic techniques Vertov invented, such as different exposures, fast and slow motion, freeze frames, matching and following shots, jump cuts, split screens, multiple angles, extreme detailed pictures, stop motion illustrations and self-reflexive visuals (*Bordwell and Thompson* 6). In film-making, Slow motion is a technique in which time appears to move and slow down as in the motion of athletic activities or natural phenomena. Fast motion time passes between two things happening, and moves faster. A frame of an image or a scene is repeated many times. So time speed increases. Vertove also uses matching cuts, where two shots are joined by the action or subject. Stop motion is an animation technique in which humans, objects, and devices are photographed and shown in a way that makes them appear alive when played as a fast sequence.

Montage meant the conscientious placement of film  
fragments in order to expose new dimensions of  
comprehension,  
not by the mere juxtaposing of images but by careful  
arrangements,  
thus endowing visual composition with a potential for a  
dialectical.  
dynamics (*McParland* 15)

Vertov depicts parts of people's body and machines in still and motion pictures. These visual images introduce the city in different times and spaces. The fragments and collages are similar to fractured images in poetry. These perspectives express variations of emotional responses, which come from the visual impact, from its viewers. According to Eisenstein's principle of montage, filmmaking and camera introduce new perspectives and conventions about reality. Stevens uses both repetitive series of shots as in Vertov's *Man with a Camera* Movie and independent images as in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*. Stevens sees poetry as a medium that joins the visual with the linguistic. His poem-film, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" (*CP* 76) is about the story of an emperor who goes to a neighbor at home. She is an old woman and has just died.

Call the roller of big cigars,  
The muscular one, and bid him whip  
In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.  
Let the wenches dawdle in such dress  
As they are used to wear, and let the boys  
Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.  
Let be be finale of seem.  
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.  
(ll.1- 8)

In the first scene, the person helps other people to put the dead corpse in bed in slow motion montage. In the second scene, readers can see

some neighbors sending flowers and others are preparing food, including ice cream, for the walk. The poet then uses jump montage; he depicts a busy kitchen, in which ice cream is “whip[ped]” (l.2) up with gusto. The poet uses an unfamiliar lustful and desirous word, “Concupiscent” (l.3), to describe food. The imagery of the “muscular roller of big cigars” (l.1) and the “wenches” who “dwadle” (l.4) around the ice cream maker and his curds suggests a sensuous activity. This scene also evokes an enthusiastic and warm atmosphere. The image, “last month's newspapers” (l. 6) suggests the passage of time. The image connotes death. Following fast motion montage, the speaker looks at the neighbors, controls the scenes and gives them instructions in this ceremony, where small festivals with rich desserts are very traditional in some Caribbean countries. He uses odd diction. The image, “deal dresser,” (l.9) with its missing knobs reflects the woman’s modest previous social status. The image of the embroidered sheet of birds suggests the finality of life. This is illustrated by the use of the verb, “embroidered” (l.11) in “She embroidered fantails once” (l. 11). The scene of the woman’s “cold” (l.14) body is opposed to that of the people’s lively activities in the kitchen. The poet introduces binary oppositions such as life and death, illustrated by the clear precise shots and sentences. The images of ice cream, flowers, and newspaper give a temporary pleasure. Life is ephemeral, but has sensuous pleasure. This poem is turned into film. This kind of interdisciplinary reading enriches the poem with different perspectives. Readers know more about both disciplines- poetry and cinema.

Stevens’ “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” (*CP* 92) is an imagist film-poem. It begins with a scene of twenty mountains. The blackbird is a symbol of a man’s response to nature and the environment.

Among twenty snowy mountains,  
The only moving thing  
Was the eye of the blackbird.  
(*CP* 92, 1-3)

The movie camera spins around the bleak area until it focuses on the “the eye of the blackbird” (l. 3). The poem itself is a kind of inflections and innuendo, “I do not know which to prefer,/ The beauty of inflections” (ll.12-3). The inflections are the rhythms and melodies, “The blackbird whistling” (l.16). The innuendo is the silence after the whistling. The scene describes the natural landscape. On a metaphorical level, the speaker cannot decide whether he should choose poetry itself and its resonance in the mind or not. The word “inflections” (l.13) is the principle of the English word building, like the use of different prefixes already present in Latin (*inflect*, *deflect*, *reflect*). There is a paradox in “I know” (l.30) and “I do not know” (l.13). The positive adjectives in “lucid, inescapable rhythms” (l.13) and “noble accents” (l.14) highlight the aesthetic beauty of the ominous blackbird. The blackbird is “the only moving thing” (l.2). There is a similarity between Stevens’ poem and Hitchcock’s film “The Birds” (1963). It focuses on a series of sudden and unexplained violent birds’ attacks on people in California. These birds are moving vigorously. Their vision is terrifying in front of the viewers. In Stevens’ poem, the blackbird’s series of movements finally stopped at “the cedar-limbs” (l.16). The “eye of the blackbird” (l. 3) moves from a natural scene to an imaginary one. Beverly Maeder says, “The blackbird's eye represents the shifting, animated, spirited world of creatures in the midst of the frozen world of geology” (114). This fact is supported by the use of the flowing stressed and unstressed syllables, “A-mong... moun-tains” (l.1). The poem starts with an ontological sense of being, starting from the “I” of the speaker, who says that he “was of three minds” (l.4). The three objects become one, “A man and a woman and a blackbird / Are one” (l.11-2). The verbs, “traced” (l.22), “walks” (l.27), “flew” (l.34) and “rode over” (l.50) reflect space movements of filling, crossing, tracing and riding. The camera lens moves throughout all places and times. The blackbird is aesthetically known by bleak light and bare limbs. Its color is opposed to the white snow. Thirteen ways of looking at the bird are introduced through thirteen camera lenses.



XII

The river is moving.  
The blackbird must be flying.

The poem illustrates that the world does not have one meaning behind it, but hundreds of senses. In his film, Hitchcock uses a high-angle shot or open shots of certain places that show the perspective of the birds.



From the visual figure of the blackbird, "There are various kinds of eyes. Nevertheless, the poem asserts its truth through its thirteen ways of looking at the blackbird. The poem calls for the reality of things, "There is no such thing as the truth." ("Like Decorations in a Cemetery" 149). The poet does not confirm the existence of the blackbird's world, but rather the possibility of finding variations of descriptions and definitions of it. Like Nietzsche, Stevens uses aphorism as a way of depicting the multiple senses without marginalizing any particular depiction. Each time he cuts back to a wider shot that reveals more birds.

X

At the sight of blackbirds  
Flying in a green light,

Even the bawds of euphony  
Would cry out sharply.

The imagery of the flying birds is dominant and scary. Besides, Hitchcock uses a distant camera to illustrate birds as a threat; they are watching and observing the scene. They are inescapable. Scenes are filmed from distances to make actors appear small and submissive. For example, Melanie is cornered on a couch in Mitch's house, which makes her look passive and weak. In the following screenshot, the actors are surrounded by the black birds, watching them.



In the film, Hitchcock Uses colors to accentuate the feelings. Compared to Melanie, dressed in a green dress with her perfect hair, the ominous black birds stand out and develop a presence as the dominant power in the frame.



In the film, Hitchcock uses freeze motion technique to show the birds' control over the scene. The viewer cannot decide what these black birds think about. Stevens writes,

**XIII**

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



Both Stevens' poem and Hitchcock's film have many similar aspects. If readers are aware of these similarities, there will be more than one reading of the work of art. Interdisciplinarity between these artistic works produce more understanding and appreciation of them.

In general, the Interdisciplinary core of Stevens's poetry is also constructed by applying multiple perspectives and ways of thinking. Readers have to study each field separately, and then relate it to other fields. A disciplinary study is required for understanding each field of study deeply. A reader needs a 'synthesising mind' (*Gardener* 3) in order to have a complete view of the interrelated studies. At the end, s/he has a full understanding of these various connected studies. Interdisciplinarity produces new forms of aesthetics, disciplines, comparisons, perspectives and appreciation. An interdisciplinary work of art expresses a unity of knowledge. The paper shows how turning poetry into painting, music and film is an interdisciplinary, as well as a mentally challenging and creative art.

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