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# Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Cockroach: Apologies to Wallace Stevens

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THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT A COCKROACH

Apologies to Wallace Stevens

- I.        Among the towering spice rack,  
the only moving things  
were the legs of the cockroach.
- II.       I was of six minds  
Like a food processor  
in which there are six cockroaches.
- III.      The cockroach slid across the wet table top.  
It was a small part of an impression of Peggy Flemming.
- IV.      A man and a woman are two different things  
A man and a woman and a cockroach,  
are two different things and a household pest.
- V.        I do not know which I prefer,  
The beauty of inflections  
Or the beauty of innuendoes  
The cockroach urinating  
of just after.
- VI.      Green, water sucking ferns filled the window  
with long green fans.  
The shadow of the cockroach  
crossed it, to and fro.  
The mood traced in the shadow  
"Could you direct me to the Roach Motel?"
- VII.     O bearded man in Creative Writing,  
why do you imagine being Tom Selleck?  
Do you not see how the cockroach  
sneaks around the feet  
of the nymphomaniacs about you?
- VIII.    I know five accents  
and perverted, sadistic moans;  
But I know, too,  
that the blackbird  
ate my cockroach.
- IX.      When the cockroach marched out of sight,  
it marked the edge  
of one of many equilateral triangles.

X.        At the sight of cockroaches  
flying in the turquoise light,  
Even the poets  
would cry out sharply,  
"Cockroaches don't fly"

XI.       He rode over Idaho  
In a '62 Buick.  
Once, a fear shocked him,  
In that he mistook the shadow of a blackbird  
for his cockroach.

XII.      The river is flooded.  
The cockroach is shopping at Apple Valley.

XIII.     It was morning, all morning-It also snowed.  
The cockroach sat reading the Wall Street Journal.

Jeff Hoover