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UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

The Faculty of Graduate Studies,
University of Saskatchewan.

We, the undersigned members of the Committee appointed
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B.A., M.A. (Drama), M.F.A. (Drama), in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts, beg to report
that we consider the thesis satisfactory both in form and content.
Subject of Thesis: "World Images in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens"

We also report that she has successfully passed an oral
examination on the general field of the subject of the thesis.

25 April 1966.
WORLD IMAGES IN THE POETRY OF WALLACE STEVENS

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of English,
University of Saskatchewan,

by

Anne Malik
April, 1966

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Anne Malik
The following abbreviations are used to indicate source and page numbers for passages of poetry and for convenience in footnote citations of essays included in collected editions:


Since no opportunity occurred in the text, I would like here to acknowledge the helpfulness of the *Concordance to the Poetry of Wallace Stevens* in the preparation of this study.

I am deeply grateful to John James Teunissen who directed the writing of this thesis.
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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**
Although by now academic circles are in fairly general agreement that the work of Wallace Stevens is a major achievement, his poetry is still widely misread by the critics, and even the poet's name is unfamiliar to many of the educated community. His poetry is unique in the unfortunate sense that even in his own period his work is the property of literary specialists and a very small public with an unusual interest in poetry. There can be little doubt that his work will find a wider audience in time; it is too good not to. But he seeks solutions in his poetry for problems confronting the spirit of man in his own time. His work is needed now, and is immediate and powerful for his contemporaries in a way that perhaps it cannot be for later generations.

The difficulty in penetrating his poetry is not due to his ideas. These are interesting and significant in human terms, but not philosophically complex in themselves. His prosody is not alarmingly experimental but rather conservative, and his rhetorical control of line is highly skillful and clear. The problem lies in his substitution of a special language of images for the words that commonly denote the ideas referred to. The reader is presented with a vocabulary that appears in context to have significance beyond the beauty of the poetics, and to have a passionate depth beyond the pleasurable connotations of sensual imagery. But until the images reverberate for him with idea and emotion as they did for Stevens, he cannot himself directly participate
Because they cannot "read" his images, readers and often critics, too, find his poems alien to them, strange and beautiful if that is to their taste, or strange and chilly, tedious, dandified, and trivial if surface attractiveness without apparent substance is not to their taste. It is not surprising that readers feel emotionally detached from his poems. Indeed, some critics feel that Stevens also was emotionally chilly, or exquisitely trivial, as if he were another Petronius Arbiter Elegantiae replying to the chaos of his century with gorgeousness, style, connoisseurship, and condescension. Relying mainly on the aesthetic pleasures of the surface of his work, they have quite understandably assumed that this kind of beauty is the emotional substance of the poems. After being out of fashion since the twenties, the elegant mode has become attractive again, and enthusiasts are ready to claim the Stevens of "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" as their own. In this context, they are content to admire, to imitate, and to leave him.

Others who are not satisfied with such pleasures but ask more of poetry, may dismiss Stevens' work, but more often of late may emphasize the intellectual enjoyment of his poems. They, too, miss contact with the deeply moving expression of feeling which is so inextricably fused with his ideas. His purpose was not only to describe or analyze ideas but to render the emotional experience of them and of the activity of thinking them. An approach to Stevens through the analysis of his ideas is interesting in itself, but since it involves replacing Stevens' images with emotionally inert denotational
expressions, the person who would fully read the poems is not much assisted in his purpose by consulting such sources. He still cannot read and feel Stevens' images. It is my conviction that only a study of Stevens' images which attempts by the analysis of comparative uses and the presentation of generous excerpts to show what they mean "denotationally" and connotationally to him, can clear the way for a full communication of his works to the non-specialist public. The method followed in this study will place images in those general contexts in which they reverberate with significant, if varying, connotations. I call these image clusters "worlds," which is convenient and, considering Stevens' use of world images, suitable. The study will begin with less complex contexts and more general comment, and move gradually into more complex world contexts where numerous images integrate in clusters that distinguish them and emotionally intensify reactions to them. Since the range of images actually illustrated must be far less in number than those Stevens employed, it may be useful for the reader to notice other images that recur in the quoted passages. Many of the passages have been selected so that related images are repeated.
II. POETRY AND REALITY: THE DARK WORLD

And these images, these reverberations
And others, make certain how being
Includes death and the imagination. (444)

The poetry of Wallace Stevens vibrates with the tension of the most profoundly thwarting antithesis of the modern age: the recognition in phenomenology of a reality that denies more than existential and earthly value to human life, and the passionate desire for ideal identity and human nobility. The famished idealist becomes the battleground of this conflict when he relentlessly refuses the comforts of an ideality he believes false in the name of reality that takes no account of a man's suffering awareness of his meaninglessness. "The Greenest Continent" is lorded over by the snake:

The was never the heaven of Africa, which had
No heaven, but death without heaven, death
In a heaven of death. Beneath the heavy foils,
Beneath the spangling greens, fear might placate
And the serpent might become a god, quick-eyed,
Rising from indolent coils.

1Page references for passages from Stevens' The Collected Poems, Opus Posthumous, and The Necessary Angel will be indicated in parentheses following the quotations. When several lines are quoted from one page, or from a stanza that runs over on to a second page, the reference will follow the last line included in the text. If the images grouped in this text or the lines quoted are not referred to in the order in which they originally appeared in the works themselves, the page number will be followed with an asterisk. Numbers alone refer to The Collected Poems, while OP and NA refer to the other two volumes.


Africa symbolizes reality and "No god rules over Africa" except death. The statue as an object of imaginative order is crossed by the serpent. As it defies what is real, it becomes unreal itself. For imaginative nobility and a sense of oneness to survive they must rest upon the reality of change and death; their grandeur must be that of the "black sublime." The forest-men in the jungle of reality are

Forever hunting or hunted, rushing through
Endless pursuit or endlessly pursued,
Until each tree, each evil-blossomed vine,
Each fretful fern drops down a fear like dew
And Africa, basking in antiquest sun,
Contains for its children not a gill of sweet. (OP, 54-55*)

The principle that "Imagination loses its vitality as it ceases to adhere to what is real" (NA, 6) sounds a dismal note when reality itself is a barren wilderness: a barrenness of time and ideality that denies man nobility of being, as the lack of heaven threatens him with meaninglessness. In an existential universe, when man's significance

2Buttel notes that in several of his undergraduate stories involving the conflict between beauty and reality, Stevens deals with the necessity for beauty to adhere to reality to be alive, and for reality to be elevated from coarseness and formlessness by the imagination. Thus, Stevens seems to have found or glimpsed his central theme early. Stevens' idea of what makes art great is simply expressed: "Poetry is great only as it exploits great ideas or what is the same thing great feelings," (OP, 176). For a full discussion of the function of poetry and the quality of feelings and ideas that are great, see NA, 30-36. Robert Buttel, "Wallace Stevens at Harvard: Some Origins of his Theme and Style", The Act of the Mind, eds. Roy Harvey Pearce and J. Hillis Miller (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1965), 30. (Hereafter referred to as AM.)
is diminished to a nonsense syllable, his spirit is also shrivelled. He must struggle not to feel mean in stature and inadequate in his humanity. Similarly, the products of man’s imagination, his little attempts at order, are the butts of time. Thus, an imaginative work that seems in one mood substantial may appear in another, a toy or "thing-a-ma-jig."

The buildings pose in the sky
And, as you paint, the clouds,
Grisaille, impearled, profound,
Pfft . . .

(198)

The pfft blows his view of an order in reality away again. The imaginative man is caught in a comic predicament; "The intelligence is part of the comedy of life" (OF, 289). The formlessness of reality is the antagonist of the imagination.

The threat of dissolution that the formless presents is captured in sea images with its constantly recurring pressure imaged in sound and surf. "Fabliau of Florida" is a poem about the unceasing efforts required of the imagination that would succeed in overcoming the formless by spinning fictive forms. The imagination struggles against reality in an attempt to hold a course "outward into heaven, / Into the alabasters / And night blues." The imagination that creates out of "foam and cloud" makes so much palmy froth which is always dissolving. "Sultry moon-monsters" of the illusionary imagination need to be replenished, and the recipe asks for some of the doggedness of those damned to carry water in a sieve: "Fill your black hull / With white moonlight." As the sea is more tireless than the imaginative man, the poem concludes with the implied ultimate defeat of form by the
formless: "There will never be an end / To this droning of the surf" (23). In "Hibiscus on the Sleeping Shores," fancy flies like a moth when the noise of the waves " Disturbed not even the most idle ear" which was "Shut to the blather that the water made" (22). The man whose ear is open to the sea, "of that wide water, inescapable" (170), is engaged in a struggle for survival. His only means of resisting the destructiveness of reality is his imagination. Yet in its grip, he finds himself a clown who attempts with absurd and persistent intentness to perfect a performance out of his imperfections:

What counted was mythology of self,
Blotted out beyond unblotching. Crispin,
The lutanist of fleas, the knave, the thane,
The ribboned stick, the bellowing breeches, cloak
Of China, cap of Spain, imperative haw
Of hum, inquisitorial botanist,
And general lexicographer of mute
And maidenly greenhorns, now behold himself,
A skinny sailor peering in the sea-glass.
What word split up in clickering syllables
And storming under multitudinous tones
Was name for this short-shanks in all that brunt?
Crispin was washed away by magnitude.
The whole of life that still remained in him
Dwindled to one sound strumming in his ear,
Ubiquitous concussion, slap and sigh,
Polyphony beyond his baton's thrust. (28)

Reality has its own fluid decorum that mocks man's religious and sentimental irrelevancies: "Never angels, nothing of the dead" (218).

In two impressive poems in Harmonium, "Cortège for Rosenbloom" and

---

"The Emperor of Ice-Cream," he faces the implications of his belief that "Life is the elimination of what is dead" (OP, 169). Only the "infants of misanthropes / And the infants of nothingness" serve the dead. Their obsequies are no more than a jangle and a jumble of the reality that was the blooming vital shape of the rose rabbi, the Everyman who is so lamentably hated that he cannot be allowed to die as he lived, in his own person: "Of the intense poem / Of the strictest prose / Of Rosenbloom" (81). The cortège that betrays the dead is seen in a wry contrasting light in "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," when at the wake they enjoy themselves, the death being only another occasion of their livingness. The things of the dead are discarded with her corpse. Her embroidered sheet, her artifact, will do to cover her body. Death cannot communicate; her horny feet prove to be dumb. Anyway, no one is listening. Last month's newspapers are suitable wrapping for her flowers, and everyday dresses fitting for the wenches who visit. Life, with its "concupiscent curds," commands the scene, and whatever sentimentality induced the gathering, its solemnity founders on the ice cream pleasure of animal reality. Significantly, the immediate forgetting of the dead is not regretted, but approved of with a relish for the vital vulgarity, now accorded its imperial title. "Let be be finale of seem"
and "Let the lamp affix its beam" both lead to a recognition of the comic reality: "The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream" (64).6 For a clear view of the reality of man's fate it is necessary to sweep away the false debris of the past. The vacuum remains until it can be filled by the imagination in a way that does not divorce man from but reconciles him to his nature, and inspires satisfactions within the reach of human achievement.

In "Evening Without Angels," Stevens speaks of the illusions men make in the presence of light in their attempt to deny the existence of the dark:

And light
That fosters seraphim and is to them
Coiffeur of haloes, fecund jeweller --
Was the sun concoct for angels or for men?
Sad men made angels of the sun, and of
The moon they made their own attendant ghosts,
Which lead them back to angels, after death. (137)

The moon as a natural object has been made unreal by men self-deceived in their sadness. In "the wearier end of November" when the Christian illusion of divinity is "touched on by hoar-frost," the old moonlight, a golden illusion
Brings back an earlier season of quiet
And quieting dreams in the sleepers in darkness --

The moon is the mother of pathos and pity. (107)

Also see: Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream", Explicator, VII, 2 (Nov. 1948), 18.
The Indian, the realist of nature, struck the Cuban Doctor "Out of his cloud and from his sky." The doctor knows that

This was no worm bred in the moon, Wriggling far down the phantom air, And on a comfortable sofa dreamed. (65)

The moonlight is dangerous to see by because its illusive forms are so easily destroyed. The public square, substantial "In a coma of the moon," is shattered by a languid janitor carrying a lantern: architecture swoons.

It turned cold and silent. Then The square began to clear. The bijou of Atlas, the moon, Was last with its porcelain leer. (108-9)

In the moonlight on a dream plain, the Prince of Peacocks meets Berserk -- "sharp he was / As the sleepless!" -- setting "traps / In the midst of dreams." The Prince learns now to dread dream visions and

the beauty Of the moonlight Falling there, Falling As sleep falls In the innocent air. (58)

The false moon, imagination in flight from reality, entices and endangers. Mrs. Alfred Uruguay renounces it: "I have said no / To everything, in order to get at myself. / I have wiped away moonlight like mud" (249). But she was left with poverty on a cold hillside. In "Men Made Out of Words," Stevens finds that without the fictions of the moon, there is nothing left of man to get at: "Castratos of moon-mash -- Life consists / Of propositions about life." The deceiving unreality of moonlight illusions has tainted all men's fictions, and since the poem specifies "the sexual myth, / The human revery or poem of death," rationalism cannot be singled out to bear the blame. This is the shadow that
threatens Stevens' hopes that fictions of significant unreality can survive and nourish man. If even the maker of these fictions must wrest them out of lack of faith, what certainty can they provide?

We compose these propositions, torn by dreams,

By the terrible incantations of defeats
And by the fear that defeats and dreams are one. (355-56*)

"Esthétique du Mal" renders the realization of man as a being divided between mind and body. The mind makes man conscious of a condition that fills him with pain, self-pity, and desperate gestures of denial. Were it not for the mind, the body could find a home in nature, the longed-for fulfillment.

The greatest poverty is not to live
In a physical world, to feel that one's desire
Is too difficult to tell from despair. (325)

But we can never return to the time "before we were wholly human and knew ourselves" (317), nor to the time before "the shaken realist first sees reality. ". . . he / That has lost the folly of the moon becomes /
The prince of the proverbs of pure poverty" (320). The fault lies not in nature, nor even in moon follies that fail to convince, but in man's dual genius:

The genius of misfortune
Is not a sentimentalist. He is
That evil, that evil in the self, from which
In desperate hallow, rugged gesture, fault
Falls out on everything: the genius of

7 For an excellent discussion of the significance of the dark world that follows the death of the gods and leaves man to find a home for himself in the midst of poverty, see J. Hillis Miller, "Wallace Stevens' Poetry of Being", AM, 143-50. For a discussion of the significance of death, particularly with reference to poems in Harmonium, see Michel Benamou, "Wallace Stevens and the Symbolist Imagination", AM, 100-102.
The mind, which is our being, wrong and wrong,
The genius of the body, which is our world,
Spent in the false engagements of the mind. (316-17)

The most elemental path which the imagination that adheres to
the real takes is the direct emotional realization of the dark world in
itself, of death. Color falls to extinction in blackness with a cry
that the poet can do no more than remember in "Domination of Black."
The black man is the ultimate reality. Icy winds chill with cold
knowledge and the season grieves with rain, "falling loudly in the
trees" (476) with "a ramshackle sound" (475); the old philosopher in
Rome is the majesty "of bird-nest arches and of rain-stained vaults" (510).
The final canto of "Things of August" renders the experience of weakening
of vitality and imagination as the old near death, in "all the white
voices / That were rosen once":

The mornings grow silent, the never-tiring wonder.
The trees are reappearing in poverty.

Without rain, there is the sadness of rain
And an air of lateness. The moon is a tricorn

Waved in pale adieu. The rex Impolitor
Will come stamping here, the ruler of less than men,

In less than nature. (495)

The response to death has a sound that death itself lacks, for all
sound fails with lifelessness. Metaphor itself describes the same
diminishing action as its fictive layers are peeled away to reveal the
center, a palpable hollow. Although the man white as marble in a green
wood broods on the sounds of images of death and the man in black space
in emptiness broods on river noises, both death and imagination dissolve
as their images are reduced to their essence.
How, then, is metaphor degeneration,
When Swatara becomes this undulant river
And the river becomes the landless, waterless
ocean?

The question answers itself, and the poem concludes as the funeral
flowers of the imagination, black violets, touch the banks of the river
that is not Swatara before it breaks down to a landless, waterless
undulance. Things-as-they-are are in essence barren. Even when
created in a mind which adheres to reality, imaginative correspondences
are abundant where reality is lean. Beneath the fictions of the imag-
ination and the particulars of reality there are only flux and the
consciousness of it: the known and the knower's emotional presence.

Also, the imagery of motion leads from the most essential, the flow,
weaving upward to that majesty of barrenness from which the imagination
of man recoils in attempts to transcend it: from undulation to the

8 While developing an interesting analysis regarding Pater's
influence on Stevens' idea of the function of art to enrich existence,
Morse comments on one difference, among others, between their ideas of
the artist's use of reality. For Pater, as Morse quotes: "what is real
in our lives fines itself down." For Stevens, reality is lean until
seen in the imaginative eye and enriched. The movement, an opposite
one to Pater's withdrawal and concentration, expands outward to include
the real as far as possible in abundant and opulent experience.
Samuel French Morse, "Wallace Stevens, Bergson, Pater", _AM_, 67, 70f.

9 Miller also perceives this desolation which he calls a sense
of nothingness or "a revelation of being. . . . The poetry of flitting
metamorphosis is the only poetry which is simultaneously true to both
imagination and reality, and it is the only poetry that will catch being." 
Miller, 155-60.
river, from the river to the snake, from the snake to Fatal Ananke, 
the "common god . . . the final god":

He, only, caused the statue to be made
And he shall fix the place where it will stand.
Be glory to this unmerciful pontifex,
Lord without any deviation, lord
And origin and resplendent end of law,
Sultan of African sultans, starless crown. (OP, 59-60)
I III. IMAGINATION AND REALITY: THE STYLE AND THE WORD

Poet, be seated at the piano.
Play the present, its hoo-hoo-hoo,
Its shoo-shoo-shoo, its ric-a-nic,
Its envious cachinnation.

If they throw stones upon the roof
While you practice arpeggios,
It is because they carry down the stairs
A body in rags. (131-32)

In the icy glance of reality man is nothing, and the ideas
which he creates to defend himself against this fact are unreal. Yet
if he does not resist, his nature becomes one with the ignoble attitudes
that resentment, self-pity, and bondage take. The unimaginative
realists, "they," not only carry down a body but symbolically are "a
body in rags." The poet whom they envy and attack has not evaded the
present but plays it with style.¹ He has at least a simple bravura in
his puffing, his "hoo-hoos" and "ric-a-nics." The facts are not
ignored: "we are old. / The snow is falling / And the streets are full
of cries"; they are a part of the "wintry sound . . . In a starry
placating" (132*).² Man is more than an object within an unchangeable

¹The problem is one of resistance. Stevens states that he
learned by his experience of poetry "the power over the mind that lies
in the mind itself . . ." (QP, 246). He also says: "There is nothing in
life except what one thinks of it" (QP, 162), and "The mind is the most
powerful thing in the world" (QP, 162).

²"It is the capacity of symbols (both individual symbols and
whole imaginative works in their symbolic aspect) to foster a life-
direction. . . . What is in question is nothing less than a fundamental
quality of human life -- man's capacity for growth and renewal in
response to the transforming energies stored in structures of the
reality in that he responds to it. Though reality cannot be altered, his response to himself and it can be. Man's only choice is whether to be slave or self-created citizen of a hostile place. Man must begin


Response considered as a conditioning factor, socially or psychologically, of significant form has been analyzed in cultural anthropological studies of myth. The ideas of existential response as variously delineated by Camus and Sartre are also comparable. The relation of Stevens' poetry to mythic response reflects this function as described by Holloway: "Seeing the great work as 'an imitation of life' or 'a criticism of life' is a little like contemplating an engine, and noticing all its parts, but not seeing that it works. What is seen is true and important, but that for which it is there has not been mentioned. Or, to vary one's terms a little, it could be said that the central quality of a great imaginative work is to be not descriptive, not explanatory, not evaluative, but -- the word will seem a strange one -- additive . . ." John Holloway, "The Concept of Myth in Literature", Metaphor and Symbol, eds. L.C. Knights and Basil Cottle (London: Butterworths Scientific Publications, 1960), 132.

The idea of function described above in terms of response, Zabel states as the operation of "an ethic of prudence" controlling the abundance of sensory pleasure in an aesthetic contest. Stevens' method then becomes "a means of refining the values of taste and pride in order that they may become available to humanity." His task is no less than "to make of man himself the instrument of knowledge and the medium of universal values . . . an image of redeemed humanity." Morton Dauwen Zabel, "Stevens and the Image of Man", Harvard Advocate: The Wallace Stevens Number, CXXVII, 3 (1940), 22f.

It is interesting to read "The Beggar" from "Street Songs" in connection with the pose a disenchanted person takes. The circumstances in the poem warrant this comparison: "Yet in this morn there is a darkest night." The beggar is sitting on the cathedral steps. The poem concludes:
The carvings and beauty of the throne
Where she is sitting, she doth meanly use
To win you and appeal. All rag and bone
She asks with her dry, withered hand a dreg
Of the world's riches. If she doth abuse
The place, pass on. It is a place to beg.


An alternate pose to that of the beggar is the proud one of
the enlargement of his spirit by squeezing the slavish out of himself. "Natives of poverty, children of malheur; / The gaiety of language is our seigneur" (322).

As a defense against reality, gaiety and will assert the vitality of the personality out-countenancing all that would relegate him to his place. Poetry is sound for Stevens, the hoo-hoo of Hoon. It is also his answer to reality. It is the sound of the individual dandy, described and evaluated so frequently by critics during the 1930's. Criticism of the dandy pose appears related to general cultural attitudes current in the post-war, and depression decades, and the busy war years. Munson in an essay written in 1925 finds Stevens' elegance answering an American need. Burnshaw's review of the controversy that led to the composition of "Owl's Clover" reveals in part the critical climate of the 1930's that rejected Stevens' ironic comedy. In 1940, Symons interpreted Stevens' pose as calculated disdain for society, an opinion close to that of Yvor Winters in his attack on the poet's hedonism. English critics such as Fraser, Davie and the hostile reviewer in The Times Literary Supplement found that he had nothing to say. For the fullest modern re-evaluation of the comic mask, Fuchs' book is the most helpful.

Fuchs, 15ff and Chapter 3.
Julian Symons, "A Short View of Wallace Stevens", AWS.
G.S. Fraser, "Mind All Alone", New Statesman, LIX, 1504 (1960), 43-44.
Donald Davie, "'Essential Gaudiness': The Poems of Wallace Stevens", Twentieth Century, CLIII, 911 (1953), 455-62.

6 "Hoon" (this may be a coinage from 'one alone,' that is, the introverted, the solitary man)" sic. Hoon is the name of the poet figure in "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon" (65). Delmore Schwartz, "The Ultimate Plato with Picasso's Guitar", Harvard Advocate: The Wallace Stevens Number, CXXVII, 3 (1940), 13.
welling up from his most intimate and stubborn singularity or ringing with his joy in being himself without reservation. This latter capacity for giving in to the joy of being is the emotional foundation for the rapture he experiences in the presence of the grand images of identity within oneness in such later poems as "Credences of Summer" and "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction." The passionate source is most readily observed in "Bantams in Pine-Woods." The bantam delights in the Chieftain's fatness as if it confirms his other and unique being: "Fat! Begone!" He, as poet, proclaims in the puissant song of his identity his inchling independence of poetic tradition in the gigantic blazing figure of romantic chanticleer. Wishful thinking can no longer answer; aesthetes of the cult of beauty must meet the challenge of this bantam champion who fights in the context of reality. The punning name of the Chieftain shows him mocking the little giant's artistic justification and by reverberation, his own hesitations as a poet as well: If I can as I can, halt! And this universal cock -- other poets, himself, poetry past and promised in his future -- appears in an outburst of mocking alliteration, the poetic cosmetic of "henna hackles" -- crown, desire, and comic chicken.7


Pearce reads "If-you-can of Azcan": "If-you-can and Ash-can -- one level of double-entendre which leads to another, that involving the polite ambiguities of 'can'." Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), 383.
Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan
Of tan with henna hackles, halt!

Damned universal cock, as if the sun
Was blackamoor to bear your blazing tail.

Fat! Fat! Fat! Fat! I am the personal.
Your world is you. I am my world.

You ten-foot poet among inchlings. Fat!
Begone! An inchling bristles in these pines,

Bristles, and points their Appalachian tangs,
And fears not portly Azcan nor his hoos.  

The haughty gesture of independence of the bantam is puissant
because as Stevens observes, "It is necessary to any originality to have
the courage to be an amateur" (CP, 169). It might be more pertinent to
say that a man must have the courage to be lavishly himself if he would
make his style the shape of his nature.8 Speaking of the artist,
Stevens says, "When he says I am my style the truth reminds him that it
is his style that is himself." He knows that the gods of China are
always Chinese; that the gods of Greece are always Greek and that all
gods are created in the image of their creators; and he sees in these
circumstances the operations of a style, a basic law" (CP, 210-11).

8Frye asserts that Stevens had this essential courage, a comment
that reflects a growing tendency to see poetic integrity and moral
rectitude in the works of a poet so long denied those qualities because of
reputation among critics for irresponsible hedonism and romantic
Stevens", Wallace Stevens, ed. Marie Borroff (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall,
1963), 175f. (Hereafter referred to as WS.)

9As Benamou notes, the faith behind imaginative efforts to
penetrate reality was that "in doing so, it apprehends itself." Benamou, AM, 118.
This sound of being and the words that represent it acquire in some of Stevens' later poems a numinous aura. The sign of its power is its irrationality, Stevens' word for a-rational phenomenology. It is not rational that an individual is in some corner of himself never overcome, that the spirit of man can survive exile and absurdity. It is clearly irrational to find man or his life noble, while poetry is as unreal as the imagination is immaterial. This being so, the hero asks if we can "nourish ourselves on crumbs of whimsey?" (278). The poet answers by evoking the image of an alienation that is transcended in an identity within irrational sound itself as a correspondence to an irrational or extra-rational experience of significant form:

But a profane parade, the basso
Preludes a-rub, a-rub-rub, for him that
Led the emperor astray, the tom trumpets
Curling round the steeple and the people,
The elephants of sound, the tigers
In trombones roaring for the children,
Young boys resembling pastry, hip-hip,
Young men as vegetables, hip-hip,
Home and the fields give praise, hurrah, hip,
Hip, hip, hurrah. Eternal morning . . .

In the next canto he defines the hero not as an image but as a feeling that comes welling out of "a profane parade, the basso" to put "flesh on the bones" (278*).

Although it is possible to discuss Stevens' view of reality in analytic terms, distinguishing two forms of the real, that of things as

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10 Faulkner expresses a similar extraordinary faith in man's capacity to prevail: William Faulkner, "Nobel Prize Award Speech", reprinted in The Saturday Review of Literature, 34, 4 (1951), 4f.

11 The elephants and the tigers can be compared to the helpless elephants herded by death, and the jaguars and lions that roared "petty dirges of fallen forest-men" in the unrelieved picture of the dark
they are and that of the response to things as they are, a rational exposition is less advantageous in the context of irrational benefits expected from a-rational experience. The sound of the poem is its world in "The Greenest Continent" of Ananke, the Serpent God (OP, 55).

12 Not surprisingly perhaps, Stevens' ideas in this area have yet to receive serious consideration from critics within a philosophic discipline. For example, the matter is not taken up in The Act of The Mind, an excellent collection of essays devoted to the explication of his ideas. The essays that approach this concept in a partial way are: Blackmur, "The Substance That Prevails," and suggestively though less specifically Sister M.B. Quinn's "Metamorphosis in Wallace Stevens." For further understanding, see numerous statements in "Adagia," although a caution is apparently necessary that such statements do refer to an order of realization and do not demonstrate that the substance of his ideas both in relation to reality and to values in insubstantial. With this in mind, several statements in Opus Posthumous are interesting:

It is necessary to propose an enigma to the mind. The mind always proposes solutions. (168)
Abstraction is a part of idealism. It is in that sense that it is ugly. (161)
The word must be the thing it represents; otherwise, it is a symbol. It is a question of identity. (168)
When the mind is like a hall in which thought is like a voice speaking, the voice is always that of someone else. (168)
We never arrive intellectually. But emotionally we arrive constantly (as in poetry, happiness, high mountains, vistas.) (173)
Ignorance is one of the sources of poetry. (173)
A Poem need not have a meaning and like most things in nature often does not have. (177)
The imagination is the liberty of the mind and hence the liberty of reality. (79)

Some poems of Stevens such as "A Woman Sings A Song for a Soldier Come Home" suggest that Stevens may have patterned his form at times on the process of assimilating paradoxes intuitively, as in the Koan exercise in Zen Buddhism. Also, Stevens' remarks in "The Irrational Element in Poetry" (OP, 216-228) appear to refer mainly to the unknown factors involved in the creative process, and to the seductive-ness of the irrational for the modern artist. In an interesting interpretation of the first part of "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle," Fahey identifies the watery bubble that rises from mon Oncle's depths as the creative source beneath Logos: "It is not in the word that life subsists, but in the more fundamental fluctuations that make and unmake the word." This view of a fluctuating process is
meaning, and the sound of its meaning is the unique sound of the poet's being which embraces the individual reader. Poetry begins and ends with the individual, and its function is to help him to live in the radiant morality of the right sentiment (NA, 58). As the poet says in "Three Travelers Watch a Sunrise," "All that you need, / To find poetry, / Is to look for it with a lantern" (OP, 127).

suggestive of the movement meditative experience takes in Stevens' poems and of the image of "repetitions." William A. Fahey, "Stevens' 'Monocle de Mon Oncle, I' ", Explicator, XV, 3 (Dec. 1956), 16.
Without man to sense and reflect it, nature exists without being conscious of itself. Self-consciousness and the awareness of the significant phases of reality are the unique contributions of man to the scheme of things. The activity of awareness changes reality into an idea of reality. The shape of this idea is a formulation of nature given human significance. "An Ordinary Evening In New Haven" is concerned with this activity, and Stevens makes an interesting statement about the poetic mode of absorbing experience as a way of discovering significance: "It is the philosopher's search / For an interior made exterior / And the poet's search for the same exterior made / Interior" (481). This poetic search is further founded on the idea: "Poetry is the imagination of life. A poem is a particular of life thought of for so long that one's thought has become an inseparable part of it . . . " (NA, 65). The movement, then, is from the outward to the inward. The human faculty that makes subjective identification possible is the means through which man can exercise his will to belong and can express his desire for nobility. The brief quotation above does not reach to the core of difference between the two kinds of searches: the philosopher's search for knowledge that satisfies the intellect and the poet's search for viable correspondences that reconcile man's interior nature and needs to his external circumstances -- reality -- in an emotional synthesis.¹

¹For further discussion of the real, the fictive and the fictive synthesis, see Bernard Heringman, "Wallace Stevens: The Use of Poetry", AM, 1-4.
Stevens comments that "it may be said that poetic truth is an agreement with reality, brought about by the imagination of a man disposed to be strongly influenced by his imagination, which he believes, for a time, to be true, expressed in terms of his emotions, or, since it is less of a restriction to say so, in terms of his own personality."

Thus, the philosopher and poet "are pursuing two different parts of a whole" ([4], 54). The essential for Stevens is the need for man to overcome his sense of alienation within nature. "Creation," he says, "is not renewed by images / Of lone wanderers" (481). Yet it is always from the point of view of a lone wanderer that his poetry springs in efforts to transcend by a new fictive translation this "loneliest air" (65) of unsponsored man. Although isolation is the individual lot, he rejects surrender, insisting that for man's task to make himself more fully and valuably human, reality is a beginning although it is also the end:

You dweller in the dark cabin,
To whom the watermelon is always purple,
Whose garden is wind and moon,

Of the two dreams, night and day,
What lover, what dreamer, would choose
The one obscured by sleep?

You dweller in the dark cabin,
Rise, since rising will not waken,
And hail, cry hail, cry hail.

Stevens' man as artist and hero is a wayfarer and a warfarer. He fights for the possibility of an ideal resemblance that in emotional synthesis will result in making man native of himself and of his place.
beneath the levels of conscious thought, will, and desire: "And sends us, winged by unconscious will, / To an immaculate end" (382). Images of the world and its contours are the metaphors of reality significant to man. Ideal emotions are anticipations of possibilities to end alienation, and they thus appear as metaphoric elevations of the real-unreal universe or as grand images having an iconic value to modify experience as objects of meditation. The concept of man within the interior mind has, therefore, two aspects: man as he is knower and dreamer, and man as he might be as knower-known, "amassed in a total double thing" (472):

Over and over again you have said,
This great world, it divides itself in two,
One part is man, the other god:  
Imagined man, the monkish mask, the face.  (218)

The individual as himself or as man stands in the center of the three worlds, the real, the unreal, and the vision, and gives a human dimension to them all. The vital principle within man animates everything, including the experience of the inanimate. In "Esthétique du Mal"

2The intensity with which Stevens invested the relation of an individual to his land and the longing to be fully native to one's place can hardly be overestimated. The desire of the exile lies within this experience: "... so that one's cry of O Jerusalem becomes little by little a cry to something a little nearer and nearer until at last one cries out to a living name, a living place, a living thing, and in crying out confesses openly all the bitter secretions of experience" (OP, 260).

3For a comparison between the points of view in the first three of Stevens' books in terms of nakedness: that of beautiful nudes, that of "bare, unpoeic reality," and that of "heroic nakedness," see Benamou, AM, 113-15.
For a treatment of Stevens' world contexts that groups images around a summer, autumn, and winter vision: see Frye, 165-69. Also, for a similar grouping with emphasis on the wintery vision, cf. Richard A. Macksey, "The Climates of Wallace Stevens," AM, 193ff, 213.
for example, indifferent nature "seemed to touch him as he spoke / A kind of elegy he found in space":

The moon rose up as if it had escaped
His meditation. It evaded his mind.
It was part of a supremacy always
Above him.

It is pain that is indifferent to the sky

It does not regard
This freedom, this supremacy, and in
Its own hallucination never sees
How that which rejects it saves it in the end. (314-15)

However insensible, space has its own hallucinations. Generally, the world is more actively animated with significance, as Stevens' comment in "Adagia" suggests: "The earth is not a building but a body" (OP, 160). It is body as it is inseparable from man's interior. There is also organic correspondence between two vital entities subject to change in time and sharing a destiny. With his pain, his heroic consciousness and his blooded thought, man provides the awareness that saves nature as well as himself from anonymity. He must hug his pain, since the alternative is unbearable: "Not to be realized because not to / Be seen, not to be loved nor hated because / Not to be realized" (385).

The relation between nature and man is imaginatively symbiotic, and those aspects of nature that have significance have it because of man's realization of vital correspondence. Thus, in its dumb way, nature needs a record, has hallucinations, and speaks its identity in a watery bubble or a windy syllable because man hears it so, and asks for something not unlike that for himself. The positive assertion of its being in the flesh terrifies, pierces, breaks up, and encourages a human
Thus the external world that is made interior appears in ways or in guises that are impossible without the human mirror. Only Stevens' insistence that the direction of perception is from outward to inward distinguishes the process from personification, pathetic fallacy or anthropomorphism. Man who sees through air, breathes the meaning of the body of reality in its air and feels its assertion of identity in its wind which blows with a force of will-to-be that reflects man's. Its vitality is red as is man's blood and its seasonal fertility is green in the hour of flourishing and nourishment. The sun is its generative source and the sign of its well-being, while the cold is its season of crisis and the sign of involvement in becoming or change. The ocean is the ceaseless movement and jumble of multiplicity which absorbs particulars in the shapelessness of raw experience waiting for form.

"Society is a sea" (OF, 169), and the sailor is at home on it. In society, he is the imaginative one; as an individual, he represents that sole capacity that differentiates man from teeming nature in order to know he is a part of it: "the sailor's metier" (354). Man's fictions of significant forms within flux determine the shape of the

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4 "I want, as a poet, to be that in nature, which constitutes nature's very self. I want to be nature in the form of a man, with all the resources of nature: I want to be the lion in the lute; and then, when I am, I want to face my parent and be his true poet. I want to face nature the way two lions face one another -- the lion in the lute facing the lion locked in stone. I want as a man of imagination, to write poetry with all the power of a monster equal in strength to that of the monster about whom I write. I want man's imagination to be completely adequate in the face of reality." Wallace Stevens, A letter to Renato Poggioli, translator into Italian of poems of Stevens, and quoted in Mattino Domenicale ed Altre Poesie [Torino: 1954] 179. Reprinted in Trinity Review, VII, 3 (1954), 22.
real-unreal. Day-night, the changing seasons, the shifting wind, and
the clouds like Hamlet's camels and whales are the global analogue of
time's meaning to man -- becoming, changing, beginning and ending.

A broad outline such as this is of limited value because of the
extraordinary degree of sign that Stevens attaches to his particular
images by consistency within their mobility and by his practice of
depending on them to communicate sign at the same time that they are
objective correlatives of emotion. Stevens was concerned with the
necessity for poets to strengthen the "connotative force" in words at
a time when connotative language is weak. In The Necessary Angel,
he discusses an idea of Bateson about language, referring to the
hedonistic tendency of connotative forces in words "to kill language
by dissipating their sense in a multiplicity of associations" (NA, 13).
Stevens' response, in part at any rate, was to restrict images to a
cluster of associations that revolve around a central correspondence.
It was also natural for a poet who depended generally on images and
specifically on resemblances between the interior and exterior, the
imagined and the real, and the unreal and the real, for communication,
to avoid wherever possible expressions outside his imagistic vocabulary.
Thus, restriction, repetition, and an implication that the particular
images convey meaning other than connotatively and symbolically through
a fusion between image and corresponding concept, resulted in a
vocabulary of metaphors that have more sign dimension than is usual
or even expected. Stevens' practice reflected a tendency for his most
used images to lose metaphoric distance in his mind until vehicle and
The tenor became virtually identical. The result is a vibrant and imaginatively rich poetic language that, before Stevens' special vocabulary is absorbed, appears to be far more stubbornly obscure than it actually is.

The problem is further increased by Stevens' concept of correspondence within the frame of three worlds. The sign-conjunctive images move into related but various applications in each world and have in each a range of associations.

Before illustrating the more complex interaction of inter-world correspondences, it is useful to indicate briefly some of the possibilities of simpler analogies. The quality of mind is revealed in objects of

5Tindall comments on the sign dimensions in Stevens' images: "To be sure his antithesis of moon and sun, blue and green, north and south are closer to sign than symbol, but he uses symbol within this significant frame." William Y. Tindall, The Literary Symbol (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 46. For similar comments also see, Tindall, Wallace Stevens, 18. And cf. Benamou, AM, 119.

The fascinating question goes beyond a description of Stevens' practice to speculation about the manner in which the images originally acquired their special impression for Stevens and whether they can or should acquire such dimensions for his readers. Speaking of the origin of linguistic functions, Cassirer asserts that "there always remains a sort of hiatus between the lyrical aspect of verbal expression and its logical character; what remains obscure is exactly that emancipation whereby sound is transformed from an emotional utterance into a denotative one." He later notes that the process depends less upon comparison and selection with an implication of some analytic activity, than on a concentration of experiences relative to "the teleological perspective from which it is viewed. Whatever appears important for our wishing and willing, our hope and anxiety, for acting and doing: that and only that receives the stamp of verbal 'meaning':" Ernst Cassirer, Language and Myth (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1946), 35, 37.
dress, habitation, and movement. In this analogy, rationalists who think in lines live in square rooms and wear square hats. If they could imagine arches and arcs, "rationalists would wear sombreros" (75). Mon Oncle wears a monocle as sign of his overall point of view as a man and secondly as an individual who had divided himself contrarily into the dark rabbi when young and the rose rabbi when old. Landscapes objectify the kind of imagination which the interior mind possesses. Poems revealing a quality of imagination by correspondence with the belongings or environment of the figure range from the beggarly and bitter "moralist hidalgo" (186) in "A Thought Revolved," and the painter of seascapes in "Sea Surface Full of Clouds," to questions about the relation of imagination to reality in "So-and-So Reclining on Her Couch" and "Woman Looking at a Vase of Flowers," and to "The Pastor Cabellero" whose ideal meaning is crystallized in his hat:

"The importance of its hat to a form becomes / More definite. The sweeping brim of the hat / Makes of the form Most Merciful Capitan" (379).

Morse finds that Stevens' use of comic resemblance as in the hat imagery was influenced by Bergson's ideas in Laughter. Morse, AM, 60.

Rosenthal's comments on seascapes as resemblances of the interior self in various aspects suggest that Tindall may have anticipated a change from Stevens' imagistic style rather than another expression of relation within the imaginative mode and tone of Crispin's sensibility. The questions raised concern not only a manner of exteriorizing interior attitudes and the unity of point of view, but also the fundamental concept that a man finds himself within his style, see above. M.L. Rosenthal. "Stevens' 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds'", Explicator, XIX, 6 (March 1961), 38.
Stevens often suggests the presence of an aspect of fundamental reality in the midst of the interior world by colors. Red and black meanings are clear since they make a direct and simple reference to life and death and have constant connotative associations. But colors like blue, green, white, yellow, violet, and colors of light, are associated with the kind and quality of the responding imagination in a particular situation or moment and to an analogous reality. What the imagination sees may describe the imagination itself, may act as an external stimulus to modify the response and to initiate a current of reverie as an object of meditation, or may be the symbol of bare reality on one hand or ideal correspondence between man and nature on the other. Even if the variety of application were not so extensive, the concepts of imagination and reality are too complex for the colors of the air and moods of the imagination to be assigned a single meaning appropriate in all contexts, such as, blue symbolizes imagination and green reality. Speaking of the "overcast blue / Of the air, in which the blue guitar is a form," Stevens describes the fundamental use he makes of color:

The color like a thought that grows
Out of a mood, the tragic robe

Of the actor, half his gesture, half
His speech, the dress of his meaning, silk

Sodden with his melancholy words,
The weather of his stage, himself.  (169-70)

In this brief passage, blue is seen as the color of a mood at a creative moment, color as the thought coming from a mood, color as the emotive costume or shape of the figure, and color as the mind or stage of the
person who imagines. Green is equally difficult, involving the double nature of the real-unreal as Stevens' comment implies: "Weather is a sense of nature. Poetry is also a sense" (OP, 160). In other words, green may express reality in one of its guises and reality in imaginative form. Since poetry is created in the mind of the poet, so is reality as man knows it. In the following passage, green related to "soundless" reality and also to reality recreated imaginatively illustrates the problem of fixing color meanings without reference to world contexts.

He held the world upon his nose
And this-a-way he gave a fling.

His robes and symbols, ai-yi-yi--
And that-a-way he twirled the thing.

Sombre as fir-trees, liquid cats
Moved in the grass without a sound.

They did not know the grass went round.
The cats had cats and the grass turned gray

And the world had worlds, ai, this-a-way:
The grass turned green and the grass turned gray.

And the nose is eternal, that-a-way.
Things as they were, things as they are,

Things as they will be by and by . . .
A fat thumb beats out ai-yi-yi.

(178)

The imaginative context is that of the fat thumb, which like a green thumb draws richness out of nature. The imagination is the sound, the "ai-yi-yi--" of the music of becoming and of knowing. The world turns in its fluid existential state without knowing its juggling conductor, and without a sound, "sombre as fir-trees" -- the substantial green. Juggler and reality are related in the process of an eternal action. The nose is eternal by knowing this and imitating it in his constant
flinging round and round. The world context is an aspect of vital existential commitment described at length in part seven of this study, "The World of the Weather and the Ideal." "The Man with the Blue Guitar" concludes within the context of the poor world which represents here the world as it is without imagination, or without the sense of poetry. This context is revealed in "mud, in Monday's dirty light," while it is now men, not cats, who do not know that "The grass went round" except in "The moments when we choose to play / The imagined pine, the imagined jay" (183-84). The world is no longer that of the "fat thumb" of identification and mutuality; time has subdued the eternal nose to its occasions, and the presence of stone denies the promise of a green grass reality, effacing the seasonal promise. Then both earth as tree and man as blue mirror, unconscious and self-conscious, are forced to rely on the individual guitarist's moods for their very existence. The world is that of poverty-striken reality and they, green reality and juggler, are both of the nature of style, imaginative form. The entire work is responsive to the poor world as other than the imaginary rich one, and this core controls all the images. The point of this example is to show that an assertion that blue stands for imagination and green for reality is not adequate for a reading of individual works. The context in which they are placed sets up a controlling or overall world correspondence in which they can only suggest or render appropriate aspects of imagination and reality.

Light colors are usually an external correspondence to an
interior source, the individual as poet, painter, or man finding himself.\textsuperscript{8} The royal purple of Hoon's light with its Yeatsian echo and the rich palate of "Sea-Surface Full of Clouds" are analogous, therefore, on the same level as the rationalists' square hats. Even in world contexts, colored light is relatively fixed in its associations because of consistent source. Moonlight and morning light, or white-yellow sunlight sometimes appear as an external stimulus for attraction or rejection. In response, Stevens creates a special seeing-through pale light:

\begin{quote}
That night is only the background of our selves, 
Supremely true each to its separate self, 
In the pale light that each upon the other throws.  \hfill (146)
\end{quote}

Pale light is similarly the light of recognitions in "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle":

\begin{quote}
Remember how the crickets came 
Out of their mother grass, like little kin, 
In the pale nights, when your first imagery 
Found inklings of your bond to all that dust. \hfill (15)
\end{quote}

Thus, the dense violet light of poetic imagination which we associate with Hoon is not necessarily the productive light of imaginative cognition of reality.\textsuperscript{9}

If relatively uncomplex expressions of imagistic correspondence

\textsuperscript{8} For a discussion of the realization of the air of the imagination in a style showing the influence of impressionistic and expressionistic modes in painting, see Michel Benamou, "Wallace Stevens: Some Relations Between Poetry and Painting", \textit{AWS}, 233-38.

\textsuperscript{9} For additional light and colored light imagery described and considered as impressionistic, see Benamou, \textit{AWS}, 242-45.
such as color present problems because of their reference to major concepts and their applications in various world contexts, it is obvious that major images will present complexities since in their development the interior-exterior, the imagined real and the unreal-real, and the ideal-real are established. The vital principle with its inescapable reminder of a human source is the guide-line to the relationship and order of movement between the corresponding worlds. The expanding circle of ripples starts from the spot the thrown stone pierces. Simple correspondence as metaphor is shown in "The Death of a Soldier" where the meaning in death of man as soldier is described in images of the analogous world as body:¹⁰

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.

When Stevens wishes to refer to the insensible world expressing a sense of its otherness, he must suggest its independence from man. Since in his vocabulary, natural images are sentient, he must de-animate

¹⁰For an interpretation that emphasizes the suggestibility of images that are ambiguous, cf. Frank Kermode, Wallace Stevens (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), 32f.
them, or simply make the night "only the background of ourselves."
The simplest means is to emphasize its bareness directly: "Bare night
is best. Bare earth is best. Bare, Bare!" (137).

In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" cloud imagery renders the
effect of the separateness of men and reality in pointed similarity
to that in "The Death of a Soldier," above:

But the first idea was not to shape the clouds
In imitation. The clouds preceded us

There was a muddy centre before we breathed.
There was a myth before the myth began,
Venerable and articulate and complete.

We are the mimics. Clouds are pedagogues
The air is not a mirror but bare board,
Couilisse bright-dark, tragic chiaroscuro

And comic color of the rose, in which
Abysmal instruments make sounds like pips
Of the sweeping meanings that we add to them. (383-84)

With sensate reverberations, the bare composes a venerable, articulate
myth, and its clouds teach the ideas of the earth; yet its instruments
reduce man's chords to pips, and clouds teach a lesson of alienation.
The clouds are reality's ideas and not man's. Yet later in the poem,
man searches for himself on the bare earth without clouds, or man's
cloudy ideas: "Looking for what was, where it used to be? / Cloudless
the morning. It is he. The man" (389). The interior world is now
dened of its unreality, or man-as-idea. The two images respond to
each other in the context of natural nakedness. In other portions of
the work, clouds form a part of images that express an ideal in man's
fictive nature, and a corresponding reverberation in nature:
For easy passion and ever-ready love
Are of our earthy birth and here and now
And where we live and everywhere we live,

As in the top-cloud of a May night-evening,
As in the courage of the ignorant man,

And:

And là-bas, là-bas, the cool bananas grew,
Rung heavily on the great banana tree,
Which pierces clouds and bends on half the world. (393)

In each of these passages, clouds are used to indicate the magnitude in
"top-cloud" and cloud piercing of a major symbol of majesty, the great arc and the ignorant man. ¹¹

"Clouds," originating in the world metaphor as an image of man's little schemes of order in his imaginative sky, acquire some of the functional mobility of words of sign. A resemblance has a linguistic capacity within Stevens' vocabulary comparable to that of denotational symbol. For a poet who would metamorphose the human world by the power of Logos, this could seem the natural development of "a basic law," where an image "is a particular of life thought of for so long that one's thought has become an inseparable part of it" (NA, 65). In studying his current of images and their world contexts we are penetrating a culture.

¹¹For comment on the value of ignorance and the meaning of the ignorant man, cf. 21n, 80f.
IV. THE ALIEN OTHERNESS OF NATURE

The earth, the stage of life, is both personal, as man gives it the shape of his desire, and impersonal, as bare reality is. Beneath these views is the earth that is finally as frighteningly non-human as the huge sky of the black night is appalling. Speaking of the earth, the mother, Stevens says:

She walks an autumn ampler than the wind
Cries up for us and colder than the frost
Pricks in our spirits at the summer's end,
And over the bare spaces of our skies
She sees a barer sky that does not bend.  

(108)

The cold season that denudes the land of its fertility warns man of the uncertainty of life, but the fate of consciousness and the helplessness of human resources are encountered face to face in the Arctic, an absolute cold. This is reality at the vanishing point on the coldest horizon of unalterable otherness. To understand its cold sound, a listener must be a snow man and "must have a mind of winter . . . and have been cold a long time" (9-10). Only so can he realize that all that is human in him is irrelevant and that he is included in the nothingness of the snow, the final impoverishment of man and earth. Pierced by the icy star, the poet's vision of life is clarified and tested. The experience realized here on a coldly perceptive intellectual plane is in a sense a defense against the frightening emotional realization of reality. For on a deeper instinctual level, a primitive horror of nature, the dreaded alien lurking beneath the familiar, is aroused. Such a relentless view of reality is not to be endured for long. As Stevens says in "Artist in Arctic":

38
"Blessed, whose beard is cloak against the snows" (105).

In earlier works, Stevens often sublimates reality's rejection of man into a note of graceful pity for the eternal difference, the dark "vent" that lies between human self-awareness of his nature and nature itself. Images of beauty of the rich imagination become more fragile, strange, or touched by pity as they are haunted by the dark in icy knowledge. Thus, the dark-light contrast of images threatens or clarifies moments of rapture, faith in man, and pleasure in the summer joy of nature. That the dark world should co-exist in the sunlit splendor of nature is a painful contrast. The title "Anatomy of Monotony" sums up the sense of emptiness that follows the feeling of being deceived by lavish vitality.

The body walks forth naked in the sun
And, out of tenderness or grief, the sun
Gives comfort, so that other bodies come,
Twinning our phantasy and our device,
And apt in versatile motion, touch and sound
To make the body covetous in desire
Of the still finer, more implacable chords.
So be it. Yet the spaciousness and light
In which the body walks and is deceived,
Falls from that fatal and that barer sky,
And this the spirit sees and is aggrieved. (108)

The finer chords are the sound of feeling, and human beauty is human music.\footnote{With music, time broke into our image world; in music our formative powers took possession of time. Thanks to music, we are able to behold time. Hearing receives its credentials as an image-creating and image-visioning function. . . . It is not just a beautiful phrase, a poetic ornament, when Bergson speaks of 'the continuous melody of our inner life'; it is the precise formulation of a scientific cognition and expresses the fact that we must search in music for the symbols that permit us to comprehend the connection of psychic phenomena, as mathematical symbols permit us to comprehend the connection of physical phenomena. When a biologist like Úexkull discovers the action of "melodic lawa" in the genesis of organisms -- 'the genetic melody which forms the fish . . . the genetic melody of the mammals, which in its first measures repeats that of the fish . . .'.}
That they rest on "feigning" is a grief for the experiencing mind in this poem and the source of that special pity that the more detached observer leaves room for in

... an image that is sure
Among the arrant spices of the sun,
O bough and bush and scented vine, in whom
We give ourselves our likest issuance.

Yet not too like, yet not so like to be
Too near, too clear, saving a little to endow
Our feigning with the strange unlike, whence springs
The difference that heavenly pity brings. (88)

The difference is more painfully and yet buoyantly imaged in "Bellissimo, pomposo" singing "in clownish boots" because "There is no pith in music / Except in something false":

Hang a feather by your eye,
Nod and look a little sly.
This must be the vent of pity,
Deeper than a truer ditty
Of the real that wrenches,
Of the quick that's wry. (103)

The gap between the dark and the light extends from the universe into human relationships, isolating the individual even in his moments of intensest identification with another and with vitality. The lovers meeting in "a bed beneath the myrtles" in a newly mowed cemetery in the South fill "The dark shadows" with the songs of themselves:

And these two never meet in the air so full of summer
And touch each other, even touching closely,
Without an escape in the lapses of their kisses.
Make a bed and leave the iris in it. (111-12)

becomes even clearer that here organic phenomena are not being simply likened to musical phenomena; instead, musical phenomena give us the decisive indication that leads us to an understanding of organic phenomena." Victor Zuckerkandl, "Tone as the Image of Time", Sound and Symbol. (New York: Bolligen Series XLIV, 1956), 261-63.
The horse

is the image of battering brainless time and the ordeal of a lifetime of dying. Breathing and beating pulse are tainted by their retarding participation in an alien impulse:

It is time that beats in the breast and it is time
That batters against the mind, silent and proud,
The mind that knows it is destroyed by time.

Time is a horse that runs in the heart, a horse
Without a rider on a road at night.
The mind sits listening and hears it pass.

Even breathing is the beating of time, in kind:
A retardation of its battering,
A horse grotesquely taut, a walker like

A shadow in mid-earth . . .

In "Thunder by the Musician" Stevens writes a creation myth of the man "the time conceived" who comes out of the will-of-being, the thunder of the earth. Then:

Slowly, one man, savager than the rest,
Rose up, tallest, in the black sun.

And, according to the composer, this butcher,
Held in his hand the suave egg-diamond
That had flashed (like vicious music that ends
In transparent accords).

Although it is imaginable that transparent accords are to be reached, this truth reduces the tallest, savager hero to one who "would be weak /

Even though he shouted." In a wilderness, "the sky would be full of bodies like wood" and in the music of man's new dispensation:

2 See the horse image in "Owl's Clover" and Stevens' references to "the powerful horse" in the statue of Bartolommeo Colleoni in Venice (NA, 8-9). I believe that power and even virility are connotatively expressed in the image of the horse and statue of the horse in the grand style. Referring to the statue in "Owl's Clover," Stevens says it is "the symbol of art" (OF, 219).
There would have been the cries of the dead
And the living would be speaking,
As a self that lives on itself.  

The cannibal image recurs in "Quisine Bourgeoise" where "yesterdays people" prefer hiding in past delusions "To shaking out heavy bodies
in the glares / Of this present . . .

This outpost, this douce, this dumb, this dead, in which
We feast on human heads, brought in on leaves,
Crowned with the first, cold buds.  

This then is the present of the musician's thunder, and reality is too
plain. Ignorance is better:

   It would have been better for his hands
   To be convulsed, to have remained the hands
   Of one wilder than the rest (like music blunted,
   Yet the sound of that).  

In "Page from a Tale," Hans, a poet, watches from the Arctic
shore as the ship of mankind-in-the-present reaches its icy encounter
with naked reality. It is Stevens' version of the second coming and a
work that in its sense of mysterious dread and monstrous possibilities
seems to begin where Yeats' ended. Hans, who was exhorted in the early
"Sonatina to Hans" to know the night, listens and waits on the frozen
beach beside a driftfire for a dark embodiment who like the primitive
ogre of folk tale would give form to a monstrous reality. The difference
is now imaged between two sounds, loud water and loud wind

Which has no accurate syllables and that
Which cries so blau and cries again so lind
Und so lau, between sound without meaning and speech,
Of clay and wattles made as it ascends
And hear it as it falls in the deep heart's core.
A steamer lay near him, foundered in the ice.  

The new, one-foot stars were not tepid ones of torpid places but "looked
back at Hans' look with savage faces." The sense of death is strong as
the fire dies down. The cold is like sleep while Hans thinks of the men
who will come ashore in a morning fearful of the sun and of the "country angels of those skies," of an icy reality, in which something "in water strove to speak / Broke dialect in a break of memory." The difference has become a raw break in which all certainty has fallen as in an alchemist's pot of mess, the idiot sounds. "The sun might rise and it might not" and if it rose "no longer known, / No more that which most of all brings back the known." The color may be a Gothic blue bearing what grotesque "portents" by "this light ... beyond the habit of sense." The following stanza images what might be becoming in arcane wheels within wheels, "weltering illuminations, humps / Of billows" in the shapeless agitations of chaos. In this irritation, the final monstrous possibility is imagined:

It might come bearing, out of chaos, kin
Smeared, smoked, and drunken of thin potencies,
Lashing at images in the atmosphere,
Ringed round and barred, with eyes held in their hands,

And capable of incapably evil thought: (422-23)

The ghastly triumph of rational unimaginative robot man whose eyes are in his hands and who is drunk with power is not unlike the cold nothing of total spiritual impoverishment from which he springs and in whose destructive spirit he makes:

Slight gestures that could rend the palpable ice,
Or melt Arcturus to ingots dropping drops,
Or spill night out in brilliant vanishings,
Whirlpools of darkness in whirlwinds of light ... The miff-maff-muff of water, the vocables
Of the wind, the glassily-sparkling particles
Of the mind -- They would soon climb down the side of the ship.
They would march single file, with electric lamps, alert
For a tidal undulation underneath. (423)

In this work man's encounter with reality at the freezing point has reached identification and immersion in the most impoverished core
of himself or in the element that man shares with an utterly reduced, alien non-human reality. Yet the world which Stevens in so many works identifies with a fruitful vision of bare reality is distinguishable from this icy emptiness since bare life is other than bare death. The significant difference is to be found in a conception of man as being and imagination, of what is part yet separate. In "A Weak Mind in the Mountains," the persona is crushed by the relentless butcher of the "miff-maff-muff" winds, yet as his life pours out in red blood, he recognizes a potential to survive as a human being the destructive depersonalization of reality:3

There was the butcher's hand.  
He squeezed it and the blood  
Spurted from between the fingers  
And fell to the floor.  
And then the body fell.  

Yet there was a man within me  
Could have risen to the clouds,  
Could have touched these winds,  
Bent and broken them down,  
Could have stood up sharply in the sky. (212)

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3 For comment about the necessity for violence in the mind of a man strong enough to oppose the butcher's force and its bad effect in not permitting Stevens "a single thoroughly integrated poem," see Fearce, The Continuity of American Poetry, 402.
V. THE EFFECT OF THE SOUND OF WATER AND THUNDER ON THE IMAGINATIVE MAN AS ARTIST

Thunder and storm are associated with the image of the wind and support its vehement violence, its unreserved statement of identity. The wind's voice is that of a savage trumpet awakening Crispin to "an elemental fate"; approaching Yucatan from "west of Mexico . . . like a gasconade of drums" it swallows up "The white cabildo . . . the facade . . ./ In swift, successive shadows, dolefully":

The rumbling broadened as it fell. The wind, Tempestuous clarion, with heavy cry, Came bluntly thundering, more terrible Than the revenge of music on bassoons.

The storm was one Of many proclamations of the kind, Proclaiming something harsher than he learned From hearing signboards whimper in cold nights

This was the span Of force, the quintessential fact, the note Of Vulcan, that a valet seeks to own, The thing that makes him envious in phrase. (32-33)

The effects on Crispin of his encounter with elemental fate in the sea and the thunderous wind are clear. He is reduced "by magnitude . . . dwindled, to one sound" to "the winter web, winter woven, wind and wind," and the mind to "pupa of straw, moppet of rags" as in "The Dwarf."  

Fuchs identifies the imagination of the North that Crispin turns to as "the imagination of disillusion." Fuchs, 44-45, 100-101, 130.
It is the mind that is woven, the mind that was jerked
And tufted in straggling thunder and shattered sun.

It is all that you are, the final dwarf of you. (208)

Crispin is valet, comedian and barber, but one inspired to attempt
the powerful phrase, the effect of the violent earth voices on the
man who finds in clamorous being a source of significance. The force
of their self-identity released him from his languor in the torpid
opulence of tropic nature. Significantly, when he "felt the Andean
breath" his mind became "more than free, elate, intent, profound /
And studious of a self possessing him."

The mountains are a central image in Stevens' world, as master-
pieces of earth's being -- statues of the earth as it were -- and as
another point where man encounters bare reality. This point of contact
represents for the artist and the meditative man an ideal correspondence
to the magnificences that the creative identity aspires to make out of
the truth of the bare essential. The mountains present a challenge and
a romantic promise, but not because mountains are to the earth as man
is to nature. Instead, the image as a massive symbol of natural
integrity beckons man to see through it to the possibility of self-
achievement and rest through self-commitment.5 The ideal man is "The
pensive man... He sees that eagle float / For which the intricate
Alps are a single nest" (216). In "How to Live. What to Do," the man

5A later use of the mountain image in which it is the place
one stands to see parts of the world come together to compose one
picture is found in "July Mountain" (OE, 115); while in "Connoisseur
of Chaos" the Alps correspond to that disordered reality that the
pensive man imagines can, in eagle flight, be made one, and a home.
and his companion leave the "unpurged" world in quest of "a sun of fuller fire":

Instead there was this tufted rock
Massively rising high and bare
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
There was neither voice nor crested image,
No chorister, nor priest . .
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
There was the cold wind and the sound
It made, away from the muck of the land
That they had left, heroic sound
Joyous and jubilant and sure. (125-26)

The freedom that the mountains and thunderous wind offer Crispin is confidence in the natural power and value of "unaccommodated man," and here most specifically, in the green voice of the individual imagination facing the reality that had dwarfed him to his "inchling" stature. 6

Crispin journeys north into reality, to move among the seasons that are the transparencies of creative light and destructive dark, through which he seeks his individual fortune. He finds the instruments on which to play the song of himself:

Four daughters in a world too intricate
In the beginning, four blithe instruments
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Hinting incredible hues, four selfsame lights
That spread chromatics in hilarious dark,
Four questioners and four sure answerers.

6Morse cites a letter of Stevens describing "The Comedian as the Letter C" as anti-mythological, and goes on to analyze the relation of the work to flux, a shifting point of view, and the elimination of "a priori assumptions." Morse, AM, 83-91.
He, "stiffest realist," concocts doctrine, sows it, and sees it "reproduced . . . the same insoluble lump."

The fatalist
Stepped in and dropped the chuckling down his craw,
Without grace or grumble. Score this anecdote
Invented for its pith, not doctrinal
In form though in design, as Crispin willed,

... ...

Or if the music sticks, if the anecdote
Is false, if Crispin is a profitless
Philosopher, beginning with green brag,
Concluding fadedly...

... ...

Fickle and fumbling, variable, obscure,
Glossing his life with after-shining flicks,
Illuminating, from a fancy gorged
By apparition, plain and common things,
Sequestering the fluster from the year,
Making gulped potions from obstreperous drops,
And so distorting, proving what he proves
Is nothing, what can all this matter since
The relation comes, benignly, to its end?

So may the relation of each man be clipped. (45-46)

Crispin proposes to live fully as a man finding his individual meaning and enriching his imaginative vitality without a paralyzing apprehension of meaninglessness. Thus, in the alphabet book of human life, man is the comedian of the primary letter C and ready to twirl the world on the end of his nose this-a-way and that-a-way. The image of the sad clown, the ridiculous misplaced person, is metamorphosed by the joyously sufficient imagination into the vital sport of the universe. The comedy is complete as Crispin gives up the composition of poetry at the end of his attempt at relation to reality -- the marvelous sophomore's most exquisite twirl "that-a-way" of comic
solemnity. 7

In poetry, the poet extends his warmth into reality and discovers for himself and others how to live in a "radiant and productive atmosphere" (NA, 57). He becomes one "for whom green speaks":

Against gold whipped reddened in a big-shadowed black,
her vague "Secrete me from reality,"
his "That reality secrete itself,"

The choice is made. Green is the orator
Of our passionate height. He wears a tufted green,
And tosses green for those for whom green speaks.

... ... ... ... ... ... ...
Secrete us in reality. Discover
A civil nakedness in which to be,

In which to bear with the exactest force
The precisions of fate, nothing fobbed off, nor changed
In a beau language without a drop of blood. 309-10

Thus when Stevens asserts more than an individual value in the function of the poet in later poems, the supreme fictions of this larger aspiration are significant because they enlarge the possibilities for individuals to realize themselves. When "The trumpet of morning blows" to announce the "visible . . . successor of the invisible" in "Credences of Summer,"
"The resounding cry / Is like ten thousand tumblers tumbling down / To share the day" (376-77). The value of freeing individual man to be

7For essays on "The Comedian as the Letter C" written since 1960 and in my opinion the most helpful, see:
Morse, AM, 70-91.
Fuchs, 31-61.
himself and to find his island home in nature, "A green baked greener in the greenest sun," underlies the ideal service of the artist to a human culture which, like "The wild orange trees continued to bloom and to bear, / Long after the planter's death" (393*). Behind the "difficult visage" (388) of manmaker, and sustainer is "mountain-minded Hoon" (121) and "Crispin, magister of a single room" (42).

Although Stevens' response to experience was to make artifacts, he questions the value of expressionism. A meditation on objects imaginatively seen is carefully described in "So-And-So Reclining on Her Couch." The lady is herself an artifact and, consequently, is completely anonymous, "born, as she was, at twenty-one." The curve of her shape is "Motionless gesture," while the crown suspended over her head implies the action that set it there or "an invisible gesture." Thus, "she is half who made her" and in these gestures "contains the desire of the artist." The problem is that the form fixes the response as a metaphor does. In this way, the painting and the metaphor interfere with the real contact of the viewer with the object. The artist has imposed his own gesture over that which the individual might personally sense. For objects like the bouquet of roses, the thing itself is so actual in its reality that "any imaginings of them lesser things" (430). Despite this reservation, Stevens finds that the sense of things has the power to change and in doing so changes the object, "exceeds all metaphor" (431). In one respect, the metaphor fails by denying the fluidity fundamental to an individual's perception and an object's existence. In another respect, metaphor may give the observer the
product of activity rather than the experience of activity. Therefore, the observer in "So-And-So Reclining on her Couch" rejects the artifact for the world that "has no / Concealed creator":

One walks easily

The unpainted shore, accepts the world
As anything but sculpture. Good-bye,
Mrs. Pappadopoulos, and thanks. (296)

The source of this reservation is not primarily the principle of adherence to reality, but rather adherence to the individual value of emotional involvement in experience:

The truth must be
That you do not see, you experience, you feel,
That the buxom eye brings merely its element
To the total thing, a shapeless giant forced
Upward.

Green were the curls upon that head. (219)

Experience through feeling is the generative principle, symbolized by the growth of the shapeless giant. The experience of making what is seen a part of oneself is rendered with sensual immediacy in "A Dish of Peaches in Russia."

With my whole body I taste these peaches,
I touch them and smell them. Who speaks?

I absorb them as the Angevine Absorbs Anjou. I see them as a lover sees,

As a young lover sees the first buds of spring
And as the black Spaniard plays his guitar.

They are full of colors of my village
And of fair weather, summer, dew, peace.

And the poet as exile, in making himself a part of the soft juicy fruit, is also a self who feels like a native. "I did not know /

That such ferocities could tear / One self from another, as these
Within his representation of man experiencing form, Stevens distinguishes commonly three elements: the man or mind, the imaginative light that reveals correspondences, and the image or resemblance. "The mind between this light or that and space, / (This man in a room with an image of the world, . . .)" (245). Stevens uses the images of glass, crystal, mirror, and diamonds to distinguish metaphors that act as correspondences to reality and, thus provide a means of looking through them at reality. The glass of air becomes an element: "It is a visibility of thought, / In which hundreds of eyes, in one mind, see at once" (488). Such correspondences have a natural integrity and are crowned with diamonds, typically more than one as a sign of the plurality of truth:

The central man, the human globe, responsive
As a mirror with a voice, the man of glass,
Who in a million diamonds sums us up. (250)

They arise from the mind that "presents the world / And in his mind the world revolves . . . the world goes round and round / In the crystal

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8Coleridge used a similar image, translucence, to convey the sense of grandeur in his description of the symbol, or for Stevens the ideal correspondence: "a symbol . . . is characterized by the translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the especial, or of the universal in the general. Above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal." S.T. Coleridge, The Statesman's Manual, Political Tracts of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, ed. R.J. White, 24-25, quoted by Knights, 135.

atmospheres of the mind" (OP, 102). The fundamental world correspondence upon which the whole cluster rests is that of air and light; the right way to see is value expressed in that crystal and luminous medium. Also, the value of a particular fiction or supreme fiction is shown by imagery relating them to ideal transparence. A group of miscellaneous references illustrates the diversity of this use: "my fluid mundo . . . stopped revolving except in crystal" (407); "He looked in a glass of the earth and thought he lived in it" (507); "Life fixed him, wandering on the stair of glass" (483); "The mannerism of nature caught in a glass" (519).

The individual is a singular world of glass:

Abba, dark death is the breaking of a glass.
The dazzled flakes and splinters disappear.
The seal is as relaxed as dirt, perdu.

But the images, disem bodied, are not broken.
They have, or they may have, their glittering crown,
Sound-soothing pearl and omni-diamond, (460)

In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," correspondence itself is a "crystal hypothesis" of "The first idea [ as] an imagined thing." The image of the thinker as major man, an ideal projection, might give "habit" to MacGillough as "a leaner being, moving in on him," (387) so that he might speak with the language of the MacGillough, "Beau linguist." In "Chocorua to Its Neighbor," "the crystal-pointed star of morning" rises to give birth "in an elemental freedom, sharp and cold" to "the self of

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10 Blackmur notes that Stevens used imagery to create moods that show "the sheer preciousness of his beliefs." In the context above, the preciousness of ideal resemblance is shown. Also see, NA, 81f. and "Of Ideal Time and Choice" NA, 88f. R.P. Blackmur, "The Substance That Prevails", Kenyon Review XVII, 1 (1955), 96.
selves. The effect of this newborn gigantic bulk; "external majesty" (299); "silver-shapeless, gold-encrusted size" (298); "True transfigurers . . . True genii . . . Gigantic embryos of populations . . . rich conspirators, / Confiders and comforters and lofty kin" (300), is that: "where he was, there is an enkindling, where / He is, the air changes and grows fresh to breathe" (301). He is "the common self," "the bare brother" that the beau linguist needs for "clearing / . . . detecting / . . . completing" (301) in his struggle to find the most real and most pointed expression.

To say more than human things with human voice,
That cannot be; to say human things with more
Than human voice, that, also, cannot be;
To speak humanly from the height or from the depth
Of human things, that is acutest speech. (300)

Imagination has been shown in its relationship to exterior stimulation, and both in its capacity for virtuosity and for making ideal resemblances. Sometimes, imagination itself, in its dark interior seat, is imaged in grotesque figures:

In the conscious world, the great clouds
Potter in the summer sky.
It is a province --

Of ugly, subconscious time, in which
There is no beautiful eye
And no true tree,

There being no subconscious place,
Only Indyterranean
Resemblances

Of place: time's haggard mongrels. (348)

In "A Word With José Rodríguez-Feo," the imagination is "one of the secretaries of the moon / The queen of ignorance" who "presides over imbeciles."
The night
Makes everything grotesque. Is it because
Night is the nature of man's interior world?

What not quite realized transit
Of ideas moves wrinkled in a motion like
The cry of an embryo?

Part IV of "The Pure Good of Theory" is entitled "Dry Birds Are Fluttering in Blue Leaves." The imaginative versions of reality are relaxations "of a destroying spiritual that digs-a-dog," the mind's capacity to know.\(^\text{11}\) Man cowers under his pretences that his resemblances have an authority that succeeds in fixing the world of time in the weather of the vital present. Or was it wishful thinking, and man a "beast of light, groaning in half-exploited gutturals"? When feeling small, the imagination "whines in its hole for puppies to come see . . . inscribes ferocious alphabets." And when the imagination takes wing, it "Flies like a bat expanding as it flies / Until its wings bear off night's middle witch" (332-33). These grotesqueries are not the phantoms of things, but "appearance" or correspondence "Of that simplified geography, in which / The sun comes up like news from Africa" (334).

"Analysis of a Theme" ends gaily on the same note. Time is within us on the lowest, subconscious level, or "time's middle deep."

Beneath form, "Immaterial monsters . . . Invisible" move. These

\(^{11}\text{Blackmur describes Stevens as "a nominalist longing to find his names realities." Such poems as those above show Stevens experiencing that depression familiar to existentialists at times when their efforts to develop value and human nobility from a-rational phenomenology seem only a pastime. Blackmur, "The Substance That Prevails", 98.}
monsters "lie beyond / The imagination, intact / And unattained." This interior universe of "bright-ethered things / Bears us toward time ... / We enjoy the ithy oonts and long-haired / Flomets, as the Herr Gott / Enjoys his comets" (349). Thus, the mind is a microcosm of being and imagination, and the dialogue is between parts of a divided, inseparable whole.

The poet's journey north to a reduced nature, a place where shadows reveal the form, is the subject of "Farewell to Florida":

I hated the vivid blooms
Curled over the shadowless hut, the rust and bones,
The trees like bones and the leaves half sand, half sun.
To stand here on the deck in the dark and say
Farewell and to know that that land is forever gone.

... ...........................................

My North is leafless and lies in a wintry slime
Both of men and clouds, a slime of men in crowds.
The men are moving as the water moves,
This darkened water cloven by sullen swells
Against your sides, then shoving and slithering,
The darkness shattered, turbulent with foam.
To be free again, to return to the violent mind
That is their mind, these men ... (118)

The South is revealed in contradictory currents of images. As a whole, it has bound the speaker above with beauty, and he is releasing himself from "silvers and greens," "massive clouds," hot palms, "pine and coral and coraline sea" (117*), and "the wilderness of waving weeds" (118) in the sea. The contradiction lies in perceiving "the rust and bones" within this lavish fertility. The key image is "shadowless," and here it is used with a direct reference to false appearance or the denial of the shadows of reality. Geographically, the South is generally characterized by its false appearance, and the North by the bluntness with which it reveals man's mortal alienation and natural
poverty. This blunt statement of reality arouses in man a violence of desire out of the "wintry slime" and through the "Whirlpools of darkness" (118) that assault the senses in northern latitudes. In the poem, the poet frees himself from delusion in order to encounter reality.

Shadow images also delineate the unreal, since all forms are reduced to shapelessness. In "A Rabbit As King of the Ghosts," a "shapeless shadow covers the sun" and in the "rabbit-light" without chiaroscuro, nothing can be perceived as a form, and so all forms are felt as part of one mass: "And east rushes west and west rushes down." The effect is one of dimensionless participation in everything. In a benumbed state through the diminishment of all particulars that give individuality to objects, the memory of other times that contradict this one is gone:

To be, in the grass, in the peacefullest time,
Without that monument of cat,
The cat forgotten in the moon. (209)

The cat is specifically identified with daylight nature in this poem.

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12 Benamou notes a change in Stevens' imagery stated in "Farewell to Florida," as he turns from the maternal moonlight and imaginative night of the South to the daytime, winter society of the North. See Benamou, AN, 94.

13 Benamou states that the downward movement in this context may be archetypal. Baker first mentions the possibility of finding Jungian archetypes in Stevens' images because, he argues rather untenably, "an understanding of the archetypes of experience ... doubtless does beget a harmonious relationship between the individual and the experience of exploring consciousness." He then asserts that moonlight is "synonymous with poetry" and is happily "the liaison between the individual and his most complex experience." Moonlight is the only image specifically mentioned in his account. Taking up the same possibility nearly 30 years later, Benamou replaces the moonlight image with the feminine anima of the moon and finds her associated with "a deceptonal movement of the imagination" within consciousness. The moon is the "truly maternal and protective symbol of the imagination in its role of euphemizing the
Without him, the poet loses the real and enjoys an interlude of complete submersion in imagination:

You become a self that fills the four corners of night,
The red cat hides away in the fur-light
And there you are humped high, humped up,

You are humped higher and higher, black as stone --
You sit with your head like a carving in space
And the little green cat is a bug in the grass.  

(210)

In this description of imagination secreted from reality,¹⁴ the oceanic pleasure is without vitality (the red cat), without fecundity (the green cat), and merges with the stony black of a "carving in space" (210). The feeble-spirited, voiceless rabbit is an appropriate symbol. This torpor is specifically what the poet frees himself from in "Farewell to Florida" where the South is the home of the moon, "her oceanic nights," which "bound me round" in her mind. He saw beneath her appearance -- "the snake has shed its skin" -- and as he sails away, he is safe from the moon's enchantment:

The moon
Is at the mast-head and the past is dead.
Her mind will never speak to me again.
I am free.  High above the mast the moon
Rides clear of her mind and the waves make a refrain
Of this: that the snake has shed its skin upon
The floor. Go on through the darkness.  The waves fly back.  

(117*)

vital fears."  I believe that it is not so much the moon, but images of good parents, the mother as being and maternal comforter, and the father as self-conscious being and the pattern of maturity, that may be most fruitfully related to archetypal experience.

Howard Baker, "Wallace Stevens", AMS, 90f.
Benamou, ABH, 93f.

¹⁴cf. 49 above for an example of Stevens' use of "secrete" in context.
Stevens was searching for forms for man and, therefore, the image of a shadow as a ghost usually characterizes an empty shape that serves the dead, as in "Heaven Considered as a Tomb," or more frequently as a shapelessness that desires a human form, or life. In "Ghosts as Cocoons" the poet waits in "This mangled, smutted semi-world hacked out / Of dirt" for the bride to come. In the name of the other ghosts, "butcher, seducer, bloodman, reveller," the poet "cries deeplier" their yearning for the bride to bring a new birth into a consequently better world:

The grass is in seed. The young birds are flying. Yet the house is not built, not even begun.

She must come now. The grass is in seed and high. Come now. Those to be born have need

Of the bride, love being a birth, have need to see And to touch her, have need to say to her,

"The fly on the rose prevents us, O season Excelling summer, ghost of fragrance falling

On dung." Come now . . . (119)

A similar yearning for a form both real and human is expressed through ghosts in "Large Red Man Reading." The red man is vital and also the man who builds the house for the bride, reading "The great blue tabulae . . . the poem of life." The ghosts have returned because "from the wilderness of stars [they] had expected more." (423-24)

They were those that would have wept to step barefoot into reality, That would have wept and been happy, have shivered in the frost And cried out to feel it again, have run fingers over leaves And against the most coiled thorn, have seized on what was ugly And laughed . . .

The poet reads from the purple tabulae:
The outlines of being and its expressing, the syllable of its law: 
Poésie . . .

Which in those ears and in those thin, those spended hearts,
Took on color, took on shape and the size of things as they are
And spoke the feeling for them, which was what they had lacked. (424)

The ghosts had strayed from the dark-light and the music of its
being; they had tried to find significance in illusion and denial.15

The idea of a formless shadow finds a counterpart in the shadow-
less form, since man visually perceives form by that suggestion of three-
dimensionality imparted by the play of various intensities of light and
shade upon objects. In "The Common Life," a white "mortal" light shows
unimaginative rational man in one-dimension without shadows: "A black
line drawn on flat air."

In this light a man is a result,
A demonstration, and a woman,
Without rose and without violet,
The shadows that are absent from Euclid,
Is not a woman for a man.

Their statement of life is "black lines," "webs / Of wire, designs of
ink":

The volumes like marble ruins
Outlined and having alphabetical
Notations and footnotes.
The paper is whiter.
The men have no shadows
And the women have only one side. (221)

A natural correspondence to this view of poverty-stricken shadowlessness
is to find an analogy between poetry and shadow making. Emptiness is

15 For a reading of "ghostlier demarcations" (130) that suggests
a further dimension for the image, see Arthur Mizener, "Not in Cold Blood,
filled, then, with shadows that create a form of the world, which without them is bare:

Do not speak to us of the greatness of poetry,
Of the torches wisping in the underground,
Of the structure of vaults upon a point of light.
There are no shadows in our sun,
Day is desire and night is sleep.
There are no shadows anywhere.
The earth, for us, is flat and bare.
There are no shadows. Poetry
Exceeding music must take the place
Of empty heaven and its hymns,
Ourselves in poetry must take their place,
Even in the chattering of your guitar. (167)

Thus, the cold world that the poet goes to in "Farewell to Florida" is both the blunt North where natural shadows proclaim without disguise man's real nature and fill man with yearning,16 and also a place where man's poverty-stricken nature is revealed as shadowless in its one-dimensionality, while his world is bare, or filled with the broken fragments of a cultural wilderness. The poet must make the poetry of reality and humanity out of dark and light, and in answer to man's needs must supply what he lacks.

16 For mention of the importance of desire in Stevens' view of life, see Helen Hennessy Vendler, "The Qualified Assertions of Wallace Stevens", AM, 168-170, 172f.

For a description of will as "a violence within," see NA, 36.
VI. THE ENCOUNTER WITH POOR REALITY

But I am, in any case,
A most inappropriate man
In a most unpropitious place. (120)

On a simple level of response, the poet reacts to the emptiness of modern life with a sense of bereavement, relieved by the mockery of a self-aware and cultivated mind. But the times are unrewarding and distracting:

How does one stand
To behold the sublime

he asks.

Shall a man go barefoot
Blinking and blank?
...
And the sublime comes down
To the spirit itself,

The spirit and space,
The empty spirit
In vacant space.
What wine does one drink?
What bread does one eat? (130-31)

In a time of "A Fading of the Sun,"

When people awaken
And cry and cry for help?

The warm antiquity of self,
Everyone, grows suddenly cold.
The tea is bad, bread sad.
How can the world so old be so mad
That the people die? (139)

The sun provides a simple contrast to this depression and "Makes me conceive how dark I have become," but in this poem, "The Sun This March," the relief that so often follows the presence of the sun is
absent. The sunshine of early spring, "Like an hallucination come to
daze / The corner of the eye," brings back the ghost of a formerly
certain self. The speaker cries out: "Oh! Rabbi, rabbi, fend my
soul for me / And true savant of this dark nature be" (133-34).
In "Snow and Stars," the poet mocks the hope of spring with an almost
anguished sauciness: "The grackles sing avant the spring / Most
spiss -- oh! Yes, most spissantly." The poet gives the dark present --
a "robe of snow and winter stars" -- to the devil as wear becoming
"his hole of blue." It will cause so much "high ting" in hell that "It
would be ransom for the willow / And fill the hill . . . full" (133).
For the "Botanist on Alp (No. 1)," "Panoramas are not what they used
to be . . . Corridors of cloudy thoughts, / Seem pretty much one: / I
don't know what." He finds no composition, only "Statues and stars,/Without a theme."

The pillars are prostrate, the arches are haggard,
The hotel is boarded and bare.
Yet the panorama of despair
Cannot be the specialty
Of this ecstatic air. (134-35)
In "Botanist on Alp (No. 2)," the poet asks why the future should "leap
the clouds / The bays of heaven, brighted, blued?" Yet "who could
tolerate the earth / Without that poem . . . ?" (136)
The mind turns between a shattered present and a persistent
intense desire that "cries out a literate despair" (159). But desire
without composition is like "The Pleasure of Merely Circulating":

The garden flew round with the angel,
The angel flew round with the clouds,
And the clouds flew round and the clouds flew round
And the clouds flew round with the clouds. (149)
He wryly decides that going round and round "Has a rather classical sound."

The poet seems in poems of this mood to experience not only isolation but a growing sense of numbness. The poet becomes conscious in "Anglais Mort a Florence" of "a self returning mostly memory":

"Only last year he said that the naked moon / Was not the moon he used to see, to feel." It is now "Naked and alien, / More leanly shining from a lankier sky." As a result of exerting reason and will, the Anglais turns to Brahms "as alternate / In speech," submerging himself and all but losing himself.

But he remembered the time when he stood alone.

He stood at last by God's help and the police;
But he remembered the time when he stood alone.
He yielded himself to that single majesty;
But he remembered the time when he stood alone,
When to be and delight to be seemed to be one,
Before the colors deepened and grew small. \(148-49\)

The disinherited man in "Waving Adieu, Adieu, Adieu" is reduced to the gesture of meaninglessness in the farewell he waves by being "In a world without heaven to follow." His response, that of the "singular self," is "to despise / The being that yielded so little, acquired /

So little, too little to care." The "ever-jubilant weather" is the airy minimum he turns to as he sips his cup. The poem ends with Stevens' mocking note of bitterness:

One likes to practice the thing. They practice,
Enough, for heaven. Ever-jubilant,
What is there here but weather, what spirit
Have I except it comes from the sun? \(127-28\)

The image clusters drape naked, lean, and fading descriptions of
diminishment around contrasting glimpses of radiance and brightness, blue and tantalizing natural immensities of sun, sky, and weather.

Since society is filled with the ruined pieces and remains of a shattered former order, a building or a statue that belongs to the past is totally rejected, as in "Dance of the Macabre Mice" where "we go round and round" a statue "covered with mice" dancing "a hungry dance."

The founder of the State. Whoever founded
A state that was free, in the dead of winter, from mice?
What a beautiful tableau tinted and towering,
The arm of bronze outstretched against all evil! (123)

The "lordly language" inscribed on the statue's base is "like zithers and tambourines combined," and similarly on the statue in "Invective Against Swans," it is a "listless testament / Of golden quirks and Paphian caricatures."1

Behold, already on the long parades
The crows anoint the statues with their dirt.

And the soul, O ganders, being lonely, flies
Beyond your chilly chariots, to the skies. (4)

The violent minds of these men of the North in "Farewell to Florida,"

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1While referring to "A bronze rain from the sun" in "Invective Against Swans," Fuchs says: "'Bronze' in Stevens connotes something which has the reality of things as they are in their natural cycle. Like the words 'sun' and 'summer' it signifies actuality, experienced life." I suggest instead that bronze partakes of a fixed form or an unalterable facet of reality. Thus bronze alone tends to be deathlike, and in phrases that relate its connotations to other substances it becomes an intensive of the unyielding or rigid nature of inexorableness; time cannot be turned back to the days when statues of nobility could exist. In a similar way, elemental ice is given an imposing form in "wintriest bronze" in "The Sense of the Sleight-of-Hand Man." Associated with human figures, as Fuchs notices in reference to "metal heroes," the bronze is crystallized into a sterile image of human rigidity. Fuchs, 66, 90.
are symbolized in "Ludwig Richter, turbulent Schlemihl" who losing
"the whole in which he was contained, / Knows desire without an object
of desire, / All mind and violence and nothing felt." The poet yearns
with painful irony: "Oh, that this lashing wind was something more /
Than the spirit of Ludwig Richter" (357-58*).

In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," the statue of General
Du Puy represents the attempt to make an effigy of a man which made
the man himself "a bit absurd, / Changed his true flesh to an inhuman
bronze. / There never had been, never could be, such / A man."
While:

The right, uplifted foreleg of the horse
Suggested, that at the final funeral,
The music halted and the horse stood still. (391)

The citizens attempted to use the statue to stop time and yet to create
an "illustrious ornament." But he "belonged / Among our more vestigial
states of mind," a fancy of an outmoded taste. More significantly, the
bronze man and his horse seem almost specifically to deny the conditions
of being, communicating only the state of mind of a past culture that
thought them possible. 2 That this culture was vestigial is not

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2 Stevens' discussion of a statue of General Jackson enlarges
on the contribution made by works of this sort. (NA, 10-11)
Zuckerkandl comments on the impossibility of not fixing in
time an artifact of the space arts. "For all eternity the advancing
horse in the equestrian statue of Colleoni will not set down its raised
foot. . . . The instant is fixed; time comes to a stop. Such is the
action of every spatial image, of every space symbol; it brings time to
a stop. But if all our symbols are space symbols, the result is that,
though we have words for motion, for time, for becoming, for change,
we have no images for them, and hence only blind words." Stevens, I
believe, wanted to increase the expressiveness of the aspect of sequence
in poetry which, with verbal rhythm, is the medium's extension into the
dimension of time. Jarrell describes this action in the dialectic
primarily a comment on the artistic maturity of the monument itself, but an illustration of the inadequacy of artistic fictions that do not recognize the principle of flux stated in the subtitle of this part of the poem, "It Must Change." "Nothing had happened because nothing had changed. / Yet the General was rubbish in the end" (391-92*). By rejecting the trash that is the remains of a formerly ordered world "one feels a purifying change":

Everything is shed; and the moon comes up as the moon
(All its images are in the dump) and you see
As a man (not like an image of a man),
You see the moon rise in the empty sky.

One sits and beats an old tin can, lard pail.
One beats and beats for that which one believes,
That's what one wants to get near. Could it after all
Be merely oneself. (202-3)

The knowledge of oneself as one really is does not imply for Stevens a man arrested in the consciousness of dispossession, or regret for the vanished gods. He concludes a passage describing the "experience of annihilation" in "Two or Three Ideas": "There was no crying out for their return ... There was always in every man the increasingly human self, which instead of remaining the observer, the non-participant, the delinquent, became constantly more and more all there was or so it seemed; and whether it was so or merely seemed so still left it for him to resolve life and the world in his own terms" (OP, 207). This idea is fully expressed in Part IX of "Things of August" in terms of progress of Stevens' longer meditative poems: "the unlikely tenderness of this movement -- the one, the not-quite-that, the other, the not-exactly-the-other, the real one, the real other."

Zuckerkandl, 261.
"A new text of the world . . . From a bravura of the mind, / A courage of the eye." It will be composed of our own meaning out of our need and from ourselves

Because we wanted it so
And it had to be,

A text of intelligent men
At the centre of the unintelligible, (494-95)

The overall effect of poems in which the poet meets himself and his culture on reality's terms without the supplemental fictions of the imagination is a rendering of desire -- irrational, intense with unwillingness to surrender. Life and desire are associated in the connotations and correspondences of red colors, beating rhythms and battering assault, the thundering horse, and in the demanding violence and prompting voice of the wind.

In this rigid room, an intenser love,
Not toys, not thing-a-ma-jigs --
The reason can give nothing at all
Like the response to desire. (218)

Desire necessitates the metamorphosis of the bare into the sustaining, the animal into the man, the disillusioned alien into the newly freed man glorying in his identity. The images of despair and poverty are themselves remolded into shapes that confirm man's recognition of himself. The lean, bare, and naked, the most "spiss" sounds of disgust, the blue hole of the devil, are transformed as are the witless angels, those attendant ghosts. The poet chooses the sun and the weather by choosing himself. In this courageous atmosphere of a refusal to be dismayed, man can direct himself to the central task: "The inhuman making choice of a human self" (NA, 89).
VII. THE WORLD OF THE WEATHER AND THE IDEAL

The progress of the newly freed man begins with a sense of the innocence of the moment:

No large white horses. But there was the fluffy dog. 
There were the sheets high up on older trees, 
Seeming to be liquid as leaves made of cloud, 
Shells under water. These were nougats. 

It had to be right: nougats. It was a shift 
Of realities, that, in which it could be wrong. 
The weather was like a waiter with a tray. 
One had come early to a crisp café. (229)¹

"The Latest Freed Man" is a man without truth, without a description of himself, and without a veil of preconceptions separating him from what he sees:

It was everything being more real, himself 
At the centre of reality, seeing it. 
It was everything bulging and blazing and big in itself, 
The blue of the rug, the portrait of Vidal, 
Qui fait fi des joliesse banales, the chairs. (205)

Here the man has rediscovered the commonplace furnishings of his room as a sign of his new state. In "On the Road Home," the man rediscovers silence, the night, and the "fragrance of the autumn" (204). The man on the dump rejoices to see the moon in its empty sky, because its plainness corresponds to his need to be plainly himself. The moment apprehended fully by the senses is perhaps the common characteristic of

¹Miller sees Stevens as "matching the fluidity of time" in the movement within his poems and within the body of his poetry. "Forces, the Will & the Weather," the poem quoted from above, illustrates this effect. Miller, AM, 153-55.
this primitive innocence. The images used to render the mood vary: the peaches in Russia, the lilacs that the rich men who hold "their eyes in their hands" cannot see in the "Philadelphia that the spiders ate" (225). Only the now fortunate, very poor man has a single sense, or nothing to put between himself and his direct experience of the moment and of objects:

It was when I said,
"There is no such thing as the truth,"
That the grapes seemed fatter.
The fox ran out of his hole. (203)

The world now is full of color and all kinds of objects, grandly commonplace. The mind is calm, even sure, under the blue sky of a benign weather. An atmosphere of blessing is heard in the blatter of nature:

Is it to hear the blatter of grackles and say
Invisible priest; is it to eject, to pull
The day to pieces and cry stanza my stone?
Where was it one first heard of the truth? The the. (203)

When the fox is able to run out of his hole, he discards the hole, the "cavern" of "systematic thinking" which is "to think the way to death," for another kind of thought, the "way to life" (256). This kind of thought is a mingling of oneself with the images we make of "This single place in which we are and stay . . . until the mind has been satisfied" (257).

Between one's self and the weather and the things
Of the weather are the belief in one's element,

To believe in the weather and in the things and men
Of the weather and in one's self, as part of that
And nothing more. (258)

If one traveled then to the moon, "One would be drowned in the air of difference." If afterwards, one were returned to the earth to a place
with the most minimal character, alone, cold, illusionless and "if then / One breathed the cold evening, the deepest inhalation / Would come from that return to the subtle centre" (258). To achieve a sense of belonging on the earth, man must see in a new way that includes rather than separates him from the conditions of life. The angel of reality is part of all being and knowing:

I am one of you and being one of you
Is being and knowing what I am and know.

Yet I am the necessary angel of earth,
Since, in my sight, you see the earth again, (496)
The angel is an apparition that can help man hear "meanings said / By repetitions of half-meanings" (497), the music of fluidity. Stevens' task as a poet of reality is to transpose the "tragio drone" into a human and humanizing harmony, in poems that lift the inert spirit on the wings of "perfective" time.² In "God Is Good. It Is A Beautiful Night" the moon, round in fullness of its meaning, rises and flies above corruption, "the rotted rose," and her special light speaks through "the scholar again, seeking celestial rendezvous." With her participation, he squeezes "the reddest fragranoe from the stump / Of summer," because:

"The venerable song falls from your fiery wings. / The song of the great space of your age pierces / The fresh night" (285).

On these venerable wings, the freed man enters the world of the

²See "perfective wings" that bear "us toward time" (349). Stevens' "The Pigeons" in "Street Songs," among his undergraduate poems, shows his pleasure in the flight of birds, "into the dazzling light" on "glistening wings," well before he identified the image with the movement of the mind, or the course of life. Already a circular pattern is observed: "they rise and turn and turn anew." In "The Beggar," also in "Street Songs," the "darkest night" is one when
weather, dominated by the principle of life. The sunny portal is
morning breaking after the night, and the evening of departure comes
gently like a promise kept. "Pass through the door and through the
walls, / Those bearing balsam, its field fragrance, / Pine-figures
bringing sleep to sleep" (235). In this place, man is in the arms of
his parents and mate:

Now in midsummer come and all fools slaughtered
And spring's infuriations over and a long way
To the first autumnal inhalations, young broods
Are in the grass, the roses are heavy with a weight
Of fragrance and the mind lays by its trouble.

these fathers standing round,
These mothers touching, speaking, being near,
These lovers waiting in the soft dry grass. (372)

The mother is earth and lover; the father is song, being and imagination.
"The leaves of the sea are shaken and shaken. / There was a tree that
was a father, / We sat beneath it and sang our songs" (233). As time
runs out, the music of an individual being in the place he has
fashioned from his mind for himself slowly interpenetrates in
generalized identity with the being and place of others at the

no "sweet birds ever rise." In another poem in the group, "The
Minstral," the birds reappear in a passage that has a Tennysonian
flavor: "But drifting sweetly through the leaves, / They die upon the
fields afar." Examining Stevens' undergraduate poems, Buttel finds them
"exercises in the poetic fashions of the nineties." He identifies
influences from Tennyson, Rossetti, Dowson, and Keats.

Stevens, "Poems -- 1940 and 1899-1901", 5f.
Buttel, 32-37.

3 For elaborations on the meaning of sun in the morning, see
Macksey, 220.
vanishing point on the horizon. In harmony with the sound of flux,
"Round and round goes the bell of the water" as

The last island and its inhabitant,
The two alike, distinguish blues,
Until the difference between air
And sea exists by grace alone,
In objects, as white this, white that. (235*)

The ideal garden scene is an island in the sea or a lake shore
bordered with pine trees. On his way to this place the eagle rises in
the morning "Out of his fiery lair" to sink "His slowly-falling round /
Down to the fishy sea" (126-27*). It is the island of the great
banana tree and the ignorant man's isle of "geese and stars" (222):
"This is his nest, / These fields, these hills, these tinted distances, /
And the pines above and along and beside the sea" (411).

The swarming woods, ferns, grass, and tinted air are the fertile
correspondences to the teeming mind of the imaginative man. In the
woods the vital present is strong: "our fortune and honey hived in the
trees" (374). The insensible stone of being and death is the rock of
summer in "Credences of Summer," while the anatomy of summer combines
"The physical pine, the metaphysical pine," (373) a double-thing in
fiery sight: "Let's see the very thing and nothing else. / Let's
see it with the hottest fire of sight" (373). The moon and night are

4Stevens discusses that synthesis between a story and its symbols
which for some readers combines "to produce a third" meaning; "or, if they
do not combine, inter-act, so that one influences the other, and
produces an effect similar in kind to the prismatic formations that
occur about us in nature in the case of reflections and refractions."
(NA, 109) More than his poetic technique is influenced by the conscious
attempt to achieve this kind of synthesis. His idea of the function
of poetry within culture depends on the capacity of poetic statement to
exercise mythic power, not by becoming myth but by being like myth
warmed in their bareness because in their message of central things, they give man his vital present. The "people in the air" in "On the Adequacy of Landscape" turn away from "the bright, discursive wings," avoiding the hallow heard from deep in the woods "Of central things." Their empty hearts cannot feel "The blood-red redness of the sun." They are afraid of the pain of being what they are and cannot know the "keenest diamond day," "the sharpest sun: the sharpest self."

But he who turns to the cocks of morning exchanges strength with the sun of green reality: "So that he that suffers most desires / The red bird most and the strongest sky" (243-44).

Time is transformed from the fluidity of death to the fluidity of life simply by laying aside the icy denial of what man sees around him in his place on the seasonal earth. He must leave the pursuit of the neutral blank beneath all the luminous colors, of "A truth beyond all truths" (242). An intellectualizing "Nabob / Of bones" (241),

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{He never supposed} \\
\text{That he might be the truth, himself, or part of it,} \\
\text{He never supposed divine} \\
\text{Things might not look divine, nor that if nothing} \\
\text{Was divine then all things were, the world itself,} \\
\text{And that if nothing was the truth, then all} \\
\text{Things were the truth, the world itself was the truth.}
\end{align*}
\]

would be. Holloway explains this power in a parallel "to the recent movement in philosophy which has been summed up in the slogan, 'don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use.' 'Use', in that context, has recognized, with a new exactitude and detail, that some uses of words are to make statement, but others are to do this only in part, or even not at all." Holloway, 125.
Had he been better able to suppose:
He might sit on a sofa on a balcony
Above the Mediterranean, emerald
Becoming emeralds. He might watch the palms
Flap green ears in the heat. He might observe
A yellow wine and follow a steamer's track
And say, "The thing I hum appears to be
The rhythm of this celestial pantomime."

While this pastoral garden present lessens the pains of literate despair, longing for the ideal still disturbs the repose of the mind. Stevens expresses this experience directly in "The Well Dressed Man with a Beard." He is comfortable on his sofa with a beard against the cold, yet longs for something that the stream of flux cannot carry away:

yet one,
One only, one thing that was firm . . .
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
One thing remaining, infallible, would be Enough. Ah! douce campagna of that thing!
Ah! douce campagna, honey in the heart,
Green in the body, out of a petty phrase,
The sustaining, green-vital yes, beau language of "a thing affirmed: /
The form on the pillow humming while one sleeps, / The aureole above the humming house . . ." (247). The time of innocence is a principle, or is it a time and place? Struggling with this question in "Auroras in Autumn," the poet forces his way to an affirmation that we can

Lie down like children in this holiness,
As if, awake, we lay in the quiet of sleep,

As if the innocent mother sang in the dark
Of the room and on an accordion, half-heard,
Created the time and place in which we breathed . . . (418-19)
The humming has always its warm low sound, but the well dressed man needs an ideal echo on which "the future world depends. . . . It can never be satisfied, the mind, never" (247).
It is evidence of this unsatisfied need that "Credences of Summer," the celebratory hymn of the garden world, ends with the cock on his bean pole unable as yet to herald the new morning.\(^5\) In order to reach the "douce campagna," man needs a sound "which is not part of the listener's own sense" (377). The garden grows to weeds now that the gardener's cat is dead and he is gone. Some necessary pole of vitality is missing in this abandoned spot which is still the "island solitude, unsponsored, free" (70).

Thus the search goes on through the garden world for a supreme fiction of it. The parts of "Certain Phenomena of Sound" show man in three places of being: in his poor world, in the garden world, and in an ideal world inspired into sound by a majestic figure of light.

In "Certain Phenomena of Sound," the Sunday song for the man napping is without the customary order and jangle of the week: "The cricket in the telephone is still" while the locust in the grass makes casual sounds that lack significant motive. John Rocket is old; his day off finds him drained of feeling: "Cat's milk is dry in the saucer."

On this drowsy Sunday, the locusts do not beat their wings "by pain, but calendar." The image of wings and flight is reduced for him to the static hovering of "a ride in a balloon," or to an analytic

\(^5\)It is interesting to compare the image of the cock crowing in the morning as the symbol of awaking into a new consciousness of the world in "Hymn from a Watermelon Pavilion" in Harmonium, with similar ones in "Credences of Summer." The comparison illustrates in one instance at least, Zabel's contention that "before he ended his career, he carried the meaning of the poems of Harmonium to its logical consequence ..." Morton Dauwen Zabel, "Wallace Stevens and the Image of Man," WS, 110.
detachment when one "in a bubble examines the bubble of air" (286). No "radiant bubble . . . deep up-pouring" (13) wells within him. The room, the external correspondence of the man's mind, "is emptier than nothingness. / Yet a spider spins in the left shoe under the bed --." The spider makes a sound that is safe to sleep to: "sound that time brings back" (286). Time images include here "beat," "calendar," "goes round," "spider spins," and the related flight and wing references. It appears that Rocket is temporarily outside of all but minimal time, and as such is but little alive although not in danger of death.

In the second canto, music makes another environment for Rocket when he finds himself in a richer present. The sound of distant music seems "To be a nature, a place in . . . itself" (287):

So you're home again, Redwood Roamer, and ready To feast . . . Slice the mango, Naaman, and dress it With white wine, sugar and lime juice. Then bring it, After we've drunk the Noselle, to the thickest shade Of the garden. We must prepare to hear the Roamer's Story . . . (286)

The new name identifies the character, or the same character, in a deeper self-awareness as the sojourner in life's vital wood. Roamer "is a voice taller than the redwoods" when he is part of the nature the sound of music makes. Sound that was safe and minimal in the

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6 Stevens comments on the analogy of music, the effect of verbal rhythms on the experience attained through a work. "It affects our sight of what we see and leaves it ambiguous, somewhat like one thing, somewhat like another . . . The music excites us and we identify it with the story and it becomes the story . . . we have had an experience very much like the story just as if we had participated in what took place . . . The music was a communication of emotion" (NA, 126). Thus,
first canto is now a creative catalyst; in Roamer's voice it produces "the things that are spoken" in "the most prolific narrative" (287*). Through it, he sees the garden world, captured in the fruit and wine images.

The third canto renders an ideal image of man under the parasol of imagination transcending his responsive nature as Roamer to become the creative nature of his own name or being. The music, figured as Bulalia, is the light that draws him from "the hospital porch" and shows him how to open "wide / A parasol," his imagination, which inside makes "a kind of blank in which one sees":

\[
\text{I saw} \\
\text{That of that light Bulalia was the name} \\
\text{Then I, Semiramida, dark-syllabled,} \\
\text{Contrasting our two names, considered speech.} \\
\]

(287)

Out of the dark and light and from the difference, the naming as well as the motive for naming comes: "You were created of your name . . . / I write Semiramida and in the script / I am." The grand image of Bulalia meditated on creates an equivalent image of himself in the poet. The names of Bulalia and Semiramida are exotic and suggest mystery and richness. An aura of the marvelous and the majestic appeals to that sense of awe in man which opens his mind to the influence of iconic symbols and rhythms.\(^7\)

\(\text{music from an external source affects a listener by putting him in} \\
\text{sympathy with another emotional dimension, just as the emotional being} \\
\text{of an individual is expressed in the music he communicates from his} \\
\text{own center.}
\)

\(\text{Also, the sovereign images that crystallize identity in oneness,} \\
\text{are often crowned, tufted or crested, to show their majesty and preciousness.} \)
In "The Candle a Saint," the "noble figure" is the ideal resemblance of night's essential meaning, she that is "The abstract, the archaic queen." Night is green as befits the conceiving time of the reality that is personified with regal certitude by the serene imagination of the garden world. Through the color and the majestic images of its meaning, imagination and being are fused in a complementary union of the knower and the known. The transparence, she, "strides above the rabbit and the cat" who are the bejeweled abstractions of the essential elements of man's fruitful world, the emerald cat of fertility and the topaz rabbit of the imagination's light. Reigning beyond them and seen behind them is she, "the essential shadow . . . the image at its source" (223).

A similar mysterious figure, Nanzia Nunzio in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," is surrounded with all of the majestic insignia of meaning. Adorned with an exotic name, a necklace and stone-studded belt, she is "The spouse beyond emerald or amethyst," (395) the naked reality that man, as time trapped Ozymandias, must mate his spirit to. She removes her jewels that represent the correspondences or fictions through which she is described, in order to be utterly essence:

I am the woman stripped more nakedly
Than nakedness, standing before an inflexible Order, saying I am the contemplated spouse.

Set on me the spirit's diamond coronal.

For a suggestive and archetypal interpretation of the green night and archaic queen, see Benamou, 101f.
She desires to wear only the single jewel of her human meaning. She has now two relationships. Within the mating image she is the ideal correspondence of the need for man to embrace the reality of his being. Thus, she is the promised spouse standing before an inflexible order. As the ideal personification of that order in the figure of the earth mother, she says that the only jewel she would wear is the ultimate one of man's spirit facing naked reality. It is this spirit that creates the jewel or the "own only precious ornament" of ultimate reality. "The final filament," or light at the extremity and at the barest, is another symbol for the "spirit's diamond coronal." For reality, man's spirit is a crown of diamonds; while the possibility of man's coming union with her causes the earth mother to say, "I tremble with such love so known / And myself am precious for your perfecting." Although value is expressed in two ways, the value felt both by order and by the woman comes from man. The passage concludes with Ozymandias' statement that man will forever clothe the earth with the fictive covering of his imagination, "always glistening from the heart and mind" (396).

In another version in "The Sense of the Sleight-of-Hand Man," of the encounter between man and the inflexible order, the figure of the ignorant man symbolizes the lack of a will to defy or regret the fluid nature he is a part of. To realize this absorption into the myth of

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9O'Connor associates the ignorant man with the "subman" who is "the natural man, primitive and almost vegetative, but, by transforming what he sees into something else, as the bell into a church or a cry into a person, he keeps us living in a fluid changing world. Without him there would be a static, changeless order." O'Connor, 83. Also see
the sun, beyond bitter necessity, he would have to sink his will into
that of the wind that throws "its contorted strength around the sky."
The mood of romantic beauty that irradiates the little island, and the
blunt tension between the images of the first and second stanzas reveal
the thorough unreality of the vision and the pitiful implausibility of
ignorant existence. To evade the knowledge of consciousness is impossible,
however attractive be the dream of "a little island full of geese and
stars" and complete espousal of the "pearly" bride (222).

Since a complete identification or mating cannot take place,
man and being must remain separated. In an ideal way, man must be both
of major and of "finikin" stature. The individual, a soldier in this
struggle to conciliate being with himself, is imaged in the army or
mass of humanity he is a part of. The world context is that of war, and
the singular soldier in his commonality of action, plain motive, and
destination is one with collective man. Together they create this giant
of their meaning:

    The body that could never be wounded,
    The life that never would end, no matter
    Who died, the being that was an abstraction,
    A giant's heart in the veins, all courage.

Each man identifying himself with the giant is magnified: "For soldiers,
the new moon stretches twenty feet" (289). The giant figures of this

John J. Enck, Wallace Stevens, Images and Judgments (Carbondale, 1964),
240.

O'Connor and Enck have misunderstood the paradoxically characterized
"man below the man below the man" in "Sombre Figuration" in "Owl's
Clover." The subman never changes and is thus fixed, yet he is associ-
ated with the capacity to imagine as one who "imagines and it is true"
in contrast to the one who "thinks and it is not true" (OP, 660). When
world of the weather are not so much glasses through which a man looks to see his own reality as great sustaining images of fluidly vital man within mankind's ever-present present:

Only this evening I saw again low in the sky
The evening star, at the beginning of winter, the star
That in spring will crown every western horizon,
Again . . . as if it came back, as if life came back,
Not in a later son, a different daughter, another place,
But as if evening found us young, still young,
Still walking in a present of our own.

we are disillusioned by the man who thinks, we become vulnerable to the shapeless whispers and designs of this lower self which are prompted by a drive for the solid. The second self, an opium eater, diminishes the particulars of life to meager singularities of remembrance: "As a church is a bell and people are an eye." "He turns us into scholars . . .," and later into "an audience of mimics . . . that play on instruments discerned / In the beat of the blood" (OP, 67). The "sterile rationalist," on the other hand, is surprised into spring vision, and we find that he does have imaginative response to the fluid world he inhabits. Thus, for each self, the upper and the lower, a different kind of imagination is distinguished, that of man in a natural world whose rational discontent is baffled by "fragrant fomentations of the spring" (OP, 69), and under whose influence he can walk garlanded "between chimeras" (OP, 67), and that perverted imagination of the subman that out of its poverty creates a portent, "breathing immense intent" (OP, 68) to enforce its image of "black spring" on "people suddenly evil, wakened, accused, / Destroyed by a vengeful movement." The result, fixed and death-dealing to the self, that upper man now weakened into mimicry, is shown in the verbal time of the following passage that gathers together the action:

Except that this is an image of black spring
And those the leaves of autumn-afterwards,
Leaves of the autumns in which the man below
Lived as the man lives now, and hated, loved,
As the man hates now, loves now, the self-same things. (OP, 69-70*)

If the subman figure is related to the ignorant man, it is only as a mirror image: a figure mumbling in the dark his hunger for order, ignorant of life itself, facing a figure fully at home in the fluid world, ignorant of regret for change and death. In the midst of a poetic turgidness untypical of Stevens' work, we stumble across another Kurtz without that small thing, that essential confidence, surrendering to the whisper of the comprehensible.
It looked apart.
Yet it is this that shall maintain -- Itself
Is time, apart from any past, apart
From any future, the ever-living and being,
The ever-breathing and moving, the constant fire. (237-38)

An ideal "finikin" of the natural world, the "hard hidalgo" in "Description Without a Place," is the artificer of a style of life, an "invention" out "of subjects still half night" (345). He is the imaginative man performing his poetic function to give shape to his place, Spain in this case. Living "in the mountainous character of his speech" (345), his ideal capacity permits him to create a present around him that is not only "alive with its own seemings," but so fitted to the order of being that a like future can be imagined consistent with the present: "Like rubies reddened by rubies reddening" (346). Thus, in his hands the ideal expressed in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" of "a permanence composed of impermanence" (472) is achieved.

If an image can be identified as the presiding genius of the world of ideal forms and functions, it is the weather giant who unites in himself the sense of a creative and confident atmosphere in imaginative man and a fertile season in nature. He, too, is dependent on man for vitality, for the abstract is embodied by the concrete.

In himself, he is "The pensive giant prone in violet space," "Viollet-le-Duc . . . an imagined thing . . . an expedient" (386-87*), thought made visible. In his imagined presence, the pensive man's "house has

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10 Stevens comments on the giant as the symbol of man's style of being with reference to Jove, and states that the poet in an age of disbelief has the task to "supply the satisfactions of belief, in his measure and in his style" (OE, 205f).
changed a little in the sun," though his visible shape had "falseness close to kin" (385). This falseness can be redressed, the "abstraction blooded" (385), by revolving the mind between the giant and the mere weather just as a man is blooded "by thought," rubies reddening.

But the problem is to make it possible to rest in the permanent presence of the hidalgo, the one unchanging thing, "A hatching that stared and demanded an answering look" (484). The problem is "to feel the same way over and over" (425). Yet time inevitably intervenes.

And yet what good were yesterday's devotions?
I affirm and then at midnight the great cat
Leaps quickly from the fireside and is gone. (264)

In "Late Hymn from the Kyrrh-Mountain" experiences that are right and whole at one time become the next day in a changing external scene only a lesser appearance in memory. However bright, it is "not quite molten, not quite the fluid thing," but is "A little changed by tips of artifice," the sobering "glints of sound from the grass."

The illuminating experience of "The knowledge of being" in a moment that seems "without the sense of time" is not in fact above time. The appearance remaining afterward is not one with the correspondence, "early constellations," that inspired "the first / Illustrious intimations" of the feeling of love that made up the experience. Nothing remains of that reality: "Take the diamonds from your hair and lay them down" (350). Thus, conditioned by fluid reality, man must again and

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11 Pearce discusses extensively Stevens' concern with grasping the implications of man's condition in reality and with considering the possibilities for man to acquire belief in an unbelieving environment. Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry, 377-82.
again find his way to things-as-they-are through a multiplicity of particulars, and "out of a storm of secondary things": "We must endure our thoughts all night, until / The bright obvious stands motionless in cold" (351). It is by his repetitions and in his moments of meditation that an individual realizes the center of being, and composes the fictions that identify or crystallize his experience. The process is itself an experience in time 12 which is the stage on which experiences of emotional synthesis occur:

Perhaps
The truth depends on a walk around a lake,

A composing as the body tires, a stop

... a wait

In the swags of pine-trees bordering the lake.
Perhaps there are times of inherent excellence,

As when the cock crows on the left and all
Is well (386)

12Several critics comment on the impression in Stevens' poetry of an experiencing mind in the act of meditation:
Tindall, Wallace Stevens, 32f, 41.

For a discussion of "repetitions," and images of the turning fluid world, see Frank Doggett, "This Invented World: Stevens' 'Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction'", AM, 27f.
VIII. THE SOLDIER'S WAR

There would still remain the never-resting mind,
So that one would want to escape, come back
To what had been so long composed.
The imperfect is our paradise.
Note that, in this bitterness, delight,
Since the imperfect is so hot in us,
Lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds. (194)

Life is an adventure into time and the individual is one soldier
in an army of people, the children of nature:

The bristling soldier, weather-foxed, who looms
In the sunshine is a filial form and one
Of the land's children, easily born, its flesh,
Not fustian. (375)

The war takes place on many fronts, but they are all parts of one
central struggle. To give meaning to life and death in descriptions
that are revelations, the soldier as poet goes to the war:

Soldier, there is a war between the mind
And sky, between thought and day and night. It is
For that the poet is always in the sun,
Patches the moon together in his room
To his Virgiliam cadences, up down,
Up down. It is a war that never ends. (407)

After this passage describing the poet's role in "Notes Toward a Supreme
Fiction," the last stanza confidently predicts an ultimate victory
appropriate to the whole work which is about the nature and power of
the supreme fiction:

How simply the fictive hero becomes the real;
How gladly with proper words the soldier dies,
If he must, or lives on the bread of faithful speech. (408)

But while the ultimate weapon in the war has been predicted, the victory
depends on the degree to which the individual can find peace within
himself. In "Repetitions of a Young Captain," this peace is identified as taking the right place between the real and the desired in "The universe that supplements the manqué." Then the soldier, between reality and the unreal universe, will find "the organic consolation" that corresponds to the garden world of being and its green orator's joy in it:

... the complete
Society of the spirit when it is
Alone, the half-arc hanging in mid-air

Composed, appropriate to the incomplete,
Supported by a half-arc in mid-earth.
Millions of instances of which I am one.

In "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War," the relation between common man himself as hero, and the giant hero who sums up common man is considered in terms of individual fate. The giant is an abstraction based on a central identification with fluidity; his fate has harmonious proportions. And so the argument develops, if the common man is indeed the common hero, it should follow that there is for him in reality an ideal common fortune. Circumstances contradict: an individual's fortune may be induced by something or nothing as far as man can tell. Significant form is lacking. Addressing the soldier-poet at this point in his meditation, Stevens says:

Soldier, think, in the darkness,
Repeating your appointed paces
Between two neatly measured stations,
Of less neatly measured common-places.

The only answer the soldier can grasp is one that evades the question and instead asserts that we must believe in a common fortune because "Unless we believe in the hero, what is there / To believe? Incisive what, the fellow / Of what good. Devise" (275). Then the passage goes on to describe the elements that should be modelled into the devised
hero who, beyond the mud of common man, should include natural reality, the world metaphor, and the principle of vitality. The ingredients are "winter's / Iciet core, a north star" of oblivion, "summer's / Imagination, the golden rescue" or the garden world. The whole is then rendered:

The bread and wine of the mind, permitted
In an ascetic room, its table
Red as a red table-cloth, its windows
West Indian, the extremest power
Living and being about us and being
Ours, like a familiar companion. (275-76)

The soldier metaphor is as strongly related to death as to the war itself as the passages quoted from "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" show. The most potent images of death in this respect are the drop of blood, and the soldier's wound.¹ Such images first appear within the world context of ideal correspondence as expressions of reality subsumed in human fate and consequently transcended. In "Esthétique du Mal" we see the ideal resemblance of fate developing from the context of the garden world, a progress that extends from Part V to Part VII. In Part V, the poet invites the presence of all sympathizers in the warmth of human relationship for the evocation "Of the damasked memory of the golden forms, / Before we were wholly human and knew ourselves" (317). This knowledge is specifically the "bitter aspic" (322); while in the golden memory, man was part of a natural organic composition of sun and himself (Part VI), and earth and himself. Part VII, which deals with the earthly, describes the ideal garden world of the soldier's wound. The individual feels himself fully expressed in the giant

¹ For agreement on the fundamental meaning of the soldier's wound, see Pearce, "Wallace Stevens: The Last Lesson of the Master, AM, 128."
soldier of time; the movement of expansion and contraction between the particular and the general, the microcosm and the macrocosm, is perfect. All the images either vibrate between the singular and the general or in themselves include both as in the rose wound figure below. The ease that the soldier feels is expressed only through the giant figure, the soldier of time in whom life and the wound are one and thus good:

How red the rose that is the soldier's wound,  
The wounds of many soldiers, the wounds of all  
The soldiers that have fallen, red in blood,  
The soldier of time grown deathless in great size.

A mountain in which no ease is ever found,  
Unless indifference to deeper death  
Is ease, stands in the dark, a shadows' hill,  
And there the soldier of time has deathless rest.

Concentric circles of shadows, motionless  
Of their own part, yet moving on the wind,  
Form mystical convolutions in the sleep  
Of time's red soldier deathless on his bed.

The shadows of his fellows ring him round  
In the high night, the summer breathes for them  
Its fragrance, a heavy somnolence, and for him,  
For the soldier of time, it breathes a summer sleep,

In which his wound is good because life was.  
No part of him was ever part of death.  
A woman smoothes her forehead with her hand  
And the soldier of time lies calm beneath that stroke.  

In the poem as a whole, the Eden ideality of this passage provides intensity of regret by its contrast to the present when knowledge has not only lost him heaven but Satan as well. Now the imagination lives on a starvation diet in the poor world; the tragic has diminished to the emptiness of "The mortal no" (320). The poet imagines that a new birth of tragedy might rise when the realist can answer mortality with a yes. The argument then moves in a similar direction to that in
"Examination of the Hero in a Time of War"; he will say yes because he needs the yes and in his deepest being has "a passion for yes that had never been broken" (320). This passion derives from the thought of a garden experience of organic composition before men knew, and it implies the possibility of achieving this sense of identity and kinship with nature. The effect of the work is not hopeful, and the last section ends the exploration of attitudes in the poor world with the imagination struggling to be free enough from ill-feeling to see good. Yet the imagination is itself surprised by its unquenchable productivity:

who could have thought to make,
So many selves, so many sensuous worlds,
As if the air, the mid-day air, was swarming. (326)

In "Dutch Graves in Bucks County," the position and quality of the modern armies of soldiers are rendered in contrast to those buried in the graveyard. The present struggle is much larger in scope than the little battles of the past as the army image of "Men are moving and marching" is developed in details of the size, numbers and enormities of effort: "Angry men and furious machines," wheels "too large for any noise," shouts and voices as mankind is on the move. The battleground is the air of the mind and "There are circles of weapons in the sun."

The circle identifies the goal of the struggle, the composition of man around the center or iciest core in the world of vitality, as the sun image indicates. The air that "attends the brightened guns" (290*) is the creative interior atmosphere of the mind that is listening for sounds of order that words can express and profess. The army's "flags are natures newly found" (291), the time is autumnal, the men engaged are both the lustiest, and the "disinherited" coming "In a storm of torn-up
testaments" (292). "Fate is the present desperado," an image crystallizing the hour of disillusionment with a sense of its inevitability and wretchedness. To counter it, the armies must achieve "a merciless triumph" in a common will to turn the defeat of centuries of "spent living and spent dying" in ignorance, into central meaning. The answer must lie "in a profounder logic" (291) that does not rest on a denial of death, "heaven in the wilderness," (292) but on death transmuted into the sense and elation of the tragic zenith. This idea is rendered in the angular bareness of the acceptance in the extreme of a point for a new beginning, as the use of "sharp" shows in:

Freedom is like a man who kills himself
Each night, an incessant butcher, whose knife
Grows sharp in blood. The armies kill themselves,
And in their blood an ancient evil dies --
The action of incorrigible tragedy. (292)

They kill themselves by refusing flight into delusion, and by their participation in death as a vital action, they exorcise the evil. The spirit's diadem in fluidity is another way in the green fertile world of expressing this same will of man to be himself. The drop of blood image, then, is in itself the crystallization of the soldier's wound in the tragic world where he encounters fate face to face.

Stevens' adventures in meeting fate by means of fictions reveal the nature of the encounter within the various worlds which he explores. Two of his later works are significant statements about where his journey took him. None of his fictions were enough to give him that repose in perfection that he sought out of ultimately "imperfective" time. This recognition was fully expressed as early as "Chocorua to Its Neighbor" in the musings of the soldier hero as giant:
The moments of enlargement overlook
The enlarging of the simplest soldier's cry
In what I am, as he falls. Of what I am,

The cry is part. (298)

The meditations of the central mind are solitary, set apart.
And though the center can hear the sound of "what is secret" and is that secret, it is always isolated from the simplest soldier:

There lies the misery, . . .
    . . . the actual bite, that life
It itself is like a poverty in the space of life,
So that the flappings of wind around me here
Is something in tatters that I cannot hold. (298-99)

Only if a single man could himself take the place of the giant hero abstraction at the human center could the enlargement include the single soldier's fortune and cry, and failure be turned into victory. Such a victory would belong to the individual. Yet throughout his career, Stevens proposed that in works of the imagination lay a means for many men in common to find themselves meaningful and elevated. It is the poet's role to create supreme fictions that can irradiate everyone's life by showing men how to live. But after his fullest treatment of this idea in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," his attention began to turn more and more toward the question of the efficacy of fictions at the point where the individual encounters his fortune as a conscious soldier involved in time, and in his singular fate.² In

²For a considerable treatment of the dissatisfied mind and its significance, see Pearce, AM.
"The Auroras of Autumn," he considers the worlds of the unreal and their crowning ideal images, while in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" he examines what the activity or fortune of the individual soldier involves and means.

"The Auroras of Autumn" is technically interesting in the way that the worlds of correspondence are related in a complex and changing adjustment while the individual is there experiencing and judging them. Most of the important images associated with each world are used as if the poet had arranged a farewell concert of his fictions. The presiding image of the whole, the serpent changing his skin, is analogous to the poet making and giving up the unreal worlds he once inhabited. The first stanzas invoke the serpent of the interior world, correspondence of the shaping imagination, and ask if the serpent is an image of reality, -- "Eyes open and fix on us in every sky, --" or only another image shadowed "at the end of the cave." The next three stanzas describe his nest as a master image for man's imaginative reality reaching for the essential bare core -- "the serpent body flashing without the skin" -- and for the soldier's pole of man's grandeur of fluid identity "In the midmost midnight." The concluding three stanzas of Part I, reveal the snake wholly identified in resemblance to ideal innocence in nature in relentless "possession of happiness . . .

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3 For an example of a fine critical essay on "The Auroras of Autumn" which nonetheless would have benefited from a grasp of the various worlds of images and their contexts that Stevens says farewell to in the poem, see Donald Davie, "The Auroras of Autumn," AW, 166-78.
that we. . . disbelieve." The "we" reverberates in that dissatisfied portion of ourselves that cannot relax into peace in the supreme fictions of the sun reality, which are imaged as:

His meditations in the ferns,
When he moved so slightly to make sure of sun

Made us no less as sure. We saw in his head,
Black-beaded on the rock, the flecked animal,
The moving grass, the Indian in his glade. (411-12)

This last glimpse of him which is as sure as is his possession of happiness, shows the reality which must be comprehended in any solution to the problem of "an unhappy people in a happy world" (420).

". . . the white of an aging afternoon" with darkness gathering as "The wind is blowing the sand across the floor" finds the imagination flaring in "polar green" with "great enkindlings" of "ice and fire and solitude" (413) at the scene of the encounter. The reality is more demanding than the idea of it was in "Variations on a Summer Day," though the idea of reality is unchanged and similarly stated in "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War." Only the reality of the soldier is changed as he here nears his personal rendezvous by saying "Farewell to an idea."
The same phrase introduces the following two parts. In the first of these, Part III, the mother earth figure who encompasses the purposes of the poem, and the house, as well, that was constructed in her name have grown old along with the interior mind that conceived them. The time is now veritable autumn: "Boreal night / Will look like frost as it approaches them." What effect has her transparence now: "Upstairs / The windows will be lighted, not the rooms." "With invincible sound," the wind, the adversary in the war, will "knock like a rifle-butt
against the door" (414). Thus, the house which the imagination built begins to dissolve.

In Part IV, man exiled from the golden age becomes again the realist of "Esthétique Du Mal," now the father of organic composition who says yes to no at evening: "At the moment when the angelic eye defines / Its actors approaching, in company, in their masks" (414). The nature theatre of the end of "Credences of Summer" is the stage, and the necessary angel observes. Yet the soldier asks "the present throne": "What company / In masks, can choir it with the naked wind?" (415).

The following two parts deal in turn with the summer platform and the theatre-making imagination. The mother invites humanity to the festival which the father organizes. The musicians play "curious ripenesses / Of pattern" for the dancing n egresses, and the father makes out of air "Scenes of the theatre, vistas and blocks of woods / And curtains like a naive pretence of sleep."

The tumult is "obedient to his trumpet's touch"; the party is gathered, but at a play in which "there are no lines to speak . . . no play. / Or, the persons act one merely by being here" (415-16). It is a theatre splashed in cloudy magnificence because it likes it, as "A season changes color to no end."

Bathed in the colors of the imagination, the theatre is "filled with flying birds" and has either yet to emerge or has just collapsed. The chaos images now dissolve Stevens' own fictions, leaving the vital question:

This is nothing until in a single man contained,
Nothing until this named thing nameless is
And is destroyed. He opens the door of his house
On flames. The scholar of one candle sees
An Arctic effulgence flaring on the frame
Of everything he is. And he feels afraid. (417)

In Part VII, Stevens renders the dissolving of fictive worlds themselves
because the imagination has leapt everywhere, "But it dare not leap by
chance in its own dark." Because of this failure, its end in leaping
is changed from destiny to caprice. All the ideal images of the
"crystalled and luminous . . . crown and diamond cabala" and "white
creator of black" are confounded in the moment when:

It leaps through us, through all our heavens leap,
Extinguishing our planets, one by one,
Leaving, of where we were and looked, of where

We knew each other and of each other thought,
A shivering residue, chilled and foregone (417*)

In the end, we are unmade in "a flippant communication under the moon"
(418).

In the following two sections, the poet strives to create within
himself a belief in innocence within nature. He insists that he will
believe and through "a wind as sharp as salt" (419) find death "Almost
as part of innocence, almost, / Almost as the tenderest and truest
part" (420). In the last part, the poet turns to a friend to support
him, but not a giant image of supreme fiction. The friend must be one
who can interpret the reality of an unhappy people in a happy world to
his congregation: "Contriving balance to contrive a whole." Thus,
as the power of fictive images fades, the figure of the rabbi re-appears
and with him a grace in the conciliating mind:
In these unhappy he meditates a whole,  
The full of fortune and the full of fate,  
As if he lived all lives, that he might know,  

In hall harridan, not hushful paradise,  
To a haggling of wind and weather, by these lights  
Like a blaze of summer straw, in winter's nick. \(420-21\)

As this is an idea of a man, the step of the individual sounds closely behind his role-ideal shape. But an increasingly painful note is heard even outside of the war poems in which it originated: can the general really enfold the particular, when the particular is one man? The question is desperately overcome rather than answered in "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War":

The Got whome we serve is able to deliver  
Us. Good chemistry, good common man, what  
Of that angelic sword? Creature of  
Ten times ten times dynamite, convulsive  
Angel, convulsive shatterer, gun,  
Click, click, the Got whome we serve is able,  
Still, still to deliver us, still magic,  
Still moving yet motionless in smoke, still  
One with us, in the heaved-up noise, still  
Captain  

... The savage weapon  
Against enemies, against the prester. \(273-74\)

And the question returns insistently as man encounters fate in his own person in the dawn of autumn. Pressed on all sides, the hero-creating will falls back on the potentiality of beauty in thorns. Ironically interpreting the lines, man "Makes poems on the syllable \(fa\) or / Jumps from the clouds or, from his window" \(280\). And he yearns for the power to endure more than man can so that he can reject anguish and "false empire" and "with nothing lost" be "as he wanted." Dark images of anguished homelessness are found in mindless syllables, animal grunting and whining in holes, distortions and devastations in "The Pure
Good of Theory" (332). The painful connotations begin to overwhelm the precarious notes of hope in many later works, where such feelings seem very near the surface or dominate. The green roses turn to smoke and the flowers swell poisonously in "Attempt to Discover Life" until the "cadaverous persons were dispelled" and behind them remained "dos centavos" (370).

"In a Bad Time" the order of reality is beggarly: "bread / Hard found, and water tasting of misery" (426). The dreary question of what the poet has is asked again and answered: "He has his poverty and nothing more" (427). Now Melpomene is sordid, "The muse of misery?" In Section III of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," the poem can satisfy the mind with a power that candor brings: "At night an Arabian in my room" whose nonsense hootla-how "pierces us with strange relation" (383). But when "leaves have fallen" in "The Plain Sense of Things," "No turban walks across the lessened floors."

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4 For agreement that a darkening sense of the possible emptiness of fictions is present in the later poems, and that concern for the individual is more apparent, see Denis Donoghue, "Nuances of a Theme by Stevens", AU, 233-241.

5 See Vendler's welcome comments on Stevens' bent of mind, based on the characteristic rhetoric of question and tentative statement found in his works as a whole: "The constraint, the sadness, the attempts at self-conviction, the enforced nobility -- all of these are missing from critical portraits of Stevens in the indicative mood." Vendler, 166.
The greenhouse never so badly needed paint.
The chimney is fifty years old and slants to one side,
A fantastic effort has failed, a repetition
In a repetitiousness of men and flies.  

Correspondence is barren too,  
without reflections, leaves,
Mud, water like dirty glass, expressing silence
Of a sort, silence of a rat come out to see,
The great pond and its waste of the lilies . . .

In the earlier "Repetitions of a Young Captain" the hero chooses reality in the end; he would bear fate in civil nakedness without evasion: "In a beau language without a drop of blood" (310). Now, though, repetitions are losing power and the imagination that raged for order at Key West, in "One of the Inhabitants of the West" awaits "an arrival . . . alert . . . at evening's one star" (503*). This figure who reads the text is without a body, and his cryptic words are "Horrid figures of Medusa" (504*), explicating the falling sparks. Their reality is in "a drop of blood,"

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6For a reading of "The Plain Sense of Things" that agrees that the poem renders the experience of the destruction of Stevens' whole poetic premise, see Macksey, 211.

Also, see Doggett's reading of "The Plain Sense of Things" in which he analyzes the difference between reality and imagination in the poem without apparently realizing the "import" of the work. The effect of the difference is not enheartening as Doggett suggests when he says: "Out of these differences come the variety and freshness of living, and the continual everlasting effort to comprehend, and continual human disintegration and mortality too." The error comes from using passages of poems to support a thesis the critic is advancing; in this case, by ignoring the first three stanzas and by abstracting ideas without modifying connotations from the last two stanzas. Frank Doggett, "Wallace Stevens' Secrecy of Words", New England Quarterly, XXXI, 1 (1958), 388.
without a "well-rosed two-light / Of their own." Even natural innocence covers over "So much guilt." "This one star's blaze" of the "archangel of evening" becomes "A stellar pallor that hangs on the threads," in "Lebensweisheitspielerei," "In the stale grandeur of annihilation" (505). In "The Green Plant," the "vocabulary of summer" says nothing now, and colors are "falsifications from a sun / In a mirror" (506). The green plant glares with hostility. An even more monstrous change overtakes the mother in "Madame La Fleurie" when she devours "His crisp knowledge," his glass transparence:

The black fugatos are strumming the blacknesses of black . . .
The thick strings stutter the finial gutturals.
He does not lie there remembering the blue-jay, say the jay.
His grief is that his mother should feed on him, himself and what he saw,
In that distant chamber, a bearded queen, wicked in her dead light.

What he has seen in the glass of the earth has come around to this, as Mr. Homburg finds in "Looking Across the Fields and Watching the Bird's Fly." "A glass aswarm with things going as far as they can" (519). Color images tend to become poisonous, and black is prominent. Sound is heavy; the strings are thick and unlively. The concluding canto of "The Bouquet" shows a faltering of faith that the fictions of an individual are more than "finikin":

A car drives up. A soldier, an officer,
Steps out. He rings and knocks. The door is not locked.
He enters the room and calls. No one is there.

He bumps the table. The bouquet falls on its side.
He walks through the house, looks round him and then leaves.
The bouquet has slopped over the edge and lies on the floor.

It is like the "Debris of Life and Mind" at the end:
There is so little that is close and warm.
It is as if we were never children.

Sit in the room. It is true in the moonlight
That it is as if we had never been young. (388)

As feelings expressed in giant images and then impatiently
swept away for the glass perfection of noble correspondence and heroic
endurance slowly give way to an even more final vision, Stevens returns
to the individual, his finite journey and a fervent though occasional
appeal to natural innocence. No longer do the ideas matter as much as
the thinking of them. The quality is in the act of meditation and less
in the product of thought as independent of the man. Two figures, that
of Ulysses, the inveterate adventurer, and that of the old philosopher
objectify the individual ideal. Ulysses represents the innocence of
persistent aspiration. The old philosopher represents the ideal rabbi,
now in a particular man, with emphasis on the meaning of his individual
adventure rather than on his social contributions. He is, as it were,
the reality of man, and demonstrates the value of man's life as the
opportunity for self-creation.

For Ulysses, the bride wife and earth mother dreams: "She has
composed, so long, a self with which to welcome him" (521). Man is
"Friend and dear friend and a planet's encouragement," and she, the
strength that "would never fail." The beating of insatiable time is
the thought of Ulysses "beating in her like her heart." She never
forgets "him that kept coming constantly so near" (521). The bride
has now warm human characteristics and desires contact.

The new emphasis on the individual's perspective finds Stevens
making poetry of a man's gesture; this redistribution of focus is clear when the last stanza of Part VII of "Esthétique du Mal," quoted on page 84, is compared to "The Owl in the Sarcophagus." In the latter poem, the man imagining his death makes romance of the backward glance, the long farewell, and the greeting of recognition with which he adorns the unknown. The tone of unreserved address and simplicity seems common in poems of this period. For example, here death cries: "Keep you, keep you, I am gone, oh keep you as / My memory" (432). The most supreme images of death come down to:

... a child that sings itself to sleep,
The mind, among the creatures that it makes,
The people, those by which it lives and dies.  

(436)

A quietude of being one with the moment of putting by the text and the struggle of the will with doubt is expressed through this child-like experience. There is an escape from repetition in happening, or in a different context: "A knowing that something certain had been proposed" (483).

This is perhaps a factor in the glowing moment that surrounds the passing of a superior man, when in Santayana Stevens finds a human correspondence to his ideal rabbi. Speaking for the philosopher that which his restless mind could never speak for himself, Stevens writes the epitaph of man's heightened grandeur, transmuting at last the involved and painful images of the soldier in a humanly centered composition. The everyday sounds of men in the city lose their particularity as they blend in a common human sound as they did in the soldier-in-time giant. This is the accompanying music of life in his passage into death. The commonplace articles that gained singularity for
the newly freed man are now filled with the permanent light that was
shed by the hidalgo with a shawl in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven":

Nothing about him ever stayed the same,
Except this hidalgo and his eye and tune,

The commonplace became a rumpling of blazons.
What was real turned into something most unreal,

In isolated moment -- isolations
Were false. The hidalgo was permanent, abstract, (483-84)

"The candle as it evades the sight" is the dying philosopher's
comfort as his own candle is "tearing against the wick / To join a hovering
excellence." Kin is ready to escape to kind, that for which "Fire is the
symbol." In this fire, the red of vitality and the light of the imagination
are one. In the philosopher, the half-arcs cross:

It is as if in a human dignity
Two parallels became one, a perspective, of which
Men are part both in the inch and in the mile. (508-9*)

The giant center has found its human correspondence; "How easily the blown
banners change to wings" (508) for

The one invulnerable man among
Crude captains, the naked majesty, if you like,
Of bird-nest arches and of rain-stained-vaults. (510)

The philosopher dozes "in the depths of wakefulness," joining two
worlds, life and death. But his regret is for life, for the tragedy in
"the last drop of the deepest blood" (509) which he, as "master and most
commiserable man," ennobles for everyone:

It is poverty's speech that seeks us out the most.
It is older than the oldest speech of Rome.
This is the tragic accent of the scene. (510)

It is in the glory of this tragic sound that he reposes: "the pity that
is the memorial of this room" (509). Thus, the sounds and life of the
city are "part of the life" in his room:

    Its domes are the architecture of your bed.
The bells keep on repeating solemn names

    In choruses and choirs of choruses,
Unwilling that mercy should be a mystery
Of silence, that any solitude of sense
Should give you more than their peculiar chords
And reverberations clinging to whisper still.

As the repetitions are at last embodied and isolation broken, "a kind of
total grandeur at the end" ensues. The visible is enlarged and yet
singular and small: "The immensest theatre, the pillared porch, / The
book and candle in your ambered room" (510). Thus, the worry about
natural innocence is left behind among other residual ghosts as the
porch of Eulalia opens onto the completed room, made and chosen by
him for himself. Dying, he "stops upon this threshold," this heaven,
"As if the design of all his words takes form / And frame from thinking
and is realized" (511). Thus, in beau language with a drop of blood,
the labors of Crispin end.

    So may the relation of each man be clipped.
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