# The Wallace Stevens Journal

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# "Credences of Summer:" Wallace Stevens' Secular Mysticism

GEORGE S. LENSING

redences of Summer" celebrates a frequent theme in Wallace Stevens' poetry, the juvenescence of the imagination. Through its ten cantos, the poem fashions its various metaphors to proclaim those rare instances when the human mind finds itself in ideal concord with the world surrounding it. The mind's eager reaching out for the "anatomy of summer" (II), 1 from which it otherwise finds itself divided, comprises the nature and function of the imagination. Such activity is both a making and a discovery: "this hard prize, Fully made, fully apparent, fully found" (VII).

After "The Comedian as the Letter C," "Credences of Summer" is the most closely organized and logically continuous of Stevens' longer poems, even though it employs much of the discursiveness and casual accumulation of the other longer poems. First published in Stevens' 1947 volume Transport to Summer, it was written, the poet says, when "my feeling for the necessity of a final accord with reality was at its strongest" (L, 719). Stevens' poems of summer are many, and they consistently reveal the knitting of the mind's activity with that reality and the attendant peace that follows:

It [the human] becomes the scholar again, seeking celestial Rendezvous,

Picking thin music on the rustiest string, Squeezing the reddest fragrance from the stump Of summer.

("God Is Good. It Is a Beautiful Night")

. . . an appanage Of indolent summer not quite physical

And yet of summer, the petty tones Its colors make, the migratory daze, The doubling second things, not mystical,

The infinite of the actual perceived, A freedom revealed, a realization touched, The real made more acute by an unreal. ("The Bouquet")

The imagination is, in fact, so consummately potent in the metaphor of summer that the "central man" can even boast: "'Thou art not August unless I make thee so'" ("Asides on the Oboe").

In "Credences of Summer" the imagination's triumph in possessing its object is everywhere shown as dazzling revelation. As the result of complete concord between the self and its environ, the manifestation that issues from it is cast in religious tones and reinforced with religious allusions. The poem puts forth articles of belief, as its title implies. There is a sense in which "Credences of Summer" belongs to the poetic tradition of religious transport, from *The Divine Comedy* to *The Dark Night of the Soul*, to *Four Quartets*. It is not religious in a theistic sense, but in its meditative probings toward that reality which is otherwise obscured by the veil, hidden to the senses, the poem is prophetic:

It is the visible announced, It is the more than visible, the more Than sharp, illustrious scene. (VIII)

As a poem of secular or profane mysticism, it shares many qualities with the writings of the contemplative Christian mystics; some of them are worth examining in the context of Stevens' findings of summer. In her classic, Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness, Evelyn Underhill presents the theme common to all the mystical writers: "The induced ecstasies of the Dionysian mysteries, the metaphysical raptures of the Neoplatonists, the voluntary or involuntary trance of Indian mystics and Christian saints—all these, however widely they may differ in transcendental value, agree in claiming such value, in declaring that this change in the quality of consciousness brought with it a valid and ineffable apprehension of the Real." The "valid and ineffable apprehension of the Real" is precisely the concern of Stevens' poem and provides the base of his affinity with the mystical tradition.

The Christian mystic seeks to possess God personally and directly by undergoing a "dark night" wherein each of his senses is deprived of natural gratification. Isolated and abandoned in spirit, sacrificing every human solace out of love for God, the aspirant is then seized by the divine Person. Transported in a rapture which approximates, in human terms, the consummation of sex, he perceives God fleetingly but powerfully as he transcends the temporal order in communion with the eternal. Stevens' mysticism seeks no union with God, but in its quest to unite the self with the reality of summer an analogous program ensues.

In one such analogy, Stevens shares with the mystics the frustrations of language in describing the reality of his union. As Underhill states above, the experience is almost always acknowledged as "ineffable". "Trasumanar significar per verba/ non si poria; pero l'esemplo basti/ a cui esperienza grazia serba," a says Dante in describing his vision of Beatrice in the Paradiso. For his union not with the divine but with the terrestrial real, Stevens elects a rhetoric of extremity in his attempt to make language approximate the experience. The poet's state of accord is presented either as one of absolute completeness: "There is nothing more" (II), "... that can attain no more" (II), "capable of nothing more" (III), "nothing else compounded" (IV)—or as a

state as complete as the relative mind can conceive it: "The more than casual blue" (V), and "the more than visible, the more! Than sharp, illustrious scene" (VIII). Otherwise, the poet employs paradigms of finality and repleteness: "last day of a certain year" (I), "final mountain" (III), "green's apogee" (III), "The utmost" (IV), "last choirs" (IV), "the extreme" (VI), "vividest repose" (VI), "this hard prize,! Fully made, fully apparent, fully found" (VII). Ultimately, the poet can only call it "Pure rhetoric of a language without words" (IV).

Stevens' preoccupation with change and with the evanescence of a dynamic world should alert his readers that another mystical analogy, the transcendence of time and space, is suspect. Such suspicion is finally and crucially justified, but this poem, as in few others by Stevens, enfolds that instant, symbolized by the June solstice ("Now in midsummer"), when earth's fruition parallels the mind's freedom from flux. Such an instant is so momentary that it might pass unnoticed. Because it is natural and not divine, because it is devised in part by the conscious but cunning making of the self, it is a fiction, but one on which "credences" can be affirmed. As Stevens puts it in his essay "Imagination as Value," "If the imagination is the faculty by which we import the unreal into what is real, its value is the value of the way of thinking by which we project the idea of God into the idea of man" (NA, 150). At its moment of greatest realization, the god-like power of Stevens' human imagination in fusion with the world participates in what Underhill calls a mystical condition in which "the departmental activities of thought and feeling, the consciousness of I-hood, of space and time—all that belongs to the World of Becoming and our own place therein—are suspended."4

Time for Stevens is defined in terms of change, and he precisely defines this instant of midsummer as "right ignorance! Of change" (II). Change is not arrested but ignored, though the mind's acquiescence in brief fixity is real. Similarly in canto V, the ideal day of summer is "Stripped of remembrance," another method of ignoring time's fluidity. When the poet, therefore, affirms at the beginning of the poem that "This is the last day of a certain year! Beyond which there is nothing left of time," he speaks with the authority of a momentary fiction. The poem itself will finally contradict the notion that "there is nothing left of time" in the last two cantos where the autumnal "inhalations" prevail.

Descriptions of the transcendence of the temporal flux through seasonal permanence are not limited to the religious mystics. Virgil's farmer-persona praises the climate of Italy in his *Georgics:* "Here is constant spring and summer in alien months" and "rabid tigers are absent." In the Garden of Adonis, Spenser's earthly paradise is also a projection of the secular imagination:

There is continuall spring, and harvest there Continuall, both meeting at one time: For both the boughes doe laughing blossomes beare,

## And with fresh colours decke the wanton Prime. (III. vi. 370-373).6

Other examples of time's suspensions resulting from the self's intercourse with the variously defined world are multiple in the English Romantics, Whitman, Lawrence, Hart Crane and others. In the more religious context of a poem published only three years before the writing of "Credences of Summer," T.S. Eliot projects the union of the soul with God in another image of seasonal simultaneity:

Midwinter spring is its own season Sempiternal though sodden towards sundown, Suspended in time, between pole and tropic.<sup>7</sup>

Where Andrew Marvell's lovers fail to make the sun stand still, Stevens' fiction of summer succeeds: "Here the sun, Sleepless, inhales his proper air, and rests" (III). A similar play on permanence in impermanence recurs in the fifth canto:

One day enriches a year. One woman makes The rest look down. One man becomes a race, Lofty like him, like him perpetual. Or do the other days enrich the one?

The day is the temporal consummation of the year, but here "right ignorance" of time is not assumed, as in canto II. The "other days" are not ignored. Does the single day subsume the many, the poem asks, or do the other days endow the one? The point, of course, is that time is exalted, rather than transcended. Like the queen bee, who, both nourishes her colony and is sustained by it, the day "Contains the year and other years."

Not only temporal, but also spatial dimensions are transcended in the poem's act of discovery through perception. The mysticism of the poem is, of course, preeminently physical; as the object of the mind, the matter of the world is what the metaphor of summer proclaims. In this sense, Stevens' mysticism is atypical. If perception's epitome-moment appears to occur in temporal transcendence, it also appears to stretch the physical world to the "limits of reality" and to fix it in its own permanence. This, indeed, is the message of the fourth canto with its mows of hay from Stevens' familiar Oley Valley in Pennsylvania. Because such a world is totally apparent in its ripeness ("too ripe for enigmas, too serene") and in its colors ("mingling of colors at a festival"), space, too, stops:

Things stop in that direction and since they stop The direction stops and we accept what is As good.

Earlier, the poem has designated in language not unlike Eliot's "still point

of the turning world," a terrestrial center as the "Axis of everything." It is presented as a tower, a "final mountain," a perfect "point of survey" (III). That point of survey, "squatting like a throne," invests its beholder with royalty, just as the queen bee is the magisterial symbol of the day which contains the year, and just as the mountainous rock of canto VI flashes forth "As if twelve princes sat before a king." In his Fables of Identity, Studies in Poetic Mythology, Northrop Frye cites this canto as an illustration of the mythic axis mundi, the mountain "where the upper world and this one come into alignment, where we look up to the heavenly world and down on the turning cycle of nature." If both the vantage point ("point of survey") and the object of survey ("A land too ripe for enigmas") have been possessed, the mind, arrested and appeased, finds fixity: "Things stop."

Frye's "turning cycle of nature," however, is one Stevens could never long deny or withhold. The descriptions of stopped direction in the poem are more a theory posed than an exemplum illustrated. The vigorous activity of the earth is everywhere demonstrated, from the "sapphires flashing from the central sky" (VI) to the Miltonic 10 "ten thousand tumblers tumbling down" (VIII). The statically perfect Eden of the sixth stanza of "Sunday Morning" ("Is there no change of death in paradise? | Does ripe fruit never fall?") is repudiated for its very monotony and inevitable languor.

As part of what is "fully found," the revelations of summer play upon temporal and physical transcendence; there are overtones of traditional mysticism, though in each case modified by Stevens' secular boundaries and by his fictional mythmaking. In one other manner, however, Stevens recalls that tradition; it involves the means by which the self's possession of the world corresponds to the soul's possession of God. The sixteenthcentury Spanish mystic, John of the Cross, repeatedly describes that union with God in sexual terms, the soul as the bride being ravaged by the force of God's love. The analogy is one to which John of the Cross constantly returns: "... so that the soul may be more completely perfected and raised up above the flesh, God makes certain assaults upon it that are glorious and Divine and after the manner of encounters ... wherewith He penetrates the soul continually, deifying its substance and making it Divine."11 In "Burnt Norton" Eliot's description of the experience in the rose garden clearly implies a moment of ecstatic rapture, religious in nature, but symbolically sexual:

> And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight, And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly, The surface glittered out of heart of light.<sup>12</sup>

Stevens' use of the sexual analogy to describe the meeting of imagination and reality is not a conscious imitation of mystical symbolism. In fact, it appears in many of his poems, from Crispin's clasping his "prismy blonde" (*CP*, 42) to the union of Ozymandias and Nanzia Nunzio in "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" (*CP*, 395-396). In "Credences of Summer" the intense

union with "The object," coming as it does in the context of the other religious elements of the poem, more closely approximates the tradition, however. Stevens describes possession of the world in summer in terms that are simultaneously sexual and apocalyptic:

Three times the concentred self takes hold, three times The thrice concentred self, having possessed

The object, grips it in savage scrutiny, Once to make captive, once to subjugate Or yield to subjugation, once to proclaim The meaning of the capture, this hard prize, Fully made, fully apparent, fully found. (VII)

While it is true that the mind's discovery in summer struggles with the inadequacies of the verbal, hints at temporal and spatial transcendence, and employs the analogy of sexual subjugation—all traits of traditional Christian mystics—Stevens' exclamations are otherwise dissociated from them. While the sacred mystics proclaim the union of soul with God, Stevens celebrates the profane union of mind with world. There is nothing of the program of asceticism ("the dark night of the soul"), at least in the physical sense, in Stevens' morality. Finally, there is the important difference that Stevens' state of summer plenitude is, in part, a fiction. If "man's mind [has] grown venerable," it is "venerable in the unreal" (VIII).

In "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet," an essay read at Mount Holyoke College in 1943, three years before the writing of "Credences of Summer," Stevens spoke of the "idea of God" as a "poetic" one. The language he employs in describing the poetic invention of God is echoed throughout "Credences of Summer":

... if we say that the idea of God is merely a poetic idea, even if the supreme poetic idea, and that our notions of heaven and hell are merely poetry not so called, even if poetry that involves us vitally, the feeling of deliverance, of a release, of a perfection touched, of a vocation so that all men may know the truth and that the truth may set them free—if we say these things and if we are able to see the poet who achieved God and placed Him in His seat in heaven in all His glory, the poet himself, still in the ecstasy of the poem that completely accomplished his purpose, would have seemed, whether young or old, whether in rags or ceremonial robe, a man who needed what he had created, uttering the hymns of joy that followed his creatior. This may be a gross exaggeration of a very simple matter. But perhaps that remark is true of many of the more prodigious thing of life and death (NA, 51).

In place of the "idea of God," Stevens poses in "Credences of Summer" "the imagination's life" (I), and in this poem he brings that life toward potent realization. If the theism of old offered "the feeling of deliverance, of a

release, of a perfection touched," so here, too, "the mind lays by its trouble" (I) and finds that which "must comfort the heart's core against/ Its false disasters." Echoing the New Testament (John 8, 32), Stevens' essay speaks of the poetic vocation whereby "all men may know the truth and the truth may set them free." Of the "rock of summer" Stevens says, "It is the truth" (VI) and on its summit stand the human characters who are "Free, for a moment, from malice and sudden cry" (X). The poet who "achieved" God sang his "hymns of joy that followed his creation"; the poet of earth and summer hears the natural "choirs,! Not evocations but last choirs" (IV). The achievement which Stevens puts forth as his "credences" is not pyrrhic, even if momentary. The happy but shifting epiphanies ("fully found") in this poem constitute the scriptures of his secular religion.

#### NOTES

- 1. The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York, 1961), p. 373. All further references to this edition will be found in parentheses in the text preceded by the notation CP. References to other primary sources, The Necessary Angel (New York, 1965) and Letters of Wallace Stevens (New York, 1966), will be similarly noted as NA and L respectively. The canto in "Credences of Summer" from which a given quotation is cited is also noted in parentheses.
- 2. Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness (New York, 1955), p. 359.
- 3. "How speak trans-human change to human sense?/ Let the example speak until God's grace/ grants the pure spirit the experience." Trans. John Ciardi (New York, 1961), canto 1, 70-72, p. 26.
  - 4. Underhill, p. 367.
  - 5. The Georgics of Vergil, trans. Harold Arnold Hedges (New York, 1959), p. 27.
- 6. The Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, and Frederick Morgan Padelford (Baltimore, 1934), III, p. 90.
  - 7. "Little Gidding" from Four Quartets in The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950 (New York, 1958), p. 138.
- 8. The line has been variously interpreted. From the allusion to Christ and the twelve apostles, it has suggested the twelve months of the year (Isabel G. MacCaffrey, "The Other Side of Silence, 'Credences of Summer' As An Example," Modern Language Quarterly, XXX (September, 1969), 428), a possible echo of the Mother Goose rhyme about four and twenty blackbirds (J. Dennis Huston, "'Credences of Summer': An Analysis," Critics on Wallace Stevens, ed. Peter L. McNamara (Coral Gables, 1972), p. 90), and a Charlemagne surrounded by twelve peers (Helen Hennessy Vendler, On Extended Wings, Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems (Cambridge, 1969), p. 239.
  - 9. (New York, 1963). p. 59.
- 10. Stevens here echoes Milton in Paradise Lost (VI, 834-836): "Full soon! Among them he arriv'd; in his right hand! Grasping ten thousand Thunders ..." Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (Indianapolis, 1957), p. 343.
  - 11. The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross, ed. E. Allison Peers (London, 1953), III, pp. 34-35.
  - 12. The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909-1950, p. 118.

## Figure and Figuration in Stevens' Long Poems

#### LISA STEINMAN

Stevens' poetry is marked by paradoxes and inconsistencies. We find a cycle of imagination traced, in which the poet celebrates the mental activity involved in confronting what is complicated. As Stevens writes to R. L. Latimer, "Everything is complicated; if that were not so, life and poetry and everything else would be a bore" (L 303). The mental activity resulting from the attempt to deal with what cannot be grasped easily is the same activity which enables man not only to place himself in a "world not his own," but also to shape himself. Thus, this mental life is what makes poetry important for Stevens.

In his essays, Stevens discusses a style and a poetics which celebrate the "center" of his imaginative process without stopping that process. The essays proceed by a series of digressions, seeming irrelevancies, misread quotations, and puns. He proposes multiple relationships (between ideas, between images, and between definitions of words) in order to stress the mental activity which he finds central, rather than to build toward any final synthesis. While he grounds his poetics in the world (poetry being man's link with the world), he also insists that poems are not symbolic, and affirms language as process not as artifact. Stevens at times refers to the process of using language as "figuration" (OP 184), and places figures of speech such as analogy at the center of his poetics. By a characteristic play of thought and language, then, his figures of speech become human figures who are made of speech and who speak, thus suggesting the way in which man creates himself through language.

Paradoxically, Stevens finds that the mind is set in motion by a desire for an end, or conclusion. In keeping with this desire, he begins to seek some final statement about the process he elevates. Since the process of creating images or proposing orders is, necessarily, an ongoing activity, there can be no final order: to reach either the source or end of thought would be to end the process which is, itself, Stevens' supreme fiction. Stevens also realizes that there is no way to reach the source of his all-important mental activity. The most perfect image of the process by which poetry is written is still an image, a thing created by the imagination. He plays with this notion in "Three Academic Pieces" when he distinguishes between resemblance, or that which is created by the imagination, and identity, which "is the vanishing point of resemblance" (NA 72). Clearly, the source of imagination would be a vanishing point, a silence or void from which all images of world or self are generated, and to reach this source would be to end the process of poetry.<sup>2</sup> But Stevens knows that such a center is necessarily only a fiction. His paragraph on identity, the vanishing point of resemblance, concludes: "After all, if a man's exact double entered a room, seated himself and spoke the words that were in the man's mind, it would remain a resemblance" (NA 72). All figures of its own activity which the mind proposes to itself are doubles in the same way; that is, such images are still part of an ongoing process of imagination and not outside (or inside) the process. Figure, then, is a device by which the mind contemplates its own activity and objectifies itself, providing a momentary satisfaction of the desire for resemblance.

Stevens' figures are also subject to the process they represent. As he says to Hi Simons, "I say that one's final belief must be in a fiction . . . Yet the statement seems a negation, or, rather, a paradox" (L 370). The qualification with which Stevens ends the above statement is revealing in that it is the paradoxical nature of his supreme fiction—that it is both essential and yet evasive—upon which he must insist, and yet which, once presented, seems to have been negated. The way in which Stevens celebrates his elusive activity of speech, or of figuration, is by backing off from the figures he creates. His ambiguity and the undermining of specific figures becomes an important part of his point.

Perhaps the most characteristic examples of this tightly controlled balance whereby figures are presented and simultaneously undermined occur in the poems "Connoisseur of Chaos" and "A Primitive like an Orb." In "Connoisseur of Chaos" an epigrammatic phrase is used in conjunction with a figure to provide a momentary sense of resolution, although the resolution finally resolves nothing. The poem moves through a series of propositions which threaten to, but never quite, yield to conclusions. As the poem says, "the squirming facts exceed the squamous mind" (CP 215), and, indeed, it is with a connoisseur's pleasure that the poem rejects any syntheses in order to toy with the multitude of propositions set in motion. The format is that of a logical proof: the poem begins with two premises, "A" and "B," and makes clear the object of parody in the parenthetical remark, "pages of illustrations" (CP 215). Thus the rejection of final proofs—"this proves nothing. Just one more truth, one more/ Element in the immense disorder of truths" (CP 216)—clashes with the expectations set up by the form. A similar tension is set up between the form and the casual tone of the speaker, who interjects statements like "if one may say so" (CP 215), and introduces one premise with an off-handed "well" (CP 216).

The plural truths which are offered in the poem are passing moments of temporary resolution which are casually experienced and not meant to endure:

... Now, A

And B are not like statuary, posed For a vista in the Louvre. They are things chalked On the sidewalk so that the pensive man may see.

(CP 216)

The fifth and final section of the poem, however, carries all the weight of a hard-earned conclusion. The iambic pentameter, saved from doggerel by the substitutions of the anapests in the second line of the couplet, adds to

the unobtrusive authority of the lines: "The pensive man . . . He sees that eagle float/ For which the intricate Alps are a single nest" (CP 216). The poem appears to have arrived at an order underlying its disorder, albeit an emotional and tentative order rather than the larger more logical conclusions rejected earlier. Indeed, this is how the final section of "Connoisseur of Chaos" is often read.

But such a reading ignores several ways in which we are distanced from that final figure. First, of course, there is the narrator, whose casual gentlemanly tone has been pronounced throughout the poem: he tells us that "a law of inherent opposites, Of essential unity, is as pleasant as port" (CP 215), for example, or muses to himself, "Well, an old order is a violent one," and, "Now, Al And B are not statuary" (CP 216, emphasis added). The final image of the pensive man is one more proposition offered by the connoisseur of chaos, and, as such, must be taken as casually as the preceding propositions. Moreover, upon examining the final couplet, we find the image is ambiguous: the pensive man does not see a single nest, but rather sees only the eagle who can see a single nest. Furthermore, the phrase in which we are told what the eagle sees maintains an insistence upon the complexity of the Alps even while reporting that the eagle finds a single point of rest. There may be the implication that the eagle ignores complexity in focusing upon his home amid the Alps. While the careful wording of the phrase seems more to insist upon complexity being a possible order in itself (the nest being made out of an entire landscape in the same way that Stevens' elusive process becomes a final belief), either interpretation of the image denies final laws or conclusions. We are given a triangle of disorder (Alps), order (the single nest), and the proposed synthesis of the two in the eagle's perspective. For us, as for the pensive man, however, the three points remain distinct. Finally, we are left with a new arrangement of the propositions with which the poem begins, balanced uneasily in the phrase, "the intricate Alps are a single nest," and merged, at best, only hypothetically in the distant eagle's eye. Both the pensive man and the reader remain earth-bound.

"Connoisseur of Chaos" does set up an interesting series of relationships: the eagle seeing both Alps and nest is seen by the pensive man, while this entire image of man and eagle is seen (and enjoyed) by the connoisseur of the title who, in turn, is the poet's figure for himself. What is emphasized is not only the act of seeing, but the act of creating figures for how one sees. These figures, whether connoisseur, pensive man, or eagle, suggest a resolution—a single nest—without finally or unambiguously offering any real conclusion. In effect, the poem never promises more than a series of projections of the poet's activity. Proclaiming that "we cannot go back" to the "bishops' books [which]/ Resolved the world," the poem offers the following alternative: "And yet relation appears,/ A small relation expanded like the shade/ Of a cloud on sand, a shape on the side of a hill" (CP 215). The perception of relations projects a shape in the same way that a cloud, both fleeting and insubstantial, casts a shadow. The final shape, or figure, presented in "Connoisseur of Chaos" is a similar projection—a figure for

the perception of relationships without resolving those relationships, whether it be the relation between order and disorder, or between figures and their creators.

Stevens' figures are often deliberately blurred or backed away from in order to call attention to the mental or verbal activity from which they arise. Like the figure of the youth as virile poet—a figure which Stevens says is "composed, in the radiant and productive atmosphere" of his essay—many of the figures in the poems are created in and by the process of writing. It is significant, too, that these large presences generated in the act of writing take a human form, As Stevens says, quoting Henri Focillon, "Human consciousness is in perpetual pursuit of a language and a style. To assume consciousness is at once to assume form. Even at levels far below the zone of definition and clarity, forms, measures, and relationships exist. The chief characteristic of the mind is to be constantly describing itself" (NA 46). Stevens suggests that in the course of constant self-description—descriptions which never arrive at a final definition—the mind creates a self.

The self revealed is not the poet as he exists historically, however, but rather an image or figure which stands for the reality and voice created by the words of a text. As an entry from Stevens' journal reads, "There is a perfect rout of characters in every man—and every man is like an actor's trunk . . . But an actor and his trunk are two different things" (L 91). The possible poet is not Stevens but is marking Stevens' consciousness of the voice (and the possibilities suggested by that voice) created in his words. We find, then, one of Stevens' central metaphors is that of the poem as a human figure, albeit an ambiguous figure.

"A Primitive like an Orb," for example, begins with "the essential poem at the center of things" (CP 440), and then proceeds to complicate the definition of such a center:

... It is, and it Is not and, therefore, is. In the instant of speech, The breadth of an accelerando moves, Captives the being, widens—and was there. (CP 440)

Both the existence and the absence of Stevens' central poem—"disposed" so that it can be "re-disposed" (CP 440)—lead to the conclusion that a center does exist, that "therefore, [it] is." We are reminded that this center is embodied (or captured) in speech or motion, and that the presences generated by such activities cannot remain, or be pinned down, without negating their essence. The poem makes clear that its essential poem, which "begats the others" (CP 441), and becomes the giant "patron of origins" (CP 443), has nothing to do with transcendence: "the light/ Of it is not a light apart, up-hill" (CP 441). The essential poem, like the figure which replaces it, does not exist apart from the "lesser poems" in which it is "seen and known" (CP 440), but is another fiction by means of which

Stevens can focus upon that which he finds important—the process by which poems are written. We find also the insistence that meditations upon what cannot be resolved, or the perception of new relationships, are illustrations of what is essential. The poem says, for instance, that clairvoyant men

... and earth and sky, inform Each other by sharp informations, sharp, Free knowledges, secreted until then, Breaches of that which held them fast. It is As if the central poem became the world,

And the world the central poem, . . . (CP 441)

"Knowledges"—and the plural indicates the continual necessity for renewal—make the act of creating fictions into reality, and reality into constantly revised fictions. These insights are "breaches," or gaps, because they involve the dismantling of old views of the world. While such "informations" may "help us face the dumbfoundering abyss! Between us and the object" (CP 437) as we are told in "Saint John and the Back-Ache," they also acknowledge the "breach of reality" (OP 191) out of which they arise. Stevens first mentions such breaches, playfully, in "A Collect of Philosophy," where he finds that "Berkeley rushed into [a] breach [in reality]" (OP 191). By refusing to follow Berkeley's thought further than the preliminary acknowledgment of a problem, Stevens leaves open the gap between the world and our images of it.)

In effect, Stevens locates his center or essential poem in such breaches or gaps, since it is irreconcilable differences which are the source of the mental play he finds central. In the line in "A Primitive like an Orb" where motion "captives the being, widens—and was there" (CP 400), for example, there is the suggestion that something has appeared and disappeared as the sentence in question unfolds. By the time we reach the end of the line, wich its definitive statement about the location of this "something," the object in question has been lost, and the loss is presented physically as occuring in the space indicated by the dash. Having reached an end, and thereby ended the motion which is "the essential poem," the meditation must continue; and does.

We are told, too, that the central poem, made of lesser poems, is

... a poem of
The whole, the essential compact of the parts,
The roundness that pulls tight the final ring.
(CP 442)

If Stevens' lesser poems mark points in his ongoing cycle of the imagination, the above image is one of that cycle as an unbroken circle, like the orb of the title. A whole is thus defined, although the common center (and so the central poem) can only be approached or described by its circumference. "A Primitive like an Orb" then takes the central poem—"the meditation of a principle" (CP 442)—and embodies it in the figure of a giant. The impulses behind the creation of this "prodigious person" (CP 443) are recorded in the two sections wherein the essential poem is transformed into a giant. The poem speaks of "a repose" (CP 442), on the one hand, and of a dazzling motion—"whirroos/ And scintillant sizzlings" (CP 442)—on the other hand. The need for a momentary focus on his elusive center, while retaining not only motion but flamboyance (and in particular flamboyant language) is characteristic: the giant, as the poem goes on to say, is "a definition with an illustration, not/Too exactly labelled" (CP 443). In other words, the figure allows an insistence on what is important in poetry—"a large among the smalls/ Of it" (CP 443)—without ending the meditiation which is the poem. Thus the giant provides a way of underlining the essential poem without, as earlier, losing it.

The way in which the figure becomes a human figure is important as well. The giant, we are told, is "an abstraction given head" (CP 443), which is, first, an abstraction allowed freedom of action; allowed to lead where it will. By a pun, a play of language and thought, then (the very play which Stevens would insist upon, in fact), we are led from the phrase "given head" to the phrase "given arms" (CP 443), and from there on to the body and legs which flesh out the giant. Also, the idiomatic use of the phrase "given head" springs from a stream of association suggesting that the central poem, later called "a daily majesty of meditation" and "too much like thinking to be less than thought" (CP 518), is not arbitrarily linked with the head nor with the human form. Furthermore, having evolved this central figure, the poem returns to "the clairvoyant men . . .! The lover, the believer and the poet" (CP 441), mentioned earlier as those who celebrate the central poem, and connects them with the giant, or with the poem as human, by setting them in motion:

That's it. The lover writes, the believer hears, The poet mumbles and the painter sees, Each one . . .

[part of] the giant of nothingness, each one And the giant ever changing, living in change. (CP 443)

Both of the poems examined are representative of Stevens' use of figure. His figures are the embodiment and affirmation of the process of writing. Their elusiveness stems from the nature of that which they represent, a process not easily symbolized, in which the figures participate. Yet the

myth-like giants and men, even as they disappear or are blurred, underline the presence and activity, the exhilaration, which is the shifting ground on which poetry rests, for Stevens, and the closest we can come to that from which poetry springs.

#### NOTES

- 1. Quotations from Stevens' works will be cited as follows:
- (CP) The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (1954; rpt. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).
- (OP) Opus Posthumous, ed. Samuel French Morse (1957; rpt. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).
- (NA) The Necessary Angel (New York: Vintage Books, 1951).
- (L) Letters of Wallace Stevens, ed. Holly Stevens (1966; rpt. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).
- 2. See Joseph Riddel's "Stevens on Imagination: The Point of Departure" in *The Quest for Imagination: Essays on Twentieth-Century Aesthetic Criticism,* ed. C.B. Hardison, Jr. (Cleveland, Ohio: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1971).

# Provisional Romanticism in "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" 1

### GEORGE BORNSTEIN

 $W^{\text{allace Stevens' most ambitious work, which he regarded as an}$ imaginative high-water mark, 2 Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, epitomizes the transformation of old to "new romanticism" so central to his mature career. For him new romanticism involved a radical provisionalizing of the representation of imaginative mental action in high romantic lyrics. He sought to create that provisionality through fictions which gave the illusion of miming imaginative activity but which under careful scrutiny collapsed back on themselves and so threw the reader into a continuing confrontation with experience. His poems thus became processes more than products. To that end he used three favorite devices: first, he distorted his syntax with interrogatives or conditionals that behave as though they were assertions; second, he both exalted and undermined the status of his own images; and finally, he presented imaginative mental action only at a remove, giving us one mind's apprehensions of another's imaginative acts. Those devices supported favorite themes like cyclical change and mental violence in the lovers' quarrel between imagination and world.4

In It Must Give Pleasure,<sup>5</sup> the third part of Notes, Stevens extends the province of both romantic and modern poetry by his treatment of mind, image, and world. The critique of Canon Aspirin as flawed but imaginative man, a sort of major man manque, leads the speaker to a startling attempt to fuse with an angelic image of his own creation. The fusion would result neither in escape into art nor in metamorphosis into a Yeatsian figure of idealized passion, but rather in achievement of a simple and elusive self-identity without self-consciousness. That transformation—which Stevens renders characteristically provisional—would complete one line of post-romantic high valuation of images. He follows it with an equally remarkable effort to turn the world itself into an image of the inamorata for the transformed poet, a green and fluent mundo revolving in crystal. For these twin enterprises Stevens enlisted his full array of provisionalizing devices. His accomplishment embodies itself as much in modes of mental action as in overt themes.

The three Canon Aspirin cantos (V-VII) begin with qualified praise and latent criticism, proceed to the magnificent force of his imagination, and end with a shattering critique. His comic name itself suggests both incongruity and inadequacy, as though all we needed were little white tablets. His title implies allegiance to the sort of outworn mythology proscribed in the opening poem of *Notes*, just as the implicit celibacy of his canonical status contrasts unfavorably with the immediately preceding marriage hymn of the great captain and Bawda. The canon has only his widowed sister. His praise of her makes us wonder about him, for its terms

can be construed both positively and negatively. Positively, her "sensible ecstasy" might imply an anti-transcendent bliss, her "poverty" an adherence to reality fortified by her rejection of dreams, her fighting off "the barest phrase" a desire to catch from the unreasoning moment its unreasoning, and her demand of sleep solely for the children's sake an admirable human feeling.6 But, negatively, sensible ecstasy might also indicate faintheartedness, poverty an absence of reality, rejecting dreams an uncomfortable affinity with Mrs. Alfred Uruguay, fighting off the barest phrase a refusal of accurate song, and demanding only the unmuddled self of sleep a denial of the imaginative power of dream. As Stevens explained in a letter, "His sister has never explored anything at all and shrinks from doing so." (LWS 445) Palm for palm, poem V leaves the reader where he began, and the following lyrics exploit first the positive and then the negative reverberations of the canon's celebration of his sister.

Poem VI depicts the canon at midnight, the time when, like a Yeatsian figure of passion or mood, major man comes (CP 388). But he does not speak. Characteristically, Stevens creates a separate speaker standing between the imaginative canon and the reader. Stevens filters the canon's mental action through the speaker's intervening consciousness, thus presenting a meditation by one mind (the speaker's) on the imaginative act of another (the canon's). Having reached that romantic limit beyond which "fact could not progress as fact," the canon reimagines the world, projecting it from "the very material of his mind." At this point he enters his own vision, fusing with the angel ("so that he was the ascending wings he saw") in its vertical movement upwards toward the stars and downwards to the children's bed. Full of "huge pathetic force" capable of producing what the last poem will call "the fiction that results from feeling" he reaches a second limit, beyond which "thought could not progress as thought." When faced with the limit of fact, he had moved into thought. When faced with the limit of thought, he chooses not to pass beyond but to include it in his vision—"It was not a choice/ Between, but of." Here Stevens breaks off the account. We do not see the canon choose in the same way we saw him become an angel; Stevens simply says that he chose and ends instead with the object of choice, the "amassing harmony."

Yet the repetition of "choose" and its variants four times in three lines suggests a flaw in the canon, which the next poem drastically exposes. The canon exercises his will too consciously. He lacks the negative capability of the ignorant man and foists his conceptions on the world: "He imposes orders as he thinks of them." He has the wrong idea of order, and it issues not in imaginative poetry but in reasonable politics. In contrast, the speaker asserts that "to impose is not! To discover" and breaks into a chant of desperate yearning:

To discover an order as of A season, to discover summer and know it, To discover winter and know it well, to find,

Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all, Out of nothing to have come on major weather,

It is possible, possible, possible. It must Be possible. (CP 403-404)

That voices Stevens' great quest and his equal doubt. He hopes to win from cyclical change a knowledge of summery imagination and wintry reality, to perceive them in a climate of major weather appropriate to major man, and to discover rather than impose the objects of his knowledge in a right ignorance. The real will come "like a beast disgorged" to indicate the presence of fortuitous imaginative violence. The concluding apostrophe to the angel—a creation of the speaker's own powers—triggers the daring assertion of poem VIII, the possible fiction that the poet can come upon major weather in his own poetry through identification with his own images of triumphant perception.

Stevens constructs poem VIII to make metamorphosis into the angel both possible and provisional. Last seen in the prologue and a few fleeting apparitions, the "I" now emerges into dominance:

What am I to believe? If the angel in his cloud, Serenely gazing at the violent abyss, Plucks on his strings to pluck abysmal glory,

Leaps downward through evening's revelations, and On his spredden wings, needs nothing but deep space, Forgets the gold centre, the golden destiny,

Grows warm in the motionless motion of his flight, Am I that imagine this angel less satisfied? Are the wings his, the lapis-haunted air?

Is it he or is it I that experience this? Is it I then that keep saying there is an hour, Filled with expressible bliss, in which I have

No need, am happy, forget need's golden hand, Am satisfied without solacing majesty, And if there is an hour there is a day,

There is a month, a year, there is a time In which majesty is a mirror of the self: I have not but I am and as I am, I am.

These external regions, what do we fill them with Except reflections, the escapades of death, Cinderella fulfilling herself beneath the roof?

(CP 404-405)

The poem heroically collapses two consciousnesses into one as the speaker identifies with his own created image of the angel. He becomes the angel, as though the pensive man of "Connoisseur of Chaos" were to become the eagle. The angel is both artist playing and instrument and image of existential self-sufficiency, moving, like the pigeons of "Sunday Morning," downward on extended wings. The speaker chooses the key word "satisfied" in line 8, for like all Stevens' questers he seeks what will suffice. And what suffices is pure being, free from irritable reaching after possession and imposition. The self achieves majesty in dispossession, not just of external encumbrance but of its own self-consciousness and need. It can say: I have not but I am, and as I am I am.

Yet the experience remains conditional. Stevens casts the entire poem into interrogatives, so that it can in nothing lieth since it nothing affirmeth. We do not know what the speaker should believe. Typically, Stevens' interrogatives turn into pseudo-assertions pretending to mimic mental action. As his opening description of an angel (lines 1-7) proceeds, the angel surpasses his origin in a conditional ("If . . .") within an interrogative and seems to take on independent existence. The long question of lines 11-18 loses its interrogative status altogether ("Is it I then that ...?") as Stevens suppresses the final question mark to intensify the seeming realization of lines 16-18. He expands the moment Satan's watch fiends cannot find into an hour, a day, a month, a year, and an all-embracing "time." The verb pattern of the poem supports the drive to ontological independence, moving from the sequence gazing-plucks-leaps-needs-forgets-grows into a constellation of "am" and "is." The triumphant "as I am, I am" in fact belongs to a complex interrogative conditional. The speaker has become so caught up in the reality of his syntax that he generates vision out of its provisional components. So he has in Stevens before, but this time he identifies with the image of his own creation and becomes the necessary and contented angel of his own devising in a provisional transubstantiation into major man.

The final tercet has sparked diverse interpretations, construing it alternately as dismissal of bondage to space and time now that the speaker has fused with his own image or as disparagement of the vision itself which has already ceased to suffice. On the one hand Harold Bloom argues: "In that heroic integration, what is outside the self can be dismissed without fear of solipsistic self-absorption, for the self has joined major man."7 On the other, Helen Vendler contends that the poem "after a heroic expansion, turns despairingly on the mind's ramifying extrapolations and evasions, and ends in disgust.... Cinderella's finery returns to rags as the mind turns on its own self-adorning 'escapades.'"8 Both readings seem to me extreme, for "these" (instead of "those," as Vendler notes) seems to locate the speaker within the regions of death and thus to inhibit Bloom's claims, while Cinderella's escapades did fulfill themselves externally and hence suggest the poet's resignation rather than the disgust posited by Vendler. Further, the speaker himself qualifies the tercet by restoring the interrogative he had repressed as the end of the previous vision. But the

tercet's significance lies as much in its contribution to mental action as in its doctrinal formulation. However we interpret it, the tercet embodies a movement back out from identification with the angel and toward a more detached verdict, whether positive or negative. The speaker moves from opening description of the putative angel to union with it and then to an evaluation of the experience. This follows the development of a Greater Romantic Lyric, that romantic genre including poems like Coleridge's "Eolian Harp," Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," or Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" in which mind interacts with an object in a pattern of description-vision-evaluation, often matched by other tripartite patterns (like here-there-here, now-then-now, or out-in-out).9 But Stevens' lyric proceeds wholly by conditionals and interrogatives which create only the illusion of an actually developing action. His genius has transformed the structure of a Greater Romantic Lyric into a poem of pure provisionality.

Stevens followed his provisional evolutions of major man, and of union with his own image of the angel, with improvisation of a concluding image of the world in the final poem of *It Must Give Pleasure*. He returned to that enterprise a few years later in a passage of the lecture "Imagination as Value" which illuminates the end of *Notes*:

The world is no longer an extraneous object, full of other extraneous objects, but an image. In the last analysis, it is with this image of the world that we are vitally concerned. We should not say, however, that the chief object of the imagination is to produce such an image. Among so many objects, it would be the merest improvisation to say of one, even though it is one with which we are vitally concerned, that it is the chief. The next step would be to assert that a particular image was the chief image. Again, it would be the merest improvisation to say of any image of the world, even though it was an image with which a vast accumulation of imaginations had been content, that it was the chief image. The imagination itself would not remain content with it nor allow us to do so. It is the irrepressible revolutionist. 10

The prose passage mirrors the techniques of the poetry, in which Stevens discusses the image and evolves it even while denying the validity of his extrapolations. He triply qualifies his statements through subjunctives ("it would be"), adjectives ("merest"), and choice of noun ("improvisation"), which he applies to the notions both that imagination's chief function is to provide an image of the world and that there can be a chief image of the world. In its ceaseless need to change and to return to reality, imagination as revolutionist precludes such status for the image. And yet the whole discussion suggests its opposite, for Stevens dwells almost lovingly on the chief image he is rejecting. The reader wonders whether such an image might not exist after all, and whether it might not itself be a kind of supreme fiction. *Notes* ends with the improvisation of an image of the world in such a way as to suggest its temporary suzerainty and ultimate inadequacy.

Poem X opens with an address to the "fat girl":

Fat girl, terrestrial, my summer, my night, How is it I find you in difference, see you there In a moving contour, a change not quite completed? (CP 406)

Stevens calls the fat girl "terrestrial" because she is an image of the earth. Yet he never succeeds in fully tracing her lineaments. He begins by addressing her in an interrogative and calling her "a change not quite completed." Such difficulties in apprehension run throughout the poem, as the speaker finds the fat girl successively "an aberration," an executor of "evasions," a "phantom," and an "irrational/ Distortion." Those epithets clearly keep his formulations provisional, while their context enacts the separate stages of poetic composition. As Frank Doggett was the first to show, "He is expressing in his conclusion, then, the genesis of a poem from the imagination of it pictured in procreant terms ('Fat girl, terrestrial, my summer, my night') through the evasions and transformations of its conception, with the arduous work of composition ('Bent over work, anxious, content, alone'), to the realization of his conception in language (calling it by name), when it is fixed in the crystal of a poem."11 The poem thus recapitulates the process of its own creation, which, as it has since the romantics, serves as paradigm for imaginative action generally.

The process culminates in the last two tercets:

They will get it straight one day at the Sorbonne. We shall return at twilight from the lecture Pleased that the irrational is rational,

Until flicked by feeling, in a gildered street, I call you by name, my green, my fluent mundo. You will have stopped revolving except in crystal.

(CP 406-407)

The academic abstractions about the irrational at the Sorbonne both amuse and instruct; however, they fail to change. They temporarily suffice the mind, but instead of catching from the irrational moment its unreasoning they reason about it with a later reason, to adopt the language of the first poem in *It Must Give Pleasure*. They only serve until the creative moment itself, when the poet tries to name his paramour. Green is Stevens' word for reality and mundo for the world transformed by imagination. <sup>12</sup> By bringing the two terms together he indicates a sacramental naming, a marriage of reality and imagination in which he at last possesses the fat girl within the vital boundary, in the mind.

At that point she "will have stopped revolving except in crystal." In that rich line Stevens has cunningly wrought his crystal into provisional process rather than final product. To begin with, the entire line is provisional,

occurring after a conditional ("Until") in an imagined future and so twice removed from permanence. "Revolving" doubles the duplicity, for it applies both to the earth (which revolves) and, in Stevens' usage, to the mind. He casually slipped into the latter sense in a letter about the fat girl: "The fat girl is the earth: what the politicians now-a-days are calling the globe, which somehow, as it revolves in their minds . . . " (LWS 426) Such usage was implicit in his idea of imagination, described in the lecture as "the irrepressible revolutionist" both because it overthrows and because it revolves. But Stevens surpasses himself in taking the word "crystal," an image of hardness and permanence, and transforming it into an icon of fluency and change. Most critics rightly identify crystal with poetry, but its meanings extend beyond that. The clearness of crystal refracts the light of imagination. Stevens uses crystal thus in his poems frequently, and he attaches it particularly to art, to Heaven, to creation out of the self, and, most significantly to mind. His late poem "The Sail of Ulysses" internalizes the hero's apprehension of the world in a matching of revolutions "In which the world goes round and round/ In the crystal atmospheres of the mind." (OP 102) In short, crystal denotes mind, which for Stevens is always active. Arresting of the fat girl's motion thus lapses back into provisionality both poetically and personally. For her to stop revolving except in crystal is for her to continue turning. She will do so in the poem because the poem is provisional and in the mind because imagination is an irrepressible revolutionist. She went on revolving in Stevens' own art and life for the many remaining and productive years of his career.

#### NOTES

- 1. A longer version of this analysis of Notes forms part of the chapter on Stevens in my study of Transformations of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens, forthcoming from University of Chicago Press.
- 2. See Letters of Wallace Stevens, ed. Holly Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 636, hereafter cited as LWS. There Stevens describes his development from Notes to Credences of Summer to The Auroras of Autumn as movement from an "imaginative period" to "as close to the ordinary, the commonplace, and ugly as it is possible for a poet to get."
- 3. There is an excellent account of Stevens' concept of the "new romantic" in A. Walton Litz, Introspective Voyager: the Poetic Development of Wallace Stevens (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 190-92.
- 4. In emphasizing those elements this brief discussion diverges from the many full-scale expositions of Notes, of which I have found particularly helpful those in Joseph N. Riddel, The Clairvoyant Eye: the Poetry and Poetics of Wallace Stevens (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965). pp. 165-85; Frank Doggett, Stevens' Poetry of Thought (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1966), pp. 98-119; Helen Vendler, On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 168-85; and Harold Bloom in Wallace Stevens: a Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Marie Borroff (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), pp. 76-95.
- 5. Stevens here may be using "pleasure" in its special romantic and post-romantic sense, which has been explored by Lionel Trilling in his essay "The Fate of Pleasure" (1963), collected in Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning (New York: Viking Press, 1968), pp. 57-87. Trilling writes: "[Wordsworth] speaks of 'the grand elementary principle of pleasure,' which is to say, pleasure not as mere charm or amenity but as the object of an instinct, of what Freud . . . was later to call a drive." (p. 60)
  - 6. The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), pp. 401-02. Hereafter cited as CP.
  - 7. Bloom, ed. Borroff, p. 94.
  - 8. Vendler, pp. 198, 200.

- 9. Meyer Abrams first proposed the term in his "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle, ed. Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965). I have suggested both modifications of the definition and several applications to modern poetry in Transformations of Romanticism.
- 10. The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination (New York: Vintage Books, n.d.), pp. 151-152; hereafter cited as NA.
  - 11. Doggett, p. 119.
- 12. Cf. NA 57-58: "It is the  $\it mundo$  of the imagination in which the imagination man delights and not the gaunt world of the reason."

## Stevens' "Human Arrangement"

### JOHN N. SERIO

In Wallace Stevens' poetry, an agreement with reality constitutes also an agreement with imagination. He demonstrates in "Credences of Summer," for example, that approaching one of the limits of reality is itself an imaginative activity. As he says in one of his letters:

One of the approaches to fiction is by way of its opposite: reality, the truth, the thing observed, the purity of the eye. The more exquisite the thing seen, the more exquisite the thing unseen. Eventually there is a state at which any approach becomes the actual observation of the thing approached. Nothing mystical is even for a moment intended.

(LWS 444)

Central to Stevens' poetics, however, is that an accord with imagination is also an accord with reality. One of the distinctive features about Stevens is that he accepts as a reality one's inescapably fictive world. Consequently, his last phase, the building of a fictive edifice in which to dwell through a final accord with imagination, though seemingly removed from the real by its very abstractness, becomes merely another version of a final accord with reality. As he writes in "Crude Foyer," we are "content,! At last, there, when it turns out to be here" (CP 305).

This complex reversal of the imagined and the real can be demonstrated by examining a short poem entitled "Human Arrangement" (CP 363), for the imagined edifice in the sky, though unreal, becomes the center of transformations that are real. The poem opens with a heavy sense of the outer world smothering the life within the persona:

Place-bound and time-bound in evening rain And bound by a sound which does not change,

Except that it begins and ends, Begins again and ends again—

Rain without change within or from Without.

The repetition in the first stanza of "bound" three times underscores the sense of containment binding the persona. Out of this scene, however, appears a fantastic vision:

### In this place and in this time

And in this sound, which do not change, In which the rain is all one thing,

In the sky, an imagined, wooden chair Is the clear-point of an edifice,

Forced up from nothing, evening's chair, Blue-strutted curule, true—unreal,

The centre of transformations that Transform for transformation's self,

In a glitter that is a life, a gold That is a being, a will, a fate.

Though imaginative—"an imagined, wooden chair"—and though fictive—"unreal"—this visionary dwelling—"an edifice . . . evening's chair"—becomes the center of changes that transfigure the bleak scene into a gaiety: "a glitter that is a life, a gold! That is a being . . ." Out of nothing, the imagination has come upon major weather: it has discovered the real in the imagined. The imaginative act of creating an edifice in the sky, in other words, expresses a sense of life and being noticeably absent from the temporally and spatially locked setting of the opening stanzas. The imagery of the poem also supports this reversal of the imagined and the real. That which seems to be real in the opening images is rendered in abstract generalities ("Place-bound and time-bound in evening rain! And bound by a sound which does not change") while that which appears to be fantastic is given in particular images ("an imagined, wooden chair . . . Bluestrutted curule, true").

Stevens expresses in "Human Arrangement" the central importance of the imagination's non-geography to the world's geography, for the "glitter that is a life, a gold/ That is a being" is not "there," absent from the scene, but "here," in this time and in this place and in this sound, which have, surprisingly, changed. That which at first appears fictively abstract—an imagined edifice in the sky—though seemingly unreal, becomes the very source of what is real in the poem. An accord with imagination has become an accord with reality.

## Poet in a Grey Business Suit: Glimpses of Stevens at the Office

#### PETER A. BRAZEAU

The following are simply a series of snapshots of Wallace Stevens at the office. They are brief excerpts from the detailed reminiscences of his colleagues which form part of a nearly completed oral history. That biography will be a full scale portrait of Stevens, drawn from the memories of those who knew him as poet, business executive, friend or relative.

Early in 1916, Stevens joined the recently organized Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. For nearly four decades, his primary responsibility at the company was to oversee bond claims. John Ladish, who worked in Stevens' department for many years, explains that the department's function was "to handle claims presented under fidelity as well as surety bonds." By the time Ladish was hired in 1924, Stevens "didn't handle any fidelity," having delegated that area to his assistant. Stevens took "charge of the surety claims." As his staff grew, he concerned himself with these contract cases, "road paving and construction, and so forth." Working on these claims "requires a knowledge of a great many legal points and also ... a judgement as to whether the company should complete (construction) or get someone else to do it. They're usually for sizeable amounts." To be the successful claims lawyer Stevens was, his long-time associate Manning Heard observes, "You have to be highly practical, realistic, you have to watch a dollar because you could throw money away handling surety claims like nobody's business."

Most of Stevens' day, Ladish recalls, was spent on his files. To Hale Anderson, a lawyer who worked near Stevens' first-floor office, "It was perhaps here that, from a visual standpoint, Stevens was quite remarkable. Everyday a load of these files, several feet high in total, would be placed on his desk. . . . And he would go through them, peruse his last notations and decide whether something had to be done or whether to leave it to the people in the field." After he had finished, "he would simply throw the file on the floor and leave it to the runner to pick up the accumulation at the end of the day."

Anderson, like many colleagues, remembers "the absolutely methodical pace at which he worked." Stevens would occasionally take a break from his routine during the day, showing a colleague a painting or some imported tea that had come in. Manning Heard recalls: "He would go at great lengths to have any particular book he liked bound up. . . . Many of them he'd show me when he got them from New York. They'd be sent to the office; he'd call me (in). . . . He was very proud of those."

Arthur Park, who worked in surety claims on the West Coast for Stevens, notes that in his business dealings Stevens was a man "of high integrity":

I was taught by him that if there was any doubt of the validity of a claim being presented against The Hartford to always resolve that doubt in favor of the person making the claim instead of the company ... He treated claimants the same, whether it was (a large corporation) as the insured or some little organization down the corner. We know that business is not always done that way. So a broker who handled a claim for a very large insured would occasionally go over Mr. Stevens' head ... to one of the directors or even the president and get approval to pay the claim. And I know that in those instances Mr. Stevens was very incensed.

Colleagues often recall Stevens' bluntness in making his feelings known in no uncertain terms. Manning Heard's recollection of his first association with Stevens dramatizes an instance of this.

The Hartford had bonded a contract for the construction of a very large diesel engine . . . As I recall, the total amount of the bond was in excess of a million dollars, which in those days (early '30's) was a very substantial sum of money. And the claim by the government . . . was for the full penalty of the bond because the contractor had completely failed in the construction. Now The Hartford had reinsured its liability . . . with several other companies, and Mr. Stevens insisted that representatives of the other companies participate in all the discussions. I was one of the attorneys ... and we started the negotiations . . . We'd meet in Washington and get up to a point where we could go no further . . . Mr. Stevens would go back to Hartford . . . That went on . . . for guite a number of months. Finally, between our visits, Mr. Stevens went on a diet . . . You wouldn't recognize him . . . His clothes looked actually like a sock on a rooster . . . He looked awful. It affected his disposition in the same way. (The government lawyer) was a typical bureaucratic counsel ... and he got to be, in many respects, rather exasperating. And in one of the conversations, it was after Mr. Stevens was on a diet and he wasn't in too good a humor anyway, he called (the lawyer) a silly, old fool. (The lawyer) got up, and he said, "I refuse to have any further conversations with this gentleman . . . As far as I'm concerned, as long as he participates, our conversations leading to the settlement of this case are closed . . . This started a most peculiar and amusing arrangement. Mr. Stevens would stay in a Washington hotel and we ... would go meet with (the lawyer).

It is revealing that, in hiring Heard some months later, he cautioned this young claim man who eventually became board chairman: "He said, 'If you accept it (the job), never expect to become an officer of the company because you never will' because he had never been made an officer and he was one of the oldest employees of the company." Evidently, Stevens thought his chances of becoming an officer were slim just months before he

was promoted in February, 1934.

The few company men with whom Stevens socialized were, for the most part, younger men who had worked for him at some time. There was an element of convenience for Stevens in these friendships since he did not drive. Anthony Sigmans, whom Stevens hired in the mid-30's and who became deeply attached to Stevens, recalls the occasional trips, sometimes a week-end long, which Stevens might take with his "boys":

The longest trip was when we went up to New York State. We went up to Glens Falls, up Fort Ticonderoga, all around there...had a good time... I would say that was around '35, '36... We had a happy time on that trip, eating, and sightseeing, and chewing the fat. When we got up in the '40's, it was purely New York occasionally, particularly if he wanted to bring a case of wine home. We'd pick up the French wine and get it in the basement door late at night. He didn't want Mrs. Stevens to know. And then the Canoe Club innumerable times.

Stevens joined this exclusive men's luncheon club on the banks of the Connecticut River in 1948. He had often been a guest in preceeding years, however, since Ralph Mullens, his assistant in charge of fidelity claims, had joined in 1933. Sigmans recalls that Stevens "loved that... because he could sit around and listen to other fellows crack jokes, and he always enjoyed a joke, and the dirtier the better, in a sense, and have a few drinks. The surroundings were rather crude ... He always paid for everything."

J. T. Hohmann, a long-time member of the Hartford Canoe Club when Stevens joined, notes that raillery was characteristic of the members. "There weren't any inhibitions. You might get needled as a guest, even. Many a time, I've warned my guest, 'You can expect anything from anybody over there'." This type of humor seems to have been a characteristic of Stevens' style at the office, as well. Those who enjoyed Stevens' humor found this "suave sarcasm," as Arthur Park defines it, pleasant. But Sigmans adds that "a lot of people misconstrued that type of ... comment." In part, this was the result of his dead-pan delivery; people were not always aware that he was kidding. Arthur Polley, a fellow vice president, thought that "Wallace, basically, was a great kidder. In his astute way, he'd say something to you and kid you. And you'd wake up about the next noon that you'd been kidded." It is important to keep Stevens' style of dead-pan bantering in mind when interpreting anecdotes about Stevens.

In his position at the insurance company, Stevens was, as in his private life, an assiduous correspondent. Because part of Charles O'Dowd's work for years entailed reviewing completed contract claims, he saw much of Stevens' correspondence. He, like many others at the company, enjoyed Stevens' style:

Some of the time I'd make copies of them, they were so beautifully written ... Sometimes I'd run across a word that struck me that it might be out of place. It didn't quite seem to fit into what he was trying

to say. And I would do exactly what he used to do all the time: go out into the law library and get Webster's big dictionary ... And sure enough, it (the word) was right on the spot ... You found it eventually; maybe it was the tenth or twelfth meaning, but it would be exactly the word that fitted ... He would go after a precise even though remote meaning.

This precision was often coupled with a terse quality that could draw attention. John Ladish recalls an instance involving one of Stevens' staff assigned to check on a claim in the field. The man "had checked into it very thoroughly, and wrote Mr. Stevens a two-page letter. And in it he requested that he be allowed to draw a draft and pay the particular claim. So Mr. Stevens . . . wrote a letter to him . . . (with) one word, pay."

There could, at times, be a decidedly literary flavor to Stevens' replies, with references to short stories by Chekov or novels from another century. O'Dowd's comment is perhaps typical of the admiration with which his colleagues mention this side of his writing: "His letters were as clear and precise as his poetry was obtuse."

Occasionally, the subject of his poetry would come up in Stevens' conversations with his colleagues. O'Dowd recalls his experience:

We were sitting in his office one day, talking ... I said, "Mr. Stevens, I just can't understand your stuff." ... He said, "Charlie, it isn't necessary that you understand my poetry or any poetry. It's only necessary that the writer understand it ... I've got paintings hanging in my house ... and I don't understand them, but that isn't necessary. I think they're very beautiful. What the painter was trying to say, I don't know; I don't understand it. But it isn't necessary that I understand it. It isn't necessary for you or anybody else to understand my poetry. I understand it; that's all that's necessary.

The question of meaning was persistent. A colleague might find he had turned into a dead end if the conversation took that direction. Hale Anderson remembers:

a long walk with him one evening after work out Farmington Avenue when I told him that I had gotten hands on some of his poetry, and I was absolutely lost . . . Could or would he give me any clue or key that would enable me to understand his writing? And we walked several paces . . . then with a combination chuckle and snort, he said, "Oh, forget it; you're much too literal minded" . . . This is something of which Mr. Stevens was capable; he could be very abrupt.

He could also, though perhaps less often, be more patient and instructive. Richard Sunbury was a young man toward whom Stevens showed a fatherly interest in the early Thirties, helping him through difficult financial and family matters, encouraging him in his legal studies. Sunbury

recalls, with fondness, many conversations with Stevens, some of which dealt with poetry:

He'd read me things, sometimes. "How does that sound to you." And I'd say, "It sounds beautiful to me; tell me what it means." And he would do that. He'd say, "essentially it means this."... He would show me how a thing could be phrased, so that it would mean so much more in ... fewer words. Now up to that time I had small acquaintance with poetry ... When we used to talk I'd say, What about scanning and all that sort of thing." He'd say, "Richard, scanning doesn't mean a thing ... It's what you feel, and what you sense, and how you say it."

## Current Bibliography

Bertholf, Robert J. "Parables and Wallace Stevens' 'Esthetique du Mal.'" ELH, XLII (Winter 1975), 669-689.

The poem proposes itself as a projection of possible ways of describing evil, pain and mal. It is as if Stevens entered an area of experience where all notions of mal were alive at once, and wrote out of that area in an attempt to reduce the abstractions of the human condition to primary findings of fact. In doing this he used the tested technique of parable writing, which had the advantage of giving out information without demanding stark belief; and each part of the poem entertains a version of evil or mal.

Bertholf, Robert J. "Renewing the Set: Wallace Stevens' 'The Auroras of Autumn.'" Ball State University Forum, XVII (Spring 1976), 37-45.

WS' poems follow the pattern of the mythic and Christian world's need to mend the split between the sacred and the profane, for him, imagination and reality. The pattern of breakage, followed by attempts at repair through ritual remains intact in both "Credences" and "The Auroras." In "The Auroras," the summer's efforts toward order have fallen into disrepair, and the poet again meets the break with the energies of imagination and reality. The ritual works to join the contending forces of mind and world for the common good.

Bertholf, Robert J. "Shelley, Stevens and Robert Duncan: The Poetry of Approximations." in Artful Thunder: Versions of the Romantic Tradition in American Literature; In Honor of Howard P. Vincent. Edited by Robert J. DeMott and Sanford E. Marovitz. (Kent State University Press, 1975), 269-299.

By indirection, symbolic formulas, and evocation, the presence of the "Holy," or Rudolf Otto's Numen, can be transferred into the visibility of language. In this designation, Otto focuses on one of the principal situations in the poetry of Shelley, Stevens and Duncan. All three poets tend toward illuminated visions, which demand a profusion of approximate images and statements and where the process of presentation qualifies as a significant portion of the poem's meaning.

Bloom, Harold. "Poetic Crossing: Rhetoric and Psychology." The Georgia Review, XXX (Fall 1976), 495-524.

"Domination of Black" is mapped as a tropological pattern and a technique for the antithetical mapping of poems is suggested to bring us closer to the cognitive workings of poetry. The tropes tend to assume three degrees of pathos which come together in 'crossings' of Election (between irony and synechdoche), Solipsism (between metonymy and hyperbole), and Identification (between metaphor and metalepsis, or sublimation and introjection). In "Dominations" these crossings occur respectively in the three stanzas.

Boroff, Marie. "Wallace Stevens's World of Words, Part I." Modern Philology, LXXIV (August 1976), 42-66.

Part of the distinctive character of WS' language has to do with its diversity of sources. If we wish to move toward a more informed

understanding of WS' exploitation of the resources of English diction, it will be helpful to have an account of these resources, one in which the various kinds of words available to the poet to use in their established values, or modify as his creative bias directs, are systematically described.

Brown, Susan Weston. "The Artist as Guitarist: Stevens and Picasso." Criticism, XVII (Spring 1975), 111-120.

The influence of Picasso, so strongly suggested in the title of "The Man with the Blue Guitar" and indirectly in "The Irrational Element in Poetry," comes less from any specific painting by Picasso than from comments by and about him in the 1935 issue of Cahiers d'Art.

Cohen, Sandy. "A Calculus of the Cycle: Wallace Stevens' 'Credences of Summer,' An Alternate View." Ball State University Forum, XVII (Spring 1976), 31-36.

In "Credences," WS sets out to understand the cycle of nature. Questioning various analytical devices, he employs the 'calculus' method: random isolation and minute observation of a very small part of the cycle, a summer day, which is then replaced in its context.

Coyle, Beverly. "An Anchorage of Thought: Defining the Role of Aphorism in Wallace Stevens' Poetry." PMLA, XCI (March 1976), 206-221.

In his Journal, WS made a connection between his love of aphoristic expression and his theory of human perception of reality as a perception of fragments, never the whole. Exploring the nature and variety of his aphorisms as a manifestation of this concept is important to an understanding of the poetry.

Dale, Kathleen A. "Extensions: Beyond Resemblance and the Pleasure Principle in Wallace Stevens' Supreme Fiction." Boundary 2, IV (Fall 1975), 255-273.

Resemblance may well be an innate human function, affording some degree of pleasure as Freud maintains. WS admits as much and often used it in his poetry. But, like Nietzsche, Stevens also seems to believe in a complementary activity—that of breaking up ordered connections—and with it the impulse toward joy and power that goes beyond the pleasure principle of which Freud spoke.

Doggett, Frank. "Stevens on the Genesis of a Poem." Contemporary Literature, XVI (Autumn 1975), 463-477.

To WS, poetic creation included both conscious craftsmanship and unconscious improvisation. The praise of spontaneous creativity in "The Creation of Sound" reflects the poet's pleasure in improvisation. The involuntary imagination that makes improvisation possible is not wholly the poet's own but may be part of a larger, much more potent imagination, or collective unconscious. It is the poet's business to try to get at this kind of imagination.

Dotterer, Ronald L. "Illusory Form in Wallace Stevens' The Comedian as the Letter C." Susquehanna University Studies, X (June 1976), 85-92.

Critics from Blackmur to Vendler have tended to emphasize the rhetorical and 'fantastic' language of "The Comedian," as being ingenuity for its own sake. But Crispin's voyage is more than this, it is the earliest manifestation of the voyage WS wishes to pursue poetically in almost all his major poems: a rejection of the complacent and comfortable, no longer adequate, and an affirmation of "things as they really are."

Dougherty, Adelyn, "Structures of Sound in Wallace Stevens' Farewell to Florida," Texas Studies in Language and Literature, XVI (Winter 1975). 755-764.

Qualitative sound patterning in Stevens' poetry serves on the higher levels of the structure to support the reference, whether by emphasis, extension, clarification, or definition. In "Farewell," he achieves an interesting variation in this pattern—the cluster of images identified and emphasized by the prosodic structure suggests an ironic contradiction to the speaker's statement of rejection and anticipation. Additionally, below the surface, he composes intricate and subtle patterns of sound which are often entirely independent of the structure of meaning, but contribute significantly to the total effect of the poem as art.

Grant, J. K. "'Gold Bugs in Blue Meadows': The 'Decadent' Poetry of Wallace Stevens." Durham University Journal, LXVIII (December 1975), 8-14.

Early critics Munson and Winters commented on the 'decadent' qualities, the extremely rich surface, of the poems of Harmonium but WS' own later poetry has transformed these early pieces to such an extent that their opaque surfaces assume a transparency which enables us to reread many of them with enhanced understanding. The hedonism, dandyism, aestheticism of the early work is converted by the developed poetry into the rudiments of a poetic sensibility, not removed from the world, but busily participating in its intellectual growth.

Lentricchia, Frank. "Wallace Stevens: The Critic's Redemption." Modern Language Quarterly, XXXVI (March 1975), 75-80.

A review-article of Adalaide Kirby Morris, Wallace Stevens: Imagination and Faith (Princeton, 1974), and Lucy Beckett, Wallace Stevens (Cambridge, 1974).

Lieber, Todd M. "Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens: 'What to Make of a Diminished Thing.'" American Literature, XLVII (March 1975), 64-83.

Notwithstanding their differences in style, Frost and Stevens had the same sense of what they were about and of its importance. The challenge facing the artist has been the necessity of dealing with the loss of unity, order, and belief that seems to characterize the modern age. Each in his own idiom arrived at an understanding of poetic activity which enabled him to see poetry as a response and corrective to the malaise of the modern spirit.

McCann, Janet. "'Prologues to What is Possible': Wallace Stevens and Jung." Ball State University Forum, XVII (Spring 1976), 46-50.

Although Benamou has shown that WS' imagery can be explained in

Jungian terms, it seems likely that Stevens deliberately used Jungian figures and ideas. Appealing to him were Jung's notions of symbol and metaphor, and also the collective unconscious. "Prologues," through its hypothetical "point of central arrival," suggests that in the collective unconscious is the collective key to reality shared by all, but that reality can never be wholly accessible, a truth still becoming, for which all expressions or perceptions are only approximations.

Miller, J. Hillis. "Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure, I-II." The Georgia Review, XXX (Spring, Summer 1976), 5-31, 330-348.

WS' poem, "The Rock," is a continuous mise en abyme, forming and reforming itself around words or images,—"icon," "rock," "cure," and so on—which both name the "alogical" and cover it over. Criticism is a continuation of that activity of the poem. If poetry is the impossible possible cure of the ground, criticism is the possible impossible cure of literature.

Monie, Willis. "Stevens' 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird, VII,'" Explicator, XXXIV (September 1975), Item 2.

"Haddum" is an old English reference to venereal disease. Using this pun, WS contrasts the illusions surrounding sex with the realities of sexual intercourse.

Mulqueen, James E. "A Reading of Wallace Stevens' An Ordinary Evening in New Haven." Perspective, XVII (Spring 1975), 268-277.

The theme of WS' last long poem is the dilemma of the imagination, torn between its yearning for the comforting illusions into which it can transform reality, and the equally strong desire to apprehend reality as it is in itself.

Pack, Robert. "Wallace Stevens' Sufficient Muse." The Southern Review, XI (October 1975), 766-778.

Stevens' Muse, whose benevolent power enables his to give credence to his own created beliefs, is also a Muse who defines and accepts the limits of reality. For the affirming poet, it must be sufficient to know that the solace of his belief cannot be permanently solacing. The need to create anew, as a source of endless human striving, necessarily ends in defeat. But each defeat renews the search for affirmation and in this search Stevens' Muse finds "what will suffice."

Rao, E. Nageswara. "Crispin's Passage to Yucatan," Literary Half-Yearly, XVI (January 1975), 125-130.

In the second section of "The Comedian," WS uses various devices for achieving structural unity: repetition of scenes, sounds, and his own comments on Crispin. Unity is also achieved by the chiaroscuro effects, brilliant colors and sunshine, then thunderheads darkening the white cabildo.

Seal, Bhupendranath. "Winter as Seen by Wallace Stevens." The Modern Review (Calcutta), CXXXVIII (September 1975), 172-173.

One of the important threads that weave the texture of WS' poetry is his confrontation with reality—reality absolute and shorn of illusion.

Winter is bare and without memorial, and as a poet Stevens' wants man to face the absolute reality of winter.

Serio, John N. "'The Comedian' as the Idea of Order in Harmonium." Papers on Language and Literature, XII (Winter 1976), 87-104.

"The Comedian as the Letter C" unifies WS' first volume of poetry. In explicitly presenting man's relationship to his soil in this long poem, Stevens uncovered the implicit theme running through virtually every poem in *Harmonium*. The various responses to changes in landscape that Crispin undergoes in his journey from the old world to the new parallel the various perspectives towards the relationships between person and place that WS had been recording since 1914.

Webb, Eugene. "Wallace Stevens and the Philosophy of Meaning." West Coast Review, X (February 1976), 53-55.

Review-article of Adalaide K. Morris, Wallace Stevens: Imagination and Faith (Princeton, 1974).

Wolfe, Charles. "Stevens' 'Peter Quince at the Clavier.'" Explicator, XXXIII (February 1975), Item 43.

The image of water in the poem may be interpreted in a number of ways—as reflecting the immortality of beauty seen in recollection, or as representing beauty itself, flowing through time.

## from "Vignettes"

To see Wallace Stevens walking down Hilliard Street
Was unforgettable. He came to see the Yale game
Each year, and sat at the top of the stands, surveying
From a height the to and fro victory and defeat,
Then he would sit in our large leather armchair,
Amiable and kindly. Before I took him to his last reading
I showed him the Gropius new architecture, then passed the red bricks
Of the old law school. He said, "Why can't they make something as
good as that?"

-Richard Eberhart

### **News and Comments**

#### **NEW BOOKS**

Holly Stevens' Souvenirs and Prophecies will be published by Knopf on January 21, 1977. The book will include large portions of Wallace Stevens' journals, juvenilia and early letters. It is Ms. Stevens' intention to show the connection between her father's early work and his mature poetry.

George Bornstein's Transformations of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens (University of Chicago Press), was published in November 1976. An excerpt from the material on WS appears in this issue of the Journal.

The Limits of Imagination: Wordsworth, Yeats, and Stevens, by Helen Regueiro, was announced for publication in November 1976 by Cornell University Press.

Bucknell University Press published Alan Perlis' Wallace Stevens: A World of Transforming Shapes, in the Spring of 1976.

Daniel J. Schneider's Symbolism: The Manichean Vision: A Study of the Art of James, Conrad, Woolf and Stevens, (University of Nebraska Press) appeared in 1975. This book of essays grew out of the author's work on symbolism in Stevens. Material on WS is previously unpublished, including "'The War that Never Ends': Patterns of Proliferation in Wallace Stevens' Poetry;" "The Symbolic System and the Authority of the Literary Work;" and "Appendix: Observation on Wallace Stevens' Symbolism."

Harold Bloom's Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate will be published in the spring of 1977 by Cornell University Press.

#### **WORK IN PROGRESS**

"The Long Poem in the Twentieth Century," edited by Joseph N. Riddel, will be the theme of the Winter 1978 issue of *Genre*: A Quarterly Devoted to Generic Criticism (University of Oklahoma).

A Centennial volume of essays on WS, edited by Frank Doggett and Robert Buttel, is currently in preparation. It will be published by Princeton University Press.

The Use of Figure in Stevens' Later Poems is the title of a dissertation in progress by Lisa Steinman (Cornell). An excerpt from this work is published elsewhere in these pages.

#### RECENT BRITISH DISSERTATIONS

Harvey, Margaret I. Imagism and Symbolism in American Poetry with Special Reference to William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens. Nottingham, M. Phil. (Reader: B. C. Lee)

Kirk, S. P. Eliot, Pound and Wallace Stevens. Birmingham, Ph.D. (L. A. Davies)

Laviguer, P. Wallace Stevens: The Pedagogical Nature and Purpose of Wallace Stevens' Work. Leeds, Ph.D.

Sharpe, A. E. Wallace Stevens: The Determining Personality; Stevens' Ideas about Art and Society, Set in Perspective. Cambridge, Trinity, M. Litt. (M. D. Lang)

#### STEVENS BOOK PRICES

On Tuesday, May 18, 1976, at Sotheby Parke Bernet, in New York, at Sale Number 3875, two Stevens books were sold:

Ideas of Order (Alcestis Press, 1935), was knocked down to Mrs. Louis Henry Cohn, proprietor of House of Books, Ltd., of New York, for \$850.00. This is one of 135 copies on Strathmore Permanent Rag paper. (Lot 213)

Owl's Clover (Alcestis Press, 1936), went to the same buyer for \$3250.00. This is one of 85 copies on Strathmore Permanent Rag paper. (Lot 214)

Phoenix Book Shop (N. Y.), Catalog 134: Transport to Summer. in a poor dust jacket, \$55.00; The Auroras of Autumn, a fine copy in dust jacket, \$50.00.

Joseph The Provider (Santa Barbara), Catalog 14: Ideas of Order, first trade edition, in the first binding, with a name on the endpaper, \$65.00; Transport to Summer, with name on endpaper and slightly worn dust jacket, \$75.00; A Primitive Like an Orb, \$60.00; The Auroras of Autumn, in slightly worn dust jacket, \$60.00; The Necessary Angel, in slightly worn dust jacket, \$50.00; Selected Poems (London, Fortune, 1952), \$90.00.

House of Books (N. Y.), Catalog for 1976: Seven letters (6 typed, 1 holograph, 5 envelopes), all from Hartford, 1922-1923, \$900.00. Harmonium (1923), in second binding of stripes, \$400.00; Transport to Summer, Alfred Kreymborg's copy, \$175.00; "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" (Edelstein C190), \$50.00; The Necessary Angel, \$65.00.

Serendipity Books (Berkeley): The Auroras of Autumn, \$40.00; The Necessary Angel, \$30.00; The Man with the Blue Guitar including Ideas of Order (1952), \$45.00.

#### 1976 MLA CONVENTION

Annual meeting of The Wallace Stevens Society. Also, the subject of The Stevens Seminar at the 1976 MLA convention—Wallace Stevens: The Long Poems. Discussion leader, R. H. Deutsch, Discussants, Robert Buttel and Jascha Kessler. Program: Credences of Summer: Wallace Stevens Secular Mysticism—George Lensing, Figure and Figuration in Wallace Stevens' Poetry—Lisa Steinman, Provisional Romanticism in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction"—George Bornstein, Stevens' "Affair of Places"—John N. Serio, and Women in Wallace Stevens Poetry—Harriet Rosenbloom.

#### STEVENS FELLOWSHIP AT YALE

A fellowship honoring the memory of Wallace Stevens has been established at Yale University. The first appointment to the Wallace Stevens Fellowship is Richard Eberhart, who was in residence at Yale on March 3 and 4, 1976. He met with students and faculty and as part of his appointment gave a reading of his work in the Timothy Dwight Common Room. The new poetry program has been established by a gift from a Fellow of Timothy Dwight College who prefers to remain anonymous. The Wallace Stevens Fellow will be housed in Timothy Dwight College at Yale and it is expected that there will be at least one appointment a year to the Fellowship.

#### MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Harmonium (1923) has been reissued by St. Martin's Press (New York) as part of their poetry Reprint Series. This volume, which is a photoreproduction from the copy in the British Museum, appeared in 1975.

"The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Ways of Looking at a Blackbird, after Wallace Stevens," by Samuel I. Bellman, appeared in CEA Critic, XXXVII (March 1975), 24.

#### RECENT BOOKS NOTED

Brendan Gill's Here at The New Yorker (Random House, 1975) contains a number of anecdotes in which WS figures, including the following:

"In my memory is an episode the leading figures of which are Frost and Stevens. I was told it by Stevens and I often play it over in my mind, like a short home movie, for the pleasure it gives me. The time is late at night and the place is Florida. Frost and Stevens, who are staying at the same resort hotel, have been out drinking at a bar somewhere along the beach. Tipsily, in perfect contentment, they are making their way back to the hotel on a boardwalk that runs a foot or so above the sand. They are holding fast to each other, and each is sure that it is he who is supporting his companion. Frost staggers, catches his heel on the edge of the boardwalk, and starts to fall. Stevens strengthens his hold on him, but in vain—over Frost goes, with Stevens on top of him. The two bulky old poets fall in a single knot onto the sand and start rolling over and over in the moonlight down the long slope of the beach to the edge of the sea."

Mr. Gill also writes: "In this country more than in any other that I know of, the relationship between writers and alcohol is a curiously close one. I have often asked literary scholars for an explanation of the fact that while in the nineteenth century few of our writers except Poe were heavy drinkers, in the twentieth century almost every writer worthy of the name has been one. Among the dead, we have only to think of Faulkner, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Lardner, Marquand, Sinclair Lewis, O'Hara, Crane, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Wallace Stevens, O'Neill, Barry, Millay, Dorothy Parker, Hammett, Roethke, Benchley and Berryman. Among the living, the list is equally long, . . ."

Wilbert Snow's autobiography *Codline's Child* (Wesleyan University Press, 1974) contains a short chapter on his friendship with Stevens. Two excepts:

"Toward the end of his life Stevens became interested in writing abstract poetry. One day at Mount Holyoke College, when he was the main speaker at a meeting of the New England English Teachers Association, he spent the whole hour reading his abstract verse. The teachers listened politely but without enthusiasm. When he had finished, I went up to him and said, 'Wallace, why didn't you read "Peter Quince at the Clavier"? The teachers would have lapped it up. 'He answered, 'No, I'll leave that to Frost and the hillbillies.' Should I tell Frost what he said? That was the question. Homer Woodbridge, my best friend at Wesleyan, said, 'Go ahead and tell him. I want to hear Frost's answer. I know it will be a good one.' But my wife said, 'No. It will hurt him too much.' I followed my wife's advice, but I was often tempted to get Robert's reaction. Frost and Stevens were rivals, and they were alike in that neither had much enthusiasm for the poetry of Eliot and Pound."

"Stevens was kind to me though he was anything but kind to other poets I knew. One of these called him up and wanted to meet and talk with him. Wallace said, I'm busy. Call again in ten years.' Another man brought a poet friend from Cambridge to Hartford, called Wallace, and said, I have a poet here with me. I would like to bring him to see you.' 'Who is your poet?' Wallace asked. The name was given. 'He is not a poet in my book,' said Wallace as he slammed down the receiver."

# The Wallace Stevens Archive at The Huntington Library

The Huntington Library, San Marino, California, announced its acquisition of the Wallace Stevens Archive in the Spring of 1975. The collection, purchased for \$225,000 from Holly Stevens, is extraordinarily rich in both printed and manuscript materials. It contains Stevens' copies of his own works—a nearly complete set of his appearances in periodicals and anthologies published in his lifetime, almost all of the editions of his books in all issues (some volumes are in bindings made for him by Gerlach and Aussord), and genealogical works privately printed for family use. All but a few of the "HS" copies located by J. M. Edelstein in Wallace Stevens: A Descriptive Bibliography (Pittsburgh, 1973) can be identified with copies now at the Huntington, and there are in the Library copies of other issues or variants which Edelstein has not identified "HS" copies. There is also an extensive collection of critical studies about Stevens, both in periodical and book form. Much of Stevens' private library—approximately 205 titles in 250 volumes—is present. Many of these books are presentation copies, or contain Stevens' annotations, or were acquired when he was a student. About a fifth of the books in Stevens' library at the Huntington were not known to Edelstein when he was preparing his article on "The Poet as Reader: Wallace Stevens and his Books," The Book Collector, XXIII (Spring 1974), 53-68.

A catalogue of the manuscript collection appears elsewhere in this issue. The material in the Stevens archive was made available for scholarly investigation at the beginning of the summer, 1975.

## Symposium and Exhibit

"Wallace Stevens at the Huntington," a symposium, was held in the Library's seminar room on April 12, 1975. The program:

10 o'clock Morning Session: James Thorpe, Chairman
Holly Stevens Wallace Stevens: A Daughter's Sense of the Poet
Wellson E. Taylor
The Poet as Businessman and Lawyer

1:30 o'clock Afternoon Session: Claude M. Simpson, Jr., Chairman
Daniel H. Woodward An Invitation to Scholarship: The Stevens
Collection at the Huntington

A. Walton Litz

Stevens and the Long Poem: the Evidence of the
Manuscripts

J. M. Edelstein

Wallace Stevens: The Bibliographer's Delight

A special exhibition, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at Wallace Stevens," was held in April and May. Included in the exhibit were materials from the Archive: letters, fine bindings, photographs, books and autographs. A handsomely illustrated brochure was issued in connection with the exhibit, and is available at the Huntington bookstore.

# The Wallace Stevens Manuscript Collection at The Huntington Library

#### WILLIAM INGOLDSBY

PROVENANCE: The Collection was acquired from Holly Stevens in January, 1975. A few of the items catalogued with the Collection have been gifts from Wilson E. Taylor and Holly Stevens and later purchases from Holly Stevens. These are noted on the individual folders.

NUMBER OF PIECES: 6,815 (including genealogical material)

DATES: 1856-1975

SUBJECT MATTER AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION:

#### I. MANUSCRIPTS (Boxes 1-8)

A. Dedicatory poems to Stevens, essays about Stevens (e.g. by Pack and Quinn), and adaptations and translations of Stevens' poems (e.g. by Poggioli).

Especially interesting pieces:

Herman Hesse, Zwolf Gedichte: 12 autograph poems in German, presented by Hesse to Stevens, each with a watercolor drawing. (WAS 223)

[Hywel David Lewis], On Poetic Truth: essay first published in Philosophy (July 1946), in Stevens' hand. (WAS 4093)

B. Manuscripts of Stevens' poems, essays and speeches. These are both autograph and typewritten. When Stevens' secretary/stenographer prepared his typescripts, she made three copies: an original and two carbons. When a carbon exists along with the original typescript, it has been catalogued with the original unless it contains annotations or corrections by Stevens.

Most of the manuscripts have been published in one of three places: 1) a published work of Stevens; 2) Opus Posthumous (1957), edited by Samuel French Morse; or 3) Robert Buttel, Wallace Stevens: The Making of Harmonium (1967). When assigning dates to manuscripts, evidence given by Morse; Buttel; J. M. Edelstein, Wallace Stevens: A Descriptive Bibliography (1973); and the correspondence have all been weighed.

Especially interesting pieces:

Adagia: 2 notebooks of aphorisms. 33p. [1930?-1955]. (WAS 70)

A Book of Verses: notebook of 20 early poems. 21p. June, 1908. (WAS 24)

Esthetique du Mal: early draft. 16p. 1944. (WAS 4140)

The Figure of Youth as Virile Poet: early draft. 23p. 1943. (WAS 4143)

Gloire du Long Desir, Idees: early draft. 23p. 1955. (WAS 4151)

Journals: 1898-1899. 1 vol. (WAS 7)

1899-1900. 1 vol. (WAS 8) 1902-1904. 1 vol. (WAS 9) 1905-1912. 1 vol. (WAS 10)

The Little June Book: notebook of 20 early poems. 21p. June 5, 1909. (WAS 25)

Poetic Exercises of 1948: 2 commonplace notebooks. 4p. 1948. (WAS 72)

Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects: 2 commonplace notebooks. 44p. 1932-1953. (WAS 73)

Also: The typescript for Selected Poems, a book submitted to Alfred A. Knopf, but never published. 200p. 1950. (WAS 2997)

#### II. CORRESPONDENCE (Boxes 9-66)

The heart of the Collection is the correspondence between Stevens and his family, scholars, poets, editors, business associates and friends. All of the correspondence (except that relating to genealogy) has been fully catalogued.

Although there is some correspondence of minor importance, such as friends' greetings while Stevens was convalescing in 1955, most of it has an interest from either a biographical or poetical viewpoint. Many of the letters from Stevens were published in 1966 by his daughter, Letters of Wallace Stevens. But still unpublished is the other side of the correspondence—to Stevens—amounting to about some 2,500 pieces. The bulk of Stevens' letters are carbon copies, with the exception of his letters to Barbara Church, Wilson E. Taylor and Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens. Stevens began to keep carbon copies regularly only after the early 1940's, so his letters from this earlier period are scarce in the Collection. A brief notice of the kinds of correspondence in the Collection is given below:

#### A. Family Letters

The most significent family figure is Stevens' wife, Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens. Most of the correspondence is from Stevens to Elsie, 1907 (before their engagement) until 1935 (271 pieces; WAS 1776-2046). The principal letters from Elsie are to her step-father and mother, and to her half-sister.

Other family correspondents include: Holly Bright Stevens (daughter); Garrett Barcalow Stevens, 1848-1911 (father); Margaretha Catherine (Zeller) Stevens, 1848-1912 (mother); Garrett Barcalow Stevens, 1877-1937 (brother); John Bergen Stevens, 1880-1940 (brother); Elizabeth (Stevens) McFarland, 1885-1943 (sister); Mary Catherine Stevens, 1889-1919 (sister, killed in France during World War I).

#### B. Foreign Correspondents

Although Stevens never travelled abroad (other than to Havana), he was always interested in reading about foreign places and corresponding with persons there. Some of the most engaging correspondence is with foreign writers, many of them not great poets in their own right, but whose letters, along with Stevens' own, are among the finest in the Collection for the insights they give into Stevens the man and the poet.

The most notable figures are:

- 1) Rosamond (Bates) Cary: 6 letters, 1931-1936. (WAS 2071-2076). Stevens to RBC: 6 carbons, 1935-1936. (WAS 2077-2082). Mrs. Cary was an American living in Otaru, Japan. Stevens asked her to select a number of Japanese toys and traditional items as gifts for Elsie and Holly Stevens.
- Peter H. Lee: 13 letters, 1951-1955. WAS 1030-1042). Stevens to PHL: 8 carbons, 1954-1955. (WAS 1043-1050). Lee was a Korean poet.
- 3) Robert McAlmon: 13 letters, 1921-1924. (WAS 1150-1162). McAlmon, an

American writer living in Europe, wrote some extremely good letters about Joyce and other literary figures in the 1920's.

- 4) Thomas MacGreevy: 39 letters, 1948-1955. (WAS 141-158, 161-180). Stevens to TM: 17 carbons, 1948-1955. (WAS 181-197). MacGreevy was appointed Director of the National Gallery of Ireland in 1950. The MacGreevy-Stevens correspondence brings out Stevens' interest in painting and the other arts.
- 5) Jose Rodriguez-Feo: 51 Letters, 1948-1955. (WAS 1588-1638). Stevens to JR-F: 9 carbons, 1948-1955. (WAS 1639-1647). Warm letters to and from a young Cuban poet, many concerning the meaning of Stevens' poetry.
- 6) Leonard Van Geyzel: 15 letters, 1938-1954. (WAS 2450-2464). Stevens to LVG: 18 carbons and 1 L.S., 1937-1954, (WAS 2470-2488). Van Geyzel was an Englishman working on a tea plantation in Ceylon who read widely in modern literature. Interesting correspondence regarding Stevens' literary and political (WW II) views.
- 7) Anatole Vidal: 20 letters, 1935-1940. In French. (WAS 2650-2669). Anatole Vidal was the Parisian bookseller who, like his daughter after his death, provided Stevens with French books and magazines, and purchased for Stevens original paintings by contemporary French artists, including Auberjonois, Maurice Brianchon, Roger Callois and Tal Coat. The Anatole and Paule Vidal correspondence is of utmost importance in defining Stevens' attitudes toward modern art and literature.
- 8) Paule Vidal: 80 letters, 1945-1955. In French. (WAS 2806-2885). Stevens to PV: 110 carbons, 1945-1955. (WA 2886-2995). Paule Vidal took over her father's bookshop in Paris after his death in the early 1940's and continued the flourishing correspondence with Stevens.
- 9) Correspondence regarding tea: Stevens was a connoisseur of fine foods and enjoyed sending away for tea in particular. These letters give some idea of his personal habits: 1935-1938. (WAS 1170-1176, 1346-1349).

#### C. Business Associates

The Collection does not contain letters from the files of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company. The following correspondents were business associates as well as friends:

- C. L. Daughrty: 7 pieces. 1943-[1955]. (WAS 492-498). Stevens to CLD: 40 pieces, 1931-1955, mostly originals. (WAS 499-538).
- Arthur Gray Powell ("Judge Powell"): 6 letters, 1940-1950. (WAS 1477-1482).
- 3) Wilson E. Taylor: 12 letters, 1939?-1955, including 5 carbons. (WAS 3837-3848). Stevens to WET: 96 letters, 1933-1955, originals. (WAS 3849-3944).

#### D. Literary Correspondents.

The heart of the Collection deals with Stevens' poetry; a good five-eighths of the correspondence falls into this category. The following list deals only with the very important correspondents—important in their own right, or important for the quality of their letters. The list is by no means complete. Many of the editors of journals, critics and publishers that figure in the Collection are not on the following list, but may be found alphabetically in the Manuscript Catalogue. All letters in the list are addressed to or written by Stevens.

- 1) Henry Hall Church: 102 pieces, 1939-1947. (WAS 3366-3467). Stevens to HHC: 94 pieces, 1939-1947, mostly carbons. (WAS 3468-3561). Barbara S. Church: 112 pieces, 1942-1955. (WAS 3563-3674). Stevens to BSC: 148 letters, 1942-1955, mostly originals. (WAS 3678-3825). The Church-Stevens correspondence is undoubtedly the most important (and largest) in the Collection. Henry Church and Stevens were both interested in French literature and during the war years when the Churches were unable to spend half the year in their home in Ville d'Avray, France, Stevens saw them frequently and they became good friends. In his correspondence with both Henry and Barbara Church, he frequently and honestly speaks of his personal and literary life.
- 2) Edward Estlin Cummings: 4 letters, 1944-1950. (WAS 1-4). Stevens to EEC: 2 carbons, 1947-1950. (WAS 5-6).
- 3) Harry Duncan (of the Cummington Press): 61 letters, 1943-1951. (WAS 555-615). Stevens to HD: 9 carbons, 1945-1950. (WAS 616-1624).
- 4) Katharine Frazier (of the Cummington Press): 19 letters, 1941-1943. (WAS 647-665).
- 5) Robert Lee Frost: 1 A.L.S., and photograph, July 28, 1935. (WAS 365).
- 6) Victor Karl Hammer: 32 letters, 1946-1952. (WAS 776-807). Stevens to VKH: 11 carbons, 1948-1951. (WAS 808-818).
- 7) Alfred A. Knopf: 64 letters, 1920-1955. (WAS 3084-3147). Stevens to AAK: 44 carbons, 1930-1955. (WAS 3148-3191). The following (a-d) are the major associates with Knopf, Inc., in the correspondence:
  - a. William Cole: 10 letters, 1951-1955. (WAS 3044-3053). Stevens to WC: 9 carbons, 1951-1955. (WAS 3054-3062).
  - b. Sidney R. Jacobs: 9 letters, 1950-1954. (WAS 3063-3071). Stevens to SRJ: 12 carbons, 1950-1954. (WAS 3072-3083).
  - c. William A. Koshland: 11 letters, 1950-1954. (WAS 3198-3208). Stevens to WAK: 10 carbons, 1950-1955. (WAS 3209-3218).
  - d. Herbert Weinstock: 74 pieces, 1946-1955. (WAS 3219-3292). Stevens to HW: 66 carbons, 1946-1955. (WAS 3293-3358).
- 8) Archibald MacLeish: 2 letters, 1925-[1948]. (WAS 1063-1064). Stevens to AM: 1 carbon, Aug. 23, 1948. (WAS 1065).
- 9) Harriet Monroe: 10 letters, 1914-1935. (WAS 28-37).
- 10) Marianne Craig Moore: 27 letters, 1926-1955. (WAS 41-67).
- 11) Samuel French Morse: 7 letters, 1953-1955. (WAS 1266-1272). Stevens to SFM: 3 carbons, 1954-1955. (WAS 1273-1275).
- 12) Renato Poggioli: 30 letters, 1947-1954. (WAS 286-315). Stevens to RP: 23 carbons, 1947-1954. (WAS 316-338).
- 13) Mary Bernetta Quinn: 12 letters, 1948-1955. (WAS 2621-2632). Stevens to MBQ: 3 carbons, 1948-1954. (WAS 2632-2635).
- 14) Hi Simons: 28 pieces, 1937-1945. (WAS 78-105). Stevens to HS: 35 carbons, 1937-1945. (WAS 106-140).
- 15) Allen John Orley Tate: 45 pieces, 1941-1949. (WAS 2340-2384). Stevens to AJOT: 21 carbons, 1941-1949. (WAS 2385-2405).
- Thornton Niven Wilder: 1 A.L.S., September 12, 1951. (WAS 2524).
   Stevens to TNW: 1 carbon, October 19, 1951. (WAS 2525).

17) William Carlos Williams: 13 letters, 1916-1953. (WAS 11-23).

NOTE: Marguerite G. Flynn, whose name figures in some of the correspondence, was Stevens' secretary and stenographer. She personally answered some of Stevens' letters, especially in 1955 when Stevens was hospitalized. Letters written by her are catalogued under her name.

#### III. PHOTOGRAPHS (Box 67)

Most of the dating of the photographs is by Elsie Stevens.

#### In 41 folders:

- 1) Wallace Stevens: studio portrait by Bachrach, [1900]
- 2) Wallace Stevens: 6 snapshots, [c. 1922]
- 3) Wallace Stevens: snapshot (of a photograph), [c. 1924]
- 4) Wallace Stevens: studio portrait by Blackstone Studios, N.Y., [c. 1935]
- 5) Wallace Stevens: 5 studio portraits by Pack Bros., [c. 1940?]
- 6) Wallace Stevens: studio portrait by Sylvia Salmi, 1943
- 7) Wallace Stevens: studio portrait by Sylvia Salmi, 1943
- 8) Wallace Stevens: studio portrait by Sylvia Salmi, 1944
- 9) Wallace Stevens: studio portrait by John Haley, [c. 1945]
- 10) Wallace Stevens: studio portrait by Sylvia Salmi, 1948
- 11) Wallace Stevens: studio portrait by R. Thorne McKenna, June, 1952
- 12) Wallace Stevens: studio portrait by R. Thorne McKenna, June, 1952
- 13) Wallace Stevens: snapshot, 1955
- 14) Wallace Stevens—home of (735 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, Conn.?): 2 snapshots, [c. 1916]
- 15) Wallace Stevens—home of (118 Westerly Terrace, Hartford, Conn.): 6 snap-shots, 1947-1953
- 16) Wallace Stevens & Holly Bright Stevens: studio portrait by Katherine Lee Endero, [c. 1925]
- 17) Wallace Stevens & Holly Bright Stevens: snapshot, Feb. 3, 1929
- 18) Wallace Stevens, Holly Bright Stevens & an unidentifiable woman/child: 3 snapshots, [c. 1929]
- 19) Wallace Stevens, Holly Bright Stevens & Peter Reed Hanchak: 8 snapshots, [Oct., 1954]
- 20) Wallace Stevens & Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens: snapshot, [c. 1920]
- 21) Wallace Stevens, Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens & Holly Bright Stevens: 5 snap-shots, [c. 1926-1929]
- 22) Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens & Holly Bright Stevens: 2 snapshots, [c. 1924]
- 23) Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens & Holly Bright Stevens: studio portrait by Katherine Lee Endero, [1924?]
- 24) Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens: 11 snapshots, [c. 1915-1920]
- 25) Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens & an unidentifiable woman: snapshot, [c. 1920]

- 26) Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens & Dorothy La Rue (Moll) Weidner: 3 snapshots, [c. 1920]
- 27) Holly Bright Stevens: 35 snapshots, [c. 1926-1929]
- 28) Holly Bright Stevens: studio portrait by John Haley, 1928
- 29) Holly Bright Stevens: studio portrait by John Haley, [c. 1931]
- 30) Holly Bright Stevens & an unidentifiable woman/child: snapshot, [1929?]
- 31) Holly Bright Stevens, Jack M. Hanchak & Peter Reed Hanchak: 2 snapshots, 1944-1947
- 32) Holly Bright Stevens & Peter Reed Hanchak: 2 snapshots, 1947-1951
- 33) Ida Bright (Smith) Kachel Moll (in front of 231 So. 13th Street, Reading, Pa.): snapshot, [1940]
- 34) Mary Catharine Stevens—grave of: unmounted print, [c. 1919]
- 35) Edwin Stanton Livingood: cabinet photograph, Apr., 1899
- 36) Babara S. Church—home of (Ville d'Avray, France): snapshot, June, 1939
- 37) Barbara S. Church—home of (Untermberg, Germany): snapshot, [c. 1948]
- 38) Wallace Stevens Family: photograph album—68 snapshots of a trip to California and Arizona by Holly Bright Stevens, Oct. 23-Nov. 3, 1972. Also: 6 snapshots of Wallace Stevens & Holly Bright Stevens, c. 1934
- 39) Unidentifiable photographs—probably from Wallace Stevens' side of the family (7 pieces)
- 40) Unidentifiable photographs—probably from Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens' side of the family (4 pieces)
- 41) Unidentifiable photographs—of Reading, Pa.? (associated with Wallace Stevens' genealogical researches: 5 photographs)
- 42) Album of 40 photographs on the side of Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens. The only photograph identified (by Holly Bright Stevens) is no. 14: Ida Bright (Smith) Kachel Moll & Elsie Viola (Moll) Stevens.

#### IV. HONORARY AWARDS (Box 68)

#### In 7 folders & 2 loose pieces:

- 1) National Book Award, 1950
- 2) Columbia University (D. Litt.), June 5, 1952
- State of Connecticut's resolution expressing the State's pride in Stevens' achievements, Feb. 3, 1955
- 4) Hartt College of Music (Doctor of Humanities), June 9, 1955
- 5) Mount Holyoke College (D. Litt.), June 2, 1952
- 6) Wesleyan University (D. Litt.), June 15, 1947
- 7) Yale University (D. Litt.), June 13, 1955
- 8) Bard College (D. Litt.), Mar. 29, 1951
- 9) Harvard University (D. Litt.), June 21, 1951

#### V. XEROXES (Boxes 69-71)

Mostly correspondence, with some poetical material, especially in the Ronald Lane Latimer folder. The folders are arranged alphabetically by correspondent. The xeroxes are for reference only; copies may not be made from them. Copies may be obtained by writing to the institution owning the original manuscripts. Indication of the owner has usually been written (by Holly Stevens) on the xerox.

#### VI. GENEALOGICAL MATERIAL (Boxes 72-79) (2,557 pieces)

In the early 1940's Wallace Stevens began an extensive correspondence to trace his family ancestry. Elsie Stevens also took an active interest in tracing her roots. Over 2,000 pieces of genealogical material resulted, in the form of letters, documents and typescripts. The material dates primarily from the 1940's. Why Stevens took such pains to trace his ancestry is open to speculation, but two possible reasons could be 1) the death of most of his family (i.e. brothers and sisters) in the late 1930's and early 1940's and 2) Holly Stevens' decision to leave Vassar College without a degree in 1942. Stevens' attempt to define and describe his family could well have been to reassure both himself and his daughter of their heritage.

The genealogical material has been semi-catalogued and is arranged alphabetically in the following general order:

Boxes 72-74	Correspondence
Box 75	Bright-Ellsworth families
Box 76	History of the Franks-Uncompiled Material (typescripts)
Box 77	Zeller-Stevens family
Box 78	Miscellaneous
Box 79	Miscellaneous—oversize

#### VII. EPHEMERA (Boxes 80-81)

- A. Box 80: Miscellaneous material (mostly printed) relating to the following (by folder no.):
  - 1) American Academy of Arts and Letters (& National Institute of Arts and Letters)
  - 2) Blackwell, B. H., Ltd. (firm)
  - 3) Church, Barbara S.
  - 4) Church, Henry Hall
  - 5) Columbia University: items re: 1952 Commencement
  - 6) Columbia University: printed item
  - 7) Duncan, Harry (and the Cummington Press)
  - 8) Gregynog Press
  - 9) Guthrie, James
  - 10) Hammer, Victor: also, box with bookplates & plates
  - 11) Harvard University
  - 12) Knopf, Alfred A. Inc.
  - 13) Moore, Marianne Craig

- 14) Morse, Samuel French
- 15) Quinn, Mary Bernetta
- 16) Simons, Hi
- 17) Stevens Family
- 18) Stevens, Elsie Viola (Moll)
- 19) Stevens, Holly Bright
- 20) Stevens, Mary Catharine
- 21) Stevens, Wallace: newspaper clippings
- 22) Vassar College
- 23) Vidal, Anatole & Paule
- 24) Weinman, Adolph Alexander
- 25) Wisconsin Players
- 26) Yale University Library
- B. Box 81: Miscellaneous material—loose. Includes newspaper articles, post-cards collected by Stevens, addresses, receipts, etc.

"The Huntington Library welcomes working scholars. Graduate students in the candidacy stage of their Ph.D degree, and established writers in non-academic fields may also apply for reading privileges. The Library is not open to undergraduates."

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