

"Domination of Black" (CP, p. 8)

The colors cast in the room at night by the fireplace are like the colors of the bushes and the fallen leaves, and turn through the room as the latter turn in the wind. But the dark color of the hemlocks is also in the room; this and the memory of the peacocks' cry add an ominous note.

The colors of the peacocks' tails resemble the autumn leaves at twilight. These same colors, of the leaves, the tails, sweep through the room as they are cast by the fire, in a way resembling the leaves being swept from the trees. It is hard to tell whether the peacocks cry against impending darkness ("twilight") or against one of the other elements of the scene, because one thing in it is so much like another, each so much part of everything else. The cry of the peacocks seems rather to mark, and to be itself part of, the whole process of annihilation exemplified by the fire, autumn, impending darkness.

Finally the stars in the night sky, the cosmos itself, is drawn into this vortex of similitudes. The stars too seem part of this process of annihilation, and the speaker, feeling afraid, remembers the cry which marks it.

"Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" (CP, p. 13)

Stevens writes of the speaker of "Le Monocle" that, "I had in mind simply a man fairly well along in life, looking back and talking in a more or less personal way about life" (LWS, p. 251). Like "The Comedian as the Letter C," this poem proceeds from speculation to speculation on the topic at hand, here love at middle age, but the didactic content, rather than being couched in narrative, occurs in the meditative mode that came to be dominant in Stevens' longer poems. The title of the poem may be interpreted as "my uncle's point of view," the attitude toward love of a worldly-wise man of middle age. (Stevens comments that the title means "merely a certain point of view"—LWS, p. 250.) It is

in French perhaps because of that country's reputation for erotic enlightenment, but also, certainly, for the sake of the phrase's comic-elegant sound.

The poem is arranged in twelve eleven-line stanzas of iambic pentameter which accommodates variation freely, especially in the substitution of an anapest. The most notable thing about the verse is its extravagance of alliteration which is sometimes used structurally, like rhyme. End rhyme is itself not used regularly but as a convenience of structure. It is used in two ways: to form couplets, and to unify a stanza by means of sound echoes. The second is the more frequent. The most usual unit of organization within the stanza is the pair of iambic lines, though in some cases, as in the last six lines of section I, they are not merely pairs but rhymed couplets. The pair of iambic lines is the unit of organization in that the syntax is most frequently arranged in successive pairs of lines. In addition there is an attempt to bind pairs of lines together even, occasionally, when the syntax runs over, sometimes with rhyme but usually without. The main devices used to this end are multiple alliteration and balance of units within the pair of lines, as in lines four and five of section IX:

Their curious fates in war, come, celebrate
The faith of forty, ward of Cupido.

Sometimes alliteration is used to connect the terminal feet of a pair of lines as in,

And you? Remember how the crickets came
Out of their mother grass, like little kin, (V, ll. 8-9)

where the lines are held together by the consonance of "came" and "kin." Repetition is used much like alliteration:

It stands gigantic, with a certain tip
To which all birds come sometime in their time.
But when they go that tip still tips the tree. (X, ll. 9-11)