

crowns") that made it seem consolingly less evil than it actually is. Our image of man as seen through "the central man," the philosophers' man, was stripped of all illusions; therefore there was nothing that the philosophers' man "did not suffer"—and since he is nothing more than our imaginative projection of ourselves, his suffering is our suffering.

Our old illusions never returned, but instead we now accepted an image of man that mirrored the human, that was totally a reflection of man himself rather than an image partly derived from some myth of the super human. Thus as we united with an image that derived wholly from ourselves, we became "wholly one." It was in this image of man that we mourned for the dead, "those buried in their blood," those buried in the sole reality of their flesh and blood rather than in terms of a myth which makes a distinction between the body and a soul that outlives the body: this despite the fact that we were still haunted by nostalgia for our old illusions ("jasmine haunted"). We finally came to know the "glass man," the image of ourselves which is totally a reflection of ourselves rather than an image of ourselves derived from reference to something beyond the human. Thus the "glass man" is sufficient in himself as a reflection of humanity and needs no "external reference."

"Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas" (CP, p. 252)

Part I begins by making a comparison between the artificial and the natural, between the paper rose and the real rose. "That states the point"; that is, that establishes the subject at hand: the distinction between the artificial world of the mind and the real world of nature. As if in a lecture at an academy, the poet goes on to state that the world we know is an artificial one. Since what we know of the world we can know only through the mind, the rose we know is of the nature of the mind, or artificial. The sea to us is simply the words through which we conceive it, the sky is just a list of

words we use to describe it, the mountains are like paintings or descriptions of mountains. The real rose, natural reality, belongs, on the other hand, to those who do not perceive the world through the mind, who are naked to reality, innocent of any intervention of the intellect. (Compare "The Sense of the Sleight-of-hand Man," CP, p. 222: "It may be that the ignorant man, alone, / Has any chance to mate his life with life.") Such people would resemble Adam and Eve in their agreeable climate, naked in their "covert," in their sheltered refuge, innocent of their nakedness (clean of "the lascivious poisons"). In such a state of innocence we would not have knowledge of nakedness "as part/ Of reality," nor would we have knowledge of reality itself; rather, we would be beyond such knowledge—we would be united with reality, in fact part of it, "part of a land beyond the mind." But this is put as a mere rhetorical question. For the mind to bypass itself and accept reality beyond the mind, the "Rain," as such, would be "unbearable tyranny." Thus, in practice, we live in an artificial world. The "eye" of the sun reveals to us only imaginary things ("a monster-maker"), shapes that have merely visual reality as in a painting, "paper things." In our experience, the distinction between the artificial and the real, the "false and true," collapses: they "are one."

Part II takes up the argument of the last part of I, and elaborates on it. The eye believes that what it sees is real, and in that belief seems to unite with reality, participate in "communion" with it. But the mind (here the "spirit," probably from the French "esprit," which means both) knows that visual reality is artificial, and therefore "The spirit laughs." The speaker elaborates on this proposition in the mock pedantic tone Stevens sometimes uses for the discursive arguments in his poems (see, for example, "Connoisseur of Chaos," CP, p. 215), addressing "the Secretary for Porcelain" as one concerned with the artificial. Evil considered imaginatively ("made magic"), as for example in tragedy, an imaginary construct in which evil culminates in the "catastrophe," if the catastrophe is well made ("neatly glazed"), becomes elegant, esthetically pleasing (as the fruit presented

to royalty would have to be), a good. Evil, from an esthetic point of view, becomes good; and since good, in this sense, is created by evil, it is "evil's last invention," last because furthest removed from its own nature. The tragic poet (the "maker of catastrophe") invents the point of view, "the eye," through which evil events are made to seem good. The thing seen depends on the way it is seen.

Evil laughs cynically at its illusory inventions of good ("ricanery," from the French "ricaner," to snicker). Generalizations about death ("ten thousand deaths"; compare II, l. 10) that allow one to give it such an esthetic veneer, are evil, the invention of evil. One must accept the evil that comes to one ("Be tranquil in your wounds"); that death is good which is accepted and therefore does away with illusory rationalizations about death ("evil death"). One will be more reconciled to death ("The placating star/ Shall be the gentler") if one accepts its fact, and the philosophers, though helpless to do anything about death, say things that are still consoling—such as, perhaps, the idea that life has its times of ripeness and fulfillment ("the reddened flower, the erotic bird").

"The lean cats of the arches of the churches" are priests, (part III), "lean" because ascetic, other-worldly. The "old world" (European, Catholic, pre-modern) was the priests' domain, but in the new world (American, Protestant, modern) all men have a direct relation to whatever divinity may exist; all are priests. They preach a gospel not yet formulated because a description of the time and place to which it must pertain is not yet formulated. If only they could formulate their different ideas into one representative idea, symbolized by one religious figure: a "queen" who, like the Virgin, would be an "intercessor" for man with the divine by virtue of her innate relation ("rapport") with both man and god; or a "king," a deity ("*roi tonnerre*," king of thunder) whose existence would be intensely real to the imagination ("dark blue," intensely imagined, in terms of Stevens' characteristic association of blue with imagination), whose worthiness, like a god's, would be in his mere existence. But such a being cannot be successfully formulated—thus he is referred to as

"Panjandrum," which is a mock title for an exalted personage. Perhaps the very fact that there are many such ideas held together in the relativist consciousness destroys the possibility for one to exist in sovereign exclusion of the others. Perhaps the sovereign idea of the single divinity, "the single man," is killed because he is not sufficient for the multitudes; perhaps he represents spiritual starvation ("starvation's head") because the old bread and wine of one belief in Christian communion is not adequate to the demands of modern relativism. The priests of the old world are thus "lean cats" also because they hunger for an inadequate god. They fit into a picture of the world supposedly designed by god ("X") in which they feel comfortable ("Bask") and which gives them a sense of clarity, understanding ("feel transparent"). They know where they fit into the picture and this security allows them to bear cheerfully what little they do not understand ("beyond/ Themselves"), and which they fit into the picture in any case, through theological rationalization, "the slightly unjust drawing that is/ Their genius": imperfection is merely an error in the constitution of the temporal world, "exquisite" because it fits into their divine picture of things. This is another example, then, of the process described in part II, by which evil is transformed into illusory good.

At first the lake seems to the subject of part IV something general, indefinite. But while the scene in winter had seemed thus vague ("an empty place"), in early spring, it seems more particularized ("the empty place"). The "difference between the and an" is the difference between the particular and the general and, since no man's experience is general, the "difference between himself and no man." Since in winter he had experienced the scene as something unspecific, it was as if in winter he had suffered a loss of his particular self (IV, l. 12). Because of his curiosity to see the specific place again, it is time to regain that self, to make his experience particular. He wants to see whether the scene, despite its barrenness, is nevertheless particular enough to differentiate his experience of it from experience in general, enough to make the difference between himself and no man. If, when

he looks at the lake, he can see the water spray into the air ("ran up the air") or break against the broken ice, it will mean that the snow and ice which had blanketed everything with the generality of winter has broken up into the particulars of spring. His experience of the scene would no longer be general, or abstract, but particular, specific, and he would become his particular self again. He would have broken through from the abstract to the real and, in so doing, have realized himself. This confrontation with reality as an actual good is in contrast with that transformation of reality into an illusory good described in II and III.

The process in which ideas are accepted and rejected (part V) is not orderly but chaotic, involving improvisation and change. "Ideas are men" in that they have existence only in the minds of men. Therefore the totality ("mass") of meaning is equivalent to the totality of men. But chaos is not the totality of meaning; rather it is the competition of ideas held by whatever number of men. These ideas fight for general acceptance until one gains such acceptance. Then the ideological chaos which had obtained gives way to order. The accepted idea orders or harmonizes, through art, the meaning of reality (an "agreement between himself and night") and men's belief in relation to itself, having effect far beyond that of reputed art dealing with sentimental trivia. The agreement with reality expressed in such art reconciles us with reality—it is the expression, through art ("music") of what men believe ("the mass of meaning"). It is "singular" because it is apparently paradoxical that, though our life is of the body, we should desire so warmly an abstract idea, that we should constantly search for that idea expressed in art ("that right sound"), the imaginative expression of what we believe. Thus the poem moves from confrontation with a particular good in reality in IV, to the possibility of general belief which will reconcile us with reality as a whole.

Part VI begins by considering the possibility of systematic thought that might arrive at such general belief. "Ercole" is Italian for Hercules. Systematic thought is represented here as a kind of misguided Hercules, wasting a powerful physical

being ("skin and spine and hair"), thinking in a "cavern," isolated from life, oriented to death. Another kind of thought, however, is oriented to life. This is a kind of thought which, rather than trying to establish an abstract system, aims at satisfying the needs of the mind as it confronts life. The mind is like a poem, requiring affective resolutions rather than resolutions in abstract, systematic thought. It is the "ultimate poem" because it contains that which all the resolutions of poetry are directed toward resolving, our experience of life itself. This statement is tentatively qualified so that the "ultimate poem" concerns not merely the mind in isolation, but the mind in relation to reality ("half earth"), our daily experience, which comprises the only Elysia we will ever know; it is reality ("Half sun"), and our thought about reality ("half thinking of the sun"); it is half "sky" (another synecdoche for the real,) and half our desire to retreat into the mind.

This other mode of thinking, in contrast with systematic thinking, has happiness as its end and is necessary for happiness ("They had to think it to be"). This kind of thought is not concerned with distinguishing the real from the imagined, as systematic thought might be; on the contrary, it wants to unite the two, the mind with reality. For the additions which the imagination makes to reality, "the images we make of it," are the means by which we "think" our way to happiness, knowing that to attain happiness the mind must be satisfied by such images. In other words, it is not the philosophical nature of reality that is important, but the psychological question of a happy relation of the mind to reality which must be achieved through the imagination, rather than through systematic thought. The analytic distinction between mind and reality is secondary to this, must wait until the "mind is satisfied." From time to time "the redeeming thought" that satisfies the mind comes to us; it is not thought out but comes in the course of time when we are least capable of systematic thought ("sleepy mid-days"), and it is too indefinite for intellectual expression. It is not a "thought" in the ordinary sense at all, but a felt relation of the ego with reality.

Part VII pursues the argument. To satisfy the ego in such a relation with reality as is sketched in VI, is "as much belief as we may have." Such belief will resist our relativistic knowledge of the failure of past belief ("each past apocalypse"), will allow us to reject yearnings for more remote, exotic belief ("Ceylon"); it will satisfy the mind with its description of reality so that belief will require nothing further from reality, "the sea," which then becomes like a beauty to be enjoyed ("*la belle/ Aux crinolines*"); and thus there will be no "mad mountains" that do not seem to fit into the picture of the world that our belief gives us. It is not the nature of reality that matters, but what one believes about it. Stevens seems to speak of belief here in the sense that a fish believes in water; that is, as an ideal adjustment of the self to its environment, "one's element," in exhilarated unions, fortuitous "reunions," meditated "surrenders" of the self to the real. Belief through which we may in this way relate to reality, feeling oneself a part of that reality, is all the belief we need. If one were then suddenly transferred to another reality to which one were totally unadjusted, one would be overwhelmed by it, "Incapable of belief." And, on the contrary, the slightest perception of the reality to which one was adjusted would be sufficient, without any need of illusion, to orient the world around one's belief.

"We live in a camp" (part VIII), in that our life is an impermanent abode, and is like a concentration camp in which we are destined to die. Within this fact of impermanence the only "final peace" lies in what the feelings can make of our condition, in what remains to the heart, "the heart's residuum." So be it. But if the opposite were true, could we thus ratify the situation with an "amen"? If we lived in permanence, as in the permanence of life after death, the evil we experience would never die; we would be fated to outlive every mortal wound since we would be unable to die "a second death." The only ultimate end to evil, which is part of life, is death. Yet if there is no resolution to evil but only the escape of death, if "evil never ends," if after death we lie "in evil earth," then death is really not an escape from

evil—death, as a permanence, simply emphasizes the permanence of evil, for after death, we cannot die again. Neither immortality nor mortality, then, gives "final peace." Imaginative expressions ("chants," "stanzas") of belief are our resort, expressions that grow out of our feelings ("the heart's residuum") about our life. But how can we create such expressions ("How can/ We chant") in face of unending evil? Earth is not "evil earth"; rather, in the dissolution that occurs after death it "dissolves/ Its evil." If earth dissolves evil after death, it must dissolve it while we are alive. It is that dissolution of evil in life that is the motive for poetry; this is the "acutest end" of poetry. We must find in our feeling the poetry for a statement which can confront our experience, all we know ("Equal to memory"), a statement which, as in poetry, is "vital" because it is dictated by feeling. The final couplet is an example, giving the doomed soldiers as a metaphor for our fate, yet making the fate seem noble.

"Dutch Graves in Bucks County" (CP, p. 290)

This poem resembles a march of time in the on-going present of the living, counterpointed by the static past of the dead from which time continually breaks.

The horde of the living swarms through the poet's imagination, figured in the metaphor of an army in the sky. The wheels of their machines are unreal, therefore silent, too large for sound, since the army represents the imagined totality of the living. As the poet imagines them, he also imagines the dead in the grave yard, his "semblables" (fellow, counterpart, reminiscent of Baudelaire's "*Au Lecteur*"—Stevens' father was born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and was of Dutch descent; Stevens was German, or "Pennsylvania Dutch" on the maternal, Zeller, side. Stevens himself was a native not of Bucks, but of nearby Berks County. See Stevens' account of a visit to the old Zeller home and to a similar, but Pennsylvania Dutch, grave yard, *NA*, p. 99-102, apparently made