

which has proved unfeasible, but as the “wrangling” of two: one concerning the imagination, and one Monday’s world. This will be the reality (“its actual stone”) of time to come, and our portion (“bread”) in it. We will accept that hard reality, and take in it what comfort we can. We will forget other concerns in our daily life, except on occasion, when we choose to indulge in the exercise of the imagination. So may this dream evade the “dirty light” of the work-a-day world, and still coexist with it.

### “The Man on the Dump” (CP, p. 201)

The scene is that of nightfall. The setting sun with its colors, is like a basket of flowers, “a bouquet” placed on the horizon by the moon, which is “Blanche,” white. The poet gloats (“Ho-ho”) over the images to be found on the “dump” (such as the moon as “Blanche” and the sunset as “a bouquet”). The days themselves are like daily papers which bring their contents to the dump, including their daily sunset (“The bouquets”). The daily advent of the moon, as well as that of the sun, comes to the dump, along with the most ordinary things (“the janitor’s poems/ Of every day”). These things come to the dump as our stale descriptions of them. Thus, the days come like old newspapers, and the rejected trash of the quotidian comes in terms of “the janitor’s poems.” The real, beyond stale descriptions of it, endures in its freshness. But even as one describes that reality it turns stale and literary. The “blowing of day,” like a wind blowing, ever fresh as it passes (and perhaps also “blowing” in the sense of the blooming of day at dawn) may be described as comparable to a reading of Cornelius Nepos (a Roman historian of the first century B.C.) insofar as his style, presumably, conduces to a fresh and breezy reading. One may compose this or that metaphor in description of the day. The fact is that one’s experience of the day is immediate and sensuous, not descriptive and literary. The images used to express this are concrete and sensuous, especially in compari-

son with the literary metaphor about Cornelius Nepos. How many men and women have copied the ephemeral freshness (“dew”) of reality in order to make of it something decorative, merely pretty, something with which to adorn themselves? One grows tired of such artificiality except as it is rejected on the dump. Now, in the freshness of spring, with the flowers blooming, one feels, in that moment of the present between the stale past and our descriptions of the immediate moment which will soon become stale, the freshness of reality itself. As one feels “the purifying change” of season from the staleness of the old to the freshness of the new, so one feels the change from our stale images of reality to immediate perception of reality in the present moment, before one has a chance to make new images of that reality which will themselves become stale. One rejects “the trash” for reality itself. It is in that moment of the immediate present that one sees reality afresh. It is a quietly dramatic moment, as if accompanied by the music of bassoons, when one sees things as they actually are, and the music and moon rise also indicate a readiness for a new release of the imagination in description of a bare reality (“the elephant-colorings of tires”). One’s images for things have been stripped away, and one sees the moon as the moon itself rather than in terms of metaphor like that of line two (the moon as the woman Blanche placing a basket of flowers); one sees things as a man rather than as a literary conception of a man (“an image of a man”), and the sky is empty of all descriptions of the sky. One keeps stubbornly making a point of the ordinary (“lard pail”), calling attention to it. It is that which one believes to be real, which one desires to approach. Could one, on the contrary, be trapped in solipsism? Could the real “Be merely oneself?” could the mind be projecting itself onto reality, making meanings of it as the ear makes meaning of a meaningless crow’s call? Would the song of the nightingale have such an unpleasant effect on us as that of the crow (packing the heart, probably, with unpleasant feelings, and grating on the mind)? Would the ear choose such an ill-tempered bird as the crow, if it were in fact creating what it

heard? Does one find peace and perfection ("philosopher's honeymoon") on the dump, and, since one does not, would the mind create such an imperfect reality for itself? One does not, conscious of all the trash rejected by reality, utter more sentimental trash that will in turn be rejected ("*aptest eve*"). One does not try to project mysterious and euphonic nonsense ("*invisible priest*") onto reality in face of the unpleasant cries of the blackbirds ("blatter of grackles"). One does not "eject" the trash of stale images and "pull the day to pieces" to get at its reality while maintaining a precious estheticism ("*stanza my stone*"). How does one find one's way back to the place where one first heard about "the truth," here apposite with "The the," the predication of that which is, the particulars of reality itself.

### "Connoisseur of Chaos" (CP, p. 215)

This poem makes use of a mock pedanticism which Stevens sometimes employs as a stratagem in his most logically discursive poems (compare, for example, "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas," CP, p. 252).

The poem begins with two paradoxical propositions. An order imposed on reality distorts it and thus is a "disorder" in that it denies the order of reality as it exists; on the other hand, "A great disorder" like the great disorder of reality, has an order inherent in itself, the order, simply, of that which is. The poem provides illustrations to the effect that the two initial propositions are actually different statements of the same idea.

The second section presents three seemingly paradoxical illustrations. The greenness of spring is blue, the color usually associated in Stevens with the imagination, because the burgeoning of spring stimulates the imagination, and it is also like a burgeoning of the imagination. This is followed by two apparent matters of fact which, in a parallel way, seem paradoxical. Since such paradoxes are merely verbal and in reality resolve into simple matters of fact—since, despite

their seeming self contradiction, or disorderliness, in life such things go on as a matter of routine, there must be, in reality, as opposed to the mind's impositions on it, a law by which opposites are dialectical and resolve into "essential unity." Such a law is pleasant to contemplate, esthetically pleasant in the same way as is a particular in a painting. (Jean Hippolyte Marchand, 1883–1941, was a painter, lithographer, and illustrator who did illustrations for books by Valéry, Claudel, and Jammes.)

The third section begins with the old religious rationale for such unity, but considered only as a dead option. Life and death were a "pretty contrast," esthetically pleasant, when they could be resolved in the idea of god and its corollary idea of immortality. But the facts of contemporary life are too difficult to be handled by a closed, rigid mentality ("squamous," covered with scales, sometimes with reference to a kind of armor and, also, part of the bone structure of the temple), especially such a rigid religious mentality as the "bishops" might exemplify. And yet, beyond the comprehending mind, relation between such opposites as life and death—that is, order—does make itself felt, ephemerally, ambiguously, but with expanding relevance.

Section four works variations on the initial propositions. An old order, like that of the "bishops' books," is an imposition on reality that distorts it. However, this, though true, is trivial, since it is just one fact among all the unrelated facts of which reality consists. B also returns to the initial proposition B. The facts of the weather, the seasons, comprise a great disorder. Should this disorder of the weather, the seasonal cycle, this natural disorder ever become fixed in a stable, powerful, old order ("Plantagenet"), it would be a violent order, and thus would be a disorder of reality as it is. This leads back to the initial statement of B: reality as it is in itself comprises an order; which in turn is to say that any imposition on that order of things as they are would be a violent order and therefore disorder, part of the great disorder which is an order. Thus A and B, as was stated at the outset, are one. These ideas are not meant for academic considera-