in order to remain present, it must destroy itself. The dead
of the Dutch graveyard, whose "glory" when they were alive
was that of "heaven in the wilderness" of Pennsylvania, are
now inanimate witnesses to the fact that the present brings a
new ideal, "a new glory of new men."

One may not even die peacefully in the knowledge of hav-
ing perfected an ideal that will endure; on the contrary, one
is tormented by the idea that those living in the new present
will "Avoid our stale perfections," using what is left of ours
for their own ends, seeking their own perfections. For the
stars of the present are not relevant to the dead imaginary
beings ("chimerae"), but to the living present "of those
alive." The living who people the present ("Under the arches,
over the arches" of the sky), on the edge of future death
("autumnal horizon"), march through segments of a chaos
which, since it is reality itself, is "more than an order"—to-
ward an ideal that will be an expression of their particular
generation, "a generation's centre." The fact that the dead
can so subtly bear witness to the effects of time in sustaining
a living present shows both that time was not wasted on the
dead, and that the differences that time has wrought were
not made too difficult for them to track down.

"No Possum, No Sop, No Taters"
(CP, p. 293)

As the title indicates, the poem presents a barren landscape.
The sun is not only absent but seems as if it belonged to
another realm all together. The scene is frozen, dead; "Bad"
seems final because the scene is static, frozen, as if it will
never change. Appropriately, therefore, the remnants of dead
vegetation suggest images of impotence, incapability: "arms
without hands," "trunks;/Without legs," "without heads,"
heads whose tongues are incapable of expressing their an-
guish. As the stalks suggest the failure of speech, the snow
suggests the failure of sight (in language that calls up the
pertinent feeling of Nashe's "Brightness falls from the air")

Even the dead leaves "hop," as though lame or crippled. The
sky, hard as if frozen, the stalks rooted in ice, emphasize the
fixity of the scene. One single sound, composed of the stupid
("gawky"), inconsequential sounds in the landscape—the
"savages hollow" of the wind as it sweeps across the scene
—expresses its monolithic barreness. It is in a "bad" so
extreme that we can know the "good" at its most absolute,
stripped of all inessentials ("last purity"); that all things are
destroyed, as in the cyclic death of the seasons in the present
scene, that even the "bad" of this season will be destroyed by
that cyclic change. In tone with the rest of the scene, the
crew seems accustomed to stasis, he "looks rusty as he rises
up." But the "malice in his eye" seems vivid, alive. He seems
to represent the necessary destructive principle that motivates
seasonal change, and therefore, in sympathy, "One joins
him," but only "at a distance," out of caution and distaste.

"So-And-So Reclining on Her Couch"
(CP, p. 295)

This is one of Stevens' funnier poems. The poet describes
himself in process of painting a figure with words, as though
on canvas, to illustrate his idea. Thus the figure is both a
functional "mechanism," and an "apparition," something
that has suddenly materialized. It is the hypothesis: "Projection
A." The figure is without context ("floats in air"), on a can-
vass, "at the level of/ The eye," without name, and without
meaning except for the sensuous one expressed by "the curv-
ing of her hip." She is so freshly imagined that the paint is
still wet, indicating her total innocence ("Eyes crippling
blue"). If one placed above her head an old crown artfully
painted into the picture ("practic," in an obsolete usage,
means artful, a usage here suggested by the archaicized spell-
ing), suspended as if in three dimensions by the artist, that
suspension, apparently indicating a magical or miraculous
phenomenon, would represent on the part of the artist a
"gesture," an expression of meaning regarding the figure, "in-