

its personal vision of the landscape, in giving point to the pines and their smell ("tang"; but "tang" also itself means points—thus also: "give point to their points"). But there is a double pun in the name of "Iffucan of Azcan": give me the lie if-you-can and, in fact, as you can.

### "To the One of Fictive Music" (CP, p. 87)

The poem is addressed to the muse of poetry—she is of that "sisterhood" of the muses who, though not alive, are alive to the poet and to the imagination, hence "the living dead." (Stevens, however, after glossing the One and the sisterhood as the muses, makes it clear that he prefers not to specify them except as they are specified in the poem—see *LWS*, pp. 297, 298.) It is she among the muses with whom the poet feels most intimate, whose works seem most tangible ("clear-est bloom"). Considered as source of the creative spirit ("mother") rather than companion ("sister," l. 1) she is chief among the other muses; and she is the object of his warmest transcendental love. But she is not distant, exotic ("cloudy silver"), not a femme fatale ("venom of renown"), but simple, as she is close and clear.

The "birth" in stanza two is that of our human consciousness, which separates us from nature while leaving us in it,<sup>16</sup> so that, seeing so much of ourselves in nature, it comes to seem to us a large and coarse image of ourselves ("Gross effigy and simulacrum"). The "music summoned" (stanza 2, l. 1) by this birth is art, which attempts to bridge the separation between man and nature (compare, "From this the poem springs: that we live in a place/ That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves," "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction," *It Must Be Abstract*, IV). Coming thus out of our "imperfections," no art renders more perfection than poetry. The muse is referred to as "rare" because of the rarity (fine, unusual) of such perfection, but "kindred" because the more perfect the poem laboriously wrought, the more of ourselves,

of the "near," the familiar, will be in it. The more the poem, as our bridge to nature, retains of ourselves, the closer it brings our selves to nature.

For in this effort to bridge the gap between the self and nature (stanza 3), men so desire to retain as much of their selves as possible that that art is most intense for them which makes a point of the familiar, what they know (l. 3), that meditation on the obscure (Riddel, p. 68, notes the pun on "musing" here) most acute which grasps, through poetry ("As in your name"), what is familiar and certain ("sure") in that unmitigated ("arrant") nature we live in. Thus here the muse is referred to in terms of the familiar detail of nature which yields a poetry that most resembles our own lives.

Yet, though poetry can proclaim the familiar, we would not like it to be too literal. In our art ("feigning") reality should be endowed with the interest that the imagination can give it ("the strange unlike"), which provides it with the saving difference from reality without the imagination. (As in Wordsworth, the imagination is to be cast over the ordinary, in order to present it to the mind in an unusual way.) To this end the muse must also be the exotic femme fatale, as well as familiar and simple. She must give us that element of unreality, the imagination, which makes reality so alluring.

### "Peter Quince at the Clavier" (CP, p. 89)

Peter Quince is the stage manager of the rustic actors in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. He is perhaps à propos as the speaker of the poem in that, as he day dreams at the key board, he is in a sense the stage manager of the imagination. The poem is a flight of imagination that takes place as Peter Quince plays, and one should note the high frequency of musical terms used. It is like a key board impromptu in which each of the four sections resembles a "movement" whose metrical tempo helps set its mood.

As the player strikes the keys of the clavier (I), so the