

the mind. But then it occurs to him that the world does not consist of a force, but of the presence of reality, and that the presence of reality is not of the mind. The Back-Ache replies that presence is trivial, a child's play ("*Kinder-Scenen*," children's scenes). Saint John objects that presence, "The effect of the object," "fills the being" before the mind can grasp it, that this effect is beyond the mind's furthest reach ("Extremest pinch") to achieve, as in the effect of a sudden appearance of color on the sea; yet presence is not that color in itself. Again, presence is beyond the mind as is the somber change of season from summer to autumn, but it is not the undoing of the last yellow leaves of late summer in itself, nor is it the woman in herself who provokes the profoundly moving experience of love at first sight. Presence is not the object but "The effect of the object" (l. 9). He notes that he is not quite articulating his point ("I speak below/ The tension of the lyre"), and goes on to do so. These illustrations of presence are nothing miraculous, but real, even ordinary, phenomena which, because they affect us deeply, because their presence is deeply felt, help us bridge the "dumbfounding abyss" between ourselves and those objects in external reality which are the cause of such feeling. In bridging this abyss between the self and reality, the mind does not help us, it has no dominion; therefore the abyss is an "ignorance," one which, however small, serves to alienate the self from the world in which it exists. Such examples of presence suggest the hypothetical proposition ("possible," "invisible," "composite") of a time when we will recognize that the venom of reality is also its wisdom, when we will understand that what inflicts pain and kills is also that reality whose presence we most profoundly need to realize. Thus in opening ourselves fully to the presence of reality, the armor of the "stale turtle" against reality will grow useless. Such knowledge would be an insight of great weight. The Back-Ache admits the possibility of this argument, since he cannot know the irrational human reaction to presence, such as that of Saint John's reaction, in its reasoned irrationality, to the pain of his own presence.

"An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" (CP, p. 465)

"An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" is written in that kind of free verse approximating a norm of iambic pentameter, which was Stevens' characteristic measure in his later poems. A summary of the poem would be of small help, since there is no argument to the poem, nor progression of any kind. Its form is rather that of a see-saw oscillation between an attitude that everything is "as unreal as real can be" (V), and its counterpart that "We keep coming back and coming back/ To the real" (IX). This oscillation in the attitude of the poem reflects the actual oscillation, as it is described by the poem, of the mind with regard to reality. The poem is a series of qualifications on the "vulgate of experience" (I), the common, received version of experience, as opposed to the fluctuations of experience in the individual and imaginative mind. The fundamental assumption of the poem is that the locus of reality, insofar as it is manifest to the mind, is a realm where it and the mind meet and interfuse one another, with a result that is sometimes in favor of the one, sometimes the other. In this realm the two balance each other, so that sometimes we use the imagination to evade reality (IV), and sometimes we seek "The poem of pure reality" (IX), according to our need. Thus it is not so much the actual nature of reality that is the poet's concern, but the ego's relation to it as it is caught and expressed in description (XXXI).

Section I states the subject of the poem. Sight, or the data of the senses, is unique ("a thing apart") as the usual or received version ("vulgate") of experience. But this statement is to be qualified again and again, as part of the endless meditation on the question, which, since it grows out of the imagination's effect on reality, is itself an imagined thing ("a giant himself"): what is the nature of reality? What does a house consist of, if not the material substance of reality ("the sun")? And yet these houses are "difficult objects"; they appear as decayed versions of appearance, and

so seem unreal, things that do not communicate their full reality to the mind, that do not seem to have a corresponding "double" in the mind. They appear unreal unless this imagined version of reality (the first giant) is replaced by another which shows a new likeness ("resemblance") of reality ("the sun"), which comes inevitably and as naturally as the processes of the weather and the seasons ("Down-pouring, up-springing"), and which will provide a more inclusive version of reality, available to more people. Its effect would be to crystallize one's vision of reality, as if the meaningless pieces ("collops") of reality were brought into unity forming a new myth of reality, composing a world as happy as a festival, personified in a god-like figure, a "giant" who is "alive with age" in that he is old as the creation, since he is its creator, and in that we feel creation has always been the way he makes it seem.

Section II supposes the houses to have no reality except as they are conceived in the mind ("composed of ourselves"). Thus they would be without substance ("impalpable"), "transparent" in that they consist of the invisible mental effects in which they are perceived, and seem to exist only in the operations of the mind. Here the objects of sight, the "far-fire flowing" (a phrase employed, perhaps, mostly for phonetic considerations), and those of sound (the bells), would come together in fluid and vague images of themselves ("flowing," "dim-coned"), in a realm of the mind in which we are in equilibrium, regardless of time or place, since it is detached from time or place. It is a realm that is the locus of what we know as reality (thus "perpetual reference"), and is therefore the object of "the perpetual meditation," and the point of love as the mind desires to perceive reality with love ("visionary love"). It is uncertain in its transformations of even the clearest fact, and, since it is the place where reality ("sun") and mind meet, its contents include both the dictates of the spirit, and confused perceptions of the reality beyond the spirit. As such it is a realm of imaginative revery where the ego comes into contact with reality, so suffusing the latter with its own character ("So

much ourselves") that we cannot distinguish our idea of reality from the existence beyond the mind which provides the data ("the bearer-being") for the idea.

Since, in section III, "The point of vision and desire are the same," we try to project onto reality what we desire to see. It is to the faculty of meditation ("the hero of midnight") that we address ourselves to make a beautiful world ("beau mont") of the hard one in which we live. If our love of reality, for which we try to make it over in an ideal image, is thwarted, and "beau mont" remains obscured by night unchanged, we resort to the wisdom that, as the will to holiness is next to the fact, so with the desire for love. To love reality requires possession of the object of love. But the desire to love cannot be frustrated, and is secure because by nature desire cannot be in possession of its object. Desire acts in all seeing, desiring to see the objects of sight as better than they are, so they may be worthy of love, and it exists always in unfulfillment, in denial that cannot be content as denial ("cannot contain its blood"). It comprises the potential perfection of a porcelain, as yet unformed in fragments of clay ("bats," fragments of hardened clay). The desire to love reality, in other words, is the unrealized desire to perceive perfection in reality.

The ugliness ("plainness") of ordinary things is cruel (section IV) as, for example, that seen by a man who has fought hard against illusion and what used to be but is no more ("was"), trying to arrive at a final unembellished clarity before his vision is extinguished by the gross relief of sleep. Men in ordinary life are not precise about the mollification they need for their plain lives. For their urgent need a rude kind of relief comes, and is accepted. It changes them, softens their need, and comforts them by bringing them into an unsophisticated but subtle accord of things unlikely ("surprised") to be in accord. It consists of a kind of wishful thinking wherein one is moved by the thought of something opposite to that which needs relief, and which is infinitely preferable to it ("diviner opposite"). So in winter comes the thought of spring, and the approach of winter, like the

ghosts of winters passed away, is soothing in the fancy which makes it seem like a fairy tale, a romanticization of summer heat, its "diviner opposite." One thinks of the cold of approaching winter as if it were a story told, assuagingly, in the heat of summer.

Reality is for us what the mind perceives, not "that which is" (section V), and therefore romance is inescapable; even disillusion is another kind of illusion, and we have a choice only among dreams. Reality consists of a series of projections of our own egos, mirrors of ourselves, so that a room contains a lake of reflections and out-of-doors is the larger mirror of a "glassy ocean"; the character of a town depends ("hanging pendent") on the shadow the ego casts on it, a nation is happy in the style we give it, and all of reality is shaped by the unreality of our projections for the eye which does not itself search out such elaborations ("inexquisite eye"). Why then ask who undertook to create the world of the imagination in addition to the common world? The choice is not between the real and the unreal but between a common unreality and a better one. The division is therefore inherent in the pattern of man's nature ("the chrysalis"), and evolves in the self during the day when there is leisure to use the imagination ("blue day"), and especially in the ramifications ("branchings") of the imagination at night after the practical concerns of the common world are past. One part of the ego holds fast to the received version, the vulgate of reality ("common earth"), and the other, in flights of the imagination, tries to find such improvements on it as it can.

Reality is the base on which the imagination elaborates, not the final truth (section VI). Reality is the plain version of things, "Naked Alpha," rather than the one which interprets the plain version, "hierophant Omega," invested with "dense" meanings, and surrounded by the entourage of the imagination. Alpha is the beginning of a process which grows from reality seen in an unsophisticated way ("the infant A") to reality learnedly glossed ("polymathic Z") through contemplation of the possibilities or relations ("distances") within it ("space"). Alpha fears the human interpretation of

reality, or imaginative men most given to such interpretations ("Omega's men"), or the imaginative elaborations of the human point of view, since these change the plain Alpha. Both of these viewpoints are present in our lives. For Alpha, the life we lead ("the scene") is adequate, and for Omega it is not, so that he seeks more through imaginative interpretation. For Omega as well as Alpha this scene is not a vacuum, since he, like Alpha, has his way of safeguarding ("custodian") a glory in life that makes it worthwhile; each considers himself the faultless ("immaculate") interpreter of life. The difference between them is that between an end and the way to it. The continual beginning in the plain version of things ends in its continual refreshment in the imaginative.

In the presence of their buildings, the architects, however materially impoverished they may be, seem as fertile and lively in spirit as the chapels and schools they designed (VII). The buildings are lively and move the spectator to feel the same quality. But the spectator is also moved by the lesser productions of "rigid realists," by the exteriorizations of the spirit of practical men, as opposed to the "impoverished" architects. The productions of the realists make it seem as if the men had become the things they created, as if in a play, and stood dressed in the "antic symbols" of themselves. As things they cannot help but reveal their spiritual nature, not merely as to the depth of understanding but as to the height of their fancy as well, and therefore with regard to the "miraculous" or imaginative, as well as to the commonplace. It then appears that realists are also men of imagination, and conceive new worlds besides the common one, in which the mornings, "pinked out pastily," are the artificial mornings of the fancy, but are also dawns of new possibilities, just as the daytime world becomes credible again at sunrise when it seemed incredible at night. Thus, the imagination of the realists makes possible new conceptions about reality.

The ego is the lover of reality (VIII). Contact with reality ("the street") is like the air itself as we breathe deeply—"a

health" that revivifies our "sepulchral hollows." We find love of reality in fragrances that, perhaps, have the pleasant ("soft") quality of waltz time ("three-four cornered") coming from leaves that have the still more exhilarating quality of "five-six" time, as we find it in the earth's green which shows the lover its fertility, and in the blue of the imagination which reclaims points of rendezvous ("a secret place") between the lover and reality from the latter's generally indifferent quality ("anonymous color"). The breath is like an element from which comes a means of communication with reality, and the breath's desperation to communicate must be calmed, so that one can come into rapport with her (reality). It is like a native language found in a foreign land, which we recognize as we breathe like an avowal of rapport that requires no answer ("contains its converse in itself"). It is like a conversation whose participants are mutually modified by their dialogue so that each ceases to be himself ("Two bodies disembodied in their talk") and enters into an understanding with the other so fragile and immediate that speech would only interfere with it.

From the imaginary, which predominates in most of the preceding sections, the poem returns in IX (as it did in VIII) to the imaginary's basis in reality, to our home in reality ("hotel") instead of insubstantial songs about it. We seek to catch reality in the poem unchanged by its language, to find the exact word that reveals the object in its greatest integrity, so that its reality transfixes the mind, as in a view of New Haven that reflects nothing of the ego ("without reflection"). We seek nothing beyond reality, since it includes the spirit's metamorphoses ("alchemicana") and its transcendence of materiality, not merely what can be seen and touched, but that which changes ("the movable") with the moment, the holidays we invent and the spirituality of saints, and the pattern we read into the cosmos. Reality includes both the palpable and the mind's interpretations of it, the spiritual, which may also be accurately described.

Everything is both predictable and dead ("fatal") in the moon because nothing happens there, and it is empty (X).

On the earth it is a different story. Here everything is a puzzle that amounts to "a total double-thing" consisting of reality and our perception of it, and in consequence we cannot tell the real from the unreal. The moon is like a statue which does not change ("whose mind was made up") and which, since it became static amidst the change of which it was part, died. Not so with us. While the static moon is imprisoned by the change which surrounds it, our changing spirit is at home in permanent change. The world we live in is faithful to change, as of morning and evening, which come therefore like fulfillments of expectation, of the sun changing from night to dawn to dusk and the festival of heavenly lights that follows. This "faithfulness" is the dependable permanence of change, as opposed to the stasis of the moon. It is the habitual way of the earth estimably sustained through the ages ("venerable holding-in"), and, through the fulfillment of our expectations, it makes gay the different appearances of reality at different times ("hallucinations in surfaces").

Considering the real town in a metaphysical aspect (XI), we remember the symbol of an older civilization of which only the symbol, the "phrase," remains meaningful to us here in a city like New Haven. Each such symbol of the spirit, in the absence of the reality it once represented, is an imaginative light that shines only at night when the rest of reality is not in evidence, and exists only in the mind as an idea, a "transparency" through which we may see reality. The great symbol for us must be potent in the daylight of reality. The potency of the old symbol grows weak since it no longer has the fact to support it, and the fact of our present reality assumes its power. That reality contrives the same kind of articulation of itself, and through it New Haven claims our feelings as Juda claimed those of its citizens, or must come to do so, since man's spiritual needs are constant, though his reality changes. One thinks of such symbols as one walks through New Haven and considers it in a metaphysical way, but one is roused from metaphysics by the reality of New Haven which destroys such creations of the mind. One is thus freed from their majesty, and yet one needs such majesty

that is credible in view of the real New Haven, a symbol, a central attraction (the French *clou*, figurative meaning), which that reality will be unable to destroy ("invincible"). It will be only minimally a product of the mind, a true symbol for the belief of the most truthful men that will be an epitome of reality itself, "The propounding of four seasons and twelve months." It will not be a light in the mind, but one at the very center of the earth, the center of meaning in our reality ("central," perhaps as in a telephone system, the point to which everything is referred).

The poem is part of its occasion, not about it (XII). It is the articulation ("cry") of the occasion, an inseparable part of the thing ("res") itself. The poem is an experience of the poet which he sets down as it comes to him, something that is present to him, and not about something else in the past. It is part of an event's effect on him ("reverberation"), his experience of a windy night when the statues seem like papers in the wind. He writes what he sees and thinks as he sees and thinks it. He writes of how things seem at the moment, not of how they will seem in the future. Tomorrow, without the wind, the statues will not be part of his poem, part of his experience which metamorphosed them—not part of the thing itself, but "things about" something else. The fluid and the static things that flicker between immediate experience and past experience are like autumn leaves that are in the process of passing away, which resemble the presence of thought that exists only as it is in process of passing away. The objects of experience exist like thoughts passing through the mind. It seems—in the psychological relation among the ego, its object in reality ("the town"), and the weather (that, like the wind, creates a mood between ego and reality)—as if the dead rubbish which experience becomes when it has passed away indicates that the articulations of experience ("words of the world") are the only things that represent and preserve the momentary life of experience ("the life of the world").

An "ephebe" (XIII) was a young Greek undergoing his final education in initiation to citizenship. Here, as in "Notes

toward a Supreme Fiction," he is an aspiring poet. He is one who keeps to his own meditations. He does not merely seek information ("the journalism of subjects"), but rather the benefits of spiritual perfection ("perquisites of sanctity"). He enjoys a mind superior to his environment ("a weak neighborhood"): thus, he is a serious man who lacks, and must seek, the serious. His thoughts are not directed to any activity, but rather to the meditation for which he is singular. During his meditative walk at evening he neither prescribes religion nor keeps order ("priest nor proctor") among those engaged in learned thought ("perilous owls"; "perilous" is an archaic form for "parlous," which in Shakespeare meant dangerously cunning) about the mystery ("big X") of divinity in a return to the supernatural ("the returning primitive"). He defines a new kind of spirituality, characterized by the coldness of the intelligence rather than the fervor of religion, found not in heaven, "not deep in a cloud," but in the common objects of reality. It is the assertion not of a faith, but of a problem: how the visible may be apprehended clearly by the mind, or, "the nations of the clear invisible," as if accurate perception of reality (referred to by the synecdoche of its sounds) gets at the only kind of spiritual perfection ("essential integrity") available to us.

God is that which can satisfy one's needs (XIV): the dry eucalyptus seeks salvation in moisture, and the professor seeks it in New Haven. He looks to the objects in the ramshackle town because there is nothing else to which he can look; there is not much besides "the object itself" in which he can choose to seek "god," or salvation. One can only choose the adjective which accommodates the reality of what one sees and at the same time satisfies the need of the ego to consider it in a certain light. Thus it is description that makes the object divine, derives from it salvation, quiet speech that arrives at the description to which we respond ("the point of reverberation"). It is not that reality is grim, but that it is grimly seen, and may be described in a new way that makes it seem "paradisal"; in any case, reality is never grim on the account of the perceiver's attitude, the "human grim." The

sounds of the ramshackle town are not substitutes for salvation, but of its essence not yet perceived in the "commodious" description.

When necessary, on the other hand, Professor Eucalyptus takes refuge from "repugnant rain" (XV), in his wish for a rainless land which he constructs in a flight of imagination ("come at upon wide delvings of wings") by means of a projection of his own ego ("the self/ Of his self"). However, his desire for such a land ("heaven") had its "counterpart," its complement, in a desire for earth, the reality of New Haven, and the merry-go-round repetitions of life (the coinage, "gay tournamonde," or turn-a-world—see LWS, p. 699, n. 1), in which he does not exist as if in a heaven, but as he is in the real New Haven. This counterpart of heaven was a kind of antithesis set against it, a "counterpoint" registered in the irksome noise made by the rain that kept falling. The rock of reality in its wintry bareness that hangs as a shadow in spring when reality is clothed in vegetation, becomes reality glittering in the light when the vegetation dies in autumn. This bare reality is the substantial ("Ponderable") source of each insubstantial dream with which, like spring, we clothe reality, such as the dream of heaven. It is the weight of this reality that we lift with such dreams, that we lighten for ourselves with the imagination through our will to do so ("light will"), through our desire to lighten its weight, the "actual hand" of desire which is no less real than the weight of reality.

The present changes so that, among the images of time, no single one remains adequate to represent it (XVI). The present, if any image suits it, is a perpetual tragedy, "the venerable mask," because of its inevitable dissolution in the total decay ("dilapidation of dilapidations") of the past. The new day, which comes like every day has come, time out of mind ("oldest-newest"), is still the unique present; the night, though it is like all the nights of the past, does not creak by like an old ghost of the night sky ("a celestial ancientness"). It comes from the sea to the continent like sleep coming to young lovers, that of the masculine "Italian"

coming from beyond the horizon to mingle with that of the "Oklahoman." But in the perfection of the present we are sometimes reminded of its tragedy, the "venerable mask," which speaks to us of the inevitable decay made of such perfection by change and, thus, of "death's poverty." The thought, in the fruition of the present, of its inevitable decay in death's poverty, should be the most affecting aspect of tragedy. It takes only a bough with its leaves fallen, and wind in the eaves that, perhaps, seems to whisper of death, to remind us of the total decay into which the living present passes, the "total leaflessness" in which the leaves are a momentary episode.

The attempt to conceive reality (XVII) is almost comic (l. 1), since reality is an inconceivable blank (l. 7). But it is not comic, because the strength of our need to do so makes the attempt too much in earnest. Perhaps it does not merely fail to become comic but rejects comedy, as serious strength rejects trifling ("pin-idleness"). The blank of reality underlies the attempts of invention to conceive it ("the trials of device"), dominates those attempts, and is "unapproachable," not to be conceived. The image ("the mirror") of the serious conception of reality is one of the blue of the imagination worked up into the symbolic colors of a precious garment that is like the presence of god's salvation in a burning bush, or that is like a fictive cloak thrown over the blank of reality, so that our pointless representations ("wasted figurations") of its meaningless processes are caught and made meaningful in a work of art (the "robe of rays"). These imaginative sayings are partly of the nature of tragedy as well as of comedy, but as the serious reflection of reality is not comic, neither is it tragic: it is composed of the commonplace caught and given value in such a "robe of rays," in a work of art.

It is looking through the window which gives on the external scene (XVIII) that makes it difficult to live in the present, and to create imaginative works with regard to the present state of the imagination ("painting"). The difficulty of living in the present stems from one's sense perception of the static external scene which seems to be the present, when

in fact "the present state of things" is a state of the mind detached from the external scene and its perception by the senses. Thus, it seems that the eyes are part of the present, that what the ears perceive in the external scene affect the mind, as if life were always physical, when, on the contrary, the mind exists in a present detached from physical reality, so that "life and death" are not "ever," or always, "physical." The "life and death," the concerns of utmost importance, of one particular artificer, or "carpenter," the poet himself, depend on imaginative elaborations of a flower that do not exist in reality, "iridescences/ Of petals that will never be realized." Such imaginative perceptions are of things that will exist in reality only after they are captured in a work of art ("Things not yet true"), and which are perceived through elaboration on what does exist in reality ("perceives through truth"). This is how the artificer perceives that present which exists apart from his perception of reality, "Or thinks he does," since it is a world of thought that exists only in the mind. His present is his imaginative elaboration of reality ("a carpenter's iridescences"), artificial ("wooden"), and is the model for those who would be men of the imagination ("astral apprentices," those who learn to "star-gaze," so to speak). It is an improvisation "slapped up" for use, instrumental to fulfillment of one's needs, "like a chest of tools"; and the eccentric forms it takes in imagination may be brought about literally in time ("of which the clocks talk").

The moon (XIX), a dominant image of the imagination, orders the mind, in which each thing is touched by its radii of light ("its radial aspect"). By means of it, that which was of the external world became of the subjective world (l. 4). The moon is only an example of a "radial aspect," and there may be other such sources of order: a uniform epoch, a central human figure, a germinal symbol, or any product of the imagination that, like the poles, serves as a point with reference to which chaos may be civilized. The "radial aspect" of our time and place among the "colonies" or civilizations of which the world, a "colony/ Of colonies," is composed, the present sense of "the changing sense// Of things," is com-

prised in a figure "like Ecclesiast," hardy and enlightening ("Rugged and luminous"). Such a figure provides us with a point of order for our world, which, however, is not obvious, but difficult to find.

On a particular day (XX), imaginative renderings ("transcripts") are hazy or indefinite like clouds; the renderings of feeling are likewise indefinite, so that it is impossible to distinguish one from another. It is a day when the effect of the imagination on reality languishes. Thus, the imagination does nothing to transform the town, which remains inert like the residuum of a chemical reaction, a "neuter" losing its form ("shedding shapes") in a dominant absolute, within which it loses its identity. But the renderings of the town when it was imaginatively fertile ("when it was blue") are retained by the mind: the renderings of it dictated by feeling, its personifications, persist in "a twilight" of memory. Such indefinite imaginative renderings and memories ("clouds and men") may have to do with the air or streets of the town itself, or they may be the concern of the periphery of a man's consciousness ("corners of a man") as he sits thinking in an out-of-the-way place. So separated from the town itself, the thinker may escape the real world ("the impure") for a consciousness pure of reality. But the evasion of one imaginative version of reality creates the need for another to take its place ("everything to make"), unless the thinker manages to exclude all content from his consciousness (which may therefore be described as "his nakedness"), and remains in a hypnotic state that, perhaps, resembles the extinction of consciousness in mystic nirvana or, perhaps, merely the point of inanition in reverie. In such a state, he would have evaded the will to conceive reality. This state is not possible however (XXI), because he can evade neither his own will to conceive reality, nor that of other men, which results in conceptions of reality other than his own and, in fact, it is inevitable, an inescapable "given" in human nature, that he have some conception of reality ("The will of necessity"). The inevitability of forming some conception of the world is due to the operation of two factors, the two "romanzas" (or songs, from

the Italian): the song of the imagination and its alternate, the song of plain reality. The first song comes from a romantic isle (Cythère), in myth sacred to Venus, which has a fanciful population ("the shepherd and his black forms," the imagination and its creations). Like a product of the imagination, it comes from an island in reality, but is not about any particular island in reality, ("not of any isle"). The alternate song comes from an isle "Close to the senses" as opposed to the imagination, and the senses render this song without taking anything from the imagination ("the senses give and nothing take"). It is the opposite of the imaginative Cythère, the reality of our place and the things around us, the isolation of which is "the object of the will," the will of necessity. This song is out of the plain things around us, not the fanciful. Such a "celestial," or extra-physical, mode as is comprised in the combination of the plain and the imaginative is paramount in conceiving reality, even if it is only a matter of branches in the rain, which is to say it is paramount even in elementary perceptions. The two songs, the distant and the near, the imaginative and the real, combine to interpret for us the nonsense sound ("boo-ha") of the wind.

The initial proposition of XXII states that the effort to isolate or conceive reality is as meaningful to us as the effort to find god, according to Professor Eucalyptus who, in XIV, is also one who seeks salvation in reality. The effort to find reality includes both the philosopher's search for the subjective exteriorized in an objective conception, and the poet's search for the objective exterior that can be made subjectively relevant. Such subjective and objective conceptions of reality are eager meditations (l. 6) that give a fresh sense of reality untouched by the mind, like the world in the cold and earliness of some archtypical beginning. But such a sense of reality is quotidian, not a predicate of philosophers or poets—creation is renewed every day at dawn, not by the creativity of isolated "wanderers." But to re-create creation, to search for a metaphorical description that transforms it, is a poetic activity. To say, in a parallel case, that the evening star is part of a reality congenial to the ego ("sleepy bosom of the

real"), and that its light exists only as it is realized in the mind ("wholly an inner light"), is to find a possible metaphorical description of the star among the descriptions of it that are possible ("its possibleness"), that re-creates or shows in a fresh way even that "most ancient light."

Half the world consists of that part of it lit by the sun (XXIII). This is the "bodiless half" because it is reality beyond the self, or body. As the sun, it is an "illumination" of what is beyond the self, an "elevation" which reveals a prospect of reality; it extends into the future and includes the past, figured as fading colors shading into the darkness of obliteration represented by "the woman in black cassimere" (a variant of "cashmere"). However, the world, as represented by New Haven, is also half night. The night has not the variety of forms that the reality of day was described as including, but only one's sleep, "the single future of night." It is like a sound that is "inevitable" as sleep is inevitable at night, "coaxing" like the approach of sleep and "cozening" as sleep is an escape from the facts of reality, and maternal as the comfort of sleep. In contrast to the "bodiless" reality of day, then, night is a process of sinking back into the self and the womb-like comfort of the mind apart from reality. Thus, night, detached from the clear reality of day, brings on a unity of the self untroubled by the many-faceted consciousness ("separate, several selves") required to deal with the variety of day, a unity that is part of the single identity of night. Even in this single and unified identity the self reaches out for a sense of reality beyond the self, "disembodiments// Still keep occurring." They occur perhaps ("uncertainly") because of a desire which is sustained long enough, possibly in reverie or in dream, to express itself in nostalgic conceptions of reality ("Forms of farewell") that, in comparison to vivid reality ("green ferns"), are furtive adumbrations of the real.

The consolations of "space"—reality or, perhaps, the cosmos—(XXIV) are without name, since they are exactly the destructions of inadequate specifications in preparation for others as yet nameless. It was after the derangement ("neu-

rosis") caused by the barrenness of winter, in the fertility of summer (its "genius"), when the supernatural ideal is superfluous, that the image of Jove among his thunder clouds was destroyed. It took all day to get over the shock of his destruction, and to replace the old ideal with a new one. In the latter part of the day, when the air had been cleared of the old ideal, and before the sound of the new beginning ("Incomincia," from the Italian verb "incominciare," to begin) of the new ideal had been established, there was a time characterized by receptivity, poised for something new which was not yet specified. Whatever was to come would be different from the statue, and thus would be "An escape from repetition." It would be a new relation between reality ("space") and the self, "that touched them both at once/ And alike," a point of contact between the two, based not on a specified ideal, but on a perception by the ego of reality, like that of a town on the horizon, which brings the two into accord. The section, then, describes the moment between the destruction of an old ideal, or myth, of reality, and the crystallization of a new conception of it.

Life caught his attention (XXV) in his vagaries in artifice ("wandering on the stair of glass"), and again in his imaginative revery in which he stood "outsensing distances." It always watches him so, requiring that his thought be faithful to life. Life is personified as an hidalgo, severe and quiet, but whose serious presence is insistently felt. Only this seriousness remains constant among the metamorphoses of reality, or of the imagination, or, probably, both. The commonplace became, through the imagination, a disorder ("rumpling") of symbols ("blazons"), and the real was transformed into the imaginative, as if the plainness of reality were like a bare tree that required embellishment ("fruited red"), given in moments isolated from the mundane course of life. But the hidalgo is there as a check to fancy, reminding one that what is isolated from the mundane is not true to life. The hidalgo is an abstraction, exempt from the changes to which reality and imagination are subject, and therefore "permanent," an invention ("hatching") whose personified seriousness obliges

the reciprocal seriousness that one remain faithful to the reality of life.

The first three stanzas of XXVI describe a colorful and attractive afternoon. The light on the path is effortlessly refracted into vivid colors, the capes along the Sound (probably Long Island Sound, though there are also mountains in the scene) lighten in color, and the waves change color as their green breaks against a corresponding shade of sky. The mountains of earth are a more moving sight ("appeared with greater eloquence") than the clouds in the heavens above them. The configurations of earth, so seen, are beloved, and in such a picturesque aspect the earth is commonly beloved ("of loving fame") and its repute as an inamorata wins from us further fame in this respect. But here in the proximity of New Haven the beloved picturesque quality, "the inamorata," is lost, and the earth is seen in the comparative poverty of a plain view. The inamorata shrinks to the familiar without embellishment ("naked or in rags"), and gives, not the satisfaction of the romantic lover, but the comfort of intimacy and the restfulness of the homely but sympathetic, which are the attractions of the plain view, as opposed to those of the romantic or picturesque.

XXVII is composed of several fragments supposedly left by a scholar. They concern "The Ruler of Reality" who is a personification of the imagination. The first fragment is a truism: since "The Ruler of Reality" is in fact more unreal than New Haven, he is an unreal ruler who is master of the unreal, or the imagination. The succeeding fragments are adumbrations ("draftings") of this "Ruler." He and the personification of fact are complementary. He represents the possibility latent in the imagination as dawn reveals the possibilities of the day, and she, "The Queen of Fact," represents the delimitation of possibility in fact as in sunset. Thus he has to do with the possibilities of life ("the theorist of life"), and the good therein (l. 9), not the final limitation of death. As master of the imagination he helps to inspire the beauty of poetry ("The sibilance of phrases"); the operation of the imagination, "his voice," is "audible" as an anticipation of

poetry, as the anticipation of music has a meaning in the mind like the effect of the music itself. He, further, helps us to discard false conceptions of ourselves ("the regalia,/ The attributions") by enabling us to imagine ourselves accurately. Finally, he has thought out his position as master of the imagination, and continues to do so, and as a result he exists in amicable relation with the Queen of Fact: the imagination as ruler takes into account the fact in complementary relation with which it rules reality.

The initial proposition of XXVIII is that "reality exists/ In the mind" as in a monastic cell (or, since reality here is feminine, a convent cell) with its spare diet and sparse accommodations, but with indulgences granted to her by the imagination (a misericord is an indulgence in relaxation of monastic rule). If it is true that reality exists in the mind, it follows that the real and unreal exist only within the unity of the mind, are "two in one." New Haven exists in the mind, whether as one imagines it before arrival, or as one sees it after arrival. Things apprehended through the imagination, whether on a postcard, in darkness, in description, through hindered vision, or in conversation, co-exist in the mind with things apprehended clearly and immediately by the senses. Thus, since reality registers in the mind exactly like imaginative experience, all experience may be considered an "endlessly elaborating poem." The "theory of poetry"—the theory of how to create reality in the mind, as, for example, the reality of Sweden or of Rome—is, then, "the life of poetry." If one were to push the point to its extreme, the theory of poetry, of how to create reality in the mind, could be shown to be the theory of all experience, "the theory of life" as it is experienced by the ego ("As it is"), in all of the ego's metaphorical approximations of reality ("the intricate evasions of as"), in its experience of both the real and the imagined ("things seen and unseen"), and of the things created by the imagination "from nothingness," such as the worlds made by the needs of the ego through the imagination (the "Misericordia" of l. 4).

In XXIX, the natives of an earthen, autumnal land are

confronted with a bright, tropical country. They see the latter only in the perspective of their own land: it seems like their northern country inverted. The southern country seen in this perspective is the same, but the new description gives it a new aspect more significant than alterations in its aspect due to the weather. For the northerners the countrymen and each unchanging thing in the southern land are metamorphosed, because their earthen point of view had resulted in a new description of its brightness. So reality is altered by the way in which it is seen and described.

It is the end of autumn (XXX); the robins have flown south ("là-bas"), and the squirrels are prepared for winter. The wind has blown away the quiet of summer; its hushed buzzing is now beyond the horizon, or underground, beneath the disturbance of ponds which used to be smooth as mirrors and which now disclose their muddy bottoms. The wintry barrenness that appears is not the absence of summer or a nostalgia for the past season, but is itself a positive state, a revelation ("exposing") of a new season that is emerging. The new season is reflected in the change of the pines from their condition in summer to that in winter. The transparency of summer weather ("The glass of the air") becomes the more active weather of winter, in which storms and turbulence make the air a palpable element again. The summer now seems like an imaginative elaboration on the actual earth. The latter may now be seen clearly, restored, perhaps, like an original painting with overlays cleaned off. The resulting clarity is not an emptiness, but the "one mind" of winter made visible in a multitude of ways seen by "hundreds of eyes" at once. Thus the recurrence of winter is like a new and more accurate conception of reality seen clearly, without the veneer of the imagination.

The subtleties of perception in the meanings of sound (XXXI), in the shadings of experience, in the rhythm of speech, in the nuances of personality ("the inner men// Behind the outer shields"), in the music in thunder, in the implications about the night given by "dead candles at the window/ When day comes," in the play of light in a foam-

ing sea—all these strokes of fine detail (“Flickings from finikin to fine finikin”), and the general effort to recreate them in art at whatever time and in whatever form, “from busts of Constantine/ To photographs of the late president,” are approaches (“edgings and inchings”) to the “final form” in which reality is successfully described through the formulation of art, which thus obliquely or immediately conceives reality. This tentative effort to conceive reality is like the evening manifesting itself through the colors of the extreme end of the spectrum only, like a philosopher trying to express himself through improvisations on the piano, or like a woman writing and destroying an approximation that does not quite capture her thought. It does not matter whether reality has any concrete substance or whether it is insubstantial. The important thing is to capture and express in the final form of art one’s sense of that reality which is significant only as it is perceived by the mind.

“Angel Surrounded by Paysans” (CP, p. 496)

This poem apparently grew out of Stevens’ contemplation of a painting he had bought, a still life by the French painter, Tal Coat, to which Stevens had given the name, “Angel Surrounded by Peasants.” The “Angel” in the painting, according to Stevens, is a Venetian glass bowl, the “peasants,” the terrines, bottles, and glasses that surround it (LWS, p. 650). Stevens writes that “the point of the poem is that there must be in the world about us things that solace us quite as fully as any heavenly visitation could” (LWS, p. 661).

The poem has the dramatic form of a biblical episode. One of the peasants has opened the door in welcome to an apparent visitor, but no visitor has presented himself. Then the angel appears for a moment and speaks. But in this case it is not one of heaven’s angels, but the “angel of reality,” who has none of the heavenly angel’s accessories, the pale

wing, the apparel of gold, the trite halo. The stars do not follow him as attendants, but are part of that reality which he represents and knows. The angel is one of the peasants, in that he is of reality rather than of heaven, and this existence as part of the reality shared in common with the peasants is all that he is and knows. Yet, though he is no more and knows no more than the peasants, he is nevertheless “the necessary angel of earth.” Man needs him, as a figuration of the imagination, through which one may see “the earth,” reality, afresh once more, beyond the rigidified “set” of images, or mold, in which man himself has imprisoned it. Through him, in poetry, one may distinguish the tragic in man’s relation to the earth, catching the fluidity of existence in fluid articulations, the words themselves part of the fluidity of existence (“watery words awash”), so that the meanings articulated are themselves composed of the fleeting suggestions of meanings which is the nature of the reality they interpret. The angel, as part of reality, is himself merely a suggestion of meaning (“only half of a figure of a sort”), only half perceived, or perceived only fleetingly, a projection of the mind, one who appears suddenly and elusively like a ghost, so nearly invisible that at the slightest change he disappears, “too quickly,” because with him disappears the illumination of reality that he brings.

“The Plain Sense of Things” (CP, p. 502)

“The Plain Sense of Things” is sufficiently unambiguous until the fourth stanza, where the crucial statement in the poem occurs: “Yet the absence of the imagination had/ Itself to be imagined.” What is the “necessity,” mentioned in the last line of the poem, that must be involved in this statement if it is to be read as more than a trivial verbal paradox? “After the leaves have fallen,” the poem begins—that is, in autumn or in an autumnal mood (possibly provoked by advancing age)—the bare constant of reality, the “plain sense of things,” is evident. (The bare earth or rock