The Wallace Stevens Newsletter

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Some Notes on Stevens' Foreign Bibliography

At least partly because of their elusiveness, translations of most poets' work typically occupy a kind of bibliographical no-man's-land between the primary writings and the criticism. Certainly Stevens has been no exception to this. Morse's bibliography makes a point of excluding foreign editions, with one or two exceptions, and a supplementary checklist in the *Dartmouth College Library Bulletin* (Dec. 1961) adds only a single entry. Nor has there been any more recent attempt to keep track of Stevens' steadily increasing international bibliography, even though this is an area of some interest to both scholars and collectors. Thus it is hoped that the following notes, incomplete as they necessarily are, will provide a point of departure and guide to this somewhat neglected area.

To date, eleven complete foreign language editions of Wallace Stevens' works have been discovered, including four Japanese translations not yet seen. For the usual reasons, no attempt has been made at an exhaustive listing of anthology or periodical appearances, although these have been noted where seen. Nor has much attempt been made to remark on the competency of the translators involved, always a risky business, though in some cases it has been impossible to resist a comment or two.

Among the earliest and still most numerous translators have been the Italians. In 1949, *Botteghe Oscure* published *A half dozen small pieces* as part of a special number on English and American literature. Italian versions of these poems by Salvatore Rosati were contained in a special supplement to this issue. In the same year other translations appeared in two anthologies:

Poeti Americani, 1662-1945, tr. Giuseppi Baldini (Torino, De Silva, 1949) containing *Peter Quince at the clavier.*

Poesia Contemporanea e Poesia Negra, tr. Carlo Izzo (Parma, Guanda, 1949) pp.130-139, containing *Peter Quince, Domination of black, & Two figures in dense violet light.*

In 1953, Ann Marie Crino translated *To an old philosopher in Rome* in the periodical *Prospetti*, no.3 (Spring 1953). This is the Italian language edition of *Perspectives USA*, where the poem appears in English. Another significant periodical appearance of about the same time is *Notes toward a supreme fiction*, translated by Glauco Cambon in *Letteratura*, II (Sett.-Dic. 1954) pp.65-87, in Italian only.

Probably the best known of all the translations has been *Mattino Domenicale ed Altre Poesie*, tr. Renato Poggioli (Torino, Einaudi, 1954) 185 pp., English & Italian [See illus.], containing four major poems *(Sunday morning, Peter Quince, The man with the blue guitar, & Credences of summer)* and eight shorter pieces, including *Domination of black* and *Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird*, two poems which have proved to be favorites of translators, and presumably their audiences, everywhere. This was the only foreign language edition to appear in Stevens' lifetime, and the poet and translator carried on a substantial correspondence during its preparation. Many of Stevens' comments on the poems appear in English in the appendix. For this reason the book has been particularly sought after by students and scholars. And even though this material has been made more generally available by the publication of the *Letters*, the book remains something of a collector's item. A West coast dealer recently offered a copy at $37.50, though a more usual figure, until recently at least, would be about half this much.

Three later Italian anthologies also noted:

Lirici Americani, tr. Alfredo Rizzardi (Caltanisetta, Roma, Sciascia, 1955) pp.61-69, English & Italian. Five poems: *To the roaring wind, The green plant, Lebensweisheitspielerei, The plain sense of things, & The ocean* (i.e. *Somnambulisma).*

Poeti Americani da E. A. Robinson a W. S. Merwin, 1900-1956, tr. Roberto Sanesi (Milano, Feltrinelli, 1958) pp.203-253, English & Italian. A short essay, bibliography, and ten poems, among them: *Fabliau of Florida, The emperor of ice cream, Sea surface full of clouds*, & parts of *Esthetique du mal & Notes toward a supreme fiction.*

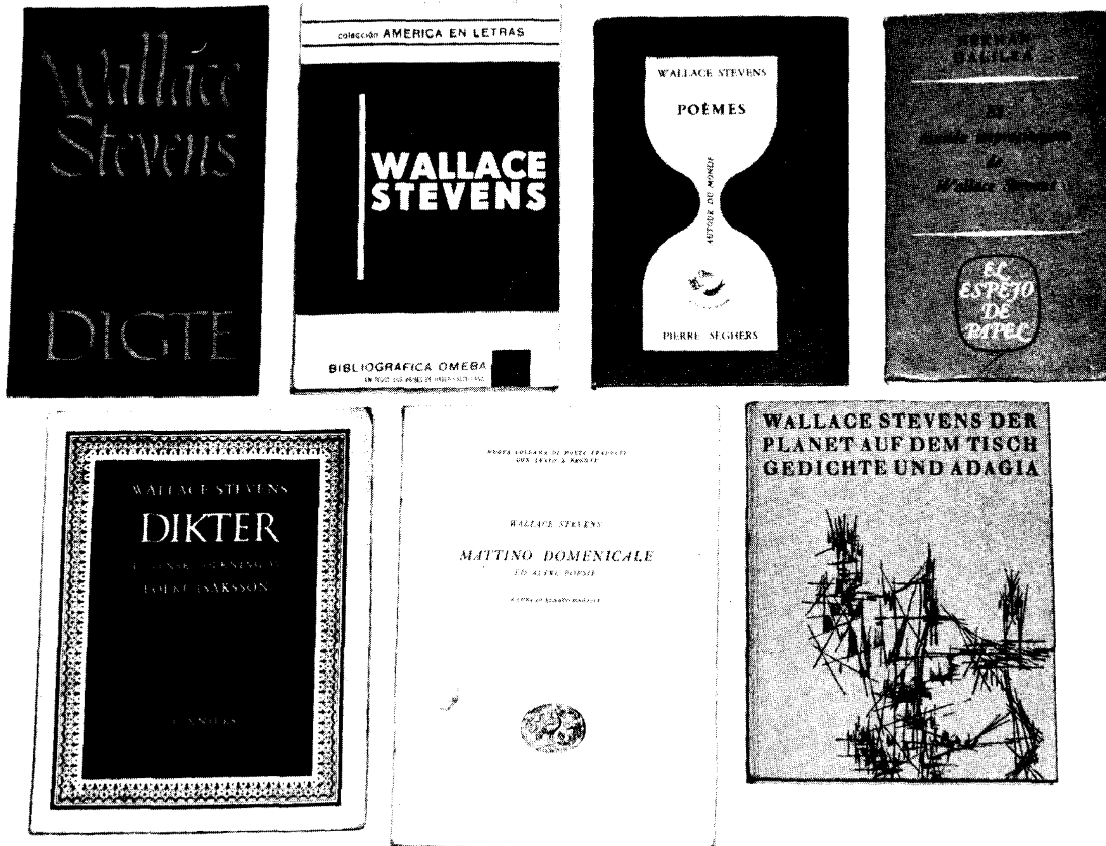
Poesia Americana del '900, tr. Carlo Izzo (Parma, Guanda, 1963) pp.116-133, English & Italian. Four poems: *Peter Quince, Domination of black, Things of August II & VIII, Reply to Papini.*

Two years after Stevens' death a Swedish edition appeared: *Dikter*, tr. Folke Isaksson (Stockholm, Bonnier, 1957) 70 pp., Swedish only. [See illus.] Of the thirty poems translated, about half are from *Harmonium.* Among the selections are: *Domination of black, The snow man, Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird, Sunday morning, Asides on the oboe, Dutch graves in Bucks county, & Irish cliffs of Moher.* One might suppose that a translator would tend to favor poems with which his readers could most easily identify, as *Lions in Sweden* or *The prejudice against the past* ("Marianna's Swedish cart") but this does not seem to have been a consideration here ("Mrs. Anderson's Swedish baby might [as] well have been German or Spanish").

The Danish translation, *Digte*, tr. Per Dorph-Petersen, Niels Barfoed & Bent Irve (Kobenhavn, Fisker-Nielsen & Lokkes Forlag, 1960) 40 pp., Danish only, [See illus.] is the most modest of the foreign editions seen so far. It seems to have been at least partly inspired by the Swedish book, about half of the twenty-seven poems also appeared there, among them: *Plowing on Sunday, Fabliau of Florida, Curtains in the house of the metaphysician, Worms at Heaven's gate, Lunar paraphrase, Dry loaf, Lebensweisheitspielerei, & The planet on the table*, as well as the more usual *Sunday morning* and *Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird.* Others include: *Postcard from the volcano, A glass of water, Tea, & Disillusionment of 10 O'Clock.*

A recent anthology:

Amerikanske Stemmer, tr. Jens Nyholm (Kobenhavn, Arne Frost-Hansens Forlag, 1968) pp.88-97, Danish only. Contains: *Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird, Peter Quince, & Domination of black.*



In contrast with the Danish, the German edition appearing the next year is the most comprehensive and physically impressive seen to date. *Der Planet auf dem Tisch,* tr. Kurt Heinrich Hansen (Hamburg, Claasen Verlag, 1961) 231 pp., English & German. [See illus.] Containing seventy-six poems, it is the first to translate selections from the *Opus Posthumous,* including a good number of the *Adagia.* Though poems from *Harmonium* are particularly well represented, a surprising number of less well known poems from later collections are also to be found. The longer works however have been almost entirely neglected, and even such poems as *Peter Quince* and *Ideas of order at Key West* appear only in fragments. This is perhaps the only regrettable feature of an otherwise superb book. Kurt Hansen is highly regarded as a translator: his version of *Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird* has been the basis of a musical work by Boris Blacher, *Eine Amsel dreizehnmal gesehen* für hohe Stimme und Streichorchester, Op. 54 (Berlin, Bote & Bock, 1958). Other translations into German have been made, but most have been primarily for scholarly purposes as part of critical studies. Morse lists a number of these in the 'foreign sources' section of his bibliography.

Stevens' French translations are fewer than one might suppose. One complete edition exists: *Poèmes,* tr. Marie-Jean Beraud-Villars & André Ravaute (Paris, P. Seghers, 1963) 85 pp., English & French. [See illus.] It is an unremarkable work containing fifteen poems, among which are: *Sunday morning,* fragments of *The man with the blue guitar, The pleasures of merely circulating, Domination in* (i.e. *of) black, Gallant chateau,* & *Tatoo. Tatoo* is another poem that has been popular with translators, possibly because, like the blackbird poem, its imagery comes through so well.

Others noted in French:

Anthologie de la Poesie Americaine, tr. Alain Bosquet (Paris, Librairie Stock, 1956) pp.134-141, English & French. Three poems: *Sea surface full of clouds, Domination of black,* & *For* (i.e. *To) an old philosopher in Rome.*

Notes toward a supreme fiction, tr. Michael Benamou, in *La Nouvelle Revue Francaise,* 7e annee, no. 83 (Nov. 1959) pp.952-960.

There are two complete editions in Spanish, both published in South America. *El Mundo Impressionista de Wallace Stevens,* por Hernan Galilea (Santiago de Chile, Editorial Universitaria, 1965) 118 pp., Spanish only, [See illus.] is a work of both criticism and translation. A well-balanced selection of fifty-eight poems is presented, with the critical text providing a commentary on Stevens' major themes. Almost all the popular short poems are included, some translated for the first time anywhere, as: *Study of two pears* and *Table talk. Sunday morning, Peter Quince,* & *Ideas of order at Key West* are among the longer poems. Others of special interest: *The emperor of ice cream* & *Of modern poetry.*

A somewhat later work is *Poemas de Wallace Stevens,* tr. Alberto Girri (Buenos Aires, Bibliografica Omeba, 1967) 136 pp., English & Spanish. [See illus.] The selection is a little difficult to understand. Of the twenty-two poems, more than half had previously appeared in Galilea's book, among them: *Domination of black, Fabliau of Florida, Disillusionment of 10 O'Clock, Sunday morning, Anecdote of the jar, Poetry is a destructive force, Study of two pears, This solitude of cataracts,* & *Tatoo.* Perhaps Girri, who has some reputation as a poet and translator, thought he could do a better job. However, a comparison shows the two men's work to be remarkably alike, often differing only in the choice of article or verb tense. This can hardly be a compliment to Mr. Girri, who must have known of Galilea's book. The first stanza of *Anecdote of the jar* furnishes a typical example:

Galilea: Puse un cántaro en Tennessee,
Y redondo era, sobre una colina.
Hizo al hirsuto yermo
Rodear esa colina.

Girri: Puse el cántaro en Tennessee,
y era redondo, sobre una colina.
Hizo que el hirsuto yermo
rodeara esa colina.

Who can say that one version is superior to the other?

But this is perhaps not being fair to either man, and certainly there are good things to say about Girri's book. To his credit he includes *The snow man, Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird,* & *To an old philosopher in Rome,* as well as sections of *Sea surface full of clouds, The man with the blue guitar,* & *Notes toward a supreme fiction.* He also demonstrates a considerable knowledge of Stevens' scholarship, placing after each poem a page or so of explanatory comment, often with critical references.

A Mexican anthology noted:

101 Poemas, Antología Bilingüe de la Poesía Norteamericana Moderna, ed. Salvador Novo (Mexico, Editorial Letras, 1965) pp.246-55, English & Spanish. Translates: *Domination of black, Tatoo* (tr. J. A. Shelley) & *The emperor of ice cream* (tr. Toro Concha).

Stevens is not nearly so well known in Eastern Europe as, say, Dylan Thomas. He has, however, had at least two Polish translators:

Tworczosc, Rok 17, no.10 (padzd. 1961) pp.52-55, Polish only: *The world as meditation, The candle a saint, Of modern poetry* (tr. Jaroslaw Marek Rymkiewicz, *Soldier, there is a war* & *Crude foyer* (tr. Leszek Elektorowicz).

Wspolczesnosc, Rok 9, no.5/157 (26 luty-11 mar. 1964) p.3, Polish only: [Selections] (tr. J. M. Rymkiewicz).

Elektorowicz, Leszek. *Przedmowy do Cisny* (Krakow, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1968) pp.52-57, Polish only: *Variations on a summer day* & *Soldier, there is a war.*

Franklin Book Programs, which holds translation rights on several poems into the Near Eastern and Indic languages, reports the following:

[*Anthology of Contemporary American Poetry*] tr. Tawfiq Sayigh (Beirut, 1963) Arabic only: *Esthetique du mal.*

[*Selections from the Best American Poetry*] tr. Shuja al-Din Shafa (Tehran, 1955) Persian only: a prose version of *Peter Quince.* Two other poems, *Of modern poetry* & *The poems of our climate,* are listed on the acknowledgment page, but were apparently dropped from the book.

The Japanese editions of Stevens have so far proved to be the most elusive of all. The following references have been taken from Naomi Fukuda's excellent work *A Bibliography of Translations, American Literary Works into Japanese,* 1868-1967 (Tokyo, 1968). While the citations themselves are in Japanese, author and title references have been provided in English. The books are all in Japanese only:

[*Adagia*] (Tokyo, 1964).

[*Effects of Analogy*] (Tokyo, 1964).

[*Harmonium*] (Tokyo, 1959).

[*The Idea of Order and Beauty: Poems*] (Nagoya, 1963).

The editor is presently endeavoring to obtain copies of these books, and if he is successful, more complete descriptions will be forthcoming.

Of course this is only the beginning. In time, Stevens ought to be at least as well translated as Yeats or Eliot, both of whom he has already overtaken in reputation in this country. Not too far hence, translations will undoubtedly be made into Russian, Finnish, Hungarian, Portuguese and the Indic languages, if in fact some of these do not already exist. It is hard to believe that there presently exists no German version of *Notes,* or that someone has not rendered the blackbird poem into French. Future issues of the *Newsletter* will attempt to supplement this list, and readers having other, or better information are asked to submit it to the editor.

A New Work

Bowl, cat and broomstick, a previously unpublished dramatic work of WS, appears in the current poetry number of *Quarterly Review of Literature,* XVI, no. 1-2 (1969) pp. 236-47. The play, written in 1916-17, is printed from an incomplete manuscript (one page is missing) in the possession of Holly Stevens, and is introduced with a short essay by A. W. Litz.

Books in Progress

Helen Vendler's *On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems* has just been published by Harvard University Press. (Please note their advertisement elsewhere in the *Newsletter.)*

Before leaving in August for Japan, where he will spend the academic year, Samuel French Morse completed the manuscript of his long-awaited critical biography of WS. It will be published by Pegasus Press, a division of Random House, sometime next year.

J. M. Edelstein is currently working on a new bibliography of WS. It should be published sometime in 1970 by the University of Pittsburgh Press. Scholars, collectors, and just about everybody else interested in WS will welcome this work, which promises to provide the most comprehensive and detailed descriptions yet attempted.

Recent Books Noted

Solid evidence of WS' early and pervasive influence on the work of Hart Crane is presented in John Unterecker's new biography *Voyager* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Many students of modern poetry have more or less taken this for granted, based on some previously published letters, but the subject has not been without controversy. Publication of Crane's complete letters, currently in the works, ought to cast even more light on this aspect of the poet's development.

In *Ernest Hemingway: a life story* (Scribner, 1969), Carlos Baker tells of a pugilistic encounter between WS and the novelist on Key West in 1936. Although twenty years older, Stevens apparently challenged Hemingway to a bout, which resulted in his receiving a black eye and swollen cheek. It is not reported what injuries he inflicted on Hemingway. The two men were good friends and the battle seems to have been undertaken in a spirit of conviviality, rather than the result of any enmity. Interested readers are referred to p.285, and a note on p. 617.

A Dirty Hand: the literary notebook of Winfield Townley Scott (University of Texas Press, 1969) contains a number of anecdotes in which WS figures. One learns, for example, that Stevens did not care for the poetry of Cummings or Jeffers, and probably did not like Roethke either (though this is somewhat less certain).

Miscellaneous Notes

"Some Wallace Stevens," a short story by Lawrence Shainberg, appears in the current *Esquire* (Oct. 1969). The connection is mostly in the title.

Some readers might be amused at a scatological travesty of WS' blackbird poem which appears in Tom Clark's latest volume of verse, *Stones* (Harper, 1968). Of a good deal more interest would be a successful parody. Are there any?

Marianne Moore's Library

The A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation, 2010 DeLancey Place, Philadelphia, recently acquired the library and personal papers of Marianne Moore, including the correspondence of WS to Miss Moore and a complete set of editions inscribed to her. An exhibition will be announced as soon as the collection has been cataloged.

Stevens' Book Prices

In the past year, two first editions of *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction* have come to market. Copy B of the three copies in the lettered series was offered late last year by New York dealer J. Howard Woolmer for $325. It was immediately sold. In a sale at the Swann Galleries in July, an inscribed copy in the regular (Arabic numeraled) series brought $240.

More recently, Blackwell offered a first edition of *Harmonium* in the first issue striped boards (somewhat faded) for £20.

Some Dissertations in Progress

Abad, Gemimo. "Concepts of the poem and methods of analysis in the criticism of WS' poetry." U. of Chicago.

Buhr, Marjorie. "WS' philosophy." U. of Miami.

Brooks, Jerome Bernard. "WS and Christian faith." U. of Chicago, Divinity School.

Furtwangler, Virginia. "On the theme of separation in the later poetry of WS." Cornell.

Heyen, William. "WS: Theme and structure in the verse plays." Ohio State.

McNeil, Helen. "The development of the long poem in WS." Yale.

Ransom, James. "The image of the human in the poetry of WS: its genesis, development, and significance." Yale. (Submitted August 1969)

Williamson, Julian. "An annotated bibliography of the criticism of the works of WS, 1900-1965." Columbia.

Some of the titles are tentative.

Essays in Books

Donoghue, Denis. "Nuances on a theme of Stevens," & "On *Notes toward a supreme fiction*," in *The Ordinary Universe* (Macmillan, 1968) pp.221-40 & pp.267-90.

Kermode, Frank. "Afterthoughts on Wallace Stevens," in *Continuities* (Random House, 1968) pp.77-91. Based on a reading of the *Letters*, with some observations on the current unhappy state of Stevens criticism.

Pearce, Roy Harvey. "Wallace Stevens: the last lesson of the master," in *Historicism Once More* (Princeton, 1969) pp.261-293. This essay previously appeared in *ELH* (1964).

Riddel, Joseph N. "Wallace Stevens," in *Fifteen Modern American Authors: a survey of research and criticism*, edited by Jackson R. Bryer (Duke, 1969) pp.389-423. Following a standard format, the essay is divided into five parts: bibliography, editions, manuscripts, biography, and criticism. The material in the early sections already shows signs of being dated, but ought to be fairly useful to a beginner. The survey of criticism is the longest and perhaps most interesting section. Riddel is at his best when reviewing the efforts of his fellow critics, and though he is inclined to be less than generous in his assessments, his remarks are usually apt enough.

Sheehan, Donald. "The ultimate Plato: a reading of Wallace Stevens' *Notes toward a supreme fiction*," in *The Forties: fiction, poetry, drama*, edited by Warren French (Everett Edwards, 1969) pp.165-177.

On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems by Helen Hennessy Vendler

Though Wallace Stevens' shorter poems are perhaps his best known, his longer poems, Helen Hennessy Vendler suggests in this book, deserve equal fame and equal consideration. Stevens' central theme — the worth of the imagination — remained with him all his life, and Mrs. Vendler therefore proposes that his development as a poet can best be seen, not in description — which must be repetitive — of the abstract bases of his work, but rather in a view of his changing styles.

The author presents here a chronological account of fourteen longer poems that span a thirty-year period, showing, through Stevens' experiments in genre, diction, syntax, voice, imagery, and meter, the inventive variety of Stevens' work in long forms, and providing at the same time a coherent reading of these difficult poems.

She concludes, "Stevens was engaged in constant experimentation all his life in an attempt to find the appropriate vehicle for his expansive consciousness; he found it in his later long poems, which surpass in value the rest of his work."

Mrs. Vendler is Professor of English at Boston University.

$7.50

Harvard University Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts

THE MASTER OF THE WINTER LANDSCAPE

by Leonard Nathan

This is that other place, north of the last
And most daring flight. Here, driven off course, small birds
Compulsively circle until they drop; the trees
Have marched against it, but always come reeling back.
No leaves, no song. Here, sun and moon are one:
A blinding wheel of snow or sometimes a shine
So pale it would ice the heart if the heart could feel it,
Could come to the middle of white within white and feel.

He, though, has been here, if only in wintering sleep,
Found himself present and breathed in that rigid air
Of no leaves, no song. Thus birds may now live here, and trees,
Though frail, bear the wind. And so we have peopled the place
With the ghost of a snow goose, the hint of a crippled pine,
Merely perhaps to say that here one man
Has stood for the rest of us once to discover that nothing
Is just what we thought without us. And this is his mark.

Ready or not, we are natives now. Though it's cold,
Though the wind refuses our gifts, we know how to praise it.

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Recent Dissertations

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THE VAST VENTRILOQUISM: WORDSWORTH AND WALLACE STEVENS.

(Order No. 69-6615)

**Robert John Bertholf, Ph.D.
University of Oregon, 1968**

Adviser: A. Kingsley Weatherhead

The thesis of this study is that Wallace Stevens is a romantic poet. Affinities between Wordsworth and Stevens are shown in side-by-side readings of "Tintern Abbey" and "The Comedian as the Letter C." The affinities are used to map out the development of what Stevens called his "new romanticism" and his concept of Being, and to explicate the major poems in his Collected Poems.

In the first chapter, I show that Wordsworth's imagination was basically a metaphor-making power which created points of interaction, "spots of time" as he called them, between the mind and Nature. For Stevens, on the other hand, the imagination was first the ability for clear sight and second the process of uncovering points of aesthetic pleasure, "moments of imperishable bliss." In Stevens the imagination is pitted against the violence of reality; it also destroys the "dead romanticism," any old or imprecise image or idea, and reveals the new romanticism, the process of clear sight that leads to the concept of Being.

In the second chapter, I expand the discussion of the dead and new romanticisms by showing that both poets founded their poetry on the authority of personal experience. For Stevens, the central order of poetry was the process of the imagination interacting with reality. In the "Blue Guitar," the process was also the principal means of defining the "self." In Parts of the World, Stevens tested the imagination against a various and imperfect reality, and he discovered that the imaginative process was the cause of Being, because it decreated old ideas of the self and allowed the self, alone, to emerge without predetermined definition. Being is a state which also designates that the mind is satisfied that it can realize all its capacities for thought and feeling.

In the third chapter, I discuss "Esthétique du Mal" in terms of Wordsworth's ideas of fear and consequently am able to read the poem directly, without paradox. Through parables of evil, Stevens says pain is human and must be accepted as such in order to know the fullness of human experience, and in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," Being designates the awareness that the imagination and reality emanate from the same source, "the muddy centre." With such an awareness, the war between the imagination and reality stops, and the imagination can then know itself and reality as equals. This action of knowing is the subject of "Credences of Summer," which asserts the value of the private uncovering of Being against the public "supreme fiction."

In chapter four, I use the narrative structure of The Prelude to show that Stevens' attempt to codify a public doctrine in "Notes" failed for the same reason that Wordsworth's infatuation with the French Revolution failed him: both poets tried to interpret the public world in terms of their private visions. The poems of The Auroras of Autumn, like Books XII and XIII of The Prelude, are attempts to overcome the failure and to revitalize the imagination. In The Rock, Stevens reclaims the imagination and thus the awareness of Being and then begins to form another cycle of the imagination's life with the assurance that reality and the imagination are not split apart. In conclusion, I show that Stevens came to his concept of Being by starting with basic Wordsworthian ideas of order, pleasure and fear, the imagination, and the continuity of the poet's changing relationship to reality. Stevens is a Wordsworthian romantic. M $4.95; X $17.55. 386 pages.

DA, v.29a, no.10 (April 1969)

WALLACE STEVENS: THE MAJOR POEMS.

(Order No. 69-7600)

Doris Leonora Eder, Ph.D.
The City University of New York, 1969

The Major Poems of Wallace Stevens is an intensive study of Stevens' major poetry, concentrating on those crucial long poems which, though not uniformly excellent, contain much that is Stevens' best and all that is essential to an understanding of his work. "Sunday Morning," "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle," The Comedian as the Letter C, The Man with the Blue Guitar, Esthétique du Mal, Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, and An Ordinary Evening in New Haven are explicated in more detail than has hitherto been accorded any of these poems. The poems are examined in their own right, without preconceived theories, since the common failing of much previous Stevens criticism has been to lay his poems on some procrustean chopping block and amputate them to fit some preordained scheme. This study holds a balance between the examination of theme and technique, focusing on how the poet communicates his vision as well as what this means.

A long introductory chapter on Stevens provides necessary background to understanding and appreciating his work. Stevens' two grand themes are identified as the interaction of imagination and reality, and the problem of belief in a secular age, giving rise to Stevens' concept of a supreme fiction--a belief that might prove a valid substitute for the idea of God.

The introduction also defines the distinguishing characteristics of Stevens' poetry, analyzing his genre, prosody, diction, tone, rhetoric, imagery, and symbolism. Stevens' prose writings are examined for the light they shed on the role philosophy plays in Stevens' poetry, and in order to illuminate certain critical and interpretative problems his work poses. Stevens is not a systematic thinker, nor is his poetry philosophical in the true sense. He presents--in individual poems and in the poetry as a whole--"The poem of the mind in the act of finding/What will suffice" in an age deprived of that grandest abstraction of the human imagination, God.

Stevens' poetry is difficult to interpret because his images and symbols, though naturally derived, often appear arbitrary and farfetched. Elucidating Stevens' poems often becomes a kind of guessing game, similar to the solving of algebraic equations, because few of Stevens' images are autonomous within their context, because his symbols are emblematic rather than suggestive, and because the basis of his comparisons is often so restricted and tenuous as to give rise to conceits rather than metaphors. Stevens' images often seem bizarre because their emblematic signification is inappropriate to their natural context.

Stevens' heritage and influences, American, English, and French, are investigated and discovered to reveal "elective affinities" rather than active influences. Stevens' poetic evolution is traced from the lush opulence of the physical world presented in Harmonium, through the prosaic poems of the thirties grappling with the recalcitrant theme of men crowded in grimy cities, to the spare, restrained elegance of the late poetry. Though Stevens' poetic vision remains remarkably constant, though he continuously celebrates the conflicts and conjunctions of imagination with reality, the poetry reveals changes in style and mood.

The dissertation ends with a review of Stevens criticism to date, and an assessment of the significance, value, and over-all stature of his poetry. It concludes that Stevens is a most accomplished and original poet, a poet of the first rank, but that, because his poetry lacks the drama of human sympathy and involvement, the verdict of time may well be that he is not a major poet. Nevertheless, Stevens' poetry provides more exquisite sensuous pleasure than that of any other poet of our century. M $7.15; X $25.45. 562 pages.

DA, v.29a, no.12 (June 1969)

WALLACE STEVENS' NOTES TOWARD A SUPREME FICTION: A CRITIQUE.

(Order No. 68-16,184)

Jean Harris Lana, Ph.D.
Cornell University, 1968

Notes Toward A Supreme Fiction is Wallace Stevens' major poetic investigation of what he considers to be the crucial problem of our times; that is, the problem of belief. The loss of our traditional belief in the gods, Stevens saw as a psychological void which must be filled; it is necessary for us to believe in something. He also discerned the need to reorder our relation to a world which was rapidly becoming more and more violent and chaotic.

Opposed to the first goal were the still persisting needs either to deify man, which is the vestige and original source of our belief in gods, or to place our faith in second-rate soldiers or politicians, our parade heroes. Stevens' solution was the creation of an authentic hero by a supreme poetic imagination. This hero, which he calls Major Man, would be the abstract embodiment of man's noblest possibilities and the projection of his deepest desires. Although based on reality, he would be a fictive figure. But he would be believed in, because there is in man what Stevens, using William James' phrase, calls a "will to believe."

The two obstacles to an authentic relationship with the natural world are the desire for a heavenly paradise in consolation for the lacks of earthly life, which leads us to neglect what present life can actually offer, and the human reason which disfigures and deadens experience by forcing it into static molds.

In Notes Stevens sees a will to change in nature. The natural world does not conform to the rational mind, but is composed of an irrational and eccentric constancy. As the change from morning to night and from season to season makes for freshness and renewal in nature, so the transformations by the imagination in poetic metaphors refresh the human spirit. But we must base our imaginative transformations upon what we actually and clearly see.

The criteria for a supreme fiction are that it be abstract, because abstraction allows us both to avoid the rigidity and ennui that are the inevitable end of any too particularized fiction, and to encompass the whole of human nature; that it change, because only in change do we enter into the heart of life, and because change gives us pleasure; and that it give pleasure, because pleasure, or the refreshment of life, is the goal of all our strivings.

This critique of Notes makes extensive use of Stevens' essays and of his recently published volume of letters. It identifies some of the sources of his ideas, and concentrates on the interrelated themes and images in the poem. Some attention, as well, is given to the validity of Stevens' conception. Notes is viewed as the culmination of a change in Stevens' poetic concerns which began about ten years previous to its composition. M $3.00; X $7.60. 165 pages.

DA, v.29a, no.6 (Dec. 1968)

THE MYTHOLOGY OF IMAGINATION; A STUDY OF THE POETRY OF WALT WHITMAN AND WALLACE STEVENS.

(Order No. 69-8611)

**Diane Wood Middlebrook, Ph.D.
Yale University, 1968**

My purpose in this dissertation is to demonstrate that Walt Whitman and Wallace Stevens each composes in his poetry what may be described as a mythology of imagination Romantic in intellectual derivation; and that the poetry of Wallace Stevens emerges from the tradition of American Romanticism of which Emerson and Whitman are the progenitors.

Each part of the dissertation is divided into two long chapters. The first chapter on each poet deals with his representation of imagination as a heroic power within the individual mind. Whitman embodies this power in a fictive persona derived from his own biography and called "the Real Me." Hence my first chapter on Whitman outlines the mythical autobiography of this persona, focusing on significant poems in the first three editions of Leaves of Grass. In Stevens the heroic imagination is conceived first as an abstraction, "the central mind," and is only gradually identified with the voice of the poet himself; therefore my discussion traces the evolution of Stevens' theory of imagination through the successive volumes of the Collected Poems, examining the variety of symbols and identities in which Stevens explores the heroic nature of imagination.

The second chapter on each poet focuses on the actions attributed to the poet-hero. In Whitman's myth the heroic action takes the form of dramatized encounters between the fictive "I" and the "bright flow" of reality; by the method of what he terms "indirection" Whitman thus demonstrates the processes of imagination in which the plethora of undifferentiated experience is contained in form. The myth of the hero in Whitman ends when he is no longer able to identify "the Real Me" with himself, when autobiography loses viability as form. In Stevens, the myth of the hero involves identifying within the single human imagination a variety of personae having different functions corresponding generally to the abstract functions Coleridge attributes to the primary and secondary imaginations. Discovering similarities between the functions of these personae and the processes which produce seasons of ripeness and decay in nature, Stevens absorbs into his myth the fact of mortality and of the failure of imagination, and is therefore able to project for the life of a single imagination a continuity which Whitman is unable to accommodate in his myth.

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Wallace Stevens

— in reply to R. S. Thomas —

by Robin Fulton

You wrote of Stevens: 'Words he shed
Were dry leaves of a dry mind,
Crackling as the wind blew
From mortuaries of the cold heart.
There was no spring in his world.
His one season was late fall;
The self ripe, but without taste.
Yet painfully on the poem's crutch
He limped on, taking despair
As a new antidote for love.'

Stevens was not Prytherch, man,
Turning the same thin soil,
Growing in the shape of weather like a tree,
Accepting age like a tasteless apple
Because the apple cost his life.
It is odd that you, so tried
In watching your peoples' long labour
Flower in unremarkable beauty,
Should mistake his florescence for
Images of autumn and drought.

Or perhaps not: perhaps you are too
Acute to words that are half dumb.
For Stevens' words exfoliate,
His mind was a botanical garden
In four seasons at once, each
Flaunting the others' exuberance,
Music and silence, spring and fall,
A man imagining things and the things
A man imagines. His cool words
Are not regrets but fecundities.

As for the crutches, flags rather,
Waved in honour of the serious clown
Who could keep so many bright fictions
Dancing in the air together
As if his fingers hardly touched them.
And despair of what? Not finding
Truth? Is truth more true
Harvested slowly on a Welsh hill
Or in Connecticut let go
Like twirling seeds from a sycamore?

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A Biography of Stevens' Father, with an Early Note of WS.

From *Historical and Biographical Annals of Berks County, Pennsylvania*. Compiled by Morton L. Montgomery. (Chicago, J. H. Beers, 1909)

GARRETT B. STEVENS, lawyer of Reading, is the head of a family of lawyers, as all his sons are practising attorneys. He was senior member of the former law firm of Stevens & Stevens, though not connected by the ties of consanguinity with his partner, W. Kerper Stevens, with whom he was associated from 1894, but who is now serving as Judge by appointment.

Benjamin Stevens, father of Garrett B. Stevens, was a farmer, and his father, Abraham Stevens, was a merchant. The first of the family in America came from Holland and held title to lands in Bucks county previous to the advent of the Penns in Pennsylvania. Benjamin Stevens married Elizabeth Barcalow, daughter of Garrett Barcalow, of Bucks county, and seven children were born of this union: Hogeland Stevens, at one time deputy sheriff of Bucks county, who died in 1898; Abraham, a farmer and store-keeper in Indiana; James Vansant, a merchant of St. Paul, Minn.; Maria, wife of Isaac Bennet, a farmer and contractor of Ivyland, Bucks county; Dr. Elwood, of Fox Chase, Philadelphia; B. Frank, formerly of Hill & Stevens, contracting carpenters of Oak Lane, Philadelphia; and Garrett B. The father of this family died in 1895, aged eighty-seven years, and the mother in 1898, in her eighty-eighth year.

Garrett B. Stevens is eminent among the members of his profession in Reading, both for his attainments and his success. He married, Nov. 9, 1876, Kate M. Zeller, daughter of John Zeller, deceased, of Reading, and five children were born to this union: Garrett, now of Cleveland, Ohio; Wallace, a graduate of Harvard and of the New York Law School, who after spending a year in the law office of Peckham, Warner & Strong was admitted in June, 1904, to practise law in the courts of New York; John B., a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, admitted to the Berks county Bar in 1902 and now associated with his father forming the firm of G. B. & J. B. Stevens; Elizabeth and Katharine.

Garrett Stevens was born in Reading, Dec. 19, 1877. He was graduated from the Reading high school in 1895, from Andover in 1896, from Yale in 1897, and from Dickinson Law school in 1898. He then registered as a law student in the office of Stevens & Stevens, and was admitted to practice Dec. 20, 1899. On Sept. 4, 1901, Mr. Stevens m. Sarah S. Stayman, daughter of Joseph B. and Mary Stayman, of Carlisle, and the one son born to this union is Garrett Barcalow, named after his grandfather. Fraternally Mr. Stevens is a Mason. He is connected with the Presbyterian Church, and in politics is a Democrat. In 1902 he was a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the Legislature from Reading, and received a very handsome support.

John B. Stevens, son of Garrett B., was born Dec. 9, 1880, in the city of Reading, and there received his early training in the public schools of the city, graduating from the high school in 1897. He then entered the University of Pennsylvania, and in 1901 received his diploma from that famous old school, immediately afterwards taking up the study of law in his father's office. On Nov. 10, 1902, he was admitted to the Berks county Bar, and in February, 1905, was admitted to practice before the Supreme court. Mr. Stevens is a member of the Kappa Sigma fraternity of the University. He is a Presbyterian in religion. He has taken considerable interest in politics as a member of the Democratic party, and has engaged in campaign work to some extent.

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FIRST CLASS

The Wallace Stevens Newsletter

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When Half-Gods Go:

Stevens' Spiritual Odyssey

MARJORIE BUHR
Miami-Dade Jr. College

If one accepts Kierkegaard's belief that there are three stages in the life of the authentic individual—the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious—one can profitably study Stevens' progress from the hedonistic aesthete of *Harmonium*, to the ethical humanist of *Ideas of Order*, to the "Metropolitan Rabbi" in search of Being in the later poetry. Such a categorization is arbitrary, of course: Stevens was an aesthete to the end of his life and he sought to be total in belief even in his youth. If the chief concern here is with the third category, it is because critics have thoroughly explored the hedonistic and humanistic sides of Stevens. At the same time, many critics have assumed that Stevens was an atheist, an understandable conclusion because of the emphasis on the death of God in his prose and poetry. It has only been the publication of the journals and letters which make it possible to follow Stevens' life-long interest in metaphysical questions.

Conventionally religious in his youth, Stevens was surprised, upon reading a life of Jesus, to think of him as separate from God (L140). The feeling of piety was dear to him and he wished to resemble St. Augustine, but even then he confessed that "modernity" was pulling him away from traditional faith (L32). Regarding the passionate faith of bygone eras with envy, he wished there were still something definite to believe in, a nostalgic desire he would never entirely lose in spite of his recognition of the precarious nature of final knowledge. Even when he questioned dogma, he did not deny the existence of God, the concept of which everyone admits "in some form or another" (L140). It was this search for an authentic form which would occupy Stevens throughout his life.

Many critics have seen a resemblance between Stevens and the *symbolistes*, but Stevens did not need Baudelaire for a doctrine of correspondences. The New England tendency to find meaningful analogies between the physical and the spiritual is apparent in Stevens' youthful thought. Jonathan Edwards' belief that awareness of God is immediate, coming to us through images or shadows of divine things, and the Transcendentalists' insistence on the correspondence between the natural and the spiritual were fertile grounds for Stevens' conviction that "behind every physical fact there is a divine force (L132). Like Emerson, he discovered the spiritual in the "mysterious calling of Nature and our responses" more easily than in man-made institutions. As he tramps through the forest, every leaf reveals the Invisible; the hills he gazes on are like "steps to the throne and Blake's angels should have been there with their 'holy, holy, holy' " (L71). Stevens' rejection of God as an "inventing mind" remote from the world and his insistence on a realized, experienced spiritual rather than an abstract conception is preceded by the Transcendentialists' rejection of an anthropomorphic God and their belief that the spiritual is a dimension of reality that penetrates all other dimensions.

But though he inherited a tradition which saw the cosmos as largely directed by benevolent and teleological forces, the intellectual world to which Stevens was introduced was dominated by an increasingly mechanistic and scientific view. The conflict between what William James called the views of the tender-minded idealist and the more tough-minded materialist became increasingly evident at the turn of the century and it is a conflict which later gave his poetry much of its tension. Stevens regretted the loss of his youthful belief and throughout his life he was intrigued by and perhaps a shade envious of sincere faith wherever he found it: in his mother, in his Catholic friend, Tom McGreevy, or in the devout pilgrims who kissed the pillars of a church until they were worn smooth. He explained the planter in "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" as the laborious human who, after all the old beliefs are gone, still clings to an illusion which pierces him (L435). But what James called "first-born" unquestioning faith was not available to Stevens. When he speaks of restoring to the imagination the faith it is losing at such a catastrophic pace, he does not advocate return to traditional beliefs. His dilemma is this: conceiving of the poetic task as a spiritual one, believing that the poet gives us a revelation that lies beneath the surface of reality, he must yet face the fact that in his own time the gods have become unreal shapes. But if the major poetic idea is of God, then it is up to the poet to adapt the modern intelligence to a new belief (L378). This is no easy task for Stevens, who loathes everything mystical (L428). Humanism seems the logical answer but he feels he must go beyond humanism:

> My trouble and the trouble of a great many people is the loss of belief in the sort of God in whom we were all brought up to believe. Humanism would be the natural substitute, but the more I see of humanism, the less I like it. (L348)

In such moments Stevens seems as concerned as Eliot about the decline of religious sensibility, but he does not feel that the answer is to kneel where prayer once found what was valid. The church is a curious relic. Once St. Armorer's was an immense success but nothing is left now but a dead blaze and a foreign smell. Neither can he reduce Being to the dimension of man's mind, as does the humanist. Very much aware that "the elaboration of the most commonplace ideas as, for example, the idea of God, has been terribly destructive of such ideas" (L512), Stevens refuses to reduce Being to the status of a "signed photo on the mantel." In an effort to avoid such limiting labels, he names and then renames Being as the "spectre of the spheres," the "immemorial grandiose," the "skeleton of the ether," the "giant of nothingness," and the "adventurer in humanity."

Ernst Cassirer, in his study of Goethe and Rousseau, asserts that the greatest geniuses have been ontological in orientation—seeking a solution to the eternal problem of Being. Frank Lentricchia, in *The Gaiety of Language*, labels Stevens a naturalist who takes the logical positivist position that metaphysics is nonsense; he finds no ontological values at all in Stevens' poetry. What he fails to note is that while Stevens denies the God-Jove-Jehovah form of Being, he does not deny Being itself; indeed the search for reality and Being are the momentous concern of his later poetry. Everything may be physical when we are young, he tells us in the *Adagia*, but "when one is old everything is psychic" (OP167).

Ontological questions have never been more difficult than in this contemporary age in which, as Heidegger says, man has come too late for the gods but too early for Being. Aquinas may have found the answers to the mystery of Being, but the most modern ontology balances itself on the top of a question mark, a dialectical tension between negation and faith, and leaves un-

answered the question as to what final reality God contains. Descartes paid devout homage to God's existence, but boasted that he devoted only a few hours a year to metaphysical thought. Stevens is attracted rather to those philosophers such as James, Bergson, Whitehead and Heidegger, who, while considered heretical by traditional theologians, devote a great deal of thought to the metaphysical and ontological puzzles, which, as James said, grow more urgent as one grows older. Which is the more profoundly spiritual point of view is a matter of judgment. Descartes, good Christian that he was, conceived of God as external, omnipotent and remote. But Stevens, seeking nothing outside reality, favors philosophers who see God as immanent in process.

It is to Henri Bergson and William James that Stevens ascribes the foundations of his own philosophy (L476) and he speaks with admiration of Whitehead (OP230). These process philosophers, seeing movement as original and everything else as derived, could not conceive of an Unmoved Mover. Everything is obscure if we speak of a world which is created and of an omniscient external Being which created it. The idea of a heaven occupied by an absolute is a sterile concept for Whitehead who cannot conceive of a god who does not manifest himself in his creatures and depend on them for an integral part of his value. Stevens deplores our tendency to postulate an inventing mind separate from the world. In "The Auroras of Autumn," which considers metaphysical concepts of Being, he ends by affirming an "adventurer in humanity" who meditates a whole in mankind.

The process philosophers are one with Stevens in rejecting the perfections of paradise; such blisses awaken only yawns in James. Whitehead scorns the "idiotic concept" of an anthropomorphic Christian god, surrounded by angels singing his praise and flattering his vanity in a rigid unchanging paradise. Keenly aware of the abyss that Cartesian dualism has wrought between man and the world, such philosophers believe, with Stevens, that a blissful liaison occasionally occurs in moments when the mind attains the "essential poem at the center of things," a moment both static and flowing, eternal and transistory, joyous and heartbreaking, triumphant and dying.

When man thought in terms of the primacy of substance, it was natural that permanence seemed preferable to mutability. Man longed to transcend the ever-whirling wheel of change and to be one with a perfect and unchanging Reality. But process philosophy condemns the escapist philosophy of those who seek to transcend temporality and feels, with Nietzsche, that blasphemy against the earth is the greatest sin. If God is process, finitude and infinitude become one, and such philosophers would approve of Stevens' angel of earth who has neither aureole nor ashen wing but in whose sight we see the earth again.

Stevens' search for a vital belief was perhaps more influenced by William James than anyone else, or so he implies to an old classmate when he considers the fuss being made over his supreme fiction. People should realize that we yield ourselves to a "declared fiction . . . out of the need to believe, what in your day and mine, in Cambridge, was called the will to believe" (L443). The fiction of "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" is an enigma that Stevens refuses to define:

> As I see the subject, it would occupy a school of rabbis for the next few generations. In trying to create something as valid as the idea of God has been, and for that matter remains, the first necessity seems to be breadth. (L435)

The spiritual areas of life have always been mysterious, according to James, but we cannot remain neutral until we have empirical proofs. Indeed, the conflict between spiritual craving and cold scientific facts can create an anguish which might well lead a man to suicide. To combat such despair, man has a right to believe that experienced reality is only part of a larger whole. We can will to believe that our wills are free, that there is a God.

Stevens ardently sought for James live hypothesis, feeling it was not possible to merely disbelieve. Because it is the poet's duty to affirm, to create confidence in the world, the "question of illusion as value" was a constant preoccupation. If the world is plastic rather than formed, if there is no heaven of eternal created essences, then the successful creation of the world may well depend on man's belief. James' emphasis on heroic faith may well have influenced Stevens' belief that those who realize that "the ideal and the real are dynamically continuous are those by whom the world is to be saved." It is man's will to "believe beyond belief" that has made him modern.

Because Stevens was not a systematic philosopher, he cannot be called an existentialist any more than a process philosopher, but it is no surprise to find him attracted to existential thinkers in his later years when the philosophy became widespread. A philosophy which distrusts abstraction, emphasizes radical discontinuity, attempts to explore the irrational, finds fecundity in the paradoxical and vitality in the absurd would predictably find favor in Stevens' eyes. The existentialists seek the difficult reconciliation between essence and existence and it is in Stevens' search for a "true center" which is so unapproachable that his thought often parallels theirs. Both emphasize the intuitive in this search. If we are deceived by the definite and the rational, if convictions are prisons, as Nietzsche insisted, if concepts which must be proven have no values, then authentic being can only be presented artistically. The existentialist reasoned that since forcing one's intuition of lived reality into conceptual thought deprives it of its quality of poetic vision and truth, then art, with its ambiguity and multiple modality, is one of the few authentic ways to communicate reality. If the systematic violates the fullness of perception, then poetry is more effective in its symbolic approach to Being than is philosophy. Thus Heidegger felt that the poet is the "namer of the gods" and Stevens believed that we owe the idea of God to poetry rather than to philosophy (L729).

For the existentialist it is man's capacity for transcendence which is the paradoxical source of his failure and tragedy, his triumph and dignity. He forever tries to synthesize the temporal and the eternal; man cannot but desire the unchanging and simultaneously he cannot help being passionately involved in the pleasures and pains of concrete existence. To solve this dilemma the religious existentialist takes a leap into faith which reason cannot support, feeling, with Pascal, that the heart has its reasons. The more tough-minded secular existentialists asserts, as does Sartre, that man must embrace his finiteness and defy his longing for infinity. In like manner Stevens systematically refutes every conforting platitude about immortality in "Dutch Graves in Bucks County." To the belief that we are immortal in the memories of others, he replies:

> And you, my semblances, in the total
> Of remembrance share nothing of ourselves

To the belief that the past is never really lost:

> And you, my semblances, in gaffer-green,
> Know that the past is not part of the present.

To man's feeling that he is immortal through future generations:

> And you, my semblances, know that your children
> Are not your children, not yourselves.

But Stevens on occasion is not less desirous than Eliot of a still point in a turning world. In "This Solitude of Cataracts" he wants to be released from destruction:

> He wanted the river to go on flowing the same way,
> To keep on flowing. He wanted to walk beside it,
> Under the buttonwoods, beneath a moon nailed fast.
> He wanted his heart to stop beating and his mind to rest
> In a permanent realization . . .

But there are even more interesting parallels between Sartre's teacher, Martin Heidegger, and Stevens, whose interest in the philosopher is apparent when he writes to Peter Lee in Friborg that if he should attend

any of Heidegger's lecturers or even see him, to "tell me about him because it will help to make him real" (L389). He was extremely eager to possess Heidegger's book on Holderin which celebrates the marriage of poetry and philosophy. For Heidegger the poet has the more exalted position since he is the namer of gods and the essence of things. Because Being lives only in experience and cannot be driven into conceptual and scientific traps, we must turn to the language of poetic vision to find reality and Being. Science can explain the average commonplace grasp of existence, or sensual awareness, but there is a superior type of understanding which discloses the ontological structure of existence and brings one to authenticity because it fully realizes and unfolds the possibility of existence. In everyday life Being does not manifest itself except rarely and in a distorted fashion. Art and poetry, however, can suspend the banal quotidian and disclose true essence. Believing that which is conceived is inferior to that which is realized, Stevens tells us in "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" that we do not achieve perfect balances in life by searching for concepts, but rather that moments of illumination occur only if we remain open to experience.

If, as J. Hillis Miller suggests in *The Act of the Mind,* the movement from the dissolution of the gods to the difficult apperception of Being represents the next step forward in the spiritual history of man, then Stevens must be considered in the vanguard of such radical ontology. If a little philosophy inclines a man towards atheism and a great deal brings him back to God again, the God that one returns to is seldom a simple object of worship. Although he felt compelled to deny the charge of atheism, Stevens admits to a friend that at the age of seventy-two he does not believe in the same God that he did as a boy (L735). His chief reason for writing poetry, however, is to struggle with the "inaccessibility of the abstract" (L434). Although he resents the exploration of the unknown by any but the most lucid minds, when that exploration is properly conducted it has for him profound seductions. Although no one can ever possess Absolute Being, poetry as metaphysics can penetrate the heart of external reality and sound the spiritual depths of the unknown.

Out of the quarrel with others, Yeats remarked, one makes rhetoric; out of the quarrel with oneself, poetry. Out of his quarrel with high-toned old Christian women, Stevens made rhetoric. It is when forced to "make up my mind about God" (L763) that he writes his greatest poetry.

HOMAGE TO STEVENS

by James Reiss

In woods of words the whisper-tree was you,
an inner voice epitomized
by green, a treey thing.

The woods quacked conversation with the wind
like ducks. A weeping willow broke
its heart of metaphor.

Even the ducks were gunboats goldplated
with ack-acks. A port blown up
by ducks! All ducks ashore!

There were no ducks, no boats, no port. The woods
went pop at noon and fizzed. Only
the whisper-tree still was.

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Meeting Wallace Stevens

EDWIN HONIG
Brown University

The Spring term of 1955 I was teaching the Modern Poetry course at Harvard. My class was overcrowded. I had to resort to lecturing and, with an assistant or two, to getting student responses to poems every other week on a double set of three-by-five cards. The pattern was predictable: they were gloatingly familiar with Frost and Cummings, excessively knowledgeable about Eliot, offended by Pound, baffled by Stevens. But one graduate student had warmed up to "Owl's Clover," almost as though the poem had been written specially for her. We were conferring and she was planning to write a long paper about it.

I had been on Stevens for three weeks when the annual dinner for the English Department given by the Board of Visitors took place at the Harvard Club in Boston. The Visitors were a mixed group of old grads, mostly former composition students of Copey or Briggs in the twenties—the ghosts most frequently invoked to the detriment of newcomers like me, holding a temporary appointment as Briggs-Copeland Assistant Professor of English Composition. Well-established publishers, magazine and newspaper editors, even some novelists, they were a liaison group between the English Department and the Overseers. During their week at the University each year they visited classes, then presumably told the Overseers about it. They might make a case of the Department's undersupply of graduate fellowships—and this generally was the burden of the afterdinner speeches by Department members. The Visitors had the jocular air of successful men of the world who are temperamentally down on academics, and though joshing them still regarding the more eminent with respect.

On this occasion, April 11, 1955, cocktails and dinner were confined to a small dining room of the Club because of the banquet going on simultaneously in the main dining room. So there was more crowding and jostling than usual and a rather quicker downing of drinks and upsurging of camaraderie. On entering the room I was immediately introduced to Wallace Stevens, there as a new member of the Board.

He was a large, heavy, powerful-looking man—monolithic, a real lion, an Olympian. I hadn't been prepared for his striking physical appearance. Friends like the poet Byron Vazakas, who'd grown up in Reading, Pennsylvania, had spoken of the Stevens brothers in that town, of Wallace Stevens' magisterial manners, of his cheerful but stolid Pennsylvania Dutch taciturnity. John Sweeney had told me of numerous attempts to bring Stevens to Harvard to read. He had only recently succeeded, as was evident in the Harvard Vocarium record, used later by Caedmon, of a Stevens reading which Richard Wilbur had introduced. It must have been around this time that Archibald MacLeish was trying to get Stevens interested in the Charles Eliot Norton Professorship for the following year. But now I, fresh from a long talk about "Owl's Clover" with my student, was talking to the poet who had written it.

Most of that hour or so before dinner we stood shifting a bit near the east wall of the narrow dining room. Though somewhat over six feet tall myself, I had the impression Stevens was a good half-head taller. I recall that at one point in our conversation he interrupted himself to ask, "Who is that man leaning against me?" Someone as tall as Stevens was not so much leaning as now and then rocking back and forth and accidentally brushing shoulders with him. "That's Professor Kenneth Murdock," I said. Murdock, hearing his name spoken, looked towards us surprised. It was then I noticed that Stevens' long impassive cheeks occasionally twitched and trembled uncontrollably.

Earlier, when I'd been introduced, Stevens recognized my name; but it turned out to be Abe Honig's, my father, who had been an insurance agent in the early thirties (and who, when later asked, told me he'd never

heard of Wallace Stevens.) Talking about critics, Stevens said, "I used to read my critics at first, but then I stopped because they never seemed to hit it right." Before I could ask him about some of the better ones, he went on, "I never read Yvor Winter's piece on me. Isn't he a snob . . ." Then, as if to correct himself before the little stain of the word could spread, he added, "Well, no, I respect him—both as a poet and a critic."

I mentioned the new poems William Carlos Williams was then writing, and this brought forth the slowly measured observation, "The young are wild about Williams' new line. What is it, after all, but the old line broken into two or three parts?" I described my students' typical responses to the poets we'd been reading, particularly Eliot and himself, and he replied, "Hugh Kenner wrote in the *Quarterly Review* lately, last month —no, not Quarterly, it was *Poetry* magazine (he's about the worst-writing critic there is)—he wrote that Eliot and Pound concentrate on the line. Now I never worried about the line. I've always been interested in the whole thing, the whole poem. Eliot and Pound are very cultured men, and they put all their culture into the poetry. I never had any to worry about."

That made me think of his "Esthétique du Mal," the poem I'd just assigned the class as a counterbalance to Eliot's "Four Quartets" and as another sort of meditation on the Second World War. Some student had questioned the near-uniformity of lines in the long stanzas and sections of the poem. And so I asked Stevens about it. His stanzas were normally quite symmetrical, as in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," for example. But in "Esthétique" the first three sections run to twenty-one lines each, while the remaining twelve sections dilate occasionally to twenty-five and contract to twenty. Was this deliberate?

"The reason for that," he said in his deep, unchanging voice, "is that I was writing on a pad of paper, and the contents of each sheet became a separate stanza. Some had more lines than others—I didn't bother to count them up." I couldn't tell from his voice or facial expression if he was pulling my leg or not. Now my question struck me as being silly. Why had I asked it? Though I thought myself informed, I was certainly no more knowledgeable than my student. It then occurred to me that where a difficult poem is concerned there's no such thing as "an informed reader." It reduces everyone to being guileless and gullible. Another student-instigated question, about "Owl's Clover," brought the response—rather unreassuring to the student, "I took it out of the *Collected Poems* because it was too rhetorical. Something I wanted very much to write—and I rewrote it, but never really brought it off."

Discussing other places and countries, I mentioned New Mexico, where I'd lived for two years just prior to my coming to Cambridge in 1949. He remembered having driven through the State once—the shrubbery, the mountains, the red soil. "Yes, I was out west once —around 1924—but not on vacation. I've never had a vacation in my life." He stressed that. No vacation. Then what about venereal Florida? What about being down in Key West with Hemingway and Frost? But there are questions one does not ask.

The time came to sit down to dinner. The dapper, white-haired columnist who would be the toastmaster was tapping a signal on his water glass just as I had asked something about "The Comedian as the Letter C." Stevens said, "Nobody has understood 'The Comedian' very well. I meant the letter *c* to stand for hard and soft sounds both." I mentioned that *cripsus,* from which the name Crispin is derived means "with curls" in Latin. He said he didn't know that. "I just picked the name Crispin because I liked it."

In the vague pressing toward the T-shaped table and chairs Stevens was indicating a place beside him for me when someone abruptly led him away to the other side. Later I heard from Douglas Bush, who had been his dinner companion, that when they'd been introduced Stevens impassively tucking in his napkin intoned, "And I suppose you're an entomologist!"

Reviews:

Vendler, Helen H. *On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems.* Harvard University Press, 1969. $7.50

How rare to be able to hail a readable book on Stevens, one which has something to say that needs to be said and says it well. Helen Vendler believes Stevens' diction and imagery have received sufficient attention: she focuses instead on the jugglery with syntax of this superlative "sleight-of-hand man." As Blackmur pointed out, Stevens longed to make tremendous affirmations which honesty forbade. In Chapter I of her book, a must for Stevens students, Helen Vendler analyzes the characteristic strategies that enable Stevens to make severely qualified but emotionally satisfying assertions, to take away with the left hand what he gives with the right. Mrs. Vendler provides pages of illustrations.

On Extended Wings purports to be a study of experiments and changes in style. The book is as much a study of the evolution of attitude as of the evolution of style. In her introduction, the author says she will ignore, whenever possible, vocabulary, imagery, rhythm, sound, symbolism, and the poet's aesthetic or "philosophy." Can what is left—syntax alone—qualify as more than the bare bones of style? But it is the bare bones of Stevens that Mrs. Vendler prefers. She finds the authentic Stevens in the winter poet, composing stoic poems on the plain sense of things. The poet of summer, sensuousness, and luxuriant foliage she declares a false mask. She recoils from Stevens "doing a Whitman," chanting in primitive orgiastic ritual; such behavior suits Stevens as ill as the assumption of brawn or virility would, say, Henry James. Mrs. Vendler hints darkly that Stevens waged a lifelong war against a naturally ascetic temperament, and in youth "felt obliged to pretend an instinct for the fertility of earth." But the poet of "Sunday Morning" (which Mrs. Vendler slights unconscionably) could not have *pretended* his instinct for earth. May it not be as Stevens declared: "when one is young, everything is physical; when one is old everything is psychic"?

Though Mrs. Vendler's Stevens is persuasive, he is not the only Stevens. She grasps only half of Stevens by refusing him his innate dualism. By concentrating on his systolic moods and rejecting his diastolic, she seizes only half his poetry. Mysteriously, she asserts that Stevens is not a poet of antinomies. But he is. Mrs. Vendler denies Stevens' true subject is the alternation between the poles of reality and imagination, while showing that his poems perpetually oscillate or eddy between these poles. Though she understands well the dialectic underlying Stevens' poetry, she castigates those poems—notably "The Comedian" and "The Man with the Blue Guitar"—which contain only thesis and antithesis, no synthesis, which achieve no middle ground between self and world but place these in mutually annihilatory relation. Stevens' poetry, Miss Vendler declares, "is a poetry of the transitional moment, of the not-quite-here and the not-yet-gone." This is well put. But one must deny that Stevens is a poet of the middle world and of limited space. On the contrary, he ranges through space, one of the first poets fully to realize the infinity without as well as within. The later and longer poems amply demonstrate this. Not only does Stevens' eye "in a fine rolling . . . Glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," but, as Stevens said of his two allegiances (the one willed, the other a suasion not to be denied), reality and imagination "project themselves endlessly and I want them to do just that . . ."

Mrs. Vendler is best on those poems in which syntax carries the burden of meaning. Thus, she is excellent on "The Man with the Blue Guitar" and her favorite, "The Auroras of Autumn." The chapter in which she discusses "Credences of Summer" and "The Auroras" back-to-back is superb. One finds unsatisfactory the discussion of the early, highly decorative poems, "Sunday Morning," "Le Monocle," and "The Comedian." Most cursory and least satisfactory is the discussion of "Esthétique du Mal." One wishes Mrs. Vendler did not share Stevens' mistrust of paraphrase. She assumes on the part of Stevens' readers a familiarity with "Notes" which does not exist, and further, confuses familiarity with understanding. She admires "Notes" for its relinquishing of revelation for repetition, the pleasures of merely circulating. Her reading of the last long poem, "An Ordinary Evening," is challenging and interesting, though she finds this the drabbest, "the saddest of all Stevens' poems." This reader finds it shot through, like "The Auroras," with the aurora borealis of Stevens' imagination, the "spirit's alchemicana," exhilarating in its intimations of the "hilarious dark."

Doris L. Eder
Assistant Professor
Ohio State University

Blessing, Richard Allen. *Wallace Stevens' "Whole Harmonium."* Syracuse University Press, 1970. $7.50

The author's thesis, that the *Collected Poems* may be considered as "a single, unified, grand poem," is one of which Stevens would certainly have approved. Almost necessarily any major poet's work must come to be seen as such—and so perhaps this is a necessary book, even if it only serves to delineate not a "natural unity," as the author suggests, but a constructed pattern, though one which the poet no doubt wanted to be appreciated.

The individual pieces of *Collected Poems* are of course not arranged in the order they were written. Stevens gave a great deal of attention to the positioning of the various poems in each of his books for a totality of effect, even to discarding better things than he kept in a few cases. In the end he apparently thought his design successful.

But as a critic's thesis such a grand unity takes a good deal of proving up, and in 185 pages of large type (the shortest book since O'Connor's) Mr. Blessing does little more than trace an undeniable thread of continuity running from *Harmonium* through *The Rock*. His method is to provide a reading of the *Collected Poems*, focusing in on those pieces and figures which best serve his purpose, and promising that analysis will eventually lead to synthesis. If it never does, it is probably more because of the enormity of his task than the shortcomings of his highly selective approach.

Leaving aside the question of success or failure, Mr. Blessing's method is of some interest because it often forces him to choose to discuss "bad" or neglected poems which illustrate his thesis rather than better-known works which contribute more to their own unity than the grand scheme. Thus "Farewell to Florida," certainly nobody's favorite poem, is discussed at some length, both as a bridge between *Harmonium* and *Ideas of Order* and as a repudiation of the venereal soil, marking a return to the North. As "Farewell to Florida" is the first poem in the Knopf edition of *Ideas of Order*, Mr. Blessing evidently does not consider it important that it did not appear in the earlier Alcestis Press edition and was probably written much later than any of the other poems. This leads the author a short time later to make a very curious statement: "The fact that Florida is the setting of 'The Idea of Order at Key West,' rather than the North of men moving in crowds, indicates that the poem is not typical of a volume which opens with 'Farewell to Florida'." This is just the sort of absurdity which thesis-bound reasoning so frequently produces.

Mr. Blessing gets himself into similar difficulty with "Notes toward Supreme Fiction," another work which appears in the *Collected Poems* well out of chronological order, though here he perhaps avoids more difficult and important questions than he raises. In these later chapters, as throughout the book, he relies heavily on critics Joseph Riddel and John Enck for guidance through the more obscure passages. But his best and most persuasive writing comes in his discussion of the final section, *The Rock*. Mr. Blessing has evidently given these poems a good deal of thought, though one might wonder if Stevens did not just leave a clearer trail toward the end.

Perhaps the most unfortunate thing about this well-intentioned work is its timing. If it had been published three years ago after the *Letters*, as was Sukenick's *Musing the Obscure*, it would no doubt have found a quite respectable place in the critical canon. Coming as it does after Mrs. Vendler's intensely analytical work, which may be said to launch Stevens criticism squarely into its third generation, this comfortably second-generation work can only suffer in comparison. Much more will be required of future writers. Still, this is a book to be read, if not greatly pondered upon, because it is a study Stevens would have found congenial, and of a type which is not likely to be attempted again for some time.

Works in Progress

Holly Stevens is editing a new, enlarged paperback edition of WS' poems, to be published by Knopf sometime next year. It should be ideally suited to student use.

Penguin Education, a division of Penguin Books (Middlesex, England), is currently preparing a volume on WS as part of their critical anthology series for schools. The publication date has not been announced as yet.

Harold Bloom is reportedly at work on a book on WS, to be published by Cornell University Press.

At least a half-dozen persons, that the editor knows of, are in the process of reworking their dissertations for publication in book form. As these projects near completion appropriate announcements will be made.

A New WS Recording

Volume 2 of *The Spoken Arts Treasury of 100 Modern American Poets* (SA1041) features Stevens reading "Infanta Marina," "Fabliau of Florida," "Bantams in Pinewoods," "Nomad Exquisite," "Indian River," "Less and Less Human, O Savage Spirit," "Imago," and "The Novel." This is vastly superior to the older Caedmon recording. Stevens' reading of "Bantams in Pine-woods" is particularly vigorous and expressive, and should be required listening for future interpreters of this poem.

New Books

Wallace Stevens' "Whole Harmonium," by Richard Allen Blessing, was published by Syracuse University Press in February. It is reviewed elsewhere in the *Newsletter*.

A Turkish language translation of about forty of WS' poems is scheduled for publication in March or April of this year. The translator is Talat S. Halman, whose letter appears elsewhere in these pages.

About To Be Published

Samuel French Morse's biography *Wallace Stevens: Poetry as Life* is scheduled for publication in May by Pegasus. (Pegasus is a division of the Western Publishing Co., not Random House as previously reported.)

The Rape of Cinderella, by Eugene Nassar, scheduled for publication in July by Indiana University Press will contain a new essay on "Sunday Morning."

William Van O'Connor

The George Arents Research Library of Syracuse University has brought out *The Achievement of William Van O'Connor:* a checklist of publications, an inventory of manuscripts, and an appreciation, by Robert Phillips and Glenn B. Skillin (1969). The papers of this early Stevens scholar are deposited at Syracuse and include fourteen letters from WS, of which several are unpublished. Copies of this nicely-done publication may be had on request from the Research Library.

Stevens Book and Letter Prices

Stevens' letters are much sought-after but seldom offered. Recently a nice one was sold by the Heritage Book Shop, Lake Zurich, Illinois, for $85. A facsimile of this previously unpublished piece of correspondence appears on p. 16 of the *Newsletter*.

A number of copies of *Harmonium* (1923) have been offered in the past few months: A remainder copy brought $60 at a Swann Gallery auction on Jan. 8th.

L. W. Currey offered another remainder copy for $40. In the same catalog he also lists a *Harmonium* (1931), very fine in dust wrapper for $50, and *The Man with the Blue Guitar* (1937) in fine condition for $32.50.

Ampersand Books, New York, listed a *Harmonium* (1931), very good, for $32.50.

Henry Wenning of New Haven offered a copy of *Harmonium* (1923) in one of the earlier bindings for $65. His same catalog also listed a very unusual item *Three Academic Pieces* (Cummington Press, 1947), signed by the poet, for $100. (If whoever bought this would care to double his money, let him contact the WSN editor.)

Last Minute Notes

A good portion of the next issue (October) of the WSN will be given over to discussion of Morses' forthcoming biography. Reviews and comments on this work will be especially welcome.

J. Hillis Miller has an essay on WS in *Modern American Poetry*, edited by Jerome Mazzaro (David McKay, 1970).

James E. Mulqueen is at work on a dissertation "Emerson and Stevens: Transcendentalism and Radical Transcendentalism" at Purdue.

Janet Pinkerton completed a dissertation "Wallace Stevens: Politics and the Tropics" at Harvard in 1968.

It is rumored that Michel Benamou has a book on WS in the works.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Mr. Ford:

It is a pleasant surprise to find out that there is a Wallace Stevens Newsletter.

The undersigned is a confirmed Stevens enthusiast. I teach Turkish language, literature and history at New York University and at Princeton . . . am a Turkish poet, critic, and translator, and have probably translated more of Stevens' poetry into Turkish and written more about him than has anyone else in Turkey.

Since 1962 I have published about two dozen of my WS translations in Turkey's leading literary magazines, including *Turk Dili* (August 1962), *Varlik, Yeditepe, Dost,* and *Cep Dergisi.* Also, in 1963 I published two major articles on abstraction in poetry using as the focal point "Garden Abstract" by Hart Crane and "The Red Fern" by Wallace Stevens. These appeared in *Varlik* in January 1963, and were included in an annual anthology *Turk Edebiyati 1964* (Turkish Literature 1964), featuring the best specimens of Turkish literature published in 1963.

At the moment I am putting the finishing touches on a small volume of Stevens' poetry in Turkish. The book will be published by Yeditepe this spring and will include an introduction and translations of close to 40 poems, including: *The snow man, Domination of black, Valley candle, The emperor of ice cream, Disillusionment of ten o'clock, Thirteen way of looking at a blackbird, The reader, The men that are falling, Poetry is a destructive force, Study of two pears,* etc.

As soon as my book comes out, hopefully in March, I will send you a couple of copies.

Sincerely,
TALAT S. HALMAN
New York University
Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures

Editor's note: At the urging of the editor, Professor Halman has consented to write a short article on the influence and impact of WS on modern Turkish poetry, to appear in a future issue of the Newsletter.

Dear Mr. Ford:

I note on p.3 that you wonder if there are any successful parodies of the blackbird poem. One or two years ago I read in an issue of *Northwest Review* a rather fine parody by Albert Drake, titled, I think, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Model A." (Mr. Drake is currently at Michigan State University, Dept. of English.)

Sincerely,
JAMES TIPTON
Dept. of English
Kalamazoo College

Editor: This poem appears in the fall 1967 issue (IX, no. 2). The editor also wishes to thank the others who sent in parodies. Probably the most humorous, and successful, parody of Stevens' style is to be found in The Pooh Perplex, *though here it is the prose style of* The Necessary Angel. *Special thanks is due Marjorie Buhr for pointing this out. What the editor was really hoping for was something on the order of Henry Reed's "Chard Witlow," a parody of style rather than any particular poem, and one which even its target thought successful.*

Dear Mr. Ford:

Wallace Stevens, always a man of many worlds, has now been linked to the world of professional football. Dick Munro in his "Letter from the Publisher" (*Sports Illustrated,* March 2, 1970, p. 4) reveals the fact that after writers Robert Gutwillig and Dick Shaap hit upon the idea of coming out with a diary of the football season, Shaap immediately designated Jerry Kramer of the Green Bay Packers as the man to record the diary, since he had once heard Kramer reciting Wallace Stevens' poetry to team-mate Jim Taylor. The rest is literary history. Jerry Kramer's *Instant Replay* became one of the most popular and praised books of 1969.

Kramer's sensitive appreciation of poetry seems proof of Stevens' contention that a man is composed of many often contradictory facets; nevertheless, one cannot help wondering how many times Kramer read of Stevens' "hero"—"the highest man with nothing higher/Than himself" — and thought only of Vince Lombardi.

Very truly yours,
JAY M. SEMEL
University of South Carolina

Editor: Notes of this sort are particularly welcome. The editor also wishes to thank his other correspondents for their many messages of congratulations on the Newsletter's inauguration.

Current Bibliography

Ackerman, Harold C. "Notes toward an Explication of 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds'," *Concerning Poetry,* II (Spring 1969), pp. 73-78. The poet displays five masks (suave, ironic, Romantic, agnostic and droll) and interprets their relationships.

Bewley, Marius. "Wallace Stevens and Emerson," in *Masks and Mirrors: Essays in Criticism* (Atheneum, 1970), pp.271-280. This essay originally appeared in *The Commonweal* (Sept. 23, 1955).

Clough, Wilson O. "Stevens' 'Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, Part III, Section III'," *Explicator,* XXVIII (Nov. 1969), Item 24.

Eder, Doris L. "The Meaning of Wallace Stevens' Two Themes," *Critical Quarterly,* XI (Summer 1969), pp.181-190. The two themes discussed are (1) reality and the imagination, and (2) the supreme fiction and the problem of belief.

———. "A Review of Stevens Criticism to Date," *Twentieth Century Literature,* XV (April 1969), pp.3-18. Not an objective review as the title would indicate, but a survey of books and articles the author has found helpful. An unusual amount of attention is devoted to J. V. Cunningham, almost none at all to Joseph Riddel.

Feshbach, Sidney. "Wallace Stevens and Erik Satie: A Source for 'The Comedian as the Letter C'," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language,* XI (Spring 1969), pp.811-818. Convincingly argues that a number of images from the opening of "The Comedian" may be traced to a magazine article on Satie by Paul Rosenfeld which appeared in *Vanity Fair* (Dec. 1921).

Jarrell, Randall. "The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens," in *The Third Book of Criticism* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969), pp.55-73. This review, which originally appeared in the *Yale Review* (Spring 1955) is one of Jarrell's best pieces of writing.

MacCaffrey, Isabel G. "The Other Side of Silence: 'Credences of Summer' as an Example," *Modern Language Quarterly,* XXX (Sept. 1969), pp.417-38.

Miller, J. Hillis. "An Exercise in Discrimination," *Yale Review,* LIX (Winter 1970), pp.281-289. A review-article of Helen Vendler's *On Extended Wings* (Harvard, 1969).

Raghavacharyulu, D. V. K. "The Well-wrought Jar of Wallace Stevens," in *The Unpunctual Pen* (Hyderabad, Maruthi Book Depot, 1968), pp.29-32. This short essay was written in 1963.

Riddel, Joseph N. A review of James Baird's *The Dome and the Rock* in *American Literature,* XLI (Jan. 1970), pp.609-611.

———. A review of Frank Lentricchia's *The Gaiety of Language* in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* LXVIII (Oct. 1969), pp.718-723.

Recent Dissertations

WALLACE STEVENS AND THE FORMS OF LYRIC POETRY

J. M. MORRISON, PH.D.
Harvard University, 1969
Readers: Harry Levin and Joel Porte

My dissertation tries to correct two erroneous tendencies; first, the tendency in Western criticism to reduce lyric poetry to a single genre so that a single theory (the mimetic, the epideiktic, the affective, for example) may account for it all; and second, the tendency of paraphrastic criticism to regard Stevens' poetry as though it belonged primarily to a single intellectual or philosophical mode, and to discuss it as though it took a correspondingly homogeneous form.

Instead of regarding lyric poetry as a single genre, I propose that we consider descriptive, intellectual, reflective and intuitive poetry as four separate genres, each requiring a separate theory (for example, a mimetic theory for descriptive poetry, a rhetorical theory for intellectual). I would then subdivide the four principal genres into twelve different modes: the ekphrastic, the imagistic, and the symbolic; the gnomic, the epideiktic and the argumentative; the didactic, the topographical and the elegiac; the visionary, the enthusiastic, and the meditative. My first chapter defines these modes and

tries to accommodate within them the various forms of lyric poetry, ancient and modern.

My second chapter tries to demonstrate the applicability and usefulness of these categories by illustrating them with examples drawn from Wallace Stevens. To give examples, I discuss "The Doctor of Geneva" as a "character" (an ekphrastic form); "Study of Two Pears," with its "image," *"motto,"* and *"explicatio,"* as an emblem (a symbolic form); "New England Verses" as satirical epigrams (in the gnomic mode); "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" as a nativity ode (an epideiktic form); "Academic Discourse at Havana," IV as a preceptive poem on the art of poetry (a didactic form); "Montrachet-le-Jardin" as a "region-poem" (a topographical form); "Another Weeping Woman" as a *consolatio* (an elegiac form); "Page from a Tale" as a visionary poem; "Autumn Refrain" as a Romantic meditation.

In Chapters Three and Four I discuss in detail the major and minor modes of Stevens' poetry. Each form that appears is illustrated, and important examples are discussed. For example, within the topographical mode, I discuss a variety of poems that correspond in form to the eighteenth-century categories for the local poem ("Chocorua to Its Neighbor" represents a curious revival, or persistence, of the "hill-poem"; "St. Armorer's Church from the Outside" is a "building-poem"); likewise, I discuss the examples of graveyard poetry in Stevens ("Two at Norfolk," "Dutch Graves in Bucks County"), the emblematic landscape, and so on. My discussion of each mode tries to take into account Stevens' own ideas and attitudes, as he expressed them in his prose and poetry. Chapters Two, Three and Four deal with virtually all Stevens' poetry, with the exception of his longer poems, whose genre is then discussed in a final chapter.

THE POETRY OF HARMONIUM: THE DEVELOPMENT OF WALLACE STEVENS, 1915-1923.

William Wade Bevis, Ph.D.
University of California, Berkeley, 1969

This dissertation studies Wallace Stevens' first book, Harmonium (1923), and the period of the Harmonium poems (1915 to 1923). Most of the poems in Harmonium were published in small magazines before they were collected in his book, and the chronology of their original publication was consistently violated in the arrangement of Harmonium. Analysis of the poems reveals that Stevens ordered Harmonium on the basis of contrasts, placing side by side poems of dissimilar theme, tone and diction.

Many of these poems were not published singly in the magazines, but in groups of from two to fourteen poems. Analysis of these groupings reveals that they were not assembled on the basis of contrasts, as was Harmonium, but instead were unified by similar and consistent approaches to theme, tone and diction.

This study of the contrasting attitudes represented by Stevens' two public presentations of his early poems defines a problem and offers a solution. The problem is that the contrasts of Harmonium have obscured both the meanings of many individual poems and the chronological development of Stevens' poetry. Reading the poems in their original groups clarifies their meanings, and reading the poems in chronological order reveals important phases in Stevens' development. Both readings influence our understanding of Harmonium. When the Harmonium period is understood, we can appreciate how Stevens developed his mature style and how the contrasts of Harmonium have influenced our understanding of Stevens' work. M $3.55; X $12.60. 276 pages.

DA, v.30a,no.5 (Nov. 1969)

THE MEDITATIVE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH AND WALLACE STEVENS

William Curtis Stephenson, Ph.D.
University of Minnesota, 1969

The meditative voice, with its peculiar modesty, prosaic rhythms, and plain diction, is common not only to Wordsworth and Stevens but to all nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets who write the meditative "poem of the mind in the act of finding/What will suffice."

The short meditative poem, written predominantly in the meditative voice, is concerned with man's attempt to understand the nature of the emotion occasioned by his interaction with a natural scene or object. In it the poet confronts and tries to make sense of mysteries of origin, purpose, and meaning, as well as the nature of man's interaction with the outer world, which is often depicted as a cosmic setting involving the natural forces of sea and wind. "The Solitary Reaper" and "The Idea of Order at Key West" illustrate the centripetal movement from outer to inner world as the mind tries to get at the center of the self which can stand by its own strengths. Other of Wordsworth's poems such as "To the Cuckoo" and "I wandered lonely as a cloud," as well as the early poems recounting boyhood experience which were incorporated into The Prelude, illustrate the way in which meditative understanding is released by the poet's sensuous encounter with cosmic activity instead of by an inward passive contemplation. Stevens' short meditative poems are his most Romantic, not only in the use of night and settings, longing, and symbolism, but also in the paradoxical identification of the breath (or voice) of nature with the living breath of the poet. Especially illustrative of a Wordsworthian confrontation with the landscape are "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon" and "Evening without Angels."

The longer meditative poem, such as "Tintern Abbey" and "Sunday Morning," derives from a historic or social awareness and seeks to reconcile man to the presence of suffering in the world. Unlike the short poem, which achieves its effect by purifying or effacing the verbal medium, the rhetoric of the longer meditative poem is deliberately heightened and ceremonious, primarily because of its excessive repetition and its encircling, interlocking argument and imagery. Moreover, it often modulates from an elevated and excited mood and voice to the bare, prosaic, meditative voice. These two voices supplement the imagery in the double process of affirming and questioning, celebrating and understanding.

Wordsworth's post-1815 meditative poems illustrate his changed attitude toward nature and his failure to capture "the spirit of the place" and write "landscapes of the mind." With a few exceptions (such as "Composed upon an Evening of extraordinary Splendour and Beauty"), they tend to move from description and questioning to speculation or moralization rather than to meditative understanding. Not all of his observations of nature are turned to religious or moral purposes, however; some poems show evidence of a new kind of poetry involving man and the landscape. Unlike Wordsworth's later poems, which all too often function as unfortunate contrasts with his earlier successful meditative poetry, Stevens' later poems represent a culmination of his poetic career and in fact a termination of the purely meditative voice. They are "antipoetic" and entirely contemplative as they strive to present directly the unity of imaginative meditation without recourse to a Romantic transcendentalism.

M $3.10; X $10.80. 237 pages.

DA, v.30a,no.6 (Dec. 1969)
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PAUL RUTHERFORD PRESIDENT

Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company

HOME OFFICE — HARTFORD 15, CONNECTICUT

July 21, 1949.

AIR MAIL

Hayden Carruth, Editor
POETRY
232 East Erie Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Carruth:

I have just sent you a wire, a copy of which you will find attached. During the last few months I have written a good many things but I am not able to send you anything. I have not forgotten my promise to you. Just at the moment I am doing a small group for Botteghe Oscure. The only way to make any progress with all these things is to stick to one's own plans.

As it happens, last Spring I exchanged some letters with Jeremy Ingalls. The suggestion that I spoke of in my wire is in reference to her. I know nothing about her work. She wanted me to do something that I was not able to do because of my own plans. This must have sounded unpleasant to her. Apparently she has given a great deal of thought to poetry. She might very well have available exactly what you want. If she has, I imagine she will be glad to let you have it. You might be sufficiently interested to carry a brief editorial note about her. After all, one does not come across people of her caliber every day. This remark is based only on a feeling that I have about it because I do not recall ever having read any of her work. As you see, I am trying to do her a good turn at your expense. This is probably part of the general corruption brought about by the New Deal. Miss Ingalls' address is 501 College Avenue, Rockford, Illinois.

Sincerely yours,

Wallace Stevens

Enc.

A Stevens Letter Recently Acquired by the Editor.

The Wallace Stevens Newsletter

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 1 OCTOBER 1970

"Mere Facts" and the Biography of Wallace Stevens

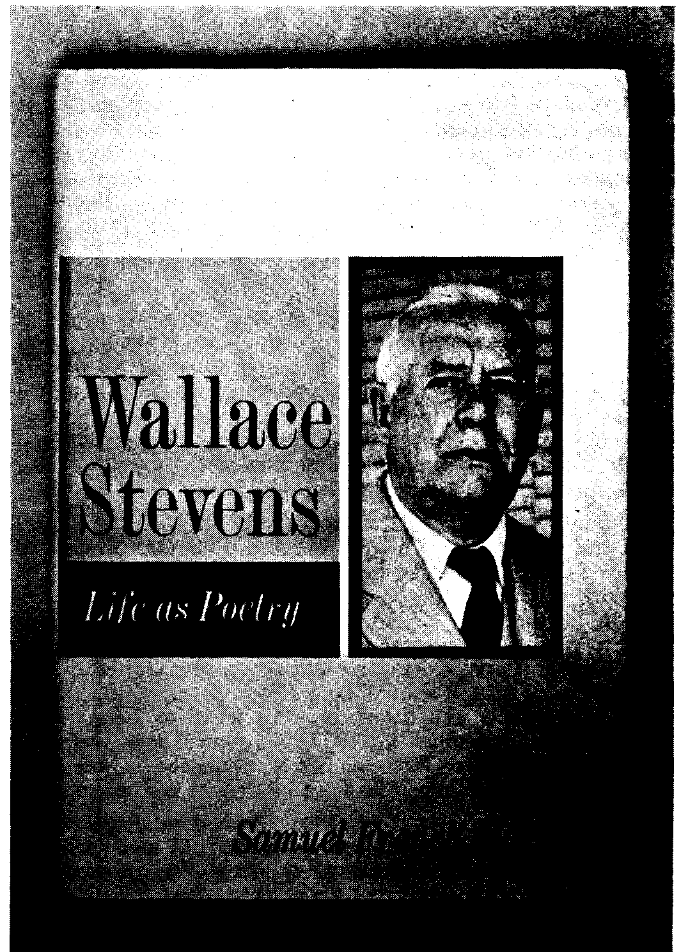
GEORGE S. LENSING
University of North Carolina

The number of major literary biographies appearing in the last decade has notably increased—partially in response to post-New Criticism rediscovery of life in relation to work, partially because a number of competent scholars have written them, and, not least, because of a growing bestseller curiosity that draws readers to them. There is little possibility of the latter occurring in the case of the life of Wallace Stevens. Not only was his deliberately an undramatic life, but it was also a concealed one, resolutely committed to privacy and personal pursuits—a fact that hardly facilitates the task of the Stevens biographer. The recent publication of Samuel French Morse's *Wallace Stevens: Poetry as Life* (the dust-jacket reads *Life as Poetry*) reopens a number of questions about the nature of literary biography generally and how it can function specifically to illuminate the work of Wallace Stevens.

The eccentricities of a prominent writer's life have always had a strong appeal—at times to the detriment of the writer's work. One thinks, for example, of the lives of Poe, Emily Dickinson and Hemingway as instances where a reader's awareness of biography has led to exaggerated biographical interpretations. The recent disclosures of Lawrance Thompson's *Robert Frost* will almost certainly prompt an outpouring of critical reinterpretations in the light of the new evidence. At the same time, the readers of Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce,* Leon Edel's volumes on Henry James, Carlos Baker's biography of Hemingway and John Unterecker's of Hart Crane—to name a few—have been rewarded with a plenitude of the individual writer's "studies, his mode of living, the means by which he attained to excellence, and his opinion of his own works"—as Boswell quotes Johnson on the subject of biography during their Hebrides tour.

Morse's biography of Stevens, though it recounts the essential outline of his life, eschews these Johnsonian criteria on the premise that Steven's life is essentially *in* his poetry and that there is little to be gained by going beyond it. His work begins with a quotation from one of the *Adagia,* "I have no life except in poetry. No doubt that would be true if my whole life was free for poetry" (OP175). As a result, in the details of Stevens' personal life there is little if any new information, and the greater part of the volume is given over to a discussion of influences and criticism rather than personal biographical data. There is little quarrel to be taken with Morse's critical perspicacity, as his previous articles on Stevens have demonstrated, but his recent book evinces that the definitive biography of Stevens remains to be written. There is also a strong argument in favor of the eventual writing of that work.

With the death of Henry Church in the spring of 1947, Wallace Stevens lost one of his closest friends, the man to whom he had dedicated "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" and whose death occasioned the writing of "The Owl in the Sarcophagus." In a letter to his widow shortly after Church's death, Stevens speculated about the value of his friend's life and the danger of his being too glibly typed and categorized: "But was Dwight Church, for example, the beau ideal of the business man, queer because he was able to step into, and out of, a world of books at will. The critic types the business man and is incapable of visualizing variations" (L562). The comparison with Stevens himself is inevitable, and it may



Morse, Samuel French. *Wallace Stevens: Poetry as Life.* New York, Pegasus, 1970. 232pp. $6.95.

well be asked if one of the values of a Stevens biography does not consist in evading the same kind of simplistic view of the poet-business man—one to which Stevens has too often been subjected. In the same letter to Barbara Church, Stevens goes on to acknowledge the value of a biography of his friend: "1. The book about Mr. Church will be of the greatest interest to me. The mere facts of his life, the freedom to 2. live a life of ideas, mark him out among Americans" (L562). Stevens here touches upon the value of "mere facts" in biography, not for their own sake, but for what they contribute to the "life of ideas." He held a similar fascination for the life of Santayana, which he described in the essay "Imagination as Value:"

> There can be lives, nevertheless, which exist by the deliberate choice of those that live them. To use a single illustration: it may be assumed that the life of Professor Santayana is a life in which the function of the imagination has had a function similar to its function in any deliberate work of art or letters. (NA147-8)

As in the case of Church and Santayana, the "mere facts" of Stevens' life "mark him out among Americans" and define his own unique life of imagination. These "mere facts"—whether flunking a year of high school in Reading, servicing surety bonds in Hartford, or clandestinely conspiring with a

member of the Vassar faculty to find a girl to befriend his restless daughter and keep her from leaving college—constitute the immediate ingredients of Stevens' personal "reality." And the need for "visualizing variations" through biography, as he suggested to Mrs. Church, is to recognize the expansion of the poet's personality and experience within the context of his art—no matter how diffuse and indirect, at times, the process may be. Stevens himself implies a similar view in one of the *Adagia,* "Literature is the better part of life. To this it seems inevitably necessary to add, provided life is the better part of literature" (OP158).

There is another particular value in the examination of the life of Wallace Stevens. It has to do with the discipline of the poet, not merely in the formal construction of poems, but in the organization of a life that refused to succumb to the distractions attendant upon literary reputation. Stevens jealously guarded the privacy of his life and that of his family in Hartford. Most of his literary friends he knew only through correspondence and occasional meetings—usually in New York and other places outside Hartford. Even at the end, he turned down the invitation from Harvard to become Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry, preferring to maintain, in his seventy-fifth year, the routine of business and family life. The aesthetic and personal interests of private life were protected with resolution and success for the almost 40 years he lived in Hartford and wrote most of his poetry. The more explicit terms of that deliberately organized life, though ostensibly undramatic and enclosed by high walls, would further justify an extended biography.

Although Stevens' life was apparently free of the sensational and sordid, it was neither bland nor simple. *Letters of Wallace Stevens,* edited by his daughter, Holly Stevens, is the one work providing the closest thing to a biographical impression of the poet yet to have appeared. Stevens maintained a vigorous correspondence with friends from Ireland, Cuba, Ceylon, Paris, Korea and all parts of the United States. From his more distant acquaintances Stevens enjoyed a steady stream of artifacts and literature. His letter to Leonard C. van Geyzel on December 31, 1937, is a typical representation of the pleasure derived from his correspondence—in this case, a Christmas package received from his friend in Ceylon:

> I selected as my own the Buddha, which is so simple and explicit that I like to have it in my room. At night, when my windows are open and the air is like ice, this particular Buddha must wish that I put a postage stamp on him and send him back to Colombo.
>
> I am having woodapple jelly and your tea every morning for breakfast. The jelly, which smells almost as good as it tastes, is not unlike a home-made guava jelly. . . . (L328)

He then goes on to ask van Geyzel to recommend other possible contacts in Java, Hong Kong or Siam. Stevens also collected a number of paintings in the last 20 years of his life, many of them through an agent, Anatole Vidal and, after Vidal's death, his daughter, Paule, in Paris. He became increasingly interested in the relation between poetry and painting, the subject of a lecture in 1951 at the Museum of Modern Art.

Morse acknowledges the wealth of material in the Stevens letters—even suggesting that "they make any biography, in one sense, superfluous" (196). In another sense, however, they convey essentially a Stevens seen by Stevens. There is little in the letters about his business and family life and nothing, of course, of the impressions made by Stevens on others. Morse does not claim for the province of his study a full pursuit of these areas. Despite Stevens' own avid interest in his family's genealogy, there are only a few remarks about his parents, two brothers and two sisters. No attempt is made to discuss his work at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, nor are business acquaintances consulted for their recollections. Even the famous black eye inflicted by Hemingway is dismissed as one of "a handful of anecdotes" (200).

Wallace Stevens: Poetry as Life raises questions of another nature about Stevens as well. What kinds of things, for example, did Stevens write as a reporter for the *New York Tribune* after his graduation from Harvard? What kind of law student was he and why did his original law practice with Lyman Ward fail? What is the context for his 1906 Journal entry: "Somehow, in this season, I like to get my pipe going well, and meditate on suicide" (L90). Morse hints rather decorously at certain marital strains: ". . . she [Elsie Stevens] seems never to have enjoyed his business or literary associates;" there were, he suggests, "vast differences in taste and interests" (39). What was Stevens' response to the failure in sales of *Harmonium* in 1923? What was his relation with his daughter? ("One of the advantages of not having children is that you avoid these extraordinary complications of character" (L427), he mentions in a letter to Henry Church at the time she had decided to withdraw from Vassar.) These questions pertain to Wallace Stevens the poet only tangentially, but in the answers to them one surely approaches the essence of this complicated man. And in response to not a few of them may well lie the roots of the darker side of Stevens which emerges in poems like "Domination of Black," "Autumn Refrain," "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery," "Esthetique du Mal," "Madame La Fleurie," "The Region November," "As You Leave the Room," and a large number of others.

Morse's discussion of the poetry written during Stevens' Harvard years (1897-1900) and the later pre-*Harmonium* poems which appeared after 1914 in magazines like *Poetry, Others, The Little Review, The Measure, The Dial* and *Broom* goes over material he had himself earlier covered in his "Introduction" to *Opus Posthumous;* it also draws on the more elaborate presentation of that period in Stevens' career by Robert Buttel in his *Wallace Stevens: The Making of Harmonium.* Morse also recounts in some detail the Bergson, Pater influences—essentially repeating the points of an earlier essay, "Wallace Stevens, Bergson, Pater," which appeared in *The Act of the Mind,* edited by Pearce and Miller. It is regrettable that Morse himself did not write an extended biography of Stevens, for he knew Stevens well—a fact he does not betray in this work. Stevens' daughter, in her introductory comments to the *Letters,* speaks of the "closeness of . . . relationship" (L811) between the older poet and the younger scholar. Stevens wrote an introduction to Morse's first volume of poems, and the letters describe trips with him to New York City, a tour of the Trinity library arranged by Morse and introductions set up by Morse to a number of students. In addition to his personal acquaintanceship with Stevens, Morse has indicated a familiarity with much of the complexity of Stevens' personality, as he reveals in his "Introduction" to *Opus Posthumous:*

> He sometimes complained, with characteristic restraint and humor, that he had grown to resent the way in which business took time that he might otherwise devote to poetry. . . . Himself a man of real energy and great discipline, he assumed that other writers ought to be able to solve the problems of making a living and carrying on their real work at the same time. He thought that poets ought to be paid for their work, but he was always willing to send a poem to a magazine even though the magazine could not pay He believed in and competed for prizes, and felt that public recognition and honors ought to be part of any award, although he fought shy of public appearances. He was generous in recommending younger poets for fellowships, but his name seldom appeared on a publisher's blurb or at the end of an introduction to another writer's work. (OPxiii-xiv)

The final argument with Morse's biography of Stevens is that it is not really biography—and thus it is a failure, not in execution, but in design. As the response to Stevens has burgeoned in the decade and a half since his death, so might one expect that a comprehensive account of his life, a life more complicated that many have supposed, will be forthcoming. Perhaps the best argument for that biography comes, again, from Stevens himself who, in a letter to Ronald Latimer in 1935, commended an article on his work by Howard Baker, going on to add: "But however striking Mr. Baker's analysis may be, what he does not see is the sort of world in which I am living" (L292).

Wallace Stevens and Turkish Poetry

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If words are motionless in the middle of the orbit
What after all is growth without movement
"This is the mythology of modern death"
Order apart from form, shape apart from mold
Consonance on the one hand, congruence on the other
It is not existence nor death, but the other one.
The voice between sound and quiet
Conviction without knowledge, science without faith
Substance somewhere and essence somewhere else
Feeling without sensation, sentiment without sense
Poised between the real and the ideal.

This excerpt, with its echoes of T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens, is from *Kollari Bagli Odiseus* (Ulysses Bound), a long poem by one of Turkey's most prominent poets, Melih Cevdet Anday (b. 1915). Published in 1962, it includes a quotation in the original English from Stevens' *The Owl in the Sarcophagus:* "This is the mythology of modern death," which appears suddenly in the midst of lines in Turkish, and represents the beginning of Stevens' influence on Anday, a leading innovator since the early 1940s, as well as on some other Turkish poets in past decade.

Until the 1960s American and British poetry exerted virtually no influence on Turkish poets. In fact, it was scarcely known because the leading poets knew no English, although many of them were well-versed in French, and very little Anglo-American poetry was available in translation. Before 1960, only one book featuring an American poet (Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*) and one anthology of American poetry had been published. The 1960s saw the publication of selected poems by Langston Hughes and T. S. Eliot as well as several anthologies of world poetry with a generous sampling of modern Anglo-American verse and anthologies of British and American poems in Turkish translation. Among modern American poets Wallace Stevens seems to be in the lead in terms of the number of poems translated and as far as critical attention is concerned. In 1970, due to his influence on a major poet like Anday who, in turn, exerts wide impact on many younger poets, Stevens is perhaps the most influential among all contemporary American poets on the aesthetics of Turkish poetry.

The earliest Stevens translations antedated Anday's interest. In 1956, Özdemir Nutku and Tarik Dursun K. included in their anthology of contemporary American poems entitled *Cagdas Amerikan Siirleri* their translations of two poems by Wallace Stevens: Section VII of "Sunday Morning" (under the title "On a Summer Morn") and "A Postcard from the Volcano." Messrs. Nutku and Dursun took liberties with the originals which are hard to explain. For example, they altered the title "A Postcard from the Volcano" to the unaccountable "A Postcard Came to the World." In the biographical notes, they did not take note of the fact that Stevens had died in 1955, and more surprisingly they awarded Stevens the 1954 Nobel Prize for Literature. Their prefatory note on Stevens compared him to Rimbaud (for long-winded poems which combine surrealism with a "symbolic" universe) and to Berkeley (for his conviction that the world of reality is actually the world of the imagination), and pointed to strong satire and abstraction and pagan primitive themes in his poetry as epitomized by "The Man with the Blue Guitar."

In the 1960s, Turkish men of letters had a much more knowledgeable access to Stevens. Anday, already famous for his translations of poems by Edgar Allan Poe and Langston Hughes as well as several 20th century French poets, published—in the influential literary monthly *Yeni Ufuklar* (New Horizons)—a number of poems by Stevens. Another highly competent translator, Cevat Capan, took an interest in Stevens and published his excellent version of "Re-statement of Romance" in his widely influential collection of translations entitled *Cin'den Peru'ya* (From China to Peru). Another appreciation of Stevens' poetry was provided when a leading literary monthly, *Türk Dili* (Turkish Language), which maintains an average circulation of about ten thousand per month, published eleven poems by Wallace Stevens in my own translations. The interest generated by this group of poems culminated in two long articles I published in *Varlik* (Existence), Turkey's oldest and most influential literary magazine, on January 1, 1963, and January 15, 1963, under the titles of "Abstract Poetry" and "Thoughts on Two Abstract Poems" respectively. In these articles, I surveyed the aesthetics of abstract poetry in general terms and offered a close textual analysis of two poems, "Garden Abstract" by Hart Crane, and "The Red Fern" by Wallace Stevens as typical of the process of abstraction. Memet Fuat, a prominent literary critic and editor, incorporated both articles into his *Türk Edebiyati 1964* (Turkish Literature 1964), an anthology of the best specimens of Turkish literature published in 1963.

Two world poetry anthologies of the 1960s devoted space to Wallace Stevens poems translated by Melih Cevdet Anday, Cevat Capan, and myself. Dr. Hüseyin Karakan included in his 1963 anthology entitled *Dünya Siiri* (World Poetry) four poems: "Re-statement of Romance" translated by Cevat Capan and my translations of "The Red Fern," "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," and "Poetry is a Destructive Force." Renowned poet and anthologist Ilhan Berk incorporated into his *Dünya Siiri* (World Poetry) of 1969 three Stevens poems: "Vacancy in the Park" translated by Anday, "Re-statement of Romance" translated by Capan, and my translation of "The Red Fern."

Turkish coverage of Stevens' poetry reached its widest scope when the leading literary publisher Yeditepe Yayinevi issued, in October 1970, a book entitled *Wallace Stevens: Siirler* (Poems), translated and with an introduction by Talat Sait Halman. This volume, the fourth Turkish book devoted to a single American-born poet (after volumes featuring Whitman, Langston Hughes, and T. S. Eliot), contains an Introduction which discusses the fundamental aspects of Stevens' poetry, furnishes a brief biography, and explains that Stevens has been a direct or indirect influence on about two dozen contemporary Turkish poets, including such major poets as Melih Cevdet Anday, Oktay Rifat, Cemal Süreya and Edip Cansever. Translations of 40 Stevens poems appear in this book. More than half of these translations were originally published in such literary magazines as *Türk Dili, Varlik, Yeditepe, Cep Dergisi,* and *Dost* in addition to being anthologized. As I indicate in the introduction, the major long poems and the literary essays remain to be translated.

The impact of Stevens on Melih Cevdet Anday is obvious—and acknowledged by Anday himself. His influence is probably direct on a number of poets, including Ülkü Tamer and Hilmi Yavuz, who, like Anday, have read Stevens in English. It is possible, but not too likely, that some others have read Stevens in French or German translations. Some of them, particularly Oktay Rifat, probably came to appreciate the aesthetics of Stevens through Anday's interest. In certain cases, the "influence" might well be coincidental similarity—this can safely be assumed in the case of Behcet Necatigil, a notable poet well-versed in German but not knowledgeable in Anglo-American literature, who was writing Stevens-like poems before the name of Stevens appeared anywhere in Turkey.

Since the middle of the 19th century, Turkish poetry has been under the dominant influence of French literature. It is only since the mid-1950s that British and American poets have made any inroads. Whitman, T. S. Eliot, and e. e. cummings have exterted feeble and passing influences on a few Turkish poets. Yeats, Pound, Emily Dickinson, Dylan Thomas, W. H. Auden *et al,* although translated, have exerted no influence at all. By contrast, every major French poet of the past 150 years has been echoed by Turkish poets.

In the long historical background of Turkish poetry, two major traditions stand out: Folk poetry, written in the vernacular and in syllabic verses, which is simple, straightforward, lyrical; and Classical poetry, heavily influenced by Persian and Arabic forms, values, and vocabulary, which is complex, intellectualized, ornate. In the second half of the 19th century, the process of Europeanization started in Turkish

poetry, which turned to French poets for norms. By the 20th century, symbolism, parnassianism, etc. had become fashionable. But a revival of interest in folk poetry also came about, and neo-classicism held sway at times. The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the emergence of free verse, leftist poetry, and Mayakovsky's influence on the one hand and an outpouring of nationalistic verse on the other. After a brief interlude of dadaism and surrealism, a group of young poets—principally Orhan Veli Kanik (1914-1950), Oktay Rifat (b. 1914), and Anday started a new movement, which can be termed "Poetic Realism," seeking to produce poetry without rigid forms, metaphors, rhymes, stentorian effects, or specious embellishments. Poetic Realism championed as its hero the man-in-the-street and utilized the rhythms and the idioms of colloquial speech. It served to simplify the craft as well as the effect of poetry.

In the 1950s a strong reaction set in against the easy intelligibility and the surface simplicities of Poetic Realism. Oktay Rifat introduced a major innovation by taking up neo-surrealism, and Ilhan Berk advocated "meaningless poetry" as communicating beyond and often in spite of words.

The range and the variety of poetic modes grew in the 1960s: Political and ideological poetry flourished. Many younger poets, feeling more at ease with their cultural heritage, proceeded to modernize classical forms. Simple lyric poems and folk poetry continued to be popular. A few poets kept writing neo-surrealist and obscurantist verse. Perhaps the most significant and fertile synthesis in the 1960s was forged by Melih Cevdet Anday, Oktay Rifat, Cemal Süreya, Ülkü Tamer and others who, like Wallace Stevens, seemed to base their "supreme fiction" on the aesthetic principles that poetry must be abstract, much change, and give pleasure. They wrote "the poem of the act of the mind," believing that "The Ultimate Poem Is Abstract."

The leading figures of "abstract poetry" in Turkey are Melih Cevdet Anday and his long-time colleague Oktay Rifat. Having served the cause of Poetic Realism in the 1940s, they are treated with respect by those Turkish critics who expect from poetry a strong political engagement, but "abstract poetry" in general and as practiced by many younger poets without Anday and Kanik's background in social commitment and criticism is often taken to task for deplorable detachment from social causes. The issue is regarded as widely significant in Turkey, where poetry constitutes an effective force in the propagation of political ideas and where the leftist poems of the late Nazim Hikmet (1902-1963) and of Turkey's leading living poet Fazil Hüsnü Daglarca wield a substantial influence in political as well as literary circles.

In the 1960s political and abstract poetry co-existed in Turkey without coalescing. Much of the political verse, not surprisingly, was marred by rhetoric and sentimentality. Abstract poetry, on the other hand, appeared to be on firmer aesthetic ground although its practitioners suffer from a paucity of philosophical insights, from inadequate intellectual orientation, from an inability to evolve an encompassing abstract vocabulary, and from an unwillingness to use, rather than refuse, their Turkish *weltanschauung.* In the 1970s, as abstract poetry no doubt continues and matures, Wallace Stevens will remain influential.

In response to a request I made, Melih Cevdet Anday was kind enough to send me a written evaluation of Stevens' influence and a general assessment of Stevens' aesthetics for *The Wallace Stevens Newsletter.* In his letter dated July 3rd, 1970, Anday makes the following statements (translated from Turkish):

> For years, I could not put aside *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens.* As far as I am concerned, he is one of the most interesting poets of our age. I cannot assert that Wallace Stevens has influenced Turkish poetry aside from my own work, and, in my case, this influence is more true of the period following the publication of *Kollari Bagli Odiseus* (Ulysses Bound, 1962). I incorporated into *Odiseus* one line by Stevens, but, as I indicated in a supplementary article, considering the links with other poets as well, this particular influence went far beyond the scope of borrowings: It served virtually as a source tapped or referred to in a treatise, my main theme in *Odiseus* being man's alienation.
>
> Later, I concentrated to a larger extent and to the best of my ability on what Wallace Stevens had set out to do. In such a brief statement, I cannot presume to shed light on Stevens' literary personality. Besides, I do not feel myself qualified or prepared to engage in such an understanding. Nevertheless, I can say this much: In Wallace Stevens, paradoxical depictions cross each other's paths. It could be asserted that, on the one hand, he narrows down the scope of poetry (he wrote, it is claimed, for poets; which poet hasn't?) and that, on the other hand, he expands the domain of poetry (because he instills in the individual limitless courage and freedom). By the same token, while poeticizing the mind he places his poetry on a non-rational foundation, or while seeming to unify nature he concentrates on its diverse elements and goes in search of various structures.
>
> But all these tend to serve as occasions for making the surprises and the chilling precision of poetry felt without specific awareness of the process but by eliciting from the reader an attentive intelligence and active interest. To sum up, I could state that Wallace Stevens arrives at the poetry, which is his real objective, by expressing, in the calm attitudes of a philosopher, the elusiveness of nature and its resemblance to human beings, the soul's faith and convulsions, the mind's powers of comprehension as well as its inadequacies. Like all great poets, Stevens too has a posture which has influenced me. As I read him, what acquires significance is not his statement, but his attitudes. It is futile to seek substance in poets who have no posture at all.

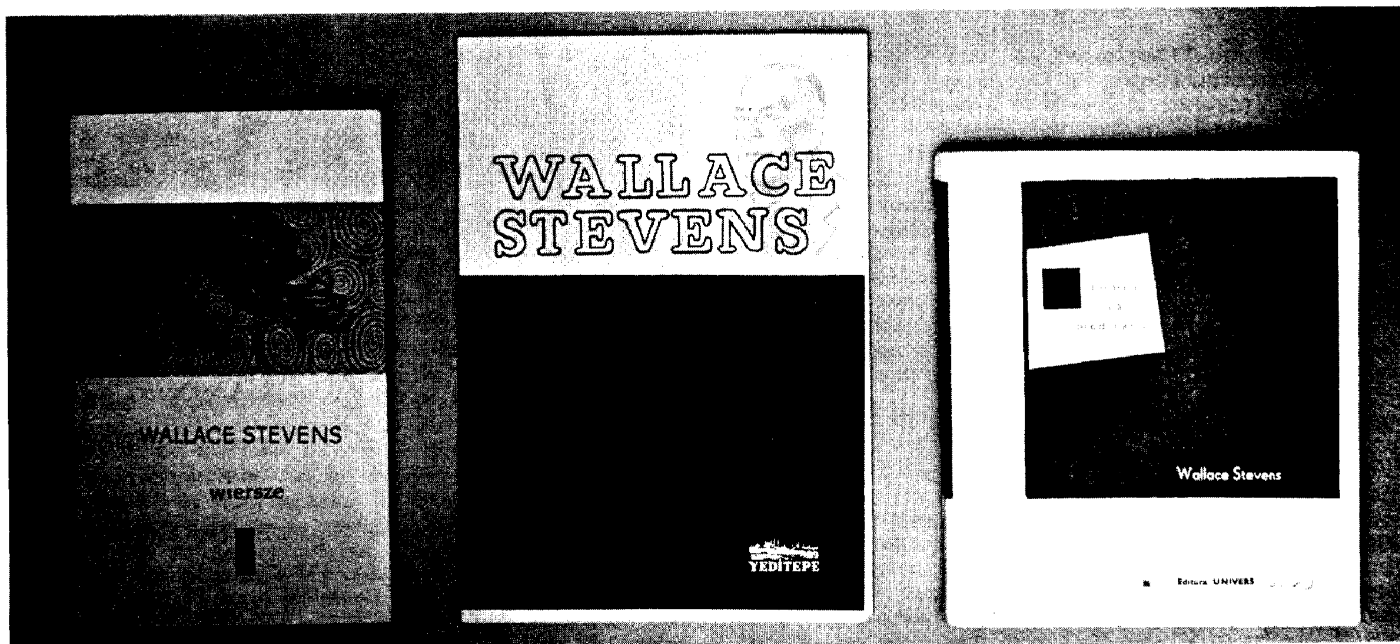
The impact exerted by Stevens' poetry on Anday and many of his contemporaries in Turkey will no doubt become stronger in the present decade. The publication of Stevens' selected poems in book form will very probably herald wider critical attention and serve to deepen his influence on younger poets—particularly those who have sufficient command of the English language to read the originals. If so, by the end of the decade, Stevens' impact will far exceed the earlier influences of Whitman, Eliot, and cummings, and he might well emerge as the strongest foreign influence on Turkish poetry.

Review:

Huguelet, Theodore L. *The Merrill Checklist of Wallace Stevens.* Columbus, Ohio, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1970. 35pp. $.75.

This is a student checklist of editions and criticism. It is attractively done, inexpensive, has large print and sufficiently wide margins to be suitable for extensive annotation. Although claiming to be selective, omitting "articles of interest only to the specialist," the checklist for the period 1963-68, not covered by Morse, is fairly complete, and the book's chief value might be as a supplement to Morse. For this period it seems to be simply a gathering of the MLA bibliography entries—the few essays which do not appear in MLA are likewise absent here—but there are a few other important omissions, as Frank Kermode's "'Notes toward a Supreme Fiction:' A Commentary," *Annali Istituto Universitario Orientale Napoli—Sezione Germanica,* IV (1961), pp.173-201, and the four original essays which appeared in *The Act of the Mind* (though this work is listed in the book section). The only post-1968 material included is Helen Vendler's book, again indicating the compiler's heavy dependence on the MLA bibliographies.

Some of the other compilers of Merrill checklists seem highly qualified—J. Albert Robbins did Poe and Joseph Katz the one on Stephen Crane—but Mr. Huguelet is not known either as a bibliographer or Stevens scholar, and the whole work is embarrassingly slight, looking as though it might have been assembled in a single afternoon. With the proper annotations and additions it might be useful, but until the appearance sometime next year of J. M. Edelstein's bibliography, which will also include an updated checklist of criticism, most researchers will probably prefer to rely on Morse, the MLA bibliographies, and the current checklists in the *Newsletter.*



Recent Translations of Wallace Stevens into Polish, Turkish and Rumanian.

New Books

Samuel French Morse's biography, *Wallace Stevens: Poetry as Life,* was published by Pegasus in late July. Apparently there were some distribution problems: a number of persons complained that they were unable to obtain the book in time to submit any comment on it to the *Newsletter.*

The Merrill Checklist of Wallace Stevens, compiled by Theodore L. Huguelet, appeared earlier this year. It is reviewed elsewhere in these pages.

Talat Halman's Turkish translation *Wallace Stevens: Siirler* was published by Yeditepe Yayinevi (Istanbul) in October. The book is more fully described in Professor Halman's essay elsewhere in these pages.

A Polish translation, *Wallace Stevens Wiersze,* of about 25 poems by Jaroslaw Marek Rymkiewicz recently came to the attention of the editor. It was published by Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy (Warsaw) in 1969.

Editura Univers (Bucharest) recently published a Rumanian translation of about 125 poems, *Wallace Stevens Lumea ca Meditatie,* by Stefan Stoenescu. It includes a lengthy introduction.

About To Be Published

Merle E. Brown's new critical work, *Wallace Stevens: The Poem As Act* (Detroit, Wayne State U.P.) is scheduled for publication in December. According to the publisher, it attempts to combine the analytic techniques of the New Criticism with a holistic consideration of the developing poet.

A new essay by Donald Sheehan, "The Whole of Harmonium: The Poetics of Wallace Stevens," will appear in *The Fifties* (DeLand, Fla., E. Everett), edited by Warren French. It should be published very soon.

Work in Progress

A. Walton Litz is at work on a study of WS, to be published by Oxford U.P. as part of their critical series on modern American poets. The emphasis of the book is to be on the stages of Stevens' development and his relationship to trends in modern poetry and criticism. It will probably appear late next year or early in 1972.

Recent Books Noted

Lawrance Thompson's *Robert Frost: The Years of Triumph* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970) contains some anecdotal material of interest. According to Frost, at a dinner in Florida to which he had been invited by Stevens, and which also included Judge Powell, "the vice president-poet drank heavily, offended by making passes at the waitress" and ordered the Judge to repeat stories from his "incredible stock of off-color jokes." Other examples of unseemly behavior are also noted and it is refreshing, if no surprise, to hear that Stevens occasionally let himself go, but Thompson reminds the reader again and again of Frost's habit of exaggeration, especially when gossiping about poets he considered a threat to his own reputation.

In the preface to his recent study, *Yeats* (Oxford U.P., 1970), Harold Bloom sees Yeats, Stevens, and perhaps Hardy, as being the enduring giants of 20th century poetry, and feels that Eliot and Pound are likely to be "the Cowley and Cleveland of this age." Even as between Yeats and Stevens it is not difficult to see which Professor Bloom prefers: "Wallace Stevens is the representative humanistic poet of our time, and I think he speaks directly to and for our condition in a way that Yeats . . . do[es] not . . ."

Stevens Book Prices

The Alcestis Press *Ideas of Order* (1935) and *Owl's Clover* (1936) are key books for any WS collection. They are also among the scarcest, though an unusual number have been offered in the past several months:

Black Sun Books (Brooklyn) offered—and quickly sold—*Ideas of Order* for $175 earlier this year.

At a Swann Gallery auction in July an ex library copy of the same book brought $60 in a lot.

Henry Wenning's spring catalog listed one of the 20 presentation copies of *Owl's Clover* at $325, calling it the author's scarcest title. This was probably a bargain price—

On October 13, Louise Bogan's copy of the regular issue (85 copies) of this book brought $525 at a Parke-Bernet sale, a record price for any WS book to date.

. . . Of Rankest Trivia

"Wallace Stevens is a Fink" is the title of a poem in Stanley Cooperman's *Cappelbaum's Dance* (U. of Nebraska Press, 1970). But the piece itself seems to be about something else.

Current Bibliography

Block, Haskell M. "The Impact of French Symbolism on Modern American Poetry, in *The Shaken Realist: Essays in Modern Literature in Honor of Frederick J. Hoffman,* edited by Melvin J. Friedman and John B. Vickery, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U.P., 1970), pp.165-217. While admitting that it is difficult to distinguish influences from affinities, the author provides a thorough overview of WS' relation to the *symbolistes.* See esp. pp.198-213.

Brown, Merle E. "A Critical Performance of 'Asides on the Oboe,'" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* XXIX (Fall 1970), pp.121-128. This excerpt from the author's forthcoming book is much concerned with the process of criticism and of finding a proper approach to the poem.

Bruns, Gerald L. "Poetry as Reality: The Orpheus Myth and Its Modern Counterparts," *ELH,* XXXVII (June 1970), pp.263-286. Heidegger and WS mark the full flowering of the Orphic theme of the power of the poet over the natural world. The 'necessary angel' is seen as a modern version of the myth. See esp. pp.276-285.

Dietrichson, Jan W. "Wallace Stevens' 'Sunday Morning,'" *Edda; Nordisk Tidsskrift for Litteraturforskning,* 1970 (Heft 2), pp. 105-116. The poem marks the end of an early stage of WS' aesthetic development. In Norwegian.

Hafner, John H. "One Way of Looking at 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,'" *Concerning Poetry,* III (Spring 1970), pp.61-65. The poem is an exercise in imagery as it illustrates the increasing complexity of the use of metaphor. The movement is from metaphor to symbol, from noticing resemblances between the things of the real world to understanding the meaning in those resemblances.

Huston, J. Dennis. "'Credences of Summer:' An Analysis," *Modern Philology,* LXVII (Feb. 1970), pp.263-272. The poem is essentially a rewriting of the Wordsworthian myth of the reciprocity between man and nature.

Lensing, George S. "Wallace Stevens' Letters of Rock and Water," in *Essays in Honor of Esmond Linworth Marilla,* edited by Thomas A. Kirby and William J. Olive, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State U.P., 1970), pp.320-330. In later life, when he had ceased travelling, WS' correspondence became a major source for his poetry, contributing particularly to its geographical imagery and symbolism.

Mulqueen, James E. "Wallace Stevens: Radical Transcendentalist," *Midwest Quarterly,* XI (April 1970), pp.329-340. WS' poetry can be read in the light of a radical transcendentalism which the poet acquired from Santayana. Among the poems discussed are *The Emperor of Ice Cream* and *The Comedian as the Letter C.*

Nassar, Eugene Paul. "Wallace Stevens' 'Sunday Morning,'" in his *The Rape of Cinderella: Essays in Literary Continuity* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1970), pp.46-57. A discussion of the shortened and rearranged version of the poem which appeared in *Poetry* (Nov. 1915), concluding that the abridgment is superior to the original. Not many are likely to agree.

Pinkerton, Jan. A review of Helen Vendler's *On Extended Wings* in *Criticism,* XII (Spring 1970), pp.161-164.

Vold, Jan Erik. "Wallace Stevens: Tretten mater a se svarttrosten pa,'" *Vinduet,* XXIV (1970), pp.72-73. A Norwegian translation of "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird."

Waggoner, Hyatt H. A review-article of Ronald Sukenick's *Wallace Stevens: Musing the Obscure,* and James Baird's *The Dome and the Rock: Structure in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens,* in *Modern Philology,* LXVII (May 1970), pp. 392-396.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Mr. Ford:

In June of 1970 a selection of Stevens' poems was published in a Rumanian translation. The basic translation was made by Stefan Stoenescu, a professor at the Institute of Foreign Languages of the University of Bucharest, and the poetic polish was added by Constantin Abaluta, a young Rumanian poet.

I knew Stoenescu when I was the Fulbright Lecturer in Bucharest in 1965-66. He is presently writing his doctoral thesis on the relationship of the aesthetic ideas of Stevens and Brancusi, the Rumanian sculptor. I think he has written an article or two on Stevens for Rumanian journals. If you wish to write him, his address is Institutul de Limbi Straine, Strada Pitar Mos 7-13, Bucharest.

RALPH M. ADERMAN
Professor of English
U. of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

Comment:

A Note on Mapping Stevens' Development

SIDNEY FESHBACH
City College
City University of New York

I wish to comment briefly on Marjorie Buhr's article, "When Half-Gods Go: Stevens' Spiritual Odyssey," *WSN* 1/2 (April, 1970), 9-13. Mrs. Buhr states clearly that the application of the Kierkegaardian tripartition of experience into the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious to Stevens is "arbitrary." She uses it as a heuristic map, a way to gather notes about the terrain so as to discover some significant paths—here he was "aesthetic," and now he was "religious."

I applaud this effort, but I think Mrs. Buhr makes an error in erasing the lines separating religious questions and philosophical problems. She writes, ". . . many critics have assumed that Stevens was an atheist . . . It has only been the publication of the journals and letters which make it possible to follow Stevens' lifelong interest in metaphysical questions." (9) Or, "What [Lentricchia] fails to note is that while Stevens denies the God-Love-Jehovah form of Being, he does not deny Being itself." (9) But Metaphysics is not Theology, or Ontology Theology, or Being God. From the handling of the materials it is clear that Mrs. Buhr knows the differences and has deliberately allowed them to be confused. It does a disservice to philosophical and critical languages to make the different categories—Ontology, Metaphysics, Theology, Poetics—one; and it definitely gets in the way of dealing with the immediate subject—the hypothesis of Stevens' religious or spiritual (which is it?) odyssey. *(Editor's note: The subtitle "Stevens' Spiritual Odyssey" was not Mrs. Buhr's, but an editorial addition for descriptive purposes.)*

Confusing such terms makes it more difficult rather than easier to analyze Stevens' work. True, in his poems and essays, Stevens expresses consistently a dialectical urge, a drive toward such a monism; possibly he found them one in experience, thought, or poetry. But, as "Stevens was an aesthete to the end of his life and he sought to be total in belief even in his youth," as Mrs. Buhr writes, it is quite difficult, and manifestly important, for the Stevens critic to stabilize categories, to maintain differences, to resist even Stevens' influence in these matters. If the critic does not stand apart somewhat, his essay is only a weak echo of Stevens' thought and it does not further our understanding of the thought or the poetry.

For such questions to be taken seriously, the critic must reinforce traditional technical distinctions; he must, even if only to show ultimately that Stevens did not. I think that by maintaining distinctions and continually clarifying them the critic will be better able to define the differences from poem to poem, to emphasize their individual thought and effect as well as to correlate different poems.

I might add that my present view of Stevens' inquiries into philosophy and religion is that they seem to have been in the manner of "going fishing," half playful, half compulsive, but not as serious as writing a poem or earning a living. Stevens chose areas where he hoped the fishing was good, cast about,

stayed as long as it was rewarding and relaxing, and moved without planning to another stream or pool; he tended to return to a few favorite spots. Critics will never draw a map of this territory if they do not take care of their surveying instruments—their analytic concepts and categories.

Nevertheless, I hope that Mrs. Buhr will continue with her speculations, for they certainly set me to thinking about some Kierkegaardian aspects of Stevens' life and poetry. Kierkegaard's *Repetition* may be particularly appropriate to both. SK's profound insights into the problems of aestheticism would help inquiry into the struggles Stevens had when he considered directions to take after *Harmonium*. SK's discussion of the problems of ethics appear particularly relevant to the strain Stevens felt when the "ethical universalism" of the Thirties "reviewed" his books. SK's extremely careful analysis of repetition and simplicity, ritual and spontaneity, and universality and particularization in religious experience should help us to understand—contrary to Mrs. Buhr's hypothesis—that Stevens did not have a religious quest, in Kierkegaardian terms; nor, apparently, was he like some other contemporary poets tempted by the religious. He continued in "The Rock" to generalize about man in an aphoristic manner and to particularize only the quality of language and events of nature. The old philosopher in Rome is attended by nuns, but remains a philosopher; he stops at the threshold of heaven. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, SK would help with the phenomenology of poetic repetition, a characteristic of Stevens' poetry from "Earthy Anecdote" to "Not Ideas about the Thing But the Thing Itself," repetitions in syntax, imagery, seasons, thought, and meditative manner. I was introduced to SK's *Repetition* by a composer, who said this book is very important for understanding how music is composed; not till Mrs. Buhr's article appeared did I remark its great usefulness for thinking about the "musical" qualities of the poetry of Wallace Stevens.

British Dissertations

Theses and dissertations in progress or recently completed in British universities, as reported in the *Journal of American Studies* (July 1970).

Brooks, Mrs. C. M. The persistence and significance of the *Harmonium* imagery throughout WS' work. University College, London. (Supervisor: J. F. Kermode) Ph.D.

Collins, N. F. The poetry of WS. Kent. M.A.

Crasnow, Ellman. The work of WS. Caius College, Cambridge. Ph.D.

De Joia, A. A linguistic-stylistic study of some earlier and later poems by WS. University College, London. Ph.D.

Lavigueur, P. WS: the pedagogical nature and purpose of WS' work. Leeds. M.Phil.

Milligan, Mrs. J. The function of tradition in the poetry of T. S. Eliot and WS. Bristol. Ph.D. (Completed).

Raider, Miss Ruth. WS: the speech of the time. Newnham College, Cambridge. Ph.D.

Woolf, Miss J. R. Wallace Stevens. Darwin College, Cambridge. M.Litt.

THE NEW ROMANTIC OF WALLACE STEVENS

(Order No. 70-12,457)

Mary Joan GIRLINGHOUSE Ph.D.
The Catholic University of America, 1970

This study explores references to literary romanticism in the writings of Wallace Stevens in order to clarify his sense of the term and to discover the influence of his understanding of that tradition upon his poetry. The exploration involves, first, close explication and interpretation of Stevens' prose writings on the subject, among them "Imagination as Value," "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet," "The Effects of Analogy," "Williams," "A Poet That Matters," "Two or Three Ideas," "Three Academic Pieces," and the "Adagia." These works present many apparent imprecisions and contradictions, particularly in the evaluation of romantic norms. Full contextual analysis reveals that the inconsistencies result from a carefully considered ambivalence rather than from the confusion that many critics have found in the prose. Stevens approves of romanticism's effort to enhance and elevate the experience of reality, but warns against attendant dangers of falseness and sterility. Then, the poems which make overt reference to romanticism are examined, among them "Explanation," "Adult Epigram," "Anecdote of the Prince of Peacocks," "The Comedian as the Letter C," "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War," "The Bouquet," "The Pure Good of Theory," "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas," "Local Objects," and "Sailing After Lunch." The collective meaning of these poems is similar to that of the prose.

Next, a survey of the author's allusions to specific poems of Keats, Coleridge, and Shelley, in his poems "Autumn Refrain," "Academic Discourse at Havana," "Man and Bottle," "Owl's Clover," "Mozart, 1935," and sections of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," again reveals a qualified sympathy and a careful acceptance, showing that his references to romanticism as an abstraction are actually based upon consideration of concrete examples. These allusions give special emphasis to Stevens' belief that conditions of modern life place special limitations upon the romantic poet, and thus further clarify the complexities of his prose statements. Finally, after establishing Stevens' definition of romanticism from these sources, the study examines three representative poems, "The Man on the Dump," "To the One of Fictive Music," and "Notes Toward A Supreme Fiction," in order to discover the effect of this interest upon his poetry.

The study concludes that Stevens' radical and independant understanding and use of romanticism is a significant factor of his identity as a poet. It is a factor that constitutes an essential element of the Stevens poetic, and is indispensable to the discovery of its exact position in literary history. Finally, and most important, it is found to have generated some of his finest poetry.

M $4.00; X $9.45, 207 pages

DA, v.31a, no. 1 (July 1970)

Dissertation Abstracts

Savage, Muriel S. **Wallace Stevens: Poetry as Religion.** Northwestern U.

The aim of this dissertation was to establish the poetic theory of Wallace Stevens as a theory of poetry as religion. It was Stevens' intense desire to create a theory of the power of poetry in shaping and guiding life. This concern is central to all Stevens' work, the subject of his poems and prose, expressed in infinite variety. Though it is Stevens' view that he failed in this search, this study contends that Stevens revealed and established such a theory.

One of the basic premises for Stevens throughout his works is that there is a central principle which is the sole creator of man and world. This central principle, or God concept, bears no relation to the personal, anthropomorphic God of traditional religion; nor is it wholly transcendent. Man may bring himself into harmonious relationship with the "central mind" through poetic conceptualization, "the act of the mind." The metaphor Stevens uses for this revelation is the imaginative-reality complex, which symbolizes for him all the interrelated ambiguities of being.

The dissertation, organized in five chapters, is based on a close analysis of Stevens' poems, prose, and letters, and includes quotations and analyses of poems from the viewpoint of Stevens' poetic theory. The first chapter presents the general purpose of the study and a discussion of terms. Chapter two deals with Stevens' language and theory of language. The philosophical and intellectual backgrounds of Stevens' poetry are discussed in chapter three. Chapter four explores the interrelation of poetry and religion as exemplified by poets, and summarizes the views of Stevens' critics on the relationship of his poetry to religion. The last chapter presents the thesis of Stevens' poetry as religion. The progressively evolving theory, from the physical world of *Harmonium* to the metaphysical world of his later writings, is traced through Stevens' evolving concept of God.

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THE ESSENTIAL POEM: A STUDY OF WALLACE STEVENS' ONTOLOGY.

(Order No. 70-1218)

Marjorie Crockett Buhr, Ph.D.
University of Miami, 1969

Supervisor: Professor Clark Emery

In a time when traditional scientific, metaphysical, and theological thought-structures are called into question, poets, if they are not anachronistic, must be searchers rather than formulators. The most probingly philosophical of recent poets, Wallace Stevens sought a concept of Being relevant to the situation of modern man, his work revealing the record of his researches.

Since many of his briefest and apparently simplest poems deal with or at least touch upon ontological and epistemological problems, Stevens is perhaps the least accessible of modern poets. A final reading of his longer poems is no doubt beyond the realm of possibility. But the approach to such a reading can be facilitated by a study of the philosophers whose thought he found congenial.

Stevens was attracted to those thinkers who portray Being as emergent rather than static, pluralistic rather than monistic, limited and immanent in the world rather than omnipotent and external, a Presence to be experienced intuitively rather than a causal force to be explained rationally.

Interested as he was in European thought, Stevens was first and foremost an American, his early journals and letters revealing that ontological traditions in American thought provided the background for his lifelong desire to reconcile idealism and naturalism. Process philosophy, both native and foreign, influenced his rejection of final ultimate truth and taught him to place himself inside process in order to speak the poem "as it is, not as it was." The belief that intuition is more significant than reason, that being and reality are defined as function and process interpenetrative with man are affirmations that Stevens readily accepted.

The chief concern of phenomenology, how the object is constituted and what method man uses in order to have accurate knowledge of it and of his own experiencing consciousness, was also Stevens' steady concern. The phenomenologists' belief that Cartesian dualism is metaphysically primitive, their rejection of simple empiricism, their emphasis on exact description, their desire to see the world without distorting preconceptions, their assertion that appearance and reality are one--these are philosophic principles that Stevens shared.

Since Stevens refused to be classified as a member of any philosophical school, he cannot be referred to as an existentialist. Nonetheless, his non-conformity, his passion for freedom and authentic existence, his emphasis on the irrational and his concern with how the experiencing self knows reality are very existential. He emphasizes man's heroism in the face of God's death and he rejects mechanistic philosophies (which existentialism despises) for transcendental ones. While he rejects Jove-Jehovah forms of Being, he continually searches for what Tillich calls the Being beyond the God of theism.

Certain epistemological and ontological theories of art (chiefly European) influenced Stevens, who believed that both the artist and the poet are seeking an "organic center" of Being. The supreme fiction is part of such a search, a psychic activity of the mind.

Like William James, Stevens believed that metaphysical puzzles become more urgent as one ages. "The Auroras of Autumn" written when he was seventy-five, sums up the ontological considerations of a lifetime, his youthful concerns lying at the heart of his more mature evaluations of the problem of Being. The obscurity of his poems is often complained of, but it was not Stevens' purpose to write discursive, narrative, or didactic poetry. He wished to present reality and Being, and, as a "metaphysician in the dark," to reconcile the imaginary and real, the ordered and the disordered, the finite and the infinite in order to find the "essential poem" at the center of the world. M $3.00; X $8.60. 186 pages.

WHITMAN AND STEVENS: FROM AN ORGANIC TO A PROCESS METAPHOR.

(Order No. 70-1842)

Sister Barbara Ann Brumleve, S.S.N.D., Ph.D.
St. Louis University, 1969

Walt Whitman and Wallace Stevens give poetic expression to the change that occurred in the intellectual milieu of America during the last one hundred years, a change from a teleological and essentially closed universe to an open-ended universe of process.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Western man shifted his emphasis from uniformity to diversity, from a vertical chain of being to a horizontally conceived one. To accommodate these changed emphases, man invoked the organic metaphor; but neither his change of emphasis nor that of metaphor substantially altered what was still an essentially closed universe.

In his pre-Civil War poetry, Whitman expressed such a universe, emphasizing that beneath the physical world, human society, and American history lay laws of universal validity which would gradually come to fruition. In such a world the microcosmic man or the poet was important because he understood the underlying laws and could, therefore, hasten their fulfillment.

After the Civil War, a modern, industrialized America came into being; but Whitman--although he underscored the importance of the war in his work--only shifted his focus from man as microcosm of the physical universe to man as representative individual in society. He appropriated the new inventions of the age; but he used them--the locomotive, the ferry boat, and the telegraph--only as surrogates for the representative individual who, particularly in the person of the poet, brings men and nature to unity within himself.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Western man had begun to shift his thinking about the universe, seeing it more in terms of process. Crispin in "The Comedian as the Letter C" lives in a different world from that of the passenger crossing Brooklyn ferry, a difference that is evident in the two poets' use of journey and drama motifs and in the very structure of their poems.

Wallace Stevens is the searcher par excellence, looking for "what will suffice" in a world in which man is alienated from physical nature, from other men, from history, and even from himself. In his correspondence, journal entries, and poetry prior to 1924, Stevens examines religion, organicism, aestheticism, and sensation as possible centers of meaning for modern man, but he dismisses all of them as inadequate.

In his work after 1924, Stevens finds the answer to his search for meaning in art and poetry. For Stevens, all art forms--but especially those that use a verbal medium--relate man to the world of objects, to his past, and to the company of other men. However, in The Rock, Stevens seems finally to be achieving something beyond even art and poetry: he seems to find man's center of meaning in some person--an Incarnate Word. Thus, Stevens gives poetic expression to that changed intellectual milieu of America, a milieu which has been developing since the time of Whitman. **M $3.00; X $8.40. 184 pages.**

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The Wallace Stevens Newsletter

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 2 APRIL 1971

Wallace Stevens' "Gubbinal"

J. M. LINEBARGER
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"Gubbinal" is one of Wallace Stevens' many poems in which the title is unusually significant: to read the poem we must define the title properly. Daniel Fuchs has consulted the *OED* and found that "gubbins" means "fragments;" he suggests that the title "perhaps refers to the movement of the poem, which is seemingly fragmentary" (*The Comic Spirit of Wallace Stevens,* n., p.80). Following Fuch's lead, Herbert J. Stern defines "gubbins" from the *NED* as "fragments, especially of fish" and concludes that the title is (like "Peter Quince at the Clavier" and others) an ironic self-indictment "which allows the poet to draw a private analogy between his lyrics and fishscraps" (*Wallace Stevens Art of Uncertainty,* p.70).

The poem depends, however, on another meaning of the word "gubbins;" Eric Partridge notes that, from the late nineteenth century, a "gubbins" was "a fool" in military and school slang (*A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English,* p.359) and *Funk & Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary* (1913) defines the word thusly: "Semi-savages who formerly inhabited the region of Dartmoor, in Devonshire, England: a contemptuous term." (1) The poet neologistically adds the suffix "al" because the poem is about a foolish person, his attitude towards life, and the poet's rejection of that attitude.

The poem is a dramatic monologue spoken by the poet to a gubbins. Apparently the two have been arguing previous to the poem's opening, and now the poet has given up in hopeless disgust. Twice he says to the fool:

> Have it your way.
> The world is ugly,
> And the people are sad.

The poet is repeating the fool's words though he does not himself believe them; his tone is one of ironic disagreement.

John J. Enck properly (albeit obliquely) defined "gubbins" in 1964 as ". . . a designation presumably derived from the Gubbins, who represented to the British what the Boeotians did to the Athenians . . ." (*Wallace Stevens: Images and Judgments,* p.69). Enck also suggests that the "sun, flowers, animals, and fire" are four separate symbols of the beauty and creativity that Stevens admires (p.69). In fact all these images in the poem are metaphors for the sun itself, as indicated by their lines beginning with the word "That" and by the explicit metaphorical equation of flower and sun in the first of these lines:

> That strange flower, the sun,
> . . . .
> That tuft of jungle feathers,
> That animal eye,
> . . . .
> That savage of fire,
> That seed. . . .

Apparently the gubbins has insisted (again, during the quarrel that preceded the opening of the poem) that the sun is none of these things, is nothing imaginative or creative or beautiful. We do not know what his exact words were, but we can be certain that they were equivalent in tone and content to his pessimistic remarks about the world and its people. (2)

The poem becomes, then, neither fragmented nor a self-indictment of the poet himself as a gubbins, but an ironic revelation of Stevens' view, found in other poems as well, that the world is not ugly, its people are not (or ought not to be) sad, and that the sun is a savage but strangely beautiful source of life.

(1) *Chamber's Encyclopedia* gives an even fuller treatment of this term, quoting from William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals:*

> And near hereto's the Gubbins Cave;
> A people that no knowledge have
> Of law, of God, or men:
> Whom Caesar never yet subdued;
> Who've lawless lived; of manners rude,
> All savage in their den.

(2) It is possible that the occasion for this poem was Stevens' reading of the pessimistic writings of Arthur de Gobineau, whose work had been praised by Nietzsche. For a recent discussion of Gobineau's philosophy see Jules Chaix-Ruy's *The Superman from Nietzsche to Teilhard de Chardin* (Notre Dame, Ind., Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1968).

Criticism as Act

Merle E. Brown's *Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970. 219pp. $8.50.

SIDNEY FESHBACH
City College, C.U.N.Y.

Merle Brown's literary and aesthetic theories—his assumptions, if not always his practice—are based primarily on the "neo-idealism" of Giovanni Gentile (about whom, Croce, and Collingwood, he has published a historical-Philosophical study, *Neo-Idealistic Aesthetics* (Wayne State U.P., 1966). Gentile's aesthetics seem, at first sight, particularly relevant to a discussion of Stevens, as indicated by the title of one of his books, *The Theory of the Mind (Spirito) as Pure Act,* but that is not, finally, why they were chosen: apparently, Gentile's aesthetics are good for all peotry. *The Poem as Act* surrounds explications of Stevens' poems (over forty are mentioned, about ten for three or more pages) with theory, and it is more a philosophy of criticism than practical criticism. Its clarity and usefulness vary greatly—its weakness, an excess of sublime appreciative writing—and its strength, a careful, highly sensitive correlation of the meaning and rhythm of Stevens' poems.

Theory. In his philosophy of criticism, Brown offers a unified poetics, exegetics and aesthetics. The poet engages in a dialectical process by which the most subjective elemental feeling is expressed, objectified and synthesized critically. (The manner of this explanation is deliberately and aggressively hieratic—sublime and beyond—I prefer the discussion in *Neo-Idealistic Aesthetics*: "The most radical idea of [Gentile's] *La filosofia dell'arte* is the idea of art as self-translation, as *autotradursi* . . . in his attempt to express his feeling, the poet denies it as immediate feeling by asserting it as verse. . . . Every new line of a poem then becomes a translation of the original feeling, as it has been expressed in the lines thus far composed, into a new unity in which the poem as object is closer to being adequate to the feeling of the poem" (*NIA,* 154).) The critic, preparing his way with philosophical analysis of the objective aspects of the poem, enters the work of art, and then dialectically arrives at an identification with the poet's feeling. "If the poet has trânslated his feeling far enough, a reader can work his way back through its ritualized forms to its savage center, to the most elemental feeling the poet has of life itself. Having arrived at the heart of the

poem, at its form-giving, unifying feeling, he can then turn back and see creatively all the objective elements of the poem, as though from the inside out. He will be at one with the poet. . . . Poetry cannot be observed; it must be participated in" (p.17).

The poetics of Gentile-Brown may be important for the analysis and resolution of some philosophical-literary problems encountered by critics who seek to understand Stevens' poems and poetic theories in relation to the Romantic tradition of Northern European or Protestant cultures, where the subject-object split figures prominently. (See Harold Bloom's introductory essay, *Romanticism and Consciousness,* Norton, 1970.) Brown's argument is not as useful to Stevens or criticism as it might be because it is obscured, not only by the hyperbole about "participation" in poetry, but also by a wavering between illustrating a theory and revealing some poems. Either Stevens stands in the center of a three-sided mirror (Gentile-Collingwood-Brown) or he is the mirror, and we are left to sorting out images.

Method. Despite his energetic and enthusiastic assertion in the first chapter, Brown does not appear to apply his theory with consistency or purity—nearly every exegetical chapter begins with a modification of the theory, drawing it "down" from the sublime to levels resembling the work of Cleanth Brooks or Leo Spitzer. Perhaps the variation is due to the impracticality of the aesthetic theory except when employed to record that the critic has, or has not, been moved deeply by a poem or to transport the critic to purpler regions—"reenactment" in "performance" leading to "participation" is magical criticism. When, however, Brown stops rhapsodizing about "overarching elemental feeling" and explicates poems by a particular man, a poet who confronted, encouraged and presented feelings, thoughts, language and rhythms in a *psychomachia* bearing significance for all of us, the book achieves its greatest interest and usefulness.

Stevens. The Poem as Act is not a consecutive argument; each chapter is a self-enclosed "performance" with a minimum number of cross-references in order to avoid a synoptic view that is easy for Stevens' critics—an analysis of why a synoptic approach is easy would, I think, point the way to understanding some essential qualities of Stevens. Despite Brown's intent, I recommend reading chapters 4 and 7, 2 and 8 as pairs. Chapters 4 ("The Man with the Blue Guitar") and 7 ("Stevens' Social Poetry") deal with Stevens' "ethical period." The first shows Stevens' struggle to comprehend imaginatively himself, his poetry, his critics, and the blue- and white-collar workers, i.e., the living. "During the early Thirties," writes Brown, "Stevens was trying to move as close as possible to the normal, to lives of ordinary people" (p.88). In the second, he shows the struggle Stevens took on with the historical, i.e., the dead, especially his Dutch-American tradition and the American tradition of denying tradition. (Here Stevens too much resembles Collingwood in search of his historical imagination.)

Because I tend to find in Stevens' poems an intense fulfilling love of words and perceptions-for-themselves and a recurring, almost chronic, moral pressure to be responsive to the demands of living, I appreciate very much Brown's critical (not his ethical) view that "In a quite special sense, [Stevens'] poems may be called social poetry; they may, in fact, be the only truly social poetry. They are not imitative of a large society composed of small people; they are themselves, as poetic actions, small societies composed of large people" (p.153), a notion which appears to be a variation of Gentile's "interior community" (*NIA*, 168). Such social mindedness offers an approach to Stevens' life-time struggle to confront

THE SOUTHERN REVIEW July 1971

Wallace Stevens and the Romantic Heritage

Holly Stevens: Reminiscences of My Father

Helen Vendler: Wallace Stevens–The True and False Sublime

Jan Peterson: Wallace Stevens and William James

Grosvenor Powell: Of Heroes and Nobility–Man as Metaphor in Wallace Stevens

James McMichael: The Wallace Stevens Vulgates

Doris Eder: Wallace Stevens–The War Between Mind and Eye

Kenneth Fields: Wallace Stevens and the 1890s

George Lensing: Wallace Stevens and the State of Winter Simplicity

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specific persons-as-they-are rather than things-as-they-are or nature-in-itself, which by comparison he faced easily. How many people are there in the poems of Stevens; how many in those of, say, William Carlos Williams?

Chapters 2 ("Poems of the Body of *Harmonium*") and 8 ("The Commonplaces of Old Age") deal with the continuity of the actual poet as a physiological-perceiver and his poems. As Spitzer explicated a poem of Baudelaire and found, to my disappointment, that the poet had a headache as the occasion of the poem, so Brown studies the late poetry of Stevens, and, mixing sarcasm (directed against Kenneth Burke) and sympathy, demonstrates the poetic relevance of Stevens' age and aging. Stevens' late poems are "realizations of the elemental qualities of the withering process of the body at the end of life . . . based upon an acceptance of the aging of the body. . . . Once the body has withdrawn into itself, the imagination moves beyond it to become one with the world that is separate from that body. It is a cold imagination . . ." (p.175-6). I wish Brown had said more, with less vague terms, for a "gerontopoetics," about the old age of the imagination, could be important for understanding Stevens' last poems and the art of all ages.

Some Problems. 1. Brown's analysis of the poet's act of the mind distinguishes between the poet's human conditions and his immanent, yet transcendent, impersonal feeling. Of necessity it must be "impersonal" because the critic knows better than to claim to be able to re-live the personal in its roughest actuality. This concept of "impersonal feeling" resembles Gentile's "concrete universal mind" and Collingwood's "impersonal thought"—or is it "libido" or "collective unconscious," aborted mysticisms of the Logos or Anti-Logos. To imply that the poet participates in and mediates (*autotradursi*: translates) that grand Feeling deprives Stevens of his uniqueness, of his voice apart from the Voice. Stevens' poems tempt the critic to make such enriching deprivations; this, not the Voice, needs study, and what is learned here will be useful to critics who distinguish the *ego* and the *self* of the poet.

2. The notion of participation in the poets' Feeling is burdened with all the ethical problems a censorious Plato found in mimetic art and irreverent artists. Suppose your favorite poem is "No Possum, No Sop, No Taters," about which Brown writes, "The poet accepts his shame and plays the fool by climbing a tree and appearing the vulture he has really been. He is laughable, but those who laugh should not forget the bright malice in the eye of the crow . . ." (p.28). How do we select our poems before we have read them? Do we need Guardians? For example, Brown finds Stevens' attempt at participation in the lives of others the right kind (see his "Social Poetry" chapter) and Kenneth Burke's the wrong kind (see Brown's acidic polemic *Kenneth Burke*, Univ. of Minnesota Pamphlet on Modern Writers, 1969). Brown's aesthetic theory and criticism insist on being an ethical statement, and therefore are we not compelled to inquire if it is infected with Gentile's intellectual and political fascism? Are "unsuccessful" poems, e.g., Brown's sensitive reading and rejection of "The Comedian as the Letter C," containers of feelings the critic disapproves of or are they to be attributed to the poet's feeling, not his Feeling, to *autotradirsi*: self-betrayal, not *autotradursi*; but that is only a trick with critical knots, philosophical Houdinism (see *NIA*, 176-9). Perhaps it is most theraputic to read Gentile-Brown's complete aesthetics of participation while keeping in mind Dilthey's concept of *Einfuhlung*: empathy, and Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*: alienation effect, which have been analysed and debated extensively and which suggest useful boundaries to this aesthetics.

Briefly, I hope *Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act* will be read and considered seriously by Stevens specialists and by critical theoreticians, for it is both a provocative study of Stevens and the second volume, the synthetic demonstration, of a philosophy of criticism which was presented analytically in *Neo-Idealistic Aesthetics*.

Current Bibliography

Adams, Richard P. "'The Comedian as the Letter C': A Somewhat Literal Reading," *Tulane Studies in English*, XVIII (1970), pp.95-114. An explication of the poem, concluding that "writing about Crispin, who is an anachronism, is a way for Stevens to avoid anachronism, to make himself contemporary, to transcend the problems that frustrate Crispin, and to prepare his attack on what he felt were the more important problems of his own time and place."

Bevis, William W. "The Arrangement of *Harmonium*," *ELH*, XXXVII (Sept. 1970), pp.456-473. Stevens varied the pace of *Harmonium* as much as possible by utilizing contrasts. He mixed his newer poems with the older ones and dispersed the old homogeneous groupings. An examination of "Banal Sojourn" and "Depression before Spring" shows that in juxtaposed poems similar or identical figures may have entirely different references and meanings.

Eder, Doris L. "Wallace Stevens: Heritage and Influences," *Mosaic*, IV (Fall 1970), pp.49-61. Although Stevens is uniquely himself, his heritage is the English poetic tradition (especially Milton, Marvell, Wordsworth and Keats) and the work of such symbolists as Mallarme, Verlaine and Baudelaire. Native influences (Whitman, Emerson) are least important, but the product is a poetry that is quintessentially American.

Fuller, Roy. "Both Pie and Custard," *Shenandoah*, XXI (Spring 1970), pp.61-76. An appreciation of the *Letters*, "one of the great books of the twentieth century." Stevens' life was a fable of modern possible literary lives, disproving his father's statement that "One never thinks out a destiny—If a fellow takes Peach Pie—he often wishes he had chosen the Custard . . . The only trouble is that . . . we cannot have *both* Pie and Custard . . ."

McGrory, Kathleen. "Wallace Stevens as Romantic Rebel," *Connecticut Review*, IV (Oct. 1970), pp.59-64. An examination of Stevens' own definition of a romantic (. . . the hermit who dwells alone on the sun and the moon, but insists on taking a rotten newspaper. OP256) and its application to his own life and work.

Mariani, Paul L. "The Critic as Friend from Pascagoula," *Massachusetts Review*, XII (Winter 1971), pp.215-227. A review-article of Helen Vendler's *On Extended Wings* and Richard Blessing's *Wallace Stevens' Whole Harmonium*.

Pinkerton, Jan. "Wallace Stevens in the Tropics: A Conservative Protest," *Yale Review*, LX (Winter 1971), pp. 215-227. Stevens' early use of tropical imagery, evocative of a natural and unhurried life in the South, is in the tradition of conservative protest against the work-progress ideal of nineteenth century New England which he shares with Hawthorne, Melville and Henry Adams.

Stoenescu, Stefan. "Ecouri Victorienne in Poezia lui Wallace Stevens," *Analele Universitatii Bucuresti: Literatura Universala si Comparata*, XIX (1970), pp.43-54. Although modern poetry is thought of as post-symbolist rather than post-Victorian, a number of Victorian concepts, as 'possible Socrates' and 'best self' (Arnold), 'mere man' (Browning), and the heroes of Carlyle and Tennyson (particularly Ulysses) are antecedent to Stevens' 'impossible possible philosopher's man,' 'central man' and 'major man.' A number of stylistic similarities are also traced. In Rumanian.

Whitaker, Thomas R. "Of Speaking Humanly," in *The Philosopher Critic*, edited by Robert Scholes, (Tulsa, Okla.: University of Tulsa. Monograph series, no.10, 1970), pp. 67-88. A key to Stevens' thought is seen in questioning the meaning for him of the act of speech itself. (To speak humanly from the height and from the depth/ Of human things, that is acutest speech. CP300) Interrelationships of speaker, speech and meaning are traced through the poems in Stevens' evolution towards an 'authentic speech.'

New Books

Merle E. Brown's *Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act* was published by Wayne State U.P. in February. It is reviewed in this issue.

About To Be Published

The Palm at the End of the Mind: Selected Poems and a Play, by Wallace Stevens, edited by Holly Stevens, is scheduled for publication on May 13 by Knopf. Pre-publication advertising lists the price at $10 in hard cover. A paperback edition suitable for student use is also planned.

The Southern Review for July 1971 will feature a special section on WS containing eight essays, including "Reminiscences of My Father," by Holly Stevens. Please see their advertisement in this issue.

Work in Progress

Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate is the title of of Harold Bloom's book in progress, to be published by Cornell University Press in the spring of 1972.

Michel Benamou has two books on WS in the works, both to be published by Princeton U.P. *Wallace Stevens: Influences and Affinities* is a collection of previously published essays; *The Symbolism of Wallace Stevens* is a new work appearing in the series of Essays in European and Comparative Literature. Both books should appear sometime in 1972.

Status Unknown

Darby Books (Darby, Pennsylvania) has announced the publication of *The Winter World of Wallace Stevens*, by Leighton G. Steele. The book, based on the author's dissertation, apparently has not appeared as yet and efforts to contact the publisher have been unsuccessful.

Stevens Book and Letter Prices

At a Parke-Bernet sale on October 29, 1970, a short typed letter, signed, to Oscar Williams (Jan. 11, 1943) brought $50. A month later it appeared in autograph dealer Paul Richards' catalog for $100.

The pirated Fortune Press *Selected Poems* (1952) has become a legendary item for WS collectors. According to Morse "Apparently all copies except a few in the hands of reviewers were destroyed." G. F. Sims (Hurst, Berkshire) recently cataloged 'a very fine copy, completely unopened' for £12.50, terming it 'scarce.' Apparently Mr. Sims acquired a stock of these books; a number of persons have reported purchasing copies from him.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Mr. Ford:

In *Wallace Stevens Checklist and Bibliography of Stevens Criticism* the editors list the *Harvard Advocate* poems, bring the uncollected poems from *The Trend* to the reader's attention, and note which poems appear in *Opus Posthumous*. However, they do not note that "The Florist Wears Knee-Breeches," "Song" ("There are great things doing"), "Inscription for a Monument," all listed under C53 in the *Checklist*, and "Gray Room," listed under C58, are not collected. (The first three poems appeared in *Others* II, March 1916, and "Gray Room" in *Others*, Special number, December 1917.) Professor Robert Buttel deals with "Gray Room," quoting it in full (*Wallace Stevens: The Making of* Harmonium, p.85), but makes no mention of the other three poems. Scholars working closely with the Stevens canon have undoubtedly come across these poems, but, as far as I know, have not brought them to the attention of the general reader.

THOMAS WALSH
Dept. of English
Georgetown University

Editor: "Inscription for a Monument" appears in Holly Stevens' new selection *The Palm at the End of the Mind*, the other poems are to be included in a projected volume of juvenalia and fugitive items.

Recent Books Noted

The Greening of America, Charles Reich's current best-seller, contains a number of significant references to WS as prophetic poet of the new consciousness (the central fact about Consciousness III [is] its assertion of the power to *choose* a way of life. p.354). Asserting that advances in technology will soon free man from the work-ethic of the corporate state allowing him to concentrate on self-realization and creativity which will produce a social revolution, the author claims, among other things, that "In his poem 'Sunday Morning,' Wallace Stevens states the doctrine of the new generation, the doctrine of present happiness. . . . If Stevens' voice is pensive and elegaic it is because he was a man ahead of his time, a man alone. His vision is the vision of today" (p.346-347). "If a history of Consciousness III were to be written, it would show a fascinating progression. The earliest sources were among those exceptional individuals who are found at any time in any society: the artistic, the highly sensitive, the tormented. Thoreau, James Joyce and Wallace Stevens all spoke directly to Consciousness III" (p.222). "Wallace Stevens said this in all his poetry: man has the power, not to substitute an imaginary world for the real one, but to find 'A new knowledge of reality'" (p.271).

Apparently the book's title also owes something to WS—that section of "Sunday Morning" containing "As April's green endures; or will endure" is quoted by way of preface. Other references occur on pages 366 and 371.

Another Stevens Recording

An Album of Modern Poetry: An Anthology Read by the Poets, edited by Oscar Williams (Gryphon, GR 902/3/4), includes WS reading "So-and-So Reclining on Her Couch," "Mountains Covered with Cats," and possibly a short introduction. The album is a revised edition of an anthology selected from the Archives of Recorded Poetry and Literature in the Library of Congress, originally issued in 1960. This three record set features 45 poets in all and may be had for $14.37 from the distributor: The Record Collectors Guild, Inc., 507 Fifth Avenue, New York 10017.

Newsletter Notes

Publish or perish. At this time the Newsletter is particularly in need of short or medium length essays of a critical or historical-biographical nature. The editor will be gratified to hear from potential contributors. Please note, however, that poetry and extended explication are not being considered at this time.

Subscriptions. All subscriptions to the Newsletter are due for renewal with this issue. The editor asks that readers save him the considerable trouble of billing by sending off a check for $4.00 as soon as possible.

Miscellaneous

"Skyblue as the Letter C," a short story appearing in the current issue of *The Paris Review* (Winter 1971), continues the adventures of Dallas E. Wiebe's picaresque hero, *Skyblue the Badass* (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

Dissertation Abstracts

University Microfilms has instituted a new program of uniform prices for Xerox copies of dissertations. Regardless of the number of pages, a softbound xerographic copy will be $10 (add $2.25 for hard-cover binding). Prices for microfilms have also been standardized at $4.00. Considering the large number of theses on WS, this is an especially welcome innovation, applying not only to new dissertations but older ones as well.

Scholars may also want to know about a new standing order program which has been established. By writing to University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48108, and indicating one's particular interest (Wallace Stevens), a copy of each new dissertation received on the indicated subject will be mailed automatically and promptly, usually before the abstract appears in print. The Newsletter has subscribed to this plan and hopes to be able to offer critical reviews of some dissertations received in the future.

Abstracts reprinted in this issue are taken from *Dissertation Abstracts* for September 1970 to April 1971.

EMERSON AND STEVENS: TRANSCENDENTALISM AND RADICAL TRANSCENDENTALISM

James E. MULQUEEN, Ph.D.
Purdue University, 1970

Major Professor: Darrel Abel

This study is a comparison and contrast of the thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Wallace Stevens. Numerous critics have commented upon the relationship between the work of the two men but no one has, as yet, attempted a full length study of that relationship, a relationship made evident by several references in Stevens' poetry to Emerson and Emersonian transcendentalism.

Emersonian transcendentalism is based upon the belief that the self of the individual human and the not-self of the world external to him are united in a spiritual unity. According to the radical transcendentalism of Wallace Stevens, self and not-self are radically separated and no spiritual power exists. The most probable source of Stevens' radical transcendentalism is George Santayana, recognized as one of the major influences on Stevens. The term "radical transcendentalism" originates with Santayana, who attacked Emersonian transcendentalism while Stevens was a student at Harvard, where Santayana was a professor of philosophy.

Two poetics develop from these two ontological views. Emerson maintains that the inspired self can intuit and express the truths which are the essence of the Over-Soul. Stevens, rejecting the concepts of spirit and truth, considers poetry the creation of fictions by the individual imagination. The confrontation of self and not-self is essential to both poetics; out of this confrontation stems poetry. Emerson has a concept of all Being as a central poem; Stevens' central poem is "Man." The theory and use of symbolism by both poets has relevance to the hypothesis of of Alfred North Whitehead that symbolism stems from the confrontation of self and not-self. The views of Emerson and Stevens on metamorphosis, resemblances, and relationships in both the material world and poetry are involved with their ontological assumptions.

In the everyday life of man, faith in a divine order sustains Emerson against the apparent evils in life; Stevens, lacking such faith, offers a courageous, joyful acceptance of man's fate on the grounds that the sweetness of life is sufficient recompense for its pain. Both Emerson and Stevens consider the social and political environments of their respective eras less than desirable; both fear reform through violence and mass action; both call for the development of the selves of individual men. Again, their ontological assumptions determine their opinions on the conduct of life.

Order No. 71-9447, 266 pages.

STRUCTURES OF BELIEF IN THE POETRY OF WALLACE STEVENS

Jay Michael SEMEL, Ph.D.
University of South Carolina, 1970

"Structures of Belief in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens" is an examination of the poet's views toward the institutions of religion and the church, politics and the state, the family and the home. All too often, Stevens is thought of only as an aesthete insulated from humanity, and thus critics frequently ignore the social motifs which pervade his work or designate them to be merely analogues which serve to illuminate one aspect of his investigation of the relationship between the creative mind and reality. Undeniably, this is his major theme; but to jam every social image which appears in the poetry into a purely aesthetical context is to deny that Stevens, the political man, ever existed. More important, such a procedure also negates the individual elements of his poetry.

Significantly, these flaws in critical method—lack of flexibility and disregard of individualities—were the very things that Stevens believed were the major shortcomings of society's institutions. He felt that naturalistic doctrine had long since killed the gods, so that the church had become a self-serving institution which demanded blind obedience to its own dogma. The state too had become an end to which all human activity was directed. While the prospect of living under Fascism frightened everyone in the thirties, Stevens also perceived the threat to the individual will posed by the democratic majority and the Communist mass. However, it proved to be his family which had the most debilitating effect on Stevens. Domestic responsibilities diverted his creative energies, and the security afforded by his home precluded the need for any poetic ordering of his life. When this security abruptly collapsed and he turned to a study of his ancestry, Stevens became aware that his concern with heritage was a denial of the individual living in the present moment.

The results of this study will not produce a dramatic reversal of the popular conception of the poet; they will suggest that Stevens' political principles were linked to his aesthetic, and will reveal that he was an intellectual, self-centered man. Yet they will also show that Stevens had not so immersed himself in his art that he ignored society's institutions; only after a very careful consideration of these institutions did he turn to art as an alternative structure.

Order No. 71-9727, 208 pages.

THE ANECDOTAL IMAGINATION: A STUDY OF WALLACE STEVENS' *HARMONIUM*

James Clarence RANSOM, Ph.D.
Yale University, 1969

This dissertation presents *Harmonium* as a book of poems embodying an esthetic at once naturalistic and romantic. The style of these poems and the quality of the world they embody are defined in three ways: through a descriptive analysis of their intrinsic structures (Chapter I), through contrasting them with Imagist and *symboliste* poems (Chapters II & III), and through determining their place in the Romantic tradition (Chapters IV & V). Finally, the unity of *Harmonium* is explored in terms of the definitions arrived at in these ways (Chapter VI).

The characteristic form in *Harmonium* is the "anecdotal" poem. An analysis of the formal structures of representative anecdotal poems reveals that, for the anecdotal poet, meaning and value rest on the surfaces of things and events. Surface phenomena take on significance through the rhetorical additions of the poet's art, a rhetoric that records a process of interchange between imagination and the data of the senses. The resultant form embodies a humanized world endowed with meaning and value.

The formal structures of the anecdotal poem and the quality of the experience it embodies are foreign to either the Imagist poem or the *symboliste* poem. The emphasis in Imagism is on stasis; in the anecdotal poem, on movement and change. "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" is both a demonstration of the felicities of the poet's art, capable of working changes in accord with a changing world, and a subtle attack on the doctrines of Imagism. The *symbolists* poem moves through sensuous imagery to an evocation of the infinite and eternal. The anecdotal poem remains within a natural context, celebrating the world of time and finitude. "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" contains a major statement of *Harmonium's* naturalistic esthetic; it is also a disavowal of the esthetic of *symbolisme.*

The poetry of *Harmonium* is outside the tradition of romantic symbolism. It belongs to another line of descent from the English Romantics, that of romantic naturalism. The Romantic lyric stands behind the anecdotal poem; and the ways in which the anecdotal poem differs from the Romantic lyric define the evolution of romantic naturalism from its beginnings in Wordsworth to its flowering in *Harmonium.* The replacement of the transcendental strategy of "correspondences" by a self-conscious rhetoric of metaphor and analogy marks the full naturalization of Stevens' imagination. An examination of the echoes of Wordsworth, Keats, and Peter in "Sunday Morning" provides a means of tracing the progressive naturalization of imagination in nineteenth-century Romanticism, disclosing an increasing ability of the self to live, and find adequate satisfactions, in a world of flux.

The esthetic of romantic naturalism expressed in "Sunday Morning" is broadened and strengthened in the whole of *Harmonium,* a volume which revolves around the issue of coming to terms with a world of change. Stevens' comic wit is a function of his acceptance of the limited conditions of natural imagination. The anecdotal imagination becomes equal to the world of change through Stevens' concept of the cyclic rhythm of imaginative desire and fulfillment. In *Harmonium* Stevens begins a lifelong act of the natural imagination, capable of creating, again and again, the forms of its transitory fulfillments within the changing context of a wholly natural existence.

Order No. 70-16,237 366 pages.

POESIS: THE THEME OF POETRY-MAKING IN THE POETRY OF WALLACE STEVENS AND PAUL VALÉRY [Some quotations in French]

Marilyn Montgomery YEARGERS, Ph.D.
Michigan State University, 1969

Major Professor: Bernard J. Paris

This is a study of poesis, or the creative process, based on the poetry of Wallace Stevens and Paul Valéry, who devoted their lives in art to disclosures of poesis both in prose and poems. Workers in diverse fields have described the creative process in similar terms: the pattern of stimulation, frustration, and insight is strikingly similar to the birth-death-rebirth pattern of myth and literature. Herbert Weisinger[1] postulates that myth is the mind's mode of perceiving itself in action. In order to answer the question, how does the creative process figure forth thematically in poetry, Stevens and Valéry are studied, first separately and then comparatively.

Wallace Stevens' poetry can be read as an entity, the story of a lifelong quest in which the imagination endlessly seeks an encounter with reality. Poetry is the result of such an encounter; but the poet's quest for the complete, central poem is an endless cycle. The end of *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* is a barren rock, nearly devoid of the poet's imaginative tincture, but the cycle begins again, as spring follows winter.

For Valéry, the creative process is a voyage into the self; *La Jeune Parque* is a paradigm of this voyage, in which a being shuts out the world of others for a phase of withdrawal, but finally bursts out of inner darkness to face day and life. This "autobiography in form" is reflected in Valéry's other major poems as well.

"Le Cimetière marin" and "Sunday Morning" are both meditations on death and time. Stevens' *persona* yearns for some permanence in a world of flux. Valéry, on the other hand, is transfixed by static noon; death for him is fixity, while the living are gnawed by anguish. For both poets, poetry and creation are the answer to the problem of man's mortality.

In Stevens' "Esthétique du Mal" and Valéry's Narcissus cycle, the two poets are seen applying, each in his way, the poetry-making faculty to questions which are ultimately unanswerable. "Esthétique du Mal" is Stevens' attempt to find the meaning of the existence of evil. Evil as an encounter between man and the world is an analogue of poetry, the encounter between the imagination and reality. Narcissus represents Valéry's devotion to himself, but Narcissus is shown to be unfruitful and unnatural; his death is a suicide and at the same time a release for Valéry's productive powers. Both poems are examples of creative blocks, but they are dealt with in very different ways.

Poesis for Stevens is a quest in which the imagination seeks a reality separate from the poet. For Valéry, the creative process is an inward search for his deepest origins. But for both, poetry is the end and goal of the process. Paradoxically, for both the true aim of the creative life lies beyond language, in the muteness of that which can be expressed only in art.

The creative process was a way of life for Stevens and Valéry; for them, each experience of poesis fed back into the poetry, as *materia poetica*. Thus the poetic process figures forth thematically in poetry. As the poet creates, he is created.

[1]Herbert Weisinger, "The Mythic Origins of the Creative Process," *The Agony and the Triumph: Papers on the Use and Abuse of Myth*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1964).

Order No. 70-15,161 197 pages.

WALLACE STEVENS AND THE POETRY OF REBIRTH

Leonora Becker WOODMAN, Ph.D.
University of Missouri - Columbia, 1970

Supervisor: Roger Meiners

The informing assumption of Wallace Stevens' poetry is that the human soul once enjoyed a harmonious, pre-conscious, paradisal state dissipated by the advent of consciousness. However, the hegemony of human consciousness is incomplete, for there yet lingers in mankind's sub-conscious an atavistic, vestigial memory of original innocence perpetually agitating for a return to first origins. This redemptive voice and the promise of human transformation it foretells is what Stevens chose to call a "Supreme Fiction."

Stevens' "Supreme Fiction" is the fiction of the qualitatively new man, variously called "major man," "medium man," or merely "the giant," whom he saw evolving out of present man. As the personification of man's liberated sub-conscious, he is Stevens' resurrected archaic man who genuinely appropriates to himself the heroic and magical properties mistakenly attributed to an external deity.

Stevens saw art as the instrument of this human redemption. According to Stevens, mankind's expressive life issues from the sub-conscious memory of the "first idea"—the memory of the paradisal state antedating human consciousness. Hence, the human imagination is an archetypal and collective psychic impulse urging mankind to redeem its former "natural" home. Art objectifies this impulse in two ways: As paradigm, it incarnates man's original perfection unwittingly discarded; as catalyst, it effects the reconciliation between man and his sub-conscious, which alone ensures the possibility of paradise regained. Once done, however, art loses its efficacy and rationale, since it is merely a secondary and temporary surrogate for the unlived "divine" life as yet incubating in mankind's sub-conscious. Hence, Stevens was convinced that the annihilation of art was a necessary prelude to the beginning of human renewal.

Order No. 71-3396, 403 pages.

MATTHEW ARNOLD AND WALLACE STEVENS: IMAGINATION AS VALUE

David George STRATMAN, Ph.D.
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1970

Supervisor: Richard Harter Fogle

Arnold and Stevens respond to modern life in the very different ways appropriate to their differences of temperament and of historical perspective; there are however important resemblances in their conceptions of the function of poetry and in the poetic process as they conceive it. They both conceive, though in different ways, of poetry as fulfilling some of the human needs which religion had in the past fulfilled. Their ideas of what Stevens called "imagination as value" clarify and lend greater significance to the concepts of imagination of both men.

I maintain that Arnold's term "imaginative reason" and that Stevens' "imagination" suggest the whole of man as he struggles to develop the inward world of the self and to project its order onto the outside world, in Stevens in the fictions of aesthetic form, in Arnold in poetry and in the forms of Church and State. I maintain further that Stevens' "imagination" and Arnold's "imaginative reason" consist of the successful cofunctioning of the sensory, experiential, critical faculties with the ordering, shaping, and creative, as this cooperation is productive of works of literature. Imagination in Stevens realizes itself both as it gives shape to reality in fictions and as it works constantly to destroy the fictions which it creates; its critical function is its vital involvement with reality. Arnold's concept of imaginative reason, as this cooperation of man's critical and creative powers is productive of the perfection of individual man and works toward the transformation of society as a whole, is the basis of "culture."

The first chapter of this dissertation considers together Arnold's "imaginative reason" and Stevens' "imagination" both as representing a union of the verifying and the ordering principle of the mind; it considers Arnold's "culture" as a projection of the imaginative reason and shows the relationship of culture and Stevens' imagination in their developing of the sum of man's faculties. Chapter Two investigates the psychological and epistemological significance of the identification of imagination with the whole personality of the poet. Culture as a projection of the imaginative reason, and Stevens' imagination, both tend to the development of an inner world of the self, fictive in its bringing objects to realization only within itself, but real and vital in its constant involvement with the world of fact. Arnold's religious writings are discussed as a development of his idea of culture, and Stevens' youth as virile poet is related to Arnold's Jesus as a man of culture. Chapter Three studies Arnold's ambivalent attitudes towards the existence of some God beyond man in the "not ourselves which makes for righteousness" and in the "tendency by which all things fulfill themselves"; it examines also Stevens' confrontation with the not ourselves, a confrontation which brings him to the face of nothingness.

In Arnold the State evolves from the order man projects from his transformed self; Chapter Four studies imagination in Arnold as a social act by which all men may be united, in his idea of the State and of the Church. Stevens' idea of the social significance of imagination contrasts sharply with Arnold's; still for Stevens man and society are the inevitable subjects of the poem. Chapter Five considers "nobility" in Arnold and Stevens as "the symbol of imagination," and imagination as the source of the divine in man.

Order No. 70-21,233 216 pages.

THE INVENTIVE IMAGINATION: WALLACE STEVENS' DIALECTIC OF SECULAR GRACE

Edward Fred GUERESCHI, Ph.D.
Syracuse University, 1969

This dissertation is a study in Wallace Stevens' defense of the imagination as it is formulated and developed into a major statement of belief. "The Comedian as the Letter C," "The Man with the Blue Guitar" and "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" reveal this purpose by their dialectical efforts to restore poetry's full power without recourse to traditional metaphysics. In Stevens' search for a new humanism, there are encountered some familiar problems of the modern consciousness attempting to recreate itself: self-identity, social responsibility and the refutation of outworn values. However, his most important issue—one upon which all others revolve—is epistemological in character. It is the struggle to counteract the "violence from without"—reality's chaos and discontinuity—with the "violence from within"—the mind's search for order and harmony. In the poet's aesthetic rendition, the vital search for knowledge is reduced to precise, equation-like terms: abstraction, change and pleasure must equal poetic transformation. Stevens' understanding and resolution of this equation in the three poems constitute the major emphasis of my study.

His interpretation of secular grace is conveyed in these works by the double perspective of hopeful protagonist and skeptical commentator. Thus, Stevens' projections, whether they be in the figures of Crispin, the blue guitarist, or the irresolute ephebe of "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction," are his attempts to objectify or externalize the mind in an act of transformation with reality. In each poem, the conflict in attitude stated by the protagonist as disciple and the commentator as Socratic teacher establishes the conditions by which a workable aesthetics is evolved. Consequently, the poet's growth of the mind is developed by the roles he has created for that purpose; all converging upon the common subject of the imagination's efficacy in the modern world.

In terms of development, "The Comedian as the Letter C" is largely concerned with the nature of abstractions and the self's ability to withstand its pressure of imposing limitations upon reality. Through a series of mock-heroic adventures that attend his hero, Stevens examines the ironic consequences awaiting the self when it encounters reality without the protection of flattering preconceptions. Insulation from reality's bitter truth is symbolized by the Adamic myth, an archetype which fosters the arrogant illusion of man's invulnerability. Freed at last from this false abstraction, Stevens awaits "chance event," or the discovery of an idea of order more conducive to the existential quality of things-as-they-are. "The Comedian as the Letter C," as I have indicated, is a poem concerned with negations, but it is also important for what it affirms about the future growth of Stevens. This affirmation includes a commitment to the unification of opposites, the imaginary and real, and the discovery of the self within experience. Thus purified of the constant dangers of sentiment and preconception, the liberated poet can affirm an uncategorized world in the revelation of fresh discoveries.

"The Man with the Blue Guitar" continues Stevens' dialectic by relating abstraction to change and process and by illustrating their compatibility in metaphor. He devotes himself (in dialogue with the blue guitarist) to the problems of developing an imaginative version of man that replaces "empty heaven and its hymns" and to an examination of change in reality. Stevens' idea of the imagination is that it is translucent, an illumination of reality. Therefore, a vision of man is drawn from reality into the imagination. Withdrawn into "space," it is "For a moment, final" in a satisfactory interchange until the world's pressure demands a new synchronization. The development of this process of imaginative withdrawal and return to reality furnishes the blue guitarist with his song. It is a song that is morally and aesthetically rehabilitative for Stevens, because it seeks to discover what is significant to order the world and bring it into meaningful relation with the self.

"Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" is Stevens' grand aesthetic summary. It states the imagination's designs for the recreation of the world: to envision a supreme fiction constructed from the eye's reality and organically unified to the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. Such are the idealized possibilities that enable the poet to "make a place dependent on ourselves," as well as remaining simultaneously faithful to the fictions of angels and the "harmonious heat of August." The work has as its aim the pleasure of reconciling the real and imaginary through man's imperative need for belief. Appropriately enough, the symbol for such belief is the figure of the poet himself—the key to Stevens' aesthetic equation. As also the agent of synthesis, the Orphic poet reconciles the real and ideal by tapping the deepest emotions and accepting his role as artificer: "For a moment in the central of our being,/ The vivid transparence that you bring is peace."

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"THE OUTLINES OF BEING AND ITS EXPRESSINGS": HUSSERL, HEIDEGGER, AND THE LATER POETRY OF WALLACE STEVENS

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University of Oregon, 1969

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The thesis of this study is that the development of the middle and later poetry of Wallace Stevens can be profitably explained through comparisons with the phenomenological methods and concepts of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Husserl's theories of the adequacy of original intuitions, his concept of intentionality, and several phases of his "reductions" are compared to the processes demonstrated in the poems of *Ideas of Order, The Man with the Blue Guitar,* and *Parts of a World.* While each comparison of the philosopher's methods with those of the poet demonstrates the affinities that exist between Husserl's phenomenology and Stevens' poetry, the introduction and subsequent chapters make clear that there is no evidence of Stevens' having been influenced by Husserl. The comparisons demonstrate the affinities of thought and use them to explain the development and meaning of Stevens' poems of this period. While the poems show surprising similarities in method to Husserl's phenomenology, there are distinct differences between the goals of the philosopher and the goals of the poet. Stevens is concerned with finding an effective aesthetic order rather than epistemological certainty.

The comparisons of Stevens' poems with Husserl's methods also show how both implicitly accepted the necessity of finding ways to overcome the Cartesian subject-object split. Husserl's concept of the intentional relations between consciousness and the objects of consciousness which are the basis of phenomenology corresponds roughly to Stevens' idea of the interaction of imagination and reality which is accomplished in poetry. When Stevens rejects the idea of a conflict between imagination and reality in *Parts of a World,* his poems incorporate processes of vision and disclosure that are similar to Martin Heidegger's descriptions of the ways in which Dasein is disclosed to itself as "Being-in-the-world." The concluding discussions of the poems of *Parts of a World* compare Heidegger's analyses of *Dasein*'s modes of Being to Stevens' descriptions of the experience of disclosure of Being. These comparisons suggest an explanation for the radical change in Stevens' poetry that begins with the last poems of that volume and continues through *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction* and *Transport to Summer.*

The comparison of Heidegger's ideas about the relation between Being, language, and temporality to Stevens' notions of Being, language, and change in *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction* and "Description Without Place" clarifies the nature of the aesthetic of existence that Stevens proposes in those two poems.

The final chapter compares Heidegger's views of poetry, his concept of the function of nothingness, and his theory of *Dasein*'s existence as a projection of possibilities to Stevens' use of metaphor, his concept of nothingness, and the motif of the cyclical fulfillment of Being in *Transport to Summer, Auroras of Autumn* and "The Rock." While the discussion emphasizes the fact that the chance of direct influence from Heidegger is as small as that from Husserl, the parallels that are pointed out establish a useful and comprehensive way of understanding Stevens' "Poetry of Being" in the later poems.

These final comparisons demonstrate how the last poems complete Stevens' "unofficial view of Being" as a limited, but fully human aesthetic of existence which can include concepts of death and time like Heidegger's as well as independent views of pleasure, pain and the imagination.

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