

I. INTRODUCTION

Wallace Stevens was born in 1879 in Reading, an important city in the American State of Pennsylvania. He was the second child of his parent. He had two brothers. One was older than him and the other younger. He had two younger sisters as well. Garrett Stevens, his father, was a practising lawyer in the city of Reading, while his wife had been a school teacher. Stevens began his education in private schools. A little before his thirteenth birthday, he joined the Boys' High school in Reading, where he studied Latin, Greek, English, mathematics, geography, physics and elocution. He proved himself a very good student and his earliest published work appeared in the school magazine.

After graduating from the Reading High School, he got admitted to Harvard University. Here, he was the student of English, but he also studied French and German. In addition to that, he studied economics, European history, and the Fine Arts of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. He conceived an ambition to become a poet at Harvard University. He met a girl, Elsie Moll, and fell in love with her in Reading. His love inspired him to write poem addressed to his sweetheart. From that time onwards he regularly sent a poem with his letter to her. His letters were intimate confessions of feelings, thoughts, and accounts of his experiences in the past and present. These poems were his first major poetic endeavour. By December in the same year (1908), he proposed to her, and she accepted the proposal. For her birthday, he produced another set of twenty poems. All these poems represented the beginnings of "Harmonium", the first volume of his poems. He married Elsie Moll in 1909.

After leaving Harvard, Stevens went to New York and tried to make a career as a journalist. He got a job as a regular reporter for the *The New York Tribune*. However, his work as a newspaper reporter did not suit him, and he was higher

successful nor very happy in that job. Accordingly, he gave up the job and he got admitted to the New York Law School in 1901. In 1904, he was admitted to the New York bar. Stevens had been working in different law firms. In 1908, after a brief period of unemployment, he got a job with the American Bonding Company. He did not feel secure there. Soon afterwards, he got a job with the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company and so he moved from New York to the city of Hartford. His major duty here was the settlement of bond claims.

Stevens was a man of extraordinary energy. He worked the whole day as an insurance lawyer and at the same time regularly produced poems of great excellence. Evidently, for him surety claims and poetry were not opposite activities. In fact these were complementary activities and together they enabled him to satisfy what he called his reality-imagination complex and to feel a whole man. On the whole, Stevens was a very reserved kind of man. Most of the time he kept aloof from people, though he was by no means recluse. He felt uncomfortable in company, and never became very intimate with any one. As for his home life, he regarded it as an intrusion and an intervention in the writing of his poetry, which was his major interest, besides his professional work.

According to Stevens, nobility is immortal essence of poetry. Nobility enables poetry to soar until the ignoble element drags it down to earth. The ignoble element is reality. He says that the poet is responsible to the imagination, which is inseparable from society. Poems or poetic images strike a perfectly satisfactory balance between the reality and the imagination of the day.

In a lecture delivered in 1943 and entitled "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet", Stevens discusses the relation between a poet and his poem. He agrees with Aristotle's precept that the poet should say very little in his own person and should not

make himself the subject of his poems. But Stevens at the same time maintains that the poems will necessarily disclose their author. The chief characteristics of the mind, he says, is to be constantly describing itself. Poetry, he further says, is a process of the personality of the poet, reflecting the physical and mental factors which condition him as an individual. This is a view which certainly complicates our own sense of the relation between the man and his work. He wore several masks in his poetry, but his personality inevitably showed itself through those masks.

Stevens also said a lot about the absence of specific meanings from poetry. According to him, it is not essential that a poem should have any rational meaning or should be susceptible to a rational interpretation. A poem may be merely an accumulation of images and sounds, and the value of such a poem may lie only in the vague feelings, which it arouses in the reader. A poem need not be systematic in its development. He also expressed the view that poetry is more satisfying than philosophy because it allows full scope to the so-called irrational articulations.

Stevens was opposed to didacticism in poetry. In the beginning of his poetic career he favoured only what he called "pure poetry" by which he meant poetry which had no designs upon the reader. Pure poetry also implied in Stevens' view, the possible absence of a rational meaning in poetry. During the period of his writing the poems of "Harmonium", Stevens found constant pleasure in the mere expressiveness of poetry. He admitted that his early poems were decorative. He had liked the images alone, or images and the music of the verse together. He also said in this connection that he was interested only in pure poetry. He admitted that the Marxist point of view did not approve of pure poetry.

Stevens' poetry is very obscure, and one reason for this obscurity is that he did not regard a rational meaning as being essential to poetry. For instance, he said that

the poem called *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* was his favorite poem even though readers might think that it did not contain a definable meaning. He said that a poem often conveyed imaginative or emotional ambiguity or uncertainty. Poems, he said, could have imaginative or emotional meanings, and no relational meanings.

Stevens devoted a number of his poems also to an exposition of his concept of poetry. Two of his longest poems were written on this subject. These poems are: *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, and *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*. A number of short poems also discuss the same subject. For instance, in *The Ultimate poem is Abstract*, Stevens discusses the role of imagination in the writing of poetry. In this poem, he emphasizes the need to be in the center of both imagination and reality. A poem is a comment on reality and, to make a comment of this kind, the poet must be in the center of reality though he must, at the same time, perceive the reality through his imagination.

Stevens defines a poem as a piece of composition in the act of finding what will suffice. In the past, poetry did not have to find what sufficed because the poet simply followed the traditional ways of writing, "The scene was set, it repeated what was in the script"(qtd. in Lall 60). But the modern poet cannot continue the old, conventional ways of writing poetry. The long poem, *The Man with the Blue Guitar* is a most important statement of Stevens' poetic theory though it is not easy to understand. This poem is a product of the creative imagination. The theme of this poem is actuality and the imaginative transformation of it. Reality and imagination are here depicted as contestants, both of which are right.

Stevens's poems appeared in the following six volumes:

- i. "Harmonium" (1923)
- ii. "Ideas of Order" (1936)

- iii. "The Man with the Blue Guitar and other Poems" (1937)
- iv. "Parts of a World" (1942)
- v. "Transport to Summer" (1947)
- vi. "The Auroras of Autumn (1950)

Stevens' first book of poems, "Harmonium", appeared in 1923, when Stevens was already forty-four years old and was well established as an insurance lawyer. All selected poems in my thesis are from this volume. The very remarkable poem in "Harmonium" is *The Snow Man*. The argument of this poem is that one must be a snow man in order to perceive reality without thinking of any misery in it. Furthermore, this poem conveys the idea that it is very difficult for the human perceiver to separate his perceptions from his own thoughts.

The principal feature of the poetry in the volume "Harmonium" is its variety of moods and personae. Stevens' fascination with the poetry of perception explains the limited range of his subjects. He was also much concerned with the problem of the limits of language for representing reality. The subject of the poems in "Harmonium" is the play of the linguistic imagination on perception. His most conspicuous habit in the writing of the poems which appear in this volume is to pile up analogies. The use of multiple analogy occurs in the poem entitled *The Load of Sugar Cane*. But one of the best of the poems illustrating the use of the multiple analogy is the poem, *Domination of Black*. This poem is also a masterpiece of imagist practice. It obeys each of the directives given by Ezra Pound. The poem called *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* is another poem of the imagist kind. Here, each stanza has the precision demanded by imagist theory.

Other poems in "Harmonium" deserving the readers attention are *On the Beach* and *The Bird with the Coppery, Keen Claws*. Another point worth mentioning

is that , in the light of the volume called "Harmonium", the critics of the time described Stevens as an aesthete and dandy, though they disagreed whether these were terms of praise or censure. Stevens wrote three long poems on aesthetics and several short ones. *Anecdote of the Jar* is a short poem and his first great statement of this theme.

The theme of the poem *The Bird with the Coppery, Keen Claws*, has been dealt with in a symbolic manner. The bird with the coppery, keen claws is a parrot which here symbolizes the poetic imagination. The imaginative poet or artist Prevails over all other mortals. He is a superior kind of man who dominates not only ordinary human beings but also the poets who are less imaginative than he.

Another poem *The Death of a Soldier* (From "Harmonium") treats the theme of death with wit, though also in a serious manner. The allusion to "a three days personage" is an allusion to the myth of Jesus Christ. The soldier's death is seen as nothing special, but part of life as we know it. It is therefore capable of moving us. Stevens tries to clinch his argument in the poem with a beautiful description of what death is like in terms of our natural environment.

"Anecdote" is Stevens' favorite title in the case of the poems in "Harmonium". Some of the poems carry the title of "Anecdote" while there are several others which are in fact anecdotes. *Anecdote of the Jar* is the beautiful example of the poem of this kind. This poem dramatizes some abstraction. Many of the poems in this volume have flux and change as their central fact. And in many poems, Stevens wields the weapon of comedy against sentimentalizing or idealizing attitudes toward death and change. In the poem *The Emperor of Ice Cream*, he has dealt with this matter.

During the period of his writing the poems of "Harmonium", Stevens had two voices for offering the supreme fiction. One was the ironic voice, and the other was

sacramental. We got an example of the ironic voice in *A High-Toned Old Christian Woman*, which begins with the line: "Poetry is the supreme fiction, madam". And we heard the sacramental voice in the poem *Sunday Morning*. However, the irony and the sacrament are both abandoned in the later poetry. In his poetry, there is a great complexity of thought and emotion. Most of the complexity results from Stevens' search for a conjunction of the imagination with the world of reality in a language. That does not violate the necessary element of constant change inherent in both mind and reality.

The poem *Peter Quince at the Clavier* celebrates life and imagination. This poem is the central implication of the figure of the wheel or cycle of forms.

The principal difference between Stevens' earlier and later poetry is that it was only after 1929 that he discovered that his subject was poetry, or in other terms, his "reality-imagination complex". This discovery was certainly anticipated in the poems of "Harmonium". But it is only in the later poems that discovery is clearly understood and stated. The later poems are more abstract than the earlier poems (Poems of "Harmonium"). In the later poems, the glamorous sensuousness of the poems of "Harmonium" disappeared, and yet maintained to the end his belief in what he called 'the essential gaudiness of poetry'.

Since the time "Harmonium" appeared on the literary arena in 1923, it received a chunk of criticism from different perspectives. Some critics have labeled "Harmonium" as a text with exotic words and ambiguities whereas some of them have commented on the positive aspect of it.

Commenting on "Harmonium", Tindall writes, "What strikes one on looking into *Harmonium* is an air of florid elegance plainly, Stevens has his mask of dandy on. In the later volumes, instead of gallant artifice, fastidious gaudiness, and 'quirk of

imagery', we commonly find the elegance of severity. The 'final elegance', he says, is 'plainly to propound' (12).

Tindall states that Dandyism is not only a mask but also a dress and a style.

Commenting on *Peter Quince at the Clavier*, he further writes:

Perhaps the most splendid example of harmony and contrast is *Peter Quince at the clavier*. This imitation of symphonic form has four movements, each related to the others by theme and motif, each different from the others in rhythm and key. The first movement quiet and meditative is a thought process, logical in frame, yet consisting of two analogies to be elaborated: that of music and that of Susanna and her red-eyed elders. Odd rhymes and "pizzicati", interrupting sobriety at the end, promise another development. The second movement, an andante, reveals Susanna bathing in green water. (20)

Thus, Tindall says that *Peter Quince at the Clavier* is a splendid example of harmony and contrast in a single poem.

Nancy Bogen, focusing on stanzas in *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*, writes:

The poem contains different forms of exposition. In stanzas 1,2,3,6,9 and 11, there is straight description, in stanzas 10,12, and 13, such descriptions are followed by a conjecture or prediction ('Even the bawds of euphony/would cry out sharply', 'the blackbird must be flying', 'it was snowing/ and it was going to snow'). Seeming statements of fact or opinion reminiscent of mathematical equation occurs in stanzas 4, 5, and 8 and in stanzas 7, there is an exhortation. (219)

Wallace Stevens uses exposition in this poem to make the viewer grab the meaning easily. He is more conscious about stanza design to convey his ideas to the viewers.

William York Tindall further says about Stevens Reality- Imagination Complex. He writes:

Anecdote of the Jar is an anecdote of a jar, a shape made by man and placed by him in a 'slovenly wildness'. The theme is interaction: the effect of the round jar on its surrounding and of them on it. This artifact composes nature, but not entirely, for the slovenly place still sprawls. Wilderness of bird and bush makes jar stand out, gray and bare, 'like nothing else in Tennessee.' Jar and wilderness, art and nature, need each other. (24)

Tindall gives his view on art which is the product of imagination can impose order upon a scene of disorder.

Commenting on Stevens' delight in the world of senses, Willard Thorpe writes, "Stevens never lost delight in the world of the senses, in color, light, waves, clouds, exotic flowers, scents, shadows, the strong sun 'that brave man' who gives his energy to the world. The seasons' changes, from the summer of 'bright and blue birds and gala sun', on through the auroras of autumns, to the winter of the snow man, were profoundly meaningful to Stevens" (211).

Robert Rehder, in his book *The Poetry of Wallace Stevens*, says that the poetry of Stevens is a search for meaning in a world of unending change. He writes:

The poetry of Stevens is a search for meaning in a world of unending change where every interpretation is tentative and only one way among many of seeing things. He believes in the irreducible poly-significance of the world and makes poetry out of the possibility of rearranging

every perception. Like Whitman, he feels himself to contain multitudes; and each item is simultaneously himself, itself, and virtually every other thing. (61)

Thus, having received a number of responses to the poems proves that no one has tried to reveal Realism in Wallace Stevens' poetry. So, this dissertation attempts at revealing Realism in his poetry.

II. REALISM

Realism can be seen both as a specific historical mode and as a far broader technique that plays a role of some kind in most narratives. As an artistic movement, Realism refers to a body of texts in the latter half of the nineteenth century which expressed the dominant mimetic fashion of the time, informed by a rationalist epistemology in reaction against the fantasies of Romanticism, and responsive both to political and social changes and to the scientific and industrial advances of the day. In earlier and subsequent texts, realism takes different forms and has been given a wide variety of interpretations, dependent upon various understandings of the real concern about the consequent elasticity of the term realism is more or less ubiquitous in the critical literature.

Realism is a term that can be applied to the accurate depiction in any literary work of the everyday life of a place or period. When the term realistic is applied to works that predate the nineteenth century, however, it usually refers more specifically to a writer's accuracy in portraying the speech and behavior of a character or characters from a low socioeconomic class.

Realism is a literary movement that developed in the latter half of the nineteenth century in America, England and France in reaction to the excesses of Romanticism. Writers associated with this movement tried to write reality. William J. Long focuses on this term as:

In realism-that is, the representation of men exactly as they are, the expression of the plain, unvarnished truth without regard to ideals or romance-the tendency was at first thoroughly bad [. . .] they saw only the externals of man, his body and appetites, not his soul and its ideals, and so, [. . .] they resemble a man lost in the woods, who wanders

aimlessly around in circles, seeing the confusing trees but never the whole forest, and who seldom think of climbing the nearest high hill to get his bearings; Later, however, this tendency to realism became more wholesome. (240)

Realism differs from romanticism particularly in its emphasis on an objective presentation of details and events rather than a subjective concentration on personal feelings, perceptions, and imaginings of various characters. Realists also reject the idealized presentations, imaginative and exotic settings, and improbable plot twists characteristic of the romance. Realists often rely heavily on local color, deliberately attempting to portray faithfully the customs, speech, dress and living and working conditions of their chosen locale. Realists also stress characterization as a critical element of a literary work.

The basic disagreement of realism with Romanticism is obvious because, realism developed in France as a reactionary movement against the dominant romantic tendencies in art. Romantics do not consider the realities of the world enough to trigger creativity. They do not find reconciliation with the worldly realities and often find refuge in the imaginary world. Baudelaire has contrasted realism with Romanticism with his forceful view that reads, "I consider it useless and tiresome to portray things as they are because nothing that exists satisfies me. Nature is ugly, and I prefer the monsters of my imagination to the tiredness of actuality" (622).

Realists include Jane Austen, Honore de Balzac, George Eliot, Gustave Flaubert, William Dean Howells, Henrik Ibsen, Henry James, Mark Twain, and Edith Wharton. Certain poems by Robert Browning, Walt Whitman, and Carl Sandburg can be referred to as realistic poems insofar as they convey real people, places, or situations in a direct, almost prosaic style. Pre-nineteenth century writers who may

broadly be said to be realistic in their outlooks and their depictions of life include Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, and Henry Fielding.

Erich Auerbach in his book *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* distinguishes as:

The foundations of modern realism five factors which underlie his exegesis from the beginning: a serious treatment of everyday reality, figured paradigmatically in the Christian Gospels, a consequent flexibility in mixing the classical stylistic levels of representation, the problematic, rather than stereotypical, presentation of socially inferior people as central subjectmatter, the embedding of people and events into a definite period of contemporary history, and a fluid, rather than a static, historical background. (qtd. in Hawkins-Daddy, 644)

Although realism grew as a dominant literary tendency only in the eighteenth century, its roots can be traced back to as early as the 1st century A.D. The art of Jean-Baptiste Simeon Chardin (1699-1779) "anticipate many of the concern of the 19th century realists and he in turn owes a debt to the Netherlands school of still-life painting of the century before him" (qtd. in Gupta and Mundra, 162). In literature and art, Realism is the element which is concerned with giving a truthful impression of actuality as it appears to the normal human consciousness. The standard for Realism is the distillation of the objective truth.

In mid-19th century France, Gustave Flaubert set forth a programme of realist painting as a self-conscious alternative to the dominant Romantic style, building on works of the painting preceding his own age, which had made use of their art in bringing about a landscape reproduction and true portrayal of village life as directly and accurately as possible. Similarly in music, particularly in the operas, the seeds of

realism have appeared since early nineteenth century. Realism as a literary tendency became dominant in the eighteenth century. The way influenced literature, particularly fiction and the theatre is really remarkable. Its origin can be traced to France, where the dominant official neoclassicism had put up a challenge against the dominant romantic tendency in literature. since 18th century, the French have traditionally viewed themselves as rationalists, and this prevailing attitude in intellectual circle meant that Romanticism was destined to be eclipsed with Realism taking hold of the entire theater tendencies of literature and other forms of art. Naturally, literature took a realistic and anti-romantic path, exemplified by epoch making creations like Gustave Flaubert's *Madam Bovary*. According to Jacobus, in realistic plays, "the detail of the setting, the costuming and the circumstances of the action are so fully realized to convince audience that they are listening in on life itself" (556).

Realism had profound effects on European and American fiction. The novel, which had been born out of the romance as a more or less fantastic narrative, settled into a realistic mode which is still dominant today. Harry Levin, in his book *The Gates of Horn: A Study of Five French Realists*, says, "The realist novel had its beginnings in a breaking away from the convention –dominated romance, and its method had continued to be an undermining of preconceptions: realism presupposes an idealism to be corrected, a convention to be superseded, or an orthodoxy to be carried" (120).

One very important aspect of the realistic writing is that it should be based on local color whose implication moves from specialized to a more generalized meaning and finally gains a universal connotation. According to M.H. Abrams, local color is the "detailed representation in prose fiction of the settings, dialect, customs, dress, and

ways of thinking and feeling which are distinctive of a particular region" (145). The local color movement in America (1865-1880) saw the continent becoming increasingly self-conscious at the very time regional writers began to write about its various aspects. Readers wanted to know what their country looked like in reality, and how the varied races which made up their growing population lived and talked.

Abrams explains how new potentialities facilitated the possibilities of local colour:

After the Civil War a number of American writers exploited the literary possibilities of local color in various parts of America; for example, the West (Bret Harte), the Mississippi (Mark Twain), the South (George Washington Cable), the Midwest (E.W. Howe, Hamlin Garland), and New England (Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Wilkins Freeman). The term "Local colour writing" is often applied to works which [. . .] rely for their interest mainly on a sentimental or comic representation of the surface particularities of a region, instead of on more deep-seated, complex and general human characteristics and problems. (145-46)

Since English poets have been trying to achieve Realism at once wider and deeper than that of the Georgians, T.S. Eliot has brought to the task great learning, valuable suggestions from French literature and astonishing technical virtuosity. He has extended the scope of poetic realism by interpreting the boredom and frustration of modern urban life and also by linking poetry again to religious tradition. Modern realism in western countries has become increasingly defeatist and tends to see only the disintegration of that modern society which it describes. The succeeding generation of poets has been influenced by Eliot and by the prophetic Jesuit, Gerald

Manley Hopkins, who had anticipated many of the demands of the modern poetic realist in the eighteen eighties.

Linda Nochlin, in *Realism*, says, "Realistic work was determined by scientific attitudes, which confined the artist to accurate observation and notation of empirical phenomena and a description of how, rather than why, things happen" (qtd. in Hawkins-Dady, 645).

The modern climate of opinion is unfavourable to any poetry except realistic poetry, though unfortunately there are usually a few creators of fantasy in every age. Many realists, American and otherwise, have also embraced what might be termed 'psychological realism' as they have turned from emphasizing the accuracy of external detail to reporting internal detail, the thought processes of the human mind or consciousness. Some authors, such as Virginia Woolf, have taken the reporting of internal detail to its extreme manifestation, using stream of consciousness narration to convey to the reader the jumble of thoughts and sensory impressions that flows unremittingly through the human mind.

Realism should also be distinguished from naturalism, with which it is sometimes confused. Although naturalists' emphasis on the presentation of concrete details renders their fiction 'realistic', naturalism cannot properly be classified even as a subtype of realism because of the deterministic outlook of its proponents,. Naturalists view all individuals as being at the mercy of biological and socioeconomic forces, whereas realists hold that humans have a certain degree of free will that they can exercise to affect their situations. Realism is intimately linked with Naturalism and the relations need to be analyzed here. Naturalism grew out of realism. Although related to realism, naturalism moves beyond literary principles to scientific ones that govern both human nature and the order of the universe. Scientific determinism leaves

characters defeated by both the natural world and their own animalistic nature, neither of which they can understand or control, social and economic determinism takes from them the power to direct their own destinies.

Started virtually with the publication of *The Experimental Fiction* in 1880 by Emile Zola, the movement developed hand in hand with realism. Majority of the naturalistic writings deal with the theme of survival, determinism, violence and taboo, which are also to a great extent, the themes of realistic writings. The main vent of the movement is that human beings gain nothing by exercising free will, as it is an illusion, and man in totality is guided and governed by predetermined destinies and the natural environment he lives in. Donna M. Campbell says, "The conflict in these writings is often man against nature or man against himself as characters struggle to retain a veneer of civilization despite external pressures that threaten to release the brute within" (qtd. in Gupta and Mundra, 180). The force of heredity and environment also find a prime treatment in these works because, they affect and afflict individual lives remarkably. Stephen Crane, John Steinbeck, James T. Farrell, John Dos Passos, Richard Wright, Norman Mailer and Saul Bellow can be especially mentioned as the representative examples of the naturalist American writers.

The rise of Naturalism does not mark a radical break with realism, rather the new style is a logical extension of the old. In fact the naturalistic writers have inherited a great deal from the realistic writers preceding them. Even Zola himself is believed to have been influenced by Balzac and Flaubert. The only breach appeared in setting, as the naturalists went for short descriptions, avoiding the long set-piece description of the locale and the time of action. The same continued with his followers, modifying here and there, the realistic elements, making them look more and more naturalistic.

Variants of realism that have developed in the twentieth century include magic realism and socialist realism. The term magic realism, originally, applied in the 1920s to a school of painters, is used to describe the prose fiction of Jorge Luis Borges in Argentina, as well as the work of writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez in Colombia, Gunter Grass in Germany, and John Fowles in England. Essentially a movement encompassing painting in the beginning, magic realism was realistic simultaneously possessed a strange or a dreamlike quality. It tended to defamiliarize the real. Franz Roh, a German art critic first used the term 'magic realism' to describe a new post-expressionistic form of art that was emerging. The moment one raised the question of the advent of magic realism in literature, the movement is immediately linked with the Latin American writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Literature of this type where we find interweaving of a sharply etched realism in representing ordinary events and descriptive details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements. The point of breach of this movement with realism is that magic realism incorporates materials derived from myths and fairy tales and weaves with the real. Thus, it can be viewed as an extended form of realism. Socialist realists employ the techniques associated especially with nineteenth century realism but solely in the service of the proletarian cause. Early practitioners of socialist realism believed that, in order to appeal to most readers, works should depict the lives of average working-class citizens.

Surrealism, by-product of realism, is a movement in art and literature which began during World War I in France. Influenced primarily by the psychology of Freud and poetry of Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud, the surrealists believed that the illogical and uncontrolled thoughts and associations of the mind better represented objective truth than ideas controlled by convention and imposed rationality. It began

with the publication of *Manifesto on Surrealism* in 1924 by Andre Breton. Surrealism arose most immediately out of Dadaism in the 1920s and the 1930s, it was particularly strong in France, its country of origin. The movement did not really affect the American literary scene until after World War II.

Presenting a dreamlike world through free-form writing and leaving interpretation to the reader alone, the surrealists asserted their freedom from reason and moral purpose. They believed in the working of the deep mind, "which they regarded as the only source of valid knowledge" (Abrams, 310).

Started as a movement in painting and sculpture, it soon took a number of literary writers into its grip and consequently, unconventional works started making their appearance, where the authors have deliberately broken with the conventional modes of writing. We find in their writings, an experiment with the free association of thoughts and illogical treatment of ideas. Andre Breton rightly says:

I shall not conceal that for me the strongest surrealist image is the one that presents the highest degree of arbitrary, the one that takes the longest to translate into practical language, whether it contains an enormous amount of apparent contradiction, whether one of its terms is curiously concealed, whether, promising to be sensational, it seems to come to a weak conclusion, whether it draws from itself a derisory formal justification, whether it is of a hallucinatory nature, whether it lends very naturally the mask of the concrete to the abstract or vice-versa; whether it implies the negation of some elementary physical quality, or whether it provokes laughter. (qtd. in Gupta and Mundra, 42)

Although the movement ended at the beginning of World War II, surrealism continued to influence contemporary writers. Writers like Dylan Thomas, Henry Miller, William Burroughs, and Thomas Pynchon may be mentioned as the pioneer of surrealism in literature.

Thus, there are so many breaches and modifications in realism. But it has survived the test of time and still prevails as a very potent mode of literary writing. Although naturalism, magic realism and surrealism put certain of its basic principles into question, realism still characterizes many literary writings.

Realism is a term that can be applied to the accurate depiction of the everyday life of a place or period. It is a reaction against the fantasies of romanticism. Realism is the expression of the plain, unvarnished truth without regard to ideals or romance. It gives emphasis on an objective presentation of details and events rather than a subjective concentration on personal feelings and imaginings of various characters. Realists reject the idealized presentation, imaginative and exotic settings. One very important aspect of the realistic writing is that it should be based on local color whose implication moves from specialized to a more generalized meaning and finally gains a universal connotation. Realists hold that humans have a certain degree of free will that they can exercise to affect their situations. Realism is the element which is concerned with giving a truthful impression of actuality as it appears to the normal human consciousness. These are the main issues of realism on which I am going to base my textual analysis.

III. REALISM IN WALLACE STEVENS' POETRY

The Snow Man

The Snow Man offers one of the most concise and penetrating introductions to the theme of reality. In this poem, a listener, snow man is presented as a realist who is attempting to give objective presentation of details rather than a subjective concentration on personal feelings and imaginings. In five short tercets that form one long, ruminative sentence, the poem posits a listener in winter who attempts to see and hear only what is there in the world around him, without adding to or imposing any thing onto what he perceives. The narrator suggests that one must have a mind of winter to achieve this vantage of pure objectivity and perceive reality without the filter of human emotion and or interpretation. To behold this wintry world of frost and snow, and ice-laden trees, one must not hear any misery in the sound of the wind:

One must have a mind of winter
 To regard the frost and the boughs
 Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

 And have been cold a long time
 To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
 The spruces rough in the distant glitter

 Of the January sun; and not to think
 Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
 In the sound of a few leaves. (1-9)

Here, Stevens' intention is very realistic. It becomes clear from the opening line of the poem. The argument of the poem is that one must be snow man in order to perceive

reality without thinking of any misery in it. The very procedure that the poem recommends for seeing the world as it is also shows how difficult it is for the human perceiver to separate his perceptions from his thoughts. We would have to be snow man to remain indifferent to the force of the cold particulars such as the 'Junipers shagged with ice', 'the distant glitter of the January sun', and the insistent 'the sound of the wind.'

The Snow Man is a poem without any embellishment. It consists of only one sentence, and it rushes forward to a shocking finality. There are symphonic effects and there is description, but there is no metaphor to intervene until the end where the snow man embodies the 'mind of winter' and the reality on which this mind casts a cold eye. Not only this snow man, but the entire poem is an analogy for these. For Stevens, language is itself a metaphor, a cloaking device incapable of depicting external reality.

In *The Snow Man*, Stevens indicated how the realistic outlook differs from the romantic. The romantic approach had been to seek a kind of union with nature. The speaker, in this poem, is a romantic because he entertains what is known as the pathetic fallacy which means finding a reflection of one's own thoughts and feelings in external Nature. The speaker in this poem hears misery in the sound of the wind, and this is an example of pathetic fallacy. But this kind of relationship between a man and Nature is not possible in the case of a snow man, listener. The snow man's 'mind of winter' cannot establish any such relationship. The snow man is incapable of forming any such relationship. The snow man thus suffers from a limitation, but this limitation becomes a virtue in him too. The snow man is better qualified than the speaker of the poem to record objectively the scene before him.

The Emperor of Ice-Cream

The Emperor of Ice-Cream deals with the reality of death that people find it difficult to accept and overcome. Stevens, as a realist, presents unvarnished truth without regard to ideals or romance. To get his point, he has also rejected the idealized presentation and exotic setting in this poem. It would seem to be about the preparation of a corpse for burial. While almost nothing in the first stanza suggests this, the cigars, curds, flowers, newspapers and ice-cream do variously suggest the theme of perishables but at the same time it provides the realistic situation for the poem:

Call the roller of big cigars,
 The muscular one, and bid him whip
 In kitchen cups concupiscent curds,
 Let the wenches dawdle in such dress
 As they are used to wear, and let the boys
 Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.
 Let be be finale of seem.

The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream. (1-8)

This first stanza begins with the neighbour's confident command to the other people: he is giving instructions as to how to conduct the funeral (waking). The man calls for a person muscular enough to whip up desserts by hand, there people must eat and drink when they arrive the poor woman's house to attend her 'wake' and funeral. This implies that we need not grieve and fast and torture the living when one who has died. The desserts will have to be served in kitchen cups, there is no fine China cups or crystal. The common people who will attend will come in their everyday clothes, rather than formal attire, the flowers will be brought in last month's newspapers,

rather than in vases, or as garlands. All these details suggest that there is nothing fanciful, nothing romantic, or nothing special about death and its aftermath, indeed, death is too ordinary and natural to be shocking.

The second stanza seems to describe a corpse and the room in which it is laid out. It continues with the preparations:

Take from the dresser of deal.
 Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet
 On which she embroidered fantails once
 And spread it so as to cover her face. (9-12)

The man asks someone to take a sheet from the top of a broken dresser to cover the dead woman's face, even if that means that her ugly feet will protrude from the too short covering. Stevens is insisting that one must look directly at death, in all its matter-of-factness, and see it not as a state of some mystical or spiritual transformation, but rather as actual fact to be faced and dealt with. To romanticize death is to invite more grief than less. The ice-cream is a symbol not only of the fleeting pleasures of life but also of the materialism or realism proper to one who takes refuge from the imagination. The wake (ceremony) takes place in the woman's own house, rather than in a church, and the preparation are inexpensive and minimal, including making the food in her kitchen. This reflects Stevens' insistence that death should not be romanticized, idealized, or sentimentalized. Lastly the poem concludes:

If her horny feet protrude, they come
 To show how cold she is, and dumb.
 Let the lamp affix its beam.
 The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream. (13-16)

The details, and the stop brought on by the caesura before 'and dumb', suggest that death is final, there is no expectation here of an afterlife, only an end of life. The poem is never sad or disappointed in such finality, however, but is full of life, reflected both in the activity going on in the house in the Stevens' characteristically vivid rhythm and diction. The lamp suggests the expressive romantic tradition, but here it is invited to affix its beam on a corpse. The repetition, three times including the poem's title, of 'the emperor of ice-cream' suggest the finality of mortality. In short, here romantic instinct has been repressed in every moment and realistic is vivid.

Sunday Morning

Sunday Morning deals with the experienced truth and the truth of religious myths. In this poem, the speaker draws the attention of the Christian lady to those facts of life which are real and which can be proved:

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?

What is divinity if it can come

Only in silent shadows and in dreams?

Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,

In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else

In any balm or beauty of the earth,

Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven? (16-22)

There is a kind of debate between the claims of orthodox religious beliefs and the demands of reason. Orthodox Christianity teaches people to believe in a heavenly paradise. But reason tells us that the beliefs taught by orthodox Christianity are mythical. Reason tells us that a heavenly paradise is an illusion. One should avail

oneself of all the comforts of this world in which everything is clearly visible and therefore perfectly real.

One very important aspect of realistic writing is that it should be based on local colour whose implication moves from specialized to a more generalized meaning and finally gains a universal connotation. The poem describes the state of mind of a woman who sits in a chair in the sun light, ready to take her breakfast. This is Sunday morning that many people are in the church. She is feeling quite comfortable but, as it is a Sunday or a holy day, her thoughts turn to religion. She begins to think of Jesus Christ who had sacrificed his life for the good of mankind. Thus, there is a movement from specialized to a more generalized thing. The lady in the poem is being urged by a speaker to devote herself to the realities of life instead of meditating upon myths and misleading orthodox religious beliefs. She thinks that there is only one heaven and that is earthly heaven. The close of the poem is perfectly tranquil and peaceful as if all doubt has been overcome and all uncertainty has ended. The poem is bound to generate heat and turmoil in the mind of those whose faith in the orthodox religion is firm and unshakable. Thus, the ending of the poem gains a universal connotation. True divinity is to be found in this present world and inside oneself:

Divinity must live within herself,
 Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;
 Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued
 Elations when the forest blooms; gusty
 Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;
 All pleasures and all pains, remembering
 The bough of summer and the winter branch.

These are the measures destined for her soul. (23-30)

These lines give the account that facts are perceptible by all human beings and all therefore recognized by human reason. The beliefs of orthodox Christianity, on the other hand, have to be taken on trust. One should not spend one's time in dwelling upon what is doubtful and what is illusory. Facts are more important than myths. The speaker appreciates the woman's rational thoughts as she refuses to accept the romantic fancies of Christian after-life and wants to make her life on this earth itself meaningful.

The poem urges us to discard our traditional religious views and adopt a new religion based on the physical realities of this world:

Of sure obliteration on our paths,
 The path sick sorrow took, the many paths
 Where triumph rang its brassy phrase, or love
 Whispered a little out of tenderness,
 She makes the willow shiver in the sun
 For maidens who were wont to sit and gaze
 Upon the grass, relinquished to their feet (66-72)

In these lines, the speaker rejects the idea of the heavenly paradise. Change is the basic principle of this earthly world. Death is part of the change which is the governing principle of this world. Death makes the objects in this world look beautiful to us. Thus, death is the mother of beauty. The paradise of the Christian thought is believed to be free from change and death. In paradise, ripe fruit never drops from the trees but remains permanently there. So, beauty does not exist there. Paradise is modelled upon the joys and pleasures of this very earthly world. That is reality. There is nothing original or exceptional about the paradise except the state of

changelessness. But without change and death there can be no real charm and no real beauty:

They shall know well the heavenly fellowship
Of men that perish and of summer morn.
And whence they came and whither they shall go
The dew upon their feet shall manifest. (102-105)

The speaker foresees a new religion arising to take the place of the orthodox Christian faith. This new religion would be a kind of sun-worship. They would not be troubled by any uncertainties. The Christian woman should know that there is no soul or spirit which survives the death of the body. And this is the state of freedom from which human beings cannot escape. This is the freedom from superstition. The people who are strongly under the influence of scientific ideas would respond joyfully to the words of the speaker in the poem. Thus, this poem is based on very important aspect of realistic writing-that is local colour whose implication moves from specialized to a more generalized meaning and finally gains a universal connotation.

Anecdote of the Jar

Anecdote of the Jar is an example that expresses an acceptance of the unlimited power of nature (reality). Realism as a reaction against the fantasies of romanticism and the expression of the plain, unvarnished truth without regard to ideals or romance, *Anecdote of the Jar* presents the natural world as it is. The jar is an artifact which is the product of human imagination, whereas the hill on which it is placed is natural. This contrast becomes more striking as the poem develops:

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.

It made the slovenly wilderness

Surround that hill. (1-4)

Here, the voice, or persona of the poem tells us that man-made jar causes a wilderness to surround the hill. So, the jar takes on a secret or mysterious quality, and one that allows it to control nature. It could not occur in reality, but only in our imagination. In the third stanza, the poem takes the other turn, in its content:

It took dominion everywhere.

The jar was gray and bare.

It did not give of bird or bush,

Like nothing else in Tennessee. (9-12)

Here, the persona shifts from the lofty images that described the majestic jar to a different description using words like 'gray' and 'bare' object which cannot give birth and recreate the fertile lushness like that of the nature. The poet is demonstrating the acceptance of the limitation of imagination and unlimitaiton of reality. The jar as symbol of imagination, is not fertile and it cannot recycle itself or reproduce. But nature has unlimited power of creation. The confident persona, who seems to have egoistically placed a jar to challenge the nature, realizes at last that his art is not capable of what the nature is. Thus, this poem depicts the picture of natural world as it is as realism gives the expression of the plain, unvarnished truth without regard to ideals or romance.

The Bird with the Coppery, Keen Claws

The Bird with the Coppery, Keen Claws is a poem which associates with the realists' idea that humans have a certain degree of free will that they can exercise to affect their situations. The theme of this poem has been dealt with in a symbolic

manner. The bird with the coppery, keen claws is a parrot which here symbolizes the poet. The poet or artist prevails over all other mortals. He is a superior kind of man who dominates not only ordinary human beings but also the poets who are less imaginative than he. Although he occupies an elevated position, he does not symbolize paradise. Realism posits human beings at the centre and he is a central figure on the earth which too is a kind of paradise. The earthly paradise is by no means the heavenly paradise which is, in any case, an illusion. Thus, in this poem, the poet has a certain degree of free will that he has affected the notion of paradise which is only illusion from the poet's point of view. The main idea of the poem finds expression in the very opening stanza:

Above the forest of the parakeets,
A parakeet of parakeets prevails,
A pip of life amid a mort of tails. (1-3)

The forest here means the world which provides vast possibilities for the exercise of ability, while a parakeet here means a poet. The master-parakeet or the great poet makes himself felt by the people around him, and although he exercises a pervasive influence in the world, he by no means symbolizes the heavenly paradise:

He is not paradise of parakeets,
Of his gold ether, golden alguazil,
Except because he broods there and is still. (7-9)

Although the master-parakeet or the great poet is bathed in the ethereal gold, he is not an idol to be worshipped. However, he is a central figure in the world. The poet is a kind of law-giver. He resembles the prime mover though he himself remains immovable. The law which he gives to the world is based on the rock of reality:

But though the turbulent tinges undulate
 As his pure intellect applies its laws,
 He moves not on his coppery, keen claws. (13-15)

The great poet prevails over the lesser poets. The master parrot or the great possesses great vitality and is a pervasive influence among the minor poets and also the people in general. The great poet never loses his mental equilibrium even though all around him he sees the turbulence of political and social events and movements. The great poet can move and stir others. The great poet, a character in this poem, has been presented as a person who has a certain degree of free will and which has exercised to affect his situations. Thus, this poem associates with the realist's idea that humans have a certain degree of free will that they can exercise to affect their situations.

Peter Quince at the Clavier

Realism is the element which is concerned with giving a truthful impression of actuality as it appears to the normal human consciousness. *Peter Quince at the Clavier*, one of the typical poems of Wallace Stevens, shows how the speaker is giving a truthful impression of actuality as it appears to his normal consciousness. The speaker, Peter Quince, begins to play on his instrument known as the clavier and then expresses his reaction to the notes which he produces from the keys of the instrument. Quince assumes the much more serious role of the lusty musician, who is attempting to woo a beautiful woman wearing a silken dress of a blue-shade. In so doing he recounts another-failed seduction, the story of Susanna and the Elders. The two lusting elders spy on Susanna while she bathes and then insist that she have sexual relations with them. Her refusal angers them and they spread the rumour that she had committed adultery. Just before her execution, Daniel proves the elders' perjury,

however, and they are executed instead. Thus, he is giving a truthful impression of actuality as it appears to his normal human consciousness. He is wooing a woman but he is more consciousness to the story of Susanna. The truthful impression of actuality as it appears to the normal human consciousness is concerned with realistic writing.

Thus, the situation of the poem is very realistic:

Just as my fingers on these keys
 Make music, so the selfsame sounds
 On my spirit make a music, too.

Music is feeling, then, not sound;
 And thus it is that what I feel,
 Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
 Is music. It is like the strain
 Waked in the elders by Susanna. (1-9)

These lines are concerned chiefly with the effect of music and of beauty on the human heart. The music coming from his clavier, when Peter Quince plays upon it, produces in his heart a desire for Susanna. Stevens rounds up the poem by emphasizing his theme that the physical beauty is more lasting than the imagined one. The poet affirms his faith in the physical, concrete, immediate and the real as the realists give objective presentation of details. The argument is that beauty is momentary in our minds, while in the physical body it is immortal:

Beauty is momentary in the mind –
 The fitful tracing of a portal;

But in the flesh it is immortal.
 The body dies; the body's beauty lives.
 So evenings die, in their green going,
 A wave, interminably flowing.
 So gardens die, their meek breath scenting
 The cowl of winter, done repenting.
 So maidens die, to the auroral
 Celebration of a maiden's choral. (51-60)

In these lines, Peter Quince speaks about the nature of physical beauty and about the ever lasting memories which beauty leaves behind after its decline and death. These lines are a tribute to physical beauty that opens with a surprising refutation of the platonic notion that earthly beauty is simply an evanescent reflection of the 'ideal form' originating in the mind. These lines give the realistic presentation of the beauty because it has discarded the idealized presentation of it. The mind plays a role in the appreciation of beauty, the poem argues, but only momentarily. Beauty most efficiently reveals itself in the flesh, whereas art bases its aesthetic on the real world. As such art provides an immortality more satisfying than any spiritual immortality. Stevens sees the eternality of the physical world. The lines, a part from expressing an important idea, contain a series of vivid and realistic pictures.

In short, in this poem, Stevens gives the truthful impression of actuality as it appears to the normal human consciousness of the speaker or Quince. And lastly, he has refuted the platonic notion or 'idealized form' by saying that beauty most efficiently reveals itself in the flesh, art and the mind plays a role in the appreciation of beauty. So, this poem is very realistic in theme and in situation.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

The poem *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* deals with the theme of human perception of reality varying from time to time. As realism is concerned with giving a truthful impression of actuality as it appears to the normal human consciousness, the speaker of the poem gives truthful impression of actuality as it appears to his normal consciousness. Stevens conjures an image of a blackbird among twenty snow capped mountains, the only moving thing is the eye of the bird. The speaker is made self-conscious by the little blackbird's eye, he is not so much looking at the blackbird as being looked at by it. The consequence is that the speaker looks at himself. It is a troubled look, he finds that the blackbird has trebled his looking.

The autumn wind blows the blackbird out of the tree and out of the speaker's mind. If the winds are not quite so powerful, then there is a conflict between blackbird and wind, such that the internal fear is externalized. The autumn wind would also blow the leaves out of the speaker's mind, death comes to every living thing. The death of the blackbird would seem parallel to that of the speaker. Thus, it seems that the speaker need worry about his own death. Things never appear top an observer or a perceiver in the same light always. Human perception of things, objects and phenomena keeps changing. That is why, the title of the poem refers to the thirteen ways in which an observer can look at a bird. The poet addresses the puritans and the ascetics of Haddam and asks them why they imagine golden birds which do not exist:

O thin men of Haddam,
 Why do you imagine golden birds?
 Do you not see how the blackbird
 Walks around the feet
 Of the women about you? (25-29)

The thin men of Haddam are the fasting ascetics who remain lost in their meditations and their fancies. The speaker asks them why they invent golden birds which do not exist. He asks why they do not turn to the realities of life and see the actual blackbird which is walking around the feet of the woman standing nearby. As a realist discards the fanciful things, the speaker also discards fanciful things. So, the speaker is presented as a realist. At first sight these lines do not appear to have much relevance to the theme of the poem. But what the poet means to say here is that reality is often more important than fancy. In one's fancy, one may behold a golden bird. Here, Stevens is disparaging the fancy.

The speaker concludes that the palpable marks the horizons of everybody's experience:

When the blackbird flew out of sight,

It marked the edge

Of one of many circles. (35-37)

The blackbird is disappearing over the horizon of the speaker's circle of knowledge, it is entering somebody else's horizon. Now that the speaker no longer has a sense of his mind's being divided within itself, he has a sense of its being separated from other minds. The speaker has a sense of his mind having something in common with other minds. That something is the palpable – that is, the blackbird. The speaker is at one with that alien fact, namely the blackbird, and the moving, reflecting element is no longer his mind but a river. But the certainty with which he says that the blackbird must be flying shows that he has permanently identified himself with the blackbird. Lastly, he suggests that he will die but that the blackbird will go. The darkness will continue to get darker and darker, the snow fall will continue but the blackbird will sit in the evergreen cedar-tree.

In short, the poem *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* presents the speaker as a realist. He gives the truthful impression of actuality as it appears to his normal human consciousness.

Domination of Black

The poem *Domination of Black* takes place on an early autumn night, focusing on a person in a room thinking about darkness, while a fire is burning in a fireplace nearby. Stevens gives emphasis on an objective presentation of details and events in the poem as a realist. A few images appear repetitively, which tie the poem together more clearly. The poem begins by describing the setting: night time, by a fire indoors. Here, Stevens rejects idealized presentation and exotic setting which do not take place in the realistic writing. The poem depicts the blackness of the open window with its outer darkness of leaves, planets, hemlocks:

At night, by the fire,
 The colors of the bushes
 And of the fallen leaves,
 Repeating themselves,
 Turned in the room,
 Like the leaves themselves
 Turning in the wind.
 Yes: but the color of the heavy hemlocks
 Came striding.
 And I remembered the cry of the peacocks. (1-10)

In this stanza, there is a correspondence between the colours inside the room and the colours outside. In general, when Stevens uses the images of a room with a window,

he is thinking of the mind with some mode of perceptions, characteristically visual. In this room, there is a fire, and the fire repeats the colours of the fallen leaves outside. The outer darkness corresponds with a darkness within the room indicates that the fire is the only light in the room which is mostly dark. The situation is altogether one of several things in resemblance, the fire resembles the fallen leaves. This situation suggests that the fallen leaves, bright as they are, are already victims of death. Thus death is presented as a reality which occurs to everything.

The colour of the hemlocks is presented objectively. The colour is said to be striding, in other words walking, almost as if they are getting closer to the indoors:

Out of the window,
 I saw how the planets gathered
 Like the leaves themselves
 Turning in the wind.
 I saw how the night came,
 Came striding like the colour of the heavy hemlocks
 I felt afraid.
 And I remembered the cry of the peacocks. (30-38)

The scene is made clearer by being compared to the way the leaves flew from the branches of the hemlocks, quickly down to the ground below. The branches are turning in the wind, as the flames are moving in the fire place. The cry of the peacocks is related to what seems to be the noise made by the fire burning. Planets out of the window are being described as being in a pattern similar to the leaves that have fallen on the ground below. A reference between the leaves turning and the planets moving is used to describe how night has come, due to the planets revolving. Night is then said to be walking, striding like the large hemlocks, where the person shows

some sort of fear. Here, the narrator remembers the cry of the peacocks, which seems to act as an omen of warning towards the poisonous hemlock trees while it is twilight.

In short, the objective presentation of details and events make this poem very realistic. Here, Stevens has rejected the idealized presentation and exotic setting to make it very realistic.

The Death of a Soldier

The Death of a Soldier is, in its quietly-stated form, a peaceful poem about bitter reality of war. In this poem, Stevens gives the objective presentation of details and events and rejects the idealized presentation as a realist. The soldier's death is seen as nothing special, but a part of life as we know it. Death for Stevens does not involve the question of eternal life but is absolute and without memorial. This poem is direct and without embellishment, where death is seen as ultimately unemotional, a natural thing:

Life contracts and death is expected,

As in a season of autumn.

The soldier falls.

He does not become a three-days personage,

Imposing his separation,.

Calling for pomp.

Death is absolute and without memorial,

As in a season of autumn,

When the wind stops. (1-9)

Here Stevens tries to clinch his argument in the poem with a beautiful description of what death is like in terms of our natural environment. He sees death as something we know, as a part of the rhythm of natural life. The soldier has been patronized by the political leaders of a nation. In other words, his life has been contracted and the leaders raise the war expecting the death of a soldier for their own personal benefit. The death of a soldier is compared to the leaves which fall from the boughs of the trees in autumn season. The soldier's death does not affect the course of the world in the least, just as the earthly stillness of autumn does not affect the clouds in the sky. The world goes in its own direction irrespective of the death of the soldier, and the clouds also do the same despite the stillness of autumn. Thus, there is the objective presentation of the details and events. The death of a soldier is presented as a general event. The anonymity of the soldier, his namelessness, accentuates the power of this poem. The soldier exists in a hush and does not become a three days personage like Christ. The death of a soldier has not been idealized as the ascension of Christ on the third day. The soldier is exalted but not revered, death is tranquil, without incident. His death is not presented as the idealized presentation of Christ. The wonderful repetition of 'as in a season of autumn' with its suggestion of leaves falling creates a gentle setting for a potentially harsh subject, a soldier's death.

In this short poem, Stevens presents the death of a soldier as a general event. Death does not involve the question of eternal life but is absolute and without memorial. Stevens tries to present his argument in the poem with a beautiful description of what death of a soldier is like in terms of our natural environment. He presents death as it is in a real sense. To get real presentation of it, he rejects the idealized presentation in this poem.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, attempts have been made to show how Wallace Stevens is handling realism to provide real pictures to the readers in his poems. Stevens rejects all notions of a fixed, stable reality. The external world, according to Stevens, is in a state of constant flux. As we are parts of this world, we can only affirm the reality by flowing with its flow. Poetry is the good embodiment of such a flowing. Although the poet can never meet Nature, his mirroring of it is at least a persistent effort. The poet's impulse to capture reality can never fade because reality is different for him everyday. For him, the present is the only reality. As the present is constantly changing, the poet's perception of it keeps changing also. The poet can only catch glimpses of things as they are because things exist only in the exact moment at which he happens to look at them.

Wallace Stevens is generally interpreted as a poet whose imagination is said to play central role in his poems. However, I want to contend that not imagination but realism is the guiding force of his poems. His poems remain rooted in the socio-cultural realities of his time.

Religion is an important issue in Stevens' poetry, Stevens rejects the traditional orthodox teaching of religion. He rejects the orthodox Christian conception of paradise in favour of a secular paradise. A secular paradise means that this world itself is a paradise and its joys can actually be experienced whereas the heavenly paradise as conceived by orthodox Christianity is only an illusion.

Stevens, as a realist, gives objective presentation of details rather than a subjective concentration on personal feelings and imaginings. In *The Snow Man*, the poet posits a listener in winter who attempts to see and hear only what is there in the world around him, without adding to or imposing anything onto what he perceives. As

a realist posits human beings in the center, Stevens also posits human beings in the center in his poems. He says that humans have a certain degree of free will that they can exercise to affect their situations.

Stevens presents unvarnished truth without regard to ideals or romance. To get his point, he also rejects the idealized presentation and exotic setting in his poems.

Peter Quince at the Clavier, one of the typical poems of Wallace Stevens shows how the speaker, as a realist, is giving a truthful impression of actuality as it appears to his normal consciousness. The speaker, Peter Quince, begins to play on his instrument known as the clavier and then expresses his reaction to the notes which he produces from the keys of instrument.

An important theme in Stevens' poetry is the varying nature of human perception. According to Stevens, our perceptions of things are bound to vary from time to time, depending upon the circumstances and the situation in which we happen to be at a particular time. This idea has been most strikingly expressed through his poem *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird*. This poem shows that there are infinite ways of looking at the same thing. Human perception of reality keeps varying. The human mind is not the only centre of human perception but one among many. *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* symbolizes the infinite variety of attitudes which the mind can adopt when it perceives reality.

In short, imagination does not play central role in Stevens' poems. But realism is the guiding force in his poems. He has adopted the different elements of realism to show the socio-cultural realities of his time.

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