

I. Wallace Stevens and His Poetry

Not only is Wallace Stevens a poet but also he is a theorist, who has discussed what poetry is and should be in his poems as well as essays. He tends to theorize poetry in most of his poems. He argues that poetry must change; poetry must be abstract; poetry must give pleasure; it is not only for its own sake but also for naming reality, it is to wash out the old fictions and to create newer ones and making poetry is supreme fiction and what not. Whatever characteristics he attributes to poetry are also characteristics of reality. Likewise, poetry, like reality, depends on resemblance and fabrication. In this manner, we, in his poeticizing of poetry, can perceive parallelism between poetry and reality in different layers. The present study, in this connection, aspires to examine whether Stevens, in his poetry, stands by his own theory: poetry is a part of structure of reality. In other words, poetry and reality are one or should be one.

Wallace Stevens was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, on October 2, 1879. His father, Garret Barekalow, was a lawyer, a poet, a Presbyterian. Stevens also prepared for a career in law at Harvard University and at New York University Law School. He joined the bar in 1904. He was engaged in general practice in New York City until 1916, when he was associated with the Hartford Indemnity Company. In 1934, he became vice president of this insurance, and he continued its service until his retirement. He did not collect a volume of poems until 1923. But when he was already forty four, "he was actually one of the older generations of the new poets" (Perkins 1493). He, after 1910, appeared in the flourishing little magazines, especially *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. He published *Harmonium*, his first volume, in 1923. His other works are: *Selected Poems* (1953), *The Collected Poems* (1954), *Opus Posthumous* (1959) and *The Palm at the End of Mind: Selected Poems and a Play* (1971).

He won National Book Award in poetry for *Auroras of Autumn* in 1951 and for *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* in 1955. *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* was also awarded The Pulitzer Prize in poetry in 1955. He also received Levinson Prize (1920), National Poetry Prize (1936), Harriet Monroe Poetry Award (1946), Bollingen Prize (1950), Poetry Society of America Gold Medal (1951). Apart from poetry, he wrote prose, too. His collection of essays *The Necessary Angels* won National Book Award in 1951. He died at the age of seventy six in Hartford, Connecticut, on August 2, 1955.

A survey on Stevens' poetry shows that critics have approached him basically from two angles: Stevens following the tradition and breaking away from the tradition. Eric L. Haralson situates Stevens in the canonical tradition of American and British Romanticism. He comments, "Stevens' habitual themes characterize him as a late Romantic; poems written to or about his muse, poems about mountains, rivers, flowers, the aurora borealis, and other inspirational to the poems describing paintings and deliberating the value and role of art, poems examining the figure of the hero in the modern age" (694).

He even studies the form of Stevens' poems and finds it very close to Romantic tradition. He further comments:

Even his characteristic line and stanza have more in common with Keats and Shelly than with his more formally experimental contemporaries; especially after *Harmonium*, Stevens favored an unrhymed iambic pentameter line, often set in regular two-three- or four line stanzas. Above all, his lifelong preoccupation with the poetic imagination allies him with the Romantic tradition. (694)

Another important critic Harold Bloom also brings Stevens in the tradition of American and British Romanticism. Bloom opines, "Stevens writes a poetry best

described as a belated form of Romanticism and the culmination of Coleridge and Blakean Poetic Theory" (91).

B.J Legget, on the other hand, attempts to counter Bloom's approach. He examines closely the intellectual and philosophical influences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Giovanni Vico and Charles Mauron on the poet. Against Bloom's literary history based on 'an anxiety driven urge' to misread one's precursors, Legget maintains, "In Stevens' version the possible poet instructs himself in his precursors; their huge imaginations induce neither envy nor despair, however, because their reality is remote and their men and women the living dead. The poet will not fear that they have filled all imaginative space" (Hakwins 758). Legget's view is that the sources and resources of poetry never exhaust themselves because creativity is by definition infinity.

George Perkins is another critic for whom Stevens is a philosophical poet. He writes: "Stevens is a poet of ideas Many of his poems derive their emotional power from reasoned revelation. This philosophical intention is supported by the titles Stevens gave to his volumes" (1493).

Joseph N. Riddel also analyses Stevens on the philosophical ground. "Wallace Stevens and Walt Whitman," as Riddel says, "had mutual indifference to traditional discipline and an unqualified faith in poetry." For him, "Stevens breaks away from tradition of traditional poetic discipline, but comes under philosophical tradition of Whitman. Stevens' theory of poetry is the naturalist end of Whitman's vision" (30).

On the other hand, another influential critic Hi Simons corrects the critics like Horace, Gregory and T.S. Eliot who read Stevens as a philosophical poet. Simons writes: "According to Eliot's definition Stevens is an intellectual poet. For that reason, though, 'the value of his poetry can not be measured in intellectual terms' alone, neither can it be appreciated without an equal understanding of both intellectual components and its

element of sheer sensibility" (45). He even opposes the idea of the critics, who regard Stevens as a lyricist in the nineteenth century tradition and goes "to the contrary, not the least of his distinction is that he created for himself a genre" (45), that is, for Simons, combination of intellectual lyric and symbolic principle of implication. He says, "The combination, an intellectual lyric framed on the symbolist principal of implication, is a twentieth century extension of Metaphysical tradition. . . . It is his genre" (52-53).

Morton D. Zabel brings Stevens in the cult of imagism. For him 'richness of imagery and the sustained confidence of rhetoric's are two unique elements of Stevens. He compares Stevens with G.M. Hopkins and Mallarme in terms of use of images and finds Stevens different. He writes, "His [Stevens'] images succeeded in bringing into balance the intellectual and the realistic functions of metaphor and the limitation of his poetry. . . . relieved by an exceptional felicity and charm of imagistic artistry" (154).

Some critics have contextualized Stevens within the framework of the World War II and post war world. Charles Benger, referring to the poems of Stevens' last decade, says: "They are poems of apocalypse written in the shadow of the world war and an impending sense of doom." (Hawkins 758). Likewise, Margaret Ferguson *et al*, in their *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, assess Stevens' poetry in these words:

Poetry for Stevens was a part of the structure of reality. Throughout his career, he worked with the joint awareness of his romantic awareness of his Romantic heritage & his distinctively modern sensibility. His poetry reveals, on the one hand, an effort to reconcile the product of his imagination with fundamental reality, and on the other his disbelief of the possibility of any such reconciliation. (331)

In the extract above, the editors try to represent Stevens as a Romantic and modernist poet at the same time. Besides, they portray him as a poet of paradoxes. He, in his poems, tries

to reconcile poetry with reality. Obviously, he regards poetry itself the structure of reality. After all, both poetry and reality are products of imagination. So they are fictive. Meanwhile, he is deeply aware of the fact that this kind of reconciliation is almost impossible.

"By the late 1950s critical studies of Stevens' poetry began to appear, highlighting his leading role as a Modernist writing outside the influence of Pound and Eliot" (Haralson 697). In this extract, Haralson sheds light on the modernist dimension of Pounds' poems. But Joan Richardson maintains, "Unlike Eliot's voice crying in the desert of twentieth-century civilization for the finding of another way, Stevens' voice cried for the recognition of his essential loneliness as much as it did for the recognition that there could be another way" (Hakwins 759). According to the changing critical fashion, Stevens' poetry has been interpreted and reinterpreted: "In 1960s and 1970s, Stevens' poetry was interpreted in the light of new theoretical paradigms" (Haralson 697).

Hellen Vendler examines Stevens' poetry as experimentalist in terms of style. He claims, "Stevens undertook experiments in diction, in rhetoric, in syntax, in genre, in imagery, in voice and in meter" (Hakwins 757). Elenor Cook examines style of Stevens' poetry and devotes attention to the allusiveness and multi-lingual puzzles that appear differently in Stevens' 'word play' - puns and jokes: "Stevens' use of word-play encompasses the play of rhetoric and dialectic against each other This is word play that is essential, not ornamental for Steven' poetry" (Hakwins 758).

Critics in 1980s and 1990s shifted their emphasis on the historical and cultural contexts of Stevens' poetry. James Longenbach sees interplay of textuality and historicity in Stevens' poems. He writes, "Appreciated in the context of American political and intellectual history, Stevens emerges not only as poet aware of events taking place around him but as a poet whose work was often inspired by them" (Hakwins 758).

Some critics opine that his main ideas revolve around the interplay between imagination and reality. Reality, for him, is the product of the imagination as it shapes the world. Because it is constantly changing as we try to find imaginatively satisfying ways to perceive the world, reality is an activity, not a static object. To make sense of the world is to construct a world view through an active exercise of the imagination. Imagination can only conceive of a world for a moment - a particular time, place and culture - and so must continually revise its conception to align with the changing world. In a way, Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, in their book *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, see the reciprocal relationship between reality and imagination in the poems of Stevens. They argue, “Stevens always conceived his own task in Romantic terms, as wherein the imagination informs and is informed by reality” (289). They somehow try to portray Stevens as a Romantic poet. Basically, the critics, who perceive him as a Romantic poet, point out Stevens’ imagination’s restorative force prevailing in his poems. Of course, these critics are aware of the other facets of Stevens’ poetry. They reflect on the subject matters of his poetry in the following passage:

For Wallace Stevens- that ironic, self skeptical modern Romantic- the limits of imagination in the secular contemporary world are the enduring subject of his artistic attention. The result was a poetry of originating meditation which made him the one natively American poet among his generation who- as a thinker about, and a thinker *in*, poetry- can seem genuinely comparable to Yeats, Eliot or Valery. (291)

Obviously, the critics, here, portray Stevens as a modernist poet, who tries to find the substitution to the lost and dismantled truths. So, it is clear that Stevens, even when he has certain Romantic grains about him, is basically an ironist, a thinker and a modernist. Moreover, the critics also lay emphasis on the fact that Stevens, who is comparable to

other modernists like Eliot, Valery or Yeats, was a natively American poet. These critics sum up their assessment of Stevens' Poetry in these words: "Wallace Stevens carries the native European grain through French symbolism and American pragmatism into the epistemological revolution of the mid-twentieth century" (294). In a way, his poetry was a bridge between American and European poetic sensibilities and poetic experimentations.

Wallace Stevens is a poet of mind. He argues that the post Romantic poet must be rather intelligent and intellectual. And T.S. Eliot, too, reflects the similar idea about Stevens' Poetry. T. S. Eliot, as cited in "The Genre of Wallace Stevens" by Hi Simons, finds Stevens' poetry highly intellectual. Simon writes: "Stevens is an intellectual poet. For that reason, though the value of his poetry cannot be measured in intellectual terms alone, neither can it be appreciated without an equal understanding of both its intellectual component and its element of sheer sensibility" (45). Though his poems are intellectual ones, we must be ready to perceive the sensibilities replete in his poems.

David Ayers, in his essay "Wallace Stevens and Romantic Legacy" published in *Modernism: A Short Introduction*, argues that Wallace Stevens is a Romantic poet. According to him, "Stevens's work resists the apparent objectivity of Imagism. Unlike Eliot, he is not concerned to foreground the instability of language and subject as they stand in relation to each other. Instead the work of Wallace Stevens, beginning with *Harmonium* (1923) and *Ideas of Order* (1935), follows the Romantics in asserting the primacy of imagination" (39). Ayers focuses on the primacy of imagination in Stevens's poetry while proving Stevens as a Romantic poet.

Hi Simons is of the opinion that Stevens' poems also consist of traits of Metaphysical poetry. Stevens, in this regard, has been influenced by Donne and his successors. Simons claims, "Yet we can say of Stevens that each of his mature poems exhibits at least one Metaphysical trait and all Metaphysical characteristics are present

somewhere in his work” (51). Simons relates Stevens to the Metaphysical poets. It’s not a coincidence that he is also called an intellectual poet.

C. Roland Wagner, in his article “A Central Poetry,” points out that Stevens has his own philosophy which “begins and ends with an acceptance of chaos without submission to chaos” (72). Here, Wagner reveals how Stevens, in his poems, plays with disorder resulted by the disintegration of traditional values. But the brilliant thing about this play with the disorder is that he, in his exploitation of chaos, does not succumb to chaos.

Dynamism in form and multiplicity in meaning remains as a key characteristic in Stevens' poems. "Nudity at the Capital" is his two lined poem and "Notes towards a Supreme Fiction" has six hundred and fifty-nine lines. The form of his poems also ranges from mere aphorism to pedagogical treatise and logical demonstration. Examining forms and techniques in his poetry, Marrie Borroff comments: “They [Stevens’ poems] range in length from two lines to thirty-odd pages, taking the form of aphorism, images, soliloquies, dialogues anecdotes, parables, myths, invocations, lectures, pedagogical treatises, logical demonstrations” (1).

Hari Prasad Belbase, in his master’s degree thesis submitted to T.U, writes, "Stevens is fond of using unusual, unfamiliar, difficult and exotic words and his syntax sometimes lead to ambiguity. . . . I have come to the conclusion that there is no fixed or absolute meaning in the poems of Stevens" (133-134).

The subject matter in Stevens' poems moves around reality - structure of reality. Life, death, change, imagination all, for him, are the parts of reality and most of his poems are meditations on these subjects. Roy Harvey Pearce, examining *Harmonium* (The first collection of Stevens' poems) comments that "his [Stevens'] subject is the life, the form and function of reality" (112). He further comments, "What is central in the poems of

Harmonium is an awareness of the texture of reality as a factor at once for the enriching and for the limiting of experience" (112).

'Change' or 'impermanence' in nature comes as a main concern of Stevens in most of his poems. For Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, a constant subject in Stevens' poems is 'emphasis on change.' She writes: "What is constant in Wallace Stevens' poetry is . . . emphasis on change. . . . He concerns himself first of all with the structure or reality; secondly with the way in which man knows his world; and finally with the transfiguration of that world as imagination acts upon it" (54). These lines show that Stevens is very much preoccupied with the reality. We can also see how he perceives the way of our understanding of the world. Sister M. Bernetta Quinn further claims, "One characteristic of the world of Wallace Stevens is the fluidity of essence. Besides the union of opposites in Nature, there is also a mysterious transference of essences" (63). Here, Quinn points out the impermanent world created in Stevens' poems. Furthermore, she also sheds light on the paradoxes prevailing in nature. She also argues that we perceive the same thing differently than others do.

Stevens is judged as a dandy as well as hedonist. 'Sexual passion' is dominant in many of his poems. But perhaps there will be a mistake if we take that literally. Marrie Borroff, making a counter point, comes up with a rebuttal in this extract: "Sexual passion is of course not excluded from the subject matter of Stevens' poetry. But almost invariably the physical relationship symbolizes the relationship between the world and the imagination, between male reality/ And. . . that other and her desire" (7).

For Stevens, poetry and reality are not the two opposite things. In "Three Academic Pieces: "I", he says, "[P]oetry is a part of structure of reality. . . . [s]tructure of poetry and structure of reality are one" (24). And, as the reality is the main concern of his poetry he has made poetry itself the subject in many of his poems. Stevens, in a poem

titled "Poetry is the subject of the poem", claims that "poetry is the subject of the poem/from this the poem issues and/ to this returns" (1-3). Taking the reference of these lines, Harold Bloom says, "Poetry is necessarily the subject of Stevens's poems" (77). Similarly, Leonard Unger comments, "The matter he chose to shape into a work of art is the work of art If the work of art is an arrangement of reality, he is writing about ways of accosting reality" (87). Obviously, art and reality, for Unger, are similar. For both of them are constructs.

Undoubtedly, Stevens still bears a great significance in the American poetry. Daniel Hoffman reveals the significance of Stevens' poetry in the following passage:

Stevens' influence on other poets has been pervasive and independent of the critical fashions of writing about his work. On the one hand, his *Harmonium*, with its pure play of language, its ecstatic hullabaloo, altered the possibilities of diction in American poetry. On the other, his late, long meditative poems, in which the autonomous imagination creates a world 'to take the place/ of empty heaven and its hymns,' have been models for A.R. Ammons and John Ashberry, among others, in their explorations of the perceptible world. (444-45)

Writing poems on poetry is a general trend among the poets. Dylan Thomas, W.B. Yeats, Walt Whitman and other many others have written a number of poems on poetry. There are many poets, who have formulated poetic theories. T.S Eliot, William Blake and P.B Shelley are some of them. Wallace Stevens, however, is a rare poet, who has theorized poetry in his poems.

Daniel Hoffman, in his article "Poetry: After Modernism" published in *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*, argues that Stevens waged war "against the emptiness of heaven" (442). He was aware of alienation, fragmentation, degeneration of

human values and spiritual crisis prevailing in the twentieth century world. The god had disappeared. So were truths. There was nothing to console a poet except the playfulness and creative potentiality of language itself. Hoffman argues, “The withering away of the traditional religion leaves the poet of the twentieth century with only the impoverished earth and ‘the gaiety of language’ as his patrimony” (442). In a way, his poetry was an attempt to demonstrate “how to make poetry, how to invent joy, in the absence of a consoling sacred text or a divine being” (442). Interestingly, Stevens attempted to find solace and joy in poetry as there was nothing else to console him as the world had lost the divine being or truth as such. It is not surprising to learn that he was obsessed with the fictive quality of poetry as well as reality. And, imagination is the very force that enables one to create reality as well as poetry. He believed in the power of imagination to get mind from the desolation of reality. Again, it is noteworthy that the imagination does not move towards the abstract Neoplatonic idealism. Instead, imagination enables one to accomplish this task with the help of “the mind’s constructs from the detritus of real” (443). Stevens’ following expression, as cited by Hoffman, too, manifests the same idea: “To picnic in the ruins that we leave” (443). In this connection, Stevens, in his poems, is equally preoccupied with the process of creating poems. In short, his poetry is metapoetry: poetry about poetry. Hoffman, too, reinforces the similar idea:

Thus the act of imagining is its own validation; each discrete poem is a part of the created universe the poet imagines and makes possible for the imagination of his readers to share. Not for nothing did this celebrant of the poetic process itself, of metapoetry, call his first collection *Harmonium*, or entitle his longest exploration of his constant theme ‘Notes toward a Supreme Fiction’” (442).

Likewise, in "Of Modern Poetry", Stevens is of the opinion that modern poetry is to wash out the old fictions and to create newer ones that lead us to the contentment of our desire for attaining reality. It should respond to the world of the time. According to him, poetry "has to be living, to learn the speech of the place/It has to face the men of the time and meet/The women of the time" (6-8).

Another requirement he puts forward is that it should touch the sense of reality and for that, the poet should act as a 'metaphysician' and should project the reality in abstract form the way a musician does. The poet, as a metaphysician-musician, should produce a perfect note: "Below which it can not descend/Beyond which it has no will to rise" (22-23).

In one of his celebrated poems "The Man with the Blue Guitar", he says poetry is to beautify reality and to fill the absence in reality. In next canto, Stevens explicitly says:

Poetry is the subject of the poem,
 From this the poem issues and
 To this returns. Between the two
 Between issues and return there is
 An absence in reality
 Things as they are. Or so we say. (XXII, 1- 6)

He is always of the opinion that poetry is no less than reality in any respect. Rather "it enhances the sense of reality, heightens it, intensifies it" ("Three Academic Pieces: I" 27). "The structure of the poetry and the structure of reality", he further says, "are one, or in effect, that poetry and reality are one, or should be" (29). Undoubtedly, he finds a similarity between poetry and reality in terms of their structures as well.

The 'the things as they are' is quite obscure. It is the job of the poetry to make it comprehensive. In "The Motives for Metaphor", Stevens exposes the obscurity of 'the

things as they are': "The wind moves like a cripple among the leaves/ and repeats words without meaning" (3-4), and, "[the] obscure moon lighting an obscure world/Of things that would never be quite expressed" (9-10). Thus the poetry is not only for its own sake, it is also for naming it and making it comprehensive as reflected in the verse below: "Desiring the exhilarations of changes: /The motive for metaphor, shrinking from/The weight of primary noon/The ABC of being" (13-16).

He negates the idea of fixed or stable reality. It's a flux. In reality, there is a level of resemblance, which is the level of nature. It can't be found in metaphor. If there was it would be just the resemblance of imagination. Poetry is the part of structure of the reality and reality is the central reference of the poetry. Poetry, for Stevens, was a part of the structure of reality.

Talking about Stevens' concern with reality and the way of man's understanding, Sister M. Bernetta Quinn in her article "Metamorphosis in Wallace Stevens", argues, "He concerns himself first of all with the structure of reality; secondly, with the ways in which man knows his world; and finally with the transfigurations of that world as imagination acts upon it" (54).

Ralph J. Mills, Jr., in his article "Wallace Stevens: The Image of the Rock", writes "[P]oetry is for Stevens something more than the written literature alone" (100). This line means that poetry is not only written artifact but it is the outcome of the act of imagination. Ralph J. Mills, Jr. argues that imagination varies from person to person and imposes brute reality. He further writes:

To account for the origins and goals of the reality and the life within it the imagination introduces figurations and images that are the spirit's interpretations and comfort. Through them the reality which is the foundation of life undergoes a radical transformation that leaves man

dominating it through his images. The fundamental reality is what it was, but has now become something more too. In time these images will fade away or be destroyed and new ones will have to replace them. Stevens believes himself to be in a transitional period: old images and beliefs have died out; others are needed. (104)

After all, there is no reality in transcendental sense. In this transitory world, resemblance between things is one of the significant components of structure of reality. It is significant because it creates the relation and it binds the things together. It is the base of the appearance. The following extract beautifully sums up this idea:

We have been trying to get at a truth about poetry, to get at one of principles that compose the theory of poetry. It comes to this, that poetry is a part of the structure of reality. If this has been demonstrated, it pretty much amounts to saying that the structure of poetry and the structure of reality are one or, in effect, that poetry and reality are one, or should be. (29)

In nature, resemblance establishes the relation between two or more parts of reality and in metaphor it may establish a relationship between two or more parts of reality, between something real and something imagined or what is something, between something real and something imagined, and between two imagined things. The difference gets blurred and then we see similarity between one man and another. Resemblance, however, is not imitation. Imitation is like an identity manqué. It is artificial. It is not fortuitous. Neither is it identity. Both in nature and metaphor identity is the vanishing-point of resemblance. In all, the structure of reality is the resemblance between things. Interestingly, poetry, too, is based on resemblance. In poetry (metaphor) resemblance between two or more parts of reality, between something real and something imagined or what is something real and

something imagined and between two imagined things can be traced out. For example, the resemblance between God and goodness in “God is good.” In other words, in poetry, like in reality, resemblance (metaphors) constitutes the structure of reality. Resemblance is not an imitation. Imitation is artificial. It is lifeless. Resemblance in metaphor is an activity of imagination; and in metaphor the imagination is life. What our eyes behold may well be the text of life but one's meditation on the text and the disclosures of these meditations are no less a part of the structure of reality. Resemblance in metaphor is an activity of imagination and imagination in metaphor is life. After all, reality and poetry both hinge on imagination. Again, the parallelism between poetry and reality emerges. Obviously, poetry, as it bears all characteristics of reality, is reality itself. According to Stevens, poetry must be abstract because reality, too, is abstract. Stevens negates the idea of fixed or stable reality, i.e., 'the things as they are.' It is in constant flux, it is chaotic and incomprehensible. Poetry, as an act of imagination, should maintain order and make it comprehensible through abstraction. The idea of abstraction is what more usually would be called 'fabrication'- invented as reflected in these words: "For some reason Stevens speaks of the myth as 'abstract' "The ultimate poem is abstract" and the first requirement of the supreme fiction is it must be abstract – by ‘abstract’ Stevens apparently means artificial in its proper sense, something constructed rather than generalized" (Frye 171). Frye clarifies that reality always refers to constructed reality. As poetry is supposed to lead us to reality, it must be abstract. It must be fabricated. As both reality and poetry depend on construction, they are abstract and transitory. Frye, in the following extract, too, reflects over the similar idea:

To go beyond the outworn conceptualizations of reality, to live in the world, yet outside the existing conceptions of it - and any poet can do this only by fabricating his fictions. Stevens is an admirable poet in whom to

study the process of poetic thought at work, and such processes are part of what he means by the phrase "supreme fiction" which enters title of his longest poem. (Frye 163)

Frye argues that the only way to grasp the abstract reality in flux is to fabricate supreme fiction: poetry. Certainly, Stevens does have very modern outlook towards reality as well as poetry. In this connection, the following words, too, reinforce the similar idea: "To those who claim that moral order is unnecessary for the making of great poetry, Stevens replies that actual poetry is the embodiment of theory of poetry, and that a theory of poetry is identical with theory of life" (Wagner 71). Wagner is rather vocal in his argument that poetry, according to Stevens, does not need to depend on any moral order or transcendental truth. It should be as dynamic, transitory and abstract as life is. Again, Frye's following argument supports this idea: "Central view of poetry is for Stevens based on straight Aristotelian principle that if art is not quite nature, at least grows naturally out of nature" (164). One may not claim that poetry is nature. All the same, as poetry somehow evolves out of nature, it consists of the characteristics of nature.

Poetry must change the way reality does. For change is reality. Mary Borroff, too, perceives change in Stevens' poetry. She argues, "The mind can find satisfaction only if what it affirms is felt as true, but the truth itself is perpetually changing in its aspects, the perceiving consciousness and the world as perceived" (11). It is rather striking that she perceives inner changes along with the changes in the external life and world. According to her, the impermanence is prevalent in both the worlds: the inner world and the external world: "These changing inner conditions are as important in Stevens' poetry as the changing conditions of the external world, but they are not as frequently noted because they remain for the most part implicit" (11).

One of the three features of poetry Stevens puts forward in his "Notes towards the Supreme Fiction" is that it must give pleasure. In his "Three Academic Pieces: I", he further clarifies, "Poetry is a satisfying of the desire for resemblances and in satisfying desire it gives pleasure" (27). But poetry is more than just satisfying desire. It should rise above the level of many lesser things. He says, "If it [poetry] did nothing but satisfy the desire it would not rise above the level of many lesser things" (27). Poetry, in an act of satisfying the desire for resemblances, "touches the sense of reality, it enhances the sense of reality, heightens it and intensifies it" (27). Stevens discusses the relation between poetry and reality in the light of theory of poetry.

The present study, in this connection, aspires to examine whether Stevens, in his poetry, stands by his own theory: poetry is a part of structure of reality. In other words, poetry and reality are one or should be. The insights from Stevens' poems and essays regarding the poeticizing of poetry will be derived to formulate theoretical tools for the analysis of the poems in question. Only nine poems will be analyzed on the basis of the Stevens' concepts on poetry discussed in the theoretical tools.

II. Poetry: A Part of the Structure of Reality

Wallace Stevens is very explicit about the subject matter and ideas of his poetry. He, in his poems and essays, has developed his own theory about poetry. For him reality is the central reference for poetry and the resemblance binds the objects of reality together. The mind, with its talent for discerning and forming connections, becomes the organizer of reality. Poetry, as the product of reality and imagination, represents the creation of a new world because 'the world as it is' is bare and ugly and it is imagination that creates new world to satisfy the desire for resemblances. Stevens' sense of what constitutes resemblance is so broad as to be universal. He, with respect to the relation, argues that "in some sense all things resemble each other" (NA 71). Light is the first likeness he discusses, a relationship which can be as simple and unmediated as that between sea and the sky. He, in "Three Academic Pieces-I", writes:

A beach extending as far as the eye can reach, bordered, on the one hand, by trees, and on the other, by the sea. The sky is cloudless and the sun is red. In what sense do the objects in this scene resemble each other? Theatre is enough green in the sea to relate it to the palms. There is enough of the sky reflected in the water to create a resemblance, in some sense, between them. The sand is yellow between green and the blue. In short the light alone creates a unity not only in receding of distance, where differences become invisible, but also in the contact of the closer sight. (24)

This is just the resemblance found common in the nature. When one goes beyond nature in to the realm of metaphor, one may no longer be connecting two real objects. The imagination intervenes and removes the boundaries of natural resemblance: private resemblance may intrude, as well as other mental overlays. Stevens adds: "In metaphor, the resemblance may be, first, between two or more parts of reality; second, between

something real and something imagined or, what is the same thing, between something imagined and something real, [...] and, third, between two imagined things” (24). What starts out as a line between objects becomes an image that passes through the mind of poet.

It sounds as if dealing with resemblance is dealing with identity. Stevens says, “We are not dealing with identity. Both in nature and in metaphor, identity is the vanishing point of resemblance” (25). Here, in this regard, it is not imitation as well, “Nor are we dealing with imitation. The difference between imitation and resemblance is a nicety. An imitation may be described as an identity manqué. It is artificial. . . . If it is an imitation of something in metaphor, it is lifeless and that, finally, is what is wrong with it” (25). Here, again Stevens reinforces in creating something new with the help of imagination, quite different from what is real and imitation as well. “Resemblance in metaphor is an activity of the imagination” (25) and the eye may be passive, but “the mind begets in resemblance as the painter begets in representation; that is to say, as the painter makes his world within a world” (25). Here, then, is Stevens’ expectation of the work, that is be a world created from the available stuff of the world as it is, yet truer, more solid by condensation. If the relationship between objects is a new reality, writing poetry is creating new reality in a very real sense. At the end of the essay, Stevens clearly notes, “It comes to this, that poetry is part of structure of reality. If this has been demonstrated, it pretty much amounts to saying that the structure of poetry and structure of reality are one or, in effect, that poetry and reality are one or should be” (29).

Critics opine that his main ideas revolve around the interplay between imagination and reality. Reality, for him, is the product of the imagination as it shapes the world. Because it is constantly changing as we try to find imaginatively satisfying ways to perceive the world, reality is an activity, not a static object. To make sense of the world is

to construct a world view through an active exercise of the imagination. Imagination can only conceive of a world for a moment - a particular time, place and culture - and so, must continually revise its conception to align with the changing world. In a way, Richard Ruland and Malcolm Bradbury, in their book *From Puritanism to Postmodernism*, see the reciprocal relationship between reality and imagination in the poems of Stevens. They argue, “Stevens always conceived his own task in Romantic terms, as wherein the imagination informs and is informed by reality” (289). They somehow try to portray Stevens as a Romantic poet. Basically, the critics, who perceive him as a Romantic poet, point out Stevens’ imagination’s restorative force prevailing in his poems.

Ralph J. Mills, Jr., in his article “Wallace Stevens: The Image of the Rock”, writes “[P]oetry is for Stevens something more than the written literature alone” (100). This line means that poetry is not only written artifact but it is the outcome of the act of imagination. Ralph J. Mills, Jr. argues that imagination varies from person to person and imposes brute reality. He further writes:

To account for the origins and goals of the reality and the life within it the imagination introduces figurations and images that are the spirit’s interpretations and comfort. Through them the reality which is the foundation of life undergoes a radical transformation that leaves man dominating it through his images. The fundamental reality is what it was, but has now become something more too. In time these images will fade away or be destroyed and new ones will have to replace them. Stevens believes himself to be in a transitional period: old images and beliefs have died out; others are needed. (104)

After all, there is no reality in transcendental sense. In this transitory world, resemblance between things is one of the significant components of structure of reality. It is significant

because it creates the relation and it binds the things together. It is the base of the appearance.

Though poetry is so close to reality, Stevens seeks to make a distinction between them. Poetry has a special status. He argues:

Its singularity is that in the act of satisfying the desire for resemblance it touches the sense of reality, it enhances the sense of reality, heightens it, intensifies it. If resemblance is described as partial similarity between two dissimilar things, it compliments and reinforces that which the two dissimilar have in common. It makes it brilliant. (27)

From this extract, we can say that poetry is an enhancer of pre-existing form. It is an overlay on bareness, “a satisfying of the desire for resemblance” (27). The desire gets satisfied only by transforming or fabricating the bare reality, that is, by creating supreme fiction. He further claims that “in satisfying mere desires, it is pleasurable only, then, it can not rise above the level of many lesser things” (27).

To rise above the level of many lesser things, poetry must have the quality of supreme fiction and for that it should wash out all old fictions and create newer ones. Stevens breaks the myths on and about poetry and theorizes how the modern poetry should be like. In "Of Modern Poetry" Stevens emphasizes the subjective quality of the poetic event as it occurs wholly within the mind, performed by and for the mind. He gives an analogy of a theatre actor to the poet and theatrical performance, here, the creative process of composing poetry. In it, the actor is poet and mind. Mind, moreover, is action, stage, audience and everything, in fulfilling the desires.

Poetry must create newer fictions that lead us to the contentment of our desires for attaining reality. It should be for the present. The past is just the "souvenir" as reflected in

the following lines: "It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place/It has to face the men of the time and meet /The woman of the time. . ." (6-8).

In rejecting old dogmas and myths, "[i]t has to construct a new stage" (8) best suitable to own subjective understandings and in an age of disbelief the actor should function new roles. He should be a different kind of actor. This actor, "like an insatiable actor, slowly and/With meditation, speak[s] words that in the ear, /In the delicatest ear of the mind" (11-13). The audience hearing the actor's words ". . . listens, /Not to the play, but to itself, expressed/In an emotion as of two people, as of two emotions becoming one" (15-18), thus becoming actor and audience at once. He, thus, at least should understand his own desires.

Another requirement of modern poetry is it should touch the sense of reality to satisfy the desire for resemblance of sense of reality. "The actor/Is a metaphysician" (18-19) and as a musician, he should produce perfect note "below which it can not descend/Beyond which it has to will to rise" (22-23). It is actor's, and by analogy the poet's responsibility to make the reality abstract and make it pleasurable. For that, he should discover the text which may draw upon the whole range of human activity:

It must

Be the finding of a satisfaction, and may

Be of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman

Combing. The poem of the act of mind. (24-27)

In a way, poetry enables us to construct our personal realities in this obscure world. This is one of the significant roles poetry, as a motive for metaphor, plays.

In one of his celebrated poems "The Man with the Blue Guitar", he, describing the greatness of poetry, argues:

. . . Poetry

Exceeding music must take the place
 Of empty heaven and its hymns
 Ourselves in poetry must take their place
 Even in the chattering of your Guitar. (V, 8-12)

Poetry is to beautify reality and to fill the absence in reality. In next canto, Stevens explicitly says:

Poetry is the subject of the poem,
 From this the poem issues and
 To this returns. Between the two
 Between issues and return there is
 An absence in reality
 Things as they are. Or so we say. (XXII, 1- 6)

Taking the reference of these lines, Harold Bloom says, "Poetry is necessarily the subject of Steven's poems" (77). Similarly, Leonard Unger comments, "The matter he chose to shape into a work of art is the work of art If the work of art is an arrangement of reality, he is writing about ways of accosting reality" (87).

Writing poems on poetry is a general trend among the poets. Dylan Thomas, W.B. Yeast, Walt Whitman and many others have written a number of poems on poetry. There are many poets, who have formulated poetic theories. T.S Eliot, William Blake and P.B Shelley are some of them. Wallace Stevens, however, is a rare poet, who has theorized poetry in his poems.

The world as we perceive is obscure and the job of the poetry is to make it comprehensive. In "The Motives for Metaphor", Stevens exposes the obscurity of 'the things as they are': "The wind moves like a cripple among the leaves/ and repeats words without meaning" (3-4), and, "[the] obscure moon lighting an obscure world/Of things that

would never be quite expressed" (9-10). Thus the poetry is not only for its own sake, it is also for naming it and making it comprehensive as reflected in the verse below: "Desiring the exhilarations of changes: /The motive for metaphor, shrinking from/The weight of primary noon/The ABC of being" (13-16).

Stevens, in "Notes towards the Supreme Fiction" puts forward three features of poetry: 'Poetry must be abstract', 'It must change' and 'It must give pleasure'. Poetry, as it bears all characteristics of reality, is reality itself. According to Stevens, poetry must be abstract because reality, too, is abstract. Stevens negates the idea of fixed or stable reality, i.e., 'the things as they are.' It is in constant flux, it is chaotic and incomprehensible. Poetry, as an act of imagination, should maintain order and make it comprehensible through abstraction. The idea of abstraction is what more usually would be called 'fabrication'- invented as reflected in these words: "For some reason Stevens speaks of the myth as 'abstract' "The ultimate poem is abstract" and the first requirement of the supreme fiction is it must be abstract – by 'abstract' Stevens apparently means artificial in its proper sense, something constructed rather than generalized" (Frye 171). Frye clarifies that reality always refers to constructed reality. As poetry is supposed to lead us to reality, it must be abstract. It must be fabricated. As both reality and poetry depend on construction, they are abstract and transitory. Frye, in the following extract, too, reflects over the similar idea:

To go beyond the outworn conceptualizations of reality, to live in the world, yet outside the existing conceptions of it - and any poet can do this only by fabricating his fictions. Stevens is an admirable poet in whom to study the process of poetic thought at work, and such processes are part of what he means by the phrase "supreme fiction" which enters title of his longest poem. (Frye 163)

Frye argues that the only way to grasp the abstract reality in flux is to fabricate supreme fiction: poetry. Certainly, Stevens does have very modern outlook towards reality as well as poetry. In this connection, the following words, too, reinforce the similar idea: “To those who claim that moral order is unnecessary for the making of great poetry, Stevens replies that actual poetry is the embodiment of theory of poetry, and that a theory of poetry is identical with theory of life” (Wagner 71). Wagner is rather vocal in his argument that poetry, according to Stevens, does not need to depend on any moral order or transcendental truth. It should be as dynamic, transitory and abstract as life is. Again, Frye’s following argument supports this idea: “Central view of poetry is for Stevens based on straight Aristotelian principle that if art is not quite nature, at least grows naturally out of nature” (164). One may not claim that poetry is nature. All the same, as poetry somehow evolves out of nature, it consists of the characteristics of nature.

Poetry must change the way reality does. For change is reality. Mary Borroff, too, perceives change in Stevens’ poetry. She argues, “The mind can find satisfaction only if what it affirms is felt as true, but the truth itself is perpetually changing in its aspects, the perceiving consciousness and the world as perceived” (11). It is rather striking that she perceives inner changes along with the changes in the external life and world. According to her, the impermanence is prevalent in both the worlds: the inner world and the external world: “These changing inner conditions are as important in Stevens’ poetry as the changing conditions of the external world, but they are not as frequently noted because they remain for the most part implicit” (11).

‘Change’ or ‘impermanence’ in nature comes as a main concern of Stevens in most of his poems. For Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, a constant subject in Stevens’ poems is ‘emphasis on change’. She writes:

What is constant in Wallace Stevens' poetry is . . . emphasis on change He concerns himself first of all with the structure of reality; secondly with the way in which man knows his world; and finally with the transfiguration of that world as imagination acts upon it. (54)

These lines show that Stevens is very much preoccupied with the reality. We can also see how he perceives the way of our understanding of the world. Sister M. Bernetta Quinn further claims, "One characteristic of the world of Wallace Stevens is the fluidity of essence. Besides the union of opposites in Nature, there is also a mysterious transference of essences" (63). Here, Quinn points out the impermanent world created in Stevens' poems.

Daniel Hoffman, in his article "Poetry: After Modernism" published in *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*, argues that Stevens waged war "against the emptiness of heaven" (442). He was aware of alienation, fragmentation, degeneration of human values and spiritual crisis prevailing in the twentieth century world. The god had disappeared. So were truths. There was nothing to console a poet except the playfulness and creative potentiality of language itself. Hoffman argues, "The withering away of the traditional religion leaves the poet of the twentieth century with only the impoverished earth and 'the gaiety of language' as his patrimony" (442). In a way, his poetry was an attempt to demonstrate "how to make poetry, how to invent joy, in the absence of a consoling sacred text or a divine being" (442). Interestingly, Stevens attempted to find solace and joy in poetry as there was nothing else to console him as the world had lost the divine being or truth as such.

It is not surprising to learn that he was obsessed with the fictive quality of poetry as well as reality. And, imagination is the very force that enables one to create reality as well as poetry. He believes in the power of imagination to liberate mind from the

desolation of reality. Instead, imagination enables one to accomplish this task with the help of “the mind’s constructs from the detritus of real” (443). Stevens’ following expression, as cited by Hoffman, too, manifests the same idea: “To picnic in the ruins that we leave” (443). In this connection, Stevens, in his poems, is equally preoccupied with the process of creating poems. In short, his poetry is meta-poetry: poetry about poetry. Hoffman, too, reinforces the similar idea: “Thus the act of imagining is its own validation; each discrete poem is a part of the created universe the poet imagines and makes possible for the imagination of his readers to share. Not for nothing did this celebrant of the poetic process itself, of meta-poetry, call his first collection *Harmonium*, or entitle his longest exploration of his constant theme ‘Notes toward a Supreme Fiction’” (442).

The chapter consists of theoretical tools as well because it is almost impossible to think of having a discussion over Stevens’ poetry without discussing his theory about poetry. He tends to theorize poetry in most of his poems. This discussion over the theoretical meanderings over Stephens' vision on poetry makes it clear that poetry is a part of the structure of reality. He argues that poetry must change; poetry must be abstract; poetry must give pleasure; it is not only for its own sake but also for naming reality, it is to wash out the old fictions and to create newer ones and making poetry is supreme fiction and what not. Whatever characteristics he attributes to poetry are also characteristics of reality. Likewise, poetry, like reality, depends on resemblance and fabrication. In this manner, we, in his poeticizing of poetry, can perceive parallelism between poetry and reality in different layers.

III. Poeticizing Poetry in Wallace Stevens' Poetry

Stevens' earliest published poems began appearing in small literary magazines in 1914, generally read like other modernist poems of the era, especially in their highly developed irony and reveal strong affinity with romantic tradition. His habitual themes of the poems written to or about her muse; poems about landscapes, mountains, rivers, flowers; and poems describing paintings and deliberating the value and role of art characterize him as a late romantic. Above all his lifelong preoccupation with the poetic imagination allies him with the romantic tradition. But his use of imagination is sought to be the "Idea of Order" and the meditating role of art and imagination in relation to them. He opines, "The imagination is one of the great human powers. Imagination is the liberty of the mind" (Haralson 694). His fiction is targeted to satisfy the desire for attaining reality, not to escape from the reality.

Stevens took a long break in his writing career from mid 1920s to early 1930s. When he began writing again he attempted to respond to the social condition of the time, the time of Great Depression. He often urged that poetry must respond to the world from which it emerges. In "Of Modern Poetry" he says, poetry, "has to be living to learn the speech of the place. /It has to face the men of the time and to meet /The woman of the time". (6-8)

The "supreme fiction" emerges as one of the central themes of Stevens' late visionary realism. The supreme fiction is an aptly substitute to the religion to the world without gods. He believes that the final belief is to believe in a fiction which we know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction and that we believe in it willingly. He basically writes about reality and for him "poetry is a part of the structure of reality" (Borroff 29). In many of his poems he has made the poetry itself the subject of the poem. Among them are "A High Toned Old Christian Woman",

"Of Modern Poetry", "The Primitive like an Orb", "The Motive for Metaphor", "Notes toward Supreme Fiction", and more.

In this study, I will be analyzing short and long 9 poems: "The Idea of Order at Key West", "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman", "Sunday Morning", "Of Modern Poetry", "The Motive for Metaphor", "Peter Quince at the Clavier", "The Auroras of Autumn", "To the One of Fictive Music", and "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction".

Stevens' "The Idea of Order at Key West" is an attempt to maintain order in chaos. Here the sea stands for external reality and the song of the woman stands as imagination to maintain order.

In this poem we are the observers, observing sea and its atmosphere. Sea is fluttering/its empty sleeves", and its motion makes "constant cry". It is an 'inhuman cry of the veritable ocean'. As the very title suggests sea, Key West is in disorder and it is our idea and desire to maintain order in it.

There is a moving interplay between the description of the "sea" and the woman, "she". They two seem to be the rivals. She sings and also hears the sound; the sea too causes sound. But the words of the woman only are intelligible; "it was she and not the sea we heard" (14).

In third stanza, she is introduced as a poet, "maker of the song" and the sea is "merely a place by which she walked to sing." By singing her own song or through the idea of abstraction she created her own world out of the "tragic gestured sea":

It was her voice that made
The sky acutest at its vanishing
She measured to the hour its solitude.
She was the single artificer of the world
In which she sang, and when she sang the sea,

Whatever self it had became the self. (34-41)

The last two stanzas lead us to think of the post singing scenario in the city. Stevens, here refers to the Ramon Fernandez, a French critic. The imageries like "dark voice" of the sea, "outer voice of sky", "bronze shadows heaped on high horizons", "grinding of water", "gasping of wind", "tragic-gestured sea" suggest the ugliness of the ocean. Beauty and order is symbolized by language which is sound given intelligible form. In it the woman who personifies the idea of order sings "beyond the genius of the sea." She sings and transforms its "dark voice" into rhythmic and expressive language of the "maker" or the poet.

Stevens makes the landscape of the nature the subject in many of his poems which is external reality for him. Here he chooses "sea" which stands for chaotic world, bare reality. The idea of order is poetic imagination which satisfies our desire for harmony, for resemblance, that is our desire for reality. The desire gets satisfied only by transforming or fabricating it, that is, by creating supreme fiction.

Poetry and arts for Stevens are genuine alternatives to religion. In "A High Toned Old Christian Woman", he proposes that the religious fictions have no greater status than fictions of the imagination. The poem starts with a dashing statement "Poetry is the supreme fiction madam" (59). This statement is quite enough to put down the "High Toned Old Christian Woman", who is addict of religion with whom the speaker debates.

The first five lines are about the process how the human conscience is converted into religious praying:

Take the moral law and make a nave of it
 And from the nave build haunted heaven. Thus,
 The conscience is converted into palms,
 Like windy citherns hankerings for hymns. (2-5)

The sixth line maintains a rebuttal, "We agree in principals" (6) that he means the process, obviously through the means of imagination. And again, the speaker suggests the woman to follow the "opposing law" (7), Pagan, in the place of Christianity. In this part he uses the terms "peristyle" instead of "nave" to suggest Paganism. This path also leads to the same place "where we began", nowhere beyond that.

Out of this logic he maintains the religious fiction can not satisfy our desires, rather it suppresses. From onward the tone changes to be a bit sarcastic to the woman. The speaker suggests the woman to allow merrymaking or "jovial hullabaloo".

. . . Allow

Therefore, that in the planetary scene

Your disaffected flagellants, well stuffed,

Smacking their muzzy bellies in parade

Proud of such novelties of the sublime. (13-17)

"The jovial hullabaloo among the spheres" is a kind of celebration. And as he has enacted in the poem the more we suppress our desire the more it asserts itself: "But the fictive things/Wink as they will. Wink most when widows wince" (21-22). Same is the principle of the poetry and religion. But the poetry, not the religion, fills beauty in life. It allows the celebration of life; it does not suppress but satisfies the desires.

The tone is sarcastic from the very beginning. The adjective "high tones" is offensive. The poem is full of commands like "take the moral law", "make a nave", "build haunted heavens", "project masque", "allow" etc. that supports the offence. "Flagellants", "well stuffed/smacking their muzzy bellies" (15-16), "jovial hullabaloo" and onomatopoeic words "tink and tank and tunk a tunk-tunk" in the second part of the poem create different setting rather of discotheque, that suggests the celebration. The poet artfully changes the motion of the poem and again maintains unity in it.

Similarly, in "Sunday Morning" Stevens rejects the idea of false paradises created in religious fictions and puts emphasis on impermanent worldly things that are natural and desirable.

"Sunday Morning" unfolds with a woman enjoying her "complacencies of the peignoir, and late/Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair/And the green freedom of a cockatoo" (1-3). It is Sunday, her neighbors are at church, and she is meditating in the garden. Her meditation leads from "the green freedom" (3) to the dark/Encroachment of that old catastrophe" (7). Like all of Stevens' metaphysicians, she is troubled with thoughts of a conflicting opposites, here with "heaven and the holy hush of ancient sacrifice" (10). The contention in her mind between life and death, present and past, earth and heaven is the structure of the poem. With its detailed setting and conflict, the poem is very rich in its theatricality. Like a drama it exercises dialectical counterpoints between desires: Desires to escape the "dominion of the blood and sepulcher" (15) with the woman's need for "some imperishable bliss" (62).

The poet questions why the woman should be distracted from her enjoyment of life by an old religion if the divinity is available "only in silent shadows and in dreams" (18). The heaven does not supply with divinity. The other voice says and suggests the woman to embrace her own divinity: "Divinity must live within herself" (23). The woman is exhorted to practice a complete identification of the self with nature in its seasonal changes. She is to experience "passion of rain" (24). She is suggested to enjoy the changing nature being strongly attached with it of which she is a part - being part of it she should not try to separate herself from it and redefine herself as something unnatural or supernatural.

The third section contrasts the pagan religion of the Greco-Roman world with Christian Religion. It traces the history of evolution of religions: From Jove's motherless

"inhuman birth" (31) to the virgin birth of Christ and its 'commingling' of our blood, to the possibility of totally human version. Thus, admittedly human should recognize that their own divinity should be enough since it is the only thing upon which they can finally rely. If they accept that there is nothing beyond this world they will be able to enjoy the world for what it is:

The sky will be much friendlier than now,
 A part of labor and a part of pain
 And next in glory to enduring love,
 Not this dividing and indifferent blue. (42-45)

The woman in fourth and fifth section comes in the stage of giving up the desire for divinity. She farewells both the religions: the pagan; "The golden underground" and "isle/Melodious where spirit get them home" (53-54) and Christianity; "The cloudy palm/ Remote on Heaven's hill" (55-56). These are also subject to change, evolving in time span. She speaks, she is content with earthly beauty; "I am content" (46), but still has discontentment in that contentment. She is not entirely willing to accept the argument because she realizes that the paradise offered is not permanent and she still needs "some imperishable bliss" (62). The other voice counters, "Death is the mother of beauty" (63). It suggests that permanence is not only impossible; it is also unnatural and undesirable.

The cycle of change, the whirling wheel of ripening fruition and decay, is shown as necessary by the portrayal of stasis in the poem's sixth section. "Is there no change of death in paradise?" (74), asks the masculine voice. "Does ripe fruit never fall?" (75) The image of "rivers like our own that seek for seas / They never find, the same receding shores / That never touch with inarticulate pang" (78-80) presents death as a consummation devoutly to be wished, a return to the ultimate mother Death, "Within whose burning bosom we devise / Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly" (87-88).

The final two sections of "Sunday Morning" seem to suggest two different replacements for the Christianity that has been, by now rejected. Section seven describes a pagan scene, "a ring of men" (89) chanting "in orgy on a summer morn" (90). These men are "boisterous" in their "devotion to the sun, / Not as a god, but as a god might be, / Naked among them, like a savage source" (91-93). Here the notion of divinity as a source is explicit. The chant of these men, boisterous in devotion to their "savage source... shall be a chant of paradise, / Out of their blood, returning to the sky" (94-95). These images recall the questions of the poem's third section: "Shall our blood fail? Or shall it come to be / the blood of paradise? And shall the earth / Seem all of paradise that we shall know" (39-41)? The chant of these men is "out of their blood," and it returns "to the sky." These images mix with later images of the transience of life to form a complete picture of the cycle of birth-death-birth:

They shall know well the heavenly fellowship
 Of men that perish and of summer morn.
 And whence they came and wither they shall go
 The dew upon their feet shall manifest. (100-103)

The poem's eight and final section retreats somewhat from this sense of closure. Images of Palestine and Jesus return, though in a context that denies them any symbolic, transcendent power. "The tomb in Palestine / Is not the porch of spirits" (105-106) but merely "the grave of Jesus" (107), the grave of a man like any other, like the ephemeral men of the previous section. We live collectively as part of a lasting cycle from which we are unable, as individuals, to escape:

We live in an old chaos of the sun,
 Or old dependency of day and night,
 Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,

Of that wide water, inescapable. (108-111)

The sense of being on an island, of being un-sponsored, of being unable to escape, is in direct contradiction to the sense of mystical and actual participation of all with all described by the previous section. From this sense of isolation, the poem moves on to a final summation of the birth-death-birth cycle:

Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;

And, in the isolation of the sky,

At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make

Ambiguous undulations as they sink,

Downward to darkness, on extended wings. (114-118)

"Isolation" and images of evening, downward motion, and darkness work together to complete "Sunday Morning" and its rejection of the Christian concept of divinity with its "holy hush of ancient sacrifice." The poem's ending seems even to repudiate the "natural" model of divinity of the "ring of men in orgy on a summer morn" (101). The "green freedom of a cockatoo" (3) of the poem's beginning has been transformed into the "Ambiguous undulations" of pigeons "as they sink, / Downward to darkness" (117-118).

The poem strongly rejects old religious dogmas and the false paradise it has offered and suggests that the impermanent worldly things are attainable.

Stevens breaks the myths on and about poetry and theorizes how the modern poetry should be like. "Of Modern Poetry", a short poem of 27 lines, talks about how the modern poetry should be like. Stevens, here, emphasizes the subjective quality of the poetic event as it occurs wholly within the mind, performed by and for the mind. He gives an analogy of a theatre actor to the poet and theatrical performance here is the creative process of composing poetry. In it the actor is poet and mind. Mind, moreover, is action,

stage, audience and everything, in fulfilling the desires: "act of finding what will suffice" (1-2).

The first requirement of modern poetry is to wash out the old fictions and create newer ones that lead us to the contentment of our desires for attaining reality. It should be for the present. The past is just the souvenir: It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place/ It has to face the men of the time and meet/ The woman of the time . . . (6-8).

In rejecting old dogmas and myths, "It has to construct a new stage" best suitable to own subjective understandings and in an age of disbelief the actor should function new roles. He should be a different kind of actor. He, "like an insatiable actor, slowly and/With meditation, speak words that in the ear, /In the delicatest ear of the mind" (11-13).The audience hearing the actor's words, ". . . listens, /Not to the play, but to itself, expressed/In an emotion as of two people, as of two emotions becoming one" (15-18), thus becoming actor and audience at once. He, thus, at least should understand his own desires.

Another requirement of modern poetry is it should touch the sense of reality to satisfy the desire for resemblance of sense of reality. "The actor/Is a metaphysician" (18-19) and as a musician should produce perfect note "below which it can not descend/Beyond which it has to will to rise" (22-23). It is actor's, and by analogy the poet's, responsibility to abstract the reality and make it pleasurable. For that he should discover the text which may draw upon the whole range of human activity:

It must

Be the finding of a satisfaction, and may

Be of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman

Combing. The poem of the act of mind. (24-27)

The poem does not look very like a poem rather it looks like an essay in three paragraphs with distinct paragraph indentation. The first paragraph serves its thesis

statement: "The poem of the mind in the act of finding/What will suffice" (1-2) and the last paragraph is a conclusion: "It must/Be the finding of a satisfaction . . ." (24-25). The remaining part serves the requirements of modern poetry with detailed description and extensive analogies. Doing this he ruptures the general concept of poetry, and presents the poem differently.

Here, too, Stevens is dealing with reality; subjective reality, reality of creative process of composing poetry. By the use of unusual analogies and transforming the concrete details into concepts, he has skillfully abstracted the reality.

The poem has been constructed as a scenario of the kind of text the modern theatre requires, at the same time, it furnishes us with an example of that text. It provides the reader not with an idea but with the dramatized imaginative experience of an idea, and concludes with precisely the sort of emotional resolution it describes. The three figures of final lines are abstract illustrations of a concept.

"The Motive for Metaphor" is another poem which explicitly talks about poetry. Here, he talks about the importance of metaphor, where the metaphor is a metaphor for poetry, and its main duty, as the poem says, is to make reality comprehensible.

The poem projects the change and the obscurity of the world. "Everything is half dead" (6) in autumn, and "the wind moves like a cripple among the leaves/ And repeats words without meaning" (3-4). And though we enjoy the spring, we are deceived with its nature, with its "half color of quarter things" (6), "slightly brighter sky" (7), "the melting clouds" (7) and "obscure moon" (8). The 'obscure moon' lights the "obscure world" (9). Things are obscure "that would never be quite expressed" (10); there is a problem in defining it. And in this constant flow of change there is a problem in naming things. We ourselves are of no identity: "Where you yourself were never quite yourself/And did not want nor have to be" (8).

To this point, the poem just talks about the obscurity of the world: obscurity caused by change, bareness and incomprehensibility. Seeking happiness in change is "the motive for metaphor" (14). In a way, we can do nothing except looking for reality and pleasure in impermanence itself. The metaphor, or by analogy poetry is a process of naming or defining reality which prevails in impermanence: "The motive for metaphor, shrinking from/The weight of primary noon/The ABC of being" (13-16).

The last stanza leads us toward poetic process. Poetry as naming the reality is a complex process. Poetry as "The ABC of being" gets "shrinking from/The weight of primary noon" and through other difficult process it turns to be "The vital, arrogant, fatal, dominant X" (20):

The muddy temper, the hammer-
Of red and blue, the hard sound-
Steel against intimation - the sharp flash,
The vital, arrogant, fatal, dominant X. (17-20)

The color "red" and "blue" in Stevens' poetry suggests reality and act of imagination respectively. 'The hammer', 'hard sound', 'sharp flash' gives us the resemblance of a furnace where the poetry is being installed. As the universe is replete with obscurities, we need metaphors to get through them. And here poetry stands for those metaphors. In a way, poetry enables us to construct our personal realities in this obscure world. This is one of the significant roles poetry, as a motive for metaphor, plays.

"Peter Quince at the Clavier" is another poem which manifests that art is not a physical thing but a feeling, so it is abstract thing. It explicitly talks about music. Peter Quince is a musician who plays a musical instrument named clavier. The poem is divided into four parts and each of them has different lyrics. In this regard, one can sense that the poem has movements as a musical composition does have. He says, "Music is feeling, not

sound” (4). He expresses his desire to possess the woman named Susanna. Later, in the poem, we can see how the music of Peter Quince and the music of Susanna’s beauty confluence in one as a hymn praising her purity. Peter Quince emphasizes on the fleeting nature of physical beauty and its everlasting memories after its death. In the second stanza, Susanna takes bath

In the green water, clear and warm,

Susanna lay.

She searched

The touch of springs,

And found

Concealed imaginings.

She sighed,

For so much melody. (16-23)

Susanna achieves harmony and oneness with the external world. She searches for the touch of springs but finds “concealed imaginings” which are only the memories of the past.

In this poem, the main character, Quince, is a lusty musician as well as narrator. Art is not a physical thing, but feeling. Quince produces music with his fingers and also becomes the instrument when his emotions are played on by the music. The music Susanna, an idealized prototype of the woman in blue, takes the form of religious praise, “pulse pizzicati of Hosanna” which responds to beauty to constitute a religious experience, a “sacrament of praise” (66). In this poem, Stevens talks about the fleeting nature of life and beauty. He further clarifies beauty is “momentary in the mind” (51). The mind is important to perceive beauty, the poem argues, but momentarily. In this poem he further exemplifies how transient beauty finds its true source in human experience – in the human

form, gardens, evening, and change in seasons. The totality of that experience becomes a “wave, interminably flowing” (700, *Encyclopedia*). Everything in this world is in flux as highlighted in the last section of the poem:

So evenings die, in their green going
 A wave, interminably flowing.
 So gardens die their meek breath scenting
 The cowl of winter, don repenting.
 So maidens die, to the auroral
 Celebration of a maiden’s choral. (55-60)

In these lines, it is clear that evening, garden and maidens all die. In the seventh line of the poem, the image of “blue- shadowed silk” begins the scene of Susanna’s bath, a segment of the poem that places particular significance on color.

In the poem, the speaker thinks seriously about the relationship between music and feeling, beauty and desire in the light of impermanence of each and every phenomenon. The speaker’s self changes into those “red- eyed elders, who lusted for Susanna and he says, he sits “here in this room, desiring you” his beloved in part first. Creation is possible only through imagination. Peter Quince shows an effort to find transcendence by elevating the artist to the stature of a god, allowing him to break out of the limitations of self in his creative frenzy. His effort resembles the effort of a poet, who depends on the creative force of imagination.

The poem “To the One of Fictive Music” obviously deals with ‘a thing made’ which is clear from the topic itself. The poet repeatedly uses the word ‘fictive.’ There is interplay between reality and imagination. Every thing is constructed by our imagination. There is no permanent and universal truth. In the poem, he talks about ‘ living dead’ , ‘flame’, ‘summer’, ‘effigy’, ‘simulacrum’, which emphasize on the transitoriness of

reality. He further clarifies that all the imperfections cause change and vice versa. If any thing is perfect, then there won't be any change. Imperfection is also necessary to give motion to perfection. There is no fixity in any field. Imperfection is our motivating factor and it guides us in every step of your life. The poem projects that there is a guiding force which gives motion to each and every thing:

By being so much of the things we are,
 Cross effigy and simulacrum, none
 Gives motion to perfection more serene
 Then yours, out of our imperfections wrought. (13-16)

The above lines clearly show how imagination plays a vital role in our every step when all things are simply transitory. The things we take as real, perfect are all baseless because imperfection is the only guiding force. And imagination, though a creative force, lies at the root of imperfection.

The poet thinks that we are worldly phenomena. In other words, there is no god given essence in our beings. We are only simulacra and cross effigies. The following lines reflect this sense of worldliness and transitoriness:

Yet leaves us in them, until earth becomes,
 By being so much of the things we are,
 Cross effigy and simulacrum, nine
 Than yours, out of our imperfections wrought. (12-15)

In this extract, 'cross effigy' and 'simulacrum' are the most striking images, which evoke this sense of transience regarding the worldly things.

It is obvious that the poet laments over the loss of imagination in the people. The poet knows very well that everything is unreal in this world as everything is in flux. There is impermanence everywhere. This harsh and bitter world of simulacra and flux is

intolerable to the poet. The poet, therefore, yearns for the imagination. The imagination enables us to build the solid foundation through the creation of truths. Though the truths are constructed ones, they help us get rid of the dizziness and nausea resulted by the whirlpool of impermanence. This kind of craving for the imagination for the creation of stability and truth, too, reflects how impermanence rules this universe. The following lines reinforce this idea in a beautiful manner:

Yet not too like, yet not so like to be
 Too near, too clear, saving a little to endow
 Our feigning with the strange unlike, whence springs
 The difference that heavenly pity brings.
 For this, musician, in your girdle fixed
 Bear other perfumes. On your pale head wear
 A band entwining, set with fatal stones.
 Unreal, give back to us what once you gave:
 The imagination that we spurned and crave. (25-33)

It is very striking to notice the paradox involved in imagination. We know that there is only the truth (if there is any) constructed by our imagination. As this truth is a fig of our imagination, that is also impermanent. Nevertheless, this fictive truth gives us solace enough to cope up with the world wretched with impermanence and simulacra. At least, imagination enables us to construct our own cosmos, where we can exist with our own fictive truths. Obviously, the impermanence of this world has turned imagination into an invaluable factor.

Right here we should not forget that the poet focuses on the poetry as poetry is the embodiment of imagination. Poetry, like other worldly things, is a fiction. Furthermore, as it consists of the the use of imagination in the concrete form, she calls it a supreme fiction.

Anyway, it is very significant that poetry, through imagination, enables us to construct our universe and a solid ground in this transitory world. However, as poetry itself is a construct of imagination, it also changes.

"The Auroras of Autumn" was published in 1950. The speaker of the poem starts with the description of a bodiless serpent. In the beginning, the poet has created an image of serpent, which is "wriggling out of the egg" (4, Canto I). The form is also created one: "This is form gulping after formlessness/skin flashing to wished-for disappearances/and the serpent body flashing without the skin" (10-12 Canto I). In these lines, the poet describes how the serpent wished for disappearances. And at the same time, the word flashing refers to the light that comes for a very short time so quickly.

In the second Canto, the poet shifts his idea saying "Farewell to an idea. . ." (1 Canto II) which he uses in the first lines of III and IV Cantos also. He brings an image of beach which is deserted and all white in color:

It is white,
 As by a custom or according to
 An ancestral theme or as a consequence
 Of an infinite course. The flowers against the wall
 are white, a little dried, a kind of mark
 Reminding, trying to remind, of a white
 that was different, something else, last year
 Or before, not the white of an aging afternoon. (2-9, Canto II)

The lines above depict the things, which are in the course of infinite change. The dry white flowers remind the poet of the flowers, which were different last year. So here, the poet is focusing especially on the ageing things which again add the point that nothing in this world is constant or permanent because everything is bound to change as reflected in the

succeeding stanza: "The season changes. A cold wind chills the beach/ The long lines of it grow longer /A darkness gathers though it does not fall" (16-18, Canto II). He further extends the ever changing north fades its color.

In the 3rd Canto, the poet repeats the same cliché "Farewell to an idea" which reinforces the idea that there is no idea which permanently rules the world. In the poem, the poet shows our inability to forecast the "incoming dreams" (4, Canto III). When the evening falls, it affects the house and people are unable to even possess the half remaining part. The mother whom they possess, also is not static - "and yet she too is dissolved, she is destroyed. /She gives transience. But she has grown old/ The necklace is ... not a kiss" (10-12, Canto III). In the succeeding stanzas, we can see how imagination is powerful which crumbles the house and burns the books. In the last stanza the poet is successful in creating an image of an army knocking at the door with rifle-butt. Here in the poem a wind is an image of an army. "a wind will spread its windy grandeurs round/And knock like a rifle-butt against the door. / The wind will command them with invincible sound" (22-24 Canto III).

Fourth Canto starts with the never ending chain of "The canceling / The negations are never final" (1-2 Canto IV). Here the father while saying yes to no says farewell to the idea. The idea about the father is superior to that of imaginary characters-angels. He is the one to measure the "velocities of change" (7 Canto IV). For this he moves from heaven to heaven unlike those bad angels who go from heaven to hell. Though he sits quietly the space, he assumes, moves in a great speed, which creates a quick movement:

From cloud to cloudless, cloudless to keen clear

In flights of eye and ear, the highest eye

And the lowest ear, the deep ear that discerns,

At evening, things that attend it until it hears

The supernatural preludes of its own,
 At the moment when the angelic eye defines
 Its actors approaching, in company, in their masks. (12-18)

The poet addresses the master, who is staying "motionless and yet of motion" (20-21 Canto IV).

In the Canto V, both the mother and the father come together to create new environment in their house. He calls dancers, musicians, peasants and story tellers which create the picture of the theatre where musicians make the "insidious tones". With all these preparation the poet gives us the impression that they are celebrating a certain festival. But this is questioned by the poet - "What festival? This loud, disordered mooch? /These musicians dubbing at a tragedy" (19-21 Canto V). There is only the presence of human being because they don't act and at the same time, there is no play to be acted.

From the very beginning of Canto VI, the poet presents an image of the theater which is floating in the cloud. The cloud itself is the theatre made up of misted rock and mountains.

It is a theatre floating through the clouds
 Itself a cloud, although of misted rock
 And mountains running like water, wave on wave,
 Through waves of light. It is of cloud transformed
 To cloud transferred again, idly, the way
 A season changes color to no end, (1-6 Canto VI)

It is very clear from the above lines that even mountains are in motion like water. The theatre which is formed with misted rock and mountains moves like wave through the wave of light. These are formed up of clouds, which transform to cloud purposelessly as "season changes color to no end" (416). The poet strongly presents his main subject matter

- change as light changes the color: yellow into gold and it goes on changing. The cloud also moves creating different forms which go changing the shapes. The whole sky, now, is an image of theatre where birds are flying, wild wedges are raining their heads and because of all these activities "The denouement has to be postponed . . ." (416). So, there is no certainty for its beginning. The scholar sees the light on the frame which is burning brightly for a very short time.

In Canto VII, the poet brings forth his mostly dealt subject matter-imagination which is grim as well as benevolent. Because of imagination in the midst of summer also we can imagine about winter when all the leaves fall down. How imagination changes the perception of our earth, extinguishing our planets: "But it dare not leap by chance in its own dark./It must change from destiny to slight caprice./And thus its jetted tragedy, its stele..."(19-21 Canto VII).

In Canto VIII, the poet talks about innocence. If it exists only in the mind and "is not a thing of time, nor of place" (3, Canto VIII) then it is not less real. For the philosopher also there is or may be the existence of innocence which gives pinches to the pitiful man. The shifting view for the same object as " A book at evening beautiful but untrue, /Like a book on rising beautiful and true."(11-12 Canto VIII). When lights come to earth, it brings the voice of cloud which stands for innocence not a false sign. In this earth we lie down as children to experience holiness.

In Canto IX again, the poet pictures the innocent earth and brings the analogy of "Danes in Denmark" and we people. Our thought matches and we are brothers living in the same house. The stars are given the human attributes as "The stars are putting on their glittering belts./They throw around their shoulders cloaks that flash/Like a great shadows last embellishment." (19-20, Canto IX)

The final Canto reflects the human misery in different mirrors. This Canto has depicted the world, which can both be happy and unhappy and the people living in this world. It throws light on the creative power of human beings who contrive balance to create "a whole, /The vital, the never-failing genius, /Fulfilling his meditations, great and small" (19-21 Canto X).

In all these Cantos, it is very conspicuous that the worldly things are in the process of transformation all the time. It is not easy to bear this flux. We need some kind of motionless, permanent and concrete ground, on which we could stand. After all, poetry, itself, is a construct of imagination. Again, Stevens poeticizes poetry in this poem by revealing how poetry is created and what it does: Poetry provides us that kind of ground. It creates the sense of permanent and concrete ground. Therefore, it somehow pacifies human soul. All the same this world is also not the permanent and transcendental one as it is constructed by imagination.

"Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" is Stevens' attempt "to give art the position of religion" (McCann 93). Stevens himself considered that his was an attempt to "create something as valid as the idea of God has been" (Letters 435), and the poem frequently displays the strains of its unachievable ambition.

The prologue, serving almost as an epic invocation to the muse, is titled "To Henry Church," though it seems to make more sense if considered as an address to the as-yet-unformulated "Supreme Fiction." The pairing of opposites in the prologue gives a clue as to its mythical/metaphysical nature: extremity and wisdom, day and night, single, certain truth and living transience, and finally, vivid transience all have the quality of paradoxical oppositions designed to lead the mind beyond the ordinary constraints of rational thought. This leads into the first section, *It Must Be Abstract*, which begins with an exhortation to an "ephebe," to "Begin. . . by perceiving the idea / Of this invention, this

invented world," and to "become an ignorant man again / And see the sun again with an ignorant eye" (Palm 207).

The ephebe is then told to discount the possibility of a creator, of "an inventing mind," or a "voluminous master" while taking careful note of "How clean the sun is when seen in its idea, / Washed in the remotest cleanliness of a heaven / That has expelled us and our images" (Palm 207). It is only through being willing to discard god, that man may come to God; similarly, it is only through being "[w]ashed in the remotest cleanliness of a heaven / That has expelled us and our images" (207) that we can see the sun in its idea, in its purest essence. The expelling of images is followed by the death of god: "The death of one god is the death of all" (207); however, the god, Phoebus, was merely "a name for something that never could be named," a symbol merely pointing to that which can never be finally and absolutely named. The inability to fix the transcendent with permanent names, names that capture, names that perfectly describe and encapsulate, does not, however, imply the end of naming: "There was a project for the sun and is. / There is a project for the sun. The sun / Must bear no name, gold flourisher, but be / In the difficulty of what it is to be" (208). In naming what "Must bear no name," the narrator hits precisely on the "difficulty" involved in trying to see "clearly in the idea," in trying to leave the image for the idea, in trying to leave god for God.

The second Canto of this section moves on to a consideration of "the first idea," to a search for which we are moved by "the celestial ennui of apartments." Returning to a first idea makes use of the idea of cycles seen throughout "Sunday Morning," while the opposition of "celestial" and "apartments" turns on the idea of the simultaneity of the actual and the mystical, immanent and the transcendent suggested by the "ring of men" from that poem's seventh section. The "desire" of the priest and the philosopher-both figures of the poet for Stevens, for whom "The poet is the priest of the invisible" (Opus

169)-is linked to the "ancient cycle" of desire "to have what is not," like "the desire at the end of winter" (Palm 208).

The third Canto figures the poem as a re-creation and the poet as the creator: "The poem refreshes life so that we share, / For a moment, the first idea It satisfies / Belief in an immaculate beginning / And sends us, winged by an unconscious will, / To an immaculate end" (Palm 208). The refreshing of life, accomplished here by the poem, is the function served by death in "Sunday Morning." The image of being winged to an immaculate end recalls the pigeons of the earlier poem, sinking "Downward to darkness, on extended wings" (Palm 8). The poem returns us, like death, to some kind of source; here the return is to a "first idea," and the wings that power our poetic flight are those of the unconscious, bringing us to a sense of unity and connection as we are pierced by "Life's nonsense . . . with strange relation" (209). Is this strange relation akin to the participation mystique of the ephemeral males of "Sunday Morning"?

The fourth Canto suggests that the answer to the above question is "yes." "The first idea was not our own. Adam / In Eden was the father of Descartes / And Eve made the air the mirror of herself, / Of her sons and daughters" (209). The "first idea" is an idea common to the human species a clear suggestion of the Jungian notion of a collective unconscious. The claim that "Adam. . . was the father of Descartes" puts the "first idea" into a different position; from this perspective, it appears that the "first idea" is consciousness, the cogito or "I think" of Descartes "I think, therefore I am." These two positions appear irreconcilable, one maintaining collectivity and the other maintaining individuality and separateness. This is another version, however, of the tension between mystical and actual, transcendent and immanent that runs through "Sunday Morning," and much of Stevens' other work. It reflects the tension of opposites that ran through the prologue. It is the tension from which the new is forged. This tension of opposites is part

of Stevens' method of poetry and conception of the poet as a mystic: "The poet who wishes to contemplate the good in the midst of confusion is like the mystic who wishes to contemplate God in the midst of evil. There can be no thought of escape" (Opus 225).

The "muddy centre before we breathed," and the "myth before the myth began" are further suggestions of a collective unconscious that is "Venerable and articulate and complete." The coming to consciousness is the coming to the awareness that we live in a place that the narrator describes as the place from which "the poem springs" (210). The poem, representative of our attempt to make meaning, does not allow us to, in the manner of Eve, make "air the mirror" of ourselves. The air is that place in which "Abysmal instruments make . . . pips / Of the sweeping meanings" we add to the world. This is the "heaven / That has expelled us and our images."

This "first idea" works its way through the remaining stanzas of the 'It Must Be Abstract' section, changing appearances and forms: appearing in the manifestly un-abstract lion, elephant, and bear of the fifth Canto; the "blooded" abstraction of the "mere weather" and the "giant of weather" in the sixth Canto. In the seventh Canto, "the giant" is presented as "A thinker of the first idea" (212), and in the eighth canto we read that "The first idea is an imagined thing" (213). What is this imagined thing, this first idea? In "Final Soliloquy of an Interior Paramour" we read "We say God and the imagination are one" (368).

The poem retreats from this Romantic precipice in the ninth canto: "The romantic intoning, the declaimed clairvoyance / Are parts of apotheosis, appropriate / And of its nature, the idiom thereof. / . . . But apotheosis is not / The origin of the major man. / He comes / . . . from reason" (214). The unity of man and God is put back on the shelf; reason, not mysticism, is the origin of "the major man." Thus the pendulum swings, for now, in favor of the actual over the mystical, the immanent over the transcendent.

The tenth and final Canto of this section swings the pendulum right back again. "The major abstraction is the idea of man / And major man is its exponent, abler / In the abstract than in his singular. / More fecund as principle than particle / Though an heroic part, of the commonal. / The major abstraction is the commonal" (215). The emphasis here is on the general over the particular, the "idea of man" rather than the "exponent," the type or representative, "major man." The "idea" of man is to be seen clearly in the commonality of man. From this vantage point, man, as an abstraction, is the first idea.

The second section 'It Must Change' deals with the themes of the undesirability of stasis and the necessity of change that were dealt with earlier in "Sunday Morning." Images of budding sexuality, fecundity and fruition, are juxtaposed with images of the worn-out, the withering, the decaying. "Italian girls [with] jonquils in their hair" (216) are watched by an "old seraph" (215), at once an angel-symbol of the "worn-out" Christian religion. The narrator speaks of "the distaste we feel for this withered scene" (215). The second Canto gives us the ridiculous image of a President ordaining the bee to be immortal, attempting, through the highest measure of human power and authority, to make permanent that which is ephemeral, while the third Canto considers the classic dilemma of life and art in its treatment of "The great statue of the General Du Puy" (217). The "permanence" of the "inhuman bronze" of the statue "made the General a bit absurd," but in the end, "Nothing had happened because nothing had changed . . . and the General was rubbish in the end" (218). Permanence is not the human lot; change is, in the cycle of development, decay, and death.

The fourth and fifth Canto returns at once to a consideration of particularity; this back and forth movement between the transcendent and the immanent, between the general and the particular, is typical of Stevens' approach throughout this poem. "On a blue island in a sky-wide water" (Palm 219) a dead planter's house has fallen. This island

image recalls the island image and the images of isolation to which "Sunday Morning" returned after its own ecstatic flirtation with the participation mystique.

Canto seven reaffirms the rejection of the Christian myth outlined in "Sunday Morning": We have not the need of any paradise, / We have not the need of any seducing hymn" (221). The problem here, however, is much like that of the naming that which must remain unnamed from the poem's first section: what is a poem if not a kind of seducing hymn? The poem-as-seducing-hymn idea is reinforced through the rest of this Canto by the use of images of "lilacs," "easy passion," and "ever-ready love." The motif of chanting is revisited in the figure of the "ignorant man, / Who chants by book, in the heat of the scholar, who writes / The book, hot for another accessible bliss" (221). The specifically sexual context of the chanting here provides an interesting for comparison to the chanting of the "ring of men" in "Sunday Morning." There, the men "chant in orgy on a summer morn" (8), while here the chanting is in the context of being "hot for another accessible bliss." Bliss is placed in the context of the interdependence of "Two things of opposite natures" (218), as the figures here given are the "ignorant man" and "the scholar," and Bliss is, in at least one of its aspects, specifically sexualized, figured as the meeting of "two lovers / That walk away as one in the greenest body" (218).

The eighth Canto brings a bride, Nanzia Nunzio, "Alone and like a vestal long-prepared" (222) to confront Ozymandias, the famous figure of mortal hubris from Shelley. Ozymandias may also serve here a symbol of the ultimate human poetic ambition, perhaps a figure for the "absolute," central," and "essential" poem; thus, in stripping naked, and asking Ozymandias to "Speak to me that, which spoken, will array me / In its own only precious ornament" (222), and in asking to be set on "the spirit's diamond coronal" (222), Nanzia Nunzio is asking for direct access to Truth, a transparent-to-the-transcendent gateway to the "first idea." Ozymandias' response, "the bride / Is never naked. A fictive

covering / Weaves always glistening from the heart and mind" (222), declares the impossibility of such direct access. "A fictive covering" always interposes itself between subject and object, weaved "from the heart and mind" of the subjective consciousness. The fiction of an absolute is as close as we can approach to an absolute in this formulation.

Canto nine considers the movement of the poem between the particular and the general, the immanent and the transcendent: "The poem goes from the poet's gibberish to / The gibberish of the vulgate and back again. / Does it move to and fro or is it of both / At once?" (222-223) The poet, the creator-figure, the shadowy god-figure, is elided, evading us, "as in a senseless element" (223). The poet seeks to find the transcendent in the immanent, the general in the particular, trying "by a peculiar speech to speak / The peculiar potency of the general" (223). In playing on the senses of "peculiar" as particular and strange or uncanny, these lines play on the mystical relation of one and many, of concrete and abstract. The "peculiar speech" of the poet takes on an incantatory quality, becomes chant-like, recalling once again the "ring of men" of "Sunday Morning," with their a chant of paradise, / Out of their blood, returning to the sky" (7-8). Viewed in this context, "The peculiar potency of the general" is a numinous, "divine" potency, another figure for the absolute.

The necessity of the cycle of change, whether formulated as the birth-death-birth cycle of "Sunday Morning," or as the concrete-abstract-concrete cycle implicit in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," is reaffirmed in the tenth Canto. "The freshness of transformation is / The freshness of a world. It is our own, / It is ourselves, the freshness of ourselves" (224). Images of "a will to change," and a "volatile world, too constant to be denied," play on the themes of permanence-in-impermanence and of the interplay of opposites; the constancy of volatility is the second principle of the Supreme Fiction 'It

Must Change'. If it does not change, it will, like the notions of divinity described in the third section of "Sunday Morning," die, and its blood will "fail" as it ossifies.

The third section, "It Must Give Pleasure", begins, as does "Sunday Morning," with a dismissal of Christianity. Singing at "exact, accustomed times," wearing the "mane of a multitude," and exulting with its "great throat," is a "facile exercise" (224). The real trick, "the difficultest rigor," is to catch from the "Irrational moment its unreasoning" (225). The argument here is for private experience freed from the constraints of a rational approach to "the image of what we see" (225). This freedom, this release from rationally ordered vision dependent upon pre-existing concepts, constructs, and conceptions, is the impetus behind the Genesis-like opening: "Begin, ephebe, by perceiving the idea . . . become an ignorant man again / And see the sun again with an ignorant eye / And see it clearly in the idea of it" (207). Becoming ignorant again is figured as an anamnesis, an unforgetting of an unconscious "knowledge" outside the realm of rational, conscious constructs. Even here, however, we are prevented from achieving the kind of transparency to transcendence for which Nanzia Nunzio seeks: the "fictive covering" is present in the perception of the image of what we see. The filter of subjectivity interposes itself at every turn.

This third section continues its play of opposing forces, introducing in the second Canto a "blue woman," arguably a goddess- or muse-figure, who stands apart from images of fecundity and sexuality: "sexual blossoms," "summer, growing fragrant in the night" (225). The third Canto merges the Christian and classical Pagan deities of "Sunday Morning," giving us the "ancient forehead hung with heavy hair" (226), combining Christ and Ophelus in the figure of a "dead shepherd who brought tremendous chords from hell / And bade the sheep carouse" (227). This raises, only to once again discard, traditional images of divinity, traditional Supreme Fictions that no longer serve their function because

they have not changed. Like General Du Puy and his bronze statue, "Nothing had happened because nothing had changed . . . and the General [read Christ/Jove/name of deity here] was rubbish in the end" (218).

The sixth Canto gives us a clue, perhaps, to how the Canon succeeds: by discovering rather than imposing, by including rather than excluding. "To impose is not / To discover . . . to find, / Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all . . . It is possible, possible, possible. It must be possible" (230). The desperate longing in the repeated "possible" is the longing to find "the real," to be stripped of every fiction except "The fiction of an absolute" (230). But how to find the real, how to find, to discover rather than impose, the fiction of an absolute? This is again the paradox of naming the unnamable, of claiming that "We have not the need of any seducing hymn" (221), a poem that is a kind of seducing hymn. This paradox is itself the center of a poem that seeks a center, a fiction of an absolute.

The question of the eighth Canto, "What am I to believe?" (230), leads the way back from the heightened mysticism of the previous Cantos toward a renewed consideration of the particular, the immanent, the local. Men and birds are considered in their activities, in their "Mere repetitions," and these repetitions are each considered as "A thing final in itself and, therefore, good: / One of the vast repetitions final in / Themselves and, therefore, good" (232).

The tenth Canto, in the figure of the "Fat girl, terrestrial," finds its way back to the discovery of the fiction of an absolute. The Fat girl, whom the narrator claims should be named "flatly" with no waste of words, holding her to herself, becomes "the soft-footed phantom, the irrational / Distortion" (232-233). There, the poem seems to find an answer to the question of belief, and it is an idea that has been weaved through the poem's own discourse from the beginning: "the more than rational distortion, / The fiction that results

from feeling" (233) is the key. The willingness to exist in a state of negative capability, to accept that sometimes what we are seeking is not that which reason can impose but that which the "irrational," or the unconscious, can discover can bring us to that "fiction of an absolute" that will, in and for its time, prove a workable fiction. Here again, however, the theme of constant change returns: "Pleased that the irrational is rational," the narrator says "I shall call you by name, my green, my fluent mundo. / You will have stopped revolving except in crystal" (233). The "Fat girl, terrestrial," the earth as Gaia, as goddess, as female figuration of permanence in impermanence is presented in an image of fixed motion, of revolving stasis. The "fiction of an absolute" may be figured in much the same way, as a fluid fixity, as a fiction that must be continually changed, adapted, reshaped and reformed to serve the needs of each new generation, each new "ring of men".

The poem concludes with an image of unity and conflict, "a war between the mind / And sky" (233). This war "never ends," yet the two warring parties are united: "The two are one. / They are a plural, a right and left, a pair, / Two parallels that meet if only in / The meeting of their shadows" (233). The fictive hero becomes real, and the soldier in this war of mind and sky "gladly. . . dies" with "proper words," or "lives on the bread of faithful speech" (234). What, after the journey through this poem, can be understood in this ending? Our "proper words," our "bread of faithful speech," are the sustaining fictions with which we live or because of which we die. In his attempt "to give art the position of religion," Stevens attempts to discover, through art, through "proper words," a new supreme fiction of the kind that the worn-out Christianity and the long-dead paganism of both "Sunday Morning" and "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" describe. Art, as both a set of objects and as an activity that, if given the opportunity, raises us out of ourselves for tantalizingly brief, yet intensely felt and long-remembered moments, reminds us that we are somehow part of something greater than ourselves-even if that something is illusory

and mythical. Art is the concrete expression of the myths-the Supreme Fictions-we must have in order to continue with our fragmented existence. Art is of necessity an attempted expression of the transcendent-even so-called "realist" art, focusing as it does on the particular and the local, raises the reader out of his or her narrow and individual frame of reference, providing-for a brief moment-contact with that which is Other.

It is through his attempt to fashion a "Poetry [that] is a means of redemption" (Opus 160), that Stevens seeks a new "fiction of an absolute." Even while arguing that his project of moving art into the place of traditional religion resonates with mystic themes, it is important to acknowledge that Stevens' work exceeds the rational boundaries that any analysis can attempt to impose. If it is impossible "to find a single systematic theory of poetry and life in Stevens," perhaps that is because a single systematic theory was precisely what Stevens tried to avoid. "Begin, ephebe, by perceiving the idea / You must become an ignorant man again." While it is in some sense a contradictory project to try to rationally understand a mystic even as a mystic, our guiding light may be "the more than rational distortion, / The fiction that results from feeling" (233), the realization that the choice is not "a choice / Between, but of" (229), a choice to "include the things / That in each other are included, the whole, / The complicate, the amassing harmony" (229).

In this manner, this poem really sums up what Stevens thinks the poetry should do and be. At the same time, he concretely presents the characteristics of poetry. Obviously, poetry, as per Stevens, should give pleasure. It should have the potentiality to change even when it evokes the sense of permanence. It should be abstract. It should evoke the resemblance of reality. As the title suggests, this poem offers us some insightful tips on poetry.

Interestingly, Stevens, in all of the poems analyzed, is obsessed with poetry itself. Instead of making poetry a means to deliver some hypocritical ideas, he makes poetry turn

back to itself. His poetry discusses poetry itself. The poems discussed above depict how poetry evolves. He beautifully discusses how poetry, as a supreme fiction, is a redemptive force as well. This analysis has made it clear how poetry enables one to exist in this world of flux. And, it equally lays emphasis on the features of poetry. In all, all the poems analyzed evidently support the claim that Stevens' poetry poeticizes poetry. In other words, his poetry is meta-poetry, poetry about poetry.

IV. Conclusion

Stevens' earliest published poems, which began appearing in small literary magazines, are generally read like other modernist poems of the contemporary period, especially in their highly developed irony. And, they reveal a strong affinity with Romantic tradition. His poems written about his muse, poems about mountains, rivers, flowers, and poems describing paintings characterize him as a late Romantic poet.

He took a long break from mid 20s to early 30s, and with the rise of Great Depression, he rose with poetry grounded in the concrete particulars of the local environment. He attempted to respond to the social conditions of his time, under which poetry itself also comes. But from late 30s, he was concerned more with poetic imagination. Gradually he crawled toward formulating poetic theories in his poems.

The present study tried to examine poeticizing poetry in Stevens' poetry. Out of his numerous poems, nine seminal poems had been selected for examining this phenomenon in his poetry in general.

We have seen that explicitly or implicitly his poems talk about poetry. His "The Idea of Order at Key West" literally talks about the disorder in at Key West and the woman's song is a uniting force to maintain order. In "Of Modern Poetry", he is of the opinion that modern poetry is to wash out the old fictions and to create newer ones that lead us to the contentment of our desire for attaining reality. It should respond to the world of the time. In "The Motives for Metaphor" he is of the opinion that poetry also should be for naming it and making the reality comprehensive. To create a supreme fiction a true marriage between reality and act of imagination is needed and for this we need a series of rejections: Rejection of romantic ideals, rejection of Freudian concept of reality, rejection of positivistic idea and rejection of old religious dogmas. "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman" and "Sunday Morning" strongly talk about rejecting old religious dogmas. Poetry

and arts for Stevens are genuine alternatives to religion. In these poems he proposes that the religious fictions have no greater status than fictions of the imagination. "Notes toward Supreme Fiction" talks about the requirements of poetry. Poetry should create new myths best suitable to our needs and desires of attaining reality. Stevens explicitly says it must be abstract, it must change and it must give pleasure.

For Stevens it is seen that poetry is the structure of reality. By reality he means things as they are but that is not simply the external world; it is existential process that includes ordinary human life on the level of absorption in routine activity. The world, 'things as they are', is monolithic, chaotic and incomprehensible. He opines that it's poet's duty to fill the gap by creating order in it, or by creating a new reality. It is possible not by the submission into the chaos but by accepting it, and that is possible with the marriage between true imagination and bare reality. And for this, a series of rejection is needed: Rejection of traditional religious dogmas, rejection of Romantic ideal, rejection of Freudian concept of reality, and rejection of positivistic idea.

The output of the marriage between imagination and reality is "Supreme Fiction". To perceive reality our mind seeks likeness or resemblance between things: between two or more parts of reality, between something real and something imagined, and between two imagined things. Poetry, being a supreme fiction must supply resemblance to its fictions that is to satisfy the desire of attaining reality. To this regard, poetry "must give pleasure, "it must change", and "it must be abstract".

Stevens gives poetry a higher status. Coming to the very near to Aristotle, his poetic theory operates in opposite direction from Platonic theory. Stevens rejects the "Ideal World" and for him poetry or art is superior to reality. In this sense he idealizes poetry.

This study has been my attempt to examine Stevens' poems with the touchstone of his own theory of poetry. In his poems, he has theorized poetry and, at the same time, he has applied it in those poems. That is, he idealizes and theorizes poetry. He writes poems about the poetic theory and applies it in his poems at the same time. Thus, he successfully poeticizes poetry.

Works Cited

- Ayers, David. "H.D., Ezra Pound and Imagism." *Modernism: A Short Introduction*. UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. 1-11.
- Belbase, Hari Prasad. "Symbolism in Wallace Stevens' Poetry." Diss. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, 2002.
- Bloom, Harold. "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction: A Commentary." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Borroff. Eaglewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963. 76- 95.
- Borroff, Marie. *Wallace Stevens: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Eaglewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963.
- Dady, Mark Hawkins, ed. *Literature in English*. London: FD, 1996.
- Ferguson, Margaret, Mary Jo Salter and Jon Stallworthy, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. 4th ed. New York: Norton, 1996.
- Frye, Northrop. "The Realistic Oriole: A Study of Wallace Stevens." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Borroff. 101-176.
- Haralson, Eric L, ed. *Encyclopedia of American Poetry*. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001.
- Hoffman, Daniel. "Poetry: After Modernism." *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*. Ed. Daniel Hoffman. 2nd ed. New Delhi: OUP, 2004. 439-495.
- Martz, Louis L. "Wallace Stevens: The World as Meditation." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Borroff. 133-150.
- McCann, Janet. *Wallace Stevens Revisited: The Celestial Possible*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995.
- Mills, Ralf J, Jr. "Wallace Stevens: The Image of the Rock." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Borroff. 96- 110.
- Pearce, Roy Harvey. "Wallace Stevens: The Life of the Imagination." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Borroff. 111-132.

Quinn, Sister M. Bernetta. "Metamorphosis in Wallace Stevens." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Boroff. 54-70.

Riddel, Joseph N. "Walt Whiteman and Wallace Stevens: Functions of a Literature." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Boroff. 30-42.

Ruland, Richard and Malcolm Bradbury. "Outland Darts and Homemade Worlds." *From Puritanism to Postmodrnism*. New York: Penguin Books. 239-268.

Simons, Hi. "The Genre of Wallace Stevens." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Boroff. 43-53.

Stevens, Wallace. "Three Academic Pieces: I." *Wallace Stevens*, Ed. Marie Boroff. 24-29.

- - -. *Letters of Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Holly Stevens. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967.

- - -. *Opus Posthumous*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957.

- - -. *The Palm at the End of the Mind: Selected Poems and a Play*. Ed. Holly Stevens. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Unger, Leonard, ed. *American writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972.

Wagner, C. Roland. "A Central Poetry." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Boroff. 71-75.

Zabel, Morton Douwen. "Wallace Stevens and the Image of Man." *Wallace Stevens*. Ed. Marie Boroff. 151-160.