

METAPHOR IN THE POETRY OF WALLACE STEVENS

By

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## PREFACE

Wallace Stevens was a poet very much interested in metaphor. He discussed it in his essays and used it as a subject for some of his poems. However, the most important result of this interest is his poetry, in which metaphor is very effectively used. This thesis is an examination of the structural patterns in Stevens' use of metaphor. I investigate the relationships between the themes of poems and the metaphors, the relationships between tenors and vehicles of metaphors, and the relationships among the metaphors in individual poems.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Wallace Stevens is very much a poet of the twentieth century. His themes are those of this century: the relationship of the artist to his society, the relationship of imagination and reality, the problem of belief. His technique, too, in some ways is clearly of the twentieth century. Even though he does not use free verse forms exclusively nor make numerous obscure allusions, he does use symbols. For instance, blue and the moon seem to represent imagination while red and the sun often represent reality. But perhaps his most notable technique is his use of metaphor. His metaphors might be part of the modern echo of the early seventeenth century. In fact, Hi Simons has called Stevens "one of the originators of the Metaphysical trend in the poetry of our time."<sup>1</sup> It is Stevens' technique in the use of metaphor which needs to be analyzed.

Stevens must have been interested in metaphor, but his attitude toward the subject is thought by some critics to be ambiguous. His interest is shown in his essays, especially "Three Academic Pieces" and "Effects of Analogy," and in such poems as "The Motive for Metaphor,"

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<sup>1</sup>Hi Simons, "The Genre of Wallace Stevens," Sewanee Review, LIII (Autumn, 1945), 569.

"Metaphors of a Magnifico," and "Metaphor as Degeneration." However, his statements in these selections seem contradictory. At times he implies that metaphor obscures reality; other times he indicates that it is the poet's only path to reality. This apparent ambiguity is perhaps characteristic of much of Stevens' theory. As J. Hillis Miller points out, "It is impossible to find a single one-dimensional theory of poetry and life in Stevens."<sup>2</sup>

Stevens' main objection to metaphor is that it comes between the poet and reality. Michel Benamou thinks that this objection is particularly strong in the poetry written during the late twenties. It is then that Stevens "yearns for transparence." However, "metaphor clouds reality" while "purity results from clearing sight of its 'man-locked set' of religious ideas and mythological metaphors."<sup>3</sup> Metaphor may indeed be an evasion of reality. Stevens says in "Add This to Rhetoric":

This is the figure and not  
An evading metaphor.<sup>4</sup>

A similar idea is evident in "Credences of Summer" (CP, 373), in which Stevens says,

Let's see the very thing and nothing else.  
Let's see it with the hottest fire of sight.  
Burn everything not part of it to ash.

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<sup>2</sup>J. Hillis Miller, "Wallace Stevens' Poetry of Being," The Act of the Mind: Essays on the Poetry of Wallace Stevens, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce and J. Hillis Miller (Baltimore, 1965), p. 146.

<sup>3</sup>Michel Benamou, "Wallace Stevens and the Symbolist Imagination," The Act of the Mind: Essays on the Poetry of Wallace Stevens, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce and J. Hillis Miller (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 94, 109.

<sup>4</sup>The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York, 1965), p. 199. Subsequent quotations from Stevens' poetry will be taken from this book. The page number preceded by the abbreviation CP will be given parenthetically in the text.

Trace the gold sun about the whitened sky  
Without evasion by a single metaphor.

It seems that by allowing one to evade "the very thing," metaphor becomes a curtain between the poet and reality. In "The Man on the Dump," an attempt to find "the very thing" or "The the," Stevens uses a number of similes, metaphors, and images in the first part of the poem: "The sun is a corbeil of flowers," "Days pass like papers from a press." However, these items are observed by "The Man on the Dump," who seems to "hate these things except on the dump":

One rejects  
The trash.

When all these figures of speech are discarded "the moon comes up as the moon" (CP, 201-202). Again indicating that metaphor has perhaps not much effect on things, Stevens writes in "Add This to Rhetoric" (CP, 198):

To-morrow when the sun,  
For all your images,  
Comes up as the sun, bull fire,  
Your images will have left  
No shadow of themselves.

It seems, then, that Stevens is sometimes critical of "wormy metaphors" (CP, 162).

In the essays, however, in which Stevens presents theories with regard to poetry, he often speaks highly of metaphor. In the first of the "Three Academic Pieces," for example, Stevens discusses "resemblance between things in nature." In looking across a beach toward the sea, one can see that the colors are unified; thus light creates the unity. Resemblance "binds together" in nature. Metaphor is then defined as a like process: "the creation of resemblance by the imagination, even



though metamorphosis might be a better word."<sup>5</sup> Poetry is defined as a "satisfying of the desire for resemblance." In satisfying this desire it "touches the sense of reality, it enhances the sense of reality, heightens it, intensifies it" (NA, 77). These statements seem to be high praise for metaphor, but Stevens goes further. He says that "poetry and metaphor are one." And, indeed, reality turns out to be poetry: "The structure of poetry and the structure of reality are one or, in effect, . . . poetry and reality are one, or should be" (NA, 81). Stevens touches on the same subject in the concluding statement of "Effects of Analogy":

Thus poetry becomes and is a transcendent analogue composed of the particulars of reality, created by the poet's sense of the world, that is to say, his attitude, as he intervenes and interposes the appearances of that sense. (NA, 130)

For Stevens in these essays the imagination is the only definer and orderer of reality.

Northrop Frye points out another way in which Stevens' conception of metaphor is unclear. Stevens speaks of the creative process as beginning in the perception of resemblance and adds that metamorphosis might be a better word. He goes on to develop the conception of resemblance into one of analogy. Nowhere in his essays, according to Frye, does Stevens suggest that metaphor is anything more than likeness or parallelism. If poetry is merely this, Frye continues, the use of metaphor could accentuate what Stevens wanted to annihilate, the contrast between subject and object. However, Frye says that Stevens

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<sup>5</sup>The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and the Imagination (New York, 1951), p. 72. Page numbers for subsequent references to this book will be preceded by the abbreviation NA and will be given parenthetically in the text.

appears to mean simile or comparison when he speaks of metaphor in this manner. Frye states that in true poetic metaphor, of which Stevens is capable, things are identified with each other, yet each is identified as itself and retains that identity. "Such a metaphor is necessarily illogical . . . and hence poetic metaphors are opposed to likeness or similarity." Further, "a world of total metaphor . . . would be a world where subject and object, reality and mental organization of reality, are one." Thus, to Frye, "Such a world of total metaphor is the formal cause of poetry." Poetic use of metaphor is the "identifying of an individual with its class." Poets see "individual and class as metaphorically identical: in other words they work with myths." Frye sums up his ideas by saying that

the theoretical postulate of Stevens' poetry is a world of total metaphor, where the poet's vision may be identified with anything it visualizes. For such poetry the most accurate word is apocalyptic, a poetry of 'revelation' in which all objects and experiences are united with a total mind.<sup>6</sup>

Sister M. Bernetta Quinn reaches a somewhat similar conclusion. She indicates that in Stevens the perceiving agent greatly alters reality. However, some objects resist the catalysts of language. Metamorphosis links the subjective and objective worlds so that it connects the realm of reality and the realm of imagination. In fact, these realms become one, that of resemblance.<sup>7</sup>

Also noting Stevens' apparent contradictory statements about metaphor, William Bevis tries to clarify Stevens' position. Bevis

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<sup>6</sup>Northrop Frye, "The Realistic Oriole: A Study of Wallace Stevens," Hudson Review, X (Autumn 1957), 363-367.

<sup>7</sup>Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, O.S.F., "Metamorphosis in Wallace Stevens," Sewanee Review, LX (Spring 1952), 233-235.

discerns three distinct categories of reality in Stevens' thought: the res, or the "physical, external world"; the harmonium, "reality reached in a union of self and the external world"; and the Ding an sich, an unattainable, "ultimate, abstract reality." Metaphor is appropriate to harmonium. When, as usually is the case, harmonium is the reality for which Stevens is searching, he praises metaphor. However, when it is the res or the Ding an sich he desires, metaphor must be rejected.<sup>8</sup>

Certain of Stevens' own statements may also aid in the reconciliation of his apparent conflicts. In "Someone Put a Pineapple Together" from "Three Academic Pieces" Stevens distinguishes between metaphors that are false and those that reveal reality. In describing the pineapple,

He must say nothing of the fruit that is  
Not true, nor think it, less. He must defy  
That metaphor that murders metaphor.  
(NA, 84)

Again in the same piece he states:

He was willing they [subjects of poetry]  
should remain incredible,  
Because the incredible, also, has its truth,  
  
Its tuft of emerald that is real, for all  
Its invitation to false metaphor.  
(NA, 85)

However, if imagination is applied accurately to the pineapple,

. . . the total artifice reveals itself  
  
As the total reality.  
(NA, 87)

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<sup>8</sup>William Bevis, "Metaphor in Wallace Stevens," Shenandoah, XV, ii, 35-37.

Stevens also discusses effective and ineffective analogies. Analogy is defined as "likeness, as resemblance between parallels and yet parallels that are parallels only in the imagination" (NA, 110). An effective analogy may have "emotional authenticity" (NA, 113); that is, it "communicates the emotion that generates it" (NA, 111). Or an analogy may be good as far as it is apposite, or right. If an object is associated with its "appointed objectification" (NA, 114), the figure of speech is appropriate. The defects that analogies may have are artificiality, incongruity, lack of definition (NA, 117). Throughout Stevens' essay, analogy seems to be more than metaphor, but it involves metaphor. Thus it seems reasonable to assume that metaphor too may be almost perfect or almost completely defective. It is possible that shifting terms as he does (e.g., metaphor, resemblance, analogy, metamorphosis), Stevens may also do the opposite. He may at times refer to effective figures of speech and at other times misleading figures of speech by the unmodified word metaphor. Indeed, as has already been noted, Northrop Frye quite casually states that when Stevens refers to metaphor pejoratively, he probably is referring to simile or comparison, not metaphor.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, one of Stevens' poems, "Dezembrum" (CP, 218), indicates that while certain metaphors are undesirable, the imagination needs metaphor. The metaphors of a previous time are to be avoided:

Tonight there are only the winter stars.  
The sky is no longer a junk-shop,  
Full of javelins and old fire-balls,  
Triangles and the names of girls.

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<sup>9</sup>Frye, p. 363.

Neither should they be metaphors of the supernatural. God is "Imagined man, the monkish mask." The stars should be "Never angels, nothing of the dead." However, indicating the need for metaphor, the poet writes:

Tonight the stars are like a crowd of faces  
 Faces to people night's brilliancy,  
 Laughing and singing and being happy,  
 Filling the imagination's need.

And, indeed, one notices that often even as Stevens points out the idea that images are ineffective, he uses them. For instance, in a section of "Add This to Rhetoric" already cited, he says,

To-morrow when the sun,  
 For all your images,  
 Comes up as the sun, bull fire. . . .  
 (CP, 198)

The imagination's need for metaphor may be "The Motive for Metaphor" (CP, 288). The poet is happy in autumn when "everything is half dead" and in spring among "half colors of quarter-things" and the "obscure moon lighting an obscure world." However, metaphor is needed in summer under the "weight of primary noon" when one can hear the hammer's

hard sound--  
 Steel against intimation.

The only way the poet can approach this sort of "dominant" reality is obliquely through metaphor. Thus is found

The motive for metaphor, shrinking from  
 The weight of primary noon,  
 The A B C of being,  
 The ruddy temper, the hammer  
 Of red and blue, the hard sound--  
 Steel against intimation--the sharp flash,  
 The vital, arrogant, fatal, dominant X.

These poems and essays show clearly that Stevens was interested in metaphor. And although his essays may not really explain his use

of metaphor,<sup>10</sup> they do perhaps accurately hint that the metaphors in his poems are carefully and often deliberately constructed. His technique in using metaphor may, in fact, be somewhat unusual. Don Geiger has stated that Stevens' fusion of metaphors in which "each particular depends for its definition on the whole assembly of particulars" is not exactly like any other poet's method.<sup>11</sup> Because of Stevens' interest in metaphor and his somewhat unusual technique, representative metaphors will be analyzed as they occur in individual poems. First some relationships between metaphors and themes will be considered; secondly, relationships between tenors and vehicles of metaphors; and finally, relationships among the metaphors.

In the discussion of these relationships, I. A. Richards' terms tenor, the "underlying idea" or "principal subject," and vehicle, the figure that the tenor is compared with, will be used to refer to the two halves of the metaphor. Thus, metaphor itself refers to the "whole double unit."<sup>12</sup> Theme in this study refers to the central idea or thesis of the poem, not the tenor of a particular metaphor. The relationships between theme and metaphor involve the method by which the poet expresses his idea to the reader. Does he, for instance, state the idea and proceed to embroider it with figurative language, or does he often leave the theme to implication? The relationships between tenor

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<sup>10</sup>Ralph Nash, "Wallace Stevens and the Point of Change," Perspective, VII (Autumn 1954), 117.

<sup>11</sup>Don Geiger, "Wallace Stevens' Wealth," Perspective, VII (Autumn 1954), 158.

<sup>12</sup>I. A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric (New York, 1936), pp. 96-97.

and vehicle involve the internal structure of individual metaphors as well as the relationships, for instance, of a vehicle of one metaphor to the tenor of another. The relationships among the metaphors involve such questions as whether the vehicles of the metaphors are related and whether the metaphors are extended throughout several lines.

Throughout this inductive study the shorter poems are almost exclusively discussed individually. The longer poems are usually discussed in sections, Stevens' method of dividing many of these poems. Poems showing similar patterns are grouped as illustrations of those patterns. Because Stevens quite naturally uses several methods in an individual poem, the result of attempting to retain the poems as units while discussing the structural patterns common to Stevens' metaphors is a foreshadowing in the analysis of one pattern of a second pattern as yet not discussed. However, this foreshadowing is a necessity because the metaphors cannot be adequately studied if they are removed from the context in which they appear.

Certain ideas tangential to this study should be acknowledged. First, critics such as Frank Kermode<sup>13</sup> and Frank Doggett<sup>14</sup> agree that Stevens' poetry became progressively more abstract and philosophical. Thus one might conclude that his use of metaphor would undergo a corresponding change. However, this study was not designed to investigate this development and, indeed, does not conclusively indicate such. In addition, in order to understand the themes of the poems, all the methods that the poet uses to express those themes must be considered.

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<sup>13</sup>Frank Kermode, Wallace Stevens (London, 1960), p. 51.

<sup>14</sup>Frank Doggett, "Wallace Stevens' Later Poetry," English Literary History, XXV (June 1958), 145.

Metaphor is one of these methods; however, symbol and imagery cannot be ignored. Thus in the discussion of the relationships of themes and metaphors, particularly in those poems in which the theme is conveyed entirely through implication, symbols and imagery will often be mentioned. Including some symbols is necessary because Stevens often uses a symbol as the tenor of a metaphor. Thus the symbolic as well as the literal value of the word must be considered. Imagery is also closely related to metaphor in that as Michel Benamou states, "The true nature of an image is to become a metaphor."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Michel Benamou, "Wallace Stevens: Some Relations Between Poetry and Painting," The Achievement of Wallace Stevens, ed. Ashley Brown and Robert S. Haller (New York, 1962), p. 244.



## CHAPTER II

### RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THEMES AND METAPHORS

Reading a poet like Stevens, who uses such extremely vivid images and complex metaphors particularly in his first books, one, nevertheless, suspects that the poet is concerned with more than pictures. Even in poems as seemingly nonsensical as "Bantams in Pine Woods" (CP, 75-76) critics such as Eugene Paul Nassar have found the theme of the artist's role in the universe.<sup>1</sup> Apparently, then, behind the striking metaphors, there are serious themes which the poet is examining. The relationships, however, between these themes and the metaphors are often quite complex.

The number of themes in which Stevens is interested seems to be relatively small. Critics are not in agreement on exactly what these themes are although there is, I think, no serious divergence of opinion. Hi Simons, for instance, indicates that Stevens has four themes. These are the relationship between imagination and reality, the problem of belief, the relationship of the artist to society, and humanism as personified in the "hero" or "major man."<sup>2</sup> Ardyth Bradley also lists four themes, one of which is the interdependence of reality and imagination. The others, although slightly different from Simons', do not contradict his seriously. Rather than the problem of belief, for

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene Paul Nassar, Wallace Stevens: An Anatomy of Figuration (Philadelphia, 1965), p. 106.

<sup>2</sup>Simons, pp. 567-568.

instance, Bradley lists the loss of the imagination's vitality in the twentieth century. The other two are the dichotomy and interdependence of life and death and the necessity of living in the present and creating whatever can be created from the present.<sup>3</sup>

It is, however, not so much what Stevens' themes are as the way he manages to express them particularly through metaphors that is the concern of this chapter. In this discussion of the relationships between the metaphors and themes, the theme of the poem refers to the meaning of the poem as a whole, not the tenor of a single metaphor. As Richards states:

. . . in many of the most important uses of metaphor, the co-presence of the vehicle and tenor results in a meaning (to be clearly distinguished from the tenor) which is not attainable without their interaction. That the vehicle is not normally a mere embellishment of a tenor which is otherwise unchanged by it but that vehicle and tenor in co-operation give a meaning of more varied powers than can be ascribed to either.<sup>4</sup>

A distinctively modern relationship between metaphor and theme is also noted by commentator, Hi Simons:

The figure is employed not as an embellishment but as the means of discourse, and its communicative possibilities are stretched to the utmost—or, in fact, to the point of obscurity. Sometimes the emotive force of the vehicle, the written word, is stressed; again, the tenor, the idea to be conveyed. In either case, the latter is left to implication, and the distinction between traditional practice and the modern technic lies in the strictness with which that is done.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ardyth Bradley, "Wallace Stevens' Decorations," Twentieth Century Literature, VII (October 1961), 114.

<sup>4</sup>Richards, p. 100.

<sup>5</sup>Simons, pp. 578-579.

Leaving something to implication is one of Stevens' habits. That which is implied is sometimes the tenor as Simons indicates. But it also often is the theme or meaning in Richards' sense that is implied by the metaphor. This chapter will present some structural patterns, most of which enable Stevens to imply his theme rather than to state it directly.

Joseph Riddel has found in Stevens' poetry an instance in which metaphor is merely decorative. "Montrachet-le-Jardin" (CP, 260) is his example. Speaking somewhat critically, Riddel says that in this poem Stevens, who is always dependent on metaphor, is not yet in full control of a metaphor that will "blood an abstraction or draw out the thread of an idea into a feeling." Hence, he feels that this poem moves between statement and "lyrical floss."<sup>6</sup>

In one of Stevens' more typical patterns there exists in the poem what seems to be a rather explicit statement of the theme. And, indeed, such a statement may offer the reader valuable guidance in his attempt to understand the poem. However, such statements are often themselves metaphorical. In addition, they often cannot be entirely trusted to reveal the exact theme of the poem because they often are modified, expanded, or explained by the metaphors which appear with them. These statements may precede the further figurative explanation; they may follow this explanation; they may be the center from which the explanation radiates; or they may be combinations of a number of these positions.

Certain sections of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," for example, consist of such statements and accompanying metaphors. In section II

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<sup>6</sup>Joseph N. Riddel, The Clairvoyant Eye: The Poetry and Poetics of Wallace Stevens (Baton Rouge, 1965), p. 162.

(CP, 466) the basic statements which the poem seems to elucidate are found in the first lines and in the last two lines. The first lines are:

Suppose these houses are composed of ourselves,  
So that they become an impalpable town, full of  
Impalpable bells.

The section ends thus:

. . . we cannot tell apart  
The idea and the bearer-being of the idea.

One notices immediately that these lines are metaphorical as are the lines which intervene between the two sections. Nevertheless, these lines seem to be the ones which guide the reader through the poem. In section III (CP, 466-467) the guiding line seems to be the first: "The point of vision and desire are the same." Section VI (CP, 469) also begins with a statement of theme: "Reality is the beginning not the end." This statement is explained throughout the rest of the poem by a metaphor about Alpha and Omega. Reality is "Naked Alpha, not the hierophant Omega," both of which

. . . appoint themselves the choice  
Custodians of the glory of the scene,  
The immaculate interpreters of life.

But that's the difference: in the end and the way  
To the end. Alpha continues to begin.  
Omega is refreshed at every end.

Similarly in "Crude Foyer" (CP, 305) Stevens announces his theme in the first line: "Thought is false happiness." Again he extends and explains his idea through metaphors. That which people foolishly think lies at the end of thought is called

A foyer of the spirit in a landscape  
Of the mind.

In this supposed foyer people assume that they get to the center of things:

. . . we sit  
And wear humanity's bleak crown;  
  
In which we read the critique of paradise  
And say it is the work  
Of a comedian. . . .

However, again Stevens labels this "False happiness." He returns to his metaphor of the "landscape of the mind" which refers to thought. In reality this landscape "Is a landscape only of the eye." Apparently we can think of nothing we have not seen. As Stevens says:

We are ignorant men incapable  
  
Of the least, minor, vital metaphor, content,  
At last, there, when it turns out to be here.

Section IX of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" (CP, 471) is constructed of alternating sections of fairly explicit statements of theme and sections of metaphorical embodiments of the theme. The first line is a statement of theme:

We keep coming back and coming back  
To the real.

Following immediately is the illustrative metaphorical phrase:

. . . to the hotel instead of the hymns  
That fall upon it out of the wind.

Next is another statement:

We seek  
The poem of pure reality.

Again an explanation follows. This "poem of pure reality" will be

Untouched  
By trope or deviation.

It will be

A view of New Haven, say, through the certain eye,  
 The eye made clear of uncertainty, with the sight  
 Of simple seeing, without reflection.

The final guiding statement is another metaphor of seeking:

We seek  
 Nothing beyond reality. Within it,  
 Everything.

These lines are followed by lines which give the scope of the word,

"Everything."

In "Jouga" (CP, 337), on the other hand, the apparent statement of theme appears in the first lines:

The physical world is meaningless tonight  
 And there is no other.

The metaphors which follow these lines, however, modify somewhat this initial statement. The first metaphor is extended. Ha-eé-me is a male beast who plays on his guitar, the female. They become "two conjugal beasts." Ha-eé-me "knocks out a noise" on his guitar. The guitar and the player are

Two beasts but two of a kind and then not beasts.  
 Yet two not quite of a kind.

It seems that the beasts have been transformed. Frank Doggett states, "By virtue of the individual imagination that is symbolized by the playing of the instrument they become other than beast. . . for the self is both a beast and not a beast."<sup>7</sup> If this is the case, the metaphor has modified the initial statement. Other briefer examples of the same process are given:

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<sup>7</sup>Frank Doggett, Stevens' Poetry of Thought (Baltimore, 1966), p. 85.

This afternoon the wind and the sea were like that--  
 And after a while, when Ha-ee-me has gone to sleep,  
 A great jaguar running will make a little sound.

Similarly, Section I of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" (CP, 465) begins with what seems to be a relatively clear statement: "The eye's plain version is a thing apart." The line is, however, metaphorical. To this line Stevens appends the metaphor: "The vulgate of experience." The poem then proceeds almost entirely by metaphor to a conclusion somewhat beyond this original statement. The metaphors involve two giants. One seems to represent the "plain version"; the other the "recent imagining of reality." The second giant kills the first. The process is inevitable, "A larger poem for a larger audience." In the last stanza Stevens portrays the resulting mythological form:

As if the crude collops came together as one,  
 A mythological form, a festival sphere,  
 A great bosom, beard and being, alive with age.

The theme of the poem, the relationship between imagination and reality, can be glimpsed only through the extended metaphor of the giants. The earlier, somewhat clearer metaphor apparently does not summarize adequately the theme of the poem.

In section IV of the same poem (CP, 467) Stevens again seems to announce what he is talking about in line one; again this line is metaphorical: "The plainness of plain things is savagery." This line is followed by a closely related figure which extends the statement somewhat. The man who fights savagely against illusion is

. . . snuffed out  
 By the obese opiates of sleep.

The extension of the original idea is that such men desire appeasement:

Plain men in plain towns  
 Are not precise about the appeasement they need.

They only know a savage assuagement cries  
 With a savage voice; and in that cry they hear  
 Themselves transposed, muted and comforted

In a savage and subtle and simple harmony,  
 A matching and mating of surprised accords,  
 A responding to a diviner opposite.

The words "diviner opposite" set up the next two stanzas which offer examples of such opposites: spring and winter, summer and the cold of autumn, which comes in such a way

. . . that this cold, a children's tale of ice,  
 Seems like a sheen of heat romanticized.

Only by understanding the metaphors does the reader sense the modification of the original statement. The savagery of plain things needs its "diviner opposite," a response to "simple harmony."

In these poems Stevens uses statements which at first glance seem to contain the themes of the poems. However, as should be evident, the exact theme is a result of these statements, themselves often metaphorical, plus the metaphors throughout the poem.

Other poems proceed through a number of metaphors and images with no clear indication of the theme. In the final stanzas of these poems are metaphors which unify and clarify the previous metaphors in such a way that at least a general impression of the theme is possible. For example, in the short poem, "Another Weeping Woman" (CP, 25), the theme is revealed in three stages. The first stage consists of metaphors which are interrelated. The heart is a vessel from which the substance, unhappiness, must be poured out because it cannot be sweetened by grieving. The next metaphor indicates that poison with its "black blooms" grows in the dark, in the "water of tears." The "water of tears" recalls "grieving" from the previous metaphor and serves to connect them. Grieving, far from sweetening the "bitter heart," is a



breeding place for poison. The second stage in the revelation of the theme is a statement on the imagination as "the one reality," "The magnificent cause of being." In the final stage of the poem the woman is left "With him for whom no phantasy moves." The cause of the unhappiness and poison is revealed as death. The elements of the poem are finally clarified in the last metaphor: "And you are pierced by a death." The theme of the poem is revealed as one metaphor clarifies another.

A similar process is evident in a much longer poem, "The Owl in the Sarcophagus" (CP, 431). This poem seems to be an attempt to describe the mythological creatures that man has invented to comfort him in his thoughts of death. The creatures are two brothers, high sleep and high peace, and the third form, a female form who speaks "in the syllable between life and death." The poem proceeds through the first five sections to describe the working of the mythology. The entire poem has metaphorical structure in that the forms themselves are metaphorical projections of the mind, which is itself thought of metaphorically in the poem. Stevens seems to delay any but incidental explanations of the forms, however, until the final section. It is here that he announces that

This is the mythology of modern death  
 And these, in their mufflings, monsters of elegy,  
 . . . . .  
 These are death's own supremest images. . . . .

The final stanza of the poem is the metaphor which organizes for the reader the impressions of the earlier stanzas:

It is a child that sings itself to sleep,  
 The mind, among the creatures that it makes,  
 The people, those by which it lives and dies.

Still another poem in which final clarification comes through the metaphors near the end is "Dutch Graves in Bucks County" (CP, 290). The stanzaic pattern in this poem is quite rigid and aids in the understanding of it. Throughout most of the poem a five line stanza containing a description of present conditions in which, for instance, armies march is followed by a two line stanza about the "Dutch graves" of Stevens' ancestors. The "semblables" in the graves "share nothing of ourselves," "Know that the past is not part of the present." Thus even at the beginning of the poem through these contrasts the reader begins to understand the theme. In this first part of the poem the metaphors are effective, but isolated: "Fate is the present desperado"; the "semblables . . . Tap skeleton drums inaudibly," "And you, my semblables, are crusts." However, near the end of the poem Stevens' meaning becomes clearer, and as it does, his use of metaphor becomes more elaborate:

Freedom is like a man who kills himself.  
 Each night, an incessant butcher, whose knife  
 Grows sharp in blood. The armies kill themselves,  
 And in their blood an ancient evil dies--  
 The action of incorrigible tragedy.

In addition to the comparison between freedom and the butcher, there is the similarity between freedom and the army in that each kills itself. Further, freedom's knife "Grows sharp in blood" while in the armies' blood "an ancient evil dies." Yet clearer is the next five line stanza:

This is the pit of torment that placid end  
 Should be illusion, that the mobs of birth  
 Avoid our stale perfections, seeking out  
 Their own, waiting until we go  
 To picnic in the ruins that we leave.

Metaphors such as "pit of torment," "mob of birth," and "picnic in the ruins" indicate masses of mankind. They thus contrast with "placid end" and "our stale perfections." Through these metaphors the theme that

each generation of men must search for their own perfections becomes more and more evident. That this search is necessary is part of the "incorrigible tragedy"; nevertheless:

These violent marchers of the present  
 . . . . .  
 March toward a generation's centre.

Another of Stevens' ways of relating theme and metaphor can be seen in "Sad Strains of a Gay Waltz" (CP, 121). This poem is typical of a number of Stevens' poems in which the reader must intuit that the announced subject of the poem, in this case the waltz, represents something else. The poet proceeds from this point to use figurative language as his means of communicating the announced subject. Thus the reader is confronted with at least three levels in the poem: the announced subject, the actual subject, and the figures. The actual subject or tenor of this poem seems to be revealed near the end of the poem. It is "The epic of disbelief." The "gay waltz" is apparently belief. The problem in the poem is stated in a line which is used twice: "Too many waltzes have ended." This line is on the level of the stated subject or vehicle. Other metaphors are added to this level when the poet writes that the music of the time is "so much motionless sound" and "empty of shadows." A prophecy for the future combines the tenor and vehicle of the metaphor:

Too many waltzes--The epic of disbelief  
 Blares oftener and soon, will soon be constant.  
 Some harmonious skeptic soon in a skeptical music  
 . . . . .  
 Will unite these figures of men and their shapes  
 Will glisten again with motion, the music  
 Will be motion and full of shadows.

The poem has come a full circle in that the "skeptical music" will supply what is missing in the present music: motion and shadows. The

three levels of the poem are neatly intertwined in these lines as well, thus rounding off the poem.

This particular process is so pervasive in Stevens that several examples might be mentioned briefly. For instance, the poem "O Florida, Venereal Soil" (CP, 47) indicates the same structure almost in its title. Florida is itself perhaps a vehicle for lush, abundant reality. The vehicle is then spoken of as "venereal soil," as "Donna, donna, dark," and as a "scholar of darkness." Another familiar example might be "The Man with the Blue Guitar" (CP, 165). The man represents the man of imagination and his playing his guitar the creative process. But in section II, for instance, he metaphorically speaks of patching his creation. In much the same way, the green plant (CP, 506), which is more than a plant, which is perhaps the vehicle for the continuity in "the harsh reality of which it is part," is personified in that it "glares." In "This Solitude of Cataracts" the "flecked river," which the man wants "to go on flowing the same way," is probably a vehicle for being. Metaphors are then applied to the scene of which the river is a part: "a moon nailed fast," for example.

Similarly, while in stanza III of "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" (CP, 14) the reader is interested in the actual images Stevens is presenting, he must also realize that Stevens is talking about something more than barbers and braids. Although he says he will "not play the flat historic scale," the poet does present some examples of past curls of past barbers, or "studious ghosts." In contrast to these past "curls" is the present in which one comes "dripping in your hair from sleep." Obviously the theme is absolutely dependent upon the images, and by studying these images the reader can come to some conclusions.

"Dripping in your hair from sleep" certainly suggests disarray. The previous curls are gone; they have not survived into the present. Thus, one suspects that this poem is related to Stevens' themes about beliefs or art. That which was sufficient for one generation is not necessarily so for another.

Stevens sometimes reverses the process and announces clearly his intended subject. But he seems to delay a full clarification of his attitude toward the subject until the end of the poem. "The Poems of Our Climate" (CP, 193) is such a poem. The first five and one half lines seem to be a description of "pink and white carnations" in a bowl of water and the

. . . . light  
In the room more like a snowy air,  
Reflecting snow.

This description is followed by the statement, "one desires so much more than that." The bowl of carnations becomes a vehicle for the tenor day:

The day itself  
Is simplified: a bowl of white.

However, the poet indicates that as a vehicle the "bowl of white" is unsatisfactory because it contradicts his attitude: it makes the day too clear and pure. In stanza two the same vehicle is applied to the world. Metaphors are also used to show the self becoming simpler:

Say even that this complete simplicity  
Stripped one of all one's torments, concealed  
The evilly compounded, vital I  
And made it fresh in a world of white. . . .

But the objection from the first stanza is still valid; "one would want more, one would need more." In stanza three the reasons are given. Man has a "never-resting mind," and the "imperfect is our paradise."

The last metaphors indicate the poet's attitude toward the subject. In order to be relevant the poems of the title have to be "flawed words and stubborn sounds."

Of course, the preceding explanations of the relationships between metaphors and themes indicate necessarily that Stevens does not restrict himself to one method in each poem. But perhaps one can most appreciate his skill while examining poems in which there are organic metaphors used as the only means of expression. They are, in short, poems in which theme is carefully left to implication.

One example of theme virtually submerged in metaphorical language is "The Ordinary Women" (CP, 10). The theme seems to be that the women need the stimulus of art for complete lives, but a life consisting only of art is not satisfactory either. The poem itself is perhaps an example of that type of writing Stevens discussed in "Effect of Analogy." In such writing, he said, "Our attention is on the symbol, which is interesting in itself. The other meaning does not dog the symbol like its shadow" (NA, 109). The first and last stanzas frame the poem. They are almost identical, but their differences, though slight, are extremely important. In the first the "ordinary women" make a change in their lives:

Then from their poverty they rose,  
From dry catarrhs, and to guitars  
They flitted  
Through the palace walls.

Their previous existence was one of metaphorical poverty; that is, something needed to give life value was missing. Indeed, the lives of the women were so bad as to be described as "catarrhs," which literally are inflammations causing an increased flow of mucus. But, what must be even worse, the women are rising from "dry catarrhs." One must assume

that a dry inflammation is somewhat different from and worse than a lack of inflammation. It is guitars to which the women go. The guitar suggests art, music, imagination. The change the women make in the first stanza is from the poverty of their own lives to art and imagination. In the last stanza they also make a change:

Then from their poverty they rose,  
From dry guitars, and to catarrhs  
They flitted  
Through the palace walls.

This time their direction is reversed; they are going from art to life. One notices, however, that there is something different about the life to which they return and the art which they are leaving. This time what is "dry" is "guitars," and the "catarrhs" no longer are. Art by itself is not the answer to meaning in life; however, one also notices that art has contributed something to the "ordinary women" in that the catarrhs are no longer dry.

The metaphors throughout the rest of the poem contribute to and perhaps clarify this interpretation. For instance, the world of art in which one finds the women throughout the poem does contain moonlight, Stevens' persistent figure of the imagination:

The moonlight  
Fubbed the girandoles

and

The moonlight  
Rose on the beachy floors.

In addition, while in the world of art, the women become more artistic themselves:

How explicit the coiffures became.

The arrangement of hair is, according to Eugene Paul Nasser, seen by Stevens as one of "the innumerable necessary deviations from reality

that create an ordered imaginative 'mundo.'<sup>8</sup> Also the women seem to be awakened to their surroundings:

As they leaned and looked  
 From the window-sills at the alphabets,  
 At beta b and gamma g,  
 To study  
 The canting curlicues  
 Of heaven and of the heavenly script.  
 And there they read of marriage-bed.  
 Ti-lill-o!  
 And they read right long.

In this connection one of the things that caused them to leave the halls was "Insinuations of desire." Apparently once awakened through art to the "marriage-bed," to desire, the women must return to their now different lives. It is perhaps not too much to suggest that "catarrh" may, because of these other references, have direct sexual significance. Whatever theme Stevens intended in this poem, he expresses it entirely through his metaphorical language. Only by considering the metaphors and their interaction can the reader hope to arrive at any understanding of the poem.

"Wild Ducks, People and Distances" (CP, 328) is another poem in which Stevens implies his theme through the metaphors. The first part of the poem describes life as it is:

The life of the world depends on that he is  
 Alive, on that people are alive, on that  
 There is village and village of them, without regard  
 To that be-misted one and apart from her.

The personification "be-misted one" may refer to the earth from which man must be separated. The next stanza seems to introduce the history of man's attitude toward the earth:

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<sup>8</sup>Nassar, p. 60.



We grew used so soon, too soon, to earth itself,  
 As an element; to the sky, as an element.  
 People might share but were never an element.

These lines refer to an attitude which became outworn when man became part of the elements: "Then he became nothing else." The major elements in the last stanzas are the wild ducks, the weather, the people, the smoke of the villages, and distances. These elements are, in part, arranged in opposition to one another. The wild ducks and the weather seem to be representatives of physical reality, which is indifferent to man. The smoke of the villages seems to refer to man's society. The distances are those between man and physical reality. Thus though man's situation changed, physical reality seemed indifferent, removed:

It was late in the year.  
 The wild ducks were enveloped. The weather was cold.

However, man's society remained and formed a buffer between man and physical reality:

There remained the smoke of the villages. Their fire  
 Was central in distances the wild ducks could  
 Not span, without any weather at all.

. . . . .  
 It was that they were there  
 That held the distances off: the villages  
 Held off the final, fatal distances,  
 Between us and the place in which we stood.

Looking at the poem from this perspective, one is inclined to think that the "smoke from the villages" is entirely successful. However, the metaphors will not allow one to be confident of his separation from the earth. The metaphors emphasize man's discovery that he is part of that physical reality from which he feels secure. In describing the change from the old to the new world, after indicating the indifference of physical reality, the poet writes:

Yet, under the migrations to solitude,

There remained the smoke of the villages.

The word "migrations" is, of course, appropriate to the wild ducks. However, one suspects that in this context it is used to describe man's movement to his new recognition of himself. If so, it immediately relates man to the wild ducks. The same basic word is used again later to indicate that man cannot separate himself from other men, and here it has the same effect:

The weather of other lives, from which there could

Be no migrating.

This quotation reveals another metaphor, "weather of other lives," which also indicates similarities between man and the physical reality from which his villages shelter him. By showing that man is really a part of physical reality, the metaphors cause the reader to sense the tension between man's identification with and his distance from the "place in which we stood."

"Invective Against Swans" (CP, 4), a short poem consisting of six two line stanzas, is another example of a poem containing Stevens' organic metaphors. These metaphors are surrounded by very brief and vague statements of the theme in stanzas one and six. These statements are themselves metaphorical:

The soul, O ganders, flies beyond the parks

The soul, O ganders, being lonely, flies  
Beyond your chilly chariots, to the skies.

The theme is one of the soul's longing for something, perhaps permanence beyond itself,<sup>9</sup> which it cannot achieve where it is, "in the parks."

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

There are many elements which seem to contribute to the soul's longing; these elements are included metaphorically in the poem.

The soul itself takes on the characteristics of a bird which flies away leaving other birds, the ganders, behind. What the soul escapes is very complex. First of all, it escapes the parks, which perhaps suggest a patterned existence imposed by man himself. This image is recalled in stanza five with the mention of the "long parades" on which "The crows anoint the statues with their dirt." "Long parades" suggest patterned movement. Statues, of course, often appear in parks and are themselves reminders of man's imposing his will on raw materials and fixing their existence in a permanent form. Just as there was something wrong in the man-ordered park, so the statues are being defiled by the crows.

Secondly, the soul escapes the "discords of the wind." "Discord" can imply that the wind is noisy, perhaps cacophonous. It may also imply disagreement, perhaps a disagreement so strong that one also imagines the noise of battle. If so, this metaphor is recalled by "long parades" in stanza five, and certainly by "chilly chariots" in stanza six. Parades are often somewhat military in nature. Chariots were used in ancient times for both war and parades. Thus, "chariot" may unify those images which deal with discord.

Other metaphors which help the reader understand what the soul desires to escape concern the "death of summer." This death is marked by "A bronze rain from the sun." This metaphor suggests the bronze cast of the almost visible rays of the sun in early autumn. It may also recall the statues previously mentioned. The lingering death of summer is endured as one would endure the lingering death of a person making

a will. This testament is "listless," perhaps almost indecent: "Of golden quirks and Paphian caricatures." The ganders are again evident. Their "white feathers" are bequeathed to the moon; their "Bland motions" to the air. Perhaps they will not fit into the new season, which will be more severe. If so, the metaphor, "chilly chariots" is again appropriate. "Chariot" could refer to the movement, or carriage, of the ganders, and "chilly" to the approaching severity. These death and final testament metaphors are also further related to stanza five: "The crows anoint the statues with their dirt." "Anoint" can refer to the ceremony in preparation for death. In this way it could also further emphasize the ineffectiveness of the statues. Thus it seems that the soul "flies beyond the parks" to escape unsatisfactory human order, discord, change, and death. One can hope to understand the necessity for such a flight, however, only by understanding the metaphors with which Stevens almost exclusively communicates his theme.

Perhaps the most accurate generalization that can be made about the relationship between theme and metaphor in Stevens' poems is that it is often one of dependency: the theme is dependent upon metaphor; expression is largely through metaphor. It seems that Stevens can achieve the nuance of thought and feeling that he desires through the interaction of metaphors. Indeed, in a poem with a title appropriate to this discussion, "Thinking of a Relation Between the Images of Metaphors" (CP, 356), Stevens says,

How close  
To the unstated theme each variation comes. . . .

One must not, then, approach his poetry looking for one key line which will be elaborated and decorated by figurative language. The metaphors

are not decorative. The poems must be approached through the metaphors, and, thus, in part, through the senses:

The poem must resist the intelligence  
Almost successfully.

(CP, 350)

### CHAPTER III

#### RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TENORS AND VEHICLES

In addition to the relationships between themes and metaphors, there are also interesting and complex relationships within the metaphors themselves or between tenors and vehicles of different metaphors. However, Stevens quite naturally uses some metaphors which seem structurally much like those of other poets. For example, the isolated metaphors, "Time is the hooded enemy" (CP, 330) and "Life is an old casino in a park" (CP, 142), do not exhibit any but the most common tenor-copulative verb-vehicle structure. Similarly, the familiar metaphor from "Sunday Morning" (CP, 66), "Death is the mother of beauty," although certainly effective in the poem is not structurally unusual. The other familiar structure for metaphors--that in which the verb carries the weight of the vehicle--is also found in Stevens' poetry. An example of this structure can be found in "Academic Discourse at Havana" (CP, 142):

. . . before the chronicle  
Of affected homage foxed so many books,  
They [the swans] warded the blank waters of the lakes.

The words foxed and warded suggest the vehicles of the metaphors in these lines. Similarly, in "Mud Master" (CP, 147) the word snarls is the vehicle in the line "The mind snarls." Or in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" (CP, 382) the word winged is the vehicle in the lines which state that the poem

. . . sends us, winged by an unconscious will,  
To an immaculate end.

In "Analysis of a Theme" (CP, 348) is the very effective metaphor:

In the conscious world, the great clouds  
Potter in the summer sky.

One of Stevens' most common ways of connecting tenor and vehicle is by appositive construction. Indeed, Frank Doggett considers this construction one of the "characteristic forms of Wallace Stevens' later style, especially of The Auroras of Autumn. The frequent recurrence of these forms gives the later poems their special air of abstraction, their appearance of lyric philosophy."<sup>1</sup> The first stanza of "One of the Inhabitants of the West" (CP, 503) has such structure. It consists of a tenor followed by two vehicles or appositives:

Our divinations,  
Mechanisms of angelic thought,  
The means of prophecy.

In "Esthétique du Mal" (CP, 315) the "over human god" becomes "Our oldest parent, peer/ Of the populace of the heart, the oldest lord,"

Another feature of Stevens' metaphors is that the vehicles may be extremely abstract or extremely concrete. Howard Nemerov states that with Stevens, metaphor becomes

arbitrary, mystical or absurd, since particulars  
may be said to resemble generalities as it were  
helplessly, whether or not the mind can trace  
the details of the resemblance:

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Doggett, "Wallace Stevens' Later Poetry," English Literary History, XXV (June 1958), 145.

The dress of a woman of Lhasa,  
 In its place,  
 Is an invisible element of that place  
 Made visible.<sup>2</sup>

Other instances can be cited in which the vehicle of the metaphor is rather abstract. For example, one might note the first metaphor of "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman" (CP, 59): "Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame." This line is reminiscent, of course, of the line in "Peter Quince at the Clavier" (CP, 90): "Music is feeling, then, not sound." Both "supreme fiction" and "feeling" are rather abstract. Perhaps in contrast one could cite a line from "The Man with the Blue Guitar": "The amorist Adjective aflame . . ." (CP, 172). The abstraction, "Adjective" is "blooded" by the word aflame; however, the entire concept manages, somehow, to escape becoming entirely concrete. In sharp contrast is the simple, but extremely vivid metaphor from "Meditation Celestial & Terrestrial" (CP, 123-124): "summer, the drunken mother."

Individual poems may combine abstract and concrete metaphors. For instance, in part I of "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery" (CP, 150) the sun of autumn is

Like Walt Whitman walking along a ruddy shore.  
 He is singing and chanting the things that are part of him.

In addition the poet states that "His beard is of fire and his staff is a leaping flame." These metaphors seem vivid and concrete. In part XVII of this poem a metaphor constructed in Stevens' method of using appositives combines the abstract and the concrete. The "sun of Asia" as it creeps around is likened to "A tiger lamed by nothingness and

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<sup>2</sup>Howard Nemerov, "The Poetry of Wallace Stevens," Sewanee Review, LXV (Winter, 1957), 4.



frost." The tiger is concrete, but the nothingness which lames him is intangible. Then in part XXXII is the very abstract metaphor, "Poetry is a finikin thing of air."

"Poetry is a Destructive Force" (CP, 192) also contains such examples. In this poem Stevens works from the abstract to the concrete. Quite abstractly he says:

That's what misery is,  
Nothing to have at heart.  
It is to have or nothing.

Then managing to transform these abstractions into the concrete, he writes:

It is a thing to have,  
A lion, an ox in his breast,  
To feel it breathing there.  
.....  
He tastes its blood, not spit.  
  
He is like a man  
In the body of a violent beast.  
Its muscles are his own. . . .

Although these isolated examples may exhibit nothing particularly unusual, the total effect of many of Stevens' poems is dependent on several rather striking uses of metaphor. At times the effect is due to the relationships between the tenor and vehicle of a single metaphor or between the vehicle of one metaphor and the tenor of another.

One of Stevens' patterns is perhaps most often noted in "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" (CP, 92):

A man and a woman  
Are one.  
A man and a woman and a blackbird  
Are one.

Such metaphors could perhaps be called "metaphors of identity." They cause the reader to determine in what ways the objects are one. In so doing, the reader may also notice that in some ways the items are not

one. In addition to these well-known lines, there are in Stevens other examples of this type of metaphor. In "Connoisseur of Chaos" (CP, 215) the poet writes:

- A. A violent order is disorder; and
  - B. A great disorder is an order. These
- Two things are one.

In "The Pastoral Nun" (CP, 378) is the line "poetry and apotheosis are one." "Sketch of the Ultimate Politician" (CP, 335) contains the line "Building and dream are one." And finally "The Man with the Blue Guitar" has a simple example, "The blue guitar and I are one" (CP, 171).

Another of Stevens' devices is what might be called "negative metaphor." This device is not new, but it is an effective method of achieving a precise feeling. An example of what is meant here by "negative metaphor" is the following from "The Man with the Blue Guitar":

The earth is not earth but a stone,  
Not the mother that held men as they fell

But stone.

(CP, 173)

In this case the reader is first told what the tenor, the earth, is not. In the second line particularly the "negative metaphor" is effective in that it causes the reader to imagine the earth as the traditional mother. This metaphor is rather comforting in its conventional way. However, the reader conjures up this image only to erase it because the metaphor is negative. Thus the reader has a sense of loss which heightens his understanding of the indifference of the earth, this indifference being pointed out in the positive part of the metaphor: the earth is stone.

Often the negative relationship between tenor and vehicle is the basis of a poem. For instance, in "Stars at Tallapoosa" (CP, 71) Stevens uses "negative metaphors" which are usually followed by the

contrasting positive ones. The effect in this poem is much the same as that of the previous example. Stevens is describing the night and the lines "between the stars." These lines are "straight and swift"; they are dark and sharp. Because of these things "The night is not the cradle that they cry." The vehicle cradle implies softness, gentle curves, safety, and comfort. But this vehicle must be erased.

Similarly, in

The body is no body to be seen  
But is an eye that studies its black lid,

Stevens again contradicts one of man's old assumptions and supplies a striking substitute. Also in this poem Stevens adds further complications. He uses a "negative metaphor," follows it by a positive one, questions the positive one, and offers yet another possibility. The "negative metaphor" is

The melon-flower nor dew nor web of either  
Is like to these [the lines between the stars].

Again the images of softness and gentle curves must be put aside. Rather the first positive vehicle is offered:

A sheaf of brilliant arrows flying straight,  
Flying and falling straightway for their pleasure,  
Their pleasure that is all bright-edged and cold.

The substituted vehicle is less comforting, more cold and pure. But it too is questioned and the poem ends with the final positive vehicle:

Or, if not arrows, then the nimblest motions,  
Making recoveries of young nakedness  
And the lost vehemence the midnights hold.

Apparently one of the uses for which Stevens finds the "negative metaphor" most appropriate is that of emphasizing the separation of man from the world around him. In "Nuances of a Theme by Williams" (CP, 18) the poet enjoins the star to "Shine alone, shine nakedly." The star

must not assume any human characteristics. Using "negative metaphors" the poet writes that the star should

Be not chimera of morning,  
Half-man, half-star.  
Be not an intelligence,  
Like a widow's bird  
Or an old horse.

However, the poet uses this device with other themes also. In "The Cuban Doctor" (CP, 64) the Indian is the tenor of a "negative metaphor":

This was no worm bred in the moon,  
Wriggling far down the phantom air,  
And on a comfortable sofa dreamed.

The vehicle indicates that a worm is not what the Indian was, but the reader must imagine a moon-bred worm if he is to negate the image.

Somewhat similarly in Stevens' masterpiece, "Sunday Morning" (CP, 66), the voice cries,

"The tomb in Palestine  
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.  
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay."  
(CP, 170)

In achieving a perfectly clear image in "Six Significant Landscapes" (CP, 73) Stevens uses a modification of "negative metaphor." The metaphor is itself positive: the pattern which results from a star's shining through leaves is the star's art, its carving. In order to intensify the beauty of this carving, Stevens compares other examples of carving negatively with it. The star's carving is greater than any other:

Not all the knives of the lamp-posts,  
Nor the chisels of the long streets,  
Nor the mallets of the domes  
And high towers,  
Can carve  
What one star can carve,  
Shining through the grape-leaves.

In "The Idea of Order at Key West" (CP, 128) Stevens uses "negative metaphor" to arrive at the exact meaning he desires. Throughout much of the poem the poet must convey to the reader what the singing was not. In so doing he uses "negative metaphors." After the negative aspects have been clarified, the poet is free to develop his positive ideas. This poem begins with a statement which needs the type of subtle clarification which Stevens achieves through the use of positive and negative metaphors: "She sang beyond the genius of the sea." The clarification of this statement comes partly through a metaphor which tells what the water did not do:

The water never formed to mind or voice,  
Like a body wholly body, fluttering  
Its empty sleeves.

Nevertheless the water did perhaps react in some way. This reaction is conveyed by another metaphor:

. . . and yet its mimic motion  
Made constant cry, caused constantly a cry,  
That was not ours although we understood,  
Inhuman, of the veritable ocean.

Stevens explains his idea further in the next stanza, which is constructed of "negative metaphors" followed by positive ones. The former are quite clear:

The sea was not a mask. No more was she.  
The song and water were not medleyed sound. . . .

However, the sea and song are almost but not entirely independent of one another. The positive metaphors about the water and wind so indicate:

It may be that in all her phrases stirred  
The grinding water and the grasping wind;  
But it was she and not the sea we heard.

Stevens also poses some metaphorical postulates which lead him to a metaphorical conclusion:

If it was only the dark voice of the sea  
That rose, or even colored by many waves;  
If it was only the outer voice of sky  
And cloud, of the sunken coral water-walled,  
However clear, it would have been deep air,  
The heaving speech of air, a summer sound  
Repeated in a summer without end  
And sound alone.

In examining these postulates somewhat closely, one notices that the sequence of metaphors is quite lengthy. For instance, if the sound or song is the sound of the sea, or the "dark voice of the sea," it would be "deep air" or the "heaving speech of air." These phrases are followed by the appositive, "a summer sound" and finally completing a circle, "sound alone." Perhaps because of that very circle, these postulates are not satisfactory, and the poet states, "But it was more than that." The important metaphors which complete this poem are positive:

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  
That was her song, for she was the maker.

The effect of her song was so great that everything became more ordered as one can see in the following metaphors:

The lights in the fishing boats at anchor there,  
As the night descended, tilting in the air,  
Mastered the night and portioned out the sea,  
Fixing emblazoned zones and fiery poles,  
Arranging, deepening, enchanting night.

Through these metaphors Stevens arrives at the point at which he can state the cause and the theme of the poem: the "Blessed rage for order."

In "Study of Two Pears" (CP, 196) Stevens also uses "negative metaphor." However, he does not use it in his usual way; he does not

follow the negative metaphor with a positive one. Rather it seems to be his purpose to eliminate metaphor entirely:

The pears are not viols,  
Nudes or bottles.  
They resemble nothing else.

In what is apparently one of his statements against metaphor he concludes the poem with the following lines:

The pears are not seen  
As the observer wills.

Throughout the poem the poet describes the pears in primarily non-metaphorical language. However, metaphor creeps in:

The yellow glistens.  
It glistens with various yellows,  
Citrons, oranges and greens.  
Flowering over the skin.

Flowering is an appropriate word, but it does for an instant make the pears resemble something else.

Somewhat in contrast with "negative metaphors" is a device in which Stevens uses as the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor two items which seem in most ways unlike. As William Van O'Conner indicates, if the items compared are in most respects dissimilar, the comparison is considered a conceit. O'Conner mentions two kinds of conceit, the condensed and the expanded, both of which he finds in Stevens. He cites two condensed conceits from Owl's Clover:

The future must bear within it every past,  
Not least the pasts destroyed, magniloquent  
Syllables, pewter on ebony.

and

The envoi to the past  
Is largely another winding of the clock.

Poems which O'Conner considers expanded conceits are "Bantams in Pine-Woods," "The Bird with the Coppery Keen Claws," "Peter Quince at the

Clavier," "Stars at Tallapoosa" and "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman." The first few lines of "Of Hartford In a Purple Light," according to O'Conner, "suggest the wit and the manner Stevens can employ in probing and expanding a conceit."<sup>3</sup> These lines are

A long time you have been making the trip  
From Havre to Hartford, Master Soleil,  
Bringing the lights of Norway and all that.  
(CP, 226)

Similarly, Hi Simons in his article "The Genre of Wallace Stevens" says of "Asides on the Oboe" that it is not the result of a mind "in which rhetorical figures blur and dispel or replace ideas, but of one to which ideas come in such figures." He labels the central image of the poem as a Metaphysical conceit, which he defines as "a figure in which two terms of a comparison meet on limited ground but are otherwise incongruous." He explains that in "Asides on the Oboe" the conceit evolves from the personification of the "philosophers' man" to the paradox, "The impossible possible philosophers' man." The conceit goes through several phases: the "central man," the "human globe," "mirror with a voice," "man of glass/ Who in a million diamonds sums us up," and "We and the diamond globe at last were one." Although Simons does not attempt to give evidence, he does say that "countless others of Stevens' compositions are conceits quite of the Metaphysical order."<sup>4</sup>

Another example of what could be considered a conceit is section V of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" (CP, 468). In this poem the conceit is used to describe how the world became divided between

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<sup>3</sup>William Van O'Conner, The Shaping Spirit: A Study of Wallace Stevens (Chicago, 1950), p. 127.

<sup>4</sup>Simons, pp. 52ff.



imagination and reality. Indicating the futility of inquiring about the person or thing responsible for the division, the poet writes:

Why, then, inquire  
Who has divided the world, what entrepreneur?  
No man.

He then is ready to explain the reason for the division. The self is responsible. The self is spoken of as "the chrysalis of all men." From this point the description of the chrysalis as it extends itself from earth to sky is conceit-like:

The self, the chrysalis of all men  
Became divided in the leisure of blue day  
And more, in branchings after day. One part  
Held fast tenaciously in common earth  
  
And one from central earth to central sky  
And in moonlit extensions of them in the mind  
Searched out such majesty as it could find.

In "Page from a Tale" (CP, 421) Stevens uses lines from Yeats' "Lake Isle of Innisfree" and in so doing contrasts the rather pleasant situation which Yeats describes with the frightening situation which faces the crew of the ice-bound ship, Balayne. The members of the crew plan to walk over the frozen sea to the shore where "Hans listened by the fire." The danger of such a walk is intensified by the threat of a bright sun, which might melt the ice. Stevens devotes approximately half the poem to descriptions of the sun. Some of these descriptions seem to be conceits. For instance, he describes a complex situation in which the sun

. . . might become a wheel spoked red and white  
In alternate stripes converging at a point  
Of flame on the line, with a second wheel below,  
Just rising, accompanying, arranged to cross,  
Through weltering illuminations, humps  
Of billows, downward, toward the drift-fire shore.

This conceit is followed by another in which the sun might bring with it evil kin, or monsters, which would think of ways to destroy the men:

It might come bearing, out of chaos, kin  
 Smears, smoked, and drunken of thin potencies,  
 Lashing at images in the atmosphere,  
 Ringed round and barred, with eyes held in their hands,  
 And capable of incapably evil thought:  
 Slight gestures that could rend the palpable ice,  
 Or melt Arcturus to ingots dropping drops,  
 Or spill night out in brilliant vanishings,  
 Whirlpools of darkness in whirlwinds of light. . . .

The short poem, "Tattoo" (CP, 81) consists of an extended comparison which has its elaborate and striking qualities like those of a conceit. The first three lines establish the basic comparison and are not particularly unusual:

The light is like a spider.  
 It crawls over the water.  
 It crawls over the edges of the snow.

However, the next two lines are striking:

It crawls under your eyelid  
 And spreads its webs there.

These webs are fastened to the "flesh and bones of you as to rafters or grass." In the last stanza of the poem, the webs, now called filaments, represent the light beams between one's eyes and the object at which he is looking:

There are filaments of your eyes  
 On the surface of the water  
 And in the edges of the snow.

The comparison of lines of vision to the web of a spider has ramifications which make the comparison seem to be a conceit.

Another of Stevens' structural patterns is the complex or telescoped metaphor. In this pattern the vehicle of one metaphor becomes the tenor of the next metaphor. Section III of "Variations on a Summer Day" (CP, 232) seems to be an almost conscious explanation of this pattern.

In this poem the rocks are dogs which turn into fishes:

The rocks of the cliffs are the heads of dogs  
That turn into fishes and leap  
Into the sea.

It is perhaps this process that Michel Benamou describes when he says that "metaphors seem to generate one another."<sup>5</sup> Citing poems in which this process is evident ("The Load of Sugar-Cane," "Frogs Eat Butterflies. . ."), Don Geiger says that all the objects in these poems are related so that their separate identities depend upon one another. According to Geiger, this fusion of elements is a characteristic of seventeenth century poetry.<sup>6</sup> Noting the same process in "Domination of Black" and "The Load of Sugar-Cane," J. Hillis Miller says that Stevens' poetry is full of motion, which is often circular. Some of his poems are a series of fluid transformations in which objects modulate into one another by a process which is not metaphorical because all the elements are on the same level of reality.<sup>7</sup>

Stevens himself notes the process and indicates too that the reality of the vehicle is necessary:

There is no such thing as a metaphor of a metaphor. One does not progress through metaphors. Thus reality is the indispensable element of each metaphor. When I say that man is a god it is very easy to see that if I also say that a god is something else, god has become reality.<sup>8</sup>

Stevens, however, does not deny that the process is metaphorical.

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<sup>5</sup>Benamou, "Wallace Stevens and the Symbolist Imagination," p. 110.

<sup>6</sup>Geiger, p. 157.

<sup>7</sup>J. Hillis Miller, Poets of Reality: Six 20th Century Writers (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 226-227.

<sup>8</sup>Wallace Stevens, Opus Posthumous, ed. Samuel French Morse (London, 1957), p. 179.

As has already been indicated, "The Load of Sugar-Cane" (CP, 12) is an example of this process. In this poem the movement of the glade-boat is compared to water flowing under rainbows. Next the rainbows are compared to birds turning "While the wind still whistles." Then the whistling of the wind is compared to the whistling of kildeer:

When they rise  
At the red turban  
Of the boatman.

Having returned to the boatman, the reader is in somewhat the same location as he was when the poem began.

The metaphors in "The Glass of Water" (CP, 197) also are telescoped. In the first stanza the glass, the vehicle of a metaphor, is spoken of first; the tenor, the metaphysical, follows. The resemblance between the two is that both have different states of being:

That the glass would melt in heat,  
That the water would freeze in cold,  
Shows that this object is merely a state,  
One of many, between two poles. So,  
In the metaphysical, there are these poles.

In stanzas two and three further metaphors are added. In one of its states, that of being a glass of water, the glass becomes a pool. Light, which literally will cause evaporation of the water in this state, becomes a "lion that comes down to drink":

Ruddy are his eyes and ruddy are his claws  
When light comes down to wet his frothy jaws

And in the water winding weeds move round.

Yet another metaphor is introduced:

And there and in another state--the refractions,  
The metaphysica, the plastic parts of poems  
Crash in the mind.

The glass of water will refract light. In the same way "The metaphysica, the plastic parts of poems" are refractions. All of these

things, tenor and vehicle alike, "crash in the mind" probably as the tiger crashes in the pool. Thus these metaphors depend on a shifting line between what is tenor and what is vehicle. First of all, the metaphysical is a metaphorical glass of water. Then the glass of water becomes literal and is metaphorically a pool from which light, a lion, drinks. Next light (as refractions), the metaphysica, and the "plastic parts of poems" are things which metaphorically "Crash in the mind."

A brief look at "Domination of Black" (CP, 8) will also reveal the pattern:

Was it a cry against the twilight  
Or against the leaves themselves  
Turning in the wind,  
Turning as the flames  
Turned in the fire,  
Turning as the tails of the peacocks  
Turned in the loud fire,  
Loud as the hemlocks  
Full of the cry of the peacocks?

In these lines the leaves are like the flames which, in turn, are like the tails of the peacocks. The items really begin to merge when "the tails of the peacocks" turn in the fire. In addition the fire and the hemlocks both become loud, a characteristic which recalls the cry of the peacocks.

"Dry Loaf" (CP, 199) is another example of a poem which contains telescoped or complex metaphors. Along with the title, the first metaphor in this poem indicates the unhappy tone of the poem:

It is equal to living in a tragic land  
To live in a tragic time.

The poem describes this land and time through metaphors which form a circle and which share the element of inevitability. The first element in the circle is the "dry men blown/ Brown as the bread, thinking of birds." These birds taken from the thoughts of the men are compared to

... dirty water in waves  
 Flowering above the rocks, flowering over the sky,  
 As if the sky was a current that bore them along,  
 Spreading them as waves spread flat on the shore,  
 One after another washing the mountains bare.

The waves, the next link in the circle, "were soldiers moving." Thus the reader is back with men, remembering that it was men who were thinking of the birds in the first place. The elements of the metaphors are combined in these lines:

It was soldiers went marching over the rocks  
 And still the birds came, came in watery flocks. . . .

All share the apparent inevitability of their fate:

Because it was spring and the birds had to come  
 No doubt that soldiers had to be marching  
 And that drums had to be rolling, rolling, rolling,

The phrase, no doubt, has the effect, however, of leaving considerable doubt in the mind of the reader.

"Somnambulisma" (CP, 304) is a poem in which the metaphors are usually related even for telescoped metaphors. The poem is structured around the following conceit:

On an old shore, the vulgar ocean rolls  
 Noiselessly, noiselessly, resembling a thin bird,  
 That thinks of settling, yet never settles, on a nest.

The next stanza appears to be an elaboration of the image. The reader tends to apply what is being said of the bird to the ocean. This application can successfully be made, especially in that the second line in this stanza seems to be an apt description of the waves on the shore:

The wings keep spreading and yet are never wings.  
 The claws keep scratching on the shale, the  
 shallow shale,  
 The sounding shallow, until by water washed away.

The reader is perhaps not particularly aware at this point of the

incongruity of the water's washing itself away. However, the next stanza heightens his awareness as a very literal bird becomes necessary:

The generations of the bird are all  
 By water washed away. They follow after.  
 They follow, follow, follow, in water washed away.

From this point on the bird becomes important in its own right. It becomes more than something that the ocean resembles; it becomes something on which the ocean is dependent, for without it the ocean

Would be a geography of the dead: not of that land  
 To which they may have gone, but of the place in which  
 They live, in which they lacked a pervasive being,

In which no scholar, separately dwelling,  
 Poured forth the fine fins, the gawky beaks, the personalia,  
 Which, as a man feeling everything, were his.

The bird has thus in the first part of this quotation taken on a symbolic significance. It now seems to be something which is necessary to life, perhaps imagination. Without it, the ocean, which often suggests unmanageable physical reality, would find itself "a geography of the dead." However, the bird is again made physical in the last lines quoted when Stevens refers to "gawky beaks" belonging to the scholar. The birds become other inhabitants of the ocean along with the fish of "fine fins." The scholar metaphorically takes on characteristics of the ocean in that he "poured forth the fine fins" apparently much as the ocean will leave items along the beach. To further complicate the issue, the beaks and the fins belonged to the ocean-like scholar because he was "a man feeling everything." The poem seems complex partly because the images vacillate between the literal and the metaphorical or symbolic.

In contrast to this process in which the vehicle of one metaphor becomes the tenor of another is the process in which the tenor is

scrupulously maintained throughout a series of vehicles. In this process the vehicles will most often be attached to the tenor by appositive construction. The structure is that of a tenor, followed by a vehicle as an appositive, followed by another vehicle as an appositive, etc. There will be as many such vehicles as the poet chooses to use. The purpose of these metaphors is not to convey an impression by having objects modulate into one another. Rather the purpose is to convey as many aspects as possible of a central tenor. Each of the vehicles applied to the tenor implies another characteristic of the tenor.

The process can be seen in "Chocurua to its Neighbor" (CP, 296). This poem is one of several discussions of the fictive hero or "major man." In this poem the description of the hero is carried out largely through metaphors. The first few stanzas prepare for the appearance of the hero. Stanza one talks of being "large in space," being part of "large earth, large air." Being such is "To perceive men without reference to their form." The second stanza takes up the idea of form in armies and cities in which individual forms become indistinguishable:

The armies are forms in number, as cities are.  
The armies are cities in movement. But a war  
Between cities is a gesticulation of forms,  
A swarming of number over number, not  
One foot approaching, one uplifted arm.

With two stanzas providing the setting the hero appears:

. . . this prodigious shadow, who then came  
In an elemental freedom, sharp and cold.

In stanzas four through nine, which consist of metaphorical definitions and descriptions of this shadow, many different metaphors are applied to the shadow, but each metaphor has as its tenor the shadow, which is often referred to as "he." In one such definition of the shadow Stevens writes:



He was the figure in  
 A poem for Liadoff, the self of selves:  
 To think of him destroyed the body's form.

In another he is

. . . a shell of dark blue glass, or ice,  
 Or air collected in a deep essay,  
 Of light embodied, or almost, a flash,  
 Blue's last transparence as it turned to black. . . .

Especially in this last quotation, one can see quite clearly Stevens' method. Each metaphor is added to the list by the conjunction or; thus each refers to he rather than to the preceding vehicle. The list continues as he is "The glitter of a being" and a "fusion of night."

In one of the descriptions of the hero the poet writes:

The feeling of him was the feel of day,  
 And of a day as yet unseen, in which  
 To see was to be.

In this metaphor the vehicle is stated; then it is itself defined more specifically. A similar process is evident in the following description:

The substance of his body seemed  
 Both substance and non-substance, luminous flesh  
 Or shapely fire: fire from an underworld,  
 Of less degree than flame and lesser shine.

"Luminous flesh" in this example is a vehicle for "substance"; "shapely fire" is a vehicle for "non-substance." Then "shapely fire" is itself defined more clearly as "fire from an underworld."

The shadow himself speaks and uses metaphorical language. His final sentence contains metaphors which also remain independent of one another:

"There lies the misery, the coldest coil  
 That grips the centre, the actual bite, that life  
 Itself is like a poverty in the space of life,  
 So that the flapping of wind around me here  
 Is something in tatters that I cannot hold."

The poet indicates that the collective being knew "There were others like him safely under roof." These people are listed: a captain, a Cardinal, a mother, a scholar. Next they too are described by several metaphors. Again each vehicle of these metaphors refers to the original tenor: The people are

True transfigurers fetched out of the human mountain,  
True genii for the diminished, spheres,  
Gigantic embryos of populations,

Blue friends in shadows, rich conspirators,  
Confiders and comforters and lofty kin.

Finally Chocurua speaks of the shadow and deflates him a bit by using metaphors he finds appropriate. The structure of these metaphors follows the pattern already observed:

Now, I, Chocurua, speak of this shadow as  
A human thing. It is an eminence,  
But of nothing, trash of sleep that will disappear

.....

XXI

Not father, but bare brother, megalfrere,  
.....  
the total man of glubbal glub,  
Political tramp with an heraldic air,

XXII

Cloud-casual, metaphysical metaphor.

Throughout the poem Stevens is consistent in his use of several metaphors to define or describe his hero. Perhaps because his purpose is to characterize the hero, the poet maintains emphasis on the original tenor--often the hero.

In "Less and Less Human, O Savage Spirit" (CP, 327) Stevens describes the kind of god that might be acceptable if it is necessary for man to have one at all:

Let him move as the sunlight moves on the floor,  
Or moonlight, silently, as Plato's ghost

Or Aristotle's skeleton.

In the conclusion of the poem, while describing the god, Stevens uses metaphors in which the tenor and vehicle are connected by appositive construction:

If there must be a god in the house, let him be one  
That will not hear us when we speak: a coolness,

A vermilioned nothingness, any stick of the mass  
Of which we are too distantly a part.

One notices that these particular metaphors are much like those in "Chocurua to its Neighbor." Each of the three vehicles (coolness, nothingness, stick) refers to the original tenor, the god. The purpose of the metaphors is similar also: to convey as many aspects of the god as is possible. Thus the poet seems to keep attention carefully focused on the god, the original tenor.

## CHAPTER IV

### RELATIONSHIPS AMONG METAPHORS

More definitely than has already been indicated, the metaphors of Stevens' poems will often be very closely interrelated. At times these metaphors are what Stevens describes as "resemblances," often resemblances among processes. At other times the metaphors, and especially the vehicles of the metaphors, are very closely interrelated or interwoven. Finally Stevens uses extended metaphors which he may retain with minor interruptions throughout an entire poem. In the poems discussed in this chapter the total effect of the poem is due in part to the convergence of the metaphors.

The reason that, for instance, the dust rising from a fallen building can resemble a "mountain-blue cloud" (CP, 109) is that the dust, the cloud, and the mountain have the elements of color and shape in common. Stevens discusses this sort of "resemblance" in the first of the "Three Academic Pieces":

. . . in some sense, all things resemble each other. Take for example, 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? There 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 the green and the blue. In short, the light alone creates a unity not only in the recedings of distance, where differences become invisible, but also in the contacts of closer sight.

(NA, 71)



The same device is evident in "The Pure Good of Theory" IV, "Dry Birds Are Fluttering in Blue Leaves" (CP, 332). Stevens announces his theme and then proceeds to give examples to illustrate what he means. The theme is that "It is never the thing but the version of the thing." This statement is followed by the examples:

The fragrance of the woman not her self,  
Her self in her manner not the solid block,

The day in its color not perpending time,  
Time in its weather, our most sovereign lord,  
The weather in words and words in sounds of sound.

These examples are related to the original statement and to one another through the sort of resemblance in which all of the items share a common characteristic.

Also in poem IV of "It Must Change" in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" (CP, 392) such examples are listed by the poet in what apparently is an attempt to convey through their convergence the very degree to which his original statement is true. The poem begins with a statement, which is followed by some of these examples:

Two things of opposite natures seem to depend  
One on another, as a man depends  
On a woman, day on night, the imagined

On the real.

These lines are followed by another idea: "This is the origin of change." Following this idea Stevens presents a long list of metaphors which seem to clarify it:

Winter and spring, cold copulars, embrace  
And forth the particulars of rapture come.

Music falls on the silence like a sense,  
A passion that we feel, not understand.  
Morning and afternoon are clasped together

And North and South are an intrinsic couple  
 And sun and rain a plural, like two lovers  
 That walk away as one in the greenest body.

In solitude the trumpets of solitude  
 Are not of another solitude resounding;  
 A little string speaks for a crowd of voices.

The partaker partakes of that which changes him.  
 The child that touches takes character from the thing,  
 The body, it touches. The captain and his men

Are one and the sailor and the sea are one.

Somewhat similarly, the poem, "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon" (CP, 65), is an elaboration of the central metaphor which is "I was the world in which I walked." The second stanza consists of three questions:

What was the ointment sprinkled on my beard?  
 What were the hymns that buzzed beside my ears?  
 What was the sea whose tide swept through me there?

These questions are answered in stanza three. The metaphorical answers resemble the central metaphor which indicates that the self is the source of all things:

Out of my mind the golden ointment rained,  
 And my ears made the blowing hymns they heard,  
 I was myself the compass of that sea.

On the other hand, the very short poem, "Mud Master" (CP, 147), shows Stevens' skill in noting other resemblances. The first lines of the poem contain the first metaphors:

The muddy rivers of spring  
 Are snarling  
 Under muddy skies.  
 The mind is muddy.

The river, which is literally muddy, takes on the characteristics of an animal as it snarls. The skies and the mind resemble the river in that they are metaphorically muddy. In the next two short stanzas the mind takes on characteristics of the skies and the river in that it is deficient in ways that they apparently are not:

As yet, for the mind, new banks  
 Of bulging green  
 Are not;  
 Sky-sides of gold  
 Are not.

The mind seems indeed to be hopelessly muddy. Further after assuming the muddy characteristic of the river, the mind resembles the river so much that it takes on the river's metaphorical characteristic: it snarls. There is, however, hope in the poem for there is "a master of mud":

The shaft of light  
 Falling, far off, from sky to land,  
 That is he--

The peach-bud maker,  
 The mud master,  
 The master of the mind.

In "Frogs Eat Butterflies. Snakes Eat Frogs. Hogs Eat Snakes. Men Eat Hogs" (CP, 78), one sees resemblances much like those in "Mud Master." As the title hints, a strong unifying element in the poem is the idea that one thing sustains itself by consuming another. The last two stanzas of the poem express this idea and also connect the previous elements of the poem:

That the hours of his indolent, arid days,  
 Grotesque with this nosing in banks,  
 This somnolence and rattapallax,

Seemed to suckle themselves on his arid being  
 As the swine-like river suckled themselves  
 While they went seaward to the sea-mouths.

The principal element in these lines seems to be that the hours "Seemed to suckle themselves" on the farmer. The idea that time does eventually consume man seems effectively expressed in these lines. The effect is, however, dependent on the other resemblances in the poem. The hours



suckle on man "As the swine-like rivers suckled themselves." These rivers to which man is compared have been previously introduced very graphically:

It is true that the rivers went nosing like swine,  
Tugging at banks, until they seemed  
Bland belly-sounds in somnolent troughs.

Returning to the last stanza, one notices that these "Swine-like rivers" are themselves consumed, for they must flow into the "sea-mouths." The poem is not as systematic as the title because man does not, after all, consume the river although like the river he is consumed.

Man, nevertheless, more closely resembles the river than the previous analysis would indicate. His cabin is near the river. The river influences his environment, particularly the air he breathes. As if the river were a swine for a moment, Stevens writes in stanza two:

That the air was heavy with the breath of these swine,  
The breath of turgid summer, and  
Heavy with thunder's rattapallax.

The river's influence on the atmosphere is immediate. The metaphor conveys the heaviness, the humidity, and the smell of some riverside locations. Also the man's life is in a subtle way swine-like. Words like bland and somnolent, which are used in the swine images, are recalled when the days of the man are described as indolent. The intelligence or awareness of the man is also indicated by the fact that he "Knew not the quirks of imagery." Altogether he is rather like a swine himself.

As has certainly been indicated by "Mud Master" and "Frogs Eat Butterflies" another of Stevens' devices is weaving the elements of metaphors from individual poems together in such a way that they become virtually interdependent. The short poem "From the Misery of

Don Joost" (CP, 46) illustrates this process. In line two "And my body, the old animal," the body becomes the "old animal" through appositive construction, the "old animal" becomes

. . . the very self of the storm  
Of sun and slaves, breeding and death.

The metaphors are arranged so that the body is the "old animal," which in turn is "the very self." Further what is said of the body in stanza one is said of the "self of the storm" in stanza four: it "Knows nothing more." Secondly, the title and the first line introduce a series of metaphors closely related to the ones above. "Don Joost" of the title, as well as being the name of the hero, may be an eye pun on joust, thus introducing the idea of combat. This idea is made explicit in line one: "I have finished my combat with the sun." Combat becomes a vehicle for whatever is at an end--life or a struggle with reality. In stanza two what seems at first to be a new metaphor is introduced:

The powerful seasons bred and killed,  
And were themselves the genii  
Of their own ends.

These lines are related to line one, however, especially by the words "killed" and "their own ends." One also notices that the seasons are personified and that they are metaphorically the genii of their own ends. Perhaps spring, for instance, in causing growth to begin does cause itself to be superseded by summer. Perhaps these metaphors of seasons represent, as does the combat of line one, part of that which is at an end for Don Joost. If so, these metaphors are constructed of the tenor, "whatever is finished," and the vehicles, combat and the seasons' breeding and killing. In stanza three a third vehicle for "whatever is finished" is introduced, the storm. It is a

. . . storm  
Of sun and slaves, breeding and death,  
The old animal.

These lines are almost a summary of the metaphors previously introduced: Sun recalls the "combat with the sun"; slaves recalls the geni of stanza two; breeding and death are echoes of "bred and killed." In addition, "the old animal" and the "self of the storm" are present. In the interweaving of all these vehicles, a strange and subtle change has taken place. In stanza one, the body presumably was in "combat with the sun." By stanza three, "the very self," which has been indirectly connected with the body, is the essence of what the body fought with in stanza one--the sun,

. . . the very self of the storm  
Of sun and slaves, breeding and death,  
The old animal.

Even so, each of these things "Knows nothing more."

Metaphors are used in "The Pure Good of Theory" I (CP, 329) to describe certain of time's characteristics. In some cases these metaphors are so closely related that one seems to be an elaboration or further explanation of another. For instance, in stanza one the poet writes:

It is time that beats in the breast and it is time  
That batters against the mind, silent and proud,  
The mind that knows it is destroyed by time.

The actions of beating "in the breast" and battering "in the mind" are elaborated in stanza two in which time becomes a horse which runs (beats and batters) "in the heart" (breast) while the mind listens:

Time is a horse that runs in the heart, a horse  
Without a rider on a road at night.  
The mind sits listening and hears it pass.

In these metaphors, however, time remains the tenor. Such is also the case in this poem when Stevens lists metaphors in a series:

Time is the hooded enemy,  
The inimical music, the enchantered space  
In which the enchanted preludes have their place.

Both "music" and "space" are vehicles for the tenor "time." Thus time becomes both the music and the space which contains the music. Stevens reverses the element in stanza four:

Even breathing is the beating of time, in kind:  
A retardation of its battering,  
A horse grotesquely taut, a walker like  
  
A shadow in mid-earth.

In these lines "breathing" is the tenor, and all of the items used as vehicles have been previously used in the poem as vehicles for the tenor "time." That the "beating of time" can become a vehicle for another tenor shows how complete the metaphoric identification was in stanza one: "It is time that beats in the breast." The same close identification is apparent, then, in the battering, the horse, and the walker.

Some of the metaphors in "Banal Sojourn" (CP, 62) are interwoven with one another while others seem independent. All combine to present a rather unattractive picture of summer. The effect of the metaphors is such that the reader concludes before Stevens announces in the last line that "One has a malady, here, a malady. One feels a malady." One of the first metaphors, "The sky is a blue gum streaked with rose," is not only visually effective but also effective in its feeling of oppressiveness. The next metaphor, "The grackles crack their throats of bone in the smooth air," is effective to the eye as well as the ear. That the sound of the grackles is described as throat bones cracking is

also appropriate to the tone of the poem. Both of these examples show Stevens' use of unusual and striking metaphors; however, both seem to operate independently of the other metaphors.

Those metaphors which are interrelated are concerned more specifically with maladies. One of the unifying figures of the poem is "Summer is like a fat beast, sleepy in mildew." The beast in typical Stevens fashion then becomes "Our old bane, green and bloated, serene. . . ." The words which connect these figures with others in the poem are fat, bane, green, and bloated. Fat and bloated, in particular, are related to previous metaphors: "Moisture and heat have swollen the garden into a slum of bloom." The garden "swells" and becomes crowded and generally unattractive, a "slum of bloom." This bloated condition contrasts with a more attractive picture of seasons "When radiance came running down, slim through the bareness." A radiance that is "slim," that runs "through the bareness" is indeed far more attractive than summer:

And so it is one damns that green shade at the bottom of  
the land.  
For who can care at the wigs despoiling the Satan ear?

"Green shade" and "Satan" are reminiscent of the "old bane, green and bloated" while the "wigs" are perhaps like the other items which clutter the scene. What the poet seems to desire is the "sky unfuzzed, soaring to the princox." To have an "unfuzzed" sky, one must remove the clutter, the wigs, the "slum of bloom."

Similarly, in "The Dwarf" (CP, 208) Stevens establishes closely related sets of metaphors. First of all, winter is a web:

The web is woven and you have to wear it.

The winter is made and you have to bear it,  
The winter web, the winter woven, wind and wind.

Secondly, the mind is woven: "It is the mind that is woven." Thus the mind becomes indirectly related to winter in that they are described by similar vehicles. However, this relationship is intensified when vehicles of weaving and of weather are applied to the mind:

. . . the mind that was jerked  
And tufted in straggling thunder and shattered sun.

The seasonal references indicate that winter is approaching. In other metaphors the mind is a "pupa of straw, moppet of rags." These metaphors both indicate small size, things which have not reached their final growth. Assuming the mind to be the central object in the poem thus far, one notices that the mind is woven; it is like winter, it is a pupa and a moppet. These relationships have been established in the first eight lines of the poem.

In the remaining six lines the poet manages to re-establish and further complicate the relationships noted above:

It [the mind] is all that you are, the final dwarf  
of you,  
That is woven and woven and waiting to be worn,  
  
Neither as mask nor a garment but as a being,  
Torn from insipid summer, for the mirror of cold,  
  
Sitting beside your lamp, there citron to nibble  
And coffee dribble . . . Frost is in the stubble.

The words "woven and woven and waiting to be worn" are applied to the mind which is woven and are also reminiscent of winter which is woven and must be borne. "The mirror of cold" and "frost" are also reminders of winter. "Stubble" in one of its meanings may remind one of the straw of line six. "Dwarf" is somewhat reminiscent of "pupa" and "moppet" in that it too is not fully grown. In addition the phrase "Neither as mask nor as garment" echoes the "pupa of straw, moppet of rags." However, the "final dwarf" seems to indicate the idea of the essence of being

rather than immature being. The mind as "final dwarf" seems to be the "mind of winter" (CP, 9) which is "Torn from insipid summer" and, perhaps has overcome those "thoughts of summer that go with it."

Interweaving metaphors is closely related to and perhaps is a path to the use of single, extended metaphors in poems, another of Stevens' practices. In fact, Hayden Carruth says that most of Stevens' poems are single metaphors.<sup>1</sup> For example, "The Beginning" (CP, 427) is a poem which contains an extended metaphor of which summer is at least the announced tenor. The title refers to the beginning of the new season and the end of summer. Throughout the poem the memory of summer is personified. Before her death she combed "her dewy hair" while looking into a glass; She gathered up "Her dress, the carefulest, commodious weave. . . ." That all is past, however, is clear: "The dress is lying, cast-off, on the floor." Indeed in the first stanza summer is shown to be reduced even more drastically:

So summer comes in the end to these few stains  
And the rust and rot of the door through which she went.

And in the last lines, those familiar with tragedy begin to speak:

Now, the first tutoyers of tragedy  
Speak softly, to begin with, in the eaves.

"The Brave Man" (CP, 138) is another extended metaphor. The sun, through appositive construction, becomes the brave man who "Comes through boughs that lie in wait." Everything that lies in his path runs away: "Green and gloomy eyes/ In dark forms of the grass," "The good stars," and fears.

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<sup>1</sup>Hayden Carruth, "'Without the Inventions of Sorrow,'" Poetry, LXXXV (February 1955), 290.

Part II of "Six Significant Landscapes" (CP, 73) is also an extended metaphor. First, night is compared to the "color of a woman's arm." Then in Stevens' manner of using appositives, night becomes the female with certain appropriate traits:

Night, the female,  
Obscure,  
Fragrant and supple,  
Conceals herself.

The striking part of this stanza is the pool which appears suddenly in the night:

A pool shines,  
Like a bracelet  
Shaken in a dance.

The simile used in these lines is closely related to previous images of the female, especially the reference to her arm. However, just as the shining pool is a contrast to the night, so the bracelet is a contrast to the previous metaphors of obscurity and concealment. That the bracelet is shaken seems also to contrast with the word supple earlier in the poem. The bracelet "shaken in a dance" adds a quality of excitement to the already appealing woman of the first lines of the poem.

Poems V and VI of "Auroras of Autumn" (CP, 415-16) contain an extended metaphor of the theater. However, the tenor of the metaphor of which theater is the vehicle seems to change from one poem to the other. In poem V the theater is the vehicle for the father's hospitality:

The father fetches pageants out of air,  
Scenes of the theatre, vistas and blocks of woods  
And curtains like a naive pretence of sleep.

Later in this poem the success of the hospitality is questioned:



We stand in the tumult of a festival.

What festival? This loud, disordered mooch?  
 These hospitaliers? These brute-like guests?  
 These musicians dubbing at a tragedy.

After this questioning, the tenor of the metaphor seems to change so that the world becomes the tenor and the theater the vehicle. The transition is made at the end of poem V:

That there are no lines to speak? There is no play.  
 Or, the persons act one merely by being here.

#### VI

It is a theatre floating through the clouds,

Next Stevens transforms theater into the tenor of another metaphor: the theater is "Itself a cloud." For the next few lines the metaphors are telescoped: the cloud is "of misted rock"

And mountains running like water, wave on wave,

Through waves of light. It is of cloud transformed  
 To cloud transformed again, idly, the way  
 A season changes color to no end,

Except the lavishing of itself in change,  
 As light changes yellow into gold and gold  
 To its opal elements and fire's delight

Splashed wide-wise because it likes magnificence  
 And the solemn pleasures of magnificent space.  
 The cloud drifts idly through half-thought-of forms.

However, the theater itself returns, and the metaphor is dismissed appropriately with the indication that one cannot know the outcome of the world, which now apparently has become a play: "The denouement has to be postponed. . . ."

In another extended metaphor of the theater, "Of Modern Poetry" (CP, 239), "The poem of the mind in the act of finding/ What will suffice" seems to be the actor. First, Stevens describes the settled past:

. . . the scene was set; it repeated what  
 Was in the script.

But circumstances changed:

Then the theatre was changed  
To something else. Its past was a souvenir.

After this the poem had a much more difficult and delicate task:

It has  
To construct a new stage. It has to be on that stage  
And, like an insatiable actor, slowly and  
With meditation, speak words that in the ear,  
In the delicatest ear of the mind, repeat,  
Exactly, that which it wants to hear, at the sound  
Of which, an invisible audience listens,  
Not to the play, but to itself, expressed  
In an emotion as of two people, as of two  
Emotions becoming one.

The actor can no longer predict what his audience is thinking. Yet he must try to express the feelings of that audience. After Stevens has so definitely established his metaphor from the theater, he can speak of actors metaphorically. This he does in a metaphor in which

The actor is  
A metaphysician in the dark, twanging  
An instrument, twanging a wiry string that gives  
Sounds passing through sudden rightnesses, wholly  
Containing the mind.

Other examples of extended, almost intricate metaphors are found in "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" (CP, 13-18). In part I, for instance, after the mockery of the first few lines one finds the rather clear metaphor: "I wish that I might be a thinking stone." Thinking by itself is not what causes the uncle's unhappiness. Being a "thinking stone" would eliminate that which does cause pain--feeling. The stone's being heavy, immobile, and without feeling emphasizes the contrast between what the uncle would like to be, the stone, and what he is: he is one in whom

The sea of spuming thought foists up again  
The radiant bubble that she was. And then  
A deep up-pouring from some saltier well  
Within me, bursts its watery syllable.

In contrast with the "thinking stone" these lines are full of action words: spuming, foists up, up-pouring, bursts. Having feelings makes one unable to maintain an equilibrium. This contrast between the immobility of the stone and the uncontrollable mobility of the water images actually serves to connect the metaphors.

The metaphors in these final four lines are themselves intricately connected with one another. The uncle's recollections are a result of the "sea of spuming thought." That other force within him, perhaps feeling, is a "saltier well." Besides the obvious resemblance between these substances, there is the resemblance between the ways in which they exert themselves. The sea "foists up," and there is a "deep up-pouring" from the well. More importantly, thought causes the recollection: "The radiant bubble that she was." The other force "Bursts its watery syllable." Thus the "radiant bubble" or the "watery syllable" is destroyed by that "saltier well." The word syllable has another function; it recalls an earlier line in this section of the poem: "the clashed edges of two words that kill."

In section VIII of the same poem (CP, 16) Stevens uses what he himself calls a "trivial trope": love is compared to a plant: "It comes, it blooms, it bears its fruit and dies." However, Stevens turns this "trivial trope" into an unforgettable one by taking it one more step. Love remains a plant. Love comes, and "it blooms"; that is, it makes two people into blooms. "It bears its fruit"; that is, it makes two people into the fruit: "We are the fruit thereof." In other words, love is the plant; the lovers are the blooms, later the fruit, and eventually the dead rinds. The metaphor is such that love from one side and the lovers from the other converge on the vehicle, the plant.

Stevens' effect with this strange arrangement is heightened by the literalness with which he means that the lovers are fruit. They are

Two golden gourds distended on our vines,  
 Into the autumn weather, splashed with frost,  
 Distorted by hale fatness, turned grotesque.  
 We hang like warty squashes, streaked and rayed.

Eventually they will become part of the next step; they will die:

The laughing sky will see the two of us  
 Washed into rinds by rotting winter rains.

In "A Primitive Like an Orb" (CP, 440), Stevens' attempt to define the "essential poem at the center of things," one can again notice the use of interrelated and extended metaphors. In this poem a certain figure will be extended for several lines or even stanzas, and then will be dropped in favor of another extended figure.

In the first stanzas of this poem the metaphors could perhaps be more accurately termed interrelated than extended. These metaphors are taken from music or sound. In the first two lines the "essential poem" is compared to "The arias that spiritual fiddlings make." In stanza II the poem

. . . is the huge, high harmony that sounds  
 A little and a little, suddenly,  
 By means of a separate sense.

Noting the poem's elusiveness, the poet combines speech and a musical term:

In the instant of speech,  
 The breadth of an accelerando moves,  
 Captives the being, widens--and was there.

Echoing the idea of a moment's widening, a final metaphor in this series contains one of nature's sounds:

. . . within an instant's motion, within  
 A space grown wide, the inevitable blue  
 Of secluded thunder, an illusion.

One of the extended figures of speech in this poem shows Stevens' ability to extend a figure and to complicate it. The basic image is that of mating. First of all, in another device characteristic of Stevens, two elements, the central poem and the world, become one. Then they become mates:

It is  
As if the central poem became the world,

VI  
And the world the central poem, each one the mate  
of the other.

This figure, in turn, is followed and explained by a second figure, which is also one of mating. Summer is espoused and her mate is her mirror:

. . . as if summer was a spouse,  
Espoused each morning, each long afternoon,  
And the mate of summer: her mirror and her look,  
Her only place and person, a self of her  
That speaks, denouncing separate selves, both one.

Applying this figure to the previous one, the reader feels that perhaps the central poem is the self of the world "That speaks." These figures, however, are dropped after the line which perhaps indicates the result of the mating: "The essential poem begets the others."

The last four stanzas of the poem are extensions of a metaphor which indicates that the central poem is "A giant, on the horizon." The giant is elaborately described in stanzas IX, X, and XI. He is "an abstraction given head." He must seem to the poet to be a successful figure, for stanza XII begins "That's it." The rest of this final stanza is devoted to a summary of the poem in terms of the giant. One notices especially the metaphorical rendering of the idea expressed earlier in the poem that the central poem is "something seen and known in lesser poems":

The lover writes, the believer hears,  
 The poet mumbles and the painter sees,  
 Each one, his fated eccentricity,  
 As a part, but part, but tenacious particle,  
 Of the skeleton of the ether, the total  
 Of letter, prophecies, perceptions, clods  
 Of color, the giant of nothingness, each one  
 And the giant ever changing, living in change.

Perhaps the most beautiful result, however, of extended metaphor in Stevens is "Peter Quince at the Clavier" (CP, 89), a very tightly integrated poem. The dominant image is music, and, in fact, many of the metaphors are elaborations of one of the early metaphors: "Music is feeling, then, not sound."

Part one of the poem introduces the present situation--Peter Quince at the clavier recalls a mythical situation, that of Susanna, which is developed in the remainder of the poem. The first three lines introduce the music of feeling, almost a spiritual music:

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

His fingers make literal music; that literal music makes another kind of music on his spirit. Thus one arrives at the central metaphor: "Music is feeling, then, not sound." This metaphor is basically the same as the similes in the first three lines except that the central step has been omitted and the identity between music and feeling has thus become closer. The next metaphor establishes that his desire for the woman in "blue-shadowed silk" is also music. This metaphor reverses the elements: now feeling is music. Next, Susanna is introduced. The music of his desire is

like the strain  
 Waked in the elders by Susanna

The elders' desire was also music. They felt

The basses of their being throb  
 In witching chords, and their thin blood  
 Pulse pizzicati of Hosanna.

Part two of this poem tells of Susanna's bath and introduces her "shame." For Susanna, too, feeling becomes music. In the water

She searched  
 The touch of springs,  
 And found  
 Concealed imaginings.  
 She sighed,  
 For so much melody.

On the bank

She felt, among the leaves,  
 The dew  
 Of old devotions.

However, the intrusion of an outside presence into her reveries silences the music:

A breath upon her hand  
 Muted the night.

The feelings that this presence must have awakened in her are also music of another sort:

A cymbal crashed,  
 And roaring horns.

In section three the "attendant Byzantines" discover Susanna. The simile, "with a noise like tambourines," begins and ends the section and describes the entrance and exit of the Byzantines. In the middle of this section is an interesting metaphor:

And as they whispered, the refrain  
 Was like a willow swept by rain.

Their whispers are a musical refrain, which is in turn likened to another object, "A willow swept by rain."

Part IV is filled with metaphors, some of which are related to the other musical references. First, in appositive construction is a

metaphor which emphasizes outline-like qualities and fleetingness:

Beauty is momentary in the mind--  
The fitful tracing of a portal;  
But in the flesh it is immortal.

As if in explanation of this paradox, Stevens uses a series of comparisons:

The body dies; the body's beauty lives;  
So evenings die, in their green going,  
A wave, interminably flowing.  
So gardens die, their meek breath scenting  
The cowl of winter, done repenting.  
So maidens die, to the auroral  
Celebration of a maiden's choral.

The construction of the comparisons in these lines is rather complex. Basically there are three items compared with the idea "The body dies; the body's beauty lives." These comparisons are "So evenings die," "So gardens die," "So maidens die." Within these comparisons are further complications. For instance, the evenings' "Green going" is compared with another element: "A wave, interminably flowing." The gardens are personified. They have "meek breath" which scents personified winter, which, no longer repenting, approaches them. The maidens die to a "maiden's choral." With the mention of the choral, Stevens returns to his images of music. The poem closes with an extended metaphor in which the musical images epitomize the poem as a whole. The elders are characterized by "bawdy strings" which "Susanna's music touched." But her music escaped and left "only Death's ironic scraping." However, Susanna's music has become immortal:

Now, in its immortality, it plays  
On the clear viol of her memory,  
And makes a constant sacrament of praise.

Certainly throughout this poem Stevens has managed to sustain his original metaphor: "Music is feeling, then, not sound."



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Stevens' interest in metaphor as evidenced in some of his essays and poems has resulted in a successful collection of poetry. The reader senses that the poems have a solid surface, that the metaphors are used accurately and often carefully. The better poems do not contain metaphors that seem unable to bear the pressure of examination.

Indeed, often one can understand the theme of a poem only by understanding the metaphors. As has been indicated previously, at times Stevens' poems seem to be statements of ideas surrounded by metaphors. However, in such poems the metaphor is usually not decorative. Rather the total meaning of the poem arises from the interaction of all the elements of the poem. In other poems Stevens offers the reader no clear guide to his meaning but lets the meaning emerge as one metaphor clarifies another. Thus from the final lines, the reader is able to sense the theme of the poem. Many of Stevens' poems while apparently about one subject, Florida, for example, are really about another subject. To the apparent subject Stevens adds metaphors. Thus the reader is confronted with three levels: the apparent or announced subject, the actual subject which is implicit in the poem, and the metaphors which are applied to the announced subject. In a way, the structure of these poems is primarily that of half a metaphor, a vehicle. The announced subject of which the entire poem consists is

that vehicle. The other half, the tenor, is usually implied rather than stated. Thus, for Stevens, metaphors are often the only method of expression, and the use of organic metaphors is prevalent in his poetry. Whatever the structure of the poems, the metaphors bear much of the weight of the expression, and they bear that weight without straining.

In addition to being a means of expression, metaphors may, by their very existence, imply that concept which is to be expressed. This process can be seen when one examines the internal structure of Stevens' metaphors. Sometimes in his metaphors the tenor and vehicle are combined: "Poetry and apotheosis are one" (CP, 378). In contrast, at times the poet indicates that the tenor and vehicle are not alike. These "negative metaphors" cause the reader to combine the tenor and vehicle in an image in order to negate that image. On the other hand, Stevens combines unlike items as the tenors and vehicles of metaphors. For instance, in "Jouga" (CP, 337) he compares a guitar with a beast: "The guitar is another beast." These combinations lend themselves to the label "conceit" and are one of the reasons for critics to see metaphysical influences in Stevens' poetry. Another method Stevens uses is the telescoped metaphor, in which the vehicle of one metaphor becomes the tenor of another. Thus a series of metaphors will have interlocking parts. The series will be a chain of metaphors running through the poem often returning to the first link, the original tenor. In contrast to this practice is the structure in which an original tenor is carefully maintained throughout a series of vehicles. In any case, the type of internal structure Stevens' metaphors have probably depends, in part, on the feeling and idea they are to express. A sense of loss is expressed very successfully, for instance, by "negative

metaphors" while a feeling that "all things resemble each other" (NA, 71) is expressed by metaphors of identification and by telescoped metaphors. Also, telescoped metaphors express by their very existence Stevens' concept of the flux of things. As Frank Doggett states: "He sees substance like vapour flowing into form and into other form, transformations with no purpose except the purpose of change."<sup>1</sup> Thus the structure of Stevens' metaphors can have direct bearing on the meaning of a poem.

In addition to being structured internally, a metaphor in Stevens' poetry will often be closely related to other metaphors in the same poem. Thus the very poem itself emanates from the metaphors. One idea behind the close relationships among metaphors is Stevens' theory of resemblances. Various objects have color or shape in common; thus they resemble one another. Various processes follow the same pattern and thus resemble one another. Stevens also carefully interweaves metaphors so that each element in the poem is related to and calls to mind other elements in the poem. The result is a web of associations which supports the poem. But perhaps Stevens' most pervasive technique and one which is related to several other practices is his use of single, extended metaphors. Poems which are extended metaphors have perhaps the tightest structure of any poems in Stevens. They have solid bases from which many ideas and interpretations can radiate. For example, the poem, "The Snow Man" (CP, 9), is built around the metaphor, "a mind of winter." Only with this "mind of winter" can one behold, for instance, "the juniper shagged with ice" and not think:

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<sup>1</sup>Doggett, Stevens' Poetry of Thought, p. 64.

Of any misery in the sound of the wind,  
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land  
Full of the same wind  
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,  
And, nothing himself, beholds  
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Thus it seems that in spite of his apparent ambivalent feeling toward metaphor, for Stevens metaphor fills "the imagination's need" (CP, 218). But more importantly, metaphor seems to be the successful wedding of imagination and reality which Stevens is so interested in. It is that

. . . mystic marriage in Catawba,  
At noon it was on the mid-day of the year  
Between a great captain and the maiden Bawda.  
(CP, 40)

And, indeed, it is at noon that one needs this wedding which is metaphor:

The motive for metaphor, shrinking from  
The weight of primary noon,  
The vital, arrogant, fatal, dominant X.  
(CP, 288)

Metaphor is Stevens' method of expressing the reality which he desires but which man cannot face squarely.

For Stevens metaphor results in the poem. Or as the poet states, "Poetry and metaphor are one" (NA, 81). Poetry results in an expression of reality, or, indeed, "poetry and reality are one" (NA, 81). Thus, as the expression of reality or as reality itself, poetry becomes extremely important: "poetry and apotheosis are one" (CP, 378). In this sense "Poetry is the supreme fiction" (CP, 59). As Stevens writes in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction":

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.

(CP, 382)

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