3. Bits of Blue

I

In spite of the prevalence of the imagination in life, it is probably true that the discussion of it in that relation is incomparably less frequent and less intelligent than the discussion of it in relation to arts and letters.

(NA 147)

As one begins to collect Stevens’ thoughts on ‘imagination,’ it begins to become obvious that a sort of theory is evolving. Stevens may not have presented this theory in a coherent manner either in poetry or prose, but does the imagination itself function coherently? In the absence of any coherence, the critic is left with the task of exhausting himself in the attempt of bridging the gap between the demand for coherence and that utter irrationality, imagination. The experience of Lacan’s critics is no different. Both the authors preclude consecutive presentation of arguments on the issues they handled. This is because all the issues they were concerned with are, besides being evanescent, so interrelated and interdependent that they closely inmix and become inseparable. It is only upon a keen observation that some aspect of an issue comes into the domain of what Wordsworth called the ‘inward eye,’ but not as unrelated to the other issue(s). The full view of a particular issue in isolation from others is almost impossible. Hence, the treatment of such aspects of the issues might seem isolated, fragmentary, but because of that most natural nonetheless, since that is how one comes to know them. The strain caused by a conflict between the desire of preserving this natural-ness and an awareness of the expectation of logical presentation might be reflected in the critic’s rendition of the author’s thoughts on an issue, as is perhaps obvious in what follows in this chapter, hoping that it does not look like a *rebus*;¹ in fact, it is true of the whole of the present study, for both Stevens and Lacan’s works are like rebuses owing to their style which it is impossible to separate from what is stylized, understanding of which “involves an interminable analysis based more on the free associations of its parts than its cohesion as a narrative or totality” (Grosz 17-18).
The apparent similarity between the spellings of Stevens' 'imagination' and Lacan's 'imaginary' attracts attention. Some of Lacan's critics, like Ragland-Sullivan, Lee, Lemaire, Jameson among others have already collected his thoughts on the imaginary. Comparing these thoughts with Stevens' thoughts on the imagination is a startling experience because of the innumerable and close similarities between. Stevens was not equipped with psychoanalytic terminology, but he invented his own. The commentator has to use the psychoanalytic terminology in order to enhance and methodize his or her understanding of Stevens' meditations on this human faculty that are presented in a poetic jargon peculiar to the poet.

One has to first see how Lacan characterizes the imaginary before establishing its parallelism with the imagination as Stevens fecit. Lacan's imaginary order is "the domain" of what Freud called "the imago," i.e. the field of images and image formation, and "relationship interaction" or relationship dynamics; it is "the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, actually perceived (real) or made up (imagined)" (ERS 130–31, 146). The imaginary functions are nothing but processes like introjection, projection, absorption, expulsion, substitution, displacement etc. It perceives the world by forming its images, and by forming relationships between man and the world (its images), and between or among different images perceived, thus forming a kind of (imaginary) network.

Stevens' work shows the understanding implicit in what Lacan named the imaginary order. Stevens himself was surprised by the relationship interaction that it is capable of when he observed that "Poetry is almost incredibly one of the effects of analogy" (NA 117). One can easily say that any creative work is, without doubt, one of the effects of the imaginary. More than Stevens' poetry, his essays are a direct statement of this inevitability of the imaginary since most parts of these essays are devoted to its modes of functioning. In "Three Academics Pieces" (NA 71-87) Stevens writes about resemblances between things. The passage quoted below from the essay reveals that 'resemblance' is one of the connotations of the imaginary 'interaction':

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. So, too, sufficiently generalized, each man resembles all other men, each woman resembles all other women, this year resembles last year. The beginning of time will, no doubt, resemble the end of time. One world is said to resemble another.

This passage is not just about relation between things of the "corporeal world" but also between "nature and imagination" (NA 118) since Stevens is giving us his sense of the landscape (NA 119). And almost magically his "words of exquisite appositeness" take away "all [our] verbality" (NA 118), as they establish a relationship, in terms of samenesses or differences, with our (or, the reader’s) sense of the landscape. The sense of resemblance is, undoubtedly, in the perceiving mind. This is a restatement, or substatement, of one of Stevens’ observations: "...we live in the mind...with the imagination" (NA 140). At this moment the second half of the observation is more important for us since it is the imagination that is responsible for the activity mentioned in the first half; the "with" in that statement almost functions like a subordinating conjunction. The passage illustrates how things "combine to produce" a rather unified picture of themselves; if they do not combine, they can at least be said to "inter-act," obviously by way of imaginary processes, “so that one [thing] influences the other” (NA 109). This resemblance or interaction is, in Lacan, the outcome of the imaginary "drive towards fusion and agreement" with the ‘other,’ the goal of which is to deny the difference between the self and other, to seek this impossible sense of Oneness (ERS 141).

Although one cannot yet shake off the feeling that Stevens uses ‘analogy’ or ‘resemblance’ more as blanket terms, it is impossible to say that he was not particularly conscious of the basic imaginary processes. In fact, as will be discussed later, he did write poems that solely enact these processes. He was aware that the imaginary “actualizes the unconscious within consciousness” (ERS 190) as is explicit in a “voluntary image,” as he prefers to call it (NA 127). Before analyzing that image, of ‘sheep having no shepherd,’ it is necessary to see how Lacan’s own illustration of the
vase and the bouquet can be utilized to understand some of these processes since it comes handy for the purpose (See Seminar I 124-42). "The eye sees images which are then recorded in the Other as memory" (ERS 143). This is the process of internalization or introjection. One has already recorded in his Other the image of the vase with the bouquet in it by way of introjection. At a later point of time if the same person is shown a vase without bouquet, he will imaginatively place the bouquet in it. This happens due to the process of projection. Thus the previously recorded image, which exists in the unconscious memory, is projected on the image of the vase that is being perceived. Thus, for the Other, there is always a bouquet in the vase whether there is one in it or not. This must precisely have been in Stevens' mind when he wrote,

You dweller in the dark cabin,
To whom the watermelon is always purple,

(CP 88)

In "Effects of Analogy" (NA 107-30) Stevens deals with these processes as he quotes St. Matthew when in his Gospel he said that Jesus went about, teaching and preaching, and that

when [Jesus] saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they...were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd

(NA 113)

As Stevens says, the analogy here is certainly not provoked, rather the imaginary has invoked it almost as if magically. What is interesting is that Stevens is conscious here that the imagination or the imaginary of St. Matthew chose the image of 'sheep having no shepherd' during that ellipsis, and that it happened without deliberate attempt. The image of 'sheep having no shepherd' had been recorded or introjected into St. Matthew's unconscious. From all such recorded images only this image was selected. This is nothing but 'expulsion' (of other images), one of the imaginary processes. In showing interest in the fact that St. Matthew "could do it without being notably deliberate (NA 113)," Stevens shows the awareness of imaginary processes as also participating in the unconscious domain. Further, he also shows the understanding of this process as
imaginary projection when he writes, "...the imaginary does not require for its projections the same amount of time that the reason requires" (emphasis mine; NA 114). All these things indicate Stevens' interest in psychic phenomena; his analysis of that image is essentially psychoanalytic (see NA 113-14).

Imaginary order is thus responsible for formation of images and relating them among themselves by availing of ever so slight similarity between them. Stevens refers to this as the "activity of resemblance" (NA 77), which lends unity to the whole world. That is why Stevens gives it a great importance. "It is significant because it creates the relation...It binds together" (NA 72). It helps one bind oneself to the world. This is its importance in the human life; the relation with the world is more important especially for the one who has lost it.

This kind of free play of associations between things goes on continuously. But this does not mean that there is no limit to the imaginary activity:

The imagination is deceptive in this respect. There is a limit to its power to surpass resemblance and that limit is to be found in nature. The imagination is able to manipulate nature as by creating three legs and five arms but it is not able to create a totally new nature as, for instance, a new element with creatures indigenous thereto, their costumes and cuisines.

(NA 74)

Stevens was aware of the fact that the imaginary works only on the basis of the data that has already been recorded in the Other as knowledge or memory. This is the reason why Lacan gives importance to the "first images imposed on infant perception... these images [set] up the originary matrices to which all other images become attached in 'hallucinatory' networks of meaning;" it is these original images that build a frame of reference, which in turn, "condition[s] adult perception" of reality along with hallucinations of signification or of meaning (ERS 141-42). One could go on to say that Stevens' 'resemblances' are no different from such 'hallucinations,' or that they are instances of "dreaming awake" which is meant "to provide a kind of order for a confused person" (ERS 142). This obviously leads to say that the poet is a 'confused person.' Indeed he is, but he is not a psychotic insofar as he is able to perceive or create 'order' out of his 'chaos.' Or, as Stevens would have it, "the imagination is the power that
enables us to perceive the normal in the abnormal, the opposite of chaos in chaos” (NA 153). This can be easily observed in the way poets resolve their confusion. Donne’s attempt at ‘canonization’ of lovers (57-59), or for that matter, various poets’ finding similarity in totally dissimilar things as in conceits, for example, may be cited as examples. This phenomenon does not remain only at the level of perception, it comes into the poet’s expression — especially, in figures of speech. All figures of speech come into being as products of what Lacan terms as ‘hallucinations,’ or Stevens as ‘resemblances.’ Consider this example: “A strand of a child’s hair brings back the whole child and in that way resembles the child” (NA 75). Is not this an illustration of ‘metonymy’? Therefore, Stevens even goes on to say, “Perhaps the whole field of connotation is based on resemblance” (NA 75). One may thus generalize that not merely poets or literary artists but all human beings perceive such resemblances and this could be observed in their expressings.

Stevens was quite aware that dealing with imagination was not an easy task because of the difficulty of pinning down or catching it in words that would be a theory of some sort. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan tells us how F. R. Rodman characterized the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicot, who refused to believe in the value of theorizing; Rodman wrote, “He was always aware, I think, that his formulations are mere momentary glimpses into the flux, and never do fix it in permanent view” (ERS 140). Stevens also confesses the difficulty in these words:

... poetic value is an intrinsic value... it is the value of the imagination. The poet tries to exemplify it...by identifying it with an imaginative activity that diffuses itself throughout our lives. I say exemplify, because poetic value is an intuitional value and because intuitional value cannot be justified. We cannot very well speak of spheres of value and the transmission of value...and allude to the peculiarity of roles, as the poet’s role, without reminding ourselves that we are speaking of a thing in continual flux.

(NA 149)

Equations may be formed: (poetic value = value of the imagination) = intuitional values \( \rightarrow \) exemplifiable but not justifiable; (the poet’s role = the role of imagination) \( \rightarrow \) continual flux. When Stevens says that imagination “is the irrepressible revolutionist” he
is merely referring to it as in a state of flux since “the imagination itself [does] not remain content with [any image of the world] nor [does] allow us to do so” (NA 152). Stevens was perhaps aware that “any static image” of the world is a deformation or falsification of the intrasubjective dynamics (See Gallop 61). Anika Lemaire portrayed Lacan’s imaginary as “everything in the human mind and its reflexive life which is in a state of flux before the fixation is effected by the symbol, a fixation which, at the very least, tempers the incessant sliding of the mutations of being and of desire” (61). Although Lacan could be said to have succeeded in theorizing it, yet the fact that he had to “formalize its laws at points of join with the other orders” points to the difficulty of formalizing it (ERS 141). In saying that the imagination does not allow us to be content with any static image of the world Stevens is also suggesting the control of the imagination over the mind. Ragland-Sullivan attests that “in Lacan’s picture the mind does not control imagination; rather, imaginary processes are among those that structure mind through formalizable laws...” (ERS 138). Even though Stevens admits the problem of justifying the value of the imagination, his habit of exemplifying it through his prose and poetry does evolve a kind of theory of imagination. Lacan, on the other hand, did not care for exemplifying his theories; he “stressed basic structures and dynamic processes rather than substantive elements” (ERS 131). If Stevens was not particularly inclined to theorize, it was because he wanted to be a poet. However, Stevens’ keen observation of working and modes of the imagination are certainly enough to raise him at least at the level of a psychoanalyzing poet. And the joy for the critic lies not only in substantiating Lacanian theories with examples from Stevens but also in experiencing those phenomena both subjectively and objectively, thus enriching his sense of himself and the world — to use Stevens’ word — by ‘analogy.’

Stevens must have searched for the impetus behind this insatiability of the imagination, and he found it in the human desire. Ms Helen Vendler has paid attention to the pervasive role of desire in Stevens’ poetry in her book bearing a very suggestive title: *Words Chosen Out of Desire*. In adult life, the imaginary childhood experiences of repression, which deny the child that sense of wholeness or Oneness and the *jouissance* thereof, take the form of a substitutive imaginary text. This imaginary text is thus always marked with a sense of loss or a lack of the primordial order. Hence the imaginary is a function of the desire for overcoming that repression. This substitutive imaginary, thus linked with desire, becomes, like desire itself, object-oriented and object-seeking for the
fulfillment of desire or recovery of the lack. It is not difficult, therefore, to see that the function of resemblance, being part of the imaginary relationship dynamics, is object-seeking. Stevens glosses it thus: “It is not difficult, having once predicated such an activity [that makes one thing resemble another], to attribute it to a desire for resemblance” (Parentheses and emphasis mine; NA 76). In other words, the imaginary becomes a representative or means of desire for it to manifest and to be able to realize or fulfill itself. If to remain insatiable is the very nature of desire, it follows that the imaginary, too, cannot be satisfied with “things as they are” (CP 165). This is the reason why the imaginary may be said to provide a “basis for desire” with regard to the desire’s fulfillment (ERS 156); otherwise, desire would try to manifest and fulfill itself through unimaginable body violence, which would be a threat to the ‘other’ as well as to the body itself through which it must manifest in the absence of the imaginary. This is one of the reasons why Stevens is correct in saying that “the absence of the imagination had itself to be imagined” (CP 503).

Stevens also links the imaginary with the symbolic order when he says that “the study of the activity of resemblance is an approach to the understanding of poetry. Poetry is a satisfying of the desire for resemblance” (NA 77). Poetry, as belonging to the symbolic order of language, tries to “catch” into words what the imaginary has ‘captured’ in the moment that is essentially “irrational;” he says this in the Notes:

...the difficultest rigor is forthwith,
On the image of what we see, to catch from that
Irrational moment its unreasoning.

(CP 398)

Hines perhaps confuses Stevens’ use of ‘catch’ and ‘capture,’ and equates them as “terms[s] for verbally catching” (230). The intensity of struggle that is obvious in the word ‘capture’ as the poet uses it in Credences of Summer (CP 372-78) is not quite there in the ‘catch’ of Notes. Instead, the struggle that is there in the passage from Notes is elsewhere than in the word ‘catch;’ “the difficultest rigor,” which transcribes that intense struggle, is “On the image of what we see” and not so much in the act of ‘catching’ the image in words, even though the ‘catching’ is also difficult owing to the irrationality of
the moment of the image. The difference in the intensity of struggle is also supported by the relatively slow cadence of the passage from *Notes* as compared with the fast, broken, as if gasping, rhythm of the concerned passage in *Credences*:\(^{12}\)

> The thrice concentrated self, having possessed

> The object, grips it in savage scrutiny,
> Once to make captive, once to subjugate
> *Or yield to subjugation, once to proclaim*
> The meaning of the capture, this hard prize,
> Fully made, fully apparent, fully found.

*(CP 376)*

Besides, in the *Notes* passage, the pre-positioning (or, insertion) of 'from' separates the 'catcher' from the "image of what we see," which itself is that "irrational moment" since the image is transient, momentary.\(^{13}\) The 'catcher' (presumably, the poet) does not 'catch' this 'moment,' but its reasoning into words that must be equally irrational, rendering the description ("its unreasoning") itself unreasonable. In the passage from *Credences*, on the other hand, it is neither such "unreasoning" nor the "image of what we see" but the very object ("what we see") is to be 'captured' *an sich*. It does not separate but brings the 'catcher' (the poet-observer, the self) and the object together. This 'capturing' is, nevertheless, imaginary since "Imagination is the only clue to reality" *(NA 137)* and without which "there would be no...representational reference point for reality perception" *(ERS 156)*. In short, 'capture' in Stevens belongs to the register of imaginary activity; it means perception of the real of an object, which is prior to the perceived object's further displacement through and in the symbolic act of verbally catching. In the *Credences*, Stevens indeed places the symbolic activity after the imaginary 'capture': "to proclaim / The meaning of the capture" (emphasis mine). In the passage from the *Notes* also, the image is already there ("the image of what we see"); what remains, or what is next, is to "proclaim" or to "catch" it into words, language. However, this symbolic act is not easy since the irrationality of the 'moment' of an image carries over into the expression. The "difficultest rigor," therefore, *is* both "On the image" and "to catch" *(emphases added)*.
This discussion, while it distinguishes ‘capture’ and ‘catch,’ or imaginary and symbolic, also establishes a link between the two in the sense that there would be no poetry (language) without imaginary perception, no “unreasoning” without the “capture,” no ‘catching.’

Thus, poetry is not simply language. It is more than even the result of imaginary perceptions legalized or fixed by the symbolic order of concrete language. The imaginary perception is real in the mind, which includes, to use Stevens’ phrases, “things as they are” and what the “I think[s] they are” (CP 165, 180). Lacan’s real order also includes the actual the world of objects and the personal experiences or effects. That is, all the three orders inmix and become apparently inseparable in discourse (see ERS 190). In short, poetry is a conjunction of the imaginary, symbolic, and real orders, and in this conjoining them it satisfies desire; Stevens says as much in a passage from “Three Academic Pieces” (NA 71-87) in which he mixes the three orders along with desire.

The study of the activity of resemblance is an approach to the understanding of poetry. Poetry is a satisfying of the desire for resemblance... Its singularity is that in the act of satisfying the desire for resemblance it touches the sense of reality, it enhances the sense of reality, heightens it, intensifies it.

(NA 77)

It has already been suggested that “Resemblance...is an activity of the imagination” (NA 73), i.e. of the imaginary, and that without the imaginary activity there would be no poetry (language). Stevens further says that poetry (imagination) not only satisfies the desire for resemblance but also touches the real, which is precisely what he means by the ‘enhanced,’ ‘heightened,’ ‘intensified’ sense of reality or of the actual world around.

One might feel that the above passage is complex owing to its reading from Lacanian point of view. Perhaps it is not. On the contrary, it may be argued that in fact Stevens has separated the orders by showing their interrelation.

After having discussed how Stevens links the imaginary with the symbolic, what remains is to see how he links it with the real order. But that may not be necessary since the passage just quoted establishes that link. Imaginary, as a function of desire, remains insatiable with its perception of the real, of things as they are. Stevens says, “When the similarity is between things of adequate dignity, the resemblance may be said to
transfigure or sublimate them" (NA 77). By “things of adequate dignity” he means things that have the power to affect our mind. Such things are metamorphosed by their transfiguration or sublimation; that is to say, in Lacanian terms, the reality is perceived in its real. If the real (things as they are) constitutes reality, along with their metamorphosed state they compose the real-ity. Thus, the last sentence of the passage quoted above could be read as “…the act of satisfying the desire for resemblance...touches the sense of real-ity, it enhances the sense of reality, heightens it, intensifies it.” In other words, the imaginary perception of relationship dynamics between real things provides a basis for desire as well as for the perception of their real. Without this kind of interpretation it would not be possible to realize what Stevens means by ‘touching the sense of reality,’ by ‘heightening,’ ‘enhancing,’ or ‘intensifying’ reality.

Stevens’ man with the blue guitar finds it impossible to “play things as they are,” but that is what the audience of The Blue Guitar demands. Both find it impossible to see or say things as they are. The guitarist declares at the very outset that

\[ T \delta \delta \delta \frac{9}{2} \frac{9}{3} \frac{7}{8} \frac{7}{6} \frac{5}{4} \frac{3}{2} \frac{1}{0} \]

...Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar.

(CP 165)

Here, Stevens shows an awareness that the imaginary itself is a principle of méconnaissance or mis(re)cognition in that it functions as an “inertia that keeps a person from really perceiving either ‘self’ or other accurately” (ERS 148). He comments,

The proliferation of resemblances extends an object. The point at which this process begins, or rather at which this growth begins, is the point at which ambiguity has been reached. The ambiguity that is so favorable to the poetic mind is precisely the ambiguity favorable to resemblance.

(NA 78-79)

The imaginary activity extends an object by essentially making it ambiguous, unclear, thus rendering clear perception of it impossible; yet, he believed in the impossibility of rejecting the imaginary altogether, and was forced to write that “…the absence of the imagination had / Itself to be imagined” (CP 503). The imaginary, thus, “convert[s] the
real world...into an imagined world” (NA 79). In fact, this is the way objects are perceived, i.e. not without “imaginative deviation” (NA 114). However, Stevens does not undervalue the inaccuracy or imperfection of imaginary perception: “...a sense of reality keen enough to be in excess of the normal sense of reality creates a reality of its own” (NA 79). Or, as he says in “Poems of Our Climate,”

"the imperfect is our paradise."

but, further adds,

Note that, in this bitterness, delight,
Since the imperfect is so hot in us,
Lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds.

(CP 194)

The ambiguity, the imperfection, the ‘flawed’-ness that is inherent in our perception, hence in our expression, is not unreal, but is a reality in its own right; it is, and creates, a human reality. The reason why Stevens calls it a reality is that the incessant drive of the imaginary is towards perceiving things in what he refers to as a “final atmosphere” (CP 168). Each time the imaginary perceives the same object, it forms different image(s) of it in the mind and each time affects the mind in a different way. The desire to know the real of that object is behind the drive of the imaginary; it is as if, in Stevens’ own words, “in the vast association of ideas there existed for every object its appointed objectification [or, real-ity]. In such a case the object and its images[s] become inseparable;” and the effect is that of “consummation” (parentheses mine; NA 114)

Like Lacan, Stevens was aware of the vastness and complexity of the field of images and activities of the imagination. This is obvious from the number of pages on which he did not consciously pay attention to the activities of imagination; they are almost non-existent in his opus. He had realized the importance of the image as a formative value. He understood that the external world is an inevitable part of images; that, in fact, the external world provides images, which build the general character of a person or the people living in a particular geographical area, or environment. “Anecdote
of Men by the Thousand" (CP 51-2) is a specific statement of the relation between man and the external world. Stevens writes,

    The soul...is composed
    Of the external world.
    There are men of the East...
    Who are the East.
    There are men of a province
    Who are that province.
    There are men of a valley
    Who are that valley.

    (CP 51)

In other words, the place in which we live defines us. In a beautiful image at the end of the above poem he speaks of how the ‘place’ is an inevitable part, if not of the soul as such, of one’s overall character or personality (“dress”); “Costume is an instance of imaginative life as social form,” or as identity (NA 146):

    The dress of a woman of Lhasa,
    In its place,
    Is an invisible element of that place
    Made visible.

The task on hands is to make explicit how the ‘place’ contributes in shaping the character or personality. Ragland-Sullivan writes, “The first images imposed on infant perception...[set] up originary matrices to which all other images become attached throughout the rest of life” (141). The role of the imaginary is very vital in this context since it seeks fusion or unity with the external world. This “builds up layer upon layer of representations” (ERS 145), creating a frame of reference so that each image perceived would (either) add to this frame (or) and will be interpreted through it. Thus, that frame of reference, originally created by images derived from the external world, provides a basis for studying the person “as a specificity” (see ERS 145). Therefore, from the images of a poet, or of any man, one can understand his personality. The illustration is
found in a passage from “Imagination as Value” (NA 133-56) Stevens bids the reader to imagine

   a discussion of the world between two people born blind, able to describe their images, so far as they have images, without the use of images derived from other people. It would not be our world that would be discussed.

   (NA 140)

Precisely because it would not be our sense of the world that would be discussed, it is impossible for us even to imagine this discussion. The images of the blind would be different from those of one who can see, and the difference creates the stumbling block — not only in our way of imagining their discussion punctuated with their images but also in our understanding of their sense of the world. Such stumbling block between two persons is what we call communication gap, which is suggestive of the difference between sensibilities, hence between personalities. However, if to bid the reader to imagine something unimaginable is itself a stumbling block in the way of the point that Stevens is trying to get across to him, Stevens furnishes another illustration with the hope that it “might help.”

   A man in Paris does not imagine the same sort of things that a native of Uganda imagines. If each could transmit his imagination to the other, so that the man in Paris, lying awake at night, could suddenly hear a football that meant the presence of some inimical and merciless monstrosity, and if the man in Uganda found himself in, say, the Muenster at Basel and experienced what is to be experienced there, what words would the Parisian find to forestall his fate and what understanding would the Ugandan have of his incredible delirium?

   (NA 140)

Far from helping, the illustration seems to mystify. Apparently, it is difficult to answer the question Stevens asks here. However, in the light of Lacan’s theory of introjection and projection that is briefly discussed previously in this chapter, one is in a better position to arrive at an answer. The imaginary operates in two major ways: first by introjection, and then by projection, which includes phenomena like creating resemblances. The introjected images are recorded in the Other; projection uses these
previously recorded images — as in the case of St. Matthew who used the image of the sheep having no shepherd to describe the multitudes of people scattered abroad. If only the imagination is transmitted, i.e. without transmitting the Other recording, the Ugandan-imaginary of the Parisian would not connect the football with any monstrosity since the Parisian’s imaginary has never assimilated, or introjected, the football as inimical or merciless. Something similar will happen with the Ugandan — he may not be afraid of the ‘muenster.’

But Stevens clearly does not mean this. By transmission of the imagination he means transmission of the Other recording of images and the imagination. (This alone should suffice in order to prove that Stevens’ conception of the imagination is the same as Lacan’s imaginary order). This is the only way the Parisian with the Ugandan-imaginary would conceive of the football as monstrosity. However, his description might parallel the normal Parisian’s description of the Muenster at Basel, just as in normal circumstances the Ugandan’s description of the football is likely to parallel the normal Parisian’s description of the muenster. On the other hand, the Ugandan (with the Parisian’s imaginary) might find his experience at Basel either only as disturbance in conceiving what is happening around him, if the experience is not already recorded in the borrowed Parisian imaginary, or he might feel extremely happy in the company of the Muenster as a result of the previously recorded experience (‘delirium’ means both ‘mental disturbance’ and ‘excited happiness’). That is, his description of the experience at Basel might be similar to the normal Parisian’s description of his ‘delirium’ at, say, the final of World Cup football with France as one of the two contenders.

In the case of such transmission, the Parisian would not remain Parisian but become the Ugandan, and the Ugandan would become the Parisian. Thus, with the transmission of their imaginary between each other, their identities will also be interchanged. The study of the personality is, therefore, the study of the imaginary. Ragland-Sullivan refers to this study as ‘unraveling’: “In adult life any unraveling of an imaginary text shows the way identity was composed as a ‘self’ text, much as the reverse side of a tapestry betrays the tangle of threads that constitute the images making up a work of art” (142). ‘Personality,’ ‘identity,’ ‘self’ are therefore fictions, ‘tapestries,’ ‘works of art;’ in short, ‘fables,’ not real.

For all the attempts at getting a full view of the imagination and images, it is impossible to exhaust the field in order to make up a theory that would be complete.
Stevens, therefore, never got tired of elaborating this field. Lacan, too, found the domain of the imagination and images insondable or unfathomable (ERS 144). Therefore, despite the wide recognition that Stevens’ imagination has received from his critics it seemed worthwhile to make an attempt to bring together the poet’s observations of the imaginary. The next section of this chapter will further study how Stevens used them for poetic achievements.

II

[T]he imagination...tries to penetrate to basic images, basic emotions, and so to compose a fundamental poetry...

(NA 145)

It is interesting to see how Stevens brings his theory of imagination into poetic practice. It is not desirable to separate theory and practice in this way, but the fact is that all the aspects of Lacan’s imaginary are so inmixed with other issues that explaining them theoretically while discussing a particular poem would create a lot of confusion besides breaking the rhythm of discussion into several diversions. It seems, therefore, necessary to first deal with the theoretical perspectives of the imaginary from Stevens’ point of view which at opportune moments may be compared with the corresponding views of the psychoanalyst.

The previous section began with the imaginary as a functional set of various processes. Accordingly, the difficulty of how to begin this section is resolved by starting with “Study of Two Pears” (CP 196-7) in which the imaginary processes are very much directly involved. Shape being one of the most prominent aspects in the perception of any object the eye sees, the poem’s first section dwells on the shape of the pears. The Other memory of the observer has a record of a large number of images introjected from the beginning of life. Shape is one of the categories in this record. The moment the shape of an object is perceived, the imaginary evokes from the Other memory certain similar shapes by ‘expulsion’ of the non-similar ones. The imaginary seeks to create a ‘resemblance’ by relating the perceived shapes with each of the invoked shapes.
alternately; this is the process of 'projection.' This happens fast enough so that the perceiver does not perceive perception as a flux. In this projection, another process is also involved — that of 'substitution' of the already recorded shapes for the object that is being perceived. The desire to perceive the object as it is is continually 'displaced' in the process. It is these displacements that are rejected in section I:

The pears are not viols,

Nudes or bottles.
They resemble nothing else.

While the desire to see the pears in their "essential barrenness" (CP 373), or in their real, causes these displacements, the desire is never quite satisfied — partly because the search for their real shifts attention to their other details (e.g. colors). This further complicates the problem since the same imaginary processes would be invoked again for color perception.

Perhaps, the poem began with a view to touch the real of pears by rejecting imaginary intervention since it caused deviation in perception. As Stevens himself observes in The Blue Guitar, "It is the chord that falsifies" (CP 171). The rejection of resemblances of the pears with "viols," "nudes," and "bottles," could be a result of this view. Now, there remains only one possible way to know or perceive the real pears: the reason, the realistic point of view. Stevens, therefore, changes his stance and attempts to see them in a 'square hatted' fashion of the realist (NA 133; CP 75), solely concentrating on their physical reality.

II
They are yellow forms
Composed of curves
Bulging towards the base.
They are touched red.

III
They are not flat surfaces
Having curved outlines.
They are round
Tapering toward the top.

This may be accurate description, but it is almost in the vein of the radical advocates of the 'dehumanization of art/Nature' cult. The question is, does this suffice the mind? Perhaps no. "One desires so much more than that" (CP 193). Reason is not the proper 'light' in which to study the pears; it is "The light more like a snowy air, / Reflecting snow" (CP 193), or as more appropriately described in "Common Life,"

It is morbid light
In which they stand
Like an electric lamp
On a page of Euclid.

(CP 221)

The mind remains dissatisfied with such 'realistic' perception since reason makes the pears look cadaverous in its "morbid light;" an 'electric lamp' on a page of 'Euclid' would not emit light as it would on a page of an imaginative artist. The so-called realists do not seem to believe "There are things in a man besides his reason" (CP 351). Hence, Stevens again resorts to the 'light' of imagination in section IV. Thus, the imagination cannot be suppressed for long; it is the "irrepressible revolutionist" (NA 152). The 'realistic' viewpoint gives way to see the way the pears are modeled. The observer senses "bits of blue" in the creation of pears. Indeed, the process of creation is highly imaginative whether it is artistic or scientific. Did not Newton first off imagine, before actually coming to a conclusion, the earth as having a force that attracts?

The verb 'model' itself seeks resemblance — this is what the poet has rejected in section I — between some 'model' that is still unknown and the pears. If the "blue," imagination, is "in the way" in which the pears are modeled, then the search for the 'model' itself, i.e. the real pears, must proceed along with the "blue." As Stevens himself accepts, imagination is "the only clue to reality" (NA 137). Although this is a return to what has been rejected at the beginning of the poem, the imagination at least makes the pears come alive, 'glisten,' instead of making them look cadaverous:
V
The yellow glistens.
It glistens with various yellows,
Citrons, oranges and green
Flowering over the skin.

The pears, by virtue of standing in the light of imagination, acquire a kind of reality since they have "shadows," which are nothing but the impressions or images of them formed in the mind. In the light of reason, things are without such "shadows," and hence do not even remain objects of desire, like

..........a woman
Without roses and without violet,
The shadows that are absent from Euclid,
Is not a woman for a man.

(CP 221)

If "rose" and "violet" are the shadows of the "woman," those of the pears are "yellow," "various yellows," "citrons," "oranges," "greens." In other words, an object is essentially perceived through the possible resemblances of its features and aspects with those of other similar objects. That is, the perception of an object is always with reference to the other, already known or recorded images. This suggests that the object acquires plurality at the level of perception itself. It is this plurality that forecloses the real to human perception of the object. This is why Stevens has a cause to be dissatisfied even with the imaginary perception:

VI
The shadows of the pears
Are blobs on the green cloth.
The pears are not seen
As the observer wills.

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The reality ("green cloth") is distorted, tainted, by imaginary perception of the pears, for their "shadows" are seen as "blobs" on it, so that pure perception of reality finally escapes for all the observer's desire and attempts.

In a letter of 17 March 1937 to J. Ronald Lane Latimer, Stevens writes, "I have been trying to see the world about me both as I see it and as it is," and this he calls "the painter's problem of realization" (Letters 316). The poem attempts to see the pears in both these ways, but it also enlarges the scope of the problem and makes it universal by making it the problem of perception. The 'still-life' mode of painting and the morbid-realist viewpoint are to be compared. A study tries to reach a truth by comparative analysis of the analyses carried out using different available tools. In this case, imagination and reason are the means: but the truth that emerges is bitter-sweet. Bitter because no available means allows a clear perception that would suffice the mind, and sweet because there is at least the respite, provided by imagination, that makes perception a desirable activity, though not absolutely satisfying. One wonders at the end why there are two pears, and not one. One wonders whether it is a 'Study of Two Pears' or a 'Study of Two Peers': imagination and Reason/reality. Rehder seems to have come close to saying this when he writes, "Interestingly, there are two pears — as if the poem expresses 'an emotion as of two people,'" though he ultimately evades the point by limiting his interest to the two people, painter and perceiver. Stevens himself said that reason and imagination are "engaged in a struggle" to apprehend reality. Here, he further remarks, "we have no particular interest in this struggle" without "outcome" (NA 141).

The "Study of Two Pears" is not without outcome, it proves the significance of the imagination in reality perception. And, though Stevens rejects any interest in the struggle, he does not resist its use in his poetry: for example, the sixth of the "Six Significant Landscapes" (CP 75), "Study of Two Pears" (CP 196-7), "Common Life" (CP 221) depict the struggle in a way that ends in the imagination’s triumph; the poet’s line of resistance to the reason is obvious in his prose and poetry as he elevates the imagination's voluptagenous quality satisfying desire.

Although "Things as they are / Are changed upon the blue guitar," Stevens prefers, over reason, to play "A tune upon the blue guitar / Of things exactly as they are" because "play, [one] must" (CP 165). It is in this 'play' alone the mind has any chance to grow. This growth is essentially related with images the mind is capable of forming with the help of the imaginary, since the images compose a frame of reference that is
responsible for perceiving the world. It is images that compose the rhythm the poem of the mind has, as Stevens suggests through “Poem with Rhythms” (CP 245-6):

The hand between the candle and the wall
Grows large on the wall.

The mind between this light or that and space,
(This man in a room with an image of the world,
That woman waiting for the man she loves,)
Grows large against space:

There the man sees the image clearly at last.
There the woman receives her lover into her heart
And weeps on his breast, though he never comes.

(CP 245)

One begins by noting that the “hand” is between the “candle” and the “wall.” Further, in the second stanza, the “mind” is positioned between the “light” and the “space.” Both the “hand” and “mind” grow large, the former “on the wall” and the latter “against space.” The position of both is that of an agency that grows large by mere intervention.

If the “hand” and “mind” are thus similar, then the “candle” and the “wall” may be equated with “this light or that” and “space” respectively. In fact, the first two stanzas may be equated by their apparent similarity in form and in their internal rhyme. However, one must note that all the elements in the first stanza have concrete physicality whereas the “mind,” “light,” and “space” of the second stanza do not have it, though their existence cannot be doubted. That is to say, one is in a position to believe that the two stanzas deal respectively with the real world of objects and the abstract and evanescent.

Obviously, the second stanza deals with something that is complex, hence the complexity in its structure in the form of the increased number of lines that are, moreover, parenthesized. Yet, it is difficult to believe that for a poet like Stevens the real world of things is not complex. In fact, for a reader who has some familiarity with Stevens’ poetry, the second stanza will not be strange, but the first might be. He will be
immediately on his guard against the trap of the first stanza’s apparent simplicity. In short, both the stanzas are complex and have strangeness. It is this strangeness of things that Stevens seeks to humanize — not simplify — by personification. “This man in a room” is the mind\(^1\) “with an image of the world.” “That woman” who waits for ‘this man’ is a complex image since one would easily call her Stevens’ imagination; she could be, as Riddel would say, ‘Penelope-imagination’ of “The World as Meditation” (CP 520-1) whose lover, ‘Ulysses-reality,’ keeps “coming constantly so near” (CP 521) “but never to consummation” (247). A similar treatment is observed in the second and third stanzas of this poem:

That woman waiting for the man she loves,
There the woman receives her lover into her heart
........................, though he never comes.

However, the roles are reversed here. If “we live in the mind...with the imagination” (NA 140), then the mind and the imagination are always together, so that there is no need to refer to the mind as “this man” and to the imagination as “that woman” (emphases mine). The pronouns ‘this’ and ‘that’ in the second stanza not only distinguish the ‘man’ and the ‘woman’ but, more importantly, also distance them. The ‘man-mind’ is on ‘this’ (near) side whereas the ‘woman-reality’ is on ‘that’ (far) side.\(^1\) It may further be argued that the woman being an object of desire has to be away from the man, for there will not be the desire otherwise. Besides, Stevens dose not seem to be personifying the reality merely literarily, but he seems to seriously believe in its anima. David Hesla has made this point while interpreting “The snow man.” However, it must be said that Stevens was not quite sure of this as will be discussed later.

One more problem is raised by the expression “this light or that.” The mind is not simply between “light” and “space,” but either between ‘this light’ and “space” or between ‘that light’ and “space.” This creates a problem of place for “space.” Where would it be, on ‘this’ side of the mind or ‘that’? Stevens evades the question. One has to approach the problem cautiously. Since the mind remains ‘between’: if ‘this light’ then ‘that space;’ if ‘that light’ then ‘this space.’ That is, the mind is either between ‘this light’ and ‘that space’ or between ‘that light’ and ‘this space’. And yet, the “space” seems to evade this logical approach since it is the ‘light’ that is variable or changes its

\(^{1}\) Emphases mine.
place: the “space” is a constant. Stevens does not involve the “space” in the logic of either-or as he does the ‘light’. Now, one has to turn to the “mind” for help. Does the “mind” change its place to remain always ‘between’? If this is graphically represented as space — mind — light — mind — space, then it clearly means that the ‘light’ is constant, and that both ‘space’ and ‘mind’ become variables. This is an inversion of what Stevens writes; in his writing it is only the “light” that varies its place, and neither the “space” nor the “mind.” One reaches where one began. Finally, with a feeling that the ‘intelligence’ has been ‘resisted’ “Almost successfully” (CP 350), one wonder’s, not without a sullenness, whether this is what Stevens means by “the pleasures of merely circulating” (CP 149)?

The solution, however, could be said to be implicit in Lacan’s concepts of the imaginary, real, and jouissance. In fact, the ‘light’ does not change its place, but there are two lights. Adhering to Stevens’ use of the pronouns ‘this’ and ‘that,’ it may be assumed that ‘this light’ is that of the imaginary (Stevens’ ‘imagination’ as that which is always with the mind and which illumines), and that the ‘that light’ is of the real-ity (of the corporeal world outside, which when perceived momentarily, affects the mind and heightens our sense of the world — just as the effects of actual light viz. reflection, refraction, or dispersion affect our view). After all, “the Real is knowable in its effects” (ERS 189). What is interesting in the poem is that either ‘this light’ exists or ‘that’. To understand the “unreasoning” of this statement (CP 398), it is imperative to imagine the situation before imaginary perception. Prior to imaginary perception, the external world is nothing to the perceiver; there is the vast ‘space’ in front of the mind, a meaninglessness, nothingness, even though the imagination is with the mind — because it illumines only when at work, i.e. while perception is taking place, whether of real things or of the meditative kind. This situation may be represented temporarily as SPACE — mind — light(imaginary). At this moment, the state of the mind could be best described as “The maker of a thing yet to be made” (CP 169), or better, as “unspotted imbecile reverie” (CP 172).

Now, as the imagination engages in the act of perception, the mind begins to grow, the real world begins to come alive, the “space” diminishes. If, though momentarily, the mind approaches the real of what it perceives, the real world becomes ‘that light’. It is the light of the real. However, the “space” does not vanish; it is only that the mind enlarges, grows against the “space.” This creates problems in the representation
formulated in the above paragraph and will have to be modified as SPACE — light(real) — mind. Here, the mind is not ‘between’ “space” and ‘that light.’ If in order for the mind to stay ‘between’ them the above codification is changed to light(real) — mind — SPACE, then it would mean a change of place for the “space,” whereas it is the constant. To solve this problem, one would do better to see that before perception the mind was surrounded by the nothing of “space” from all sides, and that even when it grows the “space” does not vanish. The “space” is not like the “candle” and the “wall” to exist on only one side precisely because it has no concrete physicality; it is more abstract than even the mind and the two ‘lights,’ and is pervasive. The pre-perception situation, thus, would be better represented as SPACE — mind — light(imaginary) — SPACE; When the imagination is at work, it would be SPACE — mind — LIGHT(imaginary) — SPACE; and at the moment of perception of the real, it may be shown as space — LIGHT(real) — mind — space, but since the mind grows here, its growth may be shown thus: space — LIGHT(real) — MIND — space. This better answers how “mind” and “space” are constant and how the ‘light’ could be in here (“this”) or out there (“that”).

Thus, the mind is, whether it grows large or does not; the “space” is, whether it diminishes or does not. The ‘light,’ however, exists either as the imagination-in-its-act or else as the real.

As the image of an actual object is formed in the mind, one feels the effect on the mind and is able to perceive the object beyond itself, i.e. in its ‘enhanced,’ ‘heightened,’ or ‘real’ state — though for a moment only. This is a moment of jouissance since the image is a union of the mind and the object, of the self and other. It is an experience, however fleeting, of an achievement of the object of desire, when the imaginary function of object-seeking comes to a momentary halt and the mind “grows large.” It becomes “complete in an unexplained completion” (CP 512), closing the abyss between self and other, thus diminishing the “space.” This is how the “space,” or to use Riddel’s expression, the “nothing” works out as a “productive principle” in Stevens,* curing the native insufficiency or the primal discord in man’s relation to his being.

Now it should not be difficult to see the importance of the first stanza. It has its own significance. It is not like the hypothetical substantive arguments that the metaphysical poets kept inventing throughout the poem in order to hammer home their conviction, though it must be conceded that the “wall” gives such impression. The “hand” is the object, the “candle” is the real (in Lacanian sense) light (“that light”)

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because of which the “hand” grows large on the “wall.” The comparison made between “hand” and “mind” a moment ago is, thus, wrong. In fact the “wall” and the “mind” are comparable since the image is formed on them. The first two stanzas are connected by the “wall” and “mind.” Thus, to grasp the whole discussion, the following figure (see Figure 2) may be useful. All the things and phenomena take place within the all-inclusive ‘space,’ and are therefore included in it. But at the same time, all of the things have their own existence apart from yet within the ‘space,’ hence need be separated from it by enclosing them in a capsule that comes into existence essentially as a result of those phenomena.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 2: “Poem with Rhythms”

It could be observed that Stevens does not say that the image of the ‘hand’ grows large, but that “the hand... / Grows large on the wall.” It is as if the ‘hand,’ or broadly speaking, the real world around is alive. This is further emphasized when Stevens begins the final stanza with “...the hand / Has a will.” It has already been mentioned in discussing the study of the two ‘peers’ that Stevens seems to have been seriously thinking on the anima of the real world of objects. But this is one of his many assertions that are qualified because he had his own doubts about them. Here, the assertion just mentioned is qualified with ‘must’

It must be that the hand
Has a will to grow larger on the wall.
The poet's doubt regarding the anima of the objective world persisted till the end. He writes in a late poem, "Two Illustrations That the World Is What You Make of It" (CP 513-15),

.........everything possessed
The power to transform itself, or else,
And what meant more, to be transformed.

(CP 514)

In the "Poem with Rhythms," this assertion could have been stronger since the 'hand' not only has the will to grow larger on the wall, but also "to grow larger and heavier and stronger than / The wall." However, the 'growth' of the object does enlarge the mind in terms of the effect its image has on the mind. Realizing this, Stevens writes,

The mind
Turns to its own figurations and declares.
"This image, this love. I compose myself
Of these. In these, I come forth outwardly.
In these, I wear a vital cleanliness,
Not as in air, bright-blue-resembling air.
But as in the powerful mirror of my wish and
will."

For Stevens, as for Lacan, the image is union ("this love") of the mind (ego, or Lacan's moi) and the real world (the other of Lacan). Stevens, like Lacan, had realized the important role of the images in the construction of the sense of 'self' ("I compose myself / Of these"). Though Lacan did realize this, his emphasis was more on the relationship of the subject and the language he hears and speaks in terms of the evolution of the 'self' (see ERS 145). This is how the mind grows large, and it is in this growing large that the 'man-mind' "sees the image clearly," i.e. understands its significance. And it is in thus being imagized that the 'woman-reality' becomes complete since she "receives her lover into her heart" as a result of 'her' effect on 'his' mind. But the lover "never comes;" the 'man-mind' never actually goes out to her. If Stevens is playing with 'come' (in the sense of ejaculation in the sexual act), then it means that the mind never
achieves the desired consummation, that unity with the external world in Lacan, since as Stevens writes in “The Well Dressed Man with a Beard,” which is placed very close to “Poem with Rhythms, “It can never be satisfied, the mind, never” (CP 247). However, it is in this remaining always insatiable, in this mercilessly impossible desire alone, in this “wish and will” itself, that the self “come[s] forth outwardly” and attains ‘vitality’. This “vital cleanliness” — it is difficult to put into words the sense of this expression — is not the result of the imagination (“bright-blue-resembling air”), but of the more fundamental and “powerful” principle: desire. Though it is difficult to give an exact sense of the “vital cleanliness,” it is that feeling which Stevens describes in “The Poem That Took The Place of a Mountain” as to feel “complete in an unexplained completion” (CP 512). It is a sense of a satisfaction of the realization of desire; “I wear a vital cleanliness, / / as in the powerful mirror of my wish and will.” That this is not actual oneness or unity with the outside world is what Stevens means in using the ‘as’ in the last two lines, one more instance of his qualifying his own assertions.

But Stevens was in no doubt whatever that it is perception in the form of images that composes the ‘self’. Lacan subverted the traditional notion of the self as a substance and called it merely an effect (ERS 145), a myth. Stevens’ views were no different. Lacan’s view that “Man’s primordial fusion with images...builds up layer upon layer of representations...” (ERS 145) creating a frame of reference suggests that studying a person as specificity, as a personality, is nothing but the study of the person’s images. This is how, Lacan agrees with others on the formative value of the image (Seminar III 16). Stevens illustrates this in a passage already discussed from “Imagination as Value” (NA 133-56); here, he bids the reader to imagine

a discussion of the world between two people born blind, able to describe their images, so far as they have images, without the use of images derived from other people. It would not be our world that would be discussed...

Their discussion would be the discussion of their images, of their image of the world, of their sense of the world, which would be peculiar to them. But, this is an extreme case. And, as if it were impossible, and must be, for us to imagine the images of the blinds who have no knowledge of the images of those who can see, Stevens furnishes another illustration:
A man in Paris does not imagine that the same sort of thing that a native of Uganda imagines. It each could transmit his imagination to other, so that the man in Paris, lying awake at night, could suddenly hear a football that meant the presence of some inimical and merciless monstrosity, and if the man in Uganda found himself in, say, the Muenster at Basel and experienced what is to be experienced there, what words would the Parisian find to forestall his fate and what understanding would the Ugandan have of his incredible delirium?

(NA 140)

In discussing this passage, the previous section of this chapter has suggested how the study of the personality is the study of the imaginary. Ragland-Sullivan refers to this study as ‘unraveling’ of the ‘self’ text, and suggests how ‘personality,’ ‘identity,’ ‘self,’ are ‘tapestries,’ ‘works of art,’ that is, are fictional and not real. These thoughts might have crossed Stevens’ mind, for he refers to “the extent of artifice within us” (NA 141), which is “an artifice” of the imagination who is “the single artificer of the world / In which she s[i]ng[s]” (CP 448, 129); it is by virtue of her ‘singing’ that there is “a growth / of the reality of the eye” (CP 448), of the mind which is the world in which she sings. This is the reason why Stevens “contemplates / A wholly artificial nature” in the second of his three academic pieces (NA 83). The title of the second piece is, “Someone Puts a Pineapple Together;” the whole poem, however, is not so much a contemplation of either the ‘someone’ or the ‘pineapple’ as of the act of ‘putting together’. The whole poem could be read as an exercise in deconstruction or unraveling of the imaginary, or of the way the ‘pineapple’ is ‘put together.’ If at all the poem speaks of the ‘someone’ of the title, it does so through the way the ‘pineapple’ is ‘put together.’ In Ragland-Sullivan’s words, the poem “betrays the threads” that make up the “tapestry” which Stevens calls an “artificial nature.”

If, thus, personality or ‘self’ is artificial, is an imaginary construct, a myth, then the only way to study it is to go beyond it to the images that form in the mind since they are the substantive elements of this myth. And, since the ego is the center of the imaginary identity as the ‘self,’ it is the study of the ego; Lacan therefore says by referring to Freud, “The ego is structured like an onion, one could peel it, and discover the successive identifications which have constituted it” (Seminar I 171). But, images are
a product of the processes that are involved in the commerce between the imaginary and
the real world outside; therefore, the study inevitably and invariably reflects the ‘region’
in which the images are formed. This is the subject of Stevens’ “A Mythology Reflects
Its Region:”

A mythology reflects its region. Here
In Connecticut, we never lived in a time
When mythology was possible — But if we had —
That raises the question of the image’s truth.
The image must be of the nature of its creator.
It is the nature of its creator increased,
Heightened. It is he, anew, in a freshened youth
And it is he in the substance of his region,
Wood of his forests and stone out of his fields
Or from under his mountains.

(OP 118)

Samuel French Morse thinks that the poem might have been written in 1955 (OP 300), almost at the end of Stevens’ poetic career and life, which was perhaps the most mature period of his poetic practice. Looking at the high degree of brevity, maturity, and compactness of thought in the poem, Morse’s guess could hardly be a deviation from the true date of its composition.

A casual glance at the title and one wonders how and when a poet, rather, a strong advocate ‘of modern poetry’ developed liking for mythological past; especially, when one has read Stevens’ avowedly “anti-mythological” long poem, The Comedian as the Letter C, or after getting fairly acquainted with his “line of resistance to the past” in general. One might recover by taking the first sentence, which is the same as the title, on strictly denotative terms, and by thinking that Stevens will soon revert to his anti-mythological stance. With the first part of the tripartite second sentence, however, comes the real jab: “Here / In Connecticut, we never lived in a time / when mythology was possible.” One almost commits the mistake of interpreting Stevens as becoming nostalgic for the past at the end of life for all his longstanding resistance to it. Further, the conditional second part, “— But if we had —,” would support such a view. However, all these things set and function as a nice trap that may not have been

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specifically devised to mislead the reader, though he might feel caught in it. In fact, Stevens is contemplating the “intricacy of new and local mythologies” (NA 17).

Just before starting discussing this poem, a parallelism has been established between Stevens and Lacan’s thoughts on the issue of the nature of the ‘self’ as an effect or myth. Myth, with ‘imaginary person’ as one of its meanings, points to ‘personality,’ character,’ ‘identity,’ that is to say, to the ‘self’. Mythology — the study of myth(s) — is, therefore, the study of the ‘self’. Stevens proposes to undertake such a study by way of ‘decreating’ the self.21

The poems that are being discussed here show that Stevens, like Lacan, had understood “the image’s formative value” (Seminar III 165; ERS 144–45).22 Hence, no wonder that images are his means for the ‘self’ study. Since images are products of the conjunction between the mind and the real world outside, it is a study of both; thus, ‘mythology’ for Stevens is the study of both the mind and ‘region,’ and he presents it through the last six lines of this ten-line poem — a considerable amount of lines are spared to it in such a short and compact poem.

Before returning to the second sentence, it is necessary to see Stevens’ thoughts on the Connecticut of his present. In “Connecticut” (OP 294–96), Stevens describes one of his railroad journeys, which is really a journey “through the character of the state”:

...I went on the railroad from my city of Hartford to Boston, in Massachusetts. Everything seemed gray, bleached and derelict, and the word derelict kept repeating itself as part of the activity of the train. But this was a precious ride through the character of the state. The soil everywhere seemed thin and difficult, and every cutting and open pit disclosed gravel and rocks in which only the young pine trees seemed to do well. There were chicken farms and there were cowbarns. There were orchards of apples and peaches. Yet in the sparse landscape with its old houses of gray and white there were other houses, smaller, fresher, more fastidious.

(OP 295)

That it was a ride though the character of the state suggests that the ‘personality’ or the ‘myth’ of the state had already been established. Further, it may be noticed that Stevens studies it through the images that he presents in the last four sentences. These images are mostly the “acts of culture” (Doreski 152). It follows that the general character of the people living there had also been established, that the “Connecticut Yankees” had
already acquired and assimilated, as part of their characters, “the thrift and frugality” that were “imposed” on them by the “natural world” (OP 294).\(^\text{21}\) This is emphasized as he continues,

Now, when all the primitive difficulties of getting started have been overcome, we live in the tradition which is the true mythology of the region and we breathe in with every breath the joy of having ourselves been created by what has been endured and mastered in the past.

\(^\text{OP 295}\)

One would do well to recall Conrad’s Mr. Kurtz in Africa. It must have been the barrier of the native language and culture that made him face and, what is more important, assimilate into his character the primitiveness of the land. For his part, he must have first come in contact with the primitiveness of the land, like Marlow. However, unlike Marlow, he had to put up with it for longer than Marlow had to. That is, while the native culture and its development among the tribes had alleviated the monster of the primitiveness of the land for them, and thus of the primitiveness in themselves, for Mr. Kurtz however it came in its pristine form. This, added with the greed that is involved in the trade–culture and the supposed supremacy of his whiteness, made his character all the more monstrous, more monstrous than the unfriendly native tribes and more monstrous than the primitive Africa could actually have made him. Thus, the natives have a different tradition and Mr. Kurtz has developed a unique one, peculiar to himself. Sheshadri-Crooks argues that “dominant racial identification — or whiteness — ...when threatened...is susceptible to uncanny effects” (353). Surely, deep in the heart of the African forests, away from the ‘Central Station,’ Kurtz must have been the only white man among the native tribes; his whiteness itself must have been the cause of that threat, the “uncanny effects” of which are quite obvious in the novella. For a lack of “the sedimentation of the ‘we’ [white race] in the constitution of [Kurtz’s] ‘I’,” his imaginary must have suffered in its “phantasmatic efforts” of identification with the environment (Sheshadri-Crooks 359).

The purpose of this digression was to bring into view the scope of the implication of “primitive difficulties of getting started,” of “tradition,” of “mythology,” and of the changes that take place as time passes and culture develops — all of which figure in the
passages just quoted. Stevens, too, had come to live in Connecticut from a more abundant (as opposed to the ‘thrift and frugality’ of Connecticut) state, Pennsylvania. But for him, unlike Kurtz, there was no barrier of language, which proved conducive for his assimilating the Connecticut culture easily. This is why Lacan’s emphasis on the role of language in the creation of the ‘self’ is justified.

In short, the people of Stevens’ Connecticut were living in a tradition — that he equates with mythology — which had already been established through the past; the tradition is continually added to or modified, however. William Doreski describes the line “We never lived in a time / When mythology was possible” as “coy disclaimer” (164); if Doreski had in mind both ‘modest’ and ‘secretive’ as meanings of ‘coy,’ then the description is apt. The ‘secretive’ part of Stevens’ line is that mythology, as a study, is still possible; moreover, as tradition, it is an endless process: “we live in the tradition...,” Stevens writes in the above passage.

The key words in these two passages are: “gray, bleached and derelict,” and “the primitive difficulties of getting started” respectively. It is these difficulties that the poet seeks, brings himself vis-à-vis, in the “— But if we had —.” These dashes, ellipses, hiatuses in Stevens are extremely important since they are significations beyond the range of cultural language. Stevens prefers them to verbal expressions, which seem “inadequate and paltry” for catching those “private experience[s]” that are “ineffable” (Corn 3). In these two dashes Stevens answers when and whether mythology was or is possible.

Stevens’ ride through the character of the state is timed when the external world is unfriendly: the weather was ‘bleak’ and wintry; everything seemed “gray, bleached and derelict,” the soil was “thin and difficult,” the landscape was “sparse.” The fact that he could study the personality or mythology of the state in difficult times, or in difficulties that are essentially “primitive,” suggests that mythology is possible in such times and places alone. In times and places that are not familiar or humanized — so that there is a fair chance of observing how the imaginary functions to perceive them in images that build up the imaginary text which is generally referred to as the ‘self’. For this reason alone, i.e. to study and/or to evolve the self, Crispin moves away from the place that had been familiarized through his dwelling there before embarking on the ‘voyage;’ away from “Bordeaux to Yucatan, Havana next, / And then to Carolina” (CP 29), from ‘South’ to ‘North,’ from the familiar and humanized to the unfamiliar and

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nonhumanized. The hominization of the ‘South’ had made his world “the world without imagination” (CP 27), where he did not have to imagine much, thus disallowing him to become “introspective” in order to study and/or evolve “mythology of self” (CP 29, 28).

For Stevens as for Crispin, “what counted was mythology of self, / blotched out beyond unblotching” (CP 28). Stevens wanted a clear perception of mythology of self, desired to perceive it in a “final atmosphere” (CP 168). For this, however, even the “unspectacular” Connecticut is not sufficient (Doreski 152), since it is more familiarized and humanized — hence is more beautiful — as compared with the ‘North’. Obviously, he must imagine or seek a more ‘sparse’ and ‘primitive’ or a non—humanized landscape, where cultural impositions like the “chicken farms,” “cowbarns,” “orchards of apples and peaches,” and “houses, smaller, fresher, more fastidious” have yet to make their mark. Stevens does this in “ — But if we had —;” and this is even reflected in the bits of images presented in the last two lines of the poem: “forests,” “stone,” “fields,” “mountains”. For this reason alone Stevens says in “Farewell to Florida,” “I hated the vivid blooms,” and then is able to reach “My North,” which he describes as a “return to the violent mind” (emphases mine; note the equation North = violent mind; CP 118). For, after all, “the specific nature of a setting,” Doreski rightly observes, “determines, to a great extent, the action possible within it, the undulation of the resultant meditation” (153). Thus, when he comments that “the fastidious little houses thrive in this unadorned landscape much as Stevens’ imagination does” (153), Doreski should also have taken into account the fact that the ‘little fastidious houses’ as symbolic of the hominization and culturization and familiarization of the world around leave that much little scope for the imagination to thrive or for becoming “introspective” and ‘blotching out’ the “mythology of self,” the reason why Crispin left the abundant ‘South.’ This alone would justify why at all Stevens bothered to write “ — But if we had —.”

As far as “A Mythology Reflects Its Region” is concerned, the issue is not of the pressure of reality, nor of making it pleasant or bearable though that is very much the possibility in Stevens as a result of its hominization, but of creating an atmosphere where the study of mind (mythology)\(^6\) will become possible. It is, therefore, necessary to travel towards, as Crispin and the speaker of “Farewell to Florida” do, or to imagine, as Stevens does in “A Mythology,” a terrain that is not familiar and/or not humanized — like the Connecticut of Stevens’ past (“But if we had”). One of the best examples of such a landscape, which essentially has to be strange, is in “Farewell to Florida” itself:
My North...lies in a wintry slime
Both of men and clouds, a slime of men in crowds.
The men are moving as the water moves,
This darkened water cloven by sullen swells
Against your sides, then shoving and slithering,
The darkness shattered, turbulent with foam.

(CP 118)

Even in the *The Comedian as the Letter C (CP 27-46)*, Crispin moves from the South to the North; America, which is his North, is more or less equally invidious:

America was always north to him,
A northern west or western north, but north,
And thereby polar, polar-purple, chilled
And lank, rising and slumping from a sea
Of hardy foam, receding flatly, spread
In endless ledges, glittering, submerged
And cold in a boreal mistiness of the moon.
The spring came there in clinking panicles
Of half-dissolving frost, the summer came,
If ever, whisked and wet, not ripening,
Before the winter's vacancy returned.
The myrtle, if the myrtle ever bloomed,
Was like a glacial pink upon the air.
The green palmettos in crepuscular ice
Clipped frigidly blue-black meridians,
More chiaroscuro, gauntly drawn.

(CP 34)

A decretative or a deconstructionist or even a commonsensical approach would appreciate the fact that while the grammatical verb functions to connect the subject and the object in a sentence, it also separates them. Similarly, “My North” of “Farewell to Florida” is both ‘within’ and ‘without’ the “wintry slime / ...of men and clouds;” the fact that it “lies” in that slime makes it part of and part from the slime. This is to suggest that Stevens’ study of the self is both individual (“My”) and collective (“of men”). The “men” (minds) move
as the "water" moves. The water with its fluidity and seeming formlessness suggests the consciousness (seeming formlessness, because as Stevens quotes from Henry Focillon, "to assume consciousness is to assume form" [NA 46]), which is split ("cloven") by the "sullen swells" of the corporeal world, the other;\textsuperscript{27} "Against your sides" distinguishes between one's "sides" (body) and the "swells," which being distinct from the body are the other. These "swells" could be both the pressure of reality or the approach of the 'real' (or, Stevens' 'unreal') of that reality: while the reality 'shoves' in, the 'real' 'slithers' — seems to approach but escapes accurate perception — thus shattering the mind or consciousness that, in the process of perceiving, rapidly creates ephemeral fictions ("foam") in the form of images.

This is a demonstration of how the imagination 'thrives' in a place that is 'strange' or 'primitive' ("wintry slime"), enabling the study, observation, or (re)evolution of the mental processes. And without doubt, "The Snow Man" remains unparalleled in Stevens as far as the issue of the 'North' is concerned; it is the 'North' of the mind and place both. In "A Mythology," it is not clear whether Stevens is referring to the mythology of the self or of the outer "natural world" (OP 294). That this ambiguity remains unresolved suggests that it is impossible to separate the self and the external world. One has to think in terms of both simultaneously. Indeed, if images comprise of the mind and the outside world, one cannot really separate them from either. However, one must believe in the reality or truth of images; and 'change' is Stevens' mode of attesting it, and of progress: "Progress in any respect is a movement through changes" (OP 157). A change from 'South' to 'North' changes the images; similarly, a change from one's 'North' to another's 'North' changes them, since it is \textit{he}, the perceiver, who, Stevens says in "A Mythology," "is in the substance of his region." Like the word 'mythology,' the poet also seems to use 'region' with all its possible connotations. It might suggest the external world as well as the internal. Further, 'region' is derived from Latin\textit{ regio}, meaning 'direction': if 'direction' suggests 'way,' Ragland–Sullivan's comment, that has already been quoted, might be recalled: "any unraveling (study) of an imaginary text shows the way identity was composed as a 'self' text (mythology)..." (parantheses and emphasis mine; ERS 142). Thus, 'region' could also signify the process or the way 'mythology' evolves or is created.

And again Stevens' use of 'must' is ambiguous, as in "The snow man." He writes, "[T]he image must be of the nature of its creator." In the light of the implications
of the preceding part of the poem, the "must" suggests the obviousness of the fact that
the image cannot be anything else. But this is merely an obviousness, which Stevens
consolidates and turns into a truth through repeated use of 'is' in the following lines, thus
eradicating the slightest possible doubt that might have filtered through the "must." His
'must' is a certainty seeming — but only seeming — to traverse, in a flitter, the border of
uncertainty. With each image recorded as memory in the Other, the nature of its creator
is quantitatively "increased" and qualitatively "heightened," for images not only build
layer upon layer of representations but also give rise to "a specific and seemingly unified
effect" (ERS 145), which we call 'personality' or 'self,' which is ultimately responsible
for one's "sense of the world" (NA 118), where "the world is no longer an extraneous
object, full of other extraneous objects, but an image" (NA 151); this is the "true
mythology" of human existence.

And this is the importance of the imaginary in human life. If 'reality is the
ultimate value' (OP 166), so is the imaginary in our life, and in Stevens' poetry. In fact,
one could even say that all the major issues that Stevens' writing is concerned with were,
for him, the ultimate values. Man is one such value to which he keeps returning —
rather, which is never out of concern in his writings. And to study man was one of his
favorite haunts. Considering the importance of the imaginary in our life, it is not
surprising that images occupied Stevens, if not as much as, much as the imagination and
reality did, since images are the mode of the function of the imaginary. He found images
to be the best means to study man, as is clearly stated in "Study of Images I" (463-64):

It does no good to speak of the big, blue bush
Of day. If the study of his images
Is the study of man, this image of Saturday,

This Italian symbol, this Southern landscape, is like
A waking, as in images we awake,
Within the every object that we seek,

Participants of its being.

The two Poems, "study of images I" and "study of images II" (464-65) are placed much
later in Collected Poems, just before the long and difficult "An ordinary Evening in New
Haven” (CP 465-88). This placement itself is enough to give a hint of their depth, and of the complexity of thought therein, not to speak of their compactness, short as they are. Most of the few critics who have tried to probe into them have had to be content with an explication of the first of them, for the second is more difficult. Yet their interpretation of the first poem leaves much to be desired.

The difficulty begins with the image presented in the opening lines, the image of “the big, blue bush/Of day.” The difficultest rigor of this image is again evoked in the third line as Stevens calls it “this image of Saturday,” which is further qualified in line four as “this Italian symbol, this Southern landscape.” So much depends upon, as William Carlos Williams would say, the understanding of this image.

The expression “Southern landscape” immediately evokes the ‘North-South’ dialectic in Stevens. As discussed earlier, the ‘North’ and ‘South’ correspond respectively to the unfamiliar, nonhumanized, and the familiar, humanized. The difference between them is crucial, as between living in a world without any preconceptions of it and living in a world with the “existing conceptions of it” (OP 164), or between the “ever-early candor” and its “late plural” of the Notes (CP 382), or between the zero level of existence as in “Snow Man” and the highest level of existence as in the summertime Oley valley in Pennsylvania of Credences of Summer (CP 374), or between the “primitive difficulties of getting started” (OP 295) and the “feel of Connecticut like coming home to it” (OP 296). Thus, one can see how cogent and expansive the ‘North-South’ issue is in Stevens.

From the beginning to this point in Collected Poems Stevens has continued his meditation on the structure and the modes of functioning of the human mind. In this course, he has had glimpses of the all pervasiveness of “That animal, that Russian, that exile” (CP 224), i.e. the Other, who is thus essentially bestial. The primitiveness, animality (non human-ness), and alien-ness (non familiarity) of the Other make it the ‘North’ of human mind. These qualities enabled Stevens to assimilate to the Other the satyr, who may be regarded as the mythological ‘North’ (owing to its ancient-ness and radical otherness), thus appropriating satyr’s bestiality, primitiveness, and remoteness. Moreover, both the Other and satyr are ‘exiled’ from current usage in both literal and figurative senses (it is difficult to tell the literal from the figurative, though): literally speaking, the satyr belongs to the outdated past (Greek mythology) and the Other’s otherness and veiled-ness remove it from the conscious; figuratively, satyr, the principle
of ‘bestial desire and behaviour,’ is sophisticated to the level of being forgotten through
generations of human civilization, and the moi-other circuit is unaware, rather tries to be
unaware, of the Other’s existence. However both the satyr and the Other erupt
occasionally and make their presence felt. This ‘North’ of the human psyche is its every-
early candor, the “absolute” (ERS 187).

The incessant drive of human desire is to seek the knowledge of the Other (Écrits
301). In the beginning of the life, the preconscious imagistic world is the mode of
realization of this desire, and later the moi and je are formed which strive for that
realization. The moi and je are the late plural of human mind, its ‘South.’ They function,
especially the moi, to seek the sense of oneness or jouissance by imaginary unification
with the other. Thus, if the Other is the ‘North pole,’ jouissance is the ‘South pole;’ these
are the two extremes between which is spanned human behaviour, “we move between
these points” (CP 382).

If bestiality is the principle of the ‘North,’ of the “violent mind” as the
unconscious (“Farewell to Florida”), that of the ‘South’ is the imaginary identification.
They are inextricably linked by the desire. That is why, although the satyr belongs to
Greek mythology, Stevens must connect it with Italy. For him, “the tradition of Italy is
the tradition of imagination” (NA 9). In other words, Greece is ‘North’ as Italy is ‘South.’
In connecting them, Stevens’ Oxford English dictionary or some encyclopedia might
have helped. OED tells us that the Roman sculptors assimilated the satyr in some degree
to the faun of their native mythology. Likewise, the ‘desire of the Other’ is responsible
for the imaginary function that seeks jouissance through identification. Hence, it follows
that the Other figures in what is generally referred to as conscious acts — though not
very heavily in the normal subject, but to some degree like the satyr in the faun. If, thus,
the ‘North’ is assimilated into the ‘South,’ one can always conversely say that the
‘South’ seeks the ‘North.’ Lacan’s jouissance, therefore, is also a oneness with the
Other; this is even reflected in the idea that the ‘desire of the Other’ is also the ‘desire for
the Other’ (see Écrits 312). This makes it possible to say that the ‘North’ and the
‘South’ are each a corroborative function of the other. This is why Stevens could write
that

...North and south are an intrinsic couple

............... like two lovers
That walk away as one in the greenest body.

(BP 392)

Between the ‘North pole,’ the Other, and the ‘South pole,’ *jouissance*, exists our normal conscious life. The drive of the conscious life is towards *jouissance*. That is to say, *jouissance* is the principle according to which it functions (and, perhaps ironically, seeks the Other). This enabled Stevens to connect it with Saturn, the principle of unrestrained merry-making. However, the consciousness, like the imaginary, is a function of desire, which is closely associated with the Other since Lacan’s thought indicates that there is no desire without the Other (recall “the desire of man is the desire of the Other,” also meaning that one owes one’s desire to the Other [Écrits 312]; this will be discussed in the next chapter). This suggests that the conscious life is the composite of the Other and *jouissance*, the “image of Saturday,” where ‘satur-‘ points to both satyr and Saturn, and ‘day’ is desire (CP 167). If the unconscious and the Other make up the ‘North’ of human mind, the conscious life and *jouissance* make up the ‘South,’ or the “Southern landscape” as Stevens writes in the poem. The word ‘landscape’ is used to suggest the expanse of conscious life; and since it is not the exact ‘South,’ it is ‘Southern,’ which signifies merely the direction, a ‘toward.’ Moreover, there is a finer distinction between the imaginary and the desire. Though both of them participate in both the conscious and unconscious processes, the desire belongs more properly to the unconscious and the imaginary to the consciousness. Since the imaginary is responsible to a very large extent for the conscious phenomena, Stevens appropriately calls the conscious life as “*This* Italian symbol” (emphasis mine). We know Stevens connects Italy with imagination; we also know that in the poetry of some powerful modern poets the symbol has become extremely complex, obscure, and as having a wide range of associations. The conscious life is no less so; for, after all, people like Freud and Lacan could become powerful only by keen observations of the conscious life. And because the imaginary is its mast, its description as ‘Italian symbol’ is a fitting one. Thus, considering the expansiveness of the conscious domain, the important role of the imaginary and, most importantly, the genetic significance of desire in their functioning, Stevens defines the conscious life as “the big, blue bush / Of day” (emphases mine).

Stevens devotes nearly four lines to ‘catch’ or describe this symbol. The fact that he describes the symbol at once aligns him with Mallarmé, especially with his earlier
works. For the French poet, symbolism was the art of "evoking an object little by little so as to reveal a mood or, conversely, the art of choosing an object and extracting from it an ‘état d’âme’," and that this mood should be extracted “par une série de déchiffrements” — by a series of decipherings” (Chadwick 1). The Stevens passage, too, ‘evokes’ the symbol of “the big, blue bush / Of day” ‘little by little’ through a series of what Mallarmé refers to as ‘decipherings.’ That they are decipherings is very clear since it would have been virtually impossible to know without them what Stevens’ bush symbolizes. Later Mallarmé is reluctant to even deciphering the symbols and “tends...to omit, or to at least play down the interpretation and to leave the symbol virtually unexplained;” he might have “banished the words ‘as’ and ‘like’ from his vocabulary” (Chadwick 2), but Stevens does decipher his symbols and does use the two words quite often in his poetry. Yet, perhaps, he found some worth in the practice of later Mallarmé since, though he describes his “big, blue bush / Of day” and uses the word ‘as’ and ‘like’ in the poem, he begins the poem by showing a reluctance to describing: “It does no good to speak of...” Perhaps his unwillingness stems from the notion that such ‘speaking’ is killing the object, that it is “to drive the dagger in [its] heart,” “to strike [its] living hi and ho” (parentheses mine; CP 166). Stevens, therefore, prefers the enjoyment of the conscious phenomena, from whatever he has so far experienced of it, to ‘turning it true’ (CP 166); the cause of this decision of his could be the painfulness of the obsessional, almost pathological psychic experiences that much of his poetry reflects.

However, the fact remains that Stevens’ experiences of the activities of the mind themselves have a great depth. Hence, he could talk about the mind, but in such a way that it does not become a ‘ticking’ and ‘tocking’ of it (CP 166); his reluctance to turning his experiences true, to speak of them directly like a philosopher (he enmeshes them into the poetic), to be always tentative in making assertions about them, preserve the interest in the psychic phenomena alive instead of killing it. With such a proposition in mind he begins to narrate his experiences in the rest of the poem.

Images are the produce of a conflation of the actual world around and the imaginary. In fact, this is the formula that makes up our conscious life, of which perception and cognition are both the inevitable means and side effects or precipitates, without which human psyche would perpetuate through, to use Coleridge’s expression, a ‘life-in-death’ (178), a deep sleep perhaps, or better, an unconscious-ness. That is why Stevens says, “this Southern landscape, is like / A waking.” The “big, blue bush” seeks
union with the world outside through image-making process that is responsible for our 'waking,' our consciousness. Consciousness is not a state or something static, it is a flux, a process — the use of the gerund as noun is unmistakable in the lines just quoted. Thus, "in images we awake;" and since there would be no images, no perception, no cognition, hence no consciousness without the object, which in the poem represents the actual world around, we awake "Within the very object that we seek." In fact, we thus participate in the object's being just as the object participates in our consciousness that is ultimately responsible for our sense of being. It might be noted that Stevens does not say that we lend being to the object, he says we are "participants of its being;" his use of such inflections or half-clauses instead of clauses or complete sentences is another way of qualifying his assertions; here he uses it to assert the 'anima' of the objective world.\(^{33}\)

The two short sentences that follow, viz "It is, we are. / He is, we are.", seem difficult to the level of obscurity. Apparently, the 'it' seems to point to the 'object' since Stevens has been talking about it, but it could also be a reference to the "big, blue bush," for the whole poem 'speaks of' it despite the initial reluctance or because, as said earlier, the sense that "we are" is due to the 'it,' the consciousness. However, the consciousness depends upon the imaginary, which in turn depends upon the object, and since the consciousness could be said to have been included in the "we," the "it" is more likely to signify the object. Thus, it is possible to read the first of the two sentences as: the object is, and therefore we are. But, "we are" not only because "It is," but also because "He is," as the second of the two sentences says. Who is this 'He'? There is nothing in the poem, no noun, for which this personal pronoun could be used, except the noun 'man' of line three. But he is very much there in the 'we' of "we are," thus precluding that possibility. What complicates the problem further is Stevens' emphasis on "He is"; Stevens not only repeats the fact of 'his' is-ing but is more happy ("Ah, bella!") to realize that the 'he' is:

He is, we are. Ah, bella! He is, we are,
Within the big, blue bush and its vast shade

At evening and at night.

The sentence that follows the exclamation gives a hint — not without recourse to Lacan, of course. The second comma in that sentence, i.e. the one after "we are," is
important in this regard. It makes the sentence ambiguous, but this ambiguity helps. The
sentence could be read in at least three ways: 'He is...within the big, blue bush...;' 'We
are...within the big, blue bush...;' and 'He is and (therefore) we are within the big, blue
bush...' The first two readings, however, suggest that the 'therefore' in the third reading
is not necessary. In fact, Stevens has not used either 'therefore' or 'because' even in the
two short sentences discussed above. He is happy to simply realize the existence of the
‘it’ and ‘he’ and some vaguely understood relation of them with the ‘we.’ Therefore, one
would do better without the logic of ‘therefore’ or ‘because.’ The ‘he’ and ‘we’ are not
only within the “big, blue bush” but also within “its vast shade.” If the ‘bush’ symbolizes
the consciousness, its ‘shade’ is the unconscious, for the unconscious is also the
consciously perceived discourse of the Other. The ‘shade’ is ‘vast’ because it is difficult
to measure and fix it in a permanent view in comparison with the consciousness, which
may be fixed to some extent in a definition; for example, one may say that all the verbs
and senses are a measure of the consciousness. Similarly, if the ‘we’ stands for all human
beings, the ‘He’ represents the Other, existing as an-other for all the ‘we.’ Stevens’
surprise cum happiness at the realization of ‘his’ existence could be equated with
Schreber’s experience of ‘him;’ Schreber elevates the Other to the level of God. The
Other being the subject of the unconsciousness, ‘he’ is very much within the “vast
shade.” But ‘he’ is within the “big, blue bush,” too; the unconscious influencing or
interrupting the conscious acts is a phenomenon well accepted since Freud. If the
unconscious is the Other’s discourse (Écrits 172), it follows that ‘he’ is within the “big,
blue bush;” after all, the Other leaves nothing outside its domain (ERS 3). Similarly, the
‘we’ too ‘are’ within both the “big, blue bush” and its “vast shade.” What is important
here is the realization of ‘we’ within the “vast shade.” Stevens is certainly also thinking
of the consciousness influencing the unconscious. If we exist within the consciousness,
we exist within the unconsciousness as well: If I think, something thinks of me, too. This
is an addition to Descartes’s gloss of cogito: ‘I think, therefore I am; something happens
to me, therefore I am.’ Indeed, the unconscious eruptions give a feeling that something is
happening to us — witness dreams, for example. Stevens further adds, “At evening and
at night.” That is, ‘He is at evening and at night;’ ‘we are at evening and at night.’ The
second of these propositions commands no explanation owing to the above discussion,
but the first does. The ‘evening’ is Stevens’ time for meditation and/or observation,35
‘night’ is a time for ‘sleep’ (CP 167). However, the Other “lies awake at night” (CP
171), and even when one is meditating. The relationship of desire ("day"), consciousness, and the Other has already been discussed, as it is implicit in the first few lines of the poem. This could be the reason why Stevens does not mention it along with evening and night, nor even immediately after "the big, blue bush" in line nine; or because 'day' is mentioned in the second line that the poet does not mention it here. It is, therefore, understood that 'he' (the Other) is in 'daytime' as well.

Now, it is objectionable that in the three lines, just quoted, Stevens does not speak of the object, the 'it' of line 7. Does not the object have any role in human mind, especially when everything, after birth, begins with object perception? Well, there are two possible reasons why the object goes unmentioned here. First, the poet is struck by the realization of the Other's existence 'within.' The rarity of 'his' glimpse and the joy thereof has attracted most of his attention. Second, the object, the other, is always present for perception, hence is not rare for glimpse. Moreover, as to its role in human mind or its relation to us, Stevens has already made a mention when he wrote, "It is, we are." Or, it could be that the Other has now become the object of his desire here.

Thus, the world of objects, the real world outside and the Other both are important in relation to our being, and for us to realize that we are. It is both the question of being and of the knowledge that we are. In short, being is realized within the other-Other circuit or, what is the same, within the moi-Other circuit, to which desire provides the necessary impetus; but "in that loop is the desire to know" (Écrits 301). The knowledge that one is, i.e. one's sense of being a (unified) 'self,' is the importance of the other and the Other. This between-ness of our being was understood by Descartes when he wrote, "Je suis comme un milieu entre Dieu et le néant" (quoted in Kelkar 165). However, Descartes' God, as Lacan would say, is one "who does not deceive," under the name of Descartes and Einstein, Lacan attacks the religious projection of God as a guarantee of the truth of reality, as something extra-ordinary and therefore super-natural, hence as nondeceiving (Seminar III 64-66). Stevens does the same with the "over-human god" of human faith (CP 315), and His nothingness is very much what is implicit in Nietzsche's nihilism. Almost all scholars of Stevens know Stevens' enmity with such a God; at the same time, though, his dislike of Nietzsche is manifest in his Letters. Stevens' belief in the death of God and His replacement with the Other as the external guarantee of our being is therefore remarkable; it is being humanistic on Stevens' part.
All this discussion of the poem, however, is very much what Stevens rejected at the outset. Has this analysis done any good? Speaking of "the big, blue bush" has reached the Other and being. There is nothing beyond. It is almost as if Stevens has reached the truth by 'ticking it, tocking it,' so that even the role of desire is over. Hence the question props up again: does it do any good "to lay" the mind "upon the board" thus (CP 166)? If the answer is implicit in the ironic tone of section III of *The Blue Guitar*, it is explicit here: "It does no good;" for, this kind of analysis, this attempt to "rationalize" (Carrier 167), strips life of its 'delight which lies in imperfection' (CP 194), in an incompleteness. Besides, it is a question of being which cannot be answered when one is speaking, or even when one is thinking, for what is thinking if not the internal speech, "the 'inter-said' or the 'intra-said' of a between-two-subjects" (*Écrits* 299)? The answer to the question can come only when there is no speech or thought. That is why Lacan says, "I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think," or better, "I am not wherever I am the plaything of my thought; I think of what I am where I do not think to think" (*Écrits* 166). This is precisely the function of Stevens' "It does no good to speak of..." Note that it is only after he stops speaking of the "big blue bush / of day," i.e. at the end of line 7, that being is realized. But he starts thinking soon, as line 9 begins; but, the being escapes, jouissance is over: "It does no good."

Ultimately, Stevens returns to the repetitive game of conscious life; there, to believe in it, to find a cause to believe in it:

Stop at the terraces of Mandolins,
False, faded and yet inextricably there,

The pulse of the object, the heat of the body grown cold
Or cooling in late leaves, not false except
When the image itself is false, a mere desire,

Not faded, if images are all we have.
They can be no more faded than ourselves.
The blood refreshes with its stale demands.

Mandolin is of the lute family. The imagery of musical instruments in Stevens refers most often to the imaginary. This might recall the "lion in the lute" of section XIX of
The Blue Guitar. If the 'lute' symbolizes the imaginary, the 'mandolins,' being of the lute family, could be said to represent the imaginary processes. Stevens is adjuring the meditation not to exceed the level of the imaginary processes because, as he has experienced, beyond that it becomes 'turning the mind true by ticking and tocking it.' Besides, it is worth stopping 'here' since that 'delight of imperfection' can always be experienced 'here.' Therefore, instead of making deliberate efforts "to see the bottom of things" (Letters 602), one must stop at the points of conflation ("terraces of mandolins" are 'mandolins as terraces' just as "emperor of ice-cream" is 'ice-cream as emperor') of the 'within' and 'without,' where images are cultivated. Imaginary processes are referred to as "false, faded" since they evade the object, create deviations in its perception. Yet, one cannot evade them, they are "inextricably there." They, being the central reference point for object perception, are "the pulse of the object." If the 'North' of the human mind is its 'ever-early candor,' symbolically called "heat," the imaginary processes are its 'late plural,' the "cold." Here, Stevens perhaps shows an awareness that images participate in both the unconscious and conscious processes, or rather, that they really belong to the unconscious as such but most of their function is related with the conscious. Hence there is the (thermal-) gustatory image of "heat...grown cold/Or cooling in late leaves" (emphases mine). However, how can they be false when they are truly there, functioning as they do? The question of falseness arises only at image-formation. If the image of the object is not the object as such, it is the image that is false. The image is, ultimately, a form of a realization of the desire; and since it is the very nature of desire to remain insatiable, to be imperfect or incomplete, the object cannot be perceived except in images that are not the object itself. If images are a form of a realization of the desire, imaginary processes are the means, true in themselves like the object. How can they be falsified when it is what they achieve that is false? They cannot even be "faded," though they are "cooling" or have "grown cold," because "images are all we have." Thus, they are up to their task. If at all they are "faded" (Stevens now accepts that they 'must be'), then "They can be no more faded than ourselves" — we faded, and have been, as we fell from the Eden. Thus the "stale" or ancient demand refreshes, refreshes our "blood" — with each new generation — refreshes the desire for the mythical paradise, where the object did not evade in images or, perhaps, even in the symbol.
The "blood" will keep refreshing and the "demand" will keep getting more and more "stale" since "images are all we have," or we will ever have. If this is so, it is imperative for a poet like Stevens to stop there, to ponder over this, to accept the only nature we have and to find possibilities of jouissance right here on the earth, so that "may some day disclose a force capable of destroying nihilism" (Letters 602), thus creating here that mythical paradise which Stevens thought of as early as in Sunday Morning. The sequel to the poem just discussed, "Study of Images II," is a part of this project.

In the previous poem, Stevens stopped at the imaginary processes as they come in contact with the outside world. Being the sequel, Stevens, in this poem, is likely to go a little further, to images and emotions. Not only that, considering the rigor of the project, it is not surprising to see him 'penetrate to the basic(s) of images, to the basic(s) of emotions;' after all, his competition is with the 'ancient world' where the people (or, the first couple) dwelt in the 'fundamentals' (NA 145). Thus,

The frequency of images of the moon
Is more or less. The pearly women that drop
From heaven and float in air, like animals

Of ether, exceed the excelling witches, whence
They came. But, brown, the ice-bear sleeping in ice-month
In his cave, remains dismissed without a dream,

As if the centre of images had its
Congenial mannequins, alert to please,
Beings of other beings manifold —

The shadowless moon wholly composed of shade,
Women with other lives in their live hair,
Rose-women as half-fishes of salt shine,

As if, as if, as if the desperate halves
Of things were waiting in a betrothl known^41
To none, awaiting espousal to the sound
Of right joining, a music of ideas, the burning
And breeding and bearing birth of harmony,
The final relation, the marriage of the rest.

The “moon” is the imaginary and the “heaven” is the jouissance that we seek. It is in this seeking that images are begotten. Hence, they are described as ‘heavenly,’ much like the real as ‘heavenly Vincentine’: “the pearly women that drop / From heaven.” However, they are neither wholly that heaven, nor are they wholly the mind. Therefore, they inhabit that thin and difficult atmosphere between the two, which Stevens refers to as “air.” They certainly exist, but have no concrete physicality, therefore are “animals of ether.” But their significance cannot be underestimated; they “exceed” reality and imagination, those “excelling witches” from which they come. Witch-like, they appear and disappear, of ether as they are; their “frequency” is therefore uncertain, “more or less.”

All this is a ‘Southern’ phenomenon, however. It immediately reminds Stevens of its ‘Northern’ counterpart. Dreams. Thinking of the “frequency of images of the moon” reminds of the frequency of dreams. Dreams are comparatively rare. If images are of the imaginary (“animals of ether”), dreams are ‘of’ the Other. The Other is described as “brown, the ice-bear.” However, when the very mention of dream and the concreteness of ice-bear should have been sufficient to evoke the Other, why should Stevens use the word ‘brown’? Brown in Stevens is one of the colors of reality, but so is ice — as in “Emperor of Ice-Cream” (CP 64). Besides, ‘brown’ here stands in the difficulty of being either adjective or noun or adverbial; possibly all; but, more possibly, nothing of them. This is because it is not a word from the symbolic order of language, it is a Word; it is a meaning as such, and like meaning, reluctant to enter into an order of language. Then, what is meaning unless it makes any sense? Lacan has a point here: “...[T]he meaning always relates to something,” “meaning always refers to meaning;” this may sound endless, but Lacan says that it stops, i.e. the seemingly endless movement of the sense, stops “always at the level of...being” (Seminar III 137). Indeed, take the word ‘tree,’ for example. What does it mean? A certain X, say. It is always possible that this X, this meaning, further points to another meaning, and so on. And as this chain keeps adding meanings like this, it becomes difficult to use language; or, the language goes on becoming more and more difficult, obscure, private, almost uninterpretable. The word
‘brown’ is of the order of such language, in which grammaticality is (su)/(o)ppresses by sense. Hence certain words and expressions, like ‘mind of winter,’ ‘that I,’ are difficult to explain but sense-able nonetheless. And because sense is primary in such cases, they operate in a linguistic complexity. Thus, if at all ‘brown’ needs explanation, one has to come back to ordinary language and say that it is what Stevens understood by his terms ‘reality’ or ‘real,’ or better, the ‘unreal.’

However, the general understanding of these terms excludes something vital. It excludes the unconscious and the Other, which are real. Lacan is wise to include them in his real order. It may be observed that Lacan’s term ‘real’ can be used, and has been used by himself and his commentators, as adjective, or as noun or as adverbial. Stevens’ word ‘brown’ also stands in a similar situation. Though it is apparent that it has not been used as an adjective as such, it is still very much an adjective in the adverbial: “But, [being] brown, the ice-bear...,” where the ‘being’ is understood; or, ‘brown’ itself functions as an adverbial here; and, though for it to be a noun it should have been preceded by the definite article, it still could be treated as noun since the lines could also be read as: “But, brown.../...remains dismissed...” Considering ‘brown’ as noun gives the noun-phrase ‘brown, the ice-bear sleeping in ice-mouth in his cave.’ Here is an equation, which noun-phrases usually create, that befits Lacanian thought: brown = the ice-bear sleeping in ice-month in his cave = Real / Truth / Absolute = the Other.

However, the poem’s dialectic makes it clear that Stevens does not wish to speak of the Other, but of images; therefore, he does not spend much time to come back to them. Yet some things must be noted, as does Stevens, on the way back: dreams, the unconsciousness, the Other all are real; dreams reveal or incorporate mere reality and not anything that is of the subject or from him directly as such. In short, dreams keep their otherness much as the unconscious and the Other do. Hence, they lack congeniality to the self. This is the point where images have an edge over dreams.

Thus, unlike dreams, images have at their center the two “Mannequins,” imagination and reality, on which they are stylized. Although the two are opposite in nature, they depend upon each other, are “congenial” to each other, and form an “intrinsic couple” (CP 392). Hence, they are con + genial, i.e. jointly favorable, to the image-making process. And since this process is the process of identification with the other, it is pleasurable. Thus, they are congenial to us as well, as if they are ever “alert to please” us, ever ready to seek for us the jouissance we crave.
The next line, “Beings of other beings manifold — ,” does not describe imagination and reality, but the images as such; the first ‘Beings’ represents images (recall Stevens refers to them as ‘animals’ in line 3). They are so because imagination without reality has no life, no significance; and images are formed as the imagination comes in contact with reality, the manifold external world composed of beings and things. Thus, images are the beings that are composed of many “other beings.” The “other” in this line represents reality in much the same way as Lacan’s ‘other’ represents reality vis-à-vis the ‘self.’ The concerned line encompasses the whole field of images, and therefore is a description of the individual’s imaginary domain itself. However, this leaves out the imaginary processes; therefore, Stevens abruptly shifts to the next stanza in order to arrive at a complete description of this domain.

Its oxymoronic sounding description as “shadowless moon wholly composed of shade” needs to be interpreted with respect to Stevens’ use of the word ‘shadow.’ In The Blue Guitar, the audience seems to have lost faith in everything except the most tangible things like ‘sun,’ ‘day,’ ‘desire,’ ‘night,’ ‘sleep.’ For them even “the earth...is flat and bare.” This predicament is compressed in a single line, “There are no shadows anywhere” (CP 167), meaning ‘there are no beliefs and faiths anywhere.’ In other words, the audience has become secular. Similarly, Stevens here suggests that the imaginary domain of an individual is secular, “shadowless.” Then, thinking of “shade” reminds of ‘light.’ “Poems of Our Climate” uses ‘light’ as conducive to clear perception. One thinks that if ‘light’ functions to give clear view, ‘shade’ could function to hide. However, one must see that Stevens does not use the word ‘dark.’ This is because imaginary perception is merely a deviation; the imaginary does not render the reality opaque as such. It only does not allow clear perception of reality. Stevens’ use of the word ‘shades,’ therefore, is parallel to his use of another word, ‘penumbra’ (CP 452, 490).

It has been noted that images formed and recorded in the Other’s memory function as the frame of reference for reality perception. In this connection, Stevens’ use of the past tense is noteworthy (“came,” “had,” “were waiting”). The imaginary domain is almost equal to this frame. That is why Stevens equates, as in a noun-phrase, his “shadowless moon” with the images (“women”) within that frame. These “women” or these “pearly women” or these “Beings” have “other lives” or “other beings” or reality in their “live hair”. The image of ‘women with other lives in their hair’ is very compact. “Live hair” should remind of live wire. It is suggestive of imaginary processes (“live
"hair") as referring to the images ("women") recorded in the unconscious and forming the frame of reference for reality perception: a ‘touch’ of reality ("other lives") and the imaginary processes create the ‘spark’ of perception that is always with reference to the earlier recorded images. Further, Stevens’ image is also suggestive of lice the parasites that inhabit hair. The lice ("other lives") prosper on the "women" and their "hair." Perhaps, Stevens is suggesting that reality (the lice, "other lives") thrives on the imaginary. This might be viewed as part of his humanism, of his project of “recovery of [human] immanence” (Miller, “Wallace Stevens’ Poetry of Being” 161), rather than imputing it to his so called anthropocentricism.

The “women” are associated with “Rose,” as in “Common Life:”

...............A woman,
Without rose and without violet,
The shadows that are absent from Euclid,
Is not a woman for man.

(CP 221)

And women without “rose and violet,” Stevens says in the last line of the poem, “have only one side” (CP 221), lack voluptuousness. Thus, ‘rose’ suggests the ability to evoke feelings and desire. The complete description of the imaginary domain seems to finish here. Yet there is a sense of incompleteness; the imaginary giving rise to feelings is not sufficient. It may be true that feelings thus roused give a sense of reality ("salt shine"), yet the images do not become complete beings; they are still “half-fishes” or half-beings for all the real shine they might give. In order to become ‘complete women,’ they must seek their ‘spouse.’ The word ‘betrothal’ is derived from ‘be’ and ‘truth.’ Thus, these ‘women’ seek ‘spouse’ in order to become true or real. And the ‘spouse’ comes from the symbolic order of language. “Espousal to the sound / Of right joining” alone legalizes images, lends them a sort of permanence, lends them the sanction of being ‘true’ and ‘complete.’ Here, Stevens is clearly opening the imaginary into the symbolic. However, images are composed of the imaginary and the real; thus, he is also opening the real-ity into the symbolic. In fact, like Lacan, Stevens is showing the imbrication and interdependency of the imaginary, symbolic, and real. “In an attempt to give even greater
precision to his three orders, Lacan introduced the example of the Borromean knot in 1953. If one ring of the Borromean knot is broken, the other two are loosened as well. Any shift of equilibrium among Lacan's three orders has the same effect on the psychic system" (ERS 131). Thus, Stevens suggests, even though reality is viewed as complete without human intervention, it is incomplete without its marriage with the imaginary and the symbolic; it is as if “things” are “halves” and, what is more, are “desperate” to ‘betroth’ (to) the “sound/Of right joining.” In the early years of life certain sounds also have been recorded or ‘inscribed’ in the Other’s memory along with images (see ERS 145). The sound that man makes later as he starts speaking, like the images he conceives in later life, refer to the images and sounds inscribed in the preconscious stage. Thus, it is in relation to these recordings that man later finds sounds of “right joining.” This is how springs the “music of ideas.” It is in an attempt to fulfill the desire and realize the feelings and emotions that these recordings keep “waiting,” keep the cycle of desire in motion (“burning,” “breeding,” “bearing birth” [emphases added]), and are responsible for establishing man’s relation with the whole world (“the rest”), and this is the “final relation” as there is no other relation beyond this. They not only establish man’s relation with the world but also among manifold things of the world. This is the sense of Oneness with and of the world. This feeling is, perhaps, one of “the rest;” it is a marriage with the “peace” (CP 373) since its anticipation makes human birth the “birth of harmony.”

This is how Stevens meditated, brooded, very deeply on the possible ways of establishing a harmonious relation with the actual world. How much he succeeded or felt having succeeded is dubitable, for it is not only the other that he sought; he could not stop there in his search of happiness; his desire urged him toward the Other, for the Other kind of jouissance. This is the ‘subject’ of the next chapter.