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INCARNATE CONSCIOUSNESS: PHENOMENOLOGY
OF PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE IN KEATS AND STEVENS

by

MARJORIE NORRIS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
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Abstract

INCARNATE CONSCIOUSNESS: PHENOMENOLOGY
OF PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCE IN KEATS AND STEVENS

by

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There is a link between Keats and Stevens in the primacy of perceptual experience in the world of their poem, in the intrusion of reality on the imaginative act and the resultant tension which empowers their poetry, and in their compelling interest in the poetic process and the vocation of the poet to help us accommodate to our world.

Phenomenology can help us explore these facets as it unfolds how things come to mean for the perceiver. It relates to poetry in that the text generates a world, and the way the poet experiences the world around him structures and is embodied in the world of the text. In the act of reading, the reader grasps the texture of being which the poet lays bare for him. In poets of perception, like Keats and Stevens who search for a palpable reality ("I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd" ["Ode to Apollo"]; "This landscape of the mind/Is a landscape only of the eye" ["Crude Foyer"], their perceptual experience has to be that of the real world: particulars in their poem have to come-to-be, they have to include their horizons and the forces

which interact with them. Like the painter, these poets capture the way the wind and the water move through things, the mode of color and lighting as it shifts and commingles with the percept, the way the body moves, behaves and is involved in the "vibration of appearances"; in short, they unveil what makes the world be, what exterior forces operate, and what is the configuration, the physiognomy of things. In their poem, which is an unfolding world, things are not representations of themselves standing for some object, but rather they are there, the poet and reader "exist" them.

A phenomenological reading of Keats and Stevens reveals kaleidoscopic changes of color and light in the poetry, shifting appearances which underscore the fluidity of perceptual experience, perspectival changes and changes in the surrounding field as well as in the perceiver himself. Bodily experience for Keats and Stevens structures the world and the poem, wherein the poets point up the reality of the physical senses; the relationship between changing phenomena-- between sound and silence, light and darkness, the present and the hidden; the structure of motion, and the communion and correlativity of self and world.

Merleau-Ponty supplies the bridge which makes Husserl's phenomenology viable for literary criticism, as he develops and expands it, asserting the role of the body in perceptual experience. Here, consciousness and being intersect only through the correlativity of body and world because the subject of perception is not the Cartesian cogito but incarnate

consciousness, and thus we no longer have the mind/thing dichotomy, but discover self and object intertwining in the same realm; we are "caught in the fabric of the world." For Merleau-Ponty, the mobile body touring and turning the object is the vehicle which unfolds the world-as-meaning because "the world is not what I think, but what I live through." Thus man constitutes his world for himself: he "lives" his time, orients himself to his space, and partakes of the existence of the robin, the sparrow, and the nightingale.

By examining some phenomenological concepts--intentionality, bracketing, reduction, and constitution--in their philosophic context, we come to understand them as they operate in the world of the poem. Bracketing in phenomenology is a suspension of all theoretical knowledge (for example, ~~2~~ of the circle), so that the object can be experienced in its physiognomy (here, its roundness), its appearing to us as we commingle with it. This self-emptying is an openness, a readiness for experience which in Keats is "negative capability" and in Stevens is "ignorance" ("You must become an ignorant man again/And see the sun again with an ignorant eye" ["Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction"]).

In the temporal, creative and perceptual process, which is the unfolding of the poem, the poet/perceiver, an incarnate unconsciousness characterized by a motor intentionality, seizes the particulars around him; and in his search for meaning as that meaning comes to be, he "sings" the world.

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Ever since I first walked into the Graduate Center it has been a special place for me. I love it very much and am deeply grateful for the fellow-feeling that I found there and for the intellectual aspiration that was fostered in me.

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INTRODUCTION

What is phenomenology? What is its relationship to poetry? These are the two questions to which this study addresses itself. Its purpose is to re-examine the phenomenological writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a twentieth-century French philosopher, in the light of the valid literary critical criteria they engender. Its aim is a marriage (in the Blakean sense of a fruitful opposition rather than a reconciliation of opposites) of philosophy and poetry. A few phenomenological critics have upset the balance by weighting either side too heavily. The philosophical is preponderant in Roman Ingarden's The Literary Work of Art¹ which schematizes the strata of formation of a literary work, a methodological demonstration of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology as applied to the literary text. The literary works he refers to merely are used to support his theory, and we are never drawn into the world of the literature. On the other hand, the poetic so presides in Gaston Bachelard's work that we are hypnotized by the rich resonances of the poetic images which he evokes and which reverberate throughout, drawing us into the poetry and dissolving in its mesmeric flow any philosophical framework. What I propose is a phenomenological criticism which enlists the positive aspects of both of these approaches: the intense and incisive philosophical analysis plus the dynamic feeling for the work examined. For me, Merleau-Ponty supplies the bridge which makes Husserl's philosophy useful for literary

criticism. He acknowledges his debt to Husserl, and he develops and expands the phenomenology, so that we can construct a workable philosophical framework to apply to the literature.

Much has been written on Merleau-Ponty as psychologist, philosopher and as social scientist,² but nothing has been done so far on Merleau-Ponty as literary critic, which is the aim of my project. John O'Neill³ refers to the act of reading as related to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of expression and Garth Gillan⁴ certainly underscores the importance of his phenomenology of language, but neither applies it to actual works of literature. The critics mostly discuss Merleau-Ponty's theories reflected in his work or as they relate to the philosophy of Husserl. Many critics recognize the affinities between phenomenology and Stevens' poetry,⁵ a few link it to Keats's work,⁶ but so far I have read only one, Thomas Hines,⁷ who actually points out the use of the methods of phenomenology in the poetry of Wallace Stevens, analyzing the poems in terms of the philosophy operative there. Hines relates phenomenology and poetry, going beyond mere surface resemblances by examining Stevens' poetry in the light of Husserl's phenomenological concepts. My study diverges from Hines in that I feel Merleau-Ponty is indispensable for any analysis of phenomenology and poetry as he clarifies, sharpens, and expands Husserl's theories so that they can be more readily understood and applied to works of art and literature.

It is through Merleau-Ponty's theory of "corporeal organization," which enables the commingling of body and world, that perceptual experience is recognized as a source of meaning, wherein the perceiver, an embodied consciousness, reaches toward the object and bestows a meaning on it as he moves his body, so that he can grasp the object's mode of existence, the way in which it presents itself to him. In perception, consciousness and being can intersect only through the correlativity of body and world because the subject of perception is not the Cartesian cogito but incarnate consciousness, and thus we no longer have the mind/thing dichotomy, but discover self and object intertwining in the same realm; we are "caught in the fabric of the world."⁸ For Merleau-Ponty, the mobile body touring and turning the object, which appears in a certain light, from a certain angle, is the vehicle which unfolds the world-as-meaning because the "world is not what I think, but what I live through."⁹ Therefore, phenomenology focuses on the shifting, the fluid, world of appearances: the varied perspectival views of the percept as well as the changing position of the viewer as against the empiricist who focuses on a completed object with scientific data which exists "out there" detachable from the perceiver and his field of vision, or against the intellectualist who sees pure subjectivity, a consciousness without an object, existing in a vacuum. The object can come-to-be for us only in the way we experience it: in a temporally unfolding and incomplete view of it. Perception

is primary in phenomenology because it is in this act that the intentional structure of consciousness is revealed: all consciousness has to be consciousness-of-something, and in its coming-to-mean for a perceiver, the object, the act, and the perceiver are inseparable. It has meaning for him in this experience of it, in this place, at this time, and in the manner of his and the object's correlative behavior in the world around them.

The phenomenology of perceptual experience relates to poetry in that the text generates a world, and the way the poet experiences the world around him structures and is embodied in the world of the text. In the act of reading, the reader enters a pact with the author in which the experiences in the text are re-created. In poets of perception, like Keats and Stevens, their perceptual experience has to be that of the real world: particulars in their poem have to come-to-be, they have to include their horizons and the forces which interact with them. Like the painter, these poets capture the way the wind and the water move through things, the mode of color and lighting as it shifts and relates to a percept, the way the body moves, behaves, and is involved in "the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things"¹⁰; in short, they unveil what makes the world be, what "interior force holds the world together,"¹¹ and what is the configuration, the physiognomy of things, which we come to know like a familiar face whose parts merge. In the poem, which is an unfolding world, things are not repres-

entations of themselves standing for some object, but rather they are there, the poet and reader "exist" them.

By examining the poem in the light of the shifting appearances in it, the perspectival changes, and changes in the surrounding field as well as in the perceiver, we can unveil the meaning of the poem and reveal the ontology of the literary text.

By examining the structure of consciousness and its acts in the light of the phenomenological concepts of intentionality, bracketing, reduction, and constitution operating in the lived world, we may shed light on the consciousness creating the poetic world and reveal the epistemological structure of the literary text.

With such a presumptive and overwhelming aim, this study can only hope to be a prolegomena to a literary theory, an interesting way of looking at a poem, and speculative at best. We may, however, as a starting point, assume with Merleau-Ponty that man, the perceiver, confers existence on the particulars of the world around him, generates temporality and orients his space as he uses language to communicate his experience of an intersubjective world.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

¹Roman Ingarden, The Literary Work of Art, trans. George Grabowicz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

²For a view of Merleau-Ponty as psychologist see, for example, Marie Rose Barral, Merleau-Ponty: The Role of the Body-Subject in Personal Relations (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1965). The majority of Merleau-Ponty's critics address themselves to his philosophy and compare it to Husserl's; for example, see Ronald Bruzina, Logos and Eidos: The Concept in Phenomenology (The Hague: Mouton, 1970); and Remy C. Kwant, The Phenomenological Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1963). For a view of Merleau-Ponty, the social scientist see, for example, Albert Rabil, Merleau-Ponty: Existentialist of the Social World (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1967); and Enzo Paci, The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972).

³John O'Neill, Perception, Expression, History: The Social Phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

⁴Garth Gillan, ed. Horizons of the Flesh: Critical Perspectives on the Thought of Merleau-Ponty (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973).

⁵Stevens' reputation has been growing in the past two decades as evidenced by the increasing number of important critical works devoted to a detailed analysis of varied aspects of his work. For an eclectic and comprehensive collection of essays mirroring this growth and development see Roy Harvey Pearce and J. Hillis Miller, eds., The Act of the Mind: Essays on the Poetry of Wallace Stevens (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965). The concluding essay is a survey of recent studies of Stevens: Joseph Riddel, "The Contours of Stevens Criticism."

Stevens' recent critics seem to fall into two categories: those who are opposed to a philosophical approach and those who see philosophical implications in the poetry. Both sets of critics agree that Stevens himself dismisses philosophic systems; however, the former group therefore rejects a philosophical reading and sees it as too exclusive and one-sided. The latter group warns that Stevens poetry is more than the philosophic principles which inform it, but nevertheless the critics give a phenomenological interpretation and feel that the parallels between the philosophy and the poetry are not reductive but, on the contrary, enriching.

For examples of the opponents of philosophic criticism

see Isabel Mac Caffrey, "The Other Side of Silence: 'Credences of Summer' as an Example," Modern Language Quarterly, 30 (September, 1969), 417-38; Ronald Sukenick, Wallace Stevens: Musing the Obscure (New York: New York University Press, 1967); James Baird, "Transvaluation in the Poetics of Wallace Stevens," Studies in Honor of John C. Hodges and Alwin Thaler, ed., Richard Beale Davis and John Leon Trevsay (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1961), pp. 163-77; and James Baird, The Dome and the Rock: Structure in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968). Mac Caffrey is by far the most outspoken of the anti-philosophical critics, feeling that "analogy with philosophy has mired so many discussions of this poet". (p. 419). Sukenick feels that the only valid criticism is explication: "Commentators have been so fascinated by the explanation of Stevens' ideas that they have largely neglected the explanation of his poems, except for fragmentary readings designed to illustrate points which are as often as not incorrect or superfluous" (pref. vii). Baird is much less critical of the philosophic mode of criticism; in fact, he expresses gratitude for the work done in some distinguished recent studies, which he examines and evaluates, coming to the conclusion, however, that "there may be limits to the value of philosophical approach" (intro. xiii, The Dome and the Rock). His own approach is architectural here: he is interested in structure, seeing the relationship of part to whole and asserting that the "separate poems of Stevens are all parts of the total poem" (intro. xxx). In his essay "Transvaluation in the Poetics of Wallace Stevens," relating Stevens' poetics to the aesthetics of modern painting, he comes very close to a phenomenological reading of Stevens despite his and Stevens' dismissal of philosophy. I think the problem with many of the opponents of the philosophical approach stems from a misunderstanding of what the philosophic critic is trying to do. He does not want to impose the philosophic system on the poetry, nor does he wish to claim that the poet was influenced by it or had it in mind when he wrote his poetry, nor even that the poet has read the philosophic works. Rather, what is vital is the expression of the philosophic concepts as they operate in the world of the poem.

Within the second group, whose criticism reflects a phenomenological approach, there is a subdivision. First, there are those who use a general and informal mode of phenomenological interpretation, sometimes making only passing reference to phenomenology without specifying or locating the concept in its philosophic context. In a sense they distil the concept to apply it to the poetry and view the poem in the light of the concepts operating there. I'm not sure if this comes from a reluctance to refer to an external system or not, but the neutralization does avoid charges of exclusiveness. (But aren't the critics who analyze poetry in terms of art or music open to the same charges?) However, this is not a charge against the critics

in this group because much incisive and impressive works of criticism have emerged here. For examples of this mode in Stevens criticism see Glauco Cambon, The Inclusive Flame: Studies in Modern American Poetry (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963); Newton P. Stallknecht, "Absence in Reality: A Study in the Epistemology of 'The Blue Guitar,'" Kenyon Review, XXI (Autumn, 1959), 545-62; Roy Harvey Pearce, "Wallace Stevens: The Life of the Imagination," PMLA, LXVI (September, 1951), 561-82; Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Joseph N. Riddel, "Wallace Stevens' 'Visibility of Thought,'" PMLA, LXXVII (March, 1962), 482-98; Joseph N. Riddel, The Clairvoyant Eye: The Poetry and Poetics of Wallace Stevens (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965). Cambon sees Poe, Melville, Whitman, and Dickinson as forerunners, whose expression of space, experiment, and prophecy paved the way for the later line of American poets. His existential view of space, reflecting the relation of space and self expressed in the poetry, is phenomenological, as is his analysis of sound, light, and kinesthetics in the poetry. Comparing Dickinson and Stevens, Cambon asserts that "with both poets 'ignorance' becomes something positive, a state of un-knowing that prepares the mind for an unclouded revelation that has the power of radically transforming the beholder" (p. 48). Pearce cogently expresses the stance of the philosophical critic: "[Stevens] becomes explicitly philosophical--in the sense that he is concerned with realizing in esthetic form certain epistemological, ontological, and moral propositions. The relationship between the propositions and the poetry is this: that esthetic experience is the only means we have of initiating the inquiry by which we arrive at these propositions and is, moreover, the only means we have of realizing and believing in them. Thus Stevens' poetry is at once an expression and an exposition of a philosophical attitude. . . . So the poet-esthete becomes the philosopher-moralist. To him a philosophical proposition fully realized is one realized as a poem. For propositions are statements involving the conjoining of the individual imagination and reality; and such a conjoining is the work of the poet, of 'any man of imagination'" (PMLA, p. 571). Without labelling it so, Riddel's phenomenology of consciousness is apparent as he asserts the self-creation and world constitution in the 'act of the mind': "Everywhere in Stevens' late poetry is this very sense of continuous self-creation, the emphasis on the 'act' by which one not only sustains but perpetuates oneself, creating the world and the self simultaneously" (The Clairvoyant Eye, p. 272).

The second subdivision in the group are those who go a step further in their philosophic commitment and give more formal, specific, and detailed analysis of the phenomenological concept, sometimes locating it and relating

it to its philosophical context. See, for instance, J. Hillis Miller, "Wallace Stevens' Poetry of Being," The Act of the Mind, pp. 143-162; J. Hillis Miller, Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966); Richard Macksey, "The Climate of Wallace Stevens," The Act of the Mind, pp. 185-223. In Miller and Macksey, it seems to me, we find a marriage of philosophy and poetry, a relation of the concept and its life in the poem. "Poetry does not . . . put in words a pre-existent mental conception. The act of naming brings things together, gathers them into one, and makes present the things which are present. Speaking belongs to being, and in naming things in their presence poetry releases a glimpse of being" (Miller, The Act of the Mind, p. 161). Here is another example from Miller of this intertwining: "The poetry of flittering metamorphosis is the only poetry which is simultaneously true to both imagination and reality, and it is the only poetry which will catch being. Being is 'the dominant blank, the unapproachable,' but it is nevertheless the source of everything, all man sees and all he is" (p. 160). For me, Macksey's criticism is powerful, compelling and incisive as it energizes and weds the poetry and the philosophy. In his explication of "The Snow Man," he says the argument of the poem "moves first in the finite space of the observer's perceptual horizon and then enters the world of the perceiver as the wind bleakly penetrates the observer's consciousness" (Macksey, The Act of the Mind, p. 197).

⁶As early as 1926 Clarence Thorpe begins his book, The Mind of John Keats (New York: Russell & Russell, [reissued] 1964), "Keats the philosophic poet is being discovered" (p. 1). I think for a while this pursuit was blocked by critics who insisted that the poem was an autonomous object needing no other frame of reference to interpret it. In his foreword to his book, The Finer Tone: Keats' Major Poems (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1953), Earl Wasserman speaks out against this constriction which "has very nearly come to mean that everything communicated by the poem is defined within its own boundaries and nowhere else" (p. 3). He feels that this principle "has made many critics neurotically fearful of using means outside the poem to explicate it" (p. 4).

But fortunately in the last two decades, perhaps in reaction to a hermetic kind of criticism, Keats's critics are seeing philosophical implications in Keats's work and are exploring many of the varied and multidimensional aspects of his poetry.

Some critics have linked Keats and Stevens, pointing out the resemblance in their emphasis on perceptual experience in the poetry, in the tension between the imaginative act and the real world, and in their shared interest in the poetic process as well as the poet's vocation which helps us accommodate to our world. For example, see Harold

Bloom, The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), pp. 380-458 ("Keats's Psyche is a sexual Goddess who renews consciousness and thus renews the earth, and for Stevens as for Keats the earth is enough" [p. 425]). See also Carol Kyros Walker, "The Longest Resonance: A Comparative Study of Keats and Stevens" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1972).

Several critics deal with Keats's sensual and perceptual experience from a phenomenological approach, but without labelling, referring to, or locating the philosophical affinities. For instance, see Richard Harter Fogle, The Imagery of Keats and Shelley: A Comparative Study (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1949).

("Much of Keats's most characteristic synaesthetic imagery reinforces sound or odor with strong tactual, organic, or kinesthetic sensations. . . . Keats comes closest to the individuality of feeling and suddenness of effect which characterizes modern synaesthesia in an image which attributes color to organic feeling" [pp. 112, 114]). See also Bernard Blackstone, The Consecrated Urn: An Interpretation of Keats in Terms of Growth and Form (London and Harlow: Longman, Green, 1959). "What is at work here is a kind of perception which is unique. I will call it 'total attention.' Keats is alive, in the moment of perception, to the whole of what is going on within his field of awareness; he throws round the event, whatever it may be, a multi-sensual net; he grasps it in its spatial relations (its references between components of the field of experience); he grasps it in its temporal relations (in its coming-to-be and its passing-away)" [p. 343].

For some criticism that deals with the categories of our experiential world, seeing space and time as lived through and experienced in the world of Keats's poetry see Hubert Heinen, "Interwoven Time in Keats's Poetry," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, III (Autumn, 1961), 382-88; and Arthur H. Bell, "The Depth of Things: Keats and Human Space," Keats-Shelley Journal XXIII (1974), 77-94.

As far as I know, there is no complete work devoted to a phenomenological reading of Keats in terms of the philosophical concepts pinpointed and labelled in the poem as well as in the philosophical context. But for a step in this direction see William Peter Hileman, "The Bodily Vision: A Phenomenological Study of John Keats" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1973); and Paul David Miers, "Keats's Myth of Consciousness: A Phenomenology of Mind and Nature" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Missouri, Columbia, 1974).

⁷Thomas J. Hines, The Later Poetry of Wallace Stevens: Phenomenological Parallels with Husserl and Heidegger (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1976).

⁸Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 163.

⁹Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pref. xvi-xvii.

¹⁰Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Signs, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 18.

¹¹Ibid., p. 18.

CHAPTER ONE

KALEIDOSCOPIC CHANGES: COLOR AND LIGHT

The phenomenology of perception can serve as a vital literary critical tool. Since hermeneutics, or the interpretation of texts, must deal with the ordering principles that shape the work, we may begin to see the text as a structure whose Gestalten are organized by the poet's perception of his world. Just as in art, the artist's perception is central, as he captures the way he perceives the world around him; so the author's perception of his experienced world, paralleled in the world of his work, is of signal importance to our understanding of the structure of the work.

The text generates a world, what Suzanne Langer calls "the virtual world"¹ of the work, and in the act of reading, the reader enters a pact with the author whereby the experience embodied in the literary text is recreated. And phenomenology can help interpret the perceptual experience of the poet. There is a dichotomy between the perceived object described physically and the object described phenomenologically. The physical description entails the object as such, its properties, its measurements, and its scientific status. But the phenomenologist is concerned with its mode of appearance, the way in which it shows itself to the perceiver. It appears in a certain light, from a certain side, and therefore, the relationship to the perceiver cannot be excluded in a phenomenological description of the perceptual act. Merleau-Ponty resolves the Cartesian

dualism of mind/body in his view of the incarnate consciousness and its role in perception. Don Ihde cogently expresses this idea: "The lived body, the embodied subject immersed in a world pregnant with unwon significance becomes the basic theme of the existential version of the primary perceptual situation."² Merleau-Ponty posits the dialectical relationship between the perceiver and the perceived, and this underscores the value of a phenomenological description of the particulars of perception. The perceived object is no longer closed and pre-given; instead we find that "perceived things, unlike geometrical objects, are not bounded entities whose laws of construction we possess a priori, but they are open, inexhaustible systems which we recognize through a certain style of development."³ It is important here to understand Merleau-Ponty's anti-psychologistic standpoint regarding the traditional view of a one-to-one correspondence between a given stimulus and an expected response. He questioned this alleged correspondence by arguing that the same stimuli can elicit different responses and conversely, different stimuli can elicit the same responses. But on a deeper level what Merleau-Ponty strongly objects to is the mechanistic approach to experience and the resultant passive role of consciousness. He opposes the sensationalists' mapping of the process of perception in terms of an isolated sense datum, a fragmented element, evoking predictable stimulation, as well as their Lockean view of the mind's role as a piece of white paper upon which

experience writes. Merleau-Ponty, in following the Gestalt theory of perception--as an organized whole, a configuration or field of forces whose interaction produces a shape and laws of organization--overcame both the fragmentation of experience and the passivity of the experiencer inherent in traditional psychology. The relational structure of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception clearly emerges as he posits the perceptual object as an organized entity imparting its laws of organization to us, shaped by its context as part of a field, and presenting itself to us in an indefinite number of perspectival views. The mutual significance of each aspect is underscored over against the empiricists' view of a completed and pre-given object. Merleau-Ponty asserts, "We now discover the core of reality: a thing is a thing because, whatever it imparts to us, is imparted through the very organization of its sensible aspects."⁴ Perceptual experience can no longer be the putting together of a bundle of discrete elements or the fortuitous collection of sensations, because the perceptual field forms a dynamic configuration with a "whole-character"⁵ that is more than the sum of its parts, and because perceptual experience, according to Merleau-Ponty, unfolds the relatedness of the object's innumerable modes of appearance. He underscores this relational significance: "Reality is not a crucial appearance underlying the rest, it is the framework of relations with which all appearances tally."⁶

In using a phenomenology of perceptual experience for the interpretation of a literary work we must discover which aspects can be applied to the world of the poem, and we must also be able to recognize which poets lend themselves to this type of descriptive analysis. A phenomenological approach, in many cases, will not prove fruitful as it is a specialization and should not become generalized and too diffuse. To avoid this we must examine clearly and distinctly the criteria of analysis, looking at them in their philosophical and psychological backgrounds, but, at the same time, keeping in mind their literary-critical applicability. The boundaries marking off which poems can be interpreted in a phenomenological manner should not be allowed to blur. For example, one's first response would be that nature poetry can benefit from a phenomenological reading, as the poet describes the world around him. But this answer must be qualified as not every nature poet lends himself to a phenomenological analysis. A poet using a mimetic transposal of natural objects will not suffice here, but rather a poet will who shifts and reorganizes the particulars of perception in a kaleidoscopic effect underscoring reality as perpetual motion, a fluidity where the particulars are constantly being transformed.

In "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" there are five views of the same scene with the setting, the given or starting point of reality, being in November, the autumn moving toward winter and depletion; Tehauntepec, a town in Oaxaca,

Mexico, land of the sun, exotic and colorful, but surrounded by water (notice "off" Tehauntepec--this is a seascape), thus the contrast between Tehauntepec and November is underscored by the geography of the town; by the "slopping" sea which grows still at night, pointing up the formlessness of the water and the frozen moment of its stillness which initiates each metamorphosis into a different kind of summer morning. The particulars are the same: the sun, the chocolate, the formless ocean, the umbrellas, but the perceiver re-creates, bringing a new reality reflected in each new appearance. There is a French phrase in the fourth stanza of each section which operates heuristically to reveal the varying stance of the perceiver and relate him to the world of his perceptions. It also effects a transformation, ironically undercutting what preceded it, vacillating to a new, heightened sense of reality. The poem begins:

In that November off Tehauntepec,
The slopping of the sea grew still one night
And in the morning summer hues the deck

And made one think of rosy chocolate
And gilt umbrellas. Paradisal green
Gave suavity to the perplexed machine

Of ocean, which like limpid water lay.
Who, then, in that ambrosial latitude
Out of the light evolved the moving blooms,

Who, then, evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds
Diffusing balm in that Pacific calm?
C'était mon enfant, mon bijou, mon âme.

The sea-clouds whitened far below the calm
And moved, as blooms move, in the swimming green
And in its watery radiance, while the hue

Of heaven in an antique reflection rolled
 Round those flotillas. And sometimes the sea
 Poured brilliant iris on the glistening blue.⁷

The perceiver is radially central to Stevens' seascape as the poet tells us by asking, "Who, then, evolved the sea-blooms from the clouds?" From the refraction of the light the moving clouds take on the color of green as they are reflected in the surface of the sea. The perceiver orders the phenomena of sea, clouds, and sky. Phenomenology affirms man's ordering his world from varied profiles of perception:

Without man's subjectivity no affirmation of reality has meaning, and without any affirmation of reality all words and formulas are empty shells. . . . Man is essentially intentionality, orientation to the world, but the meaning of the world is differentiated according to the standpoint or attitude taken by man in the world.⁸

In the world of the poem, change is the law of reality and the poet re-creates the particulars of experience. In the perceptual process, which is the poem, now the "sea-clouds" are drained of their color below the calm of the ordered sea and move on in the "swimming green." The water is still green, but the "Paradisal" becomes "swimming" and "limpid water" becomes "watery radiance," which seems to suggest a sense of movement contrasted with the still, lazy luxuriousness of the earlier stanzas. The clouds move and the light moves as it rolls "round those flotillas," fleets of clouds. The reflection of the sky, "the hue of heaven" tints the clouds blue. The motion of the clouds on the water and the reflection of light on the surface, which act

like a prism, pours out a rainbow, the "brilliant iris," on the glistening blue sea-clouds. The shimmering imagery is evanescent because of the constant change and re-arrangement of the innumerable permutations of the particulars viewed in various stances by the perceiver. "The perceived, by its nature, admits of the ambiguous, the shifting, and is shaped by its context."⁹

In Section II we have a new scene. Each section of the poem is a self-contained picture, and there does not seem to be a mappable progression from section to section, but rather a kaleidoscopic movement which merely rearranges the phenomena. Stevens wants to demonstrate that we can "perceive the unity and totality of the perceived object through an endless series of profiles, corresponding to endlessly many possible standpoints."¹⁰ The section begins:

In that November off Tehautepec
The slopping of the sea grew still one night
At breakfast jelly yellow streaked the deck.

The sun here streaks the deck with a blob of color, "jelly yellow." In Section I it "hued" the deck, reflecting a uniformity of color which gives more chromatic intensity to the imagery. The blue sky reflects on the sea and the light forms clear geometric patterns resembling "pendentives," which are triangular pieces of vaulting used in architecture to support domes.

In the third section of the poem everything is bathed in a pale, silvery light and the imagery hardens. There is

no sun. "A pale silver" is "patterned on the deck." Things seem cold, shining, and crystallized: the "tranced machine of ocean," and the "piano-polished" green. The poet asks:

Who, seeing silver petals of white blooms
Unfolding in the water, feeling sure

Of the milk within the saltiest spurge, heard then
The sea unfolding in the sunken clouds?

Watching the cloud-blooms the perceiver feels sure they contain a liquid like the "spurge," a shrubby plant yielding a milky juice. He can hear the sea, which becomes silver petals from the light, unfold in the "sunken clouds." Once again the section ends with a change effected by the sky's reflection, which colors the water blue, covering the plant leaves, breaking them up ("smiting the crevasses of the leaves") and the ocean is "deluged . . . with a sapphire blue."

We must not look at Stevens' imagery and try to find a key to a symbolic system which will evoke a given response. When Stevens sees the sun as "jelly yellow" he is describing an appearance in the particular context of the particular scene. His purpose is not to have the sun represent something, but to reach a mode of existence by participating in the very structure of the object. He does this by showing the perceptual act bestowing a meaning-for-the-perceiver on the particulars in the world of his poem.

In the last section of the poem the imagery reflects a magic performance. "The day came bowing," like a showman,

a "good clown." "Obese machines of ocean" suggests a mood of jolly indolence. There is a comic playfulness in the tone of this section. The clouds are being juggled by a sea which resembles a comic trickster with a blue turban. The saucers being tossed are the white discs of clouds reflected on the water. The clouds converge in clusters and the wind clears the "motley" hue to a new iridescence. In the closing lines the sea and heaven seem to join and fresh figurations appear. The last line of the poem, "came fresh transfigurings of freshest blue," reflects the constant motion, the flux of reality in the act of perception. There is a tentativeness characteristic of Stevens' poetry in which no conclusion can be arrived at because recurrence of moments of reality is the closest we can ever get to permanence.

"Sea Surface Full of Clouds" is a poem whose whole meaning is a perceptual experience where a phenomenological reading will unfold the various kaleidoscopic patterns shifted by the poet in the world of his poem. The point of the poem seems to be that we perceive wholes, fields where the particulars change as their context changes. The objects, chocolate and umbrellas (recalled objects) and the deck, sun, sea, and clouds (perceived objects), remain constant in each section of the poem so that their changes can be charted.

In Section I "the morning summer hued the deck," and the color is bathed in warmth, giving us "rosy chocolate"

and "gilt umbrellas," a sense of richness ("ambrosial latitude") which is Sybaritic as echoed by a "Paradisal green."

Later in the morning in Section II the sun "streaked the deck," breaking up the color intensity so that the colors look artificial ("sham-like green") as do the chocolate and umbrellas.

In Section III the pale silver light is "patterned on the deck" and gives a high-surface polish to the green, making its color translucent and attenuated. The "uncertain green,/Piano-polished" is balanced here by the "pied umbrellas" and the "porcelain chocolate" (porcelain reflecting a polished hardness which fits so well here).

In Section IV the sun "dozed upon the deck" emitting a dazed and heavy, disagreeable quality, almost a putridity reflected in the imagery--"dank stratagems," "secluded blooms" in the "thick marine." Here "musky chocolate" balances with a "too-fluent green," which suggests a heaviness coming from sleep as well as a sour moisture with color and growth gone wild. The scene reflects an overgrowth caused by the heat of the sun. The sun, the plant nurturer (the "gold flourisher"--in the sense of "blossomer"--of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction") is a "mallow sun" ("mallow" refers to the plant family malvaceae or mallow) and heats up a profusion, a decadence of shrubbery, "mile-mallows."

In Section V the sun smiles gaily and clowningly on

the "motley green" of the ocean. The clouds move together forming clusters, and the colors become patchy and indistinct. The wind shifts and now the "motley hue" is freshened and clarified to a "clearing opalescence." The imagery here reflects a jolly, painted, theatre-like atmosphere with "chinese chocolate" and "large umbrellas."

After the French phrase in each section, the scene changes within the section itself, so we have movement within the section as well as movement from section to section. The wind in the second part initiates the movement, as the sunlight did in the first part of each section, and in the second part the clouds and sea are interwoven and patterned.

To understand chromatics in Stevens further, a vital aspect of his poetry and one that lends itself to a phenomenological reading, we must probe into color perception as reflected in the writings of Merleau-Ponty. The charting of the color metamorphoses in "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" can serve as a point of departure for such a study. The green is "Paradisal" in Section I, "sham-like" in II, "uncertain and piano-polished" in III, "too-fluent" in IV, and "motley" in V. In these sections various modalities of color perception are illustrated: color character or physiognomy, color classification or type, saturation, hue, and brightness contrast.¹¹ These concepts will provide access into the mode of appearance of colors in Stevens' poetry, and are elaborated most fully in Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception, and appear also in The Structure

of Behavior, The Primacy of Perception, and The Visible and the Invisible.¹²

Merleau-Ponty asserts that "we must rediscover how to live these colours as our body does."¹³ Speaking of the blueness of the sky, he writes, "I abandon myself to it and plunge into this mystery, it 'thinks itself within me', . . . my consciousness is saturated with this limitless blue."¹⁴ He describes green as a "restful" and undemanding color ("Paradisal" of "Sea Surface Full of Clouds"), and blue as "yielding"; while red "invades the eye," and yellow has a "stinging effect."¹⁵ "Blackness," he says, "is less the sensible quality of blackness than a sombre power which radiates from the object."¹⁶ The living and dynamic character of color is a vital aspect in a phenomenological approach. In "The Rock," Stevens describes the perception of this "gray particular of man's life": "But through man's eye, their silent rhapsodist,/With redness that sticks fast to evil dreams" (CP, 528). Man, the rhapsodist, here perceives the turquoise, the restful and yielding color, but in the "odious evening" the redness comes through with its assaulting stickiness portending evil.

Merleau-Ponty's perceptual theories reflect a color experience which is significant in interpreting poetry: "Generally speaking we have on the one hand, with red and yellow, 'an experience of being torn away, of a movement away from the centre'; on the other hand, with blue and green, that of repose and concentration.'"¹⁷ These

characteristics express the phenomenological psychologists' categorizing of colors as abductive or adductive. Faber Birren illustrates this concept:

First, there is in color and light what might be called a centrifugal action--away from the organism to its environment. With high levels of illumination, warm and luminous colors in the surroundings (yellow, peach, pink), the body tends to direct its attention outward. . . . Second, on the other hand, color and light may have a centripetal action --away from the environment and toward the organism [as] with softer surroundings, cooler hues (gray, blue, green, turquoise) and lower brightness.¹⁸

Put another way, "red-appearing surfaces 'advance' and blue-appearing surfaces 'recede'."¹⁹ The centrifugal action or advancing appearance is abduction and the centripetal action or receding appearance is adduction. Stevens, in "The Rock," points up centripetal force, a movement toward the center: "it is the rock where tranquil self must adduce/Its tranquil self" (CP, 528, italics mine). "With the cool colors goes the more mature response, tranquilization," writes Faber Birren.²⁰ Merleau-Ponty explains the significance of these concepts: "Red and yellow favour abduction, blue and green adduction. Now, on the whole, the significance of abduction is that the organism turns toward the stimulus and is attracted by the world--of adduction that it turns away from the stimulus and withdraws toward its centre."²¹ The important point here is that the colors radiate a mode of existence, a rhythm, which we as perceiver share, feeling "the colors in which we live."²²

The idea of "living the colors" is a significant aspect of a phenomenology of color perception. It dissolves the dualism of the subject-object relationship and is one of the main links uniting two poets like Keats and Stevens, who reiterate the experience of sharing in the existence of the particulars of nature. Keats, discussing the creative act, writes in a letter, "In Endymion, I leaped headlong into the Sea, and thereby have become better acquainted with the Soundings, the quicksand & the rocks, than if I stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice."²³ This participation in the being of the object ("If a sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel.")²⁴ reflects a phenomenology which certainly foreshadows Wallace Stevens. Keats asserts, "Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced."²⁵ He anticipates Stevens' idea that reality is a "truth the poet recognizes by sensation,"²⁶ echoing Keats's feeling that "axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses."²⁷ The color experience in the two poets' work reflects their mode of perception as a living in the existence of the perceived.

Keats is conscious of the dynamism of color and recognizes the primacy of perception in experiencing his world and creating the world of his poem ("I see and sing by my own eyes inspired").²⁸ Although he is not so explicit and detailed in reflecting the changes in the perceptual phenomena of his world as Stevens is, they are there in all

his poetry; and although the perceptual experience is not always central to the meaning of the poem itself, nevertheless Keats can be linked to Stevens in that the two poets reflect a tension between the imaginative and the real that empowers their poetry and provides a key to its structure.

Keats's color experience is reflected in the active and verbal quality of his descriptions ("Titian colours touch'd into real life"),²⁹ and ("Barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,/And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue").³⁰ Keats, in a Stevensian line, writes, "He saw far in the concave green of the sea,"³¹ where the idea of color revealing form is implicit; it also reveals texture in the lines about the butterfly gently sipping the water: "so it did, with touch/Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch/Even with mealy gold the waters clear."³² When Keats writes that Hyperion's palace "Glar'd a blood-red" and its "curtains of Aurorian clouds/Flush'd angerly,"³³ I feel that he, like Stevens, is experiencing the assaulting quality of redness. Keats feels the power of color ("Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats . . . that pester human-kind"),³⁴ and reflects the dynamism of color experience: "the vermeil rose had blown/In frightful scarlet."³⁵

Stevens writes in "Looking Across the Fields and Watching the Birds Fly," "And what we think, a breathing like the wind,/ . . . a sharing of color and being part of it" (CP, 518). Merleau-Ponty brings to the fore the "rhythms of existence" of sensible qualities like color:

"If the qualities radiate around them a certain mode of existence, if they have the power to cast a spell and what we called just now a sacramental value, this is because the sentient subject does not posit them as objects, but enters into a sympathetic relation with them, makes them his own and finds in them his momentary law."³⁶

It is in the theory of the body's role in perception that the originality and uniqueness of Merleau-Ponty emerge as he branches out from Husserl, the father of phenomenology, and from the Gestaltists upon whose concepts he heavily depends. For me, Merleau-Ponty supplies the bridge which makes Husserl's philosophy significant for literary criticism. He acknowledges his debt to Husserl, and he develops and expands phenomenology, so that we can construct a workable philosophical framework to apply to literature.

Colors, to Merleau-Ponty, are not closed states; "they impinge within me upon a general setting through which I come to terms with the world."³⁷ "Blue," he continues, "is that which prompts me to look in a certain way, that which allows my gaze to run over it in a specific manner. It is a certain field or atmosphere presented to the power of my eyes and of my whole body."³⁸

There is a bodily attitude preparing, in a sense, for the reception of a color experience. Merleau-Ponty compares it to a sleeper preparing for slumber. The relation between a sleeper and his sleep is analogous to the perceiver and his perceived. "Sleep comes when a certain voluntary

attitude suddenly receives from outside the confirmation for which it was waiting."³⁹ He continues:

I am breathing deeply and slowly in order to summon sleep, and suddenly it is as if my mouth were connected to some great lung outside myself which alternately calls forth and forces back my breath. A certain rhythm of respiration, which a moment ago I voluntarily maintained, now becomes my very being, and sleep, until now aimed at as a significance, suddenly becomes a situation. In the same way I give ear, or look, in the expectation of a sensation, and suddenly the sensible takes possession of my ear or my gaze, and I surrender a part of my body, even my whole body, to this particular manner of vibrating and filling space known as blue or red.⁴⁰

The active role of the body in perception underscores the dialectical relationship between the perceiver and the perceived. We no longer see the subject only as the thinker noting the object, nor the object only as inertly existing independent of the perceiver. We now see the perceptual experience as an active, literal communion wherein "the sensible has not only a motor and vital significance, but is nothing other than a certain way of being in the world suggested to us from some point in space, and seized and acted upon by our body."⁴¹

The body's familiarity with the color's mode of presenting itself to it is a key to understanding the bodily function so vital in Merleau-Ponty's color perception:

"Taking up our abode in a certain setting of colour, with the transposition which it entails, is a bodily operation, and I cannot effect it otherwise than by entering into the

new atmosphere, because my body is my general power of inhabiting all the environments which the world contains."⁴² Living the color, then, means preparing for, receiving, and being affected by the color experience, processes which are reflected in the world of the poet as he communes with the particulars of his world.

Color perception is a mode of access into the being of these particulars: "Colour in living perception is a way into the thing."⁴³ It is significant here, as Merleau-Ponty repeatedly stresses, that the object reveals itself not by its geometrical form but by its physiognomy: "The Gestalt of a circle is not its mathematical law but its physiognomy,"⁴⁴ its roundness as it appears to us in our experience of it. (This calls to mind, for example, the roundness of Stevens' jar in "Anecdote of the Jar," which is a key to the structure of the poem with its phenomenology of roundness resonating throughout, supported by the linguistic aspect--"round," "surround," "around," "ground.") The 'motor physiognomy' of color is not constituted in the physicist's world but rather in our perceptual experience of it.⁴⁵ Merleau-Ponty uses the phrase "motor physiognomy" to underscore the body's role in perception. He sees the body as "an intertwining of vision and movement."⁴⁶ "My mobile body," he writes, "makes a difference in the visible world, being a part of it; that is why I can steer it through the visible."⁴⁷ Perception unfolds the spontaneous arrangement of parts, the structure of the object. It is an activity where "the

sensible configuration of an object or a gesture . . . is understood through a sort of act of appropriation which we all experience when we say that we have 'found' the rabbit in the foliage of a puzzle or that we have 'caught' a slight gesture."⁴⁸ Merleau-Ponty is emphasizing a central point for phenomenology and poetry: perceptual experience reveals structure.

In the "Study of Two Pears," another poem like "Sea Surface Full of Clouds," whose whole meaning is a perceptual experience, Stevens looks at the pears:

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

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

(CP, 196)

"Yellow forms" and "touched red" reflect the idea of color perception as a mode of access into the structure of the object. "Yellow forms" reflects the yellowness revealing the pears' shape, and "touched red" captures the quality of redness in the image of someone with red on his fingers having arbitrarily touched the pear with this specific color quality. The pears in the uniqueness of their particularity "resemble nothing else." We experience not their geometrical laws ("they are not flat surfaces/Having curved outlines"), but their physiognomy ("They are round/Tapering toward the top"). Merleau-Ponty's concepts are useful here as we live

the color, experience a perception which is a sharing in the pears' being, and use our body to walk around them or perhaps to feel them "Bulging toward the base," or to touch "A hard dry leaf [which] hangs/From the stem." Merleau-Ponty posits perception as a dialogue: "The passing of the sense-data before our eyes or under our hands is, as it were, a language which teaches itself, and in which the meaning is secreted by the very structure of the signs, and this is why it can literally be said that our senses question things and that things reply to them."⁴⁹ The significance of the object is built up as we perceive it, in the way it presents itself to us. We come to see that a "colour is never merely a colour, but the colour of a certain object, and the blue of a carpet would never be the same blue were it not a woolly blue."⁵⁰ A most significant idea in Merleau-Ponty is that of living perception as a presentation, which we can apply to the world of the work, paralleling that in art: "When I see the bright green of one of Cézanne's vases, it does not make me think of pottery, it presents it to me. The pottery is there, with its thin, smooth outer surface and its porous inside, in the particular way in which the green varies in shade."⁵¹ Color, then, reveals, the structure of the object.

In perception, the senses intercommunicate by opening us to the structure of the object.⁵² As we see in Stevens' "Study of Two Pears," the "form of objects is not their geometrical shape: it stands in a certain relation to their

specific nature, and appeals to all our other senses as well as sight."⁵³ Merleau-Ponty illustrates synesthetic experience wherein "the sight of sound and the hearing of colours exist."⁵⁴ An example he gives is that of Cézanne, who "declared that a picture contains within itself even the smell of the landscape."⁵⁵ He explains that Cézanne meant that "the arrangement of colour on the thing (and in the work of art, if it catches the thing in its entirety) signifies by itself all the responses which would be elicited through an examination by the remaining senses; that a thing would not have this colour had it not also this shape, these tactile properties, this resonance, this odour, and that the thing is the absolute fullness which my undivided existence projects before itself."⁵⁶ The phenomenon cannot be explained by the physicist's conception of sensation, assigning different regions of the brain for each sense. We must examine the concept phenomenologically as we experience the sight, for example, of tactile or aural sensation, or vice versa. We see the flexibility and elasticity of the twig from which a bird has just flown, we see the viscosity of the syrup in the jar, and we hear the hardness and unevenness of cobbles in the rattle of the carriage.⁵⁷ This is what Merleau-Ponty means when he says the senses intercommunicate. It is not two successive sensations, but rather, as binocular vision grasps a single object, it is a synthesis where "the subject does not say only that he has the sensation both of a sound and a colour:

it is the sound itself that he sees where colours are formed."⁵⁸

Synesthetic experience is reflected in the poetry of both Keats and Stevens. In Keats the synesthesia is often implicit and less clearly defined. He telescopes his images of synesthesia, of color, and of perceptual experience in general. We often get just a hint in Keats of what Stevens will describe in great detail with attention paid to the minutest particular. Keats foreshadows the themes with which Stevens so explicitly deals, and he underscores the signal importance of the perceptual process. It seems to me that one of Keats's strongest links to Stevens is his feeling that nothing is real until it is experienced. It is Keats's knowing the reality of his perceived world, which he tries to understand and which can intrude on imaginative flights of fancy, recognized for what they are, that looks forward to Stevens, and reflects the same dialectical relationship between reality and imagination which is the key to the structure of Stevens' work.

Keats, in his "Ode to Apollo," envisions an intermingling of sight and sound:

Bards, that erst sublimely told
 Heroic deeds, and sang of fate,
 With fervour seize their adamant lyres,
 Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires.
 (W, 341)

The line reflecting the "chords" as "solid rays" that "twinkle" foreshadows but reverses a line of Stevens: "To find of light

a music issuing" (CP, 398). The synesthesia in the ode is significant in that it underscores the tension that empowers Keats's poetry: the real which intrudes upon the imaginative. Unlike Shelley, for example, who rises up from nature into a mystical flight, or Wordsworth, who seeks a mysterious, saving force in nature or the memories of nature, Keats, like Stevens, wants to see the truth or reality of being. They both want to penetrate, by sharing its essence, into the core of reality. They discover the structure of reality only by being in "agreement with reality,"⁵⁹ that is, by participating in its being, and thus they both "keep coming back and coming back/To the real" (CP, 471). And it is to the real that the "Ode to Apollo" returns after its procession of poets (Homer, Virgil, Spenser, Shakespeare, Tasso and Milton), who pour forth their inspirational melodies:

But when Thou joinest with the Nine,
And all the powers of song combine,
We listen here on earth.

(W, 342)

We, here on earth, internalize the light and sound of Apollo's song. As in "I Stood Tip-toe" ("For what has made the sage or poet write/But the fair paradise of Nature's light" [W, 6]), which is also about creating poetry, "Ode to Apollo," in its apotheosis of Apollo, the God of poetry, reflects the poet's inner light, an internalization of the light that inspires and coexists with the poet as he creates the world of his poem.

An implicit synesthesia, or an intermingling of the senses which Merleau-Ponty discusses, is reflected in Keats's "Sleep and Poetry": the nymphs "are hearing, eagerly, the wild/Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping" (W, 51). To hear liquidity involves a synthesis of sight and sound. Merleau-Ponty posits the seeing of sound and the hearing of colors as "the experience of a modality of existence, the synchronisation of my body with it."⁶⁰ He continues: "When I say that I see a sound, I mean that I echo the vibration of the sound with my whole sensory being, and particularly with that sector of myself which is susceptible to colours. . . . The senses translate each other without any need of an interpreter, and are mutually comprehensible without the intervention of any idea."⁶¹ ("Both sought/His epi-tones, the colors of the ear" [CP, 347]).

Synesthetic experience in Stevens is mostly explicit and particularized in its description. In "Owl's Clover," however, there is an example of the implicit:

If the sky that followed, smaller than the night,
Still eked out luminous wrinklins on the leaves
Whitened, again, forms formless in the dark,
It was as if transparence touched her mind.
(CP, 45)

In seeing a wrinkle on the leaf, the tactile sensation is subsumed in the visual, as in the example from Keats where the visual is subsumed in the hearing of liquidity. This is what dichotomizes implicit and explicit synesthesia: when a phenomenon is clearly described (for example, touching

orange or hearing green), the synesthesia is explicit, but when an experience of sensation includes the subsumption of a different sense experience, as hearing a sound with the seeing implied (as in the Keats example above) or seeing a wrinkle with the tactile implied (as in the Stevens example), then the synesthesia is implicit. Merleau-Ponty asserts that implicit synesthesia reveals the structure of the object: "The form of a fold in linen or cotton shows us the resilience or dryness of the fibre, the coldness or warmth of the material."⁶²

There are several examples of explicit synesthesia in Stevens' "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," a poem about the relationship of the poet as perceiver and the world he perceives, as it is structured in the creation of his poem, which helps us accommodate to it. A poet's fiction, as Stevens knew, "seems in the last analysis to have something to do with our self-preservation: and that, no doubt, is why the expression of it, the sound of its words, helps us to live our lives."⁶³ Here are two examples from the poem:

The lion roars at the enraging desert
 Reddens the sand with his red-colored noise.
 (CP, 384)

The body lift[s] its heavy wing, take[s] up
 Again, an inexhaustible being, rise
 Over the loftiest antagonist
 To drone the green phases of its juvenal
 (CP, 390)

In both these examples sound is seen in color: the noise of

the lion is red and the sound the bee drones is green. There is a synthesis of the seeing and hearing as the perceiver hears the color itself where the sounds are formed. In this poem, Stevens' synesthesia is reflected by the unified sensation of smell and color perception. "We encounter in the dead middle of the night/The purple odor, the abundant bloom" (CP, 395). An interesting example of synesthesia also appears later in the poem where Stevens is describing the colossal head of a statue: "A crown/The eye could not escape, a red renown/Blowing itself upon the tedious ear" (CP, 400). The perceiver sees the sound and hears the color in a double synesthetic experience explicitly described-- "the eye . . . the ear."

The key aspect of the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived in Stevens' poetry is that of change. This concept reverberates throughout the entire corpus. The value of routine, repetition,⁶⁴ and monotony lies in the impetus they provide for change. The fluidity of the perceptual act with its kaleidoscopic rearrangement points up the significance of the role of perception in that change and in Steven's poetry. The prevalence of perceptual transformation underscores the viability of a phenomenological approach to Stevens. A study of perceptual experience in the world of the poem exhibits and illustrates the changes concretized in Stevens' imagery. He sets up an antithesis between imposed or metaphoric change and natural or perceptual change: "The freshness of transformation is/The

freshness of a world" (CP, 397-98). The insufficiency of metaphor in accommodating ourselves to the real is constantly reiterated and is reflected in many poems:

The pears are not viols,
Nudes or bottles.
They resemble nothing else.
(CP, 196)

By metaphor you paint
A thing. Thus the pineapple was a leather fruit.
(CP, 219)

Our sense of these things changes and they change
Not as in metaphor, but in our sense
Of them. So sense exceeds all metaphor
(CP, 431)

Stevens feels that "to impose is not to discover" (CP, 403), and it is the being of the object that he seeks, as he searches for the "poem of pure reality, untouched/By trope or deviation" (CP, 471). He identifies the search for what will help us accommodate ourselves as a search for what will suffice, a search for reality in one's own creations:

The poem of the mind in the act of finding
What will suffice . . .

It must
Be the finding of a satisfaction, and may
Be of a man skating, a woman dancing, a woman
Combing. The poem of the act of the mind.
(CP, 239-40)

In the creative act the poet should lay bare the particulars of his world because he is

the man,
Who, to find what will suffice,
Destroys romantic tenements
Of rose and ice.
(CP, 238)

In "Prologues to What is Possible," a poem structured as a parody of rhetorical devices, cluttered with these very devices, Stevens, via a wordiness and a bloated syntax, reflects the stultification and interference of metaphor: "The metaphor stirred his fear. The object with which he was compared/Was beyond his recognizing. . . . there was this and that intended to be recognized,/The this and that in the enclosures of hypotheses" (CP, 516). The "this" and "that" reflect bare reality closed off and stultified by metaphor. It is interesting to note the piling up of similes ("that was like being alone in a boat," "resembling the bright backs of rowers,/Gripping their oars as if they were sure of the way," "Did not pass like someone voyaging out," "part of the glass-like sides," "As he traveled alone like a man lured on by a syllable," "as if all his hereditary lights were suddenly increased" [CP, 515-17, italics mine]). The stifling feeling here is reflected in the form of the poem as it becomes difficult to read for lack of breath. At the end of the poem "the smallest lamp, which added its puissant flick" initiates a change, and we get a freshness, a natural transformation.

In "Add This to Rhetoric" Stevens again sets up the antithesis of metaphoric versus natural change:

In the way you speak
 You arrange, the thing is posed,
 What in nature merely grows.
(CP, 198)

In the second stanza we get the natural change initiated by sensation:

The sense creates the pose.
In this it moves and speaks.
This is the figure and not
An evading metaphor.

(CP, 199)

Playfully, Stevens uses "pose" and "figure" here, but in their positive meaning: "pose," not in the artificial sense of static arrangement but as a posture, a dynamic carrying of oneself created by sensation, and "figure," not as trope but as form or shape in action. Adding a natural movement to the real is a true addition; it is what Stevens means when he says at the end of the poem, "Add this. It is to add." Here we see the natural, which reveals, over against metaphor, which obscures.

In Keats the description of the changes in the perceptual process are not so clearly delineated as in Stevens. However, Keats is conscious of change and its importance. His poetry reflects a fluid shifting, as well as an intrusion of reality, which calls him back from imaginative flight ("Ah! what is it sings/His dreams away" [W, 103]), and these are aspects of Keats which I feel heavily influenced Stevens. We know from his letters that Stevens read and admired Keats. In discussing a phrase he used in "Credences of Summer" ("half pales of red"), Stevens recalls a line from Keats which acknowledges an influence:

I have forgotten where it is in Keats,
 but there is a line describing moonlight
 falling through a stained glass window
 upon a floor. Keats used words something
 like this: 'and cast warm gules of red.'⁶⁵

This is not an "anxious influence" which Stevens aggressively has to conquer and throw off, but is, on the contrary, an inspiring one, reflecting ideas which he finds central and which, when he expands, are to become so structurally significant to his poetry.

To understand the natural changes in the perceptual experience of the poet, one must undertake a phenomenological study of the work. In color perception, for example, the phenomenological approach will reveal color categories, character, and modes of appearance without which the changes in the poet's world cannot be recognized explicitly nor properly understood. A change will, of course, be noted within the world of the poem, but to entirely comprehend the change requires a comparison of the way it appears in different moments in the perceptual process. The phenomenologist is interested in the object not as a complete physical thing with definite, fixed properties, but just as the perceiving subject is aware of it as it presents itself to him in a certain mode of appearing.

Stevens' poetry, reflecting the living quality of color and the chromatic changes in perception, lends itself to an examination of color experience as described by phenomenologists. Merleau-Ponty sets up a dichotomy between surface colors and volume colors, which many phenomenological

psychologists further elucidate:⁶⁶ "As I fix my eyes on an object or allow them to wander, or else wholly submit myself to the event, the same colour appears to me as superficial (Oberflächenfarbe)--being in a definite location in space, and extending over an object--or else it becomes an atmospheric colour (Raumfarbe) and diffuses itself all round the object."⁶⁷ He also adds the psychologists' third modality, film or spectral color:

These coloured areas (Flächenfarben) are in reality only one of the possible structures of colour, and already the colour of a piece of paper or a surface colour (Oberflächenfarbe) no longer obeys the same laws. The differential thresholds are lower in the case of surface colours than in coloured areas. Coloured areas are indeed located at a distance, though vaguely; they have a spongy appearance, whereas surface colours are dense and hold the gaze upon their surface. Coloured areas, moreover, are always parallel to the frontal plane, whereas surface colours may show any orientation. Finally coloured areas are always more or less flat, and cannot, without losing their distinctive quality as such, assume a particular form and appear curved or spread out over a surface.⁶⁸

It is important to understand the differences between surface, film, and volume colors. David Katz, the psychologist most frequently cited in reference to color appearance, clarifies and gives examples of these distinctions:

The spongy texture of the spectral colour is not of such a nature that it could be referred to as a voluminousness or as a colour transparency. Rather, a spectral colour has this much in common with the

colour of a paper, that it is extended through space in the form of a bi-dimensional plane, and functions as a rear boundary for it. The delimitation of space takes place differently for the two types of colour. A spectral colour never loses an essentially frontal-parallel character. When the colour fixated is directly before the eyes and projected on the fovea [receptors], the plane in which it is seen always presents an orientation essentially perpendicular to the direction of vision. The colour of a paper, on the other hand, can assume any orientation whatsoever with reference to the direction of vision, for its plane is always that of the surface of the coloured paper.⁶⁹

Here Katz is giving spatial orientation as a key to the relationship between vision and the object. Phenomenologically this is important because each type is not an inherent color quality, but rather a mode of appearance which relates the object to the perceiver. Katz continues, naming the three categories:

We shall distinguish between these two opposed types of colour-impression on the basis of their common and differentiating factors by characterizing spectral colours, and all the colours which share their mode of appearance as film colours and the opposite type as surface colours. Surface colours are seen almost solely on objects . . . however, . . . the redness of a red glass or of a red liquid does not possess the character of a surface colour, but presents rather the mode of appearance which we shall characterize below as voluminousness. . . . The surface of an object can either be smooth or wrinkled and according as it is one or the other the surface colour too will be either smooth or wrinkled. Surface colour follows all the wrinkles of the surface of the object, and presents, too, its finest structure and texture. Film colour, on the other hand, is always localized in a smooth plane. Pronounced wrinkles never appear in film colours.⁷⁰

The importance of Katz's work for our study of perceptual experience lies in the fact that the principle of change is reflected in his dynamic classification of the way color presents itself to the perceiver. He does not categorize color according to fixed properties, but rather he describes the mode of the color's appearance which changes:

Colour-impressions do not, however, change their modes of appearance only in response to changes in the external conditions. There are also more or less controllable inner sets which can bring about transformations of colour appearance. Some observations made by V. Allesch are worth quoting in this connection: "It often happened that the same colour appeared at one time as surface colour, at another as film, and yet another as volume colour. . . . The purposeful set of the observer [was] in this connection of great significance."⁷¹

Underscoring the idea of change, he shows how a surface color can be transformed into a film color by means of a reduction screen. Kai von Feiandt gives us a concise summary of this change:

Katz also points out that any surface color can be transformed into a film color by reducing the visual field of the color surface. Viewed through a 2 cm. diameter opening cut out of a large piece of cardboard, the opposite wall of the room, for example, looks closer (hold the cardboard sheet about an arm's length in front of your eyes). Not only is the opening completely "filled up" with the color of the wall, but the appearance of the color is also changed. It has lost its character of a surface color and looks like a film color which conforms to the plane of the cardboard surface. The piece of cardboard with the hole in it is called a reduction screen. With the aid of

a device like this, surface colors can be reduced to film colors.⁷²

Merleau-Ponty exemplifies this change also:

I am sitting in my room, and I look at the sheets of white paper lying about on the table, some in the light shed through the window, others in the shadow. If I do not analyse my perception but content myself with the spectacle as a whole, I shall say that all the sheets of paper look equally white. However, some of them are in the shadow of the wall. How is it that they are not less white than the rest? I decide to look more closely. I fix my gaze upon them, which means that I restrict my visual field. I may even look at them through a "match-box lid, which will separate them from the rest of the field, or through a "reduction screen" with a window in it. Whether I use one of these devices or merely observe with the naked eye, . . . the sheets change their appearance: this is no longer white paper over which a shadow is cast, but a grey or steely blue substance, thick and not definitely localized.⁷³

In distinguishing between surface, film, and volume color and their transformations, Merleau-Ponty reaches the important point that "we have different colour-functions in which the alleged material disappears completely, since the act of patterning is effected through a change in the sensible properties themselves."⁷⁴ A reduction screen effects the change because it isolates the colors from their surroundings. The painter accomplishes this without a screen by half-closing his eyes.⁷⁵ When the color is freed from its surroundings we see colored patches instead of an object, such as paper, with a determinate color.

Stevens' poetry reflects the freeing of color and light from its surroundings. In "Banal Sojourn" the perceiver sees the sky as "a blue gum" (CP, 62), which now appears as a film color. The spongy texture of the spectral color replaces the smooth blueness of the surface color, which revealed the texture of the perceived object. Now perhaps the perceiver has half-closed his eyes because of the glaring summer sun ("Summer is like a fat beast" [CP, 62]), thereby reducing the surface color to a film color. Stevens, in "As at a Theatre," uses the "reduction screen" mode of perception when he sees the light as "A bubble without a wall on which to hang" (OP, 91). He isolates the light from the surface of the wall, which had picked up the reflection but is now no longer part of his visual field. Merleau-Ponty points out that this "changed appearance is inseparable from a change of structure in the colour; by the act of interposing the screen between our eyes and the spectacle, and half-closing our eyes, we free the colours from the objectivity they acquire on the surfaces of bodies."⁷⁶

This point is important and leads to another assertion which is vital for our study of the relational aspect of chromatics in poetry: "Every colour as a quale is therefore mediated by a colour-function, and becomes determinate in relation to a level which is variable."⁷⁷ Isolating part of the visual field is one of these variables which causes a change in color: the meadow green taken out of context loses its thickness, and the color itself changes.⁷⁸ Color

functions are tied in with other variables such as heat: "Heat enters experience as a kind of vibration of the thing; with colour on the other hand it is as if the thing is thrust outside itself, and it is a priori necessary that an extremely hot object should redden, for it is its excess of vibration which causes it to blaze forth."⁷⁹

Concepts such as "reddening" and "changing greenness" reflect a dynamic sense of color impression and appearances with which we can approach the poetry to further understand the changes in the visual experience of the poet. In addition to differentiating the modes of appearance of color--surface, film, and volume--which reveal the relational aspect of the color to the structure of the perceived object, at the same time revealing the structure of the color itself, we must also distinguish the variables of color--brightness, hue, and saturation--to enable us to describe the colors as they change in the world of the poem. In other words, we are dealing now with two types of color change: (1) changes in the mode of appearance of the color; for example, reducing from a surface to a film color which points up the texture of the color, and (2) changes in the qualities of the color; for example, the deepening of a color which points up the level of saturation or purity and intensity of the hue.

Before we turn to the poetry to examine these color changes, it is first necessary to clarify the terms we are dealing with further, regarding the modes of appearance and

color qualities.⁸⁰ The modes of appearances are classified in three ways: surface color, film color, and volume color. Put as simply as possible, surface color is the color of perceived objects. The color is seen as part of the object itself; for example, the red paper or the blue carpet. Film color is unlocalized, that is without reference to an object and without spatial characteristics; for example, the pure colors in a spectroscope. Volume color is transparent and objects may be seen through them; for example, colored liquids. The color qualities are categorized as to brightness, hue and saturation. Brightness is that dimension which varies from bright to dim; for example, blue has a lower luminosity than green. Hue is that element which leads us to distinguish and name a color red or green.⁸¹ Saturation is the percentage of hue in a color and is described as pale or deep. It is parallel to the purity or concentration of a chemical solution; for example, pink has a lower saturation than red.

It cannot be stressed enough here that although the terms brightness, hue, and saturation categorize and describe physical properties of colors, these are dynamic color qualities which change with the context; for example, when the background changes (a differently colored background for two rings of the same color changes the hue, brightness, or saturation of the inner colored ring),⁸² the same color appears to us entirely changed. It is the appearance-to-us that the phenomenologist is interested in ("not so much/

That they were oak leaves as the way they looked" [CP, 205]), not, for example, the charting of the physical properties which measures the variations in percentages of wave-length distribution among different shades. This would be a physicalist method of color observation; therefore, the terms are used merely to describe the changing appearances, not to measure the physical changes comparatively through scientific data.

Color perception in Keats is sometimes peripheral, but he is aware of color change in the fluidity of the perceptual process. This awareness reflects an interest in the particulars of nature as they appear to him, which is central. Endymion, waking from sleep, looks around him and perceives

all the pleasant hues
Of heaven and earth had faded: deepest shades
Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades
Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills
Seem'd sooty, and o'er spread with upturn'd gills
Of dying fish; the vermeil rose had blown
In frightful scarlet, and its thorn out-grown
Like spiked aloe.

(W, 72)

The two changes described here, the clear brook changing to "sooty" from the dirtying of the light (we will deal with illumination later in this chapter) and the red rose deepening to scarlet, reflect the centrality to his poetry of Keats's perceptual experience, which here points up the significance of the context in which color is experienced and its psychological effect. The change from vermilion with a red-yellow hue, highly saturated, and very bright

(yellow is highest on the brightness scale)⁸³ to scarlet, with a purple hue and much dimmer, shows the change in the color qualities as well as the effect of color. The change in the hue removes the warmth (red is a "warm" color) and the change in weight (darker colors are heavier) elicits an unfavorable reaction reflected in the imagery: "deepest dungeons," "pestilent light," "sooty," "frightful scarlet," and "thorns . . . like spiked aloe."

The process of reddening, blushing and flushing, appears often in Keats.⁸⁴ There is a parallel in his perceptual experience of the colorless shells taking on a vermilion hue and the pale cheek of the maid blushing:

Flush every thing that hath a vermeil hue
 Let the rose glow intense and warm the air,
 And let the clouds of even and of morn
 Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills;
 Let the red wine within the goblet boil,
 Cold as a bubbling well; let faint-lipp'd shells,
 On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn
 Through all their labyrinths; and let the maid
 Blush keenly.

(W, 240)

As Lamia metamorphoses into a woman, the change is paralleled by a deepening of color:

The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,
 She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain:
 A deep volcanian yellow took the place
 Of all her milder-mooned body's grace,
 And as the lava ravishes the mead
 Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede
 Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars.

(W, 164-65)

The deepening here is a color eruption where the colors are

"inflam'd," reflecting the pain of the experience. The psychological relationship of pain and color is envisioned as Lamia "writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain." As the "lava ravishes the mead," so the volcanic color spoils her silver mail and gold braiding and sullies her bright colors, "her frecklings, streaks and bars."

Keats is also conscious of reflected color:

There the king-fisher saw his plumage bright
 Vieing with fish of brilliant dye below;
 Whose silken fins and golden scales' light
 Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow:
 There saw the swan his neck of arched snow,
 And oar'd himself along with majesty;
 Sparkled his jetty eyes; his feet did show
 Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony.

(W, 21)

The color of the "ruby glow" is that mode of appearance which we have designated as volume color, transparent and which objects can be seen through. The examples of Keats's color sense quoted earlier also reflect surface color perception: the red rose, serpent body, or vermilion shells.

The shifting in the perceptual process of the elements comprising the context, such as wind and water, transforms the scene in Keats's poetry much like the shifting of the glass fragments in a kaleidoscope:

The streams with changed magic interlace:
 Sometimes like delicatest lattices,
 Cover'd with crystal vines; then weeping trees,
 Moving about as in a gentle wind,
 Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin'd,
 Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies,
 Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries
 Of flowers, peacocks, swan, and naiads fair.

(W, 95)

The crystallization of the green is implicit here as the trees move about and are reflected in the water. The movement refines them to a "watery gauze," as the shimmering effect caused by the wind and water shapes them, polishing the colors into spangles, or sparkling fragments. Keats perceives the change in the reflections in the water and weaves a texture of delicate laciness embroidered with metallic color.

Stevens more explicitly and much more frequently deals with color and the kaleidoscopic shifting of perceptual particulars. His perceptual experience and its fluidity are central to his poetry.

"Woman Looking at a Vase of Flowers," like "Study of Two Pears," is a poem whose meaning is the reality of the perceptual act, reflecting metamorphosis and particularization:

It was as if thunder took form upon
The piano, that time: the time when the crude
And jealous grandeur of sun and sky
Scattered themselves in the garden, like
The winds dissolving into birds,
The clouds becoming braided girls.
It was like the sea poured out again
In east wind beating the shutters at night.

Hoot, little owl within her, how
High blue became particular
In the leaf and bud and how the red,
Flicked into pieces, points of air,
Became-how the central, essential red
Escaped its large abstraction, became
First summer, then a lesser time,
Then the sides of peaches, of dusky pears.

Hoot how the inhuman colors fell
Into place beside her, where she was,
Like human conciliations, more like
A profound reconciling, an act,

An affirmation free from doubt.
 The crude and jealous formlessness
 Became the form and the fragrance of things
 Without clairvoyance, close to her.

(CP, 246-47)

The first stanza reflects the general forms of elements and atmospheric conditions (thunder, sun, sky, winds, clouds, sea) which metamorphose and are internalized in perception as the sun and sky scatter themselves in the garden, the wind dissolves into birds, the clouds become little girls, and the sea becomes the storm. This recalls the sun as "a round Disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea,"⁸⁵ an abstraction not even requiring a look at the sun. But the sun-for-us, the sun on our face or "scattered" "in the garden" is as we live it. Stevens here, like Blake, does not wish to see more in the sun but more of it. (His "Guinea sun" is transformed by creative perception to "an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty," which is analogous to Stevens' "winds dissolving into birds,/The clouds becoming braided girls.")

We move in the second and third stanzas to a celebration of the particular. The high blue becomes particularized in the leaf and bud. The red which was "flicked into pieces" before, just "points of air," became. The essential, pure spectroscopic red, a film color, changed to the glow of summer, a volume color, and then was objectified to a surface color--the color on the sides of peaches. The woman is living the colors now, "beside her, where she was,"

"close to her," in her bodily experience--where the formless takes form. There is affirmation in the phenomenologist's idea of perceptual experience, a dialogue bringing into being his world. Merleau-Ponty writes of this dialogue between the perceiver and the perceived: "The world no longer stands before him through representation, rather . . . the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible."⁸⁶ Stevens understands this:

Infant, it is enough in life
To speak of what you see. But wait
Until sight wakens the sleepy eye
And pierces the physical fix of things.
(CP, 365)

Merleau-Ponty asserts that in the perceptual act fixing one's gaze is an interrogation, asking what makes the thing what it is. Fixing the gaze restricts the visual field and zeroes in on the particular which absorbs the gaze. He exemplifies this in color perception:

We must first understand that this red under my eyes is not, as is always said, a quale, a pellicle of being without thickness. . . . It requires a focusing, however brief; it emerges from a less precise, more general redness, in which my gaze was caught, into which it sank, before . . . fixing it. And, now that I have fixed it, if my eyes penetrate into it, into its fixed structure, or if they start to wander round about again, the quale resumes its atmospheric existence. Its precise form is bound up with a certain woolly, metallic, or porous configuration or texture, and the quale itself counts for very little compared with these participations.⁸⁷

In "The Bouquet" Stevens captures the questioning of the gaze and the piercing of things in perception ("Here the eye fastens intently to these lines/And crawls on them" "The rose, the delphinium, the red, the blue,/Are questions of the looks they get" [CP, 450-51]). He sets up an antithesis between things suspended and static, the bouquet as metaphor ("an artifice,/Nothing much" [CP, 448]) and the thing as it is in appearance ("The infinite of the actual perceived,/A freedom revealed, a realization touched" [CP, 451]). In Stevens the dialectical relationship between imagination and reality is often ambiguous with one not always "good" and the other not always "bad." Most poems show the superiority of the real, the natural ("Not all the knives of the lamp-posts, . . ./Can carve/What one star can carve,/Shining through the grape leaves" [CP, 74-75]), but others do show the value of the imaginative qualified, however, by its connection to the real ("Perhaps it gives,/In the universal intercourse" [CP, 177]). In "The Bouquet" this interaction or fusion is embodied in the dynamic appearance of the particulars in the world of the poem. We see a triptych here as the dynamic appearance of the bouquet is framed by the fixed bouquet standing in the jar at the beginning and the fallen bouquet lying on the floor at the end. This is paralleled by the tripartite structure of dialectic (in the Hegelian sense). The thesis is the bare static object, in its metaphoric sense as "a flutter that reflects itself" (CP, 448); the antithesis is the imaginative

flight, the apparitions ("crowded with apparitions suddenly gone" [CP, 449]) and romance ("lofty scenes/But not of romance, the bitterest vulgar do/And die" [CP, 450]); and the synthesis is the object as it appears to us ("A vibrancy of petals" [CP, 450]).

Stevens classifies the perceiver of appearances as meta-men and the appearances of things as para-things. However, this perceiver is still a subject knowing the static, and the perceived is still a real object with physical properties: "And yet still men though meta-men, still things/Though para-things" (CP, 449). For meta-men, perhaps poets who reach for the poem of reality to help us cope,

The world has turned to the several speeds of glass,
For whom no blue in the sky prevents them, as
They understand, and take on potency,
By growing clear, transparent magistrates

Bearded with chains of blue-green glitterings
And wearing hats of angular flick and fleck,
Cold with an under impotency that they know.
(CP, 449)

These meta-men look at the appearance and

Behold them, not chases of Provence growing
In glue, but things transfixed, transpierced and well
Perceived: the white seen smoothly argentine
And plated up, dense silver shine.
(CP, 449)

The "blue-green glitterings" which bearded the meta-men is the synthesis of the object and the imaginative: blue is the

color of the imaginative and green that of primitive reality. Stevens juxtaposes the static and the dynamic in the poem repeatedly: the meta-men are "cold with an under impotency that they know," yet "they understand, and take on potency by growing clear." The meta-men do not perceive the things of Provence "growing in glue," but they see white as silvered or "smoothly argentine." They see the bouquet as

It stands on a table at a window
Of the land, on a checkered cover, red and white.

The checkered squares, the skeleton of repose
Breathe slightly, slightly move or seem to move
Toward a consciousness of red and white as one.
(CP, 450)

The perceiver lives the colors as they seem to converge in the dynamic appearance:

Perhaps, these, seen in insight, assume
In the eye a special hue of origin.
But if they do, they cast it widely round.

They cast deeply round a crystal crystal-white
And pallid bits, that tend to comply with blue,
A right red with its composites glutted full.
(CP, 451-52)

Color is in the eye of the beholder and not inherent in the object. The reflections that they cast round need a perceiver to relate the composites of the color: the blue, red and red-blue into which the refracted crystal breaks up. Von Fieandt writes, "Newton's discovering that a prism can split white light into its components, revolutionary as it

was, influenced all later color research."⁸⁸ Merleau-Ponty illustrates the concretion of color:

The color is yet a variant in another dimension of variation, that of its relations with the surroundings: this red is what it is only by connecting up from its place with other reds about it, with which it forms a constellation, or with other colours it dominates or that dominate it, that it attracts or that attract it, that it repels or that repel it. In short, it is a certain node in the woof of the simultaneous and the successive.⁸⁹

"The Bouquet," Stevens writes, "is a part of a dithering/ Cloud's gold, of a whole appearance that stands and is" (CP, 452). The appearance is real, it exists. The difference between the appearance and the real object is important here. As a thing is also a "para-thing," so an appearance is part of the real object but different from it. Merleau-Ponty explains:

I see the next-door house from a certain angle, but it would be seen differently from the right bank of the Seine, or from the inside, or again from an aeroplane: the house itself is none of these appearances; it is as Leibniz said, the flat projection of these perspectives and of all possible perspectives, that is the perspectiveless position from which all can be derived.⁹⁰

The appearance is dynamically connected to the real which, for Stevens, is the major point of "The Bouquet."

Stevens' poetry reflects and reiterates the struggle he feels between the real and imagined, and he emphasizes the movement and change in the act of creating a poem and

in the act of perceiving a world. In "The Bouquet" Stevens brings reality to the fore:

A pack of cards is falling toward the floor,
The sun is secretly shining on a wall.
One remembers a woman standing in such a dress.
(CP, 450)

Keats anticipates this sense of the real:

But this is human life: the war, the deeds,
The disappointment, the anxiety
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
All human, bearing in themselves this good,
That they are still the air, the subtle food,
To make us feel existence.
(W, 83)

"The Man with the Blue Guitar" is a poem entirely structured on the juxtaposition of reality and imagination, creating a tension as we move from one to the other. "Blue" in the poem is a symbol for the imaginative ("You have a blue guitar/You do not play things as they are" [CP, 165]), and "green" stands for the natural or real ("The day was green" [CP, 165]). The imaginative clouds reality ("There are no shadows in our sun, . . ./The earth, for us, is flat and bare" [CP, 167]), and he feels it is "the chord that falsifies" (CP, 171). Stevens asserts that the old myths no longer work for us:

I cannot bring a world quite round,
Although I patch it as I can

I sing a hero's head, large eye
And bearded bronze, but not a man,

Although I patch him as I can
And reach through him almost to man

Apostrophizing wreaths, the voice
In the clouds serene and final, next

The grunted breath serene and final,
The imagined and the real, thought

And the truth, Dichtung and Wahrheit, all
Confusions solved.

(CP, 177)

This fusion is a synthesis and the poem "acquires/Its true appearances there, sun's green,/Cloud's red, earth feeling, sky that thinks" (CP, 177). The interaction of "a voice in the clouds/Another on earth" with "the undertaker's song in the snow" as the image of synthesis, seems to reflect Stevens' idea that imagination can have no source but in reality. This calls to mind Yeats's "Circus Animals' Desertion" ("Now that my ladder's gone,/I must lie down where all the ladders start,/In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart").⁹¹

The use of color in this poem is interesting and multi-form as we see "blue" as a symbol, a word, a quality, and an entity, all of which are reflected in Canto XIII:

The pale intrusions into blue
Are corrupting pallors . . . ay di mi,

Blue buds or pitchy blooms. Be content-
Expansions, diffusions-content to be

The unspotted imbecile revery,
The heraldic center of the world

Of blue, blue sleek with a hundred chins,
The amorist Adjective aflame.

(CP, 172)

The last line with "Adjective" capitalized points to blue as a noun, an entity,⁹² as well as an adjective, and also a symbol for the imagination. In line three ("blue buds"),

we see blue as a surface color and quality. The intrusion of myth ("The pale intrusions into blue") corrupts the imagination and dilutes its blueness; it strikes a discordant note and furthers the distance between the imagination and the real ("The discord merely magnifies" [CP, 171]). The "heraldic center of the world/Of blue," which reflects the imagination, the "amorist Adjective," tied to the "blue buds or pitchy blooms" is the emblazoned poem, "aflame" with reality which therefore can help us cope and make life livable.

Implicit in Canto XIII is the use of the word "blue" itself, underscored because of the repetition (four times in eight lines), and because the words themselves, their sounds, shapes, and colors ("Their dark-colored words had redescribed the citrons" [CP, 487]; "Use dusky words and dusky images./Darken your speech" [CP, 86]), are significant in Stevens' poetry. Merleau-Ponty asserts that our body gives significance to words as well as to natural objects:

Words have a physiognomy because we adopt towards them, as towards each person, a certain form of behavior which makes its complete appearance the moment each word is given. "I try to grasp the word rot (red) in its living expression; but at first it is no more than peripheral for me, no more than a sign along with the knowledge of its meaning. It is not red itself. But suddenly I notice that this word pushes its way through my body. I have the feeling difficult to describe, of a kind of numbed fullness which invades my body, and which at the same time imparts to my mouth cavity a spherical shape. And precisely at that moment, I notice that the word on the paper takes on its expressive value, it comes to meet me in

a dark red halo, while the letter o intuitively presents me with that spherical quality which I previously felt in my mouth 92

This is true for the word "blue" also with its gentle rounding of the lips and its quiet glow. Merleau-Ponty continues:

What is particularly brought out by the word's behavior here is its indissoluble identity with something said, heard and seen. "The word as read is not a geometrical structure in a segment of visual space, it is the presentation of a form of behaviour and of a linguistic act in its dynamic fullness." Whether it is a question of perceiving words or more generally objects . . . "man as a dynamic and living totality has to pattern himself in order to trace out a figure in his visual field as part of the psychosomatic organism." In short, my body . . . reverberates to all sounds, vibrates to all colours, and provides word with their primordial significance through the way in which it receives them.⁹³

The body's sensitivity to color is reflected in Stevens' concept of the impact of color on us:

He had said that everything possessed
The power to transform itself, or else,

And what meant more, to be transformed.
He discovered the colors of the moon

In a single spruce, when, suddenly,
The tree stood dazzling in the air

A blue broke on him from the sun,
A bullioned blue, a blue abulge,

The daylight with times' bellishings,
And sensuous summer stood full-height.
(CP, 514)

The repetition of "blue" (3 times in 2 lines) and of the voiced plosives (6 of them in 2 lines) parallel the swellings

of summer, "summer stood full-height." Things transform themselves ("The tree stood dazzling") and are transformed ("blue broke on him"). The color as dynamic agent of change is important and ties in with the fusion of this idea of color with the linguistic act:

They rolled their r's, there, in the land of the
citrons.
In the land of big mariners, the words they spoke
Were mere brown clods, mere catching weeds of talk.

. . .

It was the same
Except for the adjective, an alternation
Of words that was a change of nature.
(CP, 486-87)

Words speak to the perceiver, of reality ("Green is the orator/Of our passionate height . . . Secrete us in reality. It is there/My orator" [CP, 309-10])). Words and colors are related in the linguistic act:

a bright red woman will be rising
And standing in violent golds, will brush her hair.
She will speak thoughtfully the words of a line
She will think about them not quite able to sing.
Besides, when the sky is so blue, things sing
themselves.
(CP, 338)

Meaning is often difficult to bring forth and remains latent in the words ("The less legible meanings of sounds, the little reds/Not often realized" [CP, 488])). There is a figuring forth in perception of the words, the sounds, and the colors:

After all, they knew that to be real each had
To find for himself his earth, his sky, his sea.

And the words for them and the colors they possessed

. . .

These are real only if I make them so. Whistle
For me, grow green for me and as you whistle
and grow green,

Intangible arrows quiver and stick in the skin.
(CP, 312-13)

The maker orders the words which are "ghostlier demarcations,
keener sounds" and which are "the words of the sea":

The maker's rage to order words of the sea
Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred,
And of ourselves and of our origin,
In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds.
(CP, 130)

There is a presentation of being in the maker's song:

For she was the maker of the song she sang

. . .

And when she sang, the sea,
Whatever self it had, became the self
That was her song, for she was the maker.
(CP, 129)

The act of reading brings into being the world of the
text as the act of perception constitutes the world-for-the-
perceiver. Forming the words as one reads, he creates the
color atmosphere ("The greenness of night lies on the page"
[CP, 267]), and

The green falls on you as you look,
Falls on and makes and gives, even a speech.
(CP, 267)

The colors are agents of change, "new colors make new things" (OP, 24), and the deepening or paling of the color reveals the changing structure of which the color is inseparably part ("The partaker partakes of that which changes him" [CP, 392]). The color is repeated in its various forms:

Red-in-red repetitions never going
 Away, a little rusty, a little rouged,
 A little roughened and ruder.
(CP, 400)

We perceive in nature an erosion, a paling of the color ("the red-rose-red/And weathered and the ruby water worn" [CP, 400]), or a deepening ("A green baked greener in the greenest sun" [CP, 393]). There is also a colorlessness, a complete washing out of the color. Stevens reflects this lack of color in a poem which explains that the "archbishop is away." He passes by when he is there and "Dressed in his colored robes," he lends color to the scene.

A dithery gold falls everywhere
 It wets the pigeons.
(CP, 140)

The shimmering color here falls on the pigeons as it does on "The bouquet," which is "part of a dithering:/Cloud's gold" (CP, 452).

In "Description with Place," we see that

Nietzsche in Basil, studied the deep pool
 Of these discolorations, mastering

 The moving and the moving of their forms
 In the much-mottled motion of blank time

His reverie was the deepness of the pool,
 The very pool, his thoughts the colored forms.
 (CP, 342)

The wetness is absorbed by the colored forms and the motion is the impetus for transformation as they are "much-mottled." Merleau-Ponty relates perception, water and its reflections:

When through the water's thickness I see the tiling at the bottom of a pool, I do not see it despite the water and the reflections there; I see it through them and because of them. If there were no distortions, no ripples of sunlight, if it were without this flesh that I saw the geometry of the tiles, then I would cease to see it as it is and where it is--which is to say, beyond any identical specific place. I cannot say that the water itself--the aqueous power, the sirupy and shimmering element--is in space; all this is not somewhere else either, but it is not in the pool. It inhabits it, it materializes itself there, yet it is not contained there; and if I raise my eyes toward the screen of cypresses where the web of reflections is playing, I cannot gainsay the fact that the water visits it, too, or at least sends into it, upon it, its active and living essence. This internal animation, this radiation of the visible is what the painter seeks under the name of depth, of space, of color.⁹⁴

As the aqueous and shimmering element of the water animates and changes the object, so the glowing radiation of lighting enlivens and alters it. Capturing this sense in painting or literature is "not construction, artifice, meticulous relationship to space and a world existing outside and . . . is truly the 'inarticulate cry,' as Hermes Trismegistus said, which seemed to be the voice of light."⁹⁵

Stevens' points up this inner sound of light:

In spite of the mere objectiveness of things,
 Like a cloud-cap in the corner of a looking glass,
 A change of color in the plain poet's mind,
 Night and silence disturbed by an interior sound
 The one moonlight.

(CP, 531-32)

"Looking glass," representing objectivity here, calls to mind the dichotomy Stevens sets up in his poetry between the mirror and the lamp. In "Blanche McCarthy," the mirror, "this dead glass," can only reflect surface, but the "mirror of the sky," reflects the dynamic changes of the natural elements:

Look in the terrible mirror of the sky
 And not in this dead glass, which can reflect
 Only the surfaces--the bending arm,
 The leaning shoulder and the searching eye.

Look in the terrible mirror of the sky
 See how the absent moon waits in a glade
 Of your dark self, and how the wings of stars
 Upward, from unimagined coverts, fly.

(OP, 10)

The mirror of the sky is not a passive looking glass but refracts the wings of light from the stars as they fly upward. Nor is the "sun-filled water" in "A Lot of People Bathing in a Stream" merely a passive mirror; it is "brightly-leafed/And limbed and lighted out from bank to bank" (CP, 371). The water seems to join with the reflections, which shape themselves:

Like their particular characters, addicts
 To blotches, angular anonymids
 Gulping for shape among the reeds.

(CP, 371)

The mirror/lamp dichotomy in Stevens is ambiguous as the mirror can be an active agent rather than a passive object ("The mirror melts and moulds itself and moves/And catches from nowhere brightly-burning breath./It blows a glassy brightness on the fire" [CP, 458]), and the lamp can subtract rather than add as it penetrates to the naked skeleton, exposing the "leaflessness" of the bough.

The internalization of the light is an important theme in both Stevens and Keats.

colors subjected in revery
To an innate grandiose, an innate light,
The sun of Nietzsche gildering the pool

. . .

In perpetual revolution, round and round.
(CP, 342)

This "innate light" is the inspiration emanating from the light the poet experiences, "the brightness in each other's eyes" (W, 9), and which is reflected in the world of his poem.

For an interior made exterior
And the poet's search for the same exterior made
Interior: breathless things broodingly abreath
With the inhalations of original cold
And of original earliness. Yet the sense
Of cold and earliness is a daily sense, . . .

To re-create, to use
The cold and earliness and bright origin
Is to search. Likewise to say of the evening star,
The most ancient light in the most ancient sky,
That it is wholly an inner light, that it shines
From the sleepy bosom of the real, re-creates,
Searches a possible for its possibility
(CP, 481)

This is the poet's inner light, the internalization of the light that inspires, the light of sun and moon co-existing with the poet, who seizes it, partakes of its being, and in an act of creation brings life, nature, and poetry together in the world of his poem.

Both Keats and Stevens show the perceiver observing the darkening of illumination. In Hyperion's palace the observer sees that "sometimes eagle's wings, . . ./Darken'd the place" (W, 225). This looks forward to Stevens' lines in "Red Loves Kit," where he describes the phenomenon in greater detail:

Rest, crows, upon the edges of the moon,
Cover the golden altar deepest black
Fly upward thick in numbers, fly across
The blueness of the half-night, fill the air
And darken it, make an unbroken mat
Out of the whirl and denseness of your wings,
Spread over heaven shutting out the light.
(OP, 31)

There are parallel passages in both poets presenting the dirtying of the light. Endymion perceives that "heaths and sunny glades/Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills/Seem'd sooty" (W, 72), which Stevens echoes in "The Man with the Blue Guitar" ("That generation's dream, aviled/In the mud, in Monday's dirty light" [CP, 183]).

The starting point for a phenomenological study of lighting and its effect would be to distinguish between illumination and the illuminated object. Merleau-Ponty adds another element to be distinguished along with these two:

Lighting is merely one element of a complex structure, the others being organization of the field as our body contrives it and the thing illuminated in its constancy. The functional correlations which can be discovered between these three phenomena are merely manifestations of their essential co-existence.⁹⁶

He elucidates the latter two and their relationship:

What are we to understand by the organization of the field? We have seen that, if we insert a white paper into the beam of light thrown by an arc lamp, the beam having hitherto been fused with the disc on to which it falls, and perceived as a solid cone--immediately the beam and the disc are dissociated and the lighting takes on the quality of lighting. The introduction of the paper into the beam, by forcing us clearly to recognize the 'non-solidity' of the cone of light, alters its significance in relation to the disc supporting it and brings out its quality as lighting. It is as if there were an incompatibility, vividly experienced, between the sight of the illuminated paper and that of a solid cone, and as if the significance of part of the spectacle induced a reassessment of the significance of the whole. . . . It is as if the parts of the spectacle, being unable singly to summon up the vision of lighting, made this possible by their union, . . . If we move a lamp round a bust at a constant distance from it, even when the lamp itself is invisible we see the rotation of the source of light in the complex changing light and colour which is all that is given. There is then a 'logic of lighting' or again a 'synthesis of lighting,' a compossibility of the parts of the visual field.⁹⁷

Before turning to the poetry we should try to understand some of the concepts described by psychologists of perception. The terminology used in discussing a light source falls into three main divisions: physics, psychophysics, and psychology. Ralph Evans clarifies these divisions:

With respect to a light source or its effects they correspond to the physical quantity and quality of the radiant energy (per unit area at each wavelength in a given direction), to the effect of the radiant energy in terms of standardized eye-response data, and to its psychological effect when seen by a real observer. . . . The movement of light through space is referred to as a flux of light, the term being essentially synonymous with the word 'flow.' The radiant energy is referred to as 'radiant flux'; the wavelength of this with respect to the eye is called the 'luminous flux'; and the mental evaluation of it after it strikes the eye is called brightness. . . . Under each of these terms come the words or expressions which tell whether the point of view taken is toward the source, toward the light falling on an object, or toward the light after it leaves the object. . . . These then are the basic words used to describe the concepts. All the physics terms are derived from the word 'radiation,' the psychophysical from the word 'luminous,' and all the psychological terms use the word 'brightness. . . . The ending 'ance' is used for words indicating the cause, and the ending 'ness' is used for words indicating the effect.⁹⁸

Thus the language of lighting here parallels Merleau-Ponty's division: the light source, "radiant energy" or "radiation"; the object lighted, "luminosity"; and the perceiver's response, "brightness."

Two important attributes of light are its wavelength and its intensity.⁹⁹ In the development of light theory the introduction of fluorescent light proved revolutionary. Formerly experiments were done under daylight conditions or in illumination from incandescent lamps, which was not very different from sunlight.¹⁰⁰ Von Fieandt explains the difference:

Physically speaking light sources can be classified as glowing or flourescent bodies. The former are often called 'hot,' the latter 'cold' sources. With a candle or carbon arc lamp the radiation originates from a burning material. The 'cold' light sources give radiations from a flourescent substance which is made to flash by the impact of an electric current.¹⁰¹

The introduction of flourescent lights proved revolutionary in that higher intensities became possible bringing about an increase in the sheer amount of light reflected by all colors, and flourescent light shows a wider variation of intensity across the band of the spectrum. Flourescent lamps contain more energy at the short end of the visible spectrum than in illumination provided by incandescent lamps.¹⁰²

The psychological reactions to illumination are significant for the phenomenologist and he emphasizes the fact that there are "basic responses to specific wavelengths of radiant energy."¹⁰³ The physical effect of the light will induce psychological reactions and conversely, the psychological attitudes will effect bodily response.¹⁰⁴ Perception of both light and color not only involves "the retina and the consciousness but the body as a totality."¹⁰⁵ Merleau-Ponty sees this as the most vital concept in a phenomenology of perception: "Quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there only because the body welcomes them."¹⁰⁶ He expands on this:

The gaze [is] in other words the natural correlation between appearances and our

kinaesthetic unfoldings, something not known through a law, but experienced as the involvement of our body in the typical situations of a world. Lighting and the constancy of the thing illuminated, which is its correlative, are directly dependent on our bodily situation. If in a brightly lit room, we observe a white disc placed in a shady corner, the constancy of the white is imperfect. It improves when we approach the shady zone containing the disc. It becomes perfect when we actually enter it. The shade does not become really a shade . . . until it has ceased to be in front of us as something to be seen, but surrounds us, becoming our environment in which we establish ourselves. This phenomenon becomes comprehensible only if the spectacle, far from being a collection of objects, a mosaic of qualities arrayed before an acosmic subject, steals round the subject and offers to come to terms with him.¹⁰⁷

Keats's poetry reflects a phenomenology of lighting which he experiences in his own perception and which appears in the world of his poem, revealing the structure of the particulars of nature. In the "Eve of St. Agnes," Porphyro sees the wintry moon which "threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast" (W, 201). In a letter to Renato Poggioli, Stevens explains that he is using the phrase "half pales of red" as Keats did in "The Eve of St. Agnes":

In the expression--half-pales of red, etc.--the word pales is used in its heraldic sense and I suppose that unconsciously I used the plural in the same way that the plural gules has been used.¹⁰⁸

Stevens' lines reflect the "personae of summer":

He sees
Them mottled, in the moodiest costumes,

Of blue and yellow, sky and sun, belted
And knotted, sashed and seamed, half pales of red,
Half pales of green, appropriate habit for

The huge decorum, the manner of the time,
 Part of the mottled mood of summer's whole.
 (CP, 378)

Both poets see the light as casting stripes of color (the heraldic terms mean vertical lines or stripes). Keats sees the light on the woman's breast as patterned in colored lines and Stevens, in more detail, perceives the light and color from the sky and sun "belted and knotted, sashed and seamed," interwoven in the "mottled mood of summer's whole." Both poets capture the rich sumptuous gleam of color, light and food. Keats has the table set for a banquet in Madeline's bedroom:

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
 In blanch'd linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
 While he from forth the closet brought a heap
 Of candied apple, quince, and plum and gourd;
 With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
 And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
 Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
 From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one
 From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

These delicacies he heap'd with glowing hand
 On golden dishes and in baskets bright
 Of wreathed silver. . . .

The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam
 Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies.
 (W, 203-04)

In "Sunday Morning" Stevens in a compressed opening interweaves the color, light, and food also:

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
 Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
 And the green freedom of a cockatoo
 Upon a rug mingle.

. . .

As a calm darkens among water-light
 The pungent oranges and bright, green wings
 Seem things in some procession of the dead.
 (CP, 66-67)

Interestingly, both poets play with the reflections from the light on the carpet. In Keats the shining trays gleam and the carpet's fringe is gilded. In Stevens the color is intensified from the sunlight and the reflections mingle and are patterned on the rug.

Keats also is aware of the patterning of light ("So that we look around with prying stare,/Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial limnings" [W, 42-43]).

Merleau-Ponty asserts that "voracious vision, reaching beyond the 'visual givens,' opens up a texture of Being of which the discrete sensorial messages are only the punctuations or the caesurae."¹⁰⁹ "The eye," he continues, "lives in this texture as a man lives in his house."¹¹⁰ Keats and Stevens grasp this idea of the 'texture of Being' and their poetry reflects the light formation as well as the structure of the object lighted. In "Endymion" the nymph says:

Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws
 A virgin light to the deep; my grotto-sands
 Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands
 By my diligent springs; my level lilies, shells
 My charming rod, my potent river spells.
 (W, 82)

The light drawn and absorbed reveals the pebbly-texture and veined structure of the river bottom. In "Lamia," Lycius and Lamia arrive before a "pillar'd porch with lofty portal door":

Where hung a silver lamp whose phospor glow
 Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
 Mild as a star in water; for so new,
 And so unsillied was the marble hue,
 So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
 Ran the dark veins.

(W, 170)

The "phospor glow" is a "cold" light source, as distinguished from incandescence, a glowing with intense heat, and reveals the polished marble steps with dark veins running through them.

In "Endymion," Peona says:

Although, before the crystal heavens darken,
 I watch and dote upon the silver lakes
 Pictur'd in western cloudiness, that takes
 The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold sands
 Islands and creaks, and amber-fretted strands.

(W, 73)

Here Keats interweaves the particulars--clouds, sunlight, and water--which emit a golden glow, and he patterns the reflection into a kaleidoscope of shimmering beauty. The "amber-fretted strands," the illuminated shore lines, are knitted with the golden light refracted from the reflections in the water.

Keats's most expanded use of the perception of light is in Book III of "Endymion" where Glaucus and Endymion come upon Neptune's palaces:

They shouldered on towards that brightening east
 At every onward step proud domes arose
 In prospect,--diamond gleams, and golden glows
 Of Amber 'gainst their faces levelling.

(W, 126)

They feel the reflected amber glow on their faces as

Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld
By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draught
Each gazer drank; and deeper drank more near.
(W, 126)

Keats captures the prismatic effect of the "blush of Coral" on the opalescent pillars which the perceiver experiences. His understanding of the bodily action of the perceptual act is clear in the phrase "each gazer drank." In his expression of the dialectical relationship of the perceiver and the perceived, he shows that the "enigma of vision . . . is relegated from the thought of seeing to vision in act. . . . One can practice it, exercise it, and, so to speak, exist it."¹¹¹ When the gates to the most lavish palace of all, which is "as bright, as colour'd as the bow/Of Iris," burst open, the perceivers are dazzled and "veil their eyes." Then their eyes adjust to the dazzling brightness ("Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze/Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze").

In the next stanza, they see that

there did spring
From natural west, and east, and south, and north,
A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth
A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head
Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread.
(W, 127)

The light of the sunset is dazzling, emitting a "green-gold" reflection at the "zenith," the upper pole of the horizon, and the perceiver catches the "blaze/Of the dome pomp,

reflected in extremes,/Globing a golden sphere." The blazing reflection of the palace dome sparkling in the light seems to encircle and cast a halo of light around the sun.

Stevens is much more explicit and detailed than Keats in his poetry dealing with the perception of light. He deals with the radiance more expressively and exhibits more originality in giving it form: "When radiance came running down, slim through the bareness" (CP, 62); "The stars are putting on their glittering belts" (CP, 419); "a tissue of the moon/Walked toward him on the stage and they embraced" (CP, 306); "And lightning colors/So, in me, come flinging/Forms, flames, and the flakes of flames" (CP, 95). He envisions the fusion of the light source and the illuminated object: "The disbeliever . . ./Observing moon-blotches on the walls" (CP, 77); "And the blackbird spread its tail,/So that the sun may speckle" (CP, 88); "She climbed until/The moonlight in her lap, mewing her velvet,/And her dress were one" (CP, 248).

Stevens often structures whole poems on the perceptual experience of light, revealing the form of the illuminant.
In "Tattoo"

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

It crawls under your eyelids
And spreads its web there--
Its two webs.

The webs of your eyes
Are fastened
To the flesh and bone of you
As to rafters or grass.

There are filaments of your eyes
 On the surface of the water
 And in the edges of the snow.
 (CP, 81)

The perceptual act here knits the perceiver and the perceived. Stevens reveals the form of the illuminant as a spidery light that crawls weaving its web and catching the eye, reflecting as well as reflected. He views the perceptual experience in its totality with the body as mediator: the eye is fastened to the body ("the flesh and bones of you"), as well as to the object. "Filament" here points up the thread-like texture of the web, as well as the reflector, which is rendered incandescent by the passing of an electric current. The x-ray mode of perception here echoes Merleau-Ponty's phrase when, citing Henri Michaux, he writes that "by breaking the skin of things painting shows how the things become things, how the world becomes world."¹¹² (Of course, this also applies to literature as well; Merleau-Ponty says in the next sentence, "Apollinaire said that in a poem there are phrases which do not appear to have been created, which seem to have formed themselves.")¹¹³

In "As at a Theatre," Stevens envisions the changing appearance of sunlight:

It might be the candle of another being
 Ragged in unkempt perceptions, that stands
 And meditates an image of itself,
 Studies and shapes a tallowy image, swarmed
 With slight, prismatic reeks not recollected,
 A bubble without a wall on which to hang.
 (OP, 91)

The surrealistic, floating light seen through a theatrical, imaginative eye reflects an "unkempt" mode of perception, as opposed to a pure perception, the piercing to the bareness of naked reality upon which the whole poem "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" turns. For Helen Vendler there is a purgation of the false where the eye is the "governing presence of the whole poem."¹¹⁴ She writes, "The iris of the eye joins with the iridescence in nature."¹¹⁵

The poem opens with Stevens' purpose: to show "the eye's plain version [as] a thing apart/The vulgate of experience" (CP, 465) by reflecting "the last plainness of a man who has fought/Against illusion" (CP, 467). His method is to "seek/Nothing beyond reality" (CP, 471), to see with an "eye made clear of uncertainty" (CP, 471), and by piercing "Straight to the transfixing object, to the object/At the exactest point at which it is itself" (CP, 471).

The naked barrenness permeates the poem, and the clear, cold mood of winter can be felt. Even if youth and warmth are brought into the poem, they only serve as contrast, pointing up the bare and skeletal:

Their eyes closed, in a young palaver of lips.
And yet the wind whimpers oldly of old age
In the western night.

(CP, 477)

"Palaver" sounds like and suggests "cadaver," and the youthful debaters, shutting their eyes, cannot shut out the whimpers of decay. They are young, however not warm and lively, but

pregnant with old age, since "something of death's poverty is heard" (CP, 477):

It is a bough in the electric light
And exhalations in the eaves, so little
To indicate the total leaflessness.
(CP, 477)

This piercing mode of perception, which sees the bare branch and the cold exhalations, penetrating beneath the flesh of things, is reiterated in "The Common Life," where Stevens sees the "church steeple" and "the little stack of the electric plant" as lines on "the down-town frieze":

It is a morbid light
In which they stand,
Like an electric lamp
On a page of Euclid.
(CP, 221)

There are no shadows reflected by the geometrical line, which resembles the architectural blueprint of the church and factory seen by the perceiver here. In this light, people appear as stick figures:

The men have no shadows
And the women have only one side.
(CP, 221)

But the "black line drawn on flat air" is not a line which imitates or represents. It is the appearance-as-line of the chimney seen from the side. Merleau-Ponty speaks of "freeing the line, of revivifying its constituting power."¹¹⁶ He cites Klee who believed that "the line no longer imitates

the visible; it 'renders visible'; it is the blueprint of a genesis of things. Perhaps no one before Klee had 'let a line muse'.¹¹⁷ The line in painting or in perception is rendered by phenomenology as a profile animated with unseen views of the totality of which it is part.

The line in Stevens is "the blueprint of a genesis of things," as well as a perceptual view which can fracture, fragment, or collapse in the changing form of light. It comprises

A slash of angular blacks
Like a fractured edifice
That was buttressed by blue slants
In a coma of the moon.

A slash and the edifice fell,
Pylons and pier fell down.
A mountain-blue cloud arose
Like a thing in which they fell,

Fell slowly as when at night
A languid janitor bears
His lantern through colonnades
And the architecture swoons.

It turned cold and silent. Then
The square began to clear.
The bijou of Atlas, the moon,
Was last with its porcelain leer.
(CP, 108)

The moonlight, reflecting blue slants of light, shines on the building, buttressing it, and reveals its angular shape. The moon only partially illumines it, so that the edifice appears fractured. A changing slash can collapse it ("slash" is doubled here as a slash of lines or a slash of light), just as a cloud can obscure it or as a janitor swinging his lantern can make it "swoon." The cold square is now still

and so is the moon--clear and crystal "with its porcelain leer."

In "Architecture," the reverse of "The Public Square," Stevens asks, "What manner of building shall we build?" Here the poet-architect will use the tools of the stone cutter and the tools of nature to erect a building which will catch the "embossings of the sky." He instructs:

Let us build the building of light
Push up the towers
To the cock-tops.
These are the pointings of our edifice,
Which, like a gorgeous palm,
Shall tuft the commonplace.
These are the window-sill
On which the quiet moonlight lies.

How shall we hew the sun?
Split it and make blocks,
To build a ruddy palace?
How carve the violent moon
To set in nicks?
Let us fix portals, east and west,
Abhorring green-blue north and blue-green south.
Our chiefest dome a demoiselle of gold.
Pierce the interior with pouring shafts,
In diverse chambers.
Pierce, too, with buttresses of coral air
And purple timbers,
Various argentines,
Embossings of the sky.

(OP, 17-18)

In "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," contrasted with "Architecture" reflecting "embossings of the sky," Stevens wants to deal only with the appearance as it is, "the dominant blank," detached from other views of it, or from the totality. He wants the particular unadorned by

Gold easings and ouncings and fluctuation of thread
And beetling of belts and light of general stones,
The blessed beams from out a blessed bush.

(CP, 477)

The changing forms of light reshape and transform the bare particulars which are then "Saved and beholden, in a robe of rays" (CP, 477), but Stevens puts this aside, asking

What is the radial aspect of this place,
This present colony of a colony
Of colonies, a sense in the changing sense

Of things?

(CP, 479)

He wants to hypostatize the minutest particular and bring it into existence as it is for him right here and right now. The "radial aspect" here is the light source which changes its shape, and restructures the illuminated object. But here the perceiver can go astray using the "perpetual reference," where

Obscure in colors whether of the sun
Or mind, uncertain in the clearest bells,
The spirit's speeches, the indefinite,

Confused illuminations and sonorities,
So much ourselves, we cannot tell apart
The idea and the bearer-being of the idea.

(CP, 466)

In Canto XXVI, Stevens envisions the "lineaments" of "the earth/Seen as inamorata" and then immediately undercuts its beguilement by undressing the scene. First we see the enrichment:

How facilely the purple blotches fell
On the walk, purple and blue, and red and gold,
Blooming and beaming and voluming colors out.

Away from them, capes, along the afternoon Sound,
Shook off their dark marine in lapis light.
The sea shivered in transcendent change, rose up

As rain and booming, gleaming, blowing, swept
The wateriness of green wet the sky.

(CP, 484)

This scene recalls much of Stevens' earlier poetry where the perceiver watches the shifting transformation of the particulars: the light falling in blotches of color, the pavement brightening and shining as it fuses with the light, the sea metamorphosing into rain which absorbs the greenness and wets the sky (as the "dithery gold" wets the pigeons in "Gray Stones and Gray Pigeons" [CP, 140]). But this expansiveness, most eloquent here, is immediately silenced in the next stanza:

But, here, the inamorata, without distance
And thereby lost, and naked or in rags,
Shrunk in the poverty of being close.

(CP, 484)

At the end of the poem, paradoxically, the little becomes more after becoming less:

These are the edgings and inchings of final form,
The swarming activities of the formulae
Of statement, directly and indirectly getting at.

Like an evening evoking the spectrum of violet,
A philosopher practicing scales on his piano,
A woman writing a note and tearing it up.

It is not in the premise that reality
Is a solid. It may be a shade that traverses
A dust, a force that traverses a shade.

(CP, 488)

The "getting at" is what Stevens has been doing throughout the poem, and if in the process he tears off the covering, the quick that he exposes beneath is a force that can still regenerate itself.

In "Of Hartford in a Purple Light," Stevens parallels the eloquence of the embellished stanza in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven." In the "Hartford" poem, Stevens addresses the sun:

A long time you have been making the trip
from Haven to Hartford, Master Soleil,
Bringing the lights of Norway and all that.

A long time the ocean has come with you,
Shaking the water off, like a poodle,
That splatters incessant thousands of drops.
(CP, 226)

The ocean shaking off the water recalls the stanza from "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," where the "capes . . ./ Shook off their dark marine in lapis light." Stevens sets up a dichotomy in the poem between masculine light ("light masculine,/Working with big hands on the town") and feminine light ("an amour of women/Purple sets purple round"). Just as the mirror/lamp dichotomy is ambiguous, so is light itself in its manner of reflecting an object. Masculine light, Stevens classifies as clear, and feminine light as contouring by a soft-colored illumination:

When male light fell on the naked back
Of the town, the river, the railroad were clear.
Now, every muscle slops away.

Hi! Whisk it, poodle, flick the spray
Of the ocean, ever-freshening,
On the irised hunks, the stone bouquet.
(CP, 227)

"The stone bouquet" here is the synthesis of the appearance of the real to the perceiver in his particular apprehension

of it. It is, I feel, the culmination of Stevens' search for reality. It is a fusion of the changing appearance and the bare rock of reality which together is for Stevens what will suffice.

The changing appearance captures Stevens' attention and he rivets his gaze so often to pierce into it and connect it to the real object. Helen Vendler writes of the geographers and their interior equivalent, the philosophers, who, just as they think they have accurately mapped the world, discover the natural changes in the particulars of nature, then things metamorphose and new and unexpected contours arise.¹¹⁸ "Geographers and philosophers," Vendler continues, "are demons that cannot be themselves, that cannot let the landscape alone, but tour the world trying to rearrange it in an orderly way, not realizing that the world, ironically enough, is always in the process of rearranging itself."¹¹⁹ This rearrangement is for me the key to Stevens' poetry, wherein he "measures the velocities of change" (CP, 414).

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CHAPTER ONE

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- ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 162.
- ⁴⁸Merleau-Ponty Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 57-58.
- ⁴⁹Ibid., p. 319.
- ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 313.
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- ⁵²Ibid., p. 229.
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⁵⁹Stevens, The Necessary Angel, p. 57.

⁶⁰Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 234.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 234-35.

⁶²Ibid., p. 229.

⁶³Wallace Stevens, "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," in Modern Poetics, ed. James Scully (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 165.

⁶⁴"One of the vast repetitions final in/Themselves and, therefore, good, the going round/And round and round, the merely going round,/Until merely going round is a final good" (CP, 405). Repetition in the lines themselves reflect the monotony which is the impetus for change.

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CHAPTER TWO
PERSPECTIVE

Another aspect of change within the perceptual process reflected in the poetry of Keats and Stevens is that of perspective. Not only does the world rearrange itself, and the poet rearrange the particulars in the way in which he perceives, but also the poet captures the different perspectival views he has while experiencing his world. He plays with perspective in his poetry; therefore, a phenomenological approach is valid as it helps us understand the innumerable appearances in which an object can present itself to us and their relation to the thing itself. Merleau-Ponty elucidates perspective in the perceptual process: "My perception . . . is given as the infinite sum of an indefinite series of perspectival views in each of which the object is given, but in none of which is it given exhaustively."¹ "Perception," he continues, "is here understood as a reference to a whole which can be grasped, in principle, only through certain of its parts or aspects." "The perceived thing is not an ideal unity; . . . it is rather a totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style, which defines the object in question."² He goes on to discuss the paradox of perception: it is both immanent and transcendent--immanent in the presentness of what is perceived and transcendent because it "contains something more than what is actually given."³

It is significant in trying to grasp the relational aspects of perception to understand that "we can no more construct perception of the thing and of the world from discrete aspects, than we can make up the binocular vision of an object from two monocular images."⁴ The concept of synthesis is important because each perspective merges into the other. That is not to say that different appearances are indistinguishable. Merleau-Ponty exemplifies this:

The square which is presented to me obliquely remains a square, not because this apparent diamond shape brings to mind the familiar form of the square seen directly in front of me, but because the diamond-shaped appearance in an oblique presentation is immediately identical to the square appearance in a frontal presentation, because, along with each of these configurations, I am given that orientation of the object which makes it possible, and because these shapes are presented in a context of relations which, a priori equate the various perspective presentations with each other. . . . Each element of the cube, if we unfold from it all the perceived significance, acquaints us with the present point of view taken of it by the observer.⁵

Another concrete example by Merleau-Ponty will be helpful here:

We do not begin by knowing the perspective aspects of the thing; it is not mediated by our senses, our sensations or our perspectives; we go straight to it, and it is only in a secondary way that we become aware of the limits of our knowledge and of ourselves as knowing. Here is a die; let us consider it as it is presented, in the natural attitude, to a subject who has never wondered about perception, and who lives among things. The die is there, lying in the world. When the subject moves

round it, there appears not signs, but sides of the die. He does not perceive projections or even profiles of the die, but he sees the die itself at one time from this side, at another from that; and those appearances which are not yet firmly fixed intercommunicate, run into each other, and all radiate from a central Würfelhaftigkeit which is the mystical link between them. . . . The thing and the world exist only so far as they are experienced by me or by subjects like me, since they are both the concatenation of our perspectives, yet they transcend all perspectives because this chain is temporal and incomplete.⁶

In "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," a poem whose Archimedean point is that of the role of perspective in perceptual experience, the number "thirteen" is just an arbitrary number; there are innumerable permutations of poses in which to see a blackbird. Stevens has chosen thirteen (paralleled by thirteen stanzas) to show and emphasize the fact that reality is perpetual motion, a fluidity where the particulars are constantly being transformed, in this case dependent on the perceiver's standpoint. Stevens does not want to see deeper into the surface of things; he starts with the eye or essence of the blackbird:

Among twenty mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.
(CP, 92)

Immediately Stevens sets up the idea of perspective and its changeability. The stanza reflects the antithesis of the static as background to the dynamic and the synthesis of the stationary (within the body it retains its place) but moving eye (it moves along with the body of the blackbird--it can

move within its fixed place and it can be moved as the blackbird moves). It is interesting to note Stevens' structure of motion: the static background, the moving blackbird, and the eye which is both stationary and moving. The relationship between mobility and immobility is significant as the perceiver views the stationary mountains that form the background against which he now rivets his gaze on the moving eye of the blackbird.

In the second stanza three blackbirds inhabit the tree:

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

But the tree, unlike the mountains, is not mere background; like the mind, it is changed by its inhabitants. Stevens is pointing up the fact that the mind and the tree are not passive agents acted upon by the particulars of nature. Stanza one shows the stationary mountains; stanza two, the active tree; and stanza three, going a step further, envisions the "blackbird [who] whirled in the autumn winds." Now we have moving bird against moving background. In stanza four we have the union of perceiver and background ("A man and a woman and a blackbird/Are one").

What is interesting and original in this poem is Stevens' allogical progression. If he merely showed us the blackbird in different positions, or the moving perceiver who looks first from above, say in one stanza, then from below in the next, or from one side then another, we would have a mappable,

logical connection, a link which could be pinned down, and we could anticipate the following stanza. But, as in perception, Stevens is saying, the poem has no one-to-one correspondence between the changes in the perceptual act, the movement of the perceiver, and the motion of the perceived.

In the fifth stanza Stevens catches the moment of motion or action, "The blackbird whistling" and the moment after, "or just after," which points up the relation of temporality or succession and motion. Unlike a photograph, perception allows us to see motion. He interestingly parallels this with the speech act: the action of inflections, active changes within the language, set over against innuendoes, needing interpretation, but not reflecting motion within themselves.

In the sixth stanza Stevens shows the relationship of the shadow to the object, to another object, and to the perceiver. The blackbird's shadow crosses the icicles, which in turn change the glass of the window:

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.

The blackbird is brought down in the seventh stanza, stripped of its soaring movement that perhaps tempts the perceiver to "imagine golden birds," and now is close to him: "Do you not see how the blackbird/Walks around the feet? Of the women around you."

Stanza VIII echoes the unity and inseparability of the fourth stanza: the perceiver and the perceived are one ("But I know, too/That the blackbird is involved/In what I know").

Changes are envisioned in the perceptual process in the next two stanzas:

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

As the bird disappears the circle of the path it left in its movement is visible, resembling the ring of circles made in the water after a stone plunges into it. The harshness of the blackbird seen "in a green light" is reflected:

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawd of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

The poem is rich, reverberating with multidimensional changes in the perception of the background and the bird itself. The relationship between the perceiver and the perceived is contrapuntal here as Stevens foregrounds this aspects in Stanzas IV, VIII, and now again in XI:

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

Stevens is using "equipage" to mean "carriage" here rather than "personal articles" or "equipment," and the shadow from

the coach is mistaken for the blackbirds' shadow. The perceiver can misperceive, but here he recognizes the illusion. Stevens includes illusion because he is dealing with many phases of perceptual experience. He believes that the "world is still the vague theatre of all experiences," and that it "takes in without discrimination real objects on the one hand and individual and momentary phantasms on the other because it is an individual which embraces everything and not a collection of objects linked by causal relations."⁷ One understands illusion as illusion because it does not tally with other appearances in the perceptual chain. Merleau-Ponty explains the unfolding of the chain of perspectives: "Each perception, though always capable of being cancelled and relegated among illusions, disappears only to give place to another perception which rectifies it."⁸

In Stanza XII we get double movement: the blackbird and the background ("The river is moving./The blackbird must be flying"). The shadow of the blackbird is moving in harmony with the moving river. "Must" gives poetic increment to the line: Stevens is emphasizing the fact that the shadow is inseparable from the object, and if the bird's shadow moves, he must be moving.

In the last stanza there is a reversal which brings the poem full circle:

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow
The blackbird sat
In the cedar limbs.

It is a momentary stasis as the blackbird sits in the tree; this is set over against the present and future movement in the dark afternoon weather ("It was snowing/And it was going to snow").

"Six Significant Landscapes" resembles "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" in that there are six scenes paralleled by six stanzas, and the link which ties each separate scene together is the centrality of the perspectival view of the perceiver in the perceptual process. Each stanza points out the relation of the perceiver to the perceived and the movement which unites them or the appearance which changes things, except for the last two which move from the particular to the general.

In the first stanza

An old man sits
In the shadow of a pine tree
In China.
He sees larkspur,
Blue and white,
At the edge of the shadow,
Move in the wind.
His beard moves in the wind.
The pine tree moves in the wind.
Thus water flows
Over weeds.

(CP, 73)

This stanza echoes "Domination in Black" where the central governing image of the poem is the turning of the leaves in the wind which fuses with the turning flames, the turning planets, and the turning colored tails of the peacock. "At the edge of the shadow," the focal point of his perspective,

the blue and white flowers move in the wind. The natural movement in the stanza suggests that changes could occur in this perceptual experience (as they actually do in "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"; for example, the blackbird on the ground). There is potential change in the stationary tree, flowers, weeds, and in the perceiver himself.

Implicit in this contrast between the moving force and the static object is the idea of potential transformation, what Aron Gurwitsch calls "perceptual implications"⁹ or Husserl calls "intentional horizons."¹⁰ Both terms refer to the fact that in perception "images of other aspects under which the thing may appear arise along with the aspect given in genuine sense-experience under which it actually appears."¹¹

"Horizon" is a key word in both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty's concept corresponds to Husserl's, which is explained by him in Ideas:

A thing is necessarily given in mere "modes of appearing" and the necessary factors in this case are a nucleus of what is "really presented," an outlying zone of apprehension consisting of marginal "co-data" of an accessory kind (uneigentlicher), and a more or less vague indeterminacy. And the meaning of this indeterminacy is once again fore-shadowed by the general meaning of the thing perceived as such. . . . It points forward to possible patterns of perception, which continually passing off into one another, coalesce in the unity of a single perception in which the continuously enduring thing in ever new series of perspectives reveals ever again new "aspects" . . . To remain for ever incomplete after this fashion is an ineradicable essential of the correlative Thing and Thing-perception.¹²

What is important here for the poetry is the other potential

appearances, with which the particular perceived is pregnant.

The second stanza reflects the fusion of the perceiver and the perceived:

The night is the color
Of a woman's arm:
Night, the female
Obscure,
Fragrant and supple,
Conceals herself.
A pool shines
Like a bracelet
Shaken in a dance.

The hidden night is "fragrant and supple" like the arm of a woman with the shimmering light of the pool illuminating, in a dance of brilliance, both the arm and the night.

In the third stanza we get a lesson in perspective with the eye and the ear as the focal points:

I measure myself
Against a tall tree
I find that I am much taller
For I reach right up to the sun,
With my eye;
And I reach to the shore of the sea
With my ear.
Nevertheless, I dislike
The way the ants crawl
In and out of my shadow.

In perception the relation of the particular object to the perceptual field is significant here as Stevens perceives the tree, not in a vacuum, but as related to the sky and sun as background. And he surveys the scene, his gaze is riveted on his shadow on the ground where the ants crawl. Merleau-Ponty explains this process:

I direct my gaze upon a sector or the landscape, which comes to life and is disclosed, while the other objects recede into the periphery and become dormant, while, however, not ceasing to be there. Now with them I have at my disposal their horizons, in which there is implied, as a marginal view, the object on which my eyes at present fall. . . . The object-horizon structure, or the perspective, is no obstacle to me when I want to see the object. . . . To see is to enter a universe of beings which display themselves.¹³

Now we come to an understanding of one aspect of the structure of perceptual experience which is vital for a phenomenology of perception: an object has an external and an internal horizon. The internal horizon is the potential appearances that are intrinsic to the object; the external horizon is the background against which the focused object stands out.¹⁴

The fourth stanza is talking about illusion and its relation to reality, which Stevens so often includes in his struggle with reality, a vital part of his function as poet:

When my dream was near the moon,
The white folds of its gown
Filled with yellow light.
The soles of its feet
Grew red.
Its hair filled
With certain blue crystallizations
From stars,
Not far off.

Stevens' letters are very helpful here. He discusses the dialectical relationship between imagination and reality in many places. Particularly enlightening are the letters where he explains stanza by stanza what he is talking about in "The Man with the Blue Guitar,"¹⁵ a poem which parallels this one in its interweaving of illusion and the real, and

in its struggle to reach the real. The dream with gown, feet, and hair is sheer imagination here, as Stevens says, "Reality changes into the imagination (under one's very eyes) as one experiences it" (L, 793), which is exactly what happens as we move from the first three stanzas to this one. He defines the process: "When the imagination is moving rapidly, it identifies things only approximately, and to stop to define them would be to stop altogether" (L, 361). Merleau-Ponty's discussion of illusion is analogous. He asserts that we must understand the unreal through the real, and, like Stevens, he feels that in experiencing the illusory "it is necessary that consciousness should, at some moment, cease to know what it is doing, otherwise it would be conscious of constituting an illusion, and would not stand by it, so there would no longer be any illusion at all."¹⁶ Stevens acknowledges that "the imagination takes out of (Ex)¹⁷ reality into pure unreality" (L, 360). In this stanza the light from the moon and stars is significant in that it effects a transformation of the imagination, which Stevens elucidates, "This transformation having been effected, the imagination with its typical nostalgia for reality tried to go back to recover the world" (L, 364). The "yellow light" of the moon and the "blue crystallizations/From stars" underscores Stevens' assertion that "Imagination depends on reality" (L, 789).

The fifth stanza, like the sixth, moves to the general and is commentary, the former compares the artifact with

the natural; the latter reflects how the attitude of the perceiver affects what he perceives, which echoes Blake's idea that "man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern."¹⁸

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

Rationalists, wearing square hats,
Think, in square rooms,
Looking at the ceiling.
They confine themselves
To right-angled triangles.
If they tried rhomboids,
Cones, waving lines, ellipses--
As, for example, the ellipse of the half-moon--
Rationalists would wear sombreros.

The rationalist who wears a sombrero is the perceiver of the real enhanced by the imagination; perhaps the poet who realizes that "the world has its own appearances in the light of the imagination" (L, 363).

In the poetry of Stevens dealing with perspective, some poems foreground the role of the perceiver, some, like the two just discussed, show the relationship between the perceiver and the perceived, and others, for example, "Anecdote of the Jar," underscore the object in perceptual experience:

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
 And sprawled around, no longer wild.
 The jar was round upon the ground
 And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
 The jar was gray and bare.
 It did not give of bud or bush,
 Like nothing else in Tennessee.
 (CP, 76)

The physiognomy of the jar, its roundness, is central here, as it is the focal point of the poem and orders the landscape. (Linguistically it is also the center as we move from "round," "surround," "around," "ground" to the culmination in the line, "The jar was round upon the ground.") In a chapter entitled "Phenomenology of Roundness," Bachelard cites a poem by Rilke¹⁹ which also unites roundness and the ordering of the landscape, where "docilely things take their place" (this resembles Stevens' "It took dominion everywhere"). Bachelard interweaves roundness and landscape: "And in this rounded landscape, everything seems to be in repose. The round being propagates its roundness, together with the calm of all roundness."²⁰

In the first stanza of "Anecdote of the Jar" the "slovenly wilderness" is ordered by the roundness of the jar, and both jar and wilderness "surround that hill." Seen through the perspective of the round jar, the wilderness is now under control. Nancy Sullivan writes of perspective as "a filter, an organizer," "an inner vision of the poet's mind that sees and seizes an experience," "a way of looking at the world that is special to the poet and in turn to each

individual poet."²¹ She discusses perspective in Stevens' "Anecdote of the Jar":

The idea of order imposed through art, a dominant one in Stevens' poetry, is here achieved through the rigid simplicity of the language, the unadorned state of the jar, and the simple stanzaic form. All unite to impose rigid attention on that jar. The perspective is imposed; it is a hypnotic one. Its insistence is its strength.²²

In the second stanza the wilderness rises up to the tall, round jar, but it is "no longer wild"; it still sprawls, but now it sprawls around; its sprawling is controlled by the jar.

In the third stanza the jar "takes dominion everywhere" and controls the landscape. There is an aridity here as the jar "did not give of bird or bush." Ms. Sullivan expresses the haunting sense of the uninhabited: "The perspective here is almost that of the first man on the moon."²³

Perspective operates in the poem to point up the poet's grasping of the essence of the object, its physiognomy, as it appears in living perceptual experience. Its roundness is its significance, and Merleau-Ponty writes of their merger: "The miracle of the real world . . . is that in it significance and existence are one, and . . . we see the latter lodge itself in no uncertain fashion in the former."²⁴ Since different aspects of a thing are "mutually significant,"²⁵ we understand the "grayness" and "bareness" of the jar as different aspects echoing the reality of the

object here. Merleau-Ponty relates the appearance to the object: "The thing is an entity of a kind such that the complete definition of one of its attributes demands that of the object in its entirety."²⁶ Martin Heidegger in Holzwege comes to grips with the problem of the relation between work, world, and things of the world, which is central to a phenomenological study of poetry. The essence of the work of art is the setting up of a world. Heidegger writes, "Das Werk stellt als Werk ein Welt auf," "Werksein heit ein Welt aufstellen"²⁷ (The work as work sets up a world, "To be a work means to set up a world"). Heidegger explains that as a temple which in its "standing-there" first gives to things their look and to men their outlook on themselves, the work is not a copy whose purpose is to make it easier to realize how the god looks; rather a work lets the god himself be present.²⁸ In "Anecdote of the Jar," the "jariness" presents itself. Heidegger states his aim: "wollen wir das Dingsein (die Dingheit) des Dinges kennenlernen . . . das Dinghafte des Dinges zu erfahren"²⁹ ("to know the thing-being (thingness) of a thing . . . to discover the thingly character of a thing"), and in this process he unfolds the essence of the work of art ("Die Kunst in ihrem Wesen ein Ursprung und nichts anderes ist: eine ausgezeichnete Weise wie Wahrheit seiend und d.h. geschichtlich wird"³⁰ ("Art is in essence an origin and nothing else: a distinct way in which truth comes into being, that is, becomes historical").

We see the interrelatedness of the perceiver and the

perceived: the object of perception is inseparable from its perceiver, and this co-existence, this participation in the being of the object, acts as a centripetal force which impels one to the center of its being. As Ernst Cassirer cogently phrases it, "Pure experience, which is the sole source and kernel of all our knowledge of reality, can never be sought elsewhere than in our simple, original perceptions." He continues, "We do not apprehend the real by attempting to attain it step by step over the painful detours of discursive thinking; we must rather place ourselves immediately at its center."³² This is exactly what Keats does in "I Stood Tip-toe" as he places himself tip-toe on the hill with the reader looking on while the poet brings into being the world of nature around him. This bringing into being by perception is reflected in the imagery of the first section of the poem. There is a sweet innocence and newborn freshness in the scene:

The air was cooling, and so very still,
That the sweet buds which with a modest pride
Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside,
Their scanty leav'd, and finely tapering stems,
Had not yet lost those starry diadems
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn.
The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn,
And fresh from the clear brook; sweetly they slept
On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves.³³

We have the newborn buds that "pull droopingly" and are "scantly leav'd," suggesting the nakedness and newness of an infant, implications that continue in the next line where the buds "had not yet lost those starry diadems/Caught from

the early sobbing of the morn." These lines reflect the glow of the infant "trailing clouds of glory," and also the sparkling dew, which are the tears of the dawn, a birth of morning. The clouds "pure and white as flocks new shorn," sweetly sleeping "on the blue fields of heaven," reflect the peace of the newborn. The reflection of the clouds in the water looks as if the clouds are sleeping "on the blue fields." Keats is playing with perspective here. He is standing tip-toe on the hill in an indeterminate position, his feet neither wholly off the ground nor wholly on it, with the cool air and clouds above him and the brook under him. The poet looks down to view the reflection of the clouds, which are above. This is an inversion of perspective; what is up must be viewed by looking down. Keats shows the fluidity and motion of a shifting reality which, like a kaleidoscope, can vary the appearances of the particulars.

Now the sky and earth meet in the vast horizon:

Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim,
And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim;
To picture out the quaint, and curious bending
Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending.
(II. 17-20)

The "dwindled edgings of its brim" are the distinction of line of demarcation between the sky and earth, which gets thinner and thinner until it disappears and they fuse "never ending." Keats's use of perspective here is interesting, and a phenomenological reading is enlightening as we can understand linear perspective as a focal point in

the stanza, operating to reveal the poet's perceptual experience. The fusion of the sky-line and earth in Keats's horizon reflects a linear perspective of which G. M. Wyburn writes:

A number of perceptual properties of the visual system other than binocular vision contribute to our capacity for three dimensional properties. For example, . . . linear perspective, by which is meant the fact that parallel lines receding into the distance appear to converge, e.g. looking down a long stretch of railway track (the artist gives depth to his picture by drawing objects in this way).³⁴

As the artist, with his brush, gives depth to his picture by drawing objects in this way, so the poet, with his words, reflects the linear perspective in his perceptual experience.

In "I Stood Tip-toe" the poet reaffirms his role of perceiver:

I gazed awhile, and felt as light and free
As though the fanning wings of mercury
Had play'd upon my heels: I was light-hearted.
(II. 23-25)

Keats continues, "So I straightway began to pluck a posey/Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy." The qualifiers "bright, milky, soft and rosy" reflect the infant imagery once again. There is a concatenation of meaning in the birth imagery--the bringing into being in the perceptual process, birth as cyclical in the life-process, and birth or beginning in the creative process--and all are engendered in this first section of the poem.

In the next short section the growth in the life process is reflected. The "May flowers" have the "bees about them," suggesting pollination and fruitful activity. We view the rich fertility of nature in the "lush laburnum" or pea bush, which gently brushes against the flowers. The "long grass" which grows protects the violets, and they "bind the moss in leafy nets." Thus we have a mutual interrelationship, a give and take in nature which Keats echoes later in the poem:

The while they cool themselves, they freshness give,
And moisture, that the bowery of green may live:
So keeping up an interchange of favours.
(II, 83-85)

In the third section of the poem (II, 35-46), the growth and thriving of nature are continued with the vines "taking the soft wind," the spring "babbling," and the bluebells "spreading." The last four lines of this scene come as a surprise:

 it may haply mourn
That such fair clusters, should be rudely torn
From their fresh beds, and scattered thoughtlessly
By infant hands, left on the path to die.
(II, 43-46)

Death is suddenly introduced right in the midst of a sense of thriving growth. I think Keats is affirming reality, as this is the way things happen. As he states in a letter to his brother and sister-in-law; "Circumstances are like Clouds continually gathering and bursting. While we are

laughing the seed of some trouble is put into the wide arable land of events."³⁵ In the poem the bluebells are "scattered thoughtlessly/By infant hands, left on the path to die." We see death antithetically as the sudden rupture of life, and "infant hands" as destroyers of life, whereas in the previous section they epitomized peaceful purity.

The introduction of the Greek god Apollo in the next section reflects Keats's masterful weaving of the processes of life, art, and nature. As Walter Evert writes,

As god of astronomy Apollo presides over the universal system in physical harmony; as god of medicine he maintains harmony among the physical elements of the human organism; as god of the sun he marks the passage of time and presides over the ripening of the fruits of the earth; as god of song and poetry he presides over the ripening of human intellect and brings it to comparable fruition in a harvest of harmonious expression.³⁶

The poet creating his poem and creating through perception also recreates myth in its enhancing of reality. We see in the following lines that the poet does not escape from the marigolds into the realm of Apollo, but rather uses Apollo to intensify the reality or being of the marigolds:

Open afresh your round of starry folds,
Ye ardent marigolds!
Dry up the moisture from your golden lids,
For great Apollo bids
That in these days your praises should be sung
On many harps, which he has lately strung;
And when again your dewiness he kisses,
Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses:
So haply when I rove in some far vale,
His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

(II, 47-56)

The imagery of sun, gold, and wind fuses as we move from natural object to inspiration to creation evident in the last line, "His mighty voice may come upon the gale." According to M. H. Abrams, there is a "connection between wind and inspiration . . . implicit in the latter term, for 'to inspire' once meant 'to blow or breathe into,' and when a man received the divine 'afflatus' he received, literally, the breath or wind of a god or muse."³⁷ In this section of Keats's poem Apollo's harp is the instrument, the wind is the inspiration, and Apollo's mighty voice is the poem. Keats brings down Apollo, humanizes him and coexists with him in the act of creation. The poetic image is real, and by plunging into it we discover the truth of it. Bachelard says of it, "the poetic image furnishes one of the simplest experiences of language that has been lived."³⁸ Keats compares the creation of the poet to a spider's spinning a web: "Man may like the Spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel."³⁹ It is an internalization of the experiential world and a living in its "thingness" to which Keats, like Stevens, constantly returns. As Stevens puts it,

We seek
 Nothing beyond reality. Within it,
 Everything, the spirit's alchemicana
 Included, the spirit that goes roundabout
 And through included, not merely the visible,
 The solid, but the movable, the moment,
 The coming on of feasts and the habits of saints,
 The pattern of the heavens and high, night air.
 (CP, 471-72)

In the next section of "I Stood Tip-toe" (II, 57-60) the sweet peas, like the poet, are on tip-toe. They are at once

bound ("bind them all about with tiny rings") and free ("wings of gentle flush . . . catching at all things"). The poet's standpoint, reflected in that of the sweet peas, functions to set up a tension, a delicate equilibrium in the dialectic of free and bound. It is resolved in an indeterminate position: "tip-toe," neither off the ground nor on it; "a noiseless noise" (line 11), which is neither noise nor silence; "lean" (line 62), which is neither standing nor lying down; and "silken ties" (line 238), words that come from "loos'd tongues" spilling out in freedom, yet binding so they "never may be broken." Perspective functions here to reflect the elusive and mutable nature of the reality of being. The "minnows" (line 71) stay "their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams." Keats says, "If you but scantily hold out the hand,/That very instant not one will remain;/But turn your eye, and they are there again" (II, 78-80). In the perceptual process, perspective functions to furnish a particular aspect from which the object is viewed, one of many possible aspects which all fit together to form a totality. Keats underscores reality as experiencing the ever-changing, elusive, perspectival view of the particulars of nature.

The "yellow flutterings" (line 92), the essence or being of the goldfinch, speak to the poet and remind him of a different fluttering: the "rustle of a maiden's gown" (line 95). Then the poet brings in the moon and light imagery which continues for more than a hundred lines. It begins:

Or by the moon lifting her silver rim
 Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim
 Coming into the blue with all her light.
 O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight.
 (II, 113-116)

Here the moon goddess fuses with Apollo to inspire the poet. Keats is not calling upon the light to inspire him, but rather these lines and several following acknowledge the light's inspirational power:

Thee I must praise above all the glories
 That smile us on to tell delightful stories.
 For what has made the sage or poet write
 But the fair paradise of Nature's light?
 (II, 123-126)

Keats creating his poem is identifying himself with the ancient originator of varied myths: of Cupid and Psyche, Pan and Syrinx, and Narcissus and Echo. Both creators feel the same and find the world "the vale of Soul-making."⁴⁰ The myths seem to blend and lose their uniqueness. What is important is the feeling and inspiration of the poet, who is moved to a heightened sense of reality to create his poetic images of love and relationship. Both say,

We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade:
 When it is moving on luxurious wings,
 The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings:
 Fair dewy roses brush against our faces,
 And flowering laurels spring from diamond vases;
 O'er head we see the jasmine and sweet briar,
 And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire;
 While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles
 Charms us at once away from all our troubles:
 So that we feel uplifted from the world,
 Walking upon the white clouds wreath'd and curl'd.
 So felt he, who first told, how Psyche went
 On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment.
 (II, 130-142)

Keats continues to penetrate into the being of the world, revealing the unfolding of the creative and mythopoeic process. He identifies with the myth-maker who is the "he" in the following lines:

So did he feel, who pull'd the boughs aside,
That we might look into a forest wide,
To catch a glimpse of Fauns, and Dryades
Coming with softest rustle through the trees;
And garlands woven of flowers wild, and sweet
Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet:
Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled
Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread.
Poor nymph--poor Pan,--how he did weep to find,
Nought but a lovely sighing of the wind.
(II, 151-160)

Keats raises the mythographer "who stood on Latmus' top" (line 194). He changes his perspective so that by placing him above, in the realm of romantic flight, where "he had burst our mortal bars," Keats can bring him down, back to reality. Here the healing power of poetry is stressed, perhaps connecting it with Apollo as physician:

The breezes were ethereal, and pure,
And crept through half closed lattices to cure
The languid sick; it cool'd their fever'd sleep,
And soothed them into slumbers full and deep.
(II, 221-224)

The sudden introduction of sickness into the idyllic scenes of love and beauty echoes the earlier part of the poem where death is introduced in the scene of fruitful activity. In "Ode to a Nightingale" Keats also brings in

The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies.
(II, 23-26)

Keats keeps coming back to the real. He explains that "intoxicated with the light and atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man--of convincing one's nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heart-break, Pain, Sickness and oppression."⁴¹ The real world must be viewed within its totality in the perceptual process.

The poem ends with the completion of Keats's creation, and he asks, "Was there a Poet born?" There is a fusion at the end between Keats, the mythmaker, Nature, and poetry. The poem is unloosed ("Until their tongues were loos'd in poesy"); it flows freely inspired by the light they experience, "the brightness in each other's eyes" (line 233).

The poet's perspective, where he stands, how he shifts his body and his eye, and his attitude, determines the way in which he sees his world. Both Keats and Stevens understand perspective and illustrate the changes with the movement of the perceiver. In "To Solitude" Keats writes:

climb with me the steep,--
Nature's observatory--whence the dell,
Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell
May seem a span.

(W, 36)

By looking at the scene from above, the perceiver sees the valley as a spread between the slopes and the river.

In many of his poems Keats alters the position of his

perceiver, and often describes in detail what he sees. In "Eve of St. Agnes," for example, Porphyro steals into Madeline's bedroom and we follow his movements:

Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breath'd himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo!--
how fast she slept.

(W, 202)

The realistic perceptual details here reinforce and empower the atmosphere of the scene: Madeline's dress in the closet, Porphyro's stealthy movements, the hush'd carpet, and climactically the curtains being parted to reveal the sleeping maiden. These image forth the stillness and sensuousness of the moment which reflects a crescendo-like movement, a building up of sensuousness climaxed in the form of the sleeping maiden "where, lo!--how fast she slept."

In "To my Brother George" the poet looks around him as he writes, and describes what he sees from his perspective: lying down in the grass:

Stretch'd on the grass at my best lov'd employment
Of scribbling lines for you. These things I thought
While, in my face, the freshest breeze I caught,
E'en now I'm pillow'd on a bed of flowers
That crowns a lofty clift, which proudly towers
Above the ocean waves. The stalk, and blades,
Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.
On one side is a field of drooping oats, . . .
And on the other side, outspread, is seen
Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple, and green.
Now 'tis I see a canvass'd ship, and now

Mark the bright silver curling round her prow.
 I see the lark down-dropping to his nest,
 And the broad winged sea-gull never at rest;
 For when no more he spreads his feathers free,
 His breast is dancing on the restless sea.
 Now I direct my eyes into the west,
 Which at this moment is in sunbeams drest:
 Why westward turn? 'Twas but to say adieu!
 'Twas but to kiss my hand, dear George, to you!
 (W, 28-29)

Keats gives a spatial orientation to the perceptual details, as the poet/perceiver is lying down in the grass moving his eyes from north to south ("On one side is a field . . ./And on the other side"--they have to be opposite), and then to the west ("Now I direct my eyes into the west"). Keats's perceptual experience is central here as he details the particulars which enrich the scene: he is lying down "pillow'd on a bed of flowers," the moving shadow of the resting stalks and blades "Chequer" his writing pad (this patterning of perceptual data looks forward to Stevens' patterning of lines and figures in many of his poems), and his eyes rove directionally over the landscape as he is looking up to see "the lark down-dropping to his nest."

Stevens' poetry also reflects the movement of the perceiver and changes in perspective. In Stevens we get a more explicit and expanded treatment: where Keats will give one aspect, for example, the perceiver's perspective and what he sees, Stevens, with more complexity, will carry this further, his whole poem centering on the one idea related to other aspects of perceptual experience, which Stevens foregrounds.

In "Things of August," Stevens reverses the lines quoted above from "To Solitude." Whereas Keats's perceiver had to climb up to see, Stevens' perceiver must descend:

He turned from the tower to the house,
From the spun sky and the high and deadly view,
To the novels on the table,
The geraniums on the sill.

He could understand the things at home.
And being up high had helped him when up high,
As if on a taller tower
He would be certain to see

That, in the shadowless atmosphere
The knowledge of things lay round but unperceived:
The height was not quite proper;
The position was wrong.

It was curious to have to descend
And, seated in the nature of his chair,
To feel the satisfactions
Of that transparent air.

(CP, 493)

Stevens sets up an interesting relationship between seeing and not seeing, playing with the different meaning of the words as he reverses them: he uses the words to see, to know, to understand, which resonate and are pregnant with their opposite. "He could understand the things at home," he grasps the novels and the geraniums close to him. Here understand equals perceive. "On a taller tower/He would be certain to see/That, in the shadowless atmosphere,/The knowledge of things lay round but unperceived." The enjambment (accentuated by its being from stanza to stanza rather than just from line to line) functions to surprise: Stevens with a twist (one thinks that Stevens is going to mean that on a taller tower he's more able to see) means

that the perceiver sees that he cannot see. He goes on to explain why: "The height was not quite proper;/The position was wrong."

The poem, "Of the Surface of Things," which should be read as a companion piece to "Things of August," continues and answers the lines in the latter poem, "It was curious to have to descend/And seated in the nature of his chair,/To feel the satisfactions/Of that transparent air." Seated in his room Stevens is saying in both poems that he cannot perceive what is outside. "Of the Surface of Things" begins

In my room, the world is beyond my understanding;
But when I walk I see that it consists of three
or four hills and a cloud.
(CP, 57)

In the next few lines the movement of the perceiver as he grasps the appearance is also underscored, as well as the underlying meaning: the perceived appearance is reflected in the virtual world of the text:

From my balcony, I survey the yellow air,
Reading what I have written,
"The spring is like a belle undressing."

The idea of the relating of text and world, which reverberates in Stevens, corresponds here to Section IX of "Things in August," where it is expanded:

A new text of the world,
A scribble of fret and fear and fate,
From a bravura of the mind,
A courage of the eye.

In which, for all the breathings
 From the edge of night,
 And for all the white voices
 That were rosen once,

The meanings are our own--
 It is a text that we shall be needing,
 To be the footing of noon,
 The pillar of midnight,

That comes from ourselves.
 (CP, 494-495)

In the essay "Eye and Mind" Merleau-Ponty relates painting and perception to the world. Implicit here (and many times Merleau-Ponty specifically mentions literary references) is that just as painting captures color, line depth, etc., in the visual experience of the perceiver/artist, so literary texts present the particulars of the perceiver/poet as they appear to him. Both art forms substantiate Merleau-Ponty's assertion that a "painting makes us see the same way in which we actually see the thing itself, even though the thing is absent."⁴² Stevens' lines quoted above about the meaning and text that "comes from ourselves" echo Merleau-Ponty's concept that "things have an internal equivalent in me; they arouse in me a carnal formula of their presence."⁴³ Vision or the power of seeing, he feels, makes itself in us.⁴⁴ Quoting Max Ernst, he discusses the idea that as the role of the poet ever since Rimbaud, consists in writing what articulates itself in him; so the painter grasps what is seen in him.⁴⁵

"Of the Surface of Things" ends with change ordered by the perceiver:

The gold tree is blue.
 The singer has pulled his cloak over his head.
 The moon is in the folds of his cloak.
 (CP, 57)

The yellow air in the moonlight is changed and the tree which was gold before, from the reflection, now becomes blue. But Stevens wants to underscore the role of the perceiver, so he has him obscure the light by pulling "his cloak over his head." The last line is rich here as Stevens goes beyond the figures of speech: it is not merely the personification or synecdoche (whole moon standing for the part, the light of the moon) which is significant, but rather the literal meaning of the shutting out of the light which now is actually in the folds of the perceiver's cloak. The essence of the moon, its light, grasped by his perceptual experience of it is no longer in his eye because he can cover it. Merleau-Ponty explains the centrality of the perceiver: "The perceptual synthesis thus must be accomplished by the subject, which can both delimit certain perspectival aspects in the object, the only ones actually given, and at the same time go beyond them. This subject, which takes a point of view, is my body as the field of perception and action [pratique]--in so far as my gestures have a certain reach and circumscribe as my domain the whole group of objects familiar to me. Perception is here understood as a reference to a whole which can be grasped, in principle, only through certain of its parts or aspects."⁴⁶

In so many poems Stevens focuses on the poet/perceiver,

the orderer of our world, without whom we cannot accommodate to it. He is

The central man, the human globe, responsive
As a mirror with a voice, the man of glass,
Who in a million diamonds sums us up.

He is the transparence of the place in which
He is and in his poems we find peace.
(CP, 250-251)

The poet is more than a mirror passively reflecting the particulars around him. He has a voice and through his expression the glass is shattered, broken into fragments, and like a kaleidoscope, rearranging and reordering the pattern of the particulars. Merleau-Ponty elaborates on the active role of the mirror which is central to Stevens here:

Man is the mirror for man. The mirror itself is the instrument of a universal magic that changes things into a spectacle, spectacles into things, myself into another, and another into myself. Artists have often mused upon mirrors because beneath this "mechanical trick," they recognized, just as they did in the case of the trick of perspective, the metamorphosis of seeing and seen which defines both our flesh and the painter's vocation. This explains why they have so often liked to draw themselves in the act of painting . . . adding to what they saw then, what things saw of them.⁴⁷

In the poem "Asides on the Oboe" quoted above, the poet/perceiver says, "Thou art not August unless I make thee so." "August-for-the-perceiver" is only so because he experiences it as it is for him in the world and in the world of the text. Here we see the perceiver as maker,

reconstituting the world for himself, a theme which reverberates in both Keats and Stevens. But Stevens adds a complexity as he delves into the "how" of the perceptual experience and captures the shifts in the world of his poem. ("This is how the wind shifts:/Like the thoughts of an old human, . . . The wind shifts like this:/Like humans approaching proudly,/Like humans approaching angrily" [CP, 83]). He understands the mutuality of particulars and perceiver in the perceptual process. "We are," he says,

Men that repeat antiques sounds of air
In an accord of repetitions. Yet,
If we repeat, it is because the wind
Encircling us, speaks always with our speech.

Light, too, encrusts us making visible
The motions of the mind and giving form
To moodiest nothings.

(CP, 137)

Metamorphoses occur constantly in one's world:

One's grand flights, one's Sunday baths,
One's tootings at the weddings of the soul
Occur as they occur. So bluish clouds
Occurred above the empty house and the leaves
Of the rhododendrons rattled their gold
As if someone lived there. Such floods of white
Came bursting from the clouds--So the wind
Threw its contorted strength around the sky.

(CP, 222)

Stevens recognizes the prime phenomenological aspect of the structure of reality: the appearance-to-the-perceiver ("the metaphysical changes that occur,/Merely in living as and where we live" [CP, 326]). They are fluid and arbitrary:

Could you have said the bluejay suddenly
 Would swoop to earth? It is a wheel, the rays
 Around the sun . . .
 To think of a dove with an eye of grenadine
 And pines that are cornets, so it occurs . . .

the life
 That is fluent in even the wintriest bronze.
 (CP, 222)

Stevens' poetry is empowered by his reflecting the process of perceptual ordering. In "The Hand as Being" his perceiver wonders

why beneath the tree
 She held her hand before him in the air,
 For him to see, wove round her glittering hair
 (CP, 271)

Now the hand is foregrounded, and if this were a painting, the hand would stand out as the perspective would necessitate accentuating it (as the jar would also in "Anecdote of the Jar"), but the hand grows in the poem as Stevens emphasizes it: "Her hand composed him and composed the tree." The wind, like the hand, shifts and structures:

The wind had seized the tree
 It held the shivering, the shaken limbs,
 Then bathed its body in the leaping lake.

Once again the perspective changes and the hand is metamorphosed from hand-in-the-air, to hand as "shaper," to hand as her instrument:

Her hand took his and drew him near to her.
 Her hair fell on him and the mi-bird flew.

The relational aspect of the perceptual experience is complex.

Stevens grasps the idea that not only do I, as perceiver,
change things but things change me:

I am what is around me.
Women understand this.
One is not a duchess
A hundred yards from a carriage.
(CP, 86)

The perceiver and the perceived are "mutually signficatory,"
and therefore perception is a dialogue:

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

And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter.
(CP, 9-10)

The poem reflects "the listener, who listens in the snow,"
and therefore communes with the coldness.

This theme is reflected and expanded in "Owl's Clover,"
where Stevens emphasizes the mind of the perceiver and its
relation to the perceived. But many other of Stevens'
themes are interwoven in this poem, a series of different
perspectives on the Statue, the central symbol of the poem
("the choice of the statue as the central symbol in Owl's
Clover was deliberate" [L, 318-319]). In Stevens' letters
about "Owl's Clover" (see especially L, 366-375), which are
indispensable, he discusses these themes: the dialectical
relationship between imagination and reality ("Although
this deals specifically with the status of art in a period
of depression, it is, when generalized, one more confrontation

of reality [the depression] and the imagination [art]. A larger expression than confrontation is: a phase of the universal intercourse" [L, 368]); the adaptation to change ("What this poem is concerned with is adaptation to change" [L, 366]) which is constant ("change is incessant" [L, 366-367]); the relation of artist to audience ("But her he had not foreseen: the bitter mind/In a flapping cloak" [OP, 44]); the ordering by the perceiver of his world ("Whether internal order proceeds from external order, or the other way round, is something I think I must have spoken of in an earlier letter. For my own part, I think that everything has its origin in externals" [L, 305]); and transformations and relationships within the mind of the perceiver as well as external to it ("What is within us, if regarded as contained within us, may be said to be a chamber or in camera. But in the camera of the sub-conscious, things are not [may not be] what they are in consciousness. The locust may titter. The turtle may sob" [L, 375])).

Helen Vendler points out the bipartite structure of "Owl's Clover":

Stevens constructs a mythical half of Owl's Clover, while in the other half he creates, in a mimicry of real reference, a country with which he presumes us to be familiar--the land of the Bulgar or of Basilewsky--as a stage, a mise-en-scene to play earth in respect to his mythological regions above and below. . . . The Muses, Africa, the Subman, and the Portent which appear in Owl's Clover are mythical entities hovering around the park, the mob, the old woman, and the Statue.⁴⁸

This contrapuntally related division is interesting and, as I see it, allegorical. The realities are not represented by symbolic figures; the "sprawling portent" does not stand for the prophetic. Rather the mythical life-world is a satiric reversal of the real life-world (this is exemplified in PL where Satan, Sin, and Death have corresponding elements and parallel negatively the Trinity--Father, Son and Holy Ghost, or in Comus, for example, where the cup of cold water offered to the lady does not represent anything; it is not a symbol, rather it is an element of Comus' life-world which corresponds, in a negative dimension, to the life-world of Christ).

The first part of "Owl's Clover," entitled "The Old Woman and the Statue," begins with the statue:

Another evening in another park,
A group of marble horses rose on wings
In the midst of a circle of trees, from which the leaves
Raced with the horses in bright hurricanes.
(OP, 43)

The scene is constituted by the poet/perceiver who has a pact with the reader, as the sculptor has with his spectator, both taking into account that the audience will perceive as they perceive, reconstituting the statue and its context: "So much the sculptor had foreseen" (OP, 43). The leaves in the background "race" with the horses, and the object is to be perceived within its horizon of external background:

The sky above the plaza widening
Before the horses, clouds of bronze imposed
On clouds of gold, and green engulfing bronze,
The marble leaping in the storms of light.
So much he had devised.

(OP, 43)

Stevens continues describing the statue as an "ideal Reader" would envision it, as the sculptor created it:

white forelegs taut
To the muscles' very tip for the vivid plunge,
The heads held high and gathered in a ring
At the center of the mass, the haunches low,
Contorted, staggering from the thrust against
The earth as the bodies rose on feathery wings,
Clumped carvings, circular, like blunted fans.
(OP, 43)

In the third section of this part of the poem, Stevens underscores the changes in point of view as he introduces the old woman looking at the statue, whom the sculptor "had not foreseen":

She walked along the paths
Of the park with chalky brow scratched over black
And black by thought that would not understand . . .
The golden clouds that turned to bronze, the sounds
Descending, did not touch her eye and left
Her ear unmoved.

(OP, 44)

The old woman's senses are impoverished, the scene "did not touch her eye and left/Her ear unmoved," so that "nothing but herself/Remained." Because of this, the atmosphere "Lay black and full of black misshapen." Stevens underscores the perceiver as shaper, and the old woman can only uncreate:

The mass of stone collapsed to marble hulk,
Stood stiffly, as if the black of what she thought
Conflicting with the moving colors there
Changed them, at last, to its triumphant hue.
(OP, 44)

Things around her become blank and motionless. ("It was as if transperence touched her mind" [OP, 45]); they are "washed over" by her mood,

A mood that had become so fixed it was
 A manner of the mind, a mind in a night
 That was whatever the mind might make of it,
 A night that was that mind so magnified
 It lost the common shape of night and came
 To be the sovereign shape in a world of shape.
 (OP, 45)

She shapes the night, but it is a "sovereign" shape, detached from its common essence and surrealistic, free from signification. She looks around her, gripped by her mood, and sees "a place in which each thing was motionless."

In the second part of the poem, entitled "Mr. Burnshaw and the Statue," the perspective changes and we get the statue seen by the revolutionary, who feels that "Everything is dead/Except the future" [OP, 46]). Stevens explains the movement of the dead past, the old woman, to the movement of the future, the revolutionary:

The first step toward reconciliation (adaptation) is to recognize the end, and to say farewell and to look forward (II). Apparently, it is to be a future of the mass (III), after a good deal of wreckage. One assumes further that the evolution of what ought to be is not now in its final stage (as all the world supposes), and that the future of the mass is not an end of the future, but that change is incessant. It is a process of passing from hopeless waste to hopeful waste. This is not pessimism. The world is completely waste, but it is a waste full of portentous lustres. We live constantly in the commingling of two reflections, that of the past and that of the future, whirling apart and wide away.

(L, 366-367)

There is a tension in the opening of this part of the poem between the horses as they are to this perceiver and as they ought to be. In the sculptor's mind they are "A

thing of the dank imagination" (OP, 47), trying to be formed "like a word in the mind that sticks at artichoke/And remains inarticulate,"⁴⁹ which is how the revolutionary sees them, unreal, as "sugar or paste or citron skin" (OP, 46), or "crepuscular images/Made to remember a life they never lived" (OP, 46). At the end of this first section, Stevens juxtaposes the polarities:

In the rudest red
Of Autumn, these horses should go clattering
Along the thin horizon, nobly more
Than this jotting-down of the sculptor's foppishness
Long after the worms and the curious carvings of
Their snouts.

(OP, 47)

The next section opens with Stevens' parody of the romantic apotheosis to light, the call for inspiration to the heavenly Muse:

Come all celestial paramours
Whether in-dwelling haughty clouds, frigid
And crisply musical, or holy caverns temple-toned,
Entwine your arms and moving to and fro,
Now like a ballet infantine in awkward step,
Chant sibilant requiems for this effigy.

(OP, 47)

Stevens calls for "lights/Astral and Shelleyan" to irradiate the statue, but even as he does so he is being ironic, parodying the rainbow glow because the "astral and Shelleyan lights are not going to alter the structure of nature" (L, 367). He sees a transformation in the sense of a perceptual change, but he wants to underscore here that it is "impossible to be truly reconciled, if one romanticizes the past (ploughmen, peacocks, doves)" (L, 367), the radiant

disclosures of the romantic imagination

Are of an eternal vista, manqué and gold
 And brown, an Italy of the mind, a place
 Of fear before the disorder of the strange,
 A time in which the poets' politics
 Will rule in a poets' world. Yet that will be
 A world impossible for poets, who
 Complain and prophesy, in their complaints,
 And are never of the world in which they live.
 (OP, 48)

Section IV, a response to the call to light in Section III, reflects the failure of the romantic imagination in its flight from reality, and mentioning Shelley again in the opening, Stevens calls forth Shelley's vision of the poet as legislator of the world and negates his apocalyptic and prophetic stance because poets like Shelley "are never of the world in which they live." Here is Stevens' dismissal of Shelley's visionary politics, a romantic, utopian vision divorced from reality. If romanticizing fails to reconcile, so Stevens says in Section VI does indifference:

It is not enough
 That the vista retain ploughmen, peacocks, doves,
 However tarnished, companions out of the past,
 And that, heavily, you move with them in the dust.
 It is not enough that you are indifferent,
 Because time moves on columns intercrossed
 And because the temple is never quite composed,
 Silent and turquoised and perpetual,
 Visible over the sea. It is only enough
 To live incessantly in change.
 (OP, 50)

Stevens writes about adaptation: "Nor is one a part of the oncoming future, if one enters it with indifference (fatalism), traceable to a sense of its impermanence (the

These lines echo those from Section IV:

In the last section of this part of the poem, Stevens concludes with a wild ecstatic dance of the Muses:

The Muses transformed to dancing girls celebrate the earth
around them. Stevens instructs:

Let your golden hands wave fastly and be gay
And your braids bear brightening of crimson bands.

This is the apotheosis to change which uncovers the real,
and it calls to mind Keats's figures on the urn, impassioned
and real, breathing and reflecting love:

For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.
(W, 210)

Stevens breathes life into the Muses:

. . . when, at last, you are yourselves,
Speaking and strutting broadly, fair and bloomed,
No longer of air but of the breathing earth,
Impassioned seducers and seduced, the pale
Pitched into swelling bodies, upward, drift
In a storm blown into glittering shapes, and flames
Wind-beaten into freshest, brightest fire.
(OP, 52)

The change that destroys ("conceive that while you dance the
statue falls" [OP, 51]) also transforms ("Until the sharply-
colored glass transforms . . . until/The porcelain bell-
borrowings become/Implicit clarities" [OP, 52]) and restruc-
tures as the flames become "Wind-beaten into freshest, bright-
est fire."

The next perspective Stevens gives us is that of the
Statue as seen by the African consciousness, "The Greenest
Continent." Here the statue stood "Thinly, among the
elephantine palms":

Sleekly the serpent would draw himself across.
The horses are a part of a northern sky
Too starkly pallid for the jaguar's light,
In which he and the lion and the serpent hide
Even in sleep, deep in the grass of sleep.
(OP, 54)

In a Lawrentean primitivism, green and hot-blooded, rife with lion, jaguar, and serpent the horses are "too starkly pallid." The statue blurs and weakens into "surfaces" and "edges," contours of the commonplace:

But could the statue stand in Africa?
 The marble was imagined in the cold.
 Its edges were taken for tumultuous wind
 That beat out slimmest edges in the ear,
 Made of the eye an insatiable intellect.
 Its surfaces came from distant fire; and it
 Was meant to stand, not in a tumbling green,
 Intensified and grandiose, but among
 The common-places of which it formed a part.
 (OP, 56)

Stevens points out that "No god rules over Africa" (OP, 55) . . . "It was a mistake to paint the gods" (OP, 57) . . . "They have/No place in the sense of colonists, no place/In Africa" (OP, 58), therefore the imaginative consciousness differs in different contexts. Stevens elaborates:

One way of explaining this poem is to say that it concerns the difficulty of imposing the imagination on those who do not share it. The idea of God is a thing of the imagination. We no longer think that God was, but was imagined. The idea of pure poetry, essential imagination, as the highest objective of the poet, appears to be, at least potentially, as great as the idea of God, and for that matter, greater, if the idea of God is only one of the things of the imagination. . . . The imagination partakes of consciousness, and as the consciousness of West (Europe) differs from the consciousness of South (Africa), etc., so the imagination of West differs from that of South, and so the idea of God and the idea of pure poetry, etc., differ.

(L, 369)

This part of the poem ends with the introduction of

Ananke, a demythologized figure who serves here as an ordering principle, a synthesizer who can grasp that the essence of the imagination, despite its different forms or context, can be shared with others:

Fatal Ananke is the common god
He looks upon the statue, where it is.
(OP, 59)

Paradoxically, Stevens is saying he has the power of a god ("His spirit knows . . . as a god/Knows") but he is displaced from Heaven, humanized ("Fateful Ananke is the final god./His hymn, his psalm, his cithern song of praise/Is the exile of the disinherited,/Life's foreigners, pale aliens of the mud" [OP, 59])). Note the detheologized theology of the last four lines of this part of the poem:

Be glory to this unmerciful pontifex,
Lord without any deviation, lord
And origin and resplendent end of law,
Sultan of African sultans, starless crown.
(OP, 60)

Ananke wears a "starless crown" because he devotes himself to "The temple of the altar where each man/Beheld the truth and knew it to be true" (OP, 54). Stevens says that with heaven empty this "would be a beginning, . . . to recognize Ananke, who, now more than ever is the world's "starless crown" (L, 370).

In Part IV of "Owl's Clover" the statue is seen from the perspective of the yearning Bulgar, the man of the future who desires a return to Eden:

they desire
 The same down-dropping fruit in yellow leaves,
 The same return at heavy evening, love
 Without any horror of the helpless loss.
 (OP, 61)

Helen Vendler sees in this yearning "two extreme points of strain: the attempt to recapture the ecstasy of ignorant response, and the worship of the artist as the creator of the immortal, transcending perceived change."⁵⁰ The poet, "the volcano Apostrophe,"⁵¹ is

he that
 Confounds all opposites and spins a sphere
 Created, like a bubble of bright sheens,
 (OP, 63)

and is Stevens' replacement for the idea of God. He writes of this movement from the idea of God to its replacement: "One of the visible movements of the modern imagination is the movement away from the idea of God. The poetry that created the idea of God will either adapt it to our different intelligence, or create a substitute for it, or make it unnecessary" (L, 378).

The artist, then, the genius of the future, sees

The statue is white and high, white brillianter
 Than the color white and high beyond any height
 That rises in the air. The sprawlers on the grass
 See more than marble in their eyes, see more
 Than the horses quivering to be gone, flashed through
 With senses chiseled on bright stone. They see
 The metropolitan of the mind, they feel
 The central of the composition, in which
 They live.

(OP, 64)

The statue is "the centre-point of the composition" which is

"above all agitation and change . . . a dominant, a metropolitan of mind" (L, 372). The statue, as central point, cannot be separated from the maker of it:

The statue is the sculptor not the stone.
 In this he carved himself, he carved his age,
 He carved the feathering walkers standing by,
 Twitching a little with crude souvenirs
 Of young identities, Aprilian stubs.
 (OP, 64)

The statue has an external context, an internal context, and a perceiver who transforms the contexts dictated by the landscape of his own mind.

Stevens gives us the final perspective in "Sombre Figuration," the fifth and last part of "Owl's Clover":

The statue in a crow's perspective of trees
 Stands brimming white, charoscuro scaled
 To space . . .
 The statue stands in true perspective. Crows
 Give only their color to the leaves.
 (OP, 70-71)

The perceiver looks at the statue in the cold, clear light of reality detaching what he can bring to it. "The statue stands in hum-drum space" because here it is not colored by the imagination ("Even imagination has an end,/When the statue is not a thing imagined" [OP, 71]). The perceiver "stops/The flight of emblemata through his mind" and thus "The spring is hum-drum like an instrument,/That a man without passion plays in an aimless way" (OP, 71). Stevens turns away from the "abominable farewells" of night as he turns away from the imagination to reach a reconciliation with the present:

The reconciliation, the rapture of a time
Without imagination, without past
And without future, a present time.
(OP, 71)

Here we reach the "still point of the turning world" and
the poem ends in stasis:

The cloak to be clipped, the night to be re-designed,
Its land-breath to be stifled, its color changed,
Night and the imagination being one.
(OP, 71)

The passion, though concealed in Stevens' unadorned and hum-
drum perspective, still is there; as the snow man in a barren
coldness "beholds/Nothing that is not there and the nothing
that is" (CP, 10), so the perceiver of "Owl's Clover"
conceals his passion, hypostatizes the present moment to
which he becomes reconciled, but knows "It can never be
satisfied, the mind, never," and this is in itself the impetus
for change.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER TWO

¹Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 15.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Ibid., p. 16.

⁴Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 329.

⁵Ibid., pp. 300-301.

⁶Ibid., pp. 324, 333. Merleau-Ponty cites Max Scheler, Der Formalismus in der Ethik (Halle: Niemeyer, 1927) for the word Würfelhaftigkeit, which he does not translate. I think it means "dicensness."

⁷Ibid., p. 343.

⁸Ibid., p. 344.

⁹Aron Gurwitsch, "The Phenomenology of Perception: Perceptual Implications," in Perception: Selected Readings in Science and Phenomenology, ed. Paul Tibbetts (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969), p. 257. ("In every act of perception, noematic components not given in genuine sense-experience are effective in shaping and molding the perceptual noema . . . we refer to these as perceptual implications.")

¹⁰Edmund Husserl, Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1970), p. 44. "Every subjective process has a process 'horizon,' which changes with the alteration of the nexus of consciousness to which the process belongs . . . an intentional horizon of reference to potentialities."

¹¹Gurwitsch, p. 256.

¹²Edmund Husserl, Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 124-125.

¹³Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 68.

¹⁴For a cogent discussion of the concept "horizon" in Husserl see Ronald Bruzina, Logos and Eidos: The Concept in Phenomenology (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), pp. 68-71.

¹⁵See Letters of Wallace Stevens, pp. 359-364 and pp. 877-791, p. 793.

¹⁶Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 344.

¹⁷Stevens is referring to the phrase "Sea of Ex" in Canto XVIII of "The Man with the Blue Guitar."

¹⁸The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 39.

¹⁹Rainer Maria Rilke, Poesie, trans. Maurice Betz under title Inquiétude, in Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 238.

²⁰Bachelard, pp. 238-239.

²¹Nancy Sullivan, Perspectives in Modern Poetry (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), pp. 55.5, 5.

²²Ibid., p. 18.

²³Ibid., p. 18.

²⁴Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 323.

²⁵Ibid., p. 323.

²⁶Ibid., p. 323.

²⁷Martin Heidegger, Holzwege (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1950), pp. 34, 33.

²⁸Heidegger, Holzwege, p. 32. "Der Tempel gibt in seinem Dastehen den Dingen erst ihr Gesicht und den Menschen erst die Aussicht auf sich selbst. . . . Er ist kein Abbild, damit man an ihm leichter zur Kenntnis nehme, wie der Gott aussieht, aber es ist ein Werk, das den Gott selbst anwesen lässt."

²⁹Heidegger, Holzwege, p. 10.

³⁰Ibid., p. 65.

³¹Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957), III, 23.

³²Ibid., p. 35.

³³W, 3.

³⁴G. W. Wyburn, R. W. Pickford and R. J. Hirst, Human Senses and Perception, p. 96. See also Clarence Graham, Vision and Visual Perception, p. 504. He defines linear

perspective: "The stimulus condition for this cue is determined by the fact that a constant distance between points subtends a smaller and smaller angle at the eye as the points recede from the subject. A subject reports that lines formed by car tracks, telephone wires, etc., seem to approach each other in the distance.

³⁵Keats's Letters II, 79.

³⁶Walter Evert, Aesthetic and Myth in the Poetry of Keats (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 31.

³⁷"The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor" in English Romantic Poets, ed. M. H. Abrams (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 45.

³⁸Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, intro., xxiv.

³⁹Keats's Letters I, 231.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 202.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 281.

⁴²Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 172.

⁴³Ibid., p. 164.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 167.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 167.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 168-169.

⁴⁸Vendler, p. 80.

⁴⁹Stevens discusses this line: "The failure of an era is as if a man was trying to find a word in his mind and could not formulate it: as if the word was artichoke and he could get no nearer to it than inarticulate, rather an heroic pun" (L, 366).

⁵⁰Vendler, p. 108.

⁵¹"A man who spouts apostrophe is a volcano and in particular the volcano Apostrophe. . . . The man, the poet, by synecdoche becomes poetry" (L, 372).

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERCEPTUAL FIELD

The changes we have been examining--natural, perspectival, and those within the perceiver--shed some light on the elusive appearance of the object to the poet/perceiver in his world and in his poem. The relational aspect of perception which phenomenology points up continuously and which is its basis, so far can be grasped in the internal horizon of the object-as-it-appears as we move from one perspective to a potential perspective realized (for example, in turning the sides of the die); of the external horizon as we notice the changing environment and objects around the particular appearance we are concentrating on; and of the relationship between the perceived and the perceiver as we see changes of the body and within the mind of the perceiver. These transformations can be further examined in the study of the concept of the perceptual field, which explains and delineates the relationship of the objects sharing the phenomenal field, and, in turn, their relation to the perceiver in the perceptual process. Merleau-Ponty, in his chapter on the phenomenal field, sees that the problem in a phenomenology of perception "is to understand the strange relationships which are woven between the parts of the landscape, or between it and me as incarnate subject, and through which an object perceived can concentrate in itself a whole scene or become the imago of a whole segment of life."¹

The phenomenologist wants to get away from seeing the world as a collection of physical objects, and instead views the "world itself . . . as the universal style of all possible perceptions."² Thus the physical description of the perceptual field as an aggregate of objects of which the perceiver becomes aware in a particular visual experience, though we may use his terms, is expanded to reflect the fluidity and changing appearance within that experience. The phenomenological description points up the fact that in "a field, the phenomena emerge as an expression of mutually interacting forces (vectors)"; that perception "is a phenomenon that emerges from a system of interrelated events, first in the individual's surrounds, and then within the neuromuscular system of the individual himself"³; and that to "understand perception one must possess means whereby such interrelations can be grasped and dealt with."⁴ In poetry, the way the poet views his world, the structurization of the poet's perception, is revealed through a study of these interrelations within the perceptual field. Sense experience, which communicates and knits the perceiver and the perceived is "the intentional tissue which the effort to know will try to take apart."⁵ It is here we begin in the poem, by realizing the fluidity of the phenomena in the perceptual experience. Just as the "first philosophical act would appear to be a return to the world of actual experience which is prior to the objective world,"⁶ so the first critical act would be a return to the poet's actual

experience reflected in the created work. The movement within this field of experience is an important aspect of phenomenology, and the changing relationships among objects can be understood better if we can describe them in terms of this relationship to each other and to the perceiver, reflected in the perceptual process. In other words the changing relationships in the poem are the changing relationships in perceptual experience. Therefore, neither the perceptual act nor the poem is to be viewed as the projection of the internal in the external, but rather both are to be seen as the identity of the external and the internal.⁷

The perceptual process, reflected in poetry, can be charted in the movement from "awareness," the being aware through our senses of an object in the perceptual field; to "attention," the focusing on an object wherein we rivet our gaze on it and other things recede into the background; to "recognition," the taking into consideration of other unseen profiles of perception which help constitute the meaning of the object. The poet reflects this sense of movement as he becomes aware of objects, brings them closer to examine and describe, and recognizes them. He underscores reality as the experience of the ever-changing, elusive perspectival view of the particulars of nature.

As we experience varied perspectives in the world of the poem occurring in a perceptual field, which we as reader reconstitute, we realize the relational aspect of a phenomenology of perception: a part of the visual field is

regarded as figure and that which remains is ground. And by concentrating on the description of the object brought closer, seen against its background, the poet, reflecting the perceptual process, foregrounds the object while he allows others to recede into the background. It is the movement in the poem which gets away from the static and mimetic rendering of a scene, transforming it from a photograph to a painting, that interests a phenomenologist and for me empowers the poem. The poet is showing that in the poem, as in perception, he does not see objects in a vacuum: the apple has to be on a tree, on the grass, or in one's hand; the vase has to be on the table, on the floor, or on a shelf in a museum. It is the interplay of forces surrounding the object, which reveals the fluidity and relationship in perceptual experience, captured in the animated darkness of a painter like De Hooch in "The Visit" and in the equally animated silence in Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," that must inhabit the world of the poem or painting to supply its "worldness."

Though all things are there in the visual spectacle before our eyes, the movement and interchange--actual and possible--within the perceptual field must be realized in order for one to grasp the perceptual process. Roles are reversible: the figure can become ground and vice-versa, as illustrated by puzzles which make one "hunt" for the figure of the rabbit lost in the woods; the present objects must become absent so we can foreground what we are concentrating

on ("the proper essence of the visible is to have a layer of invisibility in the strict sense, which it makes present as a certain absence").⁸ Perception consists as much in what is not perceived as in what is perceived. We allow an object to be present or foregrounded by the absence or hiddenness of another. The negative dimension of perception, then, is not a nothingness which annihilates but rather a requisite condition of the perceptual act because a simultaneous presence and absence are necessary for something to be perceived at all: only by concealing certain sides of an object can others be visible, by hiding part of an object can another be seen ("I see things . . . precisely because they eclipse one another"),⁹ and by not seeing the ground can the figure be seen ("To see the object, it is necessary not to see the play of shadows and light around it").¹⁰

The perceptual process, then, occurs in a visual field which rearranges and is rearranged in relation to a perceiver who structures figure and ground and reveals the dialectical relationship of the presence and absence of objects and their horizons which cling to them.

In "I Stood Tip-toe" Keats's mode of perception reveals this relationship as he focuses on the "May flowers," places them in the center, and relates the other objects to them. The bees, the pea bush, the grass all are seen in conjunction with the flowers. This phenomenological viewpoint illumines Keats's structure: "Every object appears as a definite figure against a background: it appears against

a horizon of meanings."¹¹ Keats mirrors the reality of the perceptual experience in his poem by showing the object with its background and its relational aspect to it. The kinesthetics thus help clarify the distinction made by Northrop Frye between poems of "product" and poems of "process."¹² Poems of process mirror the process, whether creative, intellectual, or perceptual, in the flux which the poet experiences and with which he structures the poem.

In "Calidore" the constant motion of the perceiver and the objects of perception reflect the sense of process in perceptual experience, emphasized by the piling up of verbs and the perceiver's shifting gaze within his perceptual field as

Young Calidore is paddling o'er the lake;
His healthful spirit eager and awake
To feel the beauty of a silent eve.
(W, 11)

The stanza reflects the scene where the "light dwelt . . . lingeringly" with "the cool blue sky," and Calidore "smiles at the far clearness all around." He is "aware" of the objects in his visual field and he

turns for calmness to the pleasant green
Of easy slopes, and shadowy trees that lean
So elegantly o'er the waters' brim
And show their blossoms trim.

He focuses his gaze on the moving swallow now:

Scarce can his clear and nimble eye-sight follow
The freaks, and dartings of the black-wing'd swallow,
Delighting much, to see it half at rest,

Dip so refreshingly its wings, and breast
 'Gainst the smooth surface, and to mark anon,
 The widening circles into nothing gone.

The perceiver here follows the flight of the swallow and its delicate, slow-motion dipping into the water with the background of its path marked in "widening circles" coming to rest and stillness "into nothing gone." The movement from the "freaks, and dartings of the swallow" to its "half at rest" to the full stop "into nothing gone" parallels perceptual experience, where, unlike a photograph, motion cannot suddenly be frozen into immobility. Merleau-Ponty, using painting as an example, illustrates the dialectic of motion/immobility, stating that movement is reflected in painting "by vibration or radiation."¹³ He asserts that the "painting itself would offer to my eyes almost the same thing offered them by real movements: a series of appropriately mixed, instantaneous glimpses along with, if a living thing is involved, attitudes unstably suspended between a before and an after--in short, the outsides of a change of place which the spectator would read from the imprint it leaves."¹⁴

In the next section of the poem motion, which is linked to immobility as sound is to silence, is started right up again:

And now the sharp keel of his little boat
 Comes up with ripple, and with easy float,
 And glides into a bed of water lillies.

(W, 11)

The perceiver is moving in the moving boat with the keel coming "up with ripple," and gliding "into a bed of water lillies." Calidore views how the "bowery shore/Went off in gentle windings to the hoar/And light blue mountains."

Keats's poem reflects the horizon, included in the perceiver's perceptual field, which clings to the shore-line "winding" to the background of "the hoar/And light blue mountains." He captures the visual experience of his perceiver showing the objects which "are rivals before my sight."¹⁵

no breathing man
With a warm heart, and eye prepared to scan
Nature's clear beauty, could pass lightly by
Objects that look'd out so invitingly.

Keats expresses two ideas here related to a phenomenology of perception: one, the first step in the perceptual process is to scan the background (denoting an "awareness" of objects in one's perceptual field) and then rivet one's gaze, thereby foregrounding an object (denoting "attention" to a figure); two, objects look at the perceiver (an idea underscoring the phenomenologist's interest in the object's mode of presentation, how it appears to the perceiver). Merleau-Ponty, quoting André Marchaud, expresses the capturing gaze of the particulars of nature: "In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me. . . . I was there, listening. . . . I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it. . . . I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out."¹⁶

In the poem, Calidore's eye scans the background and is held by the objects, which Keats particularizes in the next stanzas. The important point here is not that the description is to follow, but that Keats is mirroring the visual experience of Calidore in the movement of the poem from "awareness" to "attention," mediated by Calidore the perceiver. Merleau-Ponty clarifies the perceptual role of "attention." To pay attention is not merely further to elucidate pre-existing data, it is to bring out a new articulation of them by taking them as figures. . . . Thus attention is . . . the active constitution of a new object which makes explicit and articulate what was until then presented as no more than an indeterminate horizon."¹⁷

Keats bears out this constitutive aspect of "attention" in the very first line of the next section of the poem, where his perceiver particularizes the objects' appearance, framing the landscape in his perceptual field:

The sidelong view of swelling leafiness,
Which the glad setting sun in gold doth dress
Whence ever, and anon the jay outsprings,
And scales upon the beauty of its wings.
The lovely turret, shatter'd, and outworn,
Stands venerably proud; too proud to mourn
Its long lost grandeur: fir trees grow around,
Aye dropping their hard fruit upon the ground.
(W, 11-12)

In an article on Stevens' modernity, which Keats foreshadows here, James Baird discusses the imposition of the frame upon the object presented, where to frame is "to limit it from other objects and to endow it with the parti-

cular consciousness which one brings to it . . . to limit the act of the imagination to a given present. . . . The reference is to one moment in an artist's perception of a landscape, to an absolute infinity of the landscape presented. Framed, the object is only what it is to the individual."¹⁸

In the next section of the poem (II, 42-63), Calidore looks at the "little chapel with the cross above/Upholding wreaths of ivy," which is figure now, but becomes background as he focuses his gaze on "the white dove,/That on the window spreads his feathers light." We move from the chapel seen with its external horizon of cross and ivy, to the window of the chapel, to the white dove on the window, thus narrowing our focus and reversing the role of figure and ground, which we do in our visual experience.

In the next section, Calidore, after he "pushes off his boat most eagerly" to get to his destination, "turns a jutting point of land" and sees the "castle gloomy and grand." When he gets to the castle, Calidore enters ("into the court he sprang"), and the last four sections of the poem reflect what Calidore sees there. The entire poem is Calidore's perceptual experience, and what is even more interesting here is that along with the usual description which any Romantic poet expresses (for example, "A dimpled hand,/Fair as some wonder out of fairy land,/Hung from his shoulder like the drooping flowers/Of whitest Cassia" [W, 13]), Keats juxtaposes a kinesthetic sense, a stretching and movement of form exemplified in his choice of verbs and verbals, which

anticipates the modern shattering of form, and the fluidity and change of appearance which mirror the perceptual process:

into the court he sprang,
Just as two noble steeds, and palfreys twain,
Were slanting out their necks with loosened rein;
While from beneath the threat'ning porticullis
They brought their happy burthens.

While whisperings of affection
Made him delay to let their tender feet
Come to the earth; with an incline so sweet
From their low palfreys o'er his neck they bent.

turn'd his head
To admire the visor arch'd so gracefully
Over a knightly brow; while they went by
The lamps that from the high roof'd hall were pendent
And gave the steel a shining quite transcendent.
(W, 12-13)

The language here is suggestive of a stretching motion, an attention to detail in movement: the bending, turning, arching, slanting, etc. pin down the particular form of the head or neck in action. Keats's verbs reflect an interest in the structure of motion, the articulation of the parts as they move. Keats, to me, wishes to freeze the motion, to slow it down and capture in slow-motion the form of the particulars as they move, thereby making it more real and underscoring the sensation. There is a definite kinesthesia in the lines quoted above--even objects become agents: the grating is threatening, the lamps gave a shining. Keats's perceptual patterning, his attention to detail, and his interest in structure, which we see just beginning to emerge separate him from his contemporaries, anticipate the modern shattering of forms in painting and poetry, and link him unquestionably to Stevens.

Another interesting aspect of Keats's perceptual patterning is his sense of indeterminacy: his poetry reflects a movement which can be charted on a continuum ranging from sound to silence as well as from presence to absence. Things, in Keats, are not simply "there" or "not there"; they are both at once:

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White Hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.
("Ode to a Nightingale" W, 208)

In the poet's "embalmed darkness," the particulars cannot be seen, they are hidden from view, but they exist. Darkness and silence, in Keats, are not negative dimensions at all, but rather they are alive. Merleau-Ponty reflects this vital sense also: "Silence . . . is not an auditory nothingness but . . . keeps us in contact with the being of sound."¹⁹ Keats's poetry reflects the being of sound:

and then there crept
A little noiseless noise among the leaves,
Born of the very sigh that silence heaves:
For not the faintest motion could be seen
Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green.
("I Stood Tip-toe" W, 3)

Keats points up the horizon which clings to silence and the modulation wherein the sound dwindles into silence, but resonates and exists:

Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder,
 Or the low rumblings earth's regions under;
 And sometimes like a gentle whispering
 Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing
 That breathes about us in the vacant air;
 So that we look around with prying stare,
 Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial limning,
 And catch soft floatings from a faint-heard hymning; . . .
 Sounds which will reach the Framer of all things,
 And die away in ardent mutterings.

("Sleep and Poetry," W, 42-43)

Keats, recording the variations in volume with his vocabulary of sound--"low rumbling," "gentle whispering," "breathes about us," "soft floatings," "faint-heard hymning," "ardent mutterings,"--expresses an interest in the structure and the movement involved in the range from sound to silence.

In his poetry Keats emphasizes the fading out of sound

He sinks adown a solitary glen,
 Where there was never sound of mortal men,
 Saving perhaps, some snow-light cadences
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet.
 ("Endymion," W, 81--italics mine)

as well as the fading out of particulars,

One track unseams
 A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue
 Of ocean fades upon him.

(W, 81)

both of which underscore the process of change and the relationship between the changing phenomena--between sound and silence, light and darkness, the present and the hidden. Keats seems to capture a sense of the absence from view of certain profiles of his particulars, which parallels an important point in Merleau-Ponty's view of perception in

that it consists as much in what is not perceived as in what is perceived. Merleau-Ponty posits a theory of perception revealing indeterminate horizons that cling to a spectacle and that are a counterpart of it, allowing an object to be present by the absence or hiddenness of another. The foundation of this concept, which Merleau-Ponty takes up and expands, may be traced back to Husserl:

I have just seen and observed, through the unseen portions of the room behind my back to the verandah, into the garden, to the children in the summer-house, and so forth, to all the objects concerning which I precisely "know" that they are there and yonder in my immediate co-perceived surroundings. . . . But not even with the added reach of this intuitively clear or dark, distinct or indistinct co-present margin, which forms a continuous ring around the actual field of perception, does that world exhaust itself. . . . What is actually perceived, and what is more or less clearly co-present and determinate (to some extent at least), is partly pervaded, partly girt about with a dimly apprehended depth or fringe of indeterminate reality.²⁰

Keats is conscious of the negative dimension of perception, which is not a nothingness that annihilates but rather a requisite condition of the perceptual act, because a simultaneous presence and absence are necessary for something to be perceived at all. Only by concealing certain sides of an object can others become visible. He is also conscious of the "fringe of indeterminate reality" clinging to what he perceives, and in his poetry his perceiver visualizes the landscape with its horizon, reflecting his perceptual field as he moves within it, framing it and expressing the movement that is taking place:

once more I rais'd
 My eyes to fathom the space every way;
 The embossed roof, the silent massy range
 Of columns north and south, ending in mist
 Of nothing, then to eastward, where black gates
 Were shut against the sunrise evermore,--
 Then to the west I look'd, and saw far off
 An image, huge of feature as a cloud,
 At level of whose feet an altar slept,
 To be approach'd on either side by steps,
 And marble balustrade, and patient travail
 To count with toil the innumerable degrees.
 Towards the altar sober-paced I went
 ("The Fall of Hyperion," W, 405)

The spatial orientation, the eye movements, the straining to see what is far off mirror the perceptual process, and Keats's detailing of it, which is recreated in his poetry, underscores his concern with the structure of perceptual experience:

Now he is sitting by a shady spring,
 And elbow-deep water with feverous fingering
 Stems the upbursting cold: a wild rose tree
 Pavillions him in bloom, and he doth see
 A bud which snares his fancy: lo! but now
 He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water: how!
 It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight;
 And, in the middle, there is softly pight
 A golden butterfly; upon whose wings
 There must be surely character'd strange things,
 For with wide eye he wonders and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft,
 Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands:
 Onward it flies.

("Endymion," W, 81)

Endymion is aware of the rose tree in his visual field, it encloses him, and he focuses on a bud. The tree and the bud are not passive objects; they are acting on him in his perceptual experience, which points up the reciprocity in the experience. As he attends the bud, plucks it and watches it swell, the detailing here reflects the phenomenological

emphasis on the shifting of focus, which narrows to the butterfly on the bud of the rose tree. The butterfly becomes the figure as Endymion watches it fly, and its background shifts as it moves ("on he hies/Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies"). Earlier in the poem, Endymion encounters a forest "upon the sides of Latmos." Here again Keats frames the scene, including the horizon which "edges" it, and shifting the focus from forest to lawn, to the dove and cloud which flit across it:

Paths there were many,
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,
And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly
To a wide lawn, whence one could only see
Stems thronging all around between the swell
Of turf and slanting branches: who could tell
The freshness of the space of heaven above,
Edg'd round with dark tree tops? through which a dove
Would often beat its wings, and often too
A little cloud would move across the blue.
(W, 57)

Instead of the dove and cloud's being the figure in this field, they remain background now as he gives his attention to the marble altar which is surrounded by the paths, banks, stems and branches in the distance:

Full in the middle of this pleasantness
There stood a marble altar, with a tress
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew
Had taken fairy phantasies to strew
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve.
(W, 57)

The forest background recedes and is absent as Keats describes the daisies strewn on the grassy surface around the altar. Keats reflects two aspects of the phenomenology of perception

here: by framing he is showing the process of the bringing to attention of the particulars within his visual field, and he is also showing the horizon which clings to the scene. The frame provides a limit, a boundary wherein the perceiver can concentrate on the particulars as they appear to him here and now. The horizon which stretches out exists, adheres to the landscape and fringes the scene. Merleau-Ponty expresses the co-existence of other landscapes: "Although the landscape before my eyes may well herald the features of the one which is hidden behind the hill, it does so only subject to a certain degree of indeterminacy."²¹ Keats expresses the sense of the indeterminate, the halfway house between presence and absence, silence and sound, sleep and waking; moreover, he shows the shifts, the movements within each pole, the stretching to the limits as one reaches the threshold of conscious awareness and attention and crosses over into heightened sensitivity, a sharpening of the senses.

Stevens' poetry is the culmination of what Keats begins to show. Just as a microscope focuses on the finer details of an organism, so Stevens looks at each thread interwoven in a tapestry, unravels, magnifies, and examines it, making it the center of his poem. What Keats describes Stevens will x-ray, probing deeper into what makes it the way it is. For example, Keats expresses the structure, freezes the movement, and reveals the articulation of the parts; Stevens goes a step further: he shatters the form, uncreates and

re-creates. His framing, which also reflects the object's mode of presentation to an individual perceiver does more. It limits and differentiates the scene, but at the same time it concentrates on the contours, and instead of merely pointing to their existence, Stevens breaks up the circumscribed form and the lines containing them, revealing the process or structurization of the particulars as they are shaped. Lines, borders, and contours "were supposed to circumscribe the apple or meadow, but the apple and the meadow 'form themselves' from themselves."²² The main point here is that the line does not imitate the visible, it "renders visible": it is not a point taken from the real world and placed in the poem or painting.²³ Merleau-Ponty avers that modern painters (he uses Cézanne here) seek a "deflagration of Being" where the external form, the envelope, is revealed as being secondary and derived and not that which causes a thing to take form; therefore, the shell of space must be shattered and the fruit bowl broken.²⁴ Stevens knows this and his poetry reflects this process, the shattering of form where "the barrenness that appears is an exposing" (CP, 487). The fragmenting is there in the poem for us to view and Stevens uses different modes of reflecting poetry as a destructive force. There is an unravelling: "Every thread of summer is at last unwoven./By one caterpillar is great Africa devoured/And Gibraltar is dissolved like spit in the wind" (CP, 456). There is a melting: "The mirror melts and moulds itself and moves/And

catches from nowhere brightly-burning breath./It blows a glassy brightness on the fire" (CP, 458). In some poems ("Page from a Tale," for example) the fragmenting process wherein an object is "defamiliarized" becomes the central point and the uncreation and re-creation structure the poem:

The sun might rise and it might not if
 It rose, ashen and red and yellow, each
 Opaque, in orange circlet, nearer than it
 Had ever been before, no longer known,
 No more that which most of all brings back the known,
 But that which destroys it completely by this light.
 (CP, 422)

The familiar sun here is "no longer known," no longer the comfortable revealer that illumines the object for us. It is "a motion not in the astronomies,/Beyond the habit of sense, anarchic shape/Afire" (CP, 422). The sun is uncreated, stripped to its essence, its heat, and

It might come bearing, out of chaos, kin
 Smeared, smoked, and drunken of thin potencies,
 Looking at images in the atmosphere,
 Ringed round and barred, with eyes held in their hands.
 (CP, 422)

The sun is stripped and it in turn strips objects on which it radiates. It projects

Slight gestures that could rend the palpable ice,
 Or melt Arcturus to ingots dropping drops,
 Or spill night out in brilliant vanishings,
 Whirlpools of darkness in whirlwinds of light.
 (CP, 423)

Stevens, like Blake, wants to destroy the "Guinea sun," the

abstraction which the name "sun" calls forth without even viewing it. Therefore, in Stevens unnamings is another mode of exposing:

Throw away the lights, the definitions,
And say of what you see in the dark

That it is this or that it is that,
But do not use the rotted names.
(CP, 183)

Avoid the name forces us to really look at the object and destroys our familiar conception of it, a matter of a "habit of sense," often a bloodless abstraction.

This is nothing until in a single man contained,
Nothing until this named thing nameless is
And is destroyed.
(CP, 416)

But unnamings does not annihilate: by throwing away the name we expose the vital force of the perceived. Reality is "a shade that traverses/A dust, a force that traverses a shade" (CP, 489). Stevens tells us that the "cancellings,/The negations are never final" (CP, 414). Therefore, destruction in Stevens, reflecting poetry as a destructive force, is a process of uncreation, a getting at the essence of the object, rather than an annihilation or a denial ("But to strip off the complacent trifles,/To expel the ever-present seductions . . . This was not denial" [CP, 289]). In Stevens the negative dimension is a stripping away of the pre-conceived to get at the bare essence, the mode of existence in the world, of the perceived:

The nothingness was a nakedness, a point
 Beyond which thought would not progress as thought.
 He had to choose. But it was not a choice
 Between excluding things. It was not a choice
 Between, but of.

(CP, 403)

It is not, then, a question of a choice between being and non-being, but rather a question of being which includes its negative. The negative is a dimension of being for Stevens as "the listener, who listens in the snow, . . . beholds/ Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" (CP, 10). Stevens emphasizes the point that there "is not nothing, no, no, never nothing" (CP, 13); nothing exists in its inclusion in being. "He chose to include the things/That in each other are included," therefore, from the fragmenting process, from uncreating, Stevens' perceiver re-constitutes, "the whole,/The complicate, the amassing harmony" (CP, 403). By stripping a thing to its naked essential, Stevens reveals the "puissant flick" at its core, a palpitating quick which becomes the impetus for change enabling the structure of significance to be built up by the perceiver in the perceptual process. In order for Stevens to build up, he must strip off the preconceived, the mythic, and the imaginative. He has to crumble the known ("The moonlight crumbled to degenerate forms" [CP, 249]); split it ("How shall we hew the sun,/Split it and make blocks, . . ./How carve the violet moon/To set in nicks?" [OP, 17]); break it ("And the egg of the sky are in shells, in walls, in skins . . ./Spread outward. Crack the round dome. Break through" [CP, 490]); and brush

or wipe it away ("I have wiped away moonlight like mud"
 [CP, 249]); ("He brushed away the thunder then the clouds,/ Then the colossal illusion of heaven" [CP, 241]), to get at
 "The, the," "to eject, to pull/The day to pieces and cry
stanza my stone?/Where was it one first heard of the truth?
 The the," (CP, 203.)

Awakening is another mode of shattering the form,

In the metaphysical streets, the profoundest forms
 Go with the walker subtly walking there.
 These he destroys with wafts of wakening.
 (CP, 473)

as is skinning:

This is where the serpent lives . . .
 This is form gulping after formlessness
 Skin flashing to wished-for disappearances
 And the serpent body flashing without skin.
 (CP, 411)

Just as objects are peeled down to the vital quick in Stevens,
 so the naked self, "the hot of him" (CP, 388), is exposed
 by similar modes of destruction:

Nothing must stand
 Between you and the shapes you take
 When the crust of shape has been destroyed
 You as you are? You are yourself.
 (CP, 183)

Stevens explains, "The sea/Severs not only lands but also
 selves" (CP, 30), and in "The Comedian as the Letter C," the
 whole poem turns on the parallel paring down and accommodation
 of self and world, as both are washed, made clear in "a

luminous traversing" (CP, 30). Stevens equates clearness and transparenence with the freedom from preconceived form. ("Crispin . . . now beheld himself,/A skinny sailor peering in the sea-glass. . . ./Crispin was washed away by magnitude./The whole of life that still remained in him/Dwindled to one sound strumming in his ear" [CP, 28])). The form of self is shattered, destroyed, melted, and dissolved:

Just so an ancient Crispin was dissolved. . . .
 The dead brine melted in him like a dew
 Of winter, until nothing of himself
 Remained, except some starker, barer self
 In a starker, barer world.

(CP, 29)

"Severance was clear," Stevens tells us (CP, 30), and dissolution gives transparenence--"And yet she too is dissolved, she is destroyed/She gives transparenence" (CP, 413)--so that we get to the "veritable ding an sich at last" (CP, 29). In poem after poem Stevens' perceiver strives to reach the center:

He wanted to know,
 A naked man who regarded himself in the glass
 Of air, who looked for the world beneath the blue,
 Without blue, . . . Nabob
 Of bones, he rejected, he denied, to arrive
 At the neutral centre, the ominous element,
 The single-colored, colorless, primitive.

(CP, 241-242)

It was as we came
 To see him, that we were wholly one, as we heard
 Him chanting . . . that we knew
 The glass man, without external reference.

(CP, 251)

Stevens use of "glass" is interesting: sea, air, mirror, and

man share the essential element of an active reflector,
capable of being shattered or stripped and creatively re-
flecting by adding a clearness wherein things and self are
rendered visible:

The glass of air becomes an element--
It was something imagined that has been washed
away
A clearness has returned. It stands restored.

It is not an empty, a bottomless sight..
It is a visibility of thought,
In which hundreds of eyes, in one mind, see at once.
(CP, 488)

Stevens' range and versatility in the fragmenting and
shattering process points up his wish to make each poem
merely a fragment of the one supreme poem. He fragments
objects and the self, paring them down to their essential
nakedness, so he breaks down the ultimate poem into fragments
of poetry ("To most people poetry means certain specimens of
it, but these specimens are merely parts of a great whole.
I am not thinking of the body of poetic literature, because
that whole is merely a group of specimens" [L, 383]).
Stevens "divides and merges"²⁵ simultaneously as each poem
becomes at once a bare element and united, by the poet, by
the perceiver, and by the reader, to a greater whole. His
first step in this creative process is to destroy the myths
that no longer serve us. ("The first step toward a supreme
fiction would be to get rid of all existing fictions" [L,
431]). Here is where the phenomenology of perception is
useful as the creative process depends on the perceptual;

it is the vehicle whereby the poem comes into being. ("To sum it all up, for me the most important thing is to realize poetry. . . . It is simply the desire to contain the world wholly within one's own perception of it" [L, 501]). The poet's perceiver set in the virtual world of the poem realizes the poem in the same way we re-construct the particulars of the world around us. ("Everything comes to him/From the middle of his field./The odor of earth penetrates more deeply than any word/There he touches his being" [CP, 237]). Stevens' and Keats's poetry examines the perceiver's visual field wherein the contours, lines, boundaries, and areas in-between are of utmost importance. Keats shows their existence and suggests their fluidity and need to be included, but Stevens is more expansive and complex in his treatment of the perceptual field. By focusing on and breaking up contours, borders, and lines in his poetry, Stevens destroys the rigid mold of scientific concepts about them. He sees the "mobile and immobile flickering/In the area between is and was" (CP, 474). Merleau-Ponty speaks about contours and borders and states that they "are always between or behind whatever we fix our eyes upon."²⁶ Stevens also opens up the fixed role of borders and lines as limiters which close off and separate the particulars. We realize, for example, in "Stars at Tallapoosa" that borders and lines are more than we think, as things are more than our abstract concept of them:

The lines are straight and swift between the stars.
The night is not the cradle that they cry,

The criers, undulating the deep-oceaned phrase.
The lines are much too dark and much too sharp.

The mind herein attains simplicity.
There is no moon, on single, silvered leaf.
The body is no body to be seen
But is an eye that studies its black lid.
(CP, 71)

Stevens is saying that our perceptions, the way things appear to us, belie the formulas we have accepted. The line is too real to be merely what it is supposed to be. Merleau-Ponty frees the line of its representational role:

The beginning of the line's path establishes or installs a certain level or mode of the linear, a certain manner for the line to be and to make itself a line, "to go line." Relative to it, every subsequent inflection will have a diacritical value, will be another aspect of the line's relationship to itself, will form an adventure, a history, a meaning of the line--all this according as it slants more or less, more or less rapidly, more or less subtly.²⁷

And Stevens' lines move:

Let these be your delight, secretive hunter,
Wading the sea-lines, moist and ever-mingling,
Mounting the earth-lines, long and lax, lethargic.
These lines are swift and fall without diverging.
(CP, 72)

Stevens equates the elemental lines, which do not resemble anything ("The melon flower nor dew nor web of either/Is like to these" [CP, 72]), with "a sheaf of brilliant arrows flying straight,/Flying and falling straightway for their pleasure" (CP, 72), and which become motion internalized:

But in yourself is like:
A sheaf of brilliant arrows . . .

Or, if not arrows, then the nimblest motions,
 Making recoveries of young nakedness
 And the lost vehemence the midnights hold.
 (CP, 72)

Two most important phenomenological themes resonate here: the appearance of the contours and areas between objects as the perceiver experiences them; and the enigma of the body as both seeing and seen, epitomized by the body seeing itself ("an eye that studies its black lid"). Merleau-Ponty explodes the view of the body as object: "The body therefore is not the nondescript one among external objects,"²⁸ as Stevens does also: "The body is no body to be seen." Merleau-Ponty continues, relating the body to objects in the field: "What prevents its ever being an object, ever being 'completely constituted' is that it is that by which there are objects. . . . The presence and absence of external objects are only variations within a field of primordial presence, a perceptual domain over which my body exercises power."²⁹

The uniqueness of Merleau-Ponty's view of perception lies in the role of the body in perception. He brings sharply into focus the seer as an incarnate consciousness, who is a self "through inherence of the one who sees in that which he sees, and through inherence of sensing in the sensed--a self, therefore, that is caught up in things, that has a front and a back, a past and a future."³⁰ Stevens' poetry reiterates this relation of self and world:

The grass is full

And full of yourself. The trees around are for you,
The whole of the wideness of night is for you,
A self that touches all edges,

You become a self that fills the four corners of
night.

(CP, 209)

The identity of self and world through the body in the act of perception, which Stevens images forth in much of his poetry, points up the usefulness of a phenomenology of perception as a critical tool:

With my whole body I taste these peaches,
I touch them and smell them. Who speaks? . . .

Who speaks? But it must be that I,
That animal, that Russian, that exile, for whom

The bells of the chapel pullulate sounds at
Heart. The peaches are large and round,

Ah! and red; and they have peach fuzz, ah!
They are full of juice and the skin is soft.

They are full of the colors of my village
And of fair weather, summer, dew, peace.

(CP, 224)

Merleau-Ponty posits that "it is through my body that I perceive things."³¹ He elaborates on a mutual identification: "The identity of the thing through perceptual experience is only another aspect of the identity of one's own body throughout exploratory movements; thus they are the same in kind as each other. . . . I become involved in things with my body, they co-exist with me as an incarnate subject."³²

Stevens' poetry reflects the coexistence of body and world wherein the forms are broken up, reconstituted by the perceiver:

At the end of night last night a crystal star,
 The crystal-pointed star of morning rose
 And lit the snow to a light congenial
 To this prodigious shadow, who then came
 In an elemental freedom, sharp and cold.

The feeling of him was the feel of day,
 And of a day as yet unseen, in which
 To see was to be . . .
 To think of him destroyed the body's form.
 (CP, 296-297)

The elemental freedom of the perceiver is a freedom from constricting form, allowing him in the act of perception to coexist with the particulars around him:

A fusion of night, its blue of the pole of blue
 And of the brooding mind, fixed but for a slight
 Illumination of movement as he breathed . . .

He breathed in crystal-pointed change the whole
 Experience of night, as if he breathed
 A consciousness from solitude, inhaled
 A freedom out of silver-shaping size,
 Against the whole experience of day.
 (CP, 297-298)

The perceiver through the movement of his body "breathes in . . . the experience of night." His body is "caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrustated into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff as the body."³³ Stevens reiterates the fusion of the sensing and the sensed:

Last night at the end of night his starry head,
 Like the head of fate, looked out in darkness, part

Thereof and part desire and part the sense
Of what men are.

(CP, 299)

In Stevens' poem here the experience of the perceiver within his visual field at night shows "there is an immediate equivalence between the orientation of the visual field and the awareness of one's own body as the potentiality of that field."³⁴ Merleau-Ponty elaborates on the experience of world and body:

We have relearned to feel our body; we have found underneath the objective and detached knowledge of the body that other knowledge which we have of it in virtue of its always being with us and of the fact that we are our body. In the same way we shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world through our body, and in so far as we perceive the world with our body."³⁵

One major difference between Keats's and Stevens' perceptual patterning is the analogy in Stevens to modern art. We look at a Stevens poem the way we would look at a painting; his titles point up the connection: "Man and Bottle," "Landscape with Boat," "The Paltry Nude Starting on a Spring Voyage," "Domination of Black," "Two Figures in Dense Violet Night," "Study of Two Pears," "Woman Looking at a Vase of Flowers," "Bouquet of Roses in Sunlight." Keats anticipates Stevens by zeroing in on a landscape as it appears to an individual at a particular moment in the poem, but Keats frames it differently, separating it from the rest of the poem. In Stevens the use of the frame is extended

and perfected: the visual experience of his perceiver is the poem. The particular scene is not walled off from the rest of the poem, but rather it is a discrete entity, as is a painting, with the perceptual experience of the poet-perceiver structuring the poem. The frame here walls off this perceptual moment from other perceptual moments, rather than from other parts of the poem. As the painter uses his brush to catch the movement and gleam of his particulars, so Stevens uses words to "repeat antiques sounds of air . . . because the wind/Encircling us, speaks always with our speech" (CP, 137), so that the "poem lashes more fiercely than the wind" (CP, 239). For me this is the meaning of "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle": the validity of the poet's world, a world where

In verses wild with motion, full of din,
Loudened by cries, by clashes, quick and sure
As the deadly thought of men accomplishing
Their curious fates in war, come, celebrate
The faith of forty.

(CP, 16)

The poet is not imitator but maker; he hymns the reality of life, "the faith of forty" in all its barrenness, and when Stevens asks, "Shall I uncrumple this much-crumpled thing?" he is speaking of that recognition in the perceptual process which in an instant re-constitutes an object for the perceiver as it appears to him in its particular mode of presentation. It is the "click" of which Leo Spitzer³⁶ speaks, the recognition that the reader experiences when he

"uncrumples" the text by entering the poet's world where the meaning emerges. The reader gives significance to the world of the text, just as the perceiver gives it to the particulars around him. A bird flits across the perceiver's visual field, is re-constituted in the textual world; however, in both cases his sound is not contrived but rather a part of him, an expressive chord inseparable from what he has internalized from his world:

A red bird flies across the golden floor.
 It is a red bird that seeks out his choir
 Among the choirs of wind and wet and wing.
 A torrent will fall from him when he finds.
 (CP, 13)

And the poet captures this "torrent":

I quiz all sounds, all thoughts, all everything
 For the music and manner of the paladins
 To make oblation fit.
 (CP, 16)

He must make things "fit" in his world. Stevens censures the "fops of fancy [who] in their poem leave/Memorabilia of the mystic spouts" (CP, 16). Set over against the romantic embroiderers is Stevens who says, "I am a yeoman, as such fellows go./I know no magic trees, no balmy boughs,/No silver-ruddy, gold-vermilion fruits." He is a yeoman born free and echoing his commonality, re-creating at once the uniqueness and universality of being. In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" Stevens asks that his sparrow be given existence by poets and perceivers:

Bethou me, said sparrow, to the crackled blade,
 And you, and you, bethou me as you blow,
 When in my coppice you behold me be.
 (CP, 393)

To see is to confer existence on the object. In Stevens' poetry this bestowal is "recognition" in the perceptual process. "Recognition" is not a separate mental act where what is seen undergoes, through an act of intellection, a giving of signification. "Perception is a judgment, which, however, is unaware of the reasons underlying its own formation, which amounts to saying that the perceived object presents itself as a totality and a unity before we have apprehended the intelligible law governing it."³⁷ This is where phenomenology corrects the errors of both empiricism and intellectualism and resolves the Cartesian dualism: "only what is can be seen, the view itself and experience being no longer distinct from conception."³⁸

Merleau-Ponty clarifies and exemplifies the recognitive act in the description of the gesture:

It is through my body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive "things." The meaning of a gesture thus "understood" is not behind it, it is intermingled with the structure of the world outlined by the gesture, and which I take up on my own account. It is arrayed all over the gesture itself--as, in perceptual experience, the significance of the fireplace does not lie beyond the perceptible spectacle, namely the fireplace itself as my eye and movements discover it in the world.³⁹

He continues, expanding this example and taking in the linguistic gesture which "like all the rest, delineates its

Say that the palms are clear in a total blue,
 Are clear and are obscure; that it is night;
 That the moon shines.

(CP, 86)

The clarity and obscurity both reside in the night of his poem.

In the world of Stevens' poem, the polarities are present:

If there is a man white as marble
 Sits in a wood, in the greenest part,
 Brooding sounds of the images of death,

So there is a man in black space
 Sits in nothing that we know,
 Brooding sounds of river noises;

And these images, these reverberations,
 And others, make certain how being
 Includes death and the imagination.

(CP, 444)

Because being includes all its aspects, Stevens wants the poem that "is woven and waiting to be worn" to be seen neither "as mask nor as garment but as being" (CP, 208). Therefore the words of the poet are "the vocables/Of the wind, the glassily-sparkling particles/Of the mind" (CP, 423). He reflects "the theory of the word for those/For whom the word is the making of the world,/The buzzing world and lisp-ing firmament" (CP, 345). The reader then can also catch the "outlines of being and its expressings [which are] the syllables of its law" (CP, 424). He can recognize that the poet's "self and the sun were one/And his poems, although makings of his self,/Were no less makings of the sun"

(CP, 532). Stevens exemplifies the pact between the reader and the poet reflected in the act of reading where a reconstitutive process evokes the "virile breath" residing in the words:

What is it that my feeling seeks?
 I know from all the things it touched
 And left beside and left behind.
 It wants the diamond pivot bright.
 It wants Belshazzar reading right
 The luminous pages on his knee,
 Of being, more than birth or death.
 It wants words virile with his breath.
 (CP, 207)

Stevens asks "Is the function of the poet mere sound" and answers in the negative later in the verse paragraph:

As part of nature he is part of us.
 His rarities are ours: may they be fit
 And reconcile us to our selves in those
 True reconcilings, dark, pacific words,
 And the adroiter harmonies of their fall.
 (CP, 144)

No, Stevens is telling us, the words of the poet make a world for us. So

Close the cantina. Hood the chandelier.
 The moonlight is not yellow but a white
 That silences the ever-faithful town,
 How pale and how possessed a night it is,
 How full of exhalations of the sea.
 (CP, 144)

Let the cold, clear moonlight into the poem and "let the poet on his balcony/Speak and the sleepers in their sleep shall move,/Waken, and watch the moonlight on their floors" (CP, 144-145). Stevens comes to the conclusion that the

poem is an "incantation that the moon defines . . . An infinite incantation of our selves" (CP, 145). This incantation contours the poem and creates a world as painting does. Merleau-Ponty explains the laying out of this world: "Essence and existence, imaginary and real, visible and invisible--a painting mixes up all our categories in laying out its oneiric universe of carnal essences, of effective likenesses, of mute meanings."⁴² Thus we get in Stevens' world, for example in "Infant Marina," a framed seascape where his perceiver partakes of the being of the world around him. As in a painting, the motion and gestures of the perceiver are visible and reflect a merging with the particulars:

Her terrace was the sand
And the palms and the twilight.
She made of the motions of her wrist
The grandiose gestures
Of her thought.

The rumpling of the plumes
Of this creature of evening
Came to be sleights of sails
Over the sea.

And thus she roamed
In the roamings of her fan,
Partaking of the sea,
And of the evening,
As they flowed around
And uttered their subsiding sound.

(CP, 7-8)

Also, as in painting, we get the living nothingness that the painter captures with techniques of chiaroscuro:

And yet beneath
The stillness of everything gone, and being still,

Being and sitting still, something resides
 Some skreaking and skittering residuum.
 (CP, 160)

The silence is not negation, not auditory nothingness, but
 has being:

And the stillness is in the key, all of it is
 The stillness is all in the key of that desolate sound.
 (CP, 160)

The poem and the painting are not about things, but
 create a world where things exist, which is why silence and
 darkness live here: the coming to be of the light and the
 audible cannot exclude their opposite, the dark and the
 silent:

In the anonymous color of the universe
 Our breath is like a desperate element
 That we must calm, the origin of a mother tongue

With which to speak to her, the capable
 In the midst of foreignness, the syllable
 Of recognition, avowal, impassioned cry,

The cry that contains its converse in itself.
 (CP, 470-471)

Stevens realizes the silence on the fringe of sound as
 well as the invisible on the horizon of the visible:

The trumpet of morning blows in the clouds and
 through
 The sky. It is the visible announced,
 It is the more than visible . . . The trumpet cries
 This is the successor of the invisible.
 (CP, 376)

Because things form themselves in his world, Stevens' poetry
 reflects an "incipient cosmos," where the coming forth of
 the object is exemplified:

We live in a constellation
 Of patches and of pitches,
 Not in a single world,
 In things said well in music
 On the piano, and in speech,

As in a page of poetry--
 Thinkers without final thoughts
 In an always incipient cosmos,
 The way, when we climb a mountain,
 Vermont throws itself together.
 (OP, 114-115)

Since "Night is the nature of man's interior world. . . .
 We must enter boldly that interior world," (CP, 333) and as
 poet, Stevens has "recomposed the pines,/Shifted the rocks
 and picked his way among clouds" (CP, 512) in his world, as
 the perceiver in his reconstitutes particulars in their
 shifting appearances.

As reader we grasp the texture of being which the poet
 has laid bare for us:

The thinker as reader reads what has been written.
 He wears the words he reads to look upon
 Within his being,

A crown within him of crispest diamonds,
 A reddened garment falling to his feet,
 A hand of light to turn the page,

A finger with a ring to guide his eye
 From line to line, as we lie on the grass and listen
 To that which has no speech,

The voluble intentions of the symbols,
 The ghostly celebrations of the picnic,
 The secretions of insight.

 (CP, 492)

The "secretions of insight" are the words of the poet whose
 sounds and meanings build up for us as we throw together a
 world:

 the beasts of light,
 Groaning in half-exploited gutturals

The need of its element, the final need
 Of final access to its element
 Of access like the page of a wiggy book,

Touched suddenly by the universal flare
 For a moment, a moment in which we read and repeat
 The eloquence of light's faculties.
 (CP, 333)

Stevens' poetry reflects "the world as word" where the "many-
 stanzaed sea, the leaves/And it spoke all together" (CP, 268).
 So he says, "we put mantles on our words because/The same
 wind, rising and rising, makes a sound/Like the last muting
 of winter as it ends" (CP, 519). The silence residing in
 the muting of the words can be expressed:

The great pond,
 The plain sense of it, without reflections, leaves,
 Mud, water like dirty glass, expressing silence
 Of a sort, silence of a rat come out to see
 The great pond and its waste of lilies.
 (CP, 503)

The silence exists here as in a painting; "the smile of a
 long-dead king . . . continues to exist and to reproduce
 itself . . . on the surface of a canvas. It is too little
 to say that it is there as an image or essence; it is there
 as itself, as that which was always most alive about it."⁴³

Stevens tells us things exist in the world of the poem
 because

The poem is the cry of its occasion,
 Part of the res itself and not about it
 The poet speaks the poem as it is,

Not as it was: part of the reverberation
 Of a windy night as it is, when the marble statues
 Are like newspapers blown by the wind. He speaks

By sight and insight as they are. There is no
 Tomorrow for him. The wind will have passed by,
 The statues will have gone back to be things about.
 (CP, 473)

This calls to mind Rilke's Sonnet 11 about "the elusive nature of being" ("gejagt und dann gebändigt diese sehnige") and "the deception of even the starry union" ("Auch die sternische Verbindung trügt"), which, therefore, make us happy a while ("der Figur zu glauben. Das genügt.")⁴⁴

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER THREE

- ¹Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 52.
- ²Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 16.
- ³Bartley, pp. 36-37.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 37.
- ⁵Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 53.
- ⁶Ibid., p. 57.
- ⁷Ibid., p. 61.
- ⁸Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 187.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 180.
- ¹⁰Ibid., p. 167.
- ¹¹Luijpen, p. 99.
- ¹²Northrop Frye, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," Eighteenth-Century Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. James Clifford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).
- ¹³Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 184.
- ¹⁴Ibid., pp. 184-185.
- ¹⁵Ibid., p. 180.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 167.
- ¹⁷Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 30.
- ¹⁸James Baird, "Transvaluation in the Poetics of Wallace Stevens," Studies in Honor of John C. Hodges and Alwin Thaler, ed. Richard Beale and John Leon Trevsay (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1961), pp. 163-177.
- ¹⁹Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 328.

- ²⁰Husserl, Ideas, pp. 91-92.
- ²¹Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 331.
- ²²Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 183.
- ²³Ibid., p. 182.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 180.
- ²⁵I use the Burkean concept here of "merger" and "division." See Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 403-406.
- ²⁶Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 183.
- ²⁷Ibid., p. 183.
- ²⁸Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 92.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 92.
- ³⁰Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 163.
- ³¹Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 186.
- ³²Ibid., p. 185.
- ³³Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 163.
- ³⁴Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 206.
- ³⁵Ibid., p. 206.
- ³⁶See Leo Spitzer, Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), I, 1-39.
- ³⁷Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 42.
- ³⁸Ibid., p. 41.
- ³⁹Ibid., p. 186.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 186.
- ⁴¹Ibid., p. 193.
- ⁴²Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 169.
- ⁴³Ibid., p. 169.
- ⁴⁴Rainer Maria Rilke, Sonnets to Orpheus, trans. M. D. Herter Norton (New York: W. W. Norton, 1942), pp. 36-37.

CHAPTER FOUR

PHENOMENOLOGY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

So far we have been examining the world of the poem seen through the eyes of the phenomenologist, where the changes of appearance underscore the primacy of the perceptual process with the perceiver bringing into being the world around him. We have seen that the particulars of this world come to be in the same way that objects come to be in perceptual experience. The poet/perceiver structures his world and his poem by attending, by being aware of, and by recognizing the changes of color and light, the changes of perspective as he walks around, moves his body and really looks at the things themselves, and the changes in his visual field as he foregrounds and focuses on the particulars and their relation to their horizons. This world, then, is not merely a mimetic representation of the real world because the changes and movement are captured in process in Keats's and Stevens' work. The ontology of these poems is a phenomenological ontology, wherein reality is not copied as in a photograph, a contrived and frozen representation, but rather it is a dynamic unfolding of framed appearances which come to be as the reader re-constitutes them.

What has to be done now, to relate phenomenology and poetry on a deeper level, is to go a step further than understanding the world of the poem, its ontology; we must understand its epistemology, the processes of consciousness

which operate in the mind of the creator as he comes to know its objects. The only way to do this is to look at the methods of phenomenology and show their parallel in the creative process of the poet. The concepts and modes of phenomenology must first be understood in their philosophical context before any phenomenological literary criticism can be established.

Merleau-Ponty exemplifies the living concepts in the world around him, and by relating them to perception and expression, which can now be seen as acts of a bodily consciousness bringing into being the world of a text, we correct the idea of a static mold to be imposed on the poetry. We shall view the poetry from the vantage point of Merleau-Ponty, who not only sharpens the concepts of both Heidegger and Husserl but also interweaves in his own work many of the discrete strands in the writings of the phenomenological movement,¹ and who, because of his literary and artistic interests, engenders criteria for literary criticism, so that the world of the text is animated and can now be interpreted through his understanding of the role of incarnate consciousness in the creative and perceptual processes. Through his theory of the body, he concretizes Husserl's subject-object relationship, one which constitutes the Archimedian point in any study of phenomenology and poetry. The phenomenological modes with which we shall be dealing--intentionality, bracketing, reduction, and constitution--all are aspects of this primary relationship,

which expresses the dialectical nature of perceptual experience where the world then appears as the world-for-the-perceiver and cannot be seen in any other light.

In his book on phenomenology Ronald Bruzina clarifies the subject-object relationship:

Consciousness is now a pure field of experience-in-the-living (lived experience, *Erlebnis*), in which various objects are found as appearing-in-the-field. Any object is now considered as neither an "it" or "thing" over against and OUTSIDE me, nor a "thing" here WITHIN a "me," but as, precisely, a PHENOMENON (*φαινόμενον*, "appearing") in a field differentiated most fundamentally as a subject-object bipolarity. . . . One distinguishes the two poles of this situation, namely, subject in its attentiveness, and object under the aspect according to which it is under attention. . . . A phenomenological study of consciousness will consider the subjective pole under the aspect of the particular intending action that may be conceived, while the object will be considered according to the particular sense or meaning-aspect within which it is showing itself.²

The relational aspect, a "radical co-implication,"³ of subject and object can now be seen, and this is the fundamental concept in phenomenology, as we realize that an object is not a thing existing out there independent of consciousness, but exists only as its meaning-for-a-subject--is recognized as it makes its appearance to a subject within his field of experience. In other words, the object in perception cannot be separated from the subject in the act of perceiving it.

It is important here to trace the subject-object relationship to its source in Husserl, who sets up

the distinction between "the proper components of the intentional experience and their intentional correlates, or the component of them":⁴

Thus on the one hand we have to distinguish the parts and phases which we find through a real (reelle) analysis of the experience . . . and question concerning its parts or the dependent phases which build it up on real (reell) lines. But on the other hand the intentional experience is the consciousness of something . . . and so we can ask what can be said on essential lines concerning this "of something."

Every intentional experience, thanks to its noetic phase, is noetic, it is its essential nature to harbour in itself a meaning of some sort. . . . Such noetic phases include, for instance, the directing of the glance of the pure Ego upon the object "intended" by it in virtue of its gift of meaning, upon that which "it has in its mind as something meant"; further the apprehension of this object, the steady grasp of it whilst the glance has shifted to other objects which have entered within the circle of "conjecture" . . . All this may be discovered in the relevant experiences, however differently constituted they may be, and however variable in themselves. . . .

Corresponding at all points to the manifold data of the real (reellen) noetic content, there is a variety of data displayable in really pure (wirklich reiner) intuition, and in a correlative "noematic content," or briefly "noema"--terms which we shall henceforth be continually using.

Perception, for instance, has its noema, and at the base of this its perceptual meaning, that is, the perceived as such. . . . We must everywhere take the correlate, which . . . is here referred to as "meaning" (Sinn) precisely as it lies "immanent" in the experience of perception, of judgment, of liking, and so forth, i.e., if we question in pure form this experience itself, as we find it there presented to us. . . .

From our phenomenological standpoint we can and must put the question of essence: What is the "perceived as such"? What essential phases does it harbour in itself in its capacity as noema?⁵

Husserl is describing perception as an act of conscious-

ness, an intentional experience. Through a phenomenological analysis of perception he describes its structure: he sets up two poles--one pole concerning the "attending or intending" action, this is what he calls the noesis, the particular mode of consciousness in the act, revealed in a noetic analysis; the other pole concerning the "attended or intended" sense of the object as it appears, the noema, revealed in a noematic analysis.⁶

If we perceive a house, for example, the noematic analysis deals with the house as seen from one particular side. The appearance of the house as attended, as it presents itself in a particular perception of it is the noema. The noetic analysis deals with modes of seeing the house. The attending of the house as the perceiver half-closes his eyes is the noesis.

Merleau-Ponty also distinguishes for descriptive purposes the subject-object poles of perceptual experience at the same time declaring their actual inseparability. Here is his subject-object bipolarity:

We have the experience of a world . . . as an open totality the synthesis of which is inexhaustible. We have the experience of an I not in the sense of an absolute subjectivity, but indivisibly demolished and remade by the course of time.⁷

Merleau-Ponty is aware, even as he discusses these poles, of the meaninglessness and impossibility of this separation, since the "thing is inseparable from a person perceiving it."⁸

He, like Husserl, is also aware of the "prejudices arising from objective thinking,"⁹ and he devotes much space to refuting classical psychology, whose task it is "to reduce all phenomena which bear witness to the union of subject and world, putting in their place the clear idea of the object as in itself and of the subject as pure consciousness . . . [and to sever] the links which unite the thing and the embodied subject, leaving only sensible qualities to make up our world."¹⁰

Merleau-Ponty articulates the inseparability of subject and object more cogently and more explicitly than other philosophers, making it a central point in his phenomenology. The subject brings the object into existence as it presents itself in a certain way: "The object is made determinate as an identifiable being only through a whole open series of possible experiences, and exists only for a subject who carries out this identification."¹¹ The object exists because it is experienced and the experience of it determines it and cannot be separated from it. Like Cézanne, Merleau-Ponty wants "to seize the meaning of the world . . . as that meaning comes into being."¹² And the subject cannot be left out of this since "the world and things are thus the linking of perspectives, they exist only as lived and constituted by some subject."¹³ The object cannot be separated from the subject perceiving it and now we see that the subject cannot be separated from things if "subjectivity [is] conceived as inherence in the world."¹⁴ The

embodied subject is a self "through inherence of the one who sees in that which he sees."¹⁵ The dialectical relationship of subject and object is underscored and concretized by understanding that "the world is the field of our experience and . . . we are nothing but a view of the world."¹⁶

The focal point of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception is the role of the body in perceptual experience. This cannot be emphasized enough as it is the "Archimedian point"¹⁷ of his philosophy; it is what separates him from Husserl and his other followers, makes him unique, and renders his philosophy viable for literary critical theory. The body resolves the dialectic (in the Hegelian sense) of the subject (the thesis) and the object (the antithesis) as the synthesis where "it is caught in the fabric of the world . . . with things incrustated into its flesh."¹⁸

The visible and mobile body is intertwined with the particulars of the world. "In the life-world which arises from my carnal self-awareness the visible world and the world of my motor projects are in an open . . . relationship,"¹⁹ forming a system. The idea of system is a paradigm for understanding the relationship of body and world, which Merleau-Ponty illumines, "Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system."²⁰

The concept of open system calls to mind Walter Ong's "open-system mind-set":

Discussion of the current open-system mindset cannot avoid advertising to structuralist thinking. The protean term or concept "structuralism" designates an agglomerate of issues within which a good deal of the struggle between closed-system and open-system thinking is taking place today. The spread of this concept into the most varied areas of thought shows how pervasive the openness-closure struggle is in the evolution of human consciousness; there is structuralism in linguistics (notably in the study of grammar, generative and transformational), in anthropology and other behavioral sciences, in literary and textual analysis from that of the Tel Quel group in France to that of biblical scholarship (where, however, structuralism is a latecomer), in history (where it is also a latecomer), in philosophy of various sorts, particularly that concerned with noetics, signification, and hermeneutics, in psychology (where Gestalt theorizing indirectly adumbrated present structuralist concerns).²¹

Ong feels that we "live in an age which quite widely favors open-system thinking, at least in principle, with some of the same fervor with which earlier chirograph and typographic cultures championed closed-system thinking."²² He expresses the commingling of the subject-object which is necessary for an understanding of phenomenology, and which is analogous to the speech act standing out against the background of the language system, as well as to the perceptual act foregrounded against a background of the perceptual field:

Thus, while structuralism on the one hand seems object-like (a "structure" as such is conceived of as somehow visibly or tangibly apprehensible, at least by analogy), a kind of "thing," and thus inhuman, it proves on the other hand to be very human after all by sharing the tragedy of all mortal existence, chronic incompleteness--which, thanks in part to structuralism, we can understand more specifically as both synchronic and diachronic incompleteness.²³

Here we come back once again to Husserl's external and internal horizons ("synchronic and diachronic incompleteness") which are shifting, incomplete, and therefore, reflect the open-system concept of perceptual experience. Merleau-Ponty sharpens this significantly by adding the body, which he feels is pivotal in the world-body system:

I am conscious of my body via the world, that it is the unperceived term in the centre of the world towards which all objects turn their face, it is true for the same reason that my body is the pivot of the world: I know that objects have several facets because I could make a tour of inspection of them, and in that sense I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body.²⁴

The paradigm for grasping Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception ("I perceive with my body")²⁵ reveals "the body as mediator of our relation to the object,"²⁶ The point here is that one "could not grasp the unity of the object without the mediation of bodily experience."²⁷

In perceptual experience the thing is correlative to my body and my body takes hold of it because it is a structure accessible to a tour of inspection by my body.²⁸ The reciprocal openness of both structures enables the body to be accessible to the thing and the thing to be accessible to the body. In perception we are present to something through our body and that something is present to us also through our body. The way we use our body is the way we come to know things in that they are caught up in the "context" of the body as it moves itself about, intertwines with, and moves the particulars. "If I draw the object closer to me

or turn it round in my fingers in order to see it better, this is because each attitude of my body is for me, immediately, the power of achieving a certain spectacle, and because each spectacle is what it is for me in a certain kinaesthetic situation."²⁹ When a perceiver moves around a die, for example, he sees the die itself at one time from this side, at another from that side, and the appearances intercommunicate,³⁰ which is the way significance is built up by the embodied subject as he moves through his world. "My mobile body makes a difference in the visible world, being a part of it; that is why I can steer it through the visible."³¹

I come to know the world because I am immersed in it. Merleau-Ponty clarifies this co-existence, "The relations between things or aspects of things having always our body as their vehicle, the whole of nature is the setting of our life, or our interlocutor in a sort of dialogue."³² If the phenomenologist is to understand "the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things"³³ and "what interior force holds the world together and causes the proliferation of visible forms,"³⁴ he must first understand the dialogue of perception whose focal point is the relation of body and world. "There is a logic in the world to which my body in its entirety conforms, and through which things of intersensory significance become possible for us."³⁵ This illumines Cézanne's statement: "The landscape thinks itself in me . . . and I am its consciousness."³⁶ This understanding

of the noetic/noematic aspect of perception concretizes for us the phenomenologist's view of painting or literature where art is no longer imitation but a process of expression, "a rebirth of existence."³⁷

Our body as subject-object, seeing and seen, touching and being touched clarifies the intertwining of body and world. Because of the synthesis of subject-object which the body is, it is enabled to unite with the surrounding particulars. "I touch myself touching: my body accomplishes 'a sort of reflection.' In it, through it, there is not just the unidirectional relationship of the one who perceives to what he perceives. The relationship is reversed, the touched hand becomes the touching hand, and I am obliged to say that the sense of touch here is diffused into the body-- that the body is a 'perceiving thing,' a 'subject-object.'"³⁸ Merleau-Ponty further exemplifies this synthesis: "I can with my left hand, feel my right hand as it touches an object, the right hand as an object is not the right hand as it touches: the first is a system of bones, muscles, and flesh brought down at a point of space, the second shoots through space like a rocket to reveal the external object in its place."³⁹ Thus, we see the body's openness to the world and to itself. "The thing and the world, are given to me along with the parts of my body, not by any 'natural geometry,' but in a living connection comparable, or rather identical, with that existing between the parts of my body itself."⁴⁰ Our body, then, "is not an assemblage of organs

juxtaposed in space,"⁴¹ if so it would be just another thing among things, which it is not since we "do not merely behold as spectators the relations between the parts of our body, . . . [but rather] we are ourselves the unifier of these arms and legs,"⁴² and as such we can combine with and give meaning to things around us.

The motility of the body, its interchangeable movement from here to there, reflects the openness which enables it in the perceptual act to conform and be correlative to the world. "The body's motion can play a part in the perception of the world only if it is itself an original intentionality, a manner of relating itself to the distinct object of knowledge. The world around us must be . . . a totality of things, open to us, towards which we project ourselves."⁴³

The reaching toward a thing, intentionality as a manner of relating, is the central doctrine of phenomenology and one shared by all phenomenologists: no matter how much their individual paths diverge, they have in common the intentional structure of consciousness. Husserl established this concept, which he acknowledges as coming from his teacher, Franz Brentano⁴⁴ and as a fundamental principle for his description of consciousness. "We understood under Intentionality the unique peculiarity of experiences 'to be the consciousness of something' . . . The concept of intentionality, grasped in the indefinite breadth we have given it, is a concept which at the threshold of phenomenology is quite indispensable as a starting-point and basis."⁴⁵

Husserl's intentionality reveals the fact that the cogito cannot be severed from the cogitatum. If all consciousness is consciousness of something then that consciousness cannot be detached from what it is conscious of. If we look at consciousness "as consciousness of such-and-such,"⁴⁶ we realize that the Cartesian "ego cogito must be expanded by one term [ego cogito cogitatum]. . . . Every cogito contains a meaning: its cogitatum."⁴⁷ Husserl elaborates: "Each cogito, each conscious process, we may also say, 'means something or other and bears in itself, in this manner peculiar to the meant, its particular cogitatum. Each does this, moreover, in its own fashion. The house-perception means a house--more precisely, as this individual house--and means it in the fashion peculiar to perception."⁴⁸ Ernst Cassirer points up this aspect of phenomenology asserting that the contents of consciousness "are only because by their very being they go beyond themselves, toward something else."⁴⁹ He concludes that because the basic character of all consciousness is to mean something, "it becomes fundamentally untenable to set off existence and consciousness, matter and form from one another as different strata."⁵⁰

Another important phenomenological aspect that intentionality reveals is the unity in multiplicities. "It is intentionality," Husserl writes, "which characterizes consciousness in the pregnant sense of the term, and justifies us in describing the whole stream of experience as at once a stream of consciousness and unity of one consciousness."⁵¹

He continues: "Thus each passing cogito intends its cogitatum, not with an undifferentiated blankness, but as a cogito with a descriptably structure of multiplicities, a structure having a quite definite noetic-noematic composition, which, by virtue of its essential nature, pertains to just this identical cogitatum."⁵² Thus, identity is possible because the "continually changing appearance of the one identical die . . . is a unity of synthesis: not merely a continuous connectedness of cogitationes (as it were, a being stuck to one another externally), but a connectedness that makes the unity of one consciousness."⁵³ The "being-in-consciousness" of the die, not as a "really intrinsic component part but . . . as something intentional,"⁵⁴ is unique to phenomenology: "The 'object' of consciousness, the object as having identity 'with itself' during the flowing subjective process, does not come into the process from outside, on the contrary, it is included as a sense in the subjective process itself-- and thus as an 'intentional effect' produced by the synthesis of consciousness."⁵⁵ Objects exist in the world as cogitationes and are thus seen "solely as the intentional correlates of modes of consciousness of them."⁵⁶

Here we see the culmination of Husserl's argument against Descartes, Hume and Kant⁵⁷ with their subjective idealism on the one hand, and the modern psychologists with their objectivism on the other. It is in Husserl's treatment of the epistemological problem of identity that one can understand the full flowering of the intentional structure of consciousness and its "intentional effect."

Merleau-Ponty continues Husserl's crusade, asserting that phenomenology "united extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism in its notion of the world . . . [wherein] perspectives blend, perceptions confirm each other, a meaning emerges."⁵⁸ He grasps Husserl's "teleology of consciousness . . . [which] is a question of recognizing consciousness itself as a project of the world . . . towards which it is perpetually directed."⁵⁹ He singles out Husserl's "operative intentionality" (fungierende Intentionalität) as a broadened notion of intentionality, differing from earlier concepts, through which one can grasp the object's unique mode of existing and which produces the "natural and antepredicative unity of the world and our life."⁶⁰

And yet for all Merleau-Ponty's agreement with Husserl and his acknowledged debt to him there are important differences,⁶¹ the most significant of which is the role of the body in perceptual experience. Merleau-Ponty subsumes Husserl's simultaneous and correlative synthesis in the intending and the intended, but he takes off from there in having the world's 'givenness' mediated by the body where Husserl's "operative intentionality" now functions in the motility of the body: "The intentionality that ties together the stages of my exploration, the aspects of the thing, and the two series to each other is neither the mental subject's connecting activity nor the ideal connections of the object. It is the transition that as carnal subject I effect from one phase of movement to another."⁶²

The body's position is a condition for the appearance of things. Because of it there is access to the thing. The contact with the particular reveals the mutual openness of body and world as both are co-determined by this experiential relationship: we grasp the unity of our body through the thing and the unity of the thing through the body.

From Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the embodied consciousness and its "motor intentionality" what is for me an interesting and compelling fact comes to light: most of the phenomenologists after Husserl deal with the pathology of motor activity. They are proving that the body orients, coordinates, and gears itself to the world, structures its surroundings correlatively to its "corporeal organization" by showing, for example, in aphasia and agnosia, what happens when it is unable to do so. First Merleau-Ponty establishes the intentional "project" that the body is: "when put in front of his scissors, needle and familiar tasks [the 'subject'] does not need to look for his hand, or his fingers, because they are not objects to be discovered in objective space: bones, muscles and nerves, but potentialities already mobilized by the perception of scissors or needle, the central end of those 'intentional threads' which link him to the objects given."⁶³ Then he proves his assertion by referring to experiments done on patients with motor disturbances caused by brain injury; for example, on patients whose visual, tactile, and motor functions do not merge, and therefore a "shrinkage in the field" and a failure in a specific movement result. He cites an experiment

from Kurt Goldstein⁶⁴ (other phenomenologists have referred to this same experiment)⁶⁵ where "a subject may know how to knock at a door, but he can no longer do so if the door is hidden or merely out of reach."⁶⁶ He continues: "In the latter case, the patient cannot perform the action of knocking or opening in a void, even if his eyes are open and fixed on the door."⁶⁷ His field, unlike the normal person's, is limited to objects actually touchable, excluding horizons of possible touch. Merleau-Ponty concludes: "The deficiency would appear, in the last resort, to affect a function much deeper than vision . . . It appears to concern the subject's vital area: that opening upon the world which has the effect of making objects at present out of reach count . . . [wherein] they exist for him as touchable things and part of his world of movement."⁶⁸

If the brain-injured subject is unable to correlate his body and world, as the normal subject does, then the role of the body in perceptual experience is verified and we see that perception is not a collection of sense data synthesized by an act of the intellect but rather a "primordial contact" with an object, a communion through our body which seizes and acts upon it, building up its significance, its way of being-in-the-world, and its intelligible structure.

As we come to understand the philosophical concepts of phenomenology, the main question of this study coalesces: what has the unity, identity, and inseparability of the body

and world to do with poetry? The emerging answer is that in the world of the poet the perceptual experiences there must mirror the perceptual mode of the poet. Perceptual experience in the poem must be a "re-birth of existence" where the structure of the object is grasped as well as its horizons. The elements of the world must be captured and exhibited as they form themselves and move about. If, for example, the sea is in a poem, then it must be not a representation of the sea, but rather the sea as it comes to be sea for us, and its mode of behaviour from a particular view of it must therefore be exhibited in the poem. The words of the poet must express the sea as it is for him and we, the reader, when entering his world must reconstitute the sea as it "means" for the poet. Merleau-Ponty explains how art exhibits being: "Because each fragment of the world--and in particular the sea, sometimes riddled with eddies and ripples and plumed with spray, sometimes massive and immobile in itself--contains all sorts of shapes of being and, by the way it has of joining the encounter with one's glance, wakens a series of possible variants and teaches, over and beyond itself, a general way of expressing being."⁶⁹ He gives Renoir by the sea at Cassis as an example of the "interrogation" which reveals being: "Renoir only asks the sea--which alive can teach what he asks--for its way of interpreting the liquid substance, of exhibiting it, and of arranging it. In short . . . he only asks for a typical form of manifestation of water."⁷⁰

Keats's letters and poetry reflect the intentional structure of consciousness in the mutual openness necessary for the dialogue of perception to take place. He gives us the imperative, "Let us open our leaves like a flower and be passive and receptive" (L, I, 232), and he also expresses the responsive opening up of the object:

to his sight
 The husk of natural objects opens quite
 To the core; and every secret essence there
 Reveals the elements of good and fair;
 Making him see, where Learning hath no light.
 (W, 419)

To perceive here is not an act of the intellect ("Learning hath no light") but rather a revelation brought about by a correlativity of perceiver and perceived.

What is expressed by the poet is inseparable from the process generating it, and therefore exhibits the way the poet responds to his world and reflects the genesis and meaning of his conscious activity. Keats shows an "open-system mind-set" when he states in a letter that "Man may like the Spider spin from his own inwards his own airy Citadel--the points of leaves and twigs on which the Spider begins her work are few and she fills the Air with a beautiful circuiting" (L, I, 231-232). The idea of a system woven between self-body-world is envisioned here in the image of the web which, like Einstein's curvature of space, non-Euclidean, is finite yet unbounded. This image may also serve as a map of the perceptual continuum which is woven from percept to percept in a perceptual field. The percept

is an aspect of the object, the lamp seen from a frontal view.

The web image, the weaving of threads in a fabric, is apt also in relating the philosophy of language to the phenomenology of perception. Cassirer underscores this relationship as he traces Herder's dynamic of consciousness back to Leibniz' concept of the "unity of consciousness as the unity of apperception."⁷¹ But Herder, who came to psychology not from natural science but from the philosophy of language, enriched this concept by doing away with traditional psychological categories of language and "living in it."⁷² "Thus," Cassirer states, "there entered into the phenomenology of perception a new stream of thought which immediately demonstrated its vitalizing and fructifying power."⁷³

Cassirer provides us here with two vital ideas for our study of the phenomenology of perception. First, he relates the unity of perceptual meaning to that of linguistic meaning, which "cannot be built up piece by piece from its components, from separate words--rather, the particular word presupposes the whole of the sentence and can only be interpreted and understood through it."⁷⁴ In the same way the percept is pregnant with the meaning of the object it is an aspect of, and in turn the object with the perceptual field it is part of. Cassirer, then, following Herder, takes us a step further: sensations, like letters of words, cannot just be strung together to form a meaning. Rather,

in perceptual experience, they flow into one, and it is this unity in multiplicity that leads us to the second vital point: the intentional structure of consciousness is shown by the unfolding of meaning, the communication with "the pure dynamic of consciousness, that original flowing and forming which contains in it the potentiality of all future configurations."⁷⁵

Now we see clearly how the perceptual world is built up as the particulars present themselves to consciousness, and through a "reciprocal involvement" consciousness "reads them as experience."⁷⁶ "Each particular phenomenon is now no more than a letter which is not apprehended for its own sake . . . rather our view passes through the letter and beyond it to ascertain the signification of the word to which the letter belongs and the meaning of the sentence in which this word stands. Now the content . . . speaks to consciousness and tells it something . . . it serves only to communicate a definite meaning and to compose it with others into structures of signification, complexes of meaning."⁷⁷

Keats saw the communication between perceiver and perceived in the world around him; in his poetry objects look back at him; they behave and present themselves in a certain manner, and because of the "reciprocal involvement" the poet can share in their existence, communicate with the nightingale, the urn, the robin, and the sparrow. In "Song" he says to the robin:

STAY, ruby-breasted warbler, stay,
 And let me see thy sparkling eye,
 Oh brush not yet the pearl-strung spray
 Nor bow thy pretty head to fly.

Stay while I tell thee, fluttering thing,
 That thou of love an emblem art.
 (W, 429)

The robin is caught in the moment of preparing to fly away. The "about-to" aspect is foregrounded by Keats and we feel the muscles vibrating and the body fluttering in preparation. Keats slows up the motion, emphasizing the structure of the moving body, its articulation as it organizes and meshes with space in preparation for flight.

Keats recognizes that there is not simply motion and rest, as there is not simply sound and silence. The change from movement to rest may be mapped on a continuum revealing different levels of motion. The moving body is perceived in a dynamic relationship to its surroundings and therefore motion is perceived against a background of immobility. It is the interrelationship between mobility and immobility which reveals the structure of the perception of movement. Merleau-Ponty asserts that "motion is a phenomenon of levels, every movement presupposing a certain anchorage which is variable."⁷⁸ Perception of motion is not mere change of place, an object seen in this spot then in that spot; but rather there is an "internal relationship between what is abolished and what comes into being."⁷⁹ This relationship helps us to understand why Merleau-Ponty says that Duchamp's La Mariée does not move: "We see a rigid body . . . it is here and it is there, magically, but it

does not go from here to there . . . whereas Gericault's horses really run on canvas . . . the horses . . . bring me to see the body's grip upon the soil."⁸⁰ Quoting Rodin, Merleau-Ponty sums up the case for the phenomenological: "It is the artist who is truthful, while the photograph is mendacious."⁸¹ And here we can add the poet as well, as Keats's robin comes to rest and decides not to fly away:

Yes! patient plume thy little wing,
 Whilst I my thought to thee impart.
 (W, 429)

The robin preens himself patiently as the poet participates in its being and communicates with it. Poet and bird meet in the "interface," which is "the place at which independent systems meet and act on one another or communicate with one another."⁸² Walter Ong relates communication and human consciousness:

Communication requires closure, or unification and distinctness of a being, maximum interiority, organization from within, like that of a system, and openness, or access to whatever is outside the closure. . . . Human consciousness is open closure. The "I" interfaces with everything. There can be little doubt that our central experience on which we build (with the help of other data of course) our concept of the "one," of unity, is our conscious experience of self that we capture in the saying of "I."⁸³

We can recognize that Keats, a perceptual poet, ever conscious of the world around him communicates in this way, and the concept of "interface" concretizes for us the meeting of the self and world which is a vital key to the structure of

consciousness and the structure of the poetry.

Intentionality, characterized by openness, a reaching toward a not-self, can be exemplified in the bodily experience of the perceiver/poet. An openness of body, as well as an openness of mind, corresponding to the openness of the perceived, makes intentionality more than just a directing of the mind to an object. Merleau-Ponty sees motility as basic for intentionality: "Consciousness is in the first place not a matter of 'I think that' but of 'I can'. . . . Consciousness is being towards the thing through the intermediary of the body. A movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its 'world' and to move one's body is to aim at things through it."⁸⁴ Objects must be present for the body which is why they "no longer exist for the arm of the apraxic"⁸⁵ ("a disorder of voluntary movement, consisting in a more or less complete incapacity to execute purposeful movements. . . . A psychomotor defect in which one is unable to apply to its proper use an object which one is nevertheless able to name and the use of which one can describe.")⁸⁶ Bodily experience, the motor intention of the perceiver's body, reveals the body as "our general medium for having a world."⁸⁷

Keats is aware that the perceiver's bodily experience discloses the world for him. If not to commune with nature, Keats asks, then

why sit here
In the Sun's eye, and 'gainst my temples press
Apollo's very leaves, woven to bless.
(W, 363)

With a sense of joy in commingling, the perceiver here experiences "the feel of May;/The eyelids with the passing coolness play" (W, 364). The verb "play" here is significant, reflecting a reciprocity which underscores the bodily experience of the breeze. Keats particularizes the experience to express the coexistence of incarnate self and world. In his poems, the perceiver lies down, kneels, sits, stands, moves about, grasps and rotates objects. He perceives with his body and the motor intentionality reveals the correlativity of body and world.

Stevens, with greater complexity, detailing, and expansion, expresses the world around him:

With my whole body I taste these peaches,
I touch them and smell them . . .

I absorb them as the Angevine
Absorbs Anjou. I see them as a lover sees,

As a young lover sees the first buds of spring
And as the black Spaniard plays his guitar, . . .

The bells of the chapel pullulate sounds at
Heart. The peaches are large and round,

Ah! and red; and they have peach fuzz, ah!
They are full of juice and the skin is soft.

They are full of the colors of my village
And of fair weather, summer, dew, peace.

(CP, 224)

The senses communicate in the perception of the peaches, providing access to them and unfolding their meaning for the perceiver. Stevens adds an interesting dimension here, asking "Who speaks?" in several stanzas, and the peaches become delineators of the self: "Who speaks? But it must

be that I,/That animal, that Russian, that exile." The poet concludes, "I did not know/That such ferocities could tear/One self from another, as these peaches do."

Bodily experience for Stevens structures the world and the poem, wherein he points up the communication and correlativity of self and world:

There was a clearing, a readiness for first bells,
An opening for outpouring, the hand was raised:
There was a willingness not yet composed,

A knowing that something certain had been pro-
posed, . . . a happening

In space and the self, that touched them both at once.
(CP, 483)

In the world of the poem the union of self and object
acquires

Its true appearances there, sun's green,
Cloud's red, earth feeling, sky that thinks.

From these it takes. Perhaps it gives,
In the universal intercourse.
(CP, 177)

In the flow of experience the body and the world commingle:

the eye so touched, so played
Upon by clouds, the ear so magnified
By thunder, parts, and all these things together,
Parts, and more things, parts.
(CP, 242)

There is a reversal of Keats's "The eyelids with the passing coolness play," as here the eye is touched and played upon by the clouds. Merleau-Ponty shows the reversal expressed

thesis, "Nota: his soil is man's intelligence" (CP, 36). Now the object as agent is disclosed as coexistent and correlative with the perceiver. Then Crispin resolves the dialectic: "He made a singular collation. Thus:/The natives of the rain are rainy men" (CP, 37). Stevens expresses the fusion, the communion of self and world. The thing as agent is revealed in perceptual experience, which points up the inseparability of the seen from the one who sees; both are "inexticably there,/The pulse of the object, the heat of the body grown cold" (CP, 463).

Thus, there is a reciprocity which characterizes intentionality as revealed in the phenomenology of perception and in the world of the poem: the pulsation of the elements and particulars of nature vibrate within us ("Morning is not sun,/It is this posture of the nerves" [CP, 182]) and we in turn share in the being of the object. ("The grass is full/And full of yourself. . . ./A self that touches all edges" [CP, 209]). Stevens recognizes that the embodied consciousness intends an object in his world and grasps it in the unique perceptual moment: "Within the very object that we seek,/Participants of its being. It is, we are" (CP, 463). The mutual openness revealed in the act of perception allows for the communion of self and world wherein they "become," which underscores the inseparability of the two from each other and from the process fusing them. "We are two that use these roses as we are,/In seeing them" (CP, 431). The perceiver's use of the roses here is a proclaiming of

their meaning-for-him as he sees them. Stevens sets up the dynamic appearing and the process of meaning bestowal over against a fixed definition or state of an object. "The moment's sun, . . ./Overtaking the doctrine of the landscape" (CP, 204); "There is no place,/Here, for the lark fixed in the mind/In the museum of the sky" (CP, 182). He celebrates the shifting arrangement of the particulars in the process of coming-to-mean:

Until the used-to earth and sky, and the tree
And cloud, the used-to tree and used-to cloud,
Lose the old uses that they made of them,
And they: these men, and earth and sky, inform
Each other by sharp informations, sharp.
(CP, 411)

"Inform" here is significant in its double meaning: a dialogic encounter of presenting and disclosing each to the other, as well as a reciprocal form-giving wherein each comes to be and mean through the other. "Information" is ironic here as Stevens means the opposite of the pejorative sense of mere information, factual data. He is not playing off the double sense of the word as with "inform"; he only wants the single meaning of "information," which reveals the formative principle of something, because the "sharp informations" cut away the old uses of earth and sky, "the doctrine of this landscape."

The mutual form-giving is only possible because of the openness of self and world. The perceptual moment is incomplete and in its incompleteness both perceiver and

perceived can affect each other, and, paradoxically, the percept becomes less while at the same time becoming more:

They are more than leaves that cover the barren
rock

They bud the whitest eye, the pallidest sprout,
New senses in the engendering of sense,
The desire to be at the end of distances

The body quickened and the mind in root.
(CP, 527)

What Stevens here calls "the cure/Of leaves and of the ground and of ourselves" is the interaction, the communion which bestows meaning on, and which breathes life into, the world around us. And we, in the commingling with the being of the particular, are shaped by the contact: "This man/Is all the birds he ever heard" (OP, 58). Stevens reiterates the integration, the fusion of body and elements: "Cloud-cloisters blow/Out of the eye when the loud wind gathers up and blows" (OP, 58). That is why "the truth depends on a walk around a lake,/A composing as the body tires, a stop/. . . to watch/A definition growing certain" (CP, 386). Bodily experience composes, and "because the temple is never quite composed" (OP, 50) each perceptual moment is the unfolding of meaning wherein the body and object intertwine and are inseparable from the process which joins them.

Stevens asserts that we "live incessantly in change," (OP, 50) a condition which opens the world for us, and therefore in the poetry he foregrounds process and movement, the motion that collapses scenes and emotions as systems communicate:

Fly low, cock bright, and stop on a bean pole. Let
Your brown breast redden, while you wait for warmth
With one eye watch the willow, motionless . . .

A complex of emotions falls apart,
In an abandoned spot. Soft, civil bird,
The decay that you regard: of the arranged, douceurs,
Tristesses, the fund of life and death, suave bush

And polished beast, this complex falls apart.
And on your bean pole, it may be, you detect
Another complex of other emotions, not
So soft, so civil.

(CP, 377)

This calls to mind Keats's robin ("Stay ruby-breasted warbler"), who also stops to wait, and is foregrounded in the landscape of the poem as we watch the bird, see its eye or essence, and follow its motion and rest as it interacts with its world. Bodily movement in Keats and Stevens reflects the "about-to-be" and the "just having been," which renders art truthful:

That scrawny cry--it was
A chorister whose c preceded the choir.
It was part of the colossal sun,

Surrounded by its choral rings,
Still far away. It was like
A new knowledge of reality.

(CP, 534)

The "not yet composed," the hand raised in readiness, and the horizons clinging to the "just composed" ("a certain tip/To which all birds come . . ./But when they go that tip still tips the tree" [CP, 17]) are two important moments in perceptual experience, both of which Keats suggests and Stevens makes explicit.

Keats recognized that man "spins from his own inwards" the web of a world, and as maker of the poem it is inseparable from his creating of it. He knew the lines of this text generate a world:

This pleasant tale is like a little copse:
 The honied lines do freshly interlace
 To keep the reader in so sweet a place,
 So that he here and there full-hearted stops;
 And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops
 Come cool and suddenly against his face,
 And by the wandering melody may trace
 Which way the tender-legged linnet hops.
(W, 364)

The interlacing of the "honied lines" place and orient the reader and their "wandering melody" directs, serves as marker so that he may follow the path of the linnet.

Stevens takes these two ideas, the world which comes from oneself ("I saw the world in which I walked, and what I saw/Or heard or felt came not but from myself" [CP, 65]), and the text as world ("he sat there reading, from out of the purple tabulae,/The outlines of being and it expressings, . . ./Which . . . Took on color, took on shape and the size of things as they are" [CP, 424]), and he shows us how this comes to be:

His self and the sun were one
 And his poems, although makings of his self,
 Were no less makings of the sun.
(CP, 532)

Stevens particularizes and reiterates this relationship of self, world, and poem which becomes one of his central themes. His poems reflect the bodily experience that

composes and orders the world for him and for us ("To see,/ to hear, to touch, to taste, to smell, that's now,/That's this" [CP, 225]). The "maker's rage to order" (CP, 130) composes the sea, "Words of the fragrant portals," (CP, 130) and himself ("I was myself the compass of that sea" [CP, 65]), and both are proclaimed in the poem ("There never was a world for her/Except the one she sang and singing made" [CP, 130]).

Stevens points out how readers of a work of poetry enter the "new text of the world" (CP, 494):

They see
The metropolitan of mind, they feel
The central of the composition, in which
They live. They see and feel themselves, seeing
And feeling the world in which they live.
(OP, 64)

He exemplifies for us the fusion of self and world in the work, where meaning is unfolded in the way the poet cries, and in the way he perceives his world:

In the glassy sound of your voices, the porcelain
cries,
The alto clank of the long recitation, in these
Speak, and in these repeat: To Be Itself,
Until the sharply-colored glass transforms
Itself into the speech of the spirit, until
The porcelain bell-borrowings become
Implicit clarities in the way you cry
And are your feelings changed to sound.
(OP, 52)

The poem then is the "infinite incantation of our selves" (CP, 145), and Stevens epitomizes the poet who asserts:

I am the necessary angel of the earth,
 Since, in my sight, you see the earth again,

 Cleared of its stiff and stubborn, man-locked set,
 And, in my hearing, you hear its tragic drone

 Rise liquidly in liquid lingerings,
 Like watery words awash.
 (CP, 496-497)

Stevens gives us the paradigm here for the phenomenological approach to poetry as the lines reflect the openness-- "cleared of its stiff and stubborn, man-locked set"--of the poet as he views his world and expresses the generation of what he sees in a language that embodies the meaning of its coming-to-be. The relationship of language to the phenomenology of perception is too huge an undertaking to be included in this study as it is an entire field in itself, but some reference to it here cannot be excluded. Much of the criticism levelled at a phenomenological interpretation of poetry singles out its deficiency in omitting the role of language. Ong, for example, notes "its failure by and large to consider language primarily as it really is," and he feels little is said in the phenomenological analysis "about the differences between oral and written discourse and the fact that texts must be recycled back through sound to have meaning."⁸⁹ Phenomenologists have recognized the role of language in the creation and interpretation of the textual world. Perhaps Ong is right in stating that phenomenologists treat language differently from the way that linguists do, but to see this as "failing to consider

language as it really is" is unfair. They see it in the light of what interests them: the relation of language to the coming-to-be of the world and the genesis of meaning in that world. Cassirer devotes an entire volume to language and "its own characteristic part in establishing the concept of the I and of the world," and sees it as one "of the sources of light, the prerequisite of vision and the wellsprings of all formation."⁹⁰ He posits the psychological standpoint of the phenomenologist's interest in language; he feels that "the unity of language could no longer be sought in its logical content, but only in its genesis and in the psychological laws governing this genesis."⁹¹

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of language⁹² illumines the relationship between words, between signifier and signified, and between speech and language; he uses the Saussurean framework to understand the dynamic process of the expressive act as experienced by a speaking subject. It is of signal importance to understand that just as in perception there is an horizon of invisibility clinging to the visible, so in expression there is a background of silence against which the speech of the poet stands out. The fringe of silence surrounds the expressivity of speech: behind what is said lies what is unsaid.

In creating a poem, the poet does not simply translate a meaning for us. He creates a world, the meaning of which the reader must reconstitute, as he does in perception, by contact with it as an embodied consciousness. John O'Neill

sees "consciousness as institution," a process wherein new meaning is "anchored." The act "involves an institution of meaning in which both speaker and listener, writer and reader, share in the same expressive operation of the recuperation and innovation of a style of language."⁹³ He continues, "We start by reading an author, leaning at first upon the common associations of his words until, gradually, they begin to flow in us and to open us to an original sound which is the writer's voice borrowing from us an understanding which until then we did not know was ours to offer. . . . Once we have acquired the author's style of thinking our lives interweave in a presence which is the anticipation (Vorhaben) in the words of the whole of the author's intention and its simultaneous recovery (Nachvollzug) which continues the understanding."⁹⁴

In Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn," we are plunged into the world of the urn created for us by the poet's perception of it. The meaning of the urn for Keats is discovered in the expressive act which we, as reader, reconstitute.

The poet's speech in Stanza III of the ode is raised to a high pitch of intensity and reflects the peak of feeling that leads to a degree of inarticulateness:

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new;
 More happy love! more happy, happy love!
 (W, 210)

The repetition ("happy" appears six times in five lines, and "for ever" appears five times in four lines) is significant in this stanza: it seems to engender acceleration and reflects an effort at control. There is a correlation here between repetition (which might be semantic restriction), and acceleration (in line five the words tumble out breathlessly), and prosodic restraint and the spilling over of passionate feelings reflected in the last five lines of this stanza. The poet is trying to rein in his feelings paralleled by the slowing up of the meter. The slower pace of this line underscores the acceleration of the next two lines as they become shrill with the residue of the poet's passion, which inheres in the repetitive phrasing of lines four and five, leading to an emotive unleashing reflected in the rest of the stanza.

The third stanza is pivotal for our understanding of the relationship between words in a phenomenological concept of language, which posits that they are "diacritical": "that each of them signifies only its difference in respect to the others."⁹⁵ "Each one of them does not so much express a meaning as mark a divergence of meaning between itself and other signs."⁹⁶

More is unsaid in the first half of Keats's third stanza, and it is only in relationship of the words to the horizon of silence surrounding it that we can understand the virtual world of the figures on the urn. Merleau-Ponty promulgates a divergent relationship in his language theory:

As far as language is concerned, it is the lateral relationship of one sign to another which makes each of them significant, so that meaning appears only at the intersection of and as it were in the interval between words. . . . The relation of meaning to the spoken word can no longer be a point to point correspondence that we always have clearly in mind . . . To speak is not to put a word under each thought; if it were, nothing would ever be said. We would not have the feeling of living in the language and we would remain silent, because the sign would immediately be obliterated by its own meaning and because thought would form from a wholly explicit language. . . . Language expresses as much by what is between words as by the words themselves.⁹⁷

Just as the subject-object polarity in phenomenology is more complex than consciousness versus its object, so the relationship of speech to language is also more complex: it is more than simply the speaking act versus spoken acquisition; although there is that binary opposition, there is more to it than that. It is a living in language wherein the speaking subject "deforms" the language which he makes his own by creating his "thought-in-speech," a meaning embodied in the expressive act.

Merleau-Ponty writes of the speech-language relation:

I say that a signification is acquired and henceforth available when I have succeeded in making it dwell in a speech apparatus which was not originally designed for it. Of course the elements of this expressive apparatus did not really contain it. . . . I had to throw them off center and recenter them in order to make them signify what I intended. It is just this "coherent deformation" of available significations which arranges them in a new sense and takes not only the hearers but the speaking subject as well through a decisive step.⁹⁸

He emphasizes the importance of the body in the giving of signification and the fusion of body and speech in the gesture. The meaning of the gesture is not behind it but is embodied in the gesture itself: "The gestures does not make me think of anger, it is anger itself."⁹⁹

Keats points up the involvement of the body and the expressive gestures, which reflect the network of intentional relations in communication with others. There is a mutual confirmation in the silent language of the gesture. Movement and gesture, for example, are combined in a scene in Endymion in the Garden of Adonis (Book II):

Adonis something mutter'd
The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh
Lay dormant, mov'd convuls'd and gradually
Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum
Of sudden voices, echoing, 'Come! come!
Arise! awake! . . .
Rise, Cupids! or we'll give the blue-bell pinch
To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life begin!'
At this, from every side they hurried in,
Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists,
And doubling over head their little fists
In backward yawns.

(II, 497-502; 505-510)

The articulation of the body reflects its possession of space, and one's spatial behavior refutes the theory of the body as an object in space.

The "Ode on a Grecian Urn" reflects the spatial relation¹⁰⁰ within a poem as the language moves back or forward with the deictic functioning anaphorically or cataphorically:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.

(W, 209)

"Ye" in "ye soft pipes" is an anaphoric deictic which refers back to a previously mentioned nominal group. Much of the frequent deixis is anaphoric in this ode. Keats uses anaphora more often because he varies perspective, perceiving the same object in a different light, and therefore he points back to it.

Three important points which relate the speech act to the perceptual and reflect the phenomenologist's focus are (1) the fact that the word is related to other words as the percept is to other percepts (the experience of the word or percept are both unique moments, inseparable from the speaker or perceiver, of the process of the unfolding of meaning and both the word and the percept are pregnant with their potential meaning); (2) the audible is related to the inaudible as the visible is to the invisible (in both cases the horizon of silence or invisibility clings to each respectively); and (3) the speech act, like the perceptual, stands out against a background which is its field (parole set against langue, percept set against a field of objects).

These points relate language and perception, and both communicate and reinforce each other in the textual world. Garth Gillan, whose incisive book on Merleau-Ponty, reflects the theme of the joining of perceptual and linguistic experience in the world of the text, outlines his aim in the preface: . . . "to unfold the text and in unfolding the text to express the rapport of the text with the world signified in its language."¹⁰¹

Stevens shows what living in language meant and the language of his text, he tells us, helps us to live our lives because it structures the world for us. He is totally aware of the "power possessed by language of bringing the thing expressed into existence."¹⁰² Stevens expresses this power and how to use it:

Be the voice of night and Florida in my ear.
Use dusky words and dusky images
Darken your speech
Conceiving words,

As the night conceives the sea-sounds in silence,
And out of their droning sibilants makes
A serenade.

(CP, 86)

His imperatives show that the "dark-colored words" make a difference, "an alteration/Of words that was a change of nature" (CP, 487). Merleau-Ponty explains, "We mould and animate the reader, we cause him to participate in our creative or poetic action."¹⁰³ To do this, Stevens says, "we put mantles on our words because/The same wind, rising and rising, makes a sound/Like the last meeting of winter as it ends" (CP, 519). If the words of the poem are "virile with his breath" (CP, 207), then they embody their meaning rather than translate the thought into speech. A poem does "not illustrate a ready made thought," Merleau-Ponty writes:

The process of expression, when it is successful, does not merely leave for the reader and the writer himself a kind of reminder, it brings the meaning into existence as a thing at the very heart of the text, it brings it to life in an organism of words, . . . opening a new field or a new dimension of experience.¹⁰⁵

And our linguistic experience is parallel to our perceptual in our orienting ourselves and coexisting with the particulars in each:

I do not need to visualize external space and my own body in order to move one within the other. It is enough that they exist for me, and that they form a certain field of action spread around me. In the same way I do not need to visualize the word in order to know and pronounce it. It is enough that I possess its articulatory and acoustic style . . . the word has a certain location in my linguistic world, and is part of my equipment.¹⁰⁶

"The thinker as reader reads what has been written/He wears the words he reads to look upon/Within his being" (CP, 492). It is not a question of representation where speech is a sign of thought, but rather that in the writer or reader a thought in speech exists.¹⁰⁷ Merleau-Ponty clarifies the speech-thought relationship: "Speech and thought . . . are interinvolved, the sense of being held within the word, and the word being the external being of the sense."¹⁰⁸ This sense of being activates the word in the world of the poem, in "verses wild with motion/full of din,/Loudened by cries, by clashes, quick and sure" (CP, 16) Stevens reflects the kinesthetics of the word:

There are words of this,
Words, in a storm, that beat around the shapes.

There is a storm much like the crying of the wind,
Words that come out of us like words within, . . .

He can hear them, like people on the walls,
Running in the rises of common speech.

(CP, 335-336)

Stevens emphasizes the relationship of the word to the engendering of a world in the poet's text. For him, it is not that words call to mind a mental picture of what he is talking about, but rather that "the word is the making of the world" (CP, 345), where "just to name, is to create" (OP, 104). The act of naming brings into existence the thing named; and it lives in "Letters of rock and water, words/Of the visible elements and of ours" (CP, 232). The act of reading becomes a living in the words, and the reader makes them part of himself, as they are part of the poet who, in an infinite incantation of himself, sings the world ("he sang the colors in the stones" [CP, 230]).

The concept of the poet as rhapsodist brings together two ideas that are significant in a phenomenological interpretation of the text: the poet's singing of self and world and "the rhapsody of things as they are," (CP, 183) consisting of a fragmenting process which is revealed in the perceptual experience proclaimed by the poet. Walter Ong expresses vision as fragmentation: "Now sight, as Merleau-Ponty has beautifully (and again!) elucidated, is a fragmenting or dissecting sense. It thus serves as an analogue for our understanding because it cuts apart."¹⁰⁹ Then Ong weds vision to the language of vision in the creative process, the expression of which is parallel:

Vision is a fractioning sense, as Merleau-Ponty and others have remarked. So in its own way was the commonplace tradition, which, even in its original oral roots, had

tended to fragment discourse into the bits assembled by oral narrators and orators-- "rhapsodizers" or "song-stitchers," in the original Greek meaning of this term, who sewed together the commonplace bits out of which thought and discourse were made. It was not on the face of it unlikely that the fragmenting possibilities of the visual field would be exploited somehow when commonplaces were subject to the visual regimen of print.¹¹⁰

Vision, according to Merleau-Ponty, "breaks up the form spectacle"¹¹¹; it is an upheaval which severs the ordinary ties between things,¹¹² so that we can see what causes them to take form.¹¹³ The dissecting function of vision is what Merleau-Ponty terms "dehiscence of Being": "Every visual something . . . gives itself as a result of a dehiscence of Being."¹¹⁴ ("Dehiscence" is "a splitting of an organ in accordance with its structure.") An important point should be underscored here: although the splitting of the object in a sense removes total objectivity, it is not replaced by a total subjectivity, a private inaccessible domain. "Now when a stroke of the brush replaces a reorganization of appearances . . . which introduces us to wool or flesh, what replaces the object is not the subject--it is the allusive logic of the perceived world."¹¹⁵

The fragmenting then is what frees the artist to capture and render visible the object's mode of presentation and what it means to be what it is. "Vision or an action that is finally free throws out of focus and regroups objects of the world for the painter and words for the poet."¹¹⁶

And the poets, Keats and Stevens, envision the creative

and perceptual processes as a decomposing and reconstitution, the "innumerable compositions and decompositions which take place" (L, I, 265). Stevens expresses the paradox of shrinking to expand:

There might be, too, a change immenser than
A poet's metaphors in which being would

Come true, a point in the fire of music when
Dazzle yields to a clarity and we observe,

And observing is completing and we are content,
In a world that shrinks to an immediate whole,

That we do not need to understand, complete
Without secret arrangements of it in the mind.

There might be in the curling-out of spring
A purple-leaping element that forth

Would froth the whole heaven with a seeming-so,
The intentions of a mind as yet unknown,

The spirit of one dwelling in a seed,
Itself that seed's ripe unpredictable fruit.

(CP, 341)

The idea of "bracketing," holding in aneyance, the "secret arrangements . . . in the mind," is a vital mode in phenomenology. It is what Stevens means when the Spaniard "rescued the rose/From nature, each time he saw it, making it/As he saw it, exist in his own especial eye" (CP, 316). The concept originates with Husserl and is reflected in the works of later phenomenologists.

Husserl, in Cartesian Meditations, shows his use of, yet divergence from, Descartes' philosophy. He states that the Cartesian doubt for him is a bracketing, so that when this method is followed . . . the being of the world must

remain unaccepted at this initial stage."¹¹⁷ Earlier, in several important passages in Ideas, Husserl describes the phenomenological epokhe (ἐποχή) as an abstention, a disconnecting of the data of the natural world, a bracketing of the "General Thesis according to which the real world about me is at all times known not merely in a general way or something apprehended, but as a fact-world that has its being out there"¹¹⁸:

We can treat the potential and unexpressed thesis exactly as we do the thesis of the explicit judgment. A procedure of this sort, possible at any time, is, for instance, the attempt to doubt everything which Descartes, with an entirely different end in view, with the purpose of setting up an absolutely indubitable sphere of Being, undertook to carry through. We link on here, but add directly and emphatically that this attempt to doubt everything should serve us only as a device of method, helping us to stress certain points which by its means . . . must be brought to light. . . . It is likewise clear that the attempt to doubt any object of awareness in respect of it being actually there necessarily conditions a certain suspension (Aufhebung) of the thesis; and it is precisely this that interests us . . . the thesis undergoes a modification--whilst remaining in itself what it is, we set it as it were "out of action," we "disconnect it," "bracket" it. . . . In the attempt to doubt applied to a thesis . . . the "disconnexion" takes place.¹¹⁹

Husserl continues, proposing that we disregard Descartes' attempt at universal denial and "extract only the phenomenon of 'bracketing' or 'disconnection' which is obviously not limited to that of the attempt to doubt."¹²⁰ Husserl asserts that "in relation to every thesis, we can use this peculiar epokhe-abstention, a certain refraining from judgment."¹²¹

We put out of action the general thesis which belongs to the essence of the natural standpoint, we place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of being: this entire natural world therefore which is continually "there for us," "present to our hand," and will ever remain there, is a "fact-world" of which we continue to be conscious, even though it pleases us to put it in brackets.¹²²

Thus Husserl sets aside all presuppositions and brackets all scientific knowledge about the natural world in order to get to consciousness as a field of experience. Ronald Bruzina elucidates the concept of bracketing in Husserl's phenomenology:

Husserl proposes, then, that we disallow any notion based upon the natural attitude to influence our view of consciousness in its operation, that we suspend the frame of mind in which we hold for a world existing "there" all around "outside" us, and somehow influencing the world "here" "inside" us--and that we now try to consider our conscious experience as it would present itself. This means that we would precisely no longer think of consciousness as an "inside" and a perceptual object, for example, a chair, as "outside," "out there" in the universe. Rather, consciousness is now a pure field of experience-in-the living (lived experience, *Erlebnis*), in which various objects are found as *appearings-in-the field*.¹²³

He elaborates:

In this new point of view, we consider our perceptual object, e.g., the chair, as a phenomenon in our perceiving of it, to be no longer possessed of the index, the "value": "existing out there," but with the index or value: "object-for . . .," "phenomenon within . . ." . . . we consider it precisely as making its appearance to/within consciousness. Its value is not "thing," but "appearance for . . .," "Phenomenon within . . .," i.e., within the field of experience purely taken.¹²⁴

Merleau-Ponty follows the Husserlian concept of bracket-

ing. He feels that in order to see the world and grasp it as paradoxical, we must break with our familiar acceptance of it."¹²⁵ Then we can really look at an object for to "look at an object is to inhabit it, and from this habitation to grasp all things in terms of the aspect which they present to it."¹²⁶ Emphasizing the object's mode of presentation to the perceiver, then, requires a suspension of his pre-suppositions about it. Merleau-Ponty states that "the world should have ceased to exist around me in order to become purely and simply an object before me . . . we have the power of placing in abeyance, and that suffices to ensure our freedom from determinism. . . . I can "bracket" my opinions or the beliefs I have acquired."¹²⁷ He gives us the reason for the process and shows his debt and closeness to Husserl here:

It is because we are through and through compounded of relationships with the world that for us the only way to become aware of the fact is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity (to look at it ohne mitzumachen, as Husserl often says), or yet again, to put it "out of play." Not because we reject the certainties of common sense and a natural attitude to things--they are, on the contrary, the constant theme of philosophy--but because, being the pre-supposed basis of any thought, they are taken for granted, and go unnoticed, and because in order to arouse them and bring them to view, we have to suspend for a moment our recognition of them.¹²⁸

It is interesting to me to note the tie-in between Husserl's "bracketing," Hegel's "kenosis," and Keats's

"negative capability." All three have in common an openness, a cleansed and heightened sensitivity, readying the perceiver for experience. It is in relation to experience that these concepts are analogous in that the result is an emptying, a relinquishment which enables the subject to commune with the object of experience, and which renders the experience, the experiencer, and the experienced distinguishable but inseparable. Hegel sees experience as a process "where subject and object are transparent to each other, where the subject is aware of itself in its object, and the object responds and corresponds to the function of the subject."¹²⁹ The significance of experience to Hegel "consists in its being the process of manifesting or evolving consciousness of self, in the subject's becoming gradually aware of or finding itself in its object, and so coming to be 'at home' in its world."¹³⁰ Kenosis enables the experience to take place only because "self-consciousness empties itself of itself and makes itself into the form of 'thing.'"¹³¹

I am aware of many important differences among the processes of "bracketing," "kenosis," and "negative capability," but it is the similarities that are interesting and useful here as they relate to experience: all three involve an emptying which makes possible perceptual experience, an unfolding of the object as it comes to mean for the perceiver.

Keats writes that "several things dovetailed in my mind & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a

Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare possessed so enormously--I mean Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (L, I, 193). Keats, intuitively, has put his finger on the pulse of phenomenology here: the negating of pure subjectivity. Hegel asserts that "negativity lies in the function of distinguishing and establishing existence."¹³² Just as the negative dimension in perception allows for the making visible, so the negative dimension of knowing, the objectification of self allows for the coming-to-be of subject and object in experience. "The negative of the subjective function of knowing"¹³³ is, for me, what Keats means by negative capability and makes possible "abandonment to the very life of the object"¹³⁴; it is this objectification which leads him to dwell in the existence of sparrow and nightingale. In "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats shares in the being of the bird: "'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,/But being too happy in thine happiness'" (W, 207). He knows that since "the dull brain perplexes and retards" (W, 208) and would prevent his experience of the nightingale, data must be suspended, disconnected. It is this suspension which accounts for the amassing in Keats's poetry of varied states of half-consciousness: sleep, drowsiness, numbness, etc., are variations on a theme of self-emptying.

Interestingly, Stevens deals with the concept of self-emptying in the opposite mode: his imagery reflects a

heightened sensitivity, a sharpness which is a clearing of the consciousness. "There was a clearing, a readiness for first bells,/An opening for outpouring" (CP, 483). In Stevens "we awake/Within the very object that we seek,/Participants of its being" (CP, 463). He delineates the process: "You must become an ignorant man again/And see the sun again with an ignorant eye" (CP, 380). "Ignorance" here is a bracketing of presuppositional knowledge which frees the perceiver to experience his world. For Stevens knowledge is an intrusion in reaching the "vulgate of experience" (CP, 465), where "Between us and the object, external cause,/The little ignorance . . . is everything,/The possible nest in the invisible tree" (CP, 437). Stevens reiterates the relation between ignorance and experience:

It may be that the ignorant man, alone,
Has any chance to mate his life with life
That is the sensual, pearly spouse, the life
That is fluent in even the wintriest bronze.
(CP, 222)

In the flux of experience a correlative openness is required for the experience "to mate life with life." Paradoxically, for Stevens to be ignorant, to be in the dark, makes things accessible.

The lover sighs as for accessible bliss
Which he can take within him on his breath,
Possess in his heart, conceal and nothing known.

For easy passion and ever-ready love
Are of our earthly birth and here and now
And where we live and everywhere we live,

As in the top-cloud of a May night-evening,
 As in the courage of the ignorant man,
 Who chants by book, in the heat of the scholar,
 who writes

The book, hot for another accessible bliss:
 The fluctuations of certainty, the change
 Of degrees of perception in the scholar's dark.
 (CP, 395)

Stevens uses varied synonyms for attaining the state of ignorance, a process which parallels the concept of bracketing: a knowledge incognito ("Even the seeming of a summer's day,/Is description without place. It is a sense/To which we refer experience, a knowledge/Incognito" [CP, 343]); a relaxation of knowledge ("We must enter boldly that interior world/To pick up relaxations of the known" [CP, 333]); an inert knowledge ("It is as if/We had come to an end of the imagination,/Inanimate in an inert savoir" [CP, 502]); a banished knowledge ("what thoughts,/Like jades affecting the sequestered bride;/And what descants, he sent to banishment" [CP, 34]). It is a process analogous to Keats's negative capability, a not reaching after knowledge ("to find,/Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all" [CP, 404]; "Then there is nothing to think of. It comes of itself" [CP, 209]). For Stevens ignorance or suspended knowledge is a nakedness ("The nothingness was a nakedness, a point/Beyond which thought could not progress as thought" [CP, 403]), a poverty ("And naked of any illusion, in poverty,/In the exactest poverty, if then/One breathed the cold evening, the deepest inhalation/Would come from that return to the subtle centre" [CP, 258]), which leads to discovery ("Secrete

us in reality. Discover/A civil nakedness in which to be"
 [CP, 310]; "The rose/Of paper is of the nature of its
 world . . ./And, otherwise the rainy rose belongs/To naked
 men, to women naked as rain" [CP, 252]).

Hegelian kenosis, for me, illumines Stevens' poetry
 about self-division:

The self, the chrysalis of all men
 Became divided in the leisure of blue day
 And more, in branchings after day. One part
 Held fast tenaciously in common earth.
 (CP, 468)

Hegel reflects three moments in the evolving consciousness:

There are three moments to be distinguished:
 Essential Being; explicit Self-existence,
 which is the express otherness of essential
 Being, and for which that Being is object;
 and Self-existence or Self-knowledge in that
 other.¹³⁵

Stevens' "concentred self" expresses an essential Being and
 a self-division which captures the object:

Three times the concentrated self takes hold,
 three times
 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.
 (CP, 376)

Hegel asserts the dialectic of self in its division:

The essential Being beholds only itself in
 its Self-existence, in its objective other-
 ness. In this emptying itself, in this

kenosis, it is merely within itself: the independent Self-existence which excludes itself from essential Being. It is the "Word," the Logos, which when spoken empties the speaker of himself, outwardizes him, and leaves him behind emptied, but is as immediately perceived, and only this act of self-perceiving himself is the actual existence of the "Word."¹³⁶

This passage is central to understanding phenomenology as "the study of the advent of being into consciousness,"¹³⁷ and at the same time relates consciousness, language, and perception as interconnected aspects of experience.

Merleau-Ponty sharpens the concept of "outwardizing," by seeing that "it is the identity of the external and the internal and not the projection of the internal in the external."¹³⁸

Stevens expresses this relationship:

It is the mind that is woven, the mind that was jerked
And tufted in straggling thunder and shattered sun.

It is all that you are, the final dwarf of you,
That is woven and woven and waiting to be worn,

Neither as mask nor garment but as a being.
(CP, 208)

Here we have unmediated vision, unencumbered by mask or garment and separated from theoretical knowledge. "The final dwarf," the "hot" of one, is Stevens' image for what remains after the process of suspension has taken place.

Husserl gives predominance to the phenomenological processes known as the "reductions." Throughout his work, he purports there are two reductions: the phenomenological

or transcendental and the eidetic reduction. As I understand them the phenomenological or transcendental is existential in that the existence of the world is suspended as is all theoretical knowledge about it and the objects in it-- instead of being accepted as existing, things present themselves, are brought into being; the eidetic is essential in that it is an "intuition of essences," a drawing out of essences from variations of experience. "The essence of an object is its necessary structure: what makes it what it is."¹³⁹

The transcendental-phenomenological reduction is a suspension of the belief in the existence of the world, the existence of pre-given objects, and all our presuppositional knowledge about them as objects. Aron Gurwitsch describes its purpose: "Under the phenomenological reduction, acts of consciousness are considered solely as experiences of objects, in and through which objects appear, present themselves, and are apprehended as what they are."¹⁴⁰ To loosen the bands formed by our preconditional acceptance of objects, is to free us to see what the percept means to us as we perceive it; it reveals the operations of consciousness, disclosing perception as a bestowal of meaning.

Husserl discusses this phenomenological methodology:

This universal depriving of acceptance, the "inhibiting" or "putting out of play" of all positions taken toward the already-given objective world and, in the first place, all existential positions (those concerning being, illusion, possible being, being likely, probable, etc.),--or, as it is also called, this "phenomenological epoche" and "paren-

thesizing" of the objective world--therefore does not leave us confronting nothing. On the contrary we gain possession of something by it; and what we (or, to speak more precisely, what I, the one who is mediating) acquire by it is my pure living, with all the pure subjective processes making them up, and everything meant in them, purely as meant in them: . . . If I . . . refrain from doing any believing that takes "the" world straightforwardly as existing--if I direct my regard exclusively to this life itself, as consciousness of "the" world--I thereby acquire myself as the pure ego, with the pure stream of my cogitationes.¹⁴¹

When we effect the reduction, what remains over is the "phenomenological residuum," a unique region of Being,¹⁴² and "to the residue thereby left over belong the noemata with the noematic unity which lies in them themselves, and with these the mode in which what is real (Reales) is specifically given in consciousness itself, and our consciousness becomes aware of it."¹⁴³

The eidetic reduction is a process leading to the discernment of the essence of an object which "seems to express the conditions that must be realized to make its existence possible."¹⁴⁴ It is a suspending of the contingent and individual characteristics to get at the necessary and general, the invariant, the structure which renders it what it is. We must leave aside the individual and empirical fact to get to the essence:

At first "essence" indicated that which in the intimate self-being of an individual discloses to us "what" it is. But every such What can be "set out as Ideas":
Empirical or individual intuition can be

transformed into essential insight (ideation)-- a possibility which is itself not to be understood as empirical but as essential possibility. The object of such insight is then the corresponding pure essence or eidos.¹⁴⁵

The essence is not conditioned by facts and prior to all concepts: "The eidos itself is a beheld and beholdable universal, one that is pure 'unconditioned'--that is to say: according to its own intuitional sense, a universal not conditioned by any fact. It is prior to all 'concepts,' in the sense of the verbal significations; indeed, as pure concepts, these must be made to fit the eidos."¹⁴⁶ Husserl exemplifies the essence:

Thus, for example, every tone in and for itself has an essential nature, and at the limit the universal meaning-essence "tone in general," or rather the acoustic in general--understood in the pure sense of phase or aspect intuitively derivable from the individual tone (either in its singleness, or through comparison with others as a "common element"). So too every material thing has its own essential derivatives, and at the limit the universal derivative "material thing in general."¹⁴⁷

The process of getting from individuality to essence is, then, the eidetic reduction whereby

pure of transcendental phenomenology will be established not as a science of facts, but as a science of essential Being (an "eidetic" Science); a science which aims exclusively at establishing "knowledge of essences" (Wesenserkenntnisse) and absolutely no "facts." The corresponding Reduction which leads from the psychological phenomenon to the pure "essence," or in respect of the judging thought, from factual ("empirical") to "essential" universality, is the eidetic Reduction.¹⁴⁸

"Essence intuition," arrived at by the changeover into possible perceptions is one of the most difficult concepts in phenomenology. Throughout his work, Husserl reiterates the point that "each individual event has its essence that can be grasped in its eidetic purity,"¹⁴⁹ and he proposes that to get at the essential content we suspend the individual facts, the "fact character of the natural world in the eidetic reduction."¹⁵⁰ He outlines the process:

Starting from this table-perception as an example, we vary the perceptual object, table, with a completely free optionalness, yet in such a manner that we keep perception fixed as perception of something, no matter what. Perhaps we begin by fictively changing the shape or the color of the object quite arbitrarily, keeping identical only its perceptual appearing. In other words: abstaining from acceptance of its being, we change the fact of this perception into a pure possibility, one among other quite "optional" pure possibilities--but possibilities that are possible perceptions. . . . Thus removed from all factualness, it has become the pure "eidos" perception, whose "ideal" extension is made up of all ideally possible perceptions, as purely phantasmatic processes.¹⁵¹

Gurwitsch gives us the clearest account of this process; "free optionalness" is a synonym for "free variation" or "ideation," terms which Husserl uses interchangeably:

In the performance of the process of free variation, it appears that, as long as certain structures remain invariant, however thoroughgoing and deep-reaching the variation might otherwise be, the resulting products of our imagination are still conceivable as possible specimens of the class of the object chosen. . . . By means of the process of free variation, these structures prove

invariant by determining limits within which free variation must operate in order to yield possible examples of the class under discussion. These invariants define the essence or *eidos* of this class. . . . They specify necessary conditions to which every specimen of the class must conform to be a possible specimen of this class.¹⁵²

It is interesting to note here the analogy between Husserl's free variation and the Stevensian imagination, also a process of free play related to perception and grounded in possibility.

By comparing the two reductions we can come to more fully understand them. They are purifying processes: "It is only when the subject has been purified to the extent of being absolutely pure subjectivity that it can be the universal a priori source of objectivity."¹⁵³ For descriptive purposes we can say that "the first reduction [transcendental/phenomenological] purifies the cogito, whereas the second reduction [eidetic] purifies the cogitatum."¹⁵⁴ But a caveat must be issued here as they (cogito and cogitatum) are actually inseparable: "Just as there is no consciousness (act of consciousness) without its objective reference, so there can be no object without its subjective reference."¹⁵⁵ Or to put it another way, "What remains important is that essences be understood in an intentional context--that the essential structures of an act of consciousness always be understood in relation to some object (however general), and that the essential structures of objects be seen in relation to possible intending acts."¹⁵⁶ Husserl himself, for analytical purposes distinguishes between the cogito and cogitatum:

The perspective variation is an experience. But experience is possible only as experience and not as something spatial. The perspected variable, however, is in principle possible only as spatial (it is indeed spatial in its essence), but not possible as experience. In particular it is also nonsense to take the perspective shape-variation (that of a triangle, for instance) for something spatial and capable of being in space, and whoever does this is confusing it with the perspected variable, the shape that manifests itself through the appearance.¹⁵⁷

The perspective variation refers to the cogito, the experiencer and the perspected variable refers to the cogitatum, the experienced. But Husserl posits their inseparability because the "'actually existing Object' can have sense only as a unity meant and meanable in the nexus of consciousness."¹⁵⁸ The act of perceiving unifies and gives meaning to the perceiver and perceived and renders them inseparable.

We have now come to the most controversial issue in any discussion of the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty: the relationship between their views of the reduction. The whole controversy turns on the question of whether or not Husserl in his theory of essences separates essence from existence. Interestingly, Merleau-Ponty himself defends Husserl on this very point, which has been emphasized as reflecting a gulf between the two philosophers:

Husserl's essences are destined to bring back all the living relationships of experience, as the fisherman's net draws up from the depths of the ocean quivering fish and seaweed. Jean Wahl is therefore wrong in saying that "Husserl separates essences from existence." The

separated essences are those of language. It is the office of language to cause essences to exist in a state of separation which is in fact merely apparent, since through language they still rest upon the ante-predicative life of consciousness.¹⁵⁹

Merleau-Ponty, throughout his work,¹⁶⁰ consistently defends Husserl's theories. He asserts his agreement with Husserl and often goes to some lengths to modify the theories to fit in with his own. For example, he certainly re-directs and refocuses the reductions, giving them little emphasis in his own work. However, I feel this is not a contradiction or a rejection of Husserl, but rather a supplementation, a divergence in orientation perhaps, but one arising from a common goal: a desire to reveal the structure of consciousness. As Merleau-Ponty works out these theories in the dynamic process that philosophy is, there are changes, however, within his work and in his view of this Husserlian concept.¹⁶¹ This is what brings into play the charge against phenomenology as a philosophy of "ambiguity," but perhaps the charge of ambiguity is not as negative as one might be led to believe. Merleau-Ponty feels that "there is a 'good ambiguity' in the phenomenon of expression, a spontaneity which accomplishes what appeared to be impossible when we observed only the separate elements."¹⁶² I think a certain amount of ambiguity is built into a process which tries to understand being-in-the-world and issues cannot always be settled. The philosopher, like the painter, in "working over a favorite

problem . . . unknowingly upsets the givens of all the other problems."¹⁶³ He retraces, alters, and retracts because "the soil beneath our feet is shifting,"¹⁶⁴ and completion is a "spurious fantasy" since "the figurations of literature and philosophy are no more settled than those of painting and no more capable of being accumulated into a stable treasure . . . if no work is ever absolutely completed and done with, still each creation changes, alters, enlightens, deepens, confirms, exalts, re-creates, or creates in advance all the others. . . . If creations are not a possession . . . they have almost all their life before them."¹⁶⁵

It is this sense of ambiguity which gives rise to and explains the diverse range of the critical opinions of the relationship between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, which varies from seeing their philosophies as concordant, as contradictory, or as divergent but with a common denominator.¹⁶⁶ The latter is the most widely accepted view, and Bruzina incisively describes "a meeting of the positions of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty [where] both find the intentional grasp of meaning of any kind to be grounded in the pre-pedicative life of temporally flowing consciousness."¹⁶⁷ For both, phenomenology does more than describe; it is an unfolding through "presuppositionless neutrality," a "laying open of consciousness as the pure field of significance."¹⁶⁸ A few critics incorporate differing views within the same work; for example, Lauer writes:

"Paradoxically enough Merleau-Ponty is at one and the same time true to the spirit of Husserl's phenomenological method and untrue to Husserl in what he expects that method to yield."¹⁶⁹

It is beyond the scope of this study to explore the complex and subtle differences and similarities between the reductions in Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. It has to suffice here to briefly illustrate the concept in Husserl, and to point out how it is altered by Merleau-Ponty.

For Merleau-Ponty the meaning and importance of the phenomenological reduction lies in its revelation of our relationship with the world. It is not "a procedure of idealistic philosophy, [as] phenomenological reduction belongs to existentialist philosophy: Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world' appears only against the background of the phenomenological reduction."¹⁷⁰ To get at being-in-the-world we simply, by means of the reduction, unfold the world's coming-to-mean-for-us. We defamiliarize the world, "break with our familiar acceptance of it and . . . from this break we can learn nothing but the unmotivated upsurge of the world."¹⁷¹ We slacken the threads that attach us to the world, and in the process they are brought to our notice.¹⁷² Merleau-Ponty sifts out all of Husserl's extensive analyses in dealing with the 'problematic of the reduction,' on which he tells us Husserl has spent more time than any other question,¹⁷³ and he gets to the kernel of its viability: it is simply a reduction to our consciousness of the world as we experience it.

The eidetic reduction presents more of a problem for Merleau-Ponty as it is more complex. It is a question here of the degree to which the process can be carried out. He does not reject the eidetic reduction per se; what he rejects is its primary place in phenomenology and the extreme of Husserl's application of it to arrive at "pure essences." He feels it is a myth to believe the Wesenschau (intuition of essences) can penetrate to "pure essences," which would isolate them from their existential involvement. In his early works, Merleau-Ponty defends Husserl against this very point: "In defending Husserl against the false interpretations that are so common, we must emphasize the concrete and familiar nature of this Wesenschau. It is a grasping of universal meanings in and through my contingent experience."¹⁷⁴ In the posthumously published The Visible and the Invisible, however, he feels he must make it clear that he cannot go along with a settled and complete reduction: "Now would be the time to reject the myths of inductivity and of the Wesenschau . . . it would be naive to seek solidity in a heaven of ideas or in a ground (fond) of meaning--it is neither above nor beneath the appearances, but at their joints; it is the tie that secretly connects an experience to its variants."¹⁷⁵ So for the eidetic reduction to work for him, or for us, in interpreting the textual world, we must realize that before "the essence as before the fact, all we must do is situate ourselves within the being we are dealing with, instead of looking at it from the

outside--or, what amounts to the same thing, what we have to do is put it back into the fabric of our life, attend from within to the dehiscence (analogous to that of my own body) which opens it to itself and opens us upon it, and which, in the case of essence, is the dehiscence of the speaking and thinking."¹⁷⁶ Therefore consciousness reveals one in a situation, and Merleau-Ponty thus proves that the dichotomy of consciousness and being is untenable. He has arrived, and consistently so, at his use of Husserl's eidetic reduction: essences, intuited by an embodied consciousness, "are expressions of the meaning of existence inasmuch as that meaning is itself recognized by consciousness."¹⁷⁷

For Merleau-Ponty the Husserlian reductions unfold "the way the world comes to belong to the subject and the subject to himself, which is that cogitatio which makes experience possible; our hold on things and on our 'states of consciousness.'"¹⁷⁸ By positing the body as the third term in the dialectic of consciousness and world, Merleau-Ponty, for me, concretizes and makes viable Husserl's perceptual theories. He substantiates the concept of intentionality and establishes its importance as access to self and world by seeing that "unity and identity of the perceived thing are correlative of the unity and identity of the body."¹⁷⁹ Thus we understand that as "a correlate of the body the perceived thing exhibits a structure making itself accessible to inspection by the body."¹⁸⁰

In Merleau-Ponty the phenomenological reduction is a

process which suspends our prior knowledge of the percept, defamiliarizes it, and thus opens us to experience by reducing the percept to our experience of it:

When I perceive a cube, it is not because my reason sets the perspectival appearances straight and thinks the geometrical definition of a cube with respect to them. I do not even notice the distortions of perspective, much less correct them; I am at the cube itself in its manifestness through what I see.¹⁸¹

But the reduction is paradoxical in that things are reduced so that they can be built up, so that the relations compressed into the fragment can be unfolded by the perceiver as he experiences them.

In Merleau-Ponty the eidetic reduction is a process which removes the accidental and contingent to get at the necessary, the invariant which remains through all conceivable variations, the essence or structure "that one could not suppress or change without the thing ceasing to be itself."¹⁸² This reduction is paradoxical also because by suspending our affirmation of the being of the object to arrive at its essence, we underscore its existential involvement because we express our coexistence with it.

In a search for meaning, the intuition of essences is for Merleau-Ponty a means to an end not an end in itself as in Husserl. Whereas Husserl aims at the "pure essence," Merleau-Ponty's eidetic reduction is an expansion. And herein lies the main difference between them: to Merleau-Ponty "one's knowing is precisely one's being in the world."¹⁸³

Remy Kwant states the reversal that epitomizes this difference: "The coherence of our field of experience, however, is not due to essences; that something like an essence exists is due to the coherence of our field of experience. Essences do not underlie our experience, but our experience underlies essences."¹⁸⁴

For Merleau-Ponty the essences can never be isolated from our experience of them. To him, the necessity of essence is only valid as a durable truth because of our experience of it.¹⁸⁵

It is to experience therefore that the ultimate ontological power belongs, and the essences, the necessities by essences, the internal or logical possibility, solid and uncontestable as they may be under the gaze of the mind, have finally their force and their eloquence only because all my thoughts and the thoughts of others are caught up in the fabric of one sole Being.¹⁸⁶

What the eidetic reduction does for Merleau-Ponty is to help him get to the necessary relation that makes a thing what it is, which is exactly what Wallace Stevens does at the end of "The Comedian as the Letter C," "So may the relation of each man be clipped" (CP, 46), a poem reflecting man's search for meaning in his encounter with self and world. It is illuminating here to view Crispin's perceptual experience in the poem as analogous to the phenomenology of the perceptual process in the world around us. Seen in this light, the phenomenological methodology becomes a viable interpretive tool as it unfolds the poem reflecting how objects in our world come to mean for us.

In the first stanza with Crispin at sea, Stevens focuses on the eye of Crispin and transforms his "eye of land" to "the eye of Crispin, hung on porpoises, instead of apricots" (CP, 27). He is immediately reduced to the essence or eye and his land-dwelling roles and knowledge, which Stevens calls "the lost terrestrial," are put out of circuit, disconnected. They are the "mythology of self," and are "Blotched out beyond unblotching," so that Crispin . . . now beheld himself,/A skinny sailor peering in the sea-glass. . . . The whole of life that still remained in him/Dwindled to one sound strumming in his ear" (CP, 28). The "one sound" is the reduction to essence for Crispin, that which cannot be modified or changed, as it would then no longer be what it is.

In the second and third stanzas Stevens compares Crispin with Triton dissolving into essence:

Triton incomplicate with that
Which made him Triton, . . .

Just so an ancient Crispin was dissolved . . .
until nothing of himself
Remained, except some starker, barer self
In a starker barer world.

(CP, 28-29)

In the next stanza, which concludes Canto 1, the lines, "Severance/Was clear. . . . The sea/Severs not only lands but also selves" (CP, 30), are significant as Crispin, the perceiver, confronts and reduces his self and world. Here we see the poem as analogous to the process of the reductions: objects are severed from theoretical knowledge of them, their

"facticity" is suspended, and essences are intuited. But the reductions here, as in Merleau-Ponty, are a means to get at the things themselves:

Here was the veritable ding an sich, at last,
 Crispin confronting it . . . free
 From the unavoidable shadow of himself
 That lay elsewhere around him. . . .
 Here was no help before reality.
(CP, 30)

Stevens echoes here the phenomenological dictum that the thing perceived is inseparable from the perceiver in the act of perceiving it.

Crispin "beheld" and "was made new," so that the "imagination here, could not evade,/In poems of plums, the strict austerity/Of one vast subjugating, final tone" (CP, 30).

For me, the passage provides a key to the Stevensian imagination because it cannot be an evasion if the poet is to be "the necessary angel of earth." It must be tied to the possible and delimited by the essential structure, "the gray particular of man's life," the invariant beyond which one cannot go for the object to remain what it is. For Stevens, the poet's calling is to use his imagination, then, to reach "the supreme fiction," one that must be rooted in the realm of the possible--"On the irised hunks, the stone bouquet" (CP, 227).

One can see here the relationship between the Stevensian imagination and Husserl and Merleau-Ponty's use of "free variation," a way to get at the intuition of essences, in

the process of the eidetic reduction: "We so to speak, shift the actual perception into the realm of non-actualities, the realm of the as-if, which supplies us with "pure" possibilities, pure of everything that restricts to this fact or to any fact whatever."¹⁸⁷ Cunningham describes this process:

A second question to be considered here is how one arrives at the set of conditions which must relate to the possibility of p. This is done by what Husserl calls a process of "free variation" . . . [where] one begins to vary the elements of the structure until one reaches a point beyond which one can no longer freely vary elements without destroying the structure one is investigating.¹⁸⁸

From this imaginative varying emerges the sense of fiction which is of signal importance in understanding Stevens. The relationship between essence and imagination is clarified when we see that the phenomenological intuiting "brings the 'fiction' into play, causes the datum of consciousness to vary imaginatively, and develops experience in the mode of 'as if.' The fiction is the path from the fact to the eidos of the experienced."¹⁸⁹ Husserl sees this and realizes that "fiction is the source whence the knowledge of 'eternal truths' draws its sustenance."¹⁹⁰

The paradoxical elements in phenomenology where to reduce is to enlarge, are expressed by Stevens' voyager Crispin who, in Canto II, returned to land and

Found his vicissitudes had much enlarged
His apprehension, made him intricate
In moody rucks, and difficult and strange
In all desires, his destitution's mark.

(CP, 31)

Destitution and poverty in Stevens is an "essential barrenness" (CP, 373), a "civil nakedness in which to be" (CP, 310); it is not a dead end but a reduction that generates an expansion. Crispin's poverty here anticipates the sibyl's in "The Sail of Ulysses" where the lushness, self-parody, and play of the "Comedian" is burned away, leaving a piercing core, hardened and crystallized in the image of the sibyl of the self:

The self as sibyl, whose diamond,
Whose chiefest embracing of all wealth
Is poverty, whose jewel found
At the exactest center of the earth
Is need.

(OP, 104)

Crispin, who before his sea voyage, "wrote his couplet yearly to the spring/As dissertation of profound delight" now finds the "elemental potencies" of poetry:

He perceived
That coolness for his heat came suddenly,
And only, in the fables that he scrawled
With his own quill.

(CP, 31)

Crispin's "fabulous and . . . intrinsic verse" weds the imaginary and the essential. ("The false and true are one" [CP, 253]). Stevens, like Merleau-Ponty, sees the imaginary and the real as phases of experience: "I have an experience of the real and the imaginary."¹⁹¹ In perception the opening up of the world "enables us to 'cross out' the previous illusion,"¹⁹² but it is "the nature of illusion not to present itself as such."¹⁹³ For unreality to be at all it has to seem real:

Seeing, some distance away in the margin of
my visual field, a large moving shadow, I
look in that direction and the phantasm
shrinks and takes up its due place; it was
simply a fly near my eye. I was conscious
of seeing a shadow and now I am conscious
of having seen nothing more than a fly.¹⁹⁴

But there is no such control in the "Comedian," which differs from later poems, for example, "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" or "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven," in that earlier, Stevens undercuts the resolution he offers and lets himself wallow in imaginative flights of fancy as if he has to get this out of his system--"So much for that." The poem moves from self-deflation ("Crispin,/The lutanist of fleas, the knave, thethane/The ribboned stick") to self-aggrandizement ("For Crispin and his quill to catechize"), from stripping down ("The world, a turnip once so readily plucked") to over-luxuriance:

But they came parleying of such an earth,
So thick with sides and jagged lops of green,
So intertwined with serpent-kin encoiled
Among the purple tufts, the scarlet crowns,
Scenting the jungle in their refuges,
So streaked with yellow, blue and green and red
In beak and bud and fruity gobbet-skins,
That earth was like a jostling festival
Of seeds grown fat, too juicily opulent,
Expanding in the gold's maternal warmth.
(CP, 32)

Helen Vendler points out "the gestures toward jaunty fertility which so clog the texture of the Comedian."¹⁹⁵ At the end of the Canto, though, the thunderstorm comes, and proclaims his freedom: "His mind was free/And more than free, elate,

intent, profound," and echoing through him "the thunder,
lapsing in its clap,/Let down gigantic quavers of its voice,/For Crispin to vociferate again" (CP, 33).

In Canto III Crispin "brackets" the "lesser things/Than the relentless contact he desired." He disconnects what gets "Between himself and his environment":

what thoughts,
Like jades affecting the sequestered bride;
And what descants, he sent to banishment!
(CP, 34)

Crispin continues his voyage and is the "poetic hero . . . without regalia" (CP, 35), a "searcher for the fecund minimum" (CP, 35). The phrase is the epitome of Stevens' sense of a reduction pregnant with potential expansion. It is the skeletal bareness he must reach:

He marked the marshy ground around the dock,
The crawling railroad spur, the rotten fence,
Curriculum for the marvelous sophomore.
It purified. It made him see how much
Of what he saw he never saw at all.
(CP, 36)

The familiar acceptance of things is an abstraction and distances one from seeing. Stevens views perception not as an intellectual act but as an experience of the eye:

Crispin dwelt in the land and dwelling there
Slid from his continent by slow recess
To things within his actual eye, alert
To the difficulty of rebellious thought.
(CP, 40)

Crispin relates himself to the existence of the essence:

the plum "survives in its own form/Beyond these changes," and he grounds his experience in that existence: "So Crispin hasped on the surviving form,/For him, of shall or ought to be in is" (CP, 41). He lays bare this essential relation, and Stevens ends the "Comedian" with the necessity for reduction: "So may the relation of each man be clipped" (CP, 46).

One must grant in reading Stevens that he is close to Merleau-Ponty in his interrogation of being, his dialectic of self and world, and his view of perceptual experience as a search for, and bestowal of, meaning on the world around him. Like Merleau-Ponty, he sees the intuition of essences as a means to an end, and he sees existence and essence as inseparable: "This kind of investigation of essence is at the same time an analysis of existence in the modern sense of the word . . . since the essence of an experience is always a certain modality of our relation to the world."¹⁹⁶ Through the analogy of the reductions in phenomenology, Stevens is revealed as bracketing mediating knowledge, as suspending the familiar, and as searching for essence:

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

Trace the gold sun about the whitened sky
Without evasion by a single metaphor.
Look at it in its essential barrenness
And say this, this is the centre that I seek.
(CP, 373)

If the reduction, then, is to be seen as a means to an end, what is the end desired in phenomenology? It is to get at the things themselves and through our experience of them build up a meaning for ourselves. This search for meaning relates phenomenology and poetry as processes undertaking this quest. Through understanding the phenomenological mode of constitution, we can see the way, in perceptual experience, that the significance of the world around us is built up.

Constitution is the central and culminating process in phenomenology: it is what every aspect has led up to. We can now see the relationship between reduction and constitution: reduction is preparative of constitutive experience because it suspends the consideration of prior knowledge and existence of the object, so that the perceiver can, by contact with the object, "exist" it for himself. We can also see the relationship between intentionality and constitution as the perceiver reaches out toward a world, and because of his copresence and correlativity with it, can bring it to meaning. Constitution is "the function of the ego . . . bestowing unity and meaning on all acts and objects of consciousness as well as on itself."¹⁹⁷ The perceiver as an embodied subject, disconnects all prior knowledge of the object as object, throws himself into the perceived, and experiences this intended percept as it presents itself to him in a particular appearance of itself realized in a definite act of consciousness.

Two important questions emerge from the study of constitution: (1) What is the relation between the act of seeing and the being of the seen? (2) What is the relation between the particular appearance of the object and the object in its totality? Husserl reiterates these problems in great detail and sets up the right questions, but, for me, it is Merleau-Ponty who answers them by a sharpening of the focus, a total avoidance of circumlocution, and a resolution of the dialectic in his theory of the subject as incarnate consciousness where consciousness and being intersect.

Let us look at the first question in Husserl where he puts his finger right on the pulse of the problem:

The phenomenology of cognition is the science of cognitive phenomena in two senses. On the one hand it has to do with cognitions as appearances, presentations, acts of consciousness On the other hand, the phenomenology of cognition has to do with these objects as presenting themselves in this manner. The word "phenomenon" is ambiguous in virtue of the essential correlation between appearance and that which appears.¹⁹⁸

He establishes the polarity of consciousness and being inherent in the process of constitution. ("Consciousness gives sense, but the object gives itself.")¹⁹⁹ Ricoeur points out "the central difficulty of the Husserlian notion of constitution, the difficulty of bringing the theme of sense-giving (Sinngebung) into coincidence with the theme of self-givenness (Selbstgegebenheit)."²⁰⁰

I think Husserl begs the question when he assumes his

conclusion, "Thus this marvelous correlation between the phenomenon of cognition and the object of cognition reveals itself everywhere,"²⁰¹ without really arriving at it.

Although he does propose a connection, "as unities of cognition [they] have also their unitary objective correlates,"²⁰²

I do not think it resolves the problem or justifies his solution: "We finally arrive in this way at an understanding of how the transcendent real object can be met (can be known in its nature) in the cognitive act as that which one primarily means by it, and how the sense of this meaning is filled out step by step in a developing cognitive context."²⁰³

What this means, if I read Husserl correctly, is that as object for a subject, the perceived is tied to, and means for, the perceiver by the act of perceiving, and thus knowing and being coincide. But this merely acknowledges that there is a dialectical relationship between the two, but it fails to show just how the two reals intersect.

As for the second question, Husserl himself forms it:

The house is a transcendent thing, and forfeits its existence after the phenomenological reduction. The house-appearance, this cognitatio, emerging and disappearing in the stream of consciousness is given as actually evident. In this house-phenomenon, we find a phenomenon of redness, of existence, etc. These are evident data. But is it not also evident that a house appears in the house-phenomenon, and that it is just on that account that we call it a perception of a house?²⁰⁴

Husserl understands the relation of appearances in seeing

"a unity belonging to the passing flow of multiplicities."²⁰⁵

This unity is for him a unity of synthesis, not a collection of externally strung together acts, but rather an interconnectedness which is constituted.²⁰⁶ Husserl brackets out the factual object because the only way we can know it (and here Merleau-Ponty would agree) is in the varied appearances of it which we experience. However, appearances are not signs but aspects of the object and that is why they tally and merge with one another. And that is why they are real, a point which is central to Stevens: "Let be be finale of seem" (CP, 64); "These are the actual seemings that we see,/ Hear, feel and know" (CP, 340); "And as and is are one" (CP, 476).

But for Husserl the object of consciousness is a being in consciousness as an objective sense, the unity paralleling the unity of one consciousness which acts in a multiplicity of modes, just as the same objectivity presents itself in varied appearances:

The existence of a world and accordingly, the existence of this die are "parenthesized" in consequence of my epoché; but the one identical, appearing die (as appearing) is continuously "immanent" in the flowing consciousness, descriptively "in" it; as is likewise the attribute "one identical." This being-in-consciousness is a being-in of a completely unique kind; not a being-in consciousness as a really intrinsic component part, but rather a being-in-it "ideally" as something intentional, something appearing--or equivalantly [sic] stated, a being-in-it as its immanent "objective sense." The "object" of consciousness, the object as having identity "with itself" during the flowing subjective process, does not come into the process from outside; on the contrary,

it is included as a sense in the subjective process itself--and thus as an "intentional effect" produced by the synthesis of consciousness.²⁰⁷

The attempt to combine different realms here clearly reflects Husserl's dualism; and, for me, Merleau-Ponty resolves the problem in his theory of the embodied subject who actually coexists with his world because he can make a "tour of inspection" of the object which presents itself in its varied perspectives to him:

The sides of the cube are not projections of it, but precisely sides. When I perceive them successively, with the appearance they present in different perspectives, I do not construct the idea of the flat projection which accounts for these perspectives; the cube is already there in front of me and reveals itself through them. I do not need to take an objective view of my own movement or take it into account, in order to reconstruct the true form of the object behind its appearance; the account is already taken, and already the new appearance has compounded itself with the lived-through movement and presented itself as an appearance of a cube. The thing, and the world are given to me along with the parts of my body, not by any "natural geometry," but in a living connection comparable, or rather identical, with that existing between the parts of my body itself.²⁰⁸

The bestowing of meaning is for Merleau-Ponty not a step-by-step thought process: "I do not have one perspective, then another, and between them a link brought about by the understanding, but each perspective merges into the other."²⁰⁹ His theory of meaning can best be understood by looking at two aspects of it: the expressive gesture and the interrogation of being.

Gestural meaning for Merleau-Ponty presupposes intersubjectivity and communication. "Communication is achieved when my conduct identifies this path with its own. There is a mutual confirmation between myself and others."²¹⁰ He gives an example of this identification through bodily behavior in the form of the sexual gesture:

The sexual scene will be merely an unfamiliar and disturbing spectacle, without meaning unless the child has reached the stage of sexual maturity at which the behaviour becomes possible for it. . . . The example would pass unnoticed if it did not coincide with the inner possibilities of the child. The sense of the gesture is . . . seized upon by an act on the spectator's part,²¹¹

. . . an "act of appropriation which we all experience when we say that we have 'found' the rabbit in the foliage of a puzzle, or that we have 'caught' a slight gesture."²¹² Our bodily relation to the world is expressed by the gesture and that is why we can "catch" it.

Identity of a gesture, like that of an object, necessitates intentionality, bodily motility, an open-ended system of communication: "The communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others, of my gestures and intentions discernible in the conduct of other people. It is as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his. The gesture which I witness outlines an intentional object."²¹³

The relation of bodily behavior in the gesture to its meaning parallels the relation, in speech, of the word to

its meaning: both embody it. "The link between the word and its living meaning is not an external link of association, the meaning inhabits the word, and language is not an external accompaniment to intellectual processes,"²¹⁴ and neither is the gesture an accompaniment to emotion. The emotion resides in it. "The gesture does not make me think of anger; it is anger itself."²¹⁵

The gesture is not a sign of the emotion behind it; it is intermingled with the structure of the world²¹⁶ and reflects the power of my body to adjust to things in the world because "it is through my body I understand other people just as it is through my body I perceive things."²¹⁷ The gesture is the unique patterning of body and world in emotion and the difference in behavior corresponds to the difference in the way we live the emotion.²¹⁸ The subject as incarnate consciousness understands the "sensible configuration" of an object or gesture because to look at it is to inhabit it, to grasp things in the aspect which they present to him.²¹⁹ We reach the very core of phenomenology when we realize that "a thing is a thing because, whatever it imparts to us, is imparted through the very organization of its sensible aspects."²²⁰ Now we can understand constitution as an act of giving sense to things, a building up of significance "before our eyes . . . which merges with the exhibiting of the thing in its self-evidence."²²¹

To Merleau-Ponty interrogation of being is the questioning of the gaze, and the body's exploratory movements, as to the manner of being-in-the-world of the thing perceived.

"The gaze gets more or less from things according to the way in which it questions them, ranges over or dwells on them."²²² If a thing is what it is by its internal arrangement,²²³ we can see in painting and in poetry that in order to capture the thing, instead of the work's standing for it, the artist or poet must express the "lived-through meaning" revealed in the confrontation of subject and object in perceptual experience. Cézanne, Merleau-Ponty tells us, for example "learned that [facial] expression is the language of the thing itself and springs from its configuration."²²⁴ He "re-creates the physiognomy of things and faces,"²²⁵ and surely this is what Stevens is doing when he questions what it means to be a rose, for example, to his Spaniard who "rescued the rose/From nature, each time he saw it, making it,/As he saw it, exist in his own especial eye" (CP, 316), or a field to his wakened birds who "Before they fly, test the reality/Of misty fields, by their sweet questionings" (CP, 68). To Stevens also the gaze questions. "The rose, the delphinium, the red, the blue,/Are questions of the looks they get" (CP, 451).

The process of interrogation of being belies a passive registering of an object in perception; it is an active questioning by the gaze where the identity of the object present in each of its appearances is recognized through a bodily synthesis. "The thing as presented to sight (the moon's pale disc) or to touch (my skull as I can feel it when I touch it), and which stays the same for us through

a series of experiences, is . . . what is discovered or taken up by our gaze or our movement, a question to which these things provide a fully appropriate reply . . . in so far as my hand knows hardness and softness, and my gaze knows the moon's light, it is a certain way linking up with the phenomenon and communicating with it."²²⁶ The synthesis is temporal ("The synthesis of horizons is essentially a temporal process, which means . . . that it merges with the very movement whereby time passes"),²²⁷ thus a relationship between identity and temporality emerges as the perceiver sees the varied perspectives of the object, and the object because of its structure presents itself in varied modes.

The relationship of identity and temporality is fundamental for an understanding of the temporal dimension of the constitutive process, wherein time is the order in which experience unfolds, and thus the linking is temporal ("The object is made determinate as an identifiable being only through a whole open series of possible experiences and exists only for a subject who carries out this identification"),²²⁸ and points up the important aspects involved in the phenomenology of time: the difference between phenomenal and cosmic time; the structure of consciousness as temporal; and the relationship of past, present, and future.

The best way to understand the difference between phenomenological time and cosmic time is through the analogy of the appearance and the object. Just as the phenomenologist is interested in the appearance in its particular mode of

presentation, rather than in the object capable of scientific explication, so he is interested in "lived" time, time as the successive multiplicities of experience; and while time's fixity exists and can be measured by clock and calendar, he brackets this in the reduction to his experience of time. This is similar to his relation to space which, to him, is not a container, something he is placed in like an object, but rather is an experienced space, one that he structures with the movement of his body, "a particular manner of being in space and in a sense of making space,"²²⁹ a "gearing of the subject to his world."²³⁰

Temporality and spatiality are fundamental categories of our mode of existence, dimensions of being which enable things to be connected and arise from man's relation to his lived world. It is only through the temporality of our experience and through our spatial orientation that we can grasp these structures. Phenomenology posits the motility of the body as radially central to the constitution and the understanding of being-in-the-world. Our body, not an object in space, is a shaper of space, it structures and orients it, and links itself to the surrounding world because of this ability. "Lived" space is rooted in the experience of the body. "We grasp external space through our bodily situation. . . . Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument."²³¹ Our body orients itself toward an intended object which it handles, turns, or

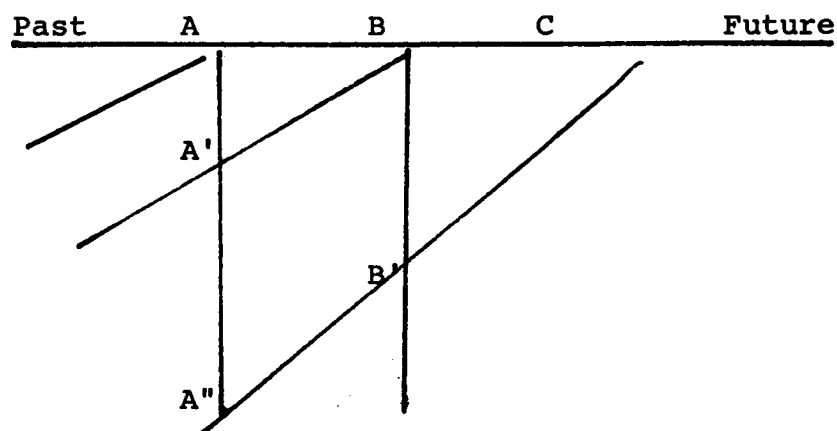
walks around in its experience as perceiver: "A 'lived' distance binds me to things which count and exist for me, and links them to each other."²³² The dimensions of lived space (distance, size, shape, etc.) as well as bodily gesture are determined through the spatiality of the experiencing body as it gears itself to the perceived world. The situation of the body constitutes directionality: "up" and "down" can only have meaning for a subject who relates them to a starting point. Such is the case also with "before" and "after," terms which come to mean for a subject who links them in his experience, thus ordering his time. Cassirer expresses phenomenological time as man's experience of it: "he possesses his self only when instead of remaining within the ever identical flow of events he divides the stream and gives form to it."²³³

Through the view of man as the "monadic center of multi-form existence"²³⁴ we come to understand intentionality and see that the structure of consciousness is intentional because all consciousness is consciousness of something, and that in reaching out toward the object, the subject constitutes it in a linking of perspectives, a synthesis of identification which is temporal. However, a distinction must be made in looking at this temporal dimension of constitution: "we have to distinguish the Objective temporality that appears (for example: the temporality of this die) from the 'internal' temporality of the appearing (for example: that of the die-perceiving)."²³⁵ This

distinction can be understood through the concept of "horizontality," and yet the poles can be seen as inseparable in the light of the act which unites them ("the unity of an enduring act is possible only with regard to something identical whose appearances may assume different temporal phases."²³⁶ Both the perceiver who recognizes the object in his multiple perspectival views of it, who sees the object with its internal horizon of possible perceptions clinging to it, and the object which presents itself in its temporality, with its accessibility to inspection, attest to the underlying temporal unfolding of experience and to the relationship of temporality and identity. The temporality of appearing centers on the act of consciousness wherein the perceiver has past and possible perceptions which cling to the present one and form a horizon of temporality. As he rotates the object from one side to the other, the appearing of it is temporal and reflects horizontality. The temporality of appearance centers on the object whose mode of presentation changes in temporal sequence and reveals the hidden dimensions of itself. Here we can see Husserl's noema/noesis correlation as from the act of intending the noetic aspect of temporality unfolds, and from the presentation of the intended the noematic aspect unfolds.

From the noetic side, Husserl's concept of "protention" and "retention" clearly illustrates the view of time as a "network of intentionalities."²³⁷ Merleau-Ponty gives us a diagram (which he takes from Husserl's The Phenomenology

of Internal Time-Consciousness),²³⁸ representing these terms and relating them to the perceptual present:



Horizontal line: series of "present moments."
 Oblique lines: Abschattungen of the same "present moments" seen from an ulterior "present moment."
 Vertical lines: Successive Abschattungen of one and the same "present moment."²³⁹

Merleau-Ponty further explains the diagram and Husserl's concepts:

Husserl uses the terms protentions and retentions for the intentionalities which anchor me to an environment. . . . I do not pass through a series of instances of now, the images of which I preserve and which, placed end to end, make a line. With the arrival of every moment, its predecessor undergoes a change: I still have it in hand and it is still there, but already it is sinking away below the level of presents; in order to retain it, I need to reach through a thin layer of time. It is still the preceding moment, and I have the power to recapture it as it was just now; I am not cut off from it, but it would not belong to the past unless something had altered. It is beginning to be outlined against, or projected upon, my present, whereas it was my present a moment ago. When a third moment arrives, the second undergoes a new modification; from being a retention it becomes the retention of a retention, and the layer of time between it and me thickens.²⁴⁰

The important point here is that retention links the past to the present; it exists as a dimension of the present and a "modification" of experience.

Merleau-Ponty continues:

Husserl introduced the notion of retention and held that I still have the immediate past in hand, precisely for the purpose of conveying that I do not posit the past, or construct it from an Abschattung really distinct from it and by means of an express act; but that I reach it in its recent, yet already elapsed thisness.²⁴¹

The same holds true for protention, what will be perceived, because "each temporal wave . . . retains its predecessor and anticipates its successor."²⁴² Thus for an understanding of phenomenological time we must see that the "lived present holds a past and future within its thickness."²⁴³ A phenomenologist sees every experience as a "flow of becoming . . . a constant flow of retentions and protentions mediated by a primordial phase which is itself in flux, in which the living now of the experience comes to consciousness contrasting with its 'before' and 'after.'"²⁴⁴

Thus the relationship of past, present, and future is clarified: "the past is a former future and a recent present, the present an impending past and a recent future, the future a present and even a past to come."²⁴⁵ We experience temporality "as future-which-lapses-into-the-past-by-coming-into-the-present."²⁴⁶ These modalities of time are seen in phenomenology as distinct but linked in horizontality, as against Bergson's conception: "Pure

duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states. . . but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole."²⁴⁷ According to Bergson, pure duration is an "interconnexion and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it."²⁴⁸ The past, present, and future merge and cannot be distinguished in the fabric of Bergson's duration. But in phenomenology they are distinguishable. The past must be grasped in its pastness: "Reproduction presupposes re-cognition, and cannot be understood as such unless I have in the first place a sort of direct contact with the past in its own domain,"²⁴⁹ and yet it must also be seen in its existence in, and therefore relation to, the present: "What is past or future for me is present in the world."²⁵⁰ It is this inseparability from the act which gives it presence, the present perception if it, that denies time as a mere "datum of consciousness," and reveals it as the paradoxical "power which holds . . . [events] together while keeping them apart."²⁵¹ The dimensions of time are unfolded by consciousness as it constitutes them by experiencing past and future as horizons of a present situation. The present moment, the lived "now" is not a "dimensionless instant," nor is time a series of "flashes of instant nows," but rather the present is a moment in one's "field of presence." It is only through this view

of the present moment--the one "I am spending working along with, behind it, the horizon of the day that has elapsed and in front of it, the evening and night--that I make contact with time, and learn to know its course."²⁵²

If in perceptual experience man constitutes the particulars of his world as they appear to him and the categories as they come to mean for him, then in the poetic world a phenomenologically-oriented poet captures in the unfolding of the work, the process of constitution. Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" reflects the temporal appearing of the urn, the process of the act of consciousness, as well as the urn in its temporal appearance. Of course, the poem is so much more than the phenomenological approach to time reflected in it, but it is interesting to note Keats's sense of the malleability of time, the freezing of it because it attests to his mortality, the dimensions of it which are brought into the present, its relation to man and history, and finally its tyranny ("Cold Pastoral" in the poem resembles "Forlorn" in the "Ode to a Nightingale," a word which tolls him back to the real and mutable world): since Keats cannot opt here for eternity, he has to settle for time. His illusion is crossed out: we cannot be out of language or consciousness.

In Keats's poem we are plunged into the world of the urn created for us by the poet's perception of it. The meaning of the urn for Keats is unfolded in the expressive act, and we, as readers, reconstitute it. The urn in the poem, like a smile in a painting, exists; it does not

merely stand for something, but because we constitute it-- watch it come to be and undergo transformations, because the poet or painter captures what it means to be an urn or a dancer--it has a presence for us.

The meaning of the urn in the context of the first stanza of the ode is reflected in three metaphoric personifications in the first three lines: "still unravish'd bride of quietness," "foster-child of silence and slow time," and "Sylvan historian." The "still unravish'd bride" ("still" meaning "quiet" as well as "yet") reflects the poet's desire to freeze time at a certain sensual moment and to delay the inevitable change inherent in the life-process. "Bride" is significant here in that it is a temporary, present state which looks back on the past as a "not-bride" and anticipates a future of consummation followed by wifehood. The bride is "unravish'd" however, because to love is to die, and the child is a "foster-child" distanced from process by its lack of natural parents and by the unnaturalness for it of "silence and slow time." The urn as "Sylvan historian" who expresses a "flowery tale" anticipates the speaking urn in the penultimate line of the poem.

Keats focuses in the next few lines of this stanza on the figures on the urn. The urn itself now becomes background as Keats foregrounds the figures. The imagery of the figures depicted on the urn supplies an Aufhebung (we watch the poet watching the figures), supported by the repetition of the interrogative as well as the rapidity and acceleration

of feeling displayed in the lines starting from "leaf-fring'd legend" and moving to "wild ecstasy." The clipped three and four word questions and the repetition of plosive and labial sounds accentuate the poetic expansion at the end of this stanza.

In the second stanza Keats particularizes the figures on the urn ("Fair youth" and Bold Lover"), taking a closer look:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal--yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!
 (W, 210)

This stanza reflects a temporal stasis as the figures approach consummation, and it proposes Keats's solution for mutability, which lies in the permanence of continuous song, trees that never grow bare, and beauty that never fades. The freedom from process (a yearning for what Kenneth Burke calls "an eternal present")²⁵³ is the poet's meditation on permanence, and he asserts, "For ever wilt thou love and she be fair."

The reader watches the poet perceiving the figures. Contemplating them, Keats sees their love as "For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd/For ever panting and for ever young," and he sets this against his past experience of love, "all breathing human passion" which "leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,/A burning forehead, and a parching

tongue." Stanza III seems to be a turning point in the ode: in the two prior stanzas the poet participates in the being of the urn (the same way as he did in "Ode to a Nightingale"), merges into a wholeness, an eternal continuity which the urn in its essence, its "urnness," offers him. He experiences a discontinuity which emerges from the intrusion of the actual world of mutable, burning, and entropic love.

In stanza IV of the ode, the poet inspects the sacrificial scene depicted on the urn:

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
 What little town by river or sea shore,
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.
(W, 210)

Here the urn presents itself as capable of being rotated in order that the rest of the scene can be viewed. We see the act of consciousness of the poet which unites, through his handling of the urn, the "perspective variable," the experience of potential perceptions, and the "perspected variable," the temporal appearance of the urn. The urn's presentation of its face and back enables the poet to further inspect it ("the face or back of a piece of material is intelligible only for a subject who can approach the object from either side, so that it is through my upsurge into the world that the material has a face or back").²⁵⁴

An interesting aspect of this stanza is the superimposition of the varied dimensions of time: the present moment of the poet looking at the urn through which he experiences the past of the sacrificial scene depicted on the urn, the more remote past of the historical event, and the future of it when "the streets for evermore/Will silent be; and not a soul to tell/Why thou art desolate, can e'er return." Here the phenomenology of time functions to point up the distinct dimensions of temporality which are changed by the alteration of their relation to the poet, the perceiver who divides the stream of time in the world of his poem.

Keats's sense of history is also phenomenological here and is constituted by his own experience which he brings to it. The ode reflects the vertical dimension of history which is the relationship within the historical consciousness of past, present, and future that determines it. Merleau-Ponty asserts the phenomenological concept of historicity: "True history thus gets its life entirely from us. It is in our present that it gets the force to refer everything else to the present. . . . A philosophy of history . . . adds to my obligation to understand situations other than my own and to create a path between my life and that of others, that is, to express myself."²⁵⁵ History, then, like time "is powerless to complete anything independently of consciousnesses which assume it and thereby its course . . . it can never be detached from us . . . it is always history lived through."²⁵⁶

At the end of the ode Keats sees the urn, which comes to mean a "consolation"²⁵⁷ for him, as an object of beauty in the world. Here beauty and truth are not abstract concepts with a moralistic tinge, but rather they reflect the perceptual experience Keats has come to unfold in his poem. It is the truth of the object's inner coherence which Keats perceives as beautiful. He writes of this cohesion of beauty and truth: "What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth" (L, I, 184).

For Stevens, time is the rhythm of existence and the order of experience. We live through it in our life processes; for example, in breathing and pulsating:

It is time that beats in the breast and it is time
That batters against the mind . . .
Time is a horse that runs in the heart . . .

It is someone walking rapidly in the street.
The reader by the window has finished his book
And tells the hour by the lateness of the sounds.

Even breathing is the beating of time.
(CP, 329-330)

The forces and action of nature in their temporal unfolding are experienced in the blood and veins:

An inner miracle and sun-sacrament,
One of the major miracles, that fall

As apples fall, without astronomy,
One of the sacraments between two breaths
Magical only for the change they make.
(CP, 262)

Our conception of time is bracketed ("without astronomy"), and time is then what flows through us ("One feels its

action moving in the blood" [CP, 324]):

There was a crush of strength in a grinding
 going round,
 Under the front of the westward evening star,

 The vigor of glory, a glittering in the veins,
 As things emerged and moved and were dissolved,

 Either in distance, change or nothingness,
 The visible transformations of summer night.
 (OP, 110)

We see the spatialization of time here as well as the juxtaposition of the star's appearing and its temporal appearance. It presents itself in its frontal aspect ("the front of the westward evening star") and the perceiver "in distance, change or nothingness" sees "visible transformations of summer nights." The "glittering in the veins" reflects the body's correlativity with the emerging and moving particulars, and the relationship of temporality and identity is implicit as these transformations are recognized in the "grinding going round."

Things move in time and space and the succession pulsates through us. "There must be some internal relationship between what is abolished and what comes into being, both must be two manifestations or two appearances, or two stages of one and the same something which is presented successively in two forms. In the same way the arrival of movement at a point must be one with its departure from the "adjacent" point, and this takes place only if there is an object in motion which simultaneously leaves one place

and occupies another."²⁵⁸ The movement is not measured objectively in scientific terms with space as the container and time as "clocked," which would distance it from our experience of it: "the bird which hovers, falls and becomes a handful of ash, does not hover and fall in physical space; it rises and falls with the existential tide running through it . . . it is the pulse of my existence, its systole and diastole."²⁵⁹

As things present themselves in the world of Stevens' poetry, the structure of the perceptual process, as well as that of time itself, is revealed in its essential aspect: horizontality:

The trumpet of morning blows in the clouds and through
The sky. It is the visible announced,
It is the more than visible, the more
Than sharp, illustrious scene. The trumpet cries
This is the successor of the invisible.
(CP, 376)

The visible is apprehended with its halo of invisibility around it. The horizon, its past and potential appearance, is part of its present moment, just as the perceiver's past and future experience forms a "cohesion in each successive present."²⁶⁰ The succession is time's movement, its flow, but its verticality, its dimension is the "thickness" of the past and future structured into the present by the perceiver's act of consciousness and the object's temporal presentation, both surrounded by their horizon. This structure presupposes a perceiver, "a man who was the axis

of his time" (CP, 473). Stevens recognizes that "the life of the world depends on that he is/Alive (CP, 328), and that "except for us,/The total past felt nothing when destroyed" (CP, 314).

The perceiver constitutes the presentness of the past, confers existence on it as a horizon, which differentiates it from memory (the past as past only).

trash of sleep that will disappear
With the special things of night, little by little,
In day's constellation, and yet remain, yet be.
(CP, 300)

It is the past's relation to the present, its sense of a perception just-having-been, a retention, that reflects the sliding movement of time from future to present to past.²⁶¹ It is significant that the past exists in the present, yet also holds its character as past; it is the preceding moment, I have it in hand and can recapture it as it was just now, but it is change.²⁶²

See how
On a day full of summer, when the leaves
Appear to sleep within a sleeping air,
They suddenly fall and the leafless sound of the wind
Is no longer a sound of summer.
(OP, 50)

In Stevens the relationship between past, present, and future is complex as he sees a pregnancy of the future with the past ("The future must bear within it every past" [OP, 70]) as well as with the present ("For him, of shall or ought to be in is" [CP, 41]), and the present as the future

of the past ("So that, where he was, there is an enkindling where/He is, the air changes and grows fresh to breathe" [CP, 301])). This interrelationship in its phenomenological aspect reflects not a juxtaposition of succeeding nows, but rather "lines of intentionality" which grasp experiences exactly as they were and which trace out the style of those to come.²⁶³

Stevens sees the interaction of the dimensions of time and the flow of universal intercourse as energizing factors:

We live constantly in the commingling of two reflections, that of the past and that of the future, whirling apart and wide away. . . . When I was a boy I used to think that things progressed by contrasts, that there was a law of contrasts. But this was building the world out of blocks. Afterwards I came to think more of the energizing that comes from mere interplay, interaction.

(L, 368)

It is the interplay and the interaction of self and world, which the painter and poet catch and make visible, and which, in turn, show how the world touches us:

When younger bodies, because they are younger, rise
And chant the rose-points of their birth, and when
For a little time, again, rose-breasted birds
Sing rose-beliefs. Above the urn two lights
Commingle, not like the commingling of sun and moon
At dawn, nor of summer-light and winter-light
In an autumn afternoon, but two immense
Reflections, whirling apart and wide away . . .

Because time moves on columns intercrossed
And because the temple is never quite composed,
Silent and turquoused and perpetual,
Visible over the sea. It is only enough
To live incessantly in change.

(OP, 49-50)

The structure of the constitutive process is temporal and incomplete, and therefore incessant change is the only reality we can know. "A shade that traverses/A dust, a force that traverses a shade" (CP, 489). The kaleidoscopic changes of color and light, the perspectival changes within the perceiver's field of horizontality, and the movement of the body, the "Forward of the eye that in its backward, sees" (CP, 340), these "are the actual seemings that we see,/ Hear, feel, and know" (CP, 340). Thus reality is what we perceive, and the way the thing presents itself, its mode of existence and behavior, have meaning for us because we experience it:

After all, they knew that to be real each had
To find for himself his earth, his sky, his sea

And the words for them and the colors they
possessed.

(CP, 312)

Things come to mean for us because they answer our gaze which interrogates; it asks how they come to be, and what it means to be this particular thing.²⁶⁴ Because the "flesh" of our body and the "flesh of our world commingle"²⁶⁵ we can experience and participate in the being of the thing, and in the flux of our living it through, we can come to know it as and where it is.

In the temporal, creative, and perceptual process which is the unfolding of the poem, the poet/perceiver, an incarnate consciousness characterized by a motor intention-

ality, seizes the particulars around him; and in his search for meaning as that meaning comes to be, he "sings" the world.

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CHAPTER FOUR

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⁵¹Husserl, Ideas, p. 222.

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¹⁵⁶Suzanne Cunningham, Language and the Phenomenological Reductions of Edmund Husserl (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), p. 62.

¹⁵⁷Husserl, Ideas, pp. 119-20.

¹⁵⁸Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, p. 62.

¹⁵⁹Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, pref. xv.

¹⁶⁰See Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and His Shadow," Signs, pp. 159-81. ("So it is not through chance or naivete that Husserl assigns contradictory characteristics to reduction. He is saying what he means here, what is imposed by the factual situation. . . . Nature become[s] once more the noema it has always been; Nature reintegrated to the consciousness which has always constituted it through and through. In the realm of 'reduction' there is no longer anything but consciousness, its acts, and their intentional object" [pp. 161-62]). See also "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man," The Primacy of Perception, pp. 43-95. ("In defending Husserl against the false interpretations that are so common, we must emphasize the concrete and familiar nature of this Wesenschau. It is a grasping of universal meanings in and through my contingent experience. . . . According to Husserl, the seeing of essences, or Wesenschau, is nothing but the clarification of the sense, or essence, toward which our consciousness is directed" [pp. 53-54]).

¹⁶¹Remy Kwant points out one such change in Merleau-Ponty's The Visible and the Invisible: "Merleau-Ponty calls Husserl's Wesenschau a myth, and he compares it with the myth of inductive knowledge. This comparison was alien to Merleau-Ponty when he wrote Phenomenology of Perception. At that time he already rejected the value of inductive knowledge, but he tried to save the Husserlian eidetic reduction. Now he rejects both of them and evidently sees some connection between them." Remy C. Kwant, "Merleau-Ponty's Criticism of Husserl's Reduction," in Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretation, ed. Joseph J. Kockelmans (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 404-405. ("Now would be the time to reject the myths of inductivity and of the Wesenschau, which are transmitted, as points of honor, from generation to generation" [The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 115-16]).

¹⁶²Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 11.

¹⁶³Ibid., pp. 189-90.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. 190.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 189-90.

¹⁶⁶For an example of a view of concordance see David Carr, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Incarnate Consciousness," in Existential Philosophers: Kierkegaard to Merleau-Ponty, ed. George Alfred Schrader, Jr. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), pp. 373-74. For an example of a view of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty as often contradictory see Paul Ricoeur, Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology, pp. 33n., 43, 209-11; and Aron Gurwitsch, Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology, p. 349n. For a view of the two philosophers as divergent but with points of contact see Quentin Lauer, Phenomenology: Its Genesis and Prospect, pp. 179-85; Ronald Bruzina, Logos and Eidos, pp. 85-115, 137-38, 167-70. For an interesting and different view, one which incorporates all three of the above, but, for the most part, sees Merleau-Ponty as mediator between Husserl and the role of language in the reductions, see Suzanne Cunningham, Language and the Phenomenological Reductions of Edmund Husserl. ("I shall take the position that the cogito must be expanded even beyond the Husserlian cogito to include not only Merleau-Ponty's bodily cogito but equally important, the linguistic cogito of reflection. . . . I would go further and claim that the only existence that essences ever have is linguistic existence, i.e., their being is exclusively in language" [pp. 13, 82]).

¹⁶⁷Bruzina, pp. 100, 137.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁶⁹Lauer, p. 180.

¹⁷⁰Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, pref. xiv.

¹⁷¹Ibid., pref. xiv.

¹⁷²Ibid., pref. xiii.

¹⁷³Ibid., pref. xi.

¹⁷⁴Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 53.

¹⁷⁵Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, pp. 115-116.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 117-118.

¹⁷⁷Bruzina, p. 171.

¹⁷⁸Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 374.

¹⁷⁹Gurwitsch, The Field of Consciousness, p. 303.

- ¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 304.
- ¹⁸¹Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 51.
- ¹⁸²Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, p. 111.
- ¹⁸³Cunningham, p. 95.
- ¹⁸⁴Kockelmans, p. 401.
- ¹⁸⁵Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, p. 110.
- ¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 110.
- ¹⁸⁷Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, p. 70.
- ¹⁸⁸Cunningham, p. 64.
- ¹⁸⁹Ricoeur, p. 91.
- ¹⁹⁰Husserl, Ideas, p. 184.
- ¹⁹¹Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, pref. xvi.
- ¹⁹²Ibid., p. 297.
- ¹⁹³Ibid., p. 295.
- ¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 297.
- ¹⁹⁵Vendler, p. 52.
- ¹⁹⁶Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 62.
- ¹⁹⁷Cunningham, p. 9.
- ¹⁹⁸Edmund Husserl, The Idea of Phenomenology, trans. William P. Alston and George Nakhnikian (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 11.
- ¹⁹⁹Ricoeur, p. 105.
- ²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 105.
- ²⁰¹Husserl, The Idea of Phenomenology, p. 10.
- ²⁰²Ibid., p. 10.
- ²⁰³Ibid., p. 11.
- ²⁰⁴Ibid., p. 57.
- ²⁰⁵Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, p. 40.

- ²⁰⁶Ibid., pp. 41-42.
- ²⁰⁷Ibid., p. 42.
- ²⁰⁸Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 204-05.
- ²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 329.
- ²¹⁰Ibid., p. 185.
- ²¹¹Ibid., pp. 184-85.
- ²¹²Ibid., pp. 57-58.
- ²¹³Ibid., p. 185.
- ²¹⁴Ibid., p. 193.
- ²¹⁵Ibid., p. 184.
- ²¹⁶Ibid., p. 186.
- ²¹⁷Ibid., p. 186.
- ²¹⁸Ibid., p. 189.
- ²¹⁹Ibid., pp. 57, 68.
- ²²⁰Ibid., p. 323.
- ²²¹Ibid., p. 323.
- ²²²Ibid., p. 153.
- ²²³Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, p. 161.
- ²²⁴Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 322.
- ²²⁵Ibid., p. 322.
- ²²⁶Ibid., p. 317.
- ²²⁷Ibid., p. 330.
- ²²⁸Ibid., p. 212.
- ²²⁹Ibid., p. 221.
- ²³⁰Ibid., p. 251.
- ²³¹Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 5.
- ²³²Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 286.
- ²³³Cassirer, III, 90.

- ²³⁴Ibid., p. 90.
- ²³⁵Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, p. 41.
- ²³⁶Gurwitsch, Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology, p. 136.
- ²³⁷Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 417.
- ²³⁸Edmund Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness, trans. James S. Churchill, ed. Martin Heidegger (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1964).
- ²³⁹Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 417.
- ²⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 416-17.
- ²⁴¹Ibid., p. 417.
- ²⁴²Ibid., p. 275.
- ²⁴³Ibid., p. 275.
- ²⁴⁴Husserl, Ideas, p. 262.
- ²⁴⁵Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 422.
- ²⁴⁶Ibid., p. 420.
- ²⁴⁷Henri Bergson, Time and Free Will, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 100.
- ²⁴⁸Ibid., p. 101.
- ²⁴⁹Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 413.
- ²⁵⁰Ibid., p. 412.
- ²⁵¹Ibid., p. 422.
- ²⁵²Ibid., p. 416.
- ²⁵³Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 449.
- ²⁵⁴Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 430.
- ²⁵⁵Merleau-Ponty, Signs, p. 75.
- ²⁵⁶Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 449.
- ²⁵⁷Morris Dickstein, Keats and His Poetry: A Study in Development (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 227.

²⁵⁸Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 271.

²⁵⁹Ibid., p. 285.

²⁶⁰Ibid., p. 407.

²⁶¹Ibid., p. 416.

²⁶²Ibid., p. 416.

²⁶³Ibid., pp. 416, 418.

²⁶⁴Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, p. 166.

²⁶⁵Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible, p. 131.

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