WALLACE STEVENS' FRENCH CONNECTION

by

SAMUEL LEONARD ROSENBAUM

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of English
University of Toronto

(C) Copyright by Samuel Leonard Rosenbaum 1997
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author’s permission.

L’auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L’auteur conserve la propriété du droit d’auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.
Wallace Stevens’ French Connection
Samuel Leonard Rosenbaum
Doctor of Philosophy 1997
Graduate Department of English
University of Toronto

ABSTRACT

This thesis studies Wallace Stevens’ lifelong fascination and involvement with French and France. The structure is a chronological examination and discussion of the manifestations of French in Stevens’ poetry and life. Stevens’ Francophilia in his private life is linked with the varied French uses in his poetry, which begin in his undergraduate writing and progress throughout his Collected Poems. Some issues of interest are the Harmonium-era movement away from fin-de-siècle French associations, and the use of moving personal elements during World War II. The thesis examines closely Stevens’ use of French-connected lexis, as well as his use of French-associated poetic personae. Reference and allusion to French writers, artists, and locales are also explored in detail. The thesis shows ultimately the lasting interrelationship between Stevens’ Francophilia and the diffuse instances of French in his poetry, indicating a poet to whom French and France are deeply significant, both personally and artistically.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: Beginnings</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: Harmonium</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: The Nineteen-Thirties</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4: Parts of a World</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: Transport to Summer</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: The Nineteen-Fifties</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: Francophilia</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated Appendix</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

What a great many people fail to see is that one uses French for the pleasure that it gives. (Letter of July 21 1953) ¹

When Wallace Stevens wrote in a late letter that "one uses French for the pleasure that it gives," it captured the essence of his long-term involvement and fascination with France. He was an admitted Francophile for whom things French were always an intimate part of life. He was exposed to French in kindergarten, studied French literature at Harvard, ² and absorbed quantities of French prose and poetry throughout his life, with a long-standing practice of quoting French sources in his journals and notebooks. He also delighted in the sound and resonance of French words, using them regularly throughout his poetry.

The study of Stevens' fascination with French and France gives insight into his life and work, and a chronological approach is useful since his involvement with France and its cultural products was life-long and changed progressively. A chronological approach reflects personal and external history as well, and shows how Stevens' French interests often connected the private and public aspects of

¹ Letters of Wallace Stevens 792. All further references will be abbreviated to L.
² Souvenirs and Prophecies: The Young Wallace Stevens 9, 17n, 23n, 33-4n. All further references will be abbreviated to S&P.
his life.

Stevens' foreign interests were not limited to France; he drew upon other cultures and languages for his poetic purposes and private interests, but none as extensively as French. For example, because of his Pennsylvania Dutch heritage and upbringing, he was familiar with the German language, noting in 1948, "I read German well enough to get something out of the [Fritz] Kredel and used to read it freely" (L 576). Stevens' secretary observed that "besides having an unusual knowledge of the French language, he read and spoke both German and French." He occasionally used German words in his poetry, for example in Notes toward a Supreme Fiction I VII (1942): "And a familiar music of the machine / Sets up its Schwärmerei." It is worth noting for comparison that there is only one German title in Collected Poems, "Lebensweisheitspielerei" (1952), whereas there are sixteen poems with French in their titles.

German language, literature and culture did not have the basic attraction that French did for Stevens. It may be

3 Stevens was born in Reading, Pennsylvania and lived there until he left for university in 1897.
4 Interview with Marguerite Flynn in Brazeau, Parts Of A World: Wallace Stevens Remembered 34. All further references will be abbreviated to Parts.
5 "Anglais Mort à Florence" (1936), "Bouquet of Belle Scavoir" (1939), "Celle Qui Fût Héaulmiette" (1950), "Cortège for Rosenbloom" (1921), "Cuisine Bourgeoise" (1939), "Cy Est Pourtraictce, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges" (1915), "Esthétique du Mal" (1947), "Gallant Château" (1934), "Homunculus et La Belle Étoile" (1919), "Madame La Fleurie" (1951), "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" (1918), "Montrachet-le-Jardin" (1942), "Paisant Chronicle" (1945), "Les Plus Belles Pages" (1941), "Poesie Abrutie " (1943), "Waving Adieu, Adieu, Adieu" (1935).
that because of his background he associated German with the normal and commonplace, and detected no sense of difference and exoticism like that residing in French and France. He also did not apparently think of German as a poetically conducive language, as he writes in a 1935 letter:

Just how it comes about that my vocabulary is more Latin than Teutonic, I don't know. Perhaps there may be something in the idea that the language of poetry is never Teutonic. (L 302)

Stevens also had an early interest in the cultural and geographical exoticism of the Orient, writing to his fiancée about a 1909 exhibition of Chinese art: "I do not know if you feel as I do about a place so remote and unknown as China - the irreality of it. So much so, that the little realities of it seem wonderful and beyond belief" (L 137). In 1935 he wrote, "I think that I have been influenced by Chinese and Japanese lyrics" (L 291) and in 1950 stated in a characteristically non-committal way:

While I know about haiku, or hokku, I have never studied them.... I have been more interested in Japanese prints although I have never collected them.... No doubt, too, I have perhaps a half dozen volumes of Chinese and Japanese poetry somewhere in the house. But all this is purely casual. (L 291n)

In this way, while Stevens was interested in aspects of German and Oriental culture they did not affect him anywhere near as deeply as that of France. While they appear at points in his poetry, they do not have the extensive

6 Stevens' interest in Oriental art and culture also differed in a significant way from his interest in German and French in that he could neither speak nor read Chinese or Japanese.
presence of France and French, which are evident poetically from his earliest to his latest work and evident personally throughout his life.

Before beginning the chronological survey of Stevens' French connections I will discuss some of the critical commentary, of which a main point of convergence is the matter of a French influence on Stevens' poetry. First of all, it is necessary to define my use of the term 'influence' in this context. Literary influence is an enormously large and complex area of critical thought and this discussion will not attempt to be definitive as much as to provide a flexible interpretation for my consideration of a certain area of Stevens criticism. What I mean by influence in this context is the evident or demonstrable use of the characteristic poetic elements of an author or genre, whether those be prosodic techniques, types of lexis, settings, tropes, or images, by another author. As an example, T. S. Eliot's use of modern urban settings is influenced by the cityscapes in Baudelaire's "Tableaux Parisiens" section of Les Fleurs du mal. I am not concerned about whether these uses or adoptions are deliberate or not as long as they are reasonably apparent at

7 I am indebted to Abbie F. Willard's Wallace Stevens: The Poet and His Critics for the organization of my discussion of criticism on the subject of Stevens and French.
8 This example carries the weight of Eliot's comment that he first saw in Baudelaire "a precedent for the poetical possibilities, never developed by any poet writing in my own language, of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis" ("What Dante means to Me" 126).
some level, and I also include allusion and echo under this Procrustean heading. Helen Regueiro Elam notes that in early (i.e., pre-Structuralist) influence studies "the earlier poet functions as an undisputed and stable 'source,' a foundation or origin itself not open to question" and that this concept of influence rests on the "idea of literary history as a stable context with determinate cause and effect relations, recognizable sources, and a reliably straightforward chronology." She also comments about the contemporary state of influence studies: "Far from attempting to define a text's origin or cause, influence has shifted to a concern with the problematic wanderings between texts." Allusion, which Earl Miner describes as the "deliberate incorporation of identifiable elements from other sources," differs from broader ideas of influence because it involves specific repetition of words or phrases. Miner notes that allusion theories assume "readers sharing knowledge with the poet" as well as "incorporation of...familiar yet distinctive elements." I include allusion under the heading of influence because use of another poet's words or lines is an obvious and explicit indicator of influence at some level. In Stevens' case, the rare allusions to French poets are some of the few safe and easily identifiable signs of French influence.

9 "Influence," The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics. All further references will be abbreviated to NPEPP.
10 "Allusion," NPEPP.
Much of the commentary about a French influence on his poetry is based on Stevens' early experimentation with French poetic styles and settings, notably those of late-nineteenth-century poets such as Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Laforgue. It is important to note, however, that the evident use of these poets is largely confined to material before Harmonium (1923), and that it is left behind as part of that volume's movement and Stevens' concentration on his own distinct poetic voice. In this way, to my mind most of the palpable influence of French poetry on Stevens occurs before his mature work; aside from occasional uses of allusion and echo, I do not see any significant overt influence of French poetry on anything after the publication of Carnet de Voyage (1914).

An early, and to Stevens' occasional dismay, enduring, critical view is that of him as an insubstantial hedonist, a dandy steeped in fin-de-siècle Aestheticism. Early Harmonium reviews seem to reflect this especially. J. G. Fletcher sees Stevens as "definitely out of tune with life and with his surroundings [and] seeking an escape into a sphere of finer harmony between instinct and

11 Robert Buttel notes:
In his undergraduate interest in things French - the French-speaking nymph, the ballade vogue, the fêtes galantes atmosphere - [Stevens] found a means of introducing details into his work that were exotic, elegant, and at that time relatively fresh. This was an interest that would lead more distinctly to Verlaine and then to the French Symbolists and ironists - though this is not to say at all that he was to be exclusively swayed by French influences" (Wallace Stevens: The Making of Harmonium 44).
intelligence."\textsuperscript{12} Llewellyn Powys is more critical, stating that Stevens' poetry reflects "the sensuality of a crotchety detached mind [that] is removed from the object of its adoration by convoluted covert laws of super-refined cerebrations."\textsuperscript{13}

R. P. Blackmur reflects upon this critical view by noting that Stevens "has a bad reputation among those who dislike the finicky, and a high one, unfortunately, among those who value the ornamental sounds of words but who see no purpose in developing sound from sense."\textsuperscript{14} Blackmur, however, dismisses these as simplistic views and goes on to argue that with a poet of Stevens' calibre each word "in its context, [is] a word definitely meant."

A culmination of the hedonism arguments comes in Yvor Winters' "Wallace Stevens or the Hedonist's Progress" where he maintains, among other things, that Stevens' concentration on a hedonist's "ennui" will "ultimately wreck his talent" because it will cause him to concentrate on creating novel feelings and effects.\textsuperscript{15} Winters sees Stevens as being affected by Symbolistes\textsuperscript{16} like Mallarmé, Valéry, and Rimbaud in their search for a poetry where "all except emotional content is as nearly as possible

\textsuperscript{12} "The Revival of Estheticism" 46.
\textsuperscript{13} "The Thirteenth Way" 31.
\textsuperscript{14} "Examples of Wallace Stevens" 52.
\textsuperscript{15} The Anatomy of Nonsense 90.
\textsuperscript{16} For the purposes of simplification and for those of this thesis, since I am focussing primarily on Stevens' relations to French literature, I will use the capitalized French terms Symbolisme and Symboliste in my discussions of Stevens' relations to French Symboliste poets.
eliminated," particularly in what he sees as Mallarmé's goal of "eliminating rational content from language" (113).

Many of the more cogent critics on the subject of a French influence on Stevens' poetry do not concentrate on his purported hedonism but rather seek out parallels in poetic technique and approach. In one of the earliest and most respected studies, René Taupin identifies and discusses Stevens' use of Symboliste techniques, concluding "sa tradition est française." Earlier critics such as Paul Rosenfeld had linked Stevens with French poetry and poetics but Taupin's analysis carries the authority of a letter from Stevens himself stating his attraction to the French language, if not to particular poets: "La légèreté, la grâce, le son et la couleur du français ont eu sur moi une influence indéniable et une influence précieuse" (276).

The influence of linguistic sound and colour is not easily separable from the influence of poetry, and Taupin agrees with this, adding that at a time when French poetry was widely imitated, Stevens "a profité des subtilités d'expression et des essais de poésie pure qui venaient de France" (277).

Hi Simons sees a more particular and detailed influence

17 L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poésie américaine (de 1910-1920) 277.
18 Rosenfeld discusses Stevens and Jules Laforgue, mentioning Stevens' use of Pierrot figures, in a general commentary about Stevens in his Men Seen. Michel Benamou notes that Rosenfeld's is the first mention in print of the much-discussed relation between Laforgue and Stevens (Wallace Stevens and the Symbolist Imagination 27).
on Stevens, outlining a series of "specific parallels" in technique and content with Mallarmé, as well as a series of "general likenesses." I feel Simons' argument for strong specific influence is weakened by his necessary admission that "too many influences composed the intellectual atmosphere of that fecund decade 1910-20 for us to decide offhand that Mallarmé was Stevens' sole and particular teacher" (255), as well as by his search for parallels with Mallarmé beyond pre-Harmonium poetry. Simons admits that there is little indication that Stevens read Mallarmé in any detail, and that his argument would have been more convincing given that evidence. He concludes reasonably that had Stevens absorbed Mallarmé the poetry would have stayed with him and that he might well have tried to write "wholly original masterpieces in the same genre" (259).

Stevens certainly wrote early pieces in the Symboliste mold and stated, in discussing Simons' article, "perhaps I absorbed more than I thought. Mallarmé was a good deal in the air when I was much younger." He also however wrote in the same letter that "Mallarmé never in the world meant as much to me as all that in any direct way" (L 636).

Less careful critics than Simons dwell on what they see

19 "Wallace Stevens and Mallarmé" 236. Willard notes that this is "the classic essay on the subject" of a French influence on Stevens' poetry (73).

20 Stevens does mention Mallarmé in his prose pieces but does not discuss his poetry at length. In response to Simons' apparent suggestion that Symboliste poets, in particular Mallarmé, were discussed among the Arensberg circle (see Chapter 2) Stevens noted "I don't remember any discussion of French poets" (L 391).
as direct and extensive influence, often to the detriment of their arguments. H. R. Hays sees Stevens as indebted to Jules Laforgue for incongruous titles and an ironic artistic attitude as well as a more general sense of living in a "meaningless world." 21 In his concentration on Laforgue as a source Hays tends to neglect the fact that the question of a "meaningless world" was a widely-shared Modernist concern and that quite a bit of Laforgue's urban despair and artistic irony came from sources like Baudelaire, with whom Stevens was familiar, and to whom, unlike Laforgue, he alluded in his poetry.

The ostensible influence of Laforgue on Stevens is discussed by a number of other critics. Warren Ramsey points out thematic and stylistic similarities between Stevens and Mallarmé, Verlaine, Baudelaire and Laforgue, in particular noting Harmonium themes such as "the mediocrity of the quotidian" and "the possibility of redemption in art" that Mallarmé would have recognized, and "the cult of eighteenth-century style...almost certainly nurtured by Verlaine." 22 He also comments on the similarity of Stevens' and Laforgue's Pierrot figures. Joseph Riddel states that "there is no doubt of Stevens' knowledge of Laforgue, if only through his repeated contacts with the Others group, among whom Walter Arensberg and Maxwell Bodenheim were enthusiastic Laforgueans," 23 and Buttel writes:

21 "Laforgue and Wallace Stevens" 244.
23 "The Contours of Stevens' Criticism" 113.
Laforgue seems to have been a very important influence behind Stevens' bringing into his poetry more naturalistic detail and the modern city with its meaninglessness, and his acquiring a surer hand in the ironic manipulation of the actual and the romantic. (173)

Benamou discusses how Stevens may have been influenced by Laforgue in developing his early Pierrot characters: "it seems plausible that Stevens found in Pierrot the prototype of a clownish self-ironist representing the artist," but he emphasizes that this figure essentially disappears after Harmonium, replaced in the long run by more complex clown-like figures like the "old fanteche" in The Man with The Blue Guitar (1937), and the tramp from Notes toward a Supreme Fiction (31).

Laforgue is thus considered to have had an influence on Stevens' early Pierrot and dandy figures, but in actuality there is little direct evidence linking the two.24 Unlike what he says of Verlaine for example,25 Stevens disavows any real knowledge of or fondness for Laforgue, stating only that he might have "picked up" something "unconsciously" (L 391). I would also argue that quite a bit of the critical interest in Laforgue and Stevens comes from Eliot's well-publicized use of Laforgue, which results in a search for similar practices in his Hartford contemporary.

Frank Kermode points out that Stevens' use of Symboliste and other French-connected techniques was not

24 Stevens owned a copy of Moralités légendaires (see Appendix) but never directly mentioned Laforgue in print.
25 He wrote in a 1908 letter, "I like Verlaine - watercolors, little statues, small thoughts" (L 110).
There is nothing out of the way in this preoccupation with French poetry; indeed it was practically inescapable. The avant-garde interests of the period, in America as well as in England, were to a great extent absorbed by French culture: painting, dancing, music and poetry. A Symbolist aesthetic...dominated all the arts.26

Kermode also notes significantly that Stevens assimilated French poetry rather than imitating it: "Since Harmonium is the work of the poet's mature years, we should not expect it to show much evidence of unassimilated influence" (29).

Helen Vendler takes an opposing view to many critics on the subject, firmly denying a French influence on Stevens' poetry. She states that "his sense of the world [is not] that of the French poets, however much he learned from them in his Harvard years."27 Vendler does not deny that Stevens was affected by reading French poets, and English and American poets, but she feels that he learned from them early on and then went on to develop his own approach which slowly "evolved through his sense of himself and through a search for his own style." She emphasizes that Stevens engaged in "patient experimentation" and that he was interested in finding "a proper mode for his austere temperament." She sees this in, among other things, the testing of verse forms in long poems before he settled into the triadic stanzas of Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, An Ordinary Evening in New Haven (1949), and "The Auroras of

26 Wallace Stevens 11.
27 On Extended Wings 3.
Harold Bloom notes echoes of Baudelaire and Flaubert among others but subsumes French influence to his own larger theory of poetic anxiety: "French colorings...in Harmonium and after, invariably are evasions of more embarrassing obligations to Anglo-American literary tradition."\(^{28}\) Bloom feels that Stevens is primarily influenced, in his own critical interpretation of the term, by Romantic and American poets, noting "I am using 'influence' in [the] sense of 'mispriision' or revisionist interpretation of tradition, an interpretation manifest in the later poet's own work" (10). Bloom explains elsewhere that "by 'poetic influence' I do not mean the transmission of ideas and images from earlier to later poets. This is indeed just 'something that happens.'"\(^{29}\) In this way, Bloom's idea of influence is quite different than that of Simons, for example, who sees definite parallels in image and technique between Stevens and Mallarmé. Bloom's idea of influence agrees, in a sense, with Vendler's emphasis on Stevens' poetic individuality, as he states strongly in a general context, "a poet's stance, his Word, his imaginative identity, his whole being, must be unique to him, and remain unique, or he will perish as a poet" (72).

Given Stevens' concentration on developing a personal style, and his stated refusal to contemplate the idea of

\(^{28}\) Wallace Stevens: *The Poems of Our Climate* 51.
\(^{29}\) The Anxiety of Influence 71.
poetic influence of any kind, it is clearly troublesome to discuss his relationship with his French predecessors in terms of how they influenced his poetry. This is also true because the nature of more modern studies on influence, such as Bloom’s, make the issues increasingly complex; it has become difficult, for example, to distinguish between what is an influence and what is, say, a "misprision."

But the tracing of poetic influence is not overly relevant or important for this study. I agree with Vendler that Stevens’ development of personal style is of paramount importance, and that while in his early development he certainly learned from and used the Symbolistes and other French poets, it is not particularly helpful or enlightening to analyze overt sources in Stevens’ poetry from that angle, especially given what he says about it. (I am setting Bloom’s ideas aside for the moment). I see it as more fruitful to analyze and discuss the obvious and evident French presence in his poetry rather than the general idea of influence that has been the focus of so many critics. Stevens wrote in a 1953 letter:

> It is a queer thing that so few reviewers seem to realize that one writes poetry because one must. Most of them seem to think that one writes poetry to imitate Mallarmé, or in order to be a member of this or that

30 "I am not conscious of having been influenced by anybody and have purposely held off from reading highly mannered people like Eliot and Pound so that I should not absorb anything, even unconsciously" (L 813).
31 "This view, that poetic influence scarcely exists, except in furiously active pedants, is itself an illustration of one way in which poetic influence is a variety of melancholy or an anxiety-principle" (The Anxiety of Influence 7).
school. It is quite possible to have a feeling about the world which creates a need that nothing satisfies except poetry and this has nothing to do with other poets or with anything else. He also wrote earlier, specifically about Symboliste poets, that "if I have picked up anything from [Mallarmé, Verlaine, Laforgue, Valéry and Baudelaire] it has been unconsciously." He added, however, that "it is always possible that, where a man's attitude coincides with your own attitude, or accentuates your own attitude, you get a great deal from him without any effort" (L 391).

In this way, while Stevens certainly read a great deal of French poetry, something evident from even a quick overview of his correspondence or a glance at his surviving books, he was firm about not admitting any dominant effect on his poetry. While the French poetry he read and how it may have affected him is certainly significant, it is only one aspect of the multifaceted presence of French in his writing and life. His early experimentation with French poetic styles disappears or is worked into a more personal style relatively quickly, whereas his heterogeneous uses of French run steadily from Harmonium through the last poems in The Rock (1954). I want to argue for just as great a

---

32 This passage is taken from a letter to Thomas McGreevy reproduced by Samuel French Morse in the introduction to Poems of Wallace Stevens (v-vi).

33 Joan Richardson comments, for example, that "in the case of the symbolists, he knew not only the primary texts, the poems themselves, but in many cases the theoretical writings that had preceded, accompanied, or followed them" (Wallace Stevens: A Biography. The Later Years, 1923-1955 55. All further annotative references to this volume will be abbreviated to The Later Years).
significance, perhaps greater, of that wide-ranging French presence in Stevens' poetry, which is manifested in a number of ways that will be discussed throughout the thesis.

Perhaps the most direct French influence on Stevens is from the language itself, which is certainly the most common French presence in the poetry. There is not in fact an easily separable distinction between the influence of poetry and the influence of language because French poetry is an important part of the language that Stevens so admired and enjoyed. As he wrote in the letter to Taupin, French was pleasing and meaningful to him, and as he wrote in a 1950 letter, "A good many words come to me from French origins. I think we have a special relation to French and even that it can be said that English and French are a single language" (L 699).34 James Baird comments:

If French and English constitute a single language, then clearly Stevens is mindful of that central English made in the admixture of French loanwords after the Battle of Hastings. It is not that he summons this distant language to his own use, but rather that he displays...an attention to semantic interplay, as though French and English might be captured in a process of fusion.35

Early in Stevens' writing (mostly in the manuscript poems and in Harmonium) French and French-connected words are often used for "essential gaudiness" (L 263), and to create a sense of difference and linguistic exoticism. Stevens associates this sense with aesthetic affectation, as

34 Stevens also wrote "French and English constitute a single language" in Adagia (OP 202).
35 The Dome and The Rock: Structure in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens 43.
well as with decorativeness and the archaic. These particular associations become sporadic and less defined later, although they will be periodically summoned up and played upon in various ways. The somewhat simple use of French for effects of "gaudiness" and foreign exoticism is supplanted by expansive and speculative bilingual wordplay after Harmonium. Previous French associations are encompassed in larger wide-ranging explorations of English and French lexis.

Stevens' bilingual word-play often can be seen as working on an axis running from familiarity to foreignness in French-adopted words. He takes advantage of the nature of Modern English, which has so much French incorporated into it at various levels of significance, and plays on foreign resonance, on degrees of familiarity, on cross-linguistic applications and meanings, and on etymology. The differences between distinctly foreign French words and words of French origin that have been adopted or adapted into English usage are important in analysis of meaning and effect, and a sliding scale of familiarity is useful in making and maintaining such distinctions.36 A good example of a familiar French-adopted word that Stevens plays upon bilingually is "rendezvous,"37 and a good example of a less

36 Eleanor Cook writes that "Foreign words...work along a scale of assimilation, for standard lexis includes many words originally considered foreign" ("Lexis," NPEPP).
37 See the discussions of "God Is Good. It is a Beautiful Night" (1942) in Chapter 5 and of "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour" (1951) in Chapter 6.
familiar word used in bilingual play is "grisaille." In general, Stevens uses many more familiar than unfamiliar words; he seems to prefer playing on words that are well-known in English by calling up their French resonances in different ways and then working back and forth between the connotations in both languages. His other French-connected diction includes the coinage of bilingually-fused words such as "tournamonde," as well as the use of completely French words such as "abrutie."

Stevens' use of French-related personae is also a notable manifestation of his French connection. Beginning with the fop characters and Pierrots of the early writing, and then moving into their colourful theatrical descendants in Harmonium and after, as well as to the diffuse narrative voices of the later long poems, French-connected personae are present throughout the poetry.

Another way in which French makes its way into the poetry is by reference or allusion to texts, authors, and painters. Examples of this are the references to Racine and Bossuet in "The Doctor of Geneva" (1921), and to Corot and Toulet in "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery" (1935), as well as the allusion to Baudelaire in "Dutch Graves in Bucks County" (1943).

France also enters into the poetry through reference to

38 See the discussion of "Add this to Rhetoric" (1938) in Chapter 3.
40 See my discussions of "Poesie Abrutie" in Chapter 5.
French locales. These uses, such as the mention of Le Havre in "Of Hartford in a Purple Light" (1939), or the significant references to Paris in Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, range from the summoning up of a generalized French geographical sensibility to considerations of France as part of a poetic sense of place.

An aspect of Stevens' French connection that will not be covered at length in this thesis is the use of French sources in his critical prose. He read and amassed information widely from both French and English, as well as from other languages, bringing together a great deal of disparate material for his own purposes, and I feel that isolating the French content places too much emphasis on it as source material. There are some cases where a significant French source can be fruitfully discussed, such as, for example, Charles Mauron's Aesthetics and Psychology, and these have already been given detailed attention in print.41 I have included Stevens' prose uses of French in the Appendix42 and will discuss them periodically in the

41 Barbara Farris Graves' 1975 thesis "Stevens' Reading in Contemporary French Aesthetics: Charles Mauron, Thierry Maulnier, Roger Caillois" analyzes the intellectual influence of Mauron, Maulnier, and Caillois on Stevens, in particular what is seen as their role in forming the poetics of the nineteen-forties and nineteen-fifties, reflected both in major poems and in his prose pieces from that period. B. J. Leggett, in "Stevens' Psychology of Reading: 'Man Carrying Thing' and Its Sources," analyses the influence of Mauron's Aesthetics and Psychology on Stevens' poetics of the nineteen-forties and nineteen-fifties, and in his Wallace Stevens and Poetic Theory discusses Stevens and Mauron within the context of a larger examination of Stevens' reading and theoretical writing.

42 The Appendix lists all the French authors and artists
context of his poetry and reading habits.

Stevens' general interest in France lasted throughout his life. While he never actually traveled there, he lived with a sense of the country and its cultural associations. As part of my thesis I will survey chronologically the development and progression of his Francophilia, both looking at it on its own and showing how it is intertwined with his poetic uses of French. All the aspects of Stevens' fascination with France are connected, and the purpose of this thesis is to examine them as a whole, to tell the story of Stevens and French.

that Stevens mentioned in print, as well as all the French and French-related books, journals, and paintings that remain from his collection.
CHAPTER 1

BEGINNINGS

One must keep in touch with Paris, if one is to have anything at all to think about. (December 3 1908 to Elsie Moll, S&P 199)

Early in Souvenirs and Prophecies Holly Stevens observes the "surprising possibility" that her father's initial exposure to French may have come at a very young age, as the first school he attended was a private kindergarten whose curriculum included French (S&P 9). She notes that French, unlike German, was not commonly spoken in Stevens' home town, and speculates that this first encounter may have set the stage for his lifelong affection. German, or Pennsylvania Dutch, was probably more important as a second language in his initial linguistic development, but French was to become his favorite adopted linguistic sibling.

Stevens' developing love of language and an indication of his fondness for the effects achieved by using French words in English contexts can be seen as early as 1896. Included in a letter from the sixteen-year-old Stevens to his mother is a colorful alliterative description of a summer camp, including a local band's "piping of flamboyant

1 Morse, Wallace Stevens: Poetry as Life 33.
flutes" and "the crescendo of cracked trombones." It is signed "with supernal affection, thy rosy-lipped arch-angelic jeune" (L 9-10). The sound effects and the lively language are characteristic of his early work, and "jeune" stands out prominently. "Jeune" is used humorously without much poetic intent, but even so it adds an exotic touch in sound and comes along with fashionable French associations. Later, with increasing sophistication, French will not only add linguistic colour and exoticism, but also start to invoke a range of cultural, literary, and artistic associations.

In 1897 Stevens began attending Harvard. Over his three years as a special student he took two courses in French literature and one elementary language course.2 Beyond the actual classes that he attended, the surrounding literary and intellectual climate had a significant effect on his early development and writing.

Taupin writes of the poet Paul Bourget coming to Harvard in the eighteen-nineties and going to the Tavern Club where "les jeunes gens de Harvard...discutaient Baudelaire" (23). Baudelaire and French poetry were in vogue, and Harvardians "'played at being abroad'" while out

2 The first literature course, taken in his second year, covered Corneille, Racine, Molière, Beaumarchais, Hugo, de Musset and Balzac, giving him a grounding in drama, Parnassian poetry, and prose. Stevens received a 'B' in this course. He had demonstrated his facility with the French language by getting an 'A' the previous year in the elementary course. He did slightly less well in his third French course, which was listed as a general survey, receiving a 'C+' (L 17n, 23n, and 33-4n).
in Boston. Instructors such as Barrett Wendell and Pierre la Rose helped to spread Aestheticism and Symboliste poetry respectively among their students. Stevens attended Wendell’s classes and also knew la Rose, likely meeting George Santayana through him (S&P 17). La Rose taught English literature and encouraged his students and fellow Signet Club members, which included Stevens, to read the Symbolistes. Stevens also likely attended the French poet Henri de Regnier’s lecture series on Parnassian and Symboliste poetry in the spring of 1900, although there is no record of his doing so.

For a Harvard student the influence of French poetry and aesthetics often travelled to the U.S via England. Taupin points out that much of the popularity of French came via English writers and critics like Stuart Merrill and Arthur Symons, who first made the Symbolistes known in America (24). Bates notes also that the "aesthetic dandyism" with which Stevens became familiar at Harvard was a "distinctly English translation of a French text," pointing out that Gautier had promoted "l’art pour l’art" well before Walter Pater (94).

Stevens read Pater, if not uncritically, while at

---

4 See Milton J. Bates, Wallace Stevens: A Mythology of Self 25. See also Richardson, Wallace Stevens: A Biography. The Early Years 1879-1923 65 (all further annotative references to this volume will be abbreviated to The Early Years).
5 A Mythology of Self 25.
6 Ibid., 25.
Harvard, and read Symboliste poetry. As he later says: "Mallarmé was a good deal in the air when I was much younger." He also, however, states that he was "never a student of [Symbolistes]; they were simply poets and I was the youthful general reader" (L 636).

Although Stevens was certainly affected by the fin-de-siècle Harvard intellectual atmosphere, he was not completely won over and remained somewhat skeptical. He expressed his misgivings about facile Aestheticism in an 1899 journal entry:

"Beauty is strength. But art - art all alone, detached, sensuous for the sake of sensuousness, not to perpetuate inspirations or thought, art that is mere art - seems to me to be the most arrant as it is the most inexcusable rubbish. (S&P 38)

In a similar vein several years later he wrote "Arthur Symons has great weight with several fellows I know. What has always made him impossible for me is his terrible chatter about Art" (S&P 163).

In his 1936 lecture "The Irrational Element in Poetry," Stevens writes that when he was a student "it was a commonplace to say that all the poetry had been written and all the paintings painted," demonstrating in retrospect the enervated affectation of Harvard undergraduates. One way in

7 An annotated copy of Appreciations survives from his Harvard-era library. Bates comments that Stevens' marginalia "suggest[s] rather the irate copy editor than the disciple. He attacked not only the legendary stylist's stylistic tics, but also his aesthetic program" (30).
8 Stevens' surviving library contains major texts by Baudelaire, Laforgue, Mallarmé, de Nerval, Rimbaud, Valéry, and Verlaine. See Appendix.
which Stevens distinguished himself from this studied pose of Decadent ennui was through his deep and abiding love of the natural world. He reflected this while writing about a hometown summer away from Harvard, completing a journal filled with rapturous accounts of long walks and other bucolic experiences: "the complete change of intellectual vestment has been like the exchange of a dusty road for a path through green and happy fields" (S&P 59). Randall Jarrell notes that in Harmonium Stevens "loves America best when he can think of it as wilderness, naturalness, pure potentiality." Morse observes in a later context (that of the New York "art crowd") that Stevens "was caught between the glib sophistication of friends who espoused the cause of modernism indiscriminately and without real understanding, and his own unabashed fondness for nature as a romantic retreat" (112).

Stevens took what he needed from the literary climate at Harvard and developed poetic approaches and personae outwards from those ideas, in time forming the unique American and European synthesis of Harmonium. He began writing poetry and prose pieces for the Harvard Advocate and eventually became president in his final semester. His pieces reflected, and sometimes reacted against, the Harvard atmosphere. Some, in particular "Part of His Education"

9 "Reflections on Wallace Stevens" 138.
10 A Mythology of Self 25.
11 Bates comments that Stevens' Advocate pieces reflected "both his literary and social aspirations in college" (25).
and "The Nymph," contain early French-connected themes and diction.

"Part of His Education," the earlier of the two stories, concerns two students, one a "regular fellow" and one a self-styled aesthete named "Geoffrey," who visit a crude country barroom. Geoffrey orders a "Crème de Menthe" and is subsequently ridiculed by the locals in the bar. He in turn insults and mocks them for "desecrating a ballade" while they sing. Through these acts he demonstrates pretentiousness and affectation.

"Crème de Menthe" is sweetly exotic sounding and tasting, and it differs in all respects from the homely beer that the regulars drink. The liqueur itself and the consumption of it symbolize a finicky ostentation. It contrasts metaphorically with the "beer of reality" which Geoffrey absorbs when he reconciles himself with the locals, mostly by ordering them a round. As a result he experiences "the side of life he had never seen."

The use of "Crème de Menthe" and "ballade" shows Stevens establishing an association between French and a generalized cultural sense of difference, a contrast in manner and sensation to the down-to-earth and plainly American. Jarrell discusses the strong attraction of "Culture, the exotic, the past, the Earth-minus-America" (133) for Stevens and his contemporaries; this is an

---

12 "Part of His Education" was published April 24 1899 and "The Nymph" December 6 1899. The two pieces are quoted and discussed by Buttel in The Making of Harmonium 21-6.
attraction that, at least for Stevens, is frequently located in France. John Ransom notes that in Harmonium, and earlier I would add, "French words often signal a certain urbane refinement for which the American poet has no hometown equivalent." 13

Stevens is also, however, associating French with the affectation typified by Geoffrey, one of his earliest fop characters. French exoticism is very inviting, but Stevens makes it clear that it can be ridiculous if abused by would-be sophisticates, resulting in what Jarrell calls "that vulgar exoticism which disregards both what we have kept and what we are unique in possessing" (134). Stevens is aware that the genuine appeal of the foreign can go hand-in-hand with the pretension of the self-styled connoisseur. While he does not object to playing a comically pretentious role himself at times, as he occasionally does in his journals and later incorporates into Harmonium-era personae, he always maintains a derisive view of glib cultural sophistication attained through the use of French.

"The Nymph" has a slightly different sense of French exoticism. The narrator takes a walk in the woods where he encounters an attractive girl with a sketch pad. She declares herself to be a nymph and mocks the food he is carrying: canned beans and crackers. She offers him instead wild food such as mushrooms, cherries and blackberries, and names them in French, calling the blackberries "mûres de

13 "Fable in Harmonium's 'Adult Make-Believe'" 48.
ronce," for example. Buttel notes that "naming the woodland dainties in French" "intensif[ies] the sense of their delicacy" (23). This is both because of the general appeal that comes from the French and an associated sense of attractiveness and excitement that comes from the girl herself. The mushrooms and berries contrast in their forest provenance with the mass-manufactured beans and crackers; the naming of them in French furthers this intrinsic difference, making for a linguistic and cultural distancing as well. Buttel also points out that the distinction between the two kinds of food recalls the liqueur/beer dichotomy in "Part of His Education." In both stories the use of French is tied in with the sensory pleasure of eating and drinking, establishing an association between a French-connected aesthetics and certain kinds of food and drink, which Stevens will explore in later poetry.

The continental refinement of the nymph is brought down to earth when it turns out ironically that she is a member of "The Eureka Camping Club of Billville, Mass.," showing that her elegance and her use of French cover up a typically plain American existence. She remains, however, a more positive figure than the somewhat repellent Geoffrey even if the treatment of both is satirical. She is not merely affecting a pose and putting down local yokels for their lack of sophistication; she is using fantasy and French to make something imaginative out of a mundane life. In this she resembles Stevens. The narrator is also more
sympathetic toward her because she is a beguiling female. The French sensibility in "The Nymph" is quite seductive because of its association with the girl. The appeal of the foreign adds to her attractiveness for the somewhat abashed down-home narrator. In this, as Buttell notes, the nymph foreshadows *Harmonium* females like those in "The Plot against the Giant" (1917). There, three girls entice a "yokel," but with a full range of sensory attractions - smell, color and sound. The third girl uses French to challenge and attract, although more erotically than in the early story: "Oh, la...le pauvre! / I shall run before him, / With a curious puffing. / He will bend his ear then." The contrast between the sexually charged "Heavenly labials," demonstrated onomatopoeically in the French line, and the "world of gutturals," with a suggested pun on gutters adding a physical and moral sense of lowness to the sounds, furthers the already-established contrast in size, gender, and style between the Giant and the girls. Ransom comments that the third girl’s use of French "typifies the use in *Harmonium* of the French language for its elegance and refined sensual appeal, to which the poet is attracted and yet about which he feels uneasy" (48). The relation of French with a sense of femininity and sexuality remains for Stevens. It will come to be associated with romance and romantic roles when he is courting his future wife, and will surface in his later poetry.

Stevens also explores French-associated images in his
1900 poem "Ballade of the Pink Parasol," a facetious imitation of François Villon's famous fifteenth-century Ballade des dames du temps jadis, written under the pseudonym of "Carrol More." The ballade form was repopularized by Théodore de Banville's 1872 Petit traité de poésie française, which inspired late-nineteenth-century English poets such as Dobson, Swinburne, and Rossetti (who translated Villon's poem) to translate and write ballades. De Banville's popularity "spread to poets in American colleges, who laid claim to English and continental sophistication with a barrage of ballades." One of Geoffrey's social faux-pas in "Part of His Education" was to ridicule the locals for "desecrating a ballade."

Stevens' poem follows the classic ballade stanza form and rhyme scheme while varying the octosyllabic line length. It has a distinctly mocking tone as a speaker bemoans the lack of things like "the old-time wig," and hence the passing of what Bates calls "an age of elegance and artifice" (27):

Where is the roll of the old calash,
And the jog of the light sedan?
Whence Chloe's diamond brooch would flash
And conquer poor peeping man.
Answer me, where is the painted fan
And the candles bright on the wall;
Where is the coat of yellow and tan -
But where is the pink parasol?

14 "Ballade of the Pink Parasol" is reprinted in Souvenirs and Prophecies 66-7.
15 A Mythology of Self 28.
16 Ibid., 28.
17 "Ballade," NPEPP.
Stevens ends with a traditional envoi, "Prince, these baubles are far away / In the ruin of palace and hall," which summons up the ubi sunt theme of the original while satirizing fin-de-siècle nostalgia for bygone elegance.

Riddel notes that the poem "yearns futilely for the romantic past," and Buttel notes that the diction deliberately chosen for its evocation of a recherché and sophisticated elegance [carries] an effect of the absurd...which enable[s] Stevens to include a conception of refinement and beauty without being sentimental. (39)

Stevens' use of somewhat dated and mockingly quaint French-adopted words like "parasol" and "calash" looks forward to similar diction in Harmonium poems like "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" (1915).

The knowledge of French literature and general Francophilia apparent in Stevens' early publications are also evident in the journal which he started at Harvard in 1898. With it he began a life-long practice of alluding to and quoting passages from French sources in his private writing. J. M. Edelstein comments that Stevens' "journals and letters from this time are one long commentary on what he was reading." Long after he stopped keeping a journal...

18 The Clairvoyant Eye 54.
19 "Parasol" is adopted from the French parasol and "calash" from the French calèche (The Oxford English Dictionary, 1989 ed. Unless otherwise noted, all references will be to this edition and abbreviated as OED).
20 In "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" the speaker laments the lack of "beaded ceintures" on contemporary nightgowns, using the unusual and somewhat exotic French-originated "ceintures" to emphasize a sense of decorativeness and artifice.
21 "The Poet as Reader: Wallace Stevens and his Books" 57.
he kept notebooks and commonplace books full of annotated quotations and observations, frequently taken from reading in French. Fittingly enough, the first dated entry from his journal contains a topical French quotation: "I wish that like Eugénie de Guérin I might write something about which I could say, 'Ceci n'est pas pour le public; c'est de l'intime, c'est de l'âme, c'est pour un'" (S&P 20). The quotation is about joys of writing for oneself, and this sense of intimacy is heightened by the use of French, which acts as a private and personal language for Stevens. The French in itself brings an intimate pleasure akin to that which comes from journal writing. This association between his personal pleasure in the use of French and the pleasure which came from keeping journals and notebooks (and putting quotations from French reading in them) continued for Stevens when journal keeping was replaced by marginalia and critical commentary in Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects in the thirties.

A good early example of Stevens' discussion of French reading in his journal comes in a 1903 entry made while camping in British Columbia where he recounts "taking sunbaths and fighting mosquitoes and dipping into the Lettres Spirituelles of Bossuet - a real summer's day -" (L 66). Bossuet is later one of the few authors who have the

22 Guérin (1805-48) was known for her Journal. The quotation is taken from an August 24 1835 entry (76).
23 Jacques Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704). Stevens' surviving library includes a copy of Bossuet's Sermon sur la mort. See Appendix.
honour of being directly mentioned in Stevens' poetry; in "The Doctor of Geneva," the "Lacustrine man had never been assailed / By such long-rolling opulent cataracts / Unless Racine or Bossuet held the like." Stevens mocks the Doctor's citified and ostentatiously intellectual thoughts, which are set "spinning and hissing" by his experience of the "voluble delugings" of the Pacific.

Mockery of overly serious intellectual or academic types such as the "rationalists, wearing square hats" in "Six Significant Landscapes" (1916) or "the scholars" who "think hard in the dark cuffs / Of voluminous cloaks" from "Homunculus et la Belle Étoile" (1919) occurs in several Harmonium poems, and later as well.

The presence of French in his journals involved more than quotations from his reading; it also included a characteristic blending of French phrases into English sentences. In a 1900 journal entry he wrote, "My feelings tonight find vent in this phrase alone: Salut au Monde!" (S&P 55). Another expression of personal feelings with French comes in a 1901 entry where he observes that "the weather is more comme il faut" (S&P 111) or a 1902 entry which begins, "Oh Mon Dieu, how my spirits sink when I am alone here in my room!" (L 58). In a 1903 entry he comments on a star "in the clair de crépuscule" (L 68).

Stevens was familiar enough with the language to

24 Bossuet is also mentioned in "Meditation" (1917): "Bossuet did not preach at the funerals / Of puppets."
understand plays performed in French, seeing Rostand's *L'Aiglon* twice in the fall of 1900, the first time commenting that "it was all vastly entertaining as everything of the sort is bound to be in New York" (S&P 89). He also shows a knowledge of French painting and a tendency towards seeing the outside world in a painterly way when in a 1906 journal entry he comments upon a "half-misty, Fantin-La Tourish night" (S&P 167). In this way Stevens was already thinking and writing about French literature, theater, and art in his journal, showing the diverse areas that his Francophilia encompassed and laying the foundations for his mature interests.

Stevens' facility in reading French was not apparently accompanied by an ability in speaking, as he mentions more than once in his journal entries. In a 1900 entry he writes of playing with a farm kitten while speaking to it in French, "perhaps with countless mistakes" but "with no flaw in the pleasure" (S&P 53). In a self-critical mood he was more likely to refer to his spoken French as "execrable" even while delighting in being a "wild polyglot" (S&P 83). In a semi-French (and grammatically incorrect) entry he describes a certain shyness at speaking it in public: "Ate a big juicy 'bifstek' chez l'Hotel Martin ce soir. Mais je ne parle pas au garçon; j'eus trop de peur" (S&P 89).25 This

25 "Je ne parle pas" is a present tense construction and "j'eus" is a passé simple form; the two clauses do not agree. The "de" is also unnecessary. The sentence ought to read correctly in a passé composé form, "Je n'ai pas parlé au garçon, j'avais trop peur."
particular problem did not apparently remain with him, as later in life he is recorded as deeply impressing his nephew John Sauer by taking him out to an expensive French restaurant and ordering proficiently in the native language, showing at the least a familiarity with that particular menu and a knowledge of French food (Parts 276). His spoken French also improved enough to speak relatively easily with natives like Marcel Duchamp, the French artist and mutual acquaintance of Walter Arensberg. He quite lyrically describes a lunch with Arensberg and Duchamp in a 1915 letter to his wife, emphasizing his enduring enjoyment of the sound of French through the bird simile: "When the three of us spoke French it sounded like sparrows around a pool of water" (L 185).

The use of French itself remained something personal and intimate for Stevens throughout the years, and not just in his journals. It was not unusual for him to use jocular French phrases in casual correspondence, for example in a postcard to his wife from his first trip to Miami in 1916, "this is a jolly place - joli" (L 191), or a 1920 postcard to Harriet Monroe: "Je vous assure, madame, q[u]’une promenade à travers the soot-deposit qu’est Indianapolis est une chose véritablement étrange" (L 218). He would not however write entire letters in French, especially to native speakers, even late in life writing in English to French

26 Walter Arensberg was a Harvard acquaintance of Stevens who held a World War I era salon in his New York apartment (L 92, 185, 391, 820-3, 850-1).
correspondents like Paule Vidal and receiving letters in French from them.27

As with his treatment of the use of French by would-be sophisticates like Geoffrey, Stevens' inclusion of French phrases in his journal and correspondence could be ironic. It reflected a general tone of comic pretentiousness apparent in journal entries such as "I ate a grapefruit in my room & then went down to the corner and had my boots blacked. In this way, I nurse an aristocratic feeling" (S&P 95). This wry accounting of inexpensive pleasures also, however, represented a genuine desire for experiences beyond the norm of his impoverished bachelor life.28 These feelings were sometimes expressed in a desire for travel to foreign locales. As he stated in a 1900 entry: "I've been wanting to go to Arizona or Mexico, but do not have any good reason for doing so. I am likely to remain here until Spring. Europe is still on the other side of the ocean"

27 In his first letter to Paule Vidal, in 1945, Stevens wrote:

Your father was accustomed to write to me in French, and I was accustomed to reply in English. This enabled both of us to say exactly what we had in mind, without awkwardness, and I hope that it will be possible for us to continue to carry on correspondence in that manner. (L 491)

In a 1943 letter to his friend Henry Church Stevens suggested, "Why don't you write your letters to me in French, or, at least, do so now and then? But I shall have to reply in English" (L 430). Upon receiving a postcard in French from Peter Lee, a Korean student acquaintance of his, Stevens wrote in a 1954 letter: "I could answer you in French but, if I did, you wouldn't know it" (L 845).

28 In a 1904 entry Stevens wrote: "Working savagely; but I have been so desperately poor at times as not to be able to buy sufficient food - and sometimes not any" (S&P 142).
Stevens was starting to develop the idea of France, in particular Paris, as an aesthetic and intellectual haven, combining his desire for travel and foreign experience with his general Francophilia. In an unpublished 1907 letter about the lack of appeal of New York bookstores he says:

I like to drop into a dusky-looking basement shop and find odd volumes of the old English poets or of the old French ones for all that. I'd like to find a volume of Marot or Villon... In Boston and Philadelphia it is different; and they say that in the book-stalls along the quays of Paris, it is different, too.29

In a 1909 letter to Elsie he writes:

We'll be going over there one of these days, I hope. I should mope in Paradise (probably) if I were to die without first having been to London. - On Sunday, it was Berlin. - I have had my hours in Paris, too - when I could see the street of the Little Stables, and the Street of Beautiful Leaves, and the Bridge of Arts, and the Church of Our Lady, and the Arc of Triumph - as clearly as I can see you looking out of that frame. - Good fortune, send us to them all.30

This wistful desire for travel and different experience remained with him, associated in particular with the idea of a voyage to France. France, however, always stayed "on the other side of the ocean" for him. Richard Ellmann notes that Stevens, like Des Esseintes, that other non-travelling aesthetic idealist, "mostly stayed home."31

29 April 14 1907 (WAS 1789: Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library).
30 George Lensing, Wallace Stevens: A Poet's Growth 226-7. All further references will be abbreviated to A Poet's Growth.
31 "How Wallace Stevens Saw Himself" 150. Kermode comments: "Des Esseintes' trip to London ended with a bottle of stout on a foggy night at Calais. For Stevens, Europe was a daydream about Paris, a postcard from Basel; and China a box of tea or a packet of jasmine solicited from travellers"
Jarrell points out that Stevens' desire for travel and foreign experience was not unique:

there was nothing really unusual in what Stevens felt. To have reached, in 1900, in the United States, the age of twenty-one, or fifteen, or twelve - as Stevens and Pound and Eliot did - this was so hard a thing for poets, went so thoroughly against the grain, that they emigrated as soon as they could, or stayed home and wrote poems in which foreignness, pastness, is in itself a final good. (133-4)

Kermode also notes the difficulty "for a literate American to escape the attractions of Paris, and that special sense of being at home in French culture which history has as it were forced on the American intellectual" (12). The idea of France and Paris in particular being an intellectual and artistic Mecca was something that Stevens cherished throughout his life even if he never traveled there like Pound, Hemingway, or the more anonymous flocks of Americans seeking foreign experience.

The sense of mild ridicule that Stevens associated with a mannered search for Beauty and the playing of the aesthete's role stayed with him, as he shows in a 1918 letter to William Carlos Williams describing the beauty of spring in Nashville:

I spare you the whole-souled burblings in the park, the leaves, lilacs, tulips and so on. Such things are unnanly and non-Prussian and, of course, a fellow must pooh-pooh something, even if it happens to be something he rather fancies, you know. 32

Stevens continued to keep a journal and to keep recording French quotations throughout his bachelor life in

(Continuities 78).
32 A Mythology of Self 87.
New York City from 1900 to the summer of 1904 when he met Elsie Moll, his future wife. He began a correspondence with her that mostly supplanted his journal writing and continued up until and after their marriage in 1909. This period is important in terms of Stevens' literary growth because he began writing poetry for Elsie in 1908-9, his first poetic efforts since his Harvard Advocate publications.33

Thinking about and writing to Elsie seemed to have stimulated Stevens' literary imagination in a variety of ways, and that included encouraging him to discuss his reading, a practice carried over from his journal writing. As usual, that literature was often French, as in a December 1908 letter: "I spent the evening reading the last volume of "La Chartreuse de Parme" (L 109).

Not all of his readings in French were recent, as in a 1909 letter where he mentioned reading "some of the French poets of the sixteenth century"34 and translated Joachim du Bellay's famous "Heureux qui comme Ulysse" sonnet from Les regrets. Later in the same sequence of letters he sent Elsie a prose translation of Chénier's "La Flute" and mentioned translating a poem by Charles d'Orléans (L 150-6).

33 Stevens wrote two collections for Elsie, the "Book of Verses" (S&P 191-6), and The Little June Book (S&P 227-35), presented on her twenty-second and twenty-third birthdays respectively in June of 1908 and 1909. Some of the poems from The Little June Book were eventually published as part of Carnet de Voyage (1914).
34 Stevens owned Poètes du second ordre, an two-volume anthology of Medieval and Renaissance French poets, which included du Bellay and d'Orléans as well as Ronsard, Marot, and Malherbe. See Appendix.
Stevens called his du Bellay translation "Sonnet from the Book of Regrets" and sent it along with the original and a translation by Austin Dobson.35

The "Ulysse" sonnet remained personally meaningful for Stevens. In a 1913 letter to Elsie he expressed his recurring desire for travel in the context of discussing a visit to Reading:

And so I keep recalling Du Bellay's sonnet in the Book of Regrets; for, when all is said and done, there is more for a common yellow dog like me in our Pennsylvania Anjou than in the 'fronts audacieux' of New York. Only I never intend to admit that I'm a common yellow dog..Indeed, to-night I'd like to be in Paris, sipping a bock under a plane-tree, and listening to Madame's parrot from Madagascar. (L 181)

In mentioning "the 'fronts audacieux' of New York" and "our Pennsylvania Anjou," Stevens alludes to du Bellay. The sonnet is about the attractiveness of one's home region, in du Bellay's case "la douceur anjevine," compared with the lesser appeal of impressive foreign locales, for example "de palais romains le front audacieux." Stevens recognized his own basic attachment to his roots but willingly turned from du Bellay's Odyssean attraction to home towards the diverse sensory enticements of an imaginary voyage to Paris. Stevens thus combined his literary musings with his desire for travel, showing how his love of France involved both an interest in the country's literature and a fascination with the idea of traveling there and experiencing it for himself.

This literary and geographical fusion, the filtering of a

35 Dobson's translation was taken from Waddington's The Sonnets of Europe. See Appendix.
desire for travel through imaginative musings, is characteristic of Stevens’ Francophilia.

Du Bellay continued to hold a position in Stevens’ literary imagination as he is alluded to in *Phases* (1914), paraphrased in "Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges" (1915) and referred to in "Bowl, Cat and Broomstick," (1917) one of the three *Harmonium*-era plays. He is also alluded to later in "A Dish of Peaches in Russia" (1939) and in the late prose piece "A Collect of Philosophy" (1951).

A particular association of Elsie and romance with French seems to have come early and naturally to Stevens, as he wrote in a 1904 journal entry about visiting Elsie in Reading: "My word, she seemed une vraie princesse lointaine" (*S&P* 146). The French phrase gives Elsie a sense of exoticism similar to that initially surrounding the nymph and serves to further romanticize the already idyllic idea of a far away princess. This kind of quiet idealization of his beloved is consciously poetic, and the use of French adds to that impression. The French makes the description seem more personal and intimate as well, creating much the same effect as it does in journal entries and letters. The romanticism is both emphasized and ironically muted by the French and this is a device that Stevens often uses in his writing to and about Elsie.

It is apparent from the letters that she too felt that things French were special to both of them. In a 1911
letter Stevens shares a private joke about punctuation:

But personally I find pleasure in too many things not sociable. This is largely the result of many years of isolation and of tastes formed under such conditions...(notice my Frenchy way of punctuating? Très chic, n’est-ce pas?)...But for all that, I see your side of it too.36

Stevens developed and expanded upon his Francophilic amorous musings as his writings to Elsie increased. He began to associate himself and his beloved with French-connected fictional characters. In particular he sometimes referred to himself as Pierrot and to Elsie as Columbine, as in this 1907 sketch:

And so when summer came, they went in a boat to [a] quiet island, and on the way, Pierrot pulled out a newspaper and read to Columbine a little news of the stupid world from which he was taking her. But Columbine didn’t think it stupid. So Pierrot turned the boat around, and they drifted back to town. Yet even while they were drifting, Columbine thought of the quiet island and she knew that Pierrot was thinking of it too. (L 106)

Pierrot and Columbine are characters that stem originally from the seventeenth-century Italian Commedia dell’arte and who have a long history in Italian and French theater and art, particularly Pierrot. Pierrot began as an

36 Both of the ellipses, about which Stevens is commenting, are in the original. Richardson writes:

He adopted the ellipsis to replace the usual short dash he had picked up from his father. The new pause mark somehow became "Frenchy." (Though it was not a widely employed stylistic device in English prose until a few years later in the century, it did not have much wider currency in French.) His using it here and there in this letter represented at least a sentimental turning away from the harsher dash associated with his father and the more stringent tradition in which he had been raised. He was going to Paris at least in punctuation. (The Early Years 382)
undefined clown figure known as Pedrolino and eventually developed, by way of interpretation by mimes like Jean-Gaspard Deburau, into the romantic quasi-noble figure of a "moonstruck" naïf. Storey notes that "the commedia types were ubiquitous in nineteenth-century Paris." The Pierrot figure was eventually taken up and adapted by nineteenth-century French poets, most notably Verlaine in Fêtes galantes, and later Laforgue.

Stevens was familiar with the history of Pierrot, and owned copies of Maurice Sand’s Masques et Bouffons as well as Pierre Duchartre’s Comédie italienne. He was also undoubtedly familiar with the representations of Pierrot in painting by artists such as Watteau, who influenced Fêtes galantes, and was fond of Verlaine, writing in 1908, "I like Verlaine - water-colors, little statues, small thoughts" (L 110). He later stated in a 1949 letter that in his youth Verlaine "meant a good deal more to him" than other French poets and that there "were many of his lines that I delighted to repeat" (L 636).

Buttel notes that Pierrot in the Verlaine tradition is a "tender lover and aesthete, who observes the irony of his situation with sadness, with wry self-mockery, and a humor that at times becomes mordant" (60). The element of self-mockery certainly applies to Stevens' views of himself as a

---

37 Robert Storey recounts the history and development of Pierrot in Pierrot: A Critical History of a Mask.  
38 Pierrots on the Stage of Desire 234n.  
39 Riddle notes Stevens' "more than casual interest in harlequinade" (95).
lover and his use of French language and references as part of that role. Storey sees Stevens' artistic temperament in the first decade of the century, especially once he had fallen in love with Elsie, as one that was likely to sympathize with the "coyly ironic" sentimentality of a Pierrot figure.\textsuperscript{40} Buttel also points out that Stevens appropriated Verlaine's \textit{Fêtes galantes} settings along with the use of the Pierrot persona: "In the formal gardens and parks of the \textit{fêtes galantes} mode was the essence of elegance, refinement, order, and art" (56-8). These settings are particularly evident in the "Book of Verses," \textit{The Little June Book}, and subsequently in \textit{Carnet de Voyage}.

Bates notes a letter to Elsie where Stevens writes of Pierrot and Columbine "how aptly those two evanescent characters symbolize, in some aspects, ourselves!" (57). Stevens also comments on the theatrical history of Pierrot who developed from a "creature, passive and disinherited" into a lover figure who "wore many disguises" and "made love to Columbine." This goes along with his own progress from a lonely 'gentleman caller' to Elsie's fiancé and subsequently husband.

The idea of a lover who wore many disguises obviously

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Pierrot: A Critical History of a Mask} 68.
\textsuperscript{41} Morse notes in the introduction to the first edition of \textit{Opus Posthumous} that the manuscript poems are "exercises in texture and coloring in which there is an obvious influence of Verlaine" (xviii). Unless specified otherwise, all further references will be to the 1989 revised edition and abbreviated to \textit{OP}.
appealed to Stevens. Bates notes that Stevens seemed to associate the idea of changing clothes or putting on a costume with that of "entering the realm of romance" (58). In one letter he wrote to Elsie of moving from the world of "real things" to a world where "there is nothing real, at least there need not be." He relates this to changing from a magisterial "black wig and black gown," perhaps associated with the day-to-day mundanity of his legal work, to "a white wig, full of powder, and a suit of motley - or, maybe, the old costume of Pierrot" (L 134). In another letter he suggested revealingly that the idea of adopting romantic costumes could be a form of self-protection as well:

You saw me thread-bare - for I am thread-bare when I stand beside you, dear, spouting those long sentences.... And I [don't] like to be seen thread-bare. - The purple robe must, of course, be laid aside now and then; but never, I hope, entirely lost sight of.42

When Stevens later began writing beyond romantic fantasies and love verses for Elsie he developed the Pierrot figure into other personae. He created poetic masks that encompassed the respectively festive and ironic Pierrot figures of Verlaine and Laforgue, implicitly including the stylishness of such French associations and the accompanying mockery of pretension from the early prose pieces.

These Pierrot-descended figures with their varied French associations become some of the characteristic poetic voices in Harmonium. After a certain point, Stevens no

42 A Mythology of Self 58.
longer refers directly to Pierrot as a named character but he maintains an interest in names involving Peter, such as Peter Parasol (which he used both as a pseudonym and as the title of a poem), Peter Quince, and Peter Pecksniff (the nominal basis of the 1919 Pecksniffiana collection), all of whom are to varying degrees related to the Pierrot persona. Interestingly enough, Stevens' Harvard nickname was Pete.

In his initial use of Pierrot in the sketch for Elsie, the character is simpler, more of a romantic conceit between lovers than a self-consciously poetic construction. As Pierrot and Columbine, Wallace and Elsie are romanticized into ideal lover figures who are, however mundanely, facing the ancient issue of an ideal world beyond their reach. The town and the newspaper represent "the stupid world" of people and events which stands in opposition to their insular love and from which they cannot quite disassociate themselves. By heading back to town they acknowledge their inability to escape that world into one of their own love. It is interesting to note that in this sketch Pierrot seems to stand for romance and escapism while Columbine stands for acknowledgment of reality because she does not deride "the stupid world" from which they attempt to escape.

Ironically, ten years later in "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" the

43 Alastair Fowler notes that "all character names are of significance as possible indicators of genre" (Kinds of Literature 85).
44 The Early Years 98.
speaker criticizes his lover for her inability to abandon an unrealistic "starry connaissance" of love and romance.

The somewhat plaintive pathos resulting from Pierrot and Columbine's inability to escape "the stupid world" is carried into other current poetry. The speaker of The Little June Book's "Pierrot" expresses melancholy because his love lies "dreaming under ground" and looks forward to joining her. The pose is unrelieved by any of the self-deprecating humor that surfaces in later love poetry. In another, untitled piece the despondence is more explicit. Buttel notes that the speaker is "evidently a disenchanted Pierrot" who shows "a fin de siècle world-weariness" in lines like "I am weary of the plum and of the cherry / And that buff moon in evening's aquarelle" (63). The speaker's depression is expressed in an aesthetic fatigue with fancy fruit and artistic interpretations of natural scenes. Stevens cannot, however, as he is later able to do, get beyond expressing lassitude with stilted phrases and rhymes that might themselves give rise to that kind of fatigue, and as a result the effect is somewhat self-defeating. Stevens, however, obviously thought well of this lyric, as he eventually included it in Carnet de Voyage.45

Carnet de Voyage was Stevens' first publication since the Harvard Advocate and it is significant in the study of his French connections. None of the poems from Carnet de Voyage ever found its way into Harmonium; some, however, 45 The Trend, Sept/Nov 1914 (OP 5-8).
have themes and techniques that appear in later poems.

Stevens' choice of a French title for this sequence is meaningful for a variety of reasons. It is the first example of his intermittent use of French titles for individual and collected writings; he later goes on to give many poems French or partly French titles, as well as a collection of poems (Sur Ma Guzla Gracile), and his commonplace book (Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects). "Carnet" is a French word for a small notebook and can be used in conjunction to indicate various kinds of record books (carnet d'adresses, carnet d'échéances, etc.).

Gasc's Dictionary of the French and English Languages, which Stevens owned, translates carnet as a notebook or memorandum book. Stevens uses the term to indicate a travel notebook or journal. As a travel notebook it suggests a series of impressions or observations jotted down by the poet and thus fits in with Stevens' fondness for journal writing. The idea of a notebook of observations also works to bind together what is otherwise a somewhat disjointed sequence, containing as it does touches of Symboliste technique ("An odor from a star"), Chinoiserie (One More Sunset, Chinese Rocket, "She that winked her sandal fan"), and Shakespearean song (On an Old Guitar), as well as the fin-de-siècle despondency of early Pierrot poetry ("I am weary of the plum and of the cherry").

46 Grand Larousse de la langue française, 1974 ed. All further references will be abbreviated to Larousse.
Stevens' overall affection for France gives the French title a great deal more personal meaning than if he had called it simply 'travel notebook.' The foreign title opens up the world of French-associated exoticism that pervades the group, and in a sense allows Stevens to travel there poetically. A. Walton Litz notes that the title "refers to the structure of the collection, an imagined voyage to those exotic landscapes that inspired so much of his verse during the post-Harvard years." 47 This is apt because Carnet can be seen as a poetic summary of imaginative tendencies demonstrated in Stevens' journals and post-Harvard poetry: the desire for travel and multicultural experience side-by-side with romanticized, backwards-looking, French-inspired poetic voices and settings. Five of the eight poems in the Carnet sequence actually come from The Little June Book 48 and are thus more indicative of what came before than they are of the first Harmonium poetry he began writing soon after.

The first poem, "An odor from a star," was written closer to the publication date than most of the other poems in the group. Buttel states that it "serves as a point of departure for observing Stevens' response to the Symbolists and his rapidly developing resourcefulness in fitting many of their techniques to his needs" (103). The poem reflects

47 Introspective Voyager 11.
48 Poems III ("Here the grass grows), IV ("She that winked her sandal fan"), V ("I am weary of the plum and of the cherry), VI ("Man from the waste evolved"), and VII (Chinese Rocket), are taken from The Little June Book.
other late-nineteenth-century poetic tastes as well; Bates notes that the "sultana" of the poem "is in fact a Blessed Damozel, invested with the fainting eroticism of the Pre-Raphaelites" (71).

A standard Symboliste-associated technique that Stevens uses in "An odor" is synaesthesia. The most famous example of synaesthesia in Symboliste poetry comes from Baudelaire's poem "Correspondances," although it must be noted that its use is by no means unique or new to Baudelaire and his inheritors. Stevens makes a synaesthetic effect the basis of "An odor," transferring a visual impression into an olfactory and emotional image: "An odor from a star / Comes to my fancy, slight, / Tenderly spiced and gay." The "odor" is then developed into a tactile and visual image where it and the star are linked with "the fragrant silks / Of some sultana, bright / In her soft sky."

The association of the star with the "seraph" whose

49 "The phenomenon wherein one sense modality is felt, perceived, or described in terms of another" (T. V. F. Brogan and A. G. Engstrom, "Synaesthesia" NPEPP).
50 In "Correspondances" Baudelaire establishes a connection between odors and other sensations - "Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent." Smell is associated with touch (child's flesh), sound (oboes), and colour (the green of the prairies). Ian Watt notes that "Correspondances" also suggests "that the phenomenal world [is] a mysterious source of larger and quasi-religious symbolic meanings" (Conrad in the Nineteenth Century 182).
51 It is noted that poetic use of synaesthesia "is ancient and cross-cultural," going back as far as the Iliad and the Odyssey, but that "critical conceptualization of it in the West dates only from the 18th c.," and "in the literary sense [the term] seems to have been first employed by Jules Millet in 1892" (NPEPP).
angelic hand undoes the silks brings a quasi-spiritual element to the poem, which otherwise emphasizes mildly erotic physical sensations. This juxtaposition of ephemeral spiritual content with sensual synaesthetic effects is rendered much more subtly and proficiently in later poems, most notably "Peter Quince at the Clavier" (1915).

The presence of France in Carnet de Voyage is not, however, restricted to the title and to the use of Symboliste technique. The sequence also contains a French geographical reference and echoes of two major French poets.

The poem beginning "She that winked her sandal fan" (IV) contains the lines "She that heard the bell intone / Rendezvous by rolling Rhone." This is one of The Little June Book poems, which looks back to Stevens' association of Elsie and romance with France. It is also an early example of Stevens' poetic use of French place-names, a practice that comes out of the imaginative geographic musings in his journals. He is beginning to create his own French locational metaphors; he will refine and expand them in later poetry. In this case it is the fairly simple association of an abstract female figure with the French river, which looks back to the French-speaking nymph and forward to figures like the "smoky demoiselles" of "Montrachet-le-Jardin" (1942).

"She that winked her sandal fan" is also a link between Stevens' interest in Orientalism and his Francophilia. As Jarrell notes, "foreignness, pastness, is
in itself a final good" for Stevens and his contemporaries, and this taste for exotica is not exclusively limited to France. Stevens’ poet travels to Shakespearean England as well on his Voyage, in "On an Old Guitar": "It was a simple thing / For her to sit and sing, / 'Hey nonino!'" Carnet de Voyage is about travel to all the fanciful locales, and times, that attract the poet, although I would argue from the title of the sequence and from Stevens’ general Francophilia that France is given imaginative primacy over the others.

"Man from the waste evolved / The Cytherean glade" (VI) summons up Baudelaire’s "Un voyage à Cythère," as well as Verlaine’s "Cythère," from Fêtes galantes. In Baudelaire’s poem a voyager who arrives at the birthplace of Venus expecting the island to be a place of mythical beauty finds instead an "isle triste et noire" whose only occupant is not, as he imagines, a lovely priestess, but instead a bird-eaten corpse hanging from gallows. Stevens’ Cytherean glade is celebrated as a man-made poetic fantasy land: "It was a place to sing in / And honor noble Life / For white doves to wing in, / And roses to spring in." There is none of the bitter anti-mythological disillusionment of Baudelaire’s poem, although this does come into play years later when Stevens revisits Cythère in An Ordinary Evening in New Haven.

Stevens’ early Cythera seems closer to Verlaine’s poem, which is an idyllic description of "un pavillion à claires-
voies" where Venus satisfies the senses and provides undying pleasure:

Et, l'Amour comblant tout, hormis
La faim, sorbets et confitures
Nous préservent des courbatures.

Stevens' springing roses recall Verlaine's fragrant "rosiers amis;" the two romantic locales are clearly similar. Both also bear resemblance to the "quiet island" visited by Pierrot and Columbine in the earlier epistolary fantasy for Elsie.

The placement of this poem near the end of the Carnet sequence suggests that the Cytherean glade is where the metaphorical voyage ends up. It is interesting to note that a passage in From the Journal of Crispin (1921) excised in "The Comedian as the Letter C" (1923), refers to Crispin as "an artful, most affectionate emigrant, / From Cytherea and its learned doves." Taken in context with the Carnet poem to which it alludes, this statement supports the idea of Crispin moving from an immature French-associated poetic state, that of Carnet and the Cytherean glade, to a mature poetic existence.52

In this way, because of its diverse French elements, Carnet de Voyage previews Stevens' future poetic uses of France, which will include varied use of French diction as well as extensive reference and allusion to French authors, 52 Even though the lines from the Journal suggest a metaphorical movement away from Cythera, the figure of Venus will surface later in several of Stevens' Harmonium-era poems.
artists, and locales. Shortly after the publication of *Carnet de Voyage* Stevens began writing poetry that made its way into *Harmonium*, and thus moved into a new and prolific poetic phase in which French and his Francophilia continued to play a significant role.
CHAPTER 2

HARMONIUM

Ach, Mutter,
This old, black dress,
I have been embroidering
French flowers on it.
"Explanation" (1917)

In many ways the fin-de-siècle settings and personae of the manuscript poems, which culminate in Carnet de Voyage, provide some of the basic themes and colourings in Harmonium. There is, however, a general movement throughout Stevens' first volume away from older associations and towards a newer, more personal, more American, voice. Stevens' uses of French throughout the collection, ranging from French diction, to allusion, to the strong presence of French-associated poetic personae, provide an interesting map of this movement. The personae are particularly significant in what is Stevens' most theatrical volume;¹ their development and progress is a focal point in this chapter's examination of Stevens' Harmonium-era French connections.

Stevens submitted Carnet de Voyage to The Trend, which

¹ Frank Doggett notes that "the poems of Harmonium are essentially dramatic, with the emphasis on a certain situation with the involvement of person and the dominance of the verb and descriptive words and images" ("Wallace Stevens's Later Poetry" 148).
was headed by his Harvard friend Pitts Sanborn (L 165-6). This connection proved to be important for both his social life and his career as a poet. Carl Van Vechten, another old Harvard acquaintance involved with The Trend, introduced Stevens to a group of poets, artists, and publishers in New York, which included Allen and Louise Norton, Donald Evans, and Alfred Kreymborg. They formed what Stevens came to call the "art crowd."\(^1\) The group coalesced around the apartment of Walter Arensberg, who by this time had become a wealthy collector.\(^2\) The "art crowd" was consciously Modern and art-oriented. It also had a related French interest, at least in part because of events like the 1913 Armory show of Post-Impressionist Art\(^3\) and Arensberg's friendships with Marcel Duchamp and other French artists.\(^4\) Glen Macleod comments that "the atmosphere of the salon [was] aristocratic, playful, intellectual, with a French accent, and above all, a consuming interest in art" (41).

Stevens, who jokingly referred to himself as an "Eminent Vers Libriste" in a 1916 letter to his wife (L 196), thus found himself in the midst of a group of artistic, like-minded Francophiles who provided an

---

1 Quoted from a letter to Ferdinand Reyher in Glen Macleod's *Wallace Stevens and Company: The Harmonium Years 1913-1923* 19, 97n.
3 Buttel notes: "Stevens does not mention his own degree of interest in the art world of 1913, but his daughter reports that he, too, attended the Armory show" (82).
4 "Walter Arensberg's apartment in New York was a kind of meeting place for a good many Frenchmen whose company he enjoyed" (L 850).
enthusiastic audience for his poetry. His period of association with them coincides with the writing of the first poetry good enough to be eventually included in Harmonium. Bates feels that "the writers and artists who gathered at 33 West Sixty-Seventh Street...provided [Stevens] with the impetus to start writing again" (74). While Stevens' association with the Arensberg circle may have done this, and may have inspired him to be more contemporary, it certainly helped advance his publication career. The Nortons published Rogue while Arensberg and Kreymborg were involved in the production of Others; Stevens published work in both that would in due time find its way into Harmonium.

Macleod states that the spirit of the "art crowd" "corresponds strikingly to the spirit of Harmonium" (41). It is, however, important to note that the "post-decadent"

---

5 Stevens moved from New York City to Hartford in May of 1916, effectively ending his active social interaction with the "art crowd" (L 189). Macleod sees this period of Stevens' life as formally ending in 1922 when he donated his collection of art catalogues, "by [his] own account, a virtually complete record of every important art exhibit in New York during the preceding decade," to Hartford's Wadsworth Atheneum (19).

6 Litz comments that "by 1913 Stevens was well on the way to modernizing his own poetic style...although he felt committed to no particular movement or coterie" (10).

7 See A Mythology of Self 74, 94.

8 Stevens published "Tea" and "Cy Est Pourtraitc, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges" in Rogue I,1 (March 15, 1915), and "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" in Rogue II,2 (Sept. 15, 1915). "Peter Quince at the Clavier" (1915), "Six Significant Landscapes" (1916), and "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" (1918) appeared in Others I, II and V. See L 184n, 215n, and A Mythology of Self 77.

9 A Mythology of Self 72.
spirit of the Arensberg salon corresponds more with the poetry that Stevens was writing at the time than it does with the overall spirit of Harmonium, which is quite varied.

The poetic diversity in Harmonium results from the long period of time over which the poems were collected and also from the range of Stevens’ interests, of which French and France were but one aspect. For example, one of the principal characteristics of the volume is a strongly American geographical and poetic consciousness, something that becomes apparent with the 1917 Primordia sequence and continues throughout Harmonium. Bates observes that "the purely ideal landscapes of Elsie’s poems [make] way for American settings" (74-5).

A good example of the American and European synthesis in Harmonium comes in Stevens’ back-to-back placement of "Ploughing on Sunday" (1919) and "Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges." "Ploughing on Sunday" with its "willed and artificial primitivism," robust exclamatory sounds, American agriculture, and American allusion (Joel Chandler Harris), contrasts markedly with the sophisticated and archaic French title, harmonium.

10 Section VII of Primordia appears in Harmonium under the title "In the Carolinas," and section IX as "Indian River." The final non-numbered section, "To the Roaring Wind," appears under its original title as the closing poem of Harmonium. Holly Stevens notes that her father’s new job at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company as of March 1916 "involved a good deal of travel, taking [him] all over the United States" (L 189).
11 Vendler, On Extended Wings 52.
12 Both poems are, however, as Eleanor Cook notes, linked through their treatment of religion (Poetry, Word-Play, and
French flowers, and French allusiveness of the earlier poem. Other examples of this kind of arrangement are the sandwiching of "The Load of Sugar Cane" (1921) between "The Ordinary Women" (1922) and "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" (1918), or the placement of "Hymn from a Watermelon Pavilion" (1922) next to "Peter Quince at the Clavier" (1915).

French does, however, have a significant presence in Stevens' first volume and there are notable French elements in most of the major poems. Throughout the Harmonium period Stevens continued to experiment with French-tinged fin-de-siècle flavourings as he established his distinctive personal style. He also began to make the characteristic uses of French diction and allusion that would continue in his poetry long after the vistas and personae of the early manuscript poems had disappeared. Elements like Fêtes galantes landscapes and Pierrot-derived personae became much less evident in his poetry, but he did not completely eliminate them as much as he adopted and modified them. This is particularly true of the Pierrots from the

Word-War in Wallace Stevens 100. All further references will be abbreviated to Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War). In this way, they have thematic similarities that go beyond their differences in cultural colourings.

13 Cook notes other contrasts between "The Load of Sugar Cane" and "The Ordinary Women": "warmth against cold, flowing against vacillation, mostly ordinary against much precious diction, work against fantasy" (54).

14 Macleod notes that Stevens made "a deliberate effort to break out of his early manner. But unlike many other modernist writers...he did not entirely disavow the Nineties in his maturity" (12).
manuscript poems, which he blended with the French
sensibility seen in his early stories and journals to create
idiosyncratic personae that were in varying ways hybrids of
Pierrot and French-associated fin-de-siècle fops. Storey
states that

the Pierrot of the manuscript books...undergoes an
imaginative transformation - we might even say
resuscitation - during the making of Harmonium. His
name disappears (a name too evidently redolent of musk-
scented slivers of moon) and he begins to cultivate
healthy self-mockery.  

Storey also notes that to Stevens, "both Pierrot and
the dandy...had always seemed two sides of the same elegant
glove" (176). This is because they were both figures with
which Stevens felt affinity and to which he applied aspects
of his emotional and aesthetic sensitivity.

The French dandysme espoused by D'Aurevilly and
Baudelaire, what Holbrook Jackson calls "dandyism of
temperament," was influential in the English and American
fin-de-siècle, and of natural interest to Stevens who
"absorbed the poses and preoccupations of the English
decadence and transmitted them, refracted by the medium of
his unique sensibility." Critics somewhat simplistically
labeled Stevens as a "dandy" poet early on in his career;  

16 Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties 132. Ellen
Moers' The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm explores the history
of the Dandy figure including a detailed exploration of
Barbey D'Aurevilly's and Charles Baudelaire's development of
dandyism into "an attitude of protest against the
vulgarized, materialistic civilization of the bourgeois
century" (264).
17 A Mythology of Self 100.
18 Gorham Munson, for example, rather deprecatingly
the "caractère d'opposition et de révolte" of the dandy, however, was only part of what Stevens drew upon for Harmonium poetry. His uses of refinement and elegance were less polemical.

The Rogue poems and those that follow were also written and published fifteen to twenty years after Stevens' Harvard days and the then-contemporary popularity of attitudes like dandysme. As such they represent more a stylized looking-back than genuine dandy poetry; Stevens' figures are not dandies per se because they have been distanced and adapted from their sources.

Some of Stevens' Harmonium-era figures do share a dandy characteristic, however, and that is a sense of aesthetic or cultural deficiency in the world that surrounds them. Jarrell sees this sense as an American predicament, one particularly applicable to Stevens and his era:

> Our most disastrous lacks - delicacy, awe, order, natural magnificence and piety, "the exquisite errors of time," and the rest; everything that is neither bought, sold, nor imagined on Sunset Boulevard or in Times Square... - these things were the necessities of Stevens' spirit. Some of his poems set about supplying these lacks - from other times and places, from the underlying order of things, from the imagination.... The feeling of being a leisured, cultivated, and sympathetic tourist (in a time-machine sometimes) is essential to much of his work. (134)

This applies well to the Harmonium-era poetry where Stevens uses, sometimes satirically, French-connected personae,

----

commented in 1925 on such things as the "elegance [Stevens] attains in his fastidious vocabulary" ("The Dandyism of Wallace Stevens" 413).

19 Baudelaire, "Le Dandy" (Oeuvres complètes II 711).
diction, and allusion to create elegant and occasionally antique poetic effects.

Within a year after Carnet de Voyage Stevens went on to publish, among other poems, "Tea," "Cy Est Pourtraitcte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges," and "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" (all in Rogue, 1915); they are the earliest of his poems to eventually appear in Harmonium. David Perkins notes that Rogue aimed to be "exquisite, dandified and decadent" and that "to them [the publishers] the mode of London twenty-five years before seemed to be the last word in modern daring."\textsuperscript{20} The Rogue poems fit in with these purported aims, particularly "Cy Est Pourtraitcte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges," where Stevens "burlesques the more recently fashionable pieties of the fin de siècle,"\textsuperscript{21} and "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" with its implicitly anti-bourgeois disapproval suggesting a dandyesque aesthetic snobbery.\textsuperscript{22} The Rogue poems also represent, to varying degrees, the post-Carnet de Voyage personae and poetic tendencies.

"Cy Est Pourtraitcte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges" is a mock religious parable that looks back to the end of the last century with its "aesthete-God and...Pre-Raphaelite damozel,"\textsuperscript{23} and considerably further

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{20} A History of Modern Poetry I 528. \\
\textsuperscript{21} A Mythology of Self 73. \\
\textsuperscript{22} Macleod also notes an echo of Whistler's "Ten O'Clock" lecture of 1885, "that locus classicus of Aestheticism," in the title of Stevens' poem (25). \\
\textsuperscript{23} A Mythology of Self 73.
\end{flushright}
with its archaic title. The poet indulges in a certain French-flavoured literary erudition, beginning with the title, and following this somewhat esoteric allusion with an echo of du Bellay’s "D’un Vanneur de blé aux Vents," paraphrased in Ursula’s floral offering: "Upon your altars / I have placed / The marguerite and coquelicot, / And roses / Frail as April snow."26

The French "marguerite" and "coquelicot" linguistically distinguish this oblation from the more modest offering "in the grass / Of radishes and flowers." Their long-vowelled multi-syllabic sounds further the contrast with the generic flowers and homely root vegetables of the second, more personal, gift. They also add to the general French atmosphere that comes from the title (and to a lesser extent from the echo of du Bellay), and provide subtle meaning because of their fields of association. "Marguerite" is used in English, in a meaning adopted from the French, for

24 The title is likely taken from an illustration of the martyrdom of St Ursula in a fifteenth-century French translation of Jacobus de Voragine’s Legenda Aurea, the medieval compendium of saint’s lives (A Mythology of Self 73). Stevens also uses Voragine in "Colloquy with a Polish Aunt" (1919), discussed below.
25 Stevens commented in a 1919 letter to Harriet Monroe in context of "Colloquy with a Polish Aunt": "Voragine may warrant a charge of obscurantism on my part or of stupidity on the other fellow’s part, as the wind blows," noting that Voragine "ought to be fairly well-known even to book-reviewers" (L 216).
26 Du Bellay’s original line reads "J’offre ces violette, / Ces lis et ces fleurettes / Et ces roses icy, / Ces vermeilletes roses, / Tout freschement écloses, / Et ces oeillets aussi" (Oxford Book of French Verse 97). The source of this allusion comes from Cook’s discussion of "Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges" 102.
varieties of daisies (OED). In an old French use, the plural *marguerites* means a collection of complimentary verse "d'un style recherché et fleuri," perhaps jokingly commenting on Stevens' deliberately elegant diction and phrasing (Larousse). *Effeuiller la marguerite* describes the petal-plucking "loves me, loves me not" game (Larousse), fitting in with Ursula's abashed youthful affection. "Coquelicot" in English is adapted from the French flower name to describe red or poppy-coloured fabric, and this somewhat obsolete usage²⁷ adds a suggestion of bygone decorative stylishness, which accompanies the listed colours of the flowers and Ursula's "red and gold brocade." Naming the flowers in French also allows Stevens to use a cross-linguistic rhyme, matching "coquelicot" and "April snow," a technique he will occasionally use later.

It is interesting to note that Pater considered du Bellay's poem both popular and significant,²⁸ stating that it captured the "certain silvery grace of fancy" of Pléiade poetry.²⁹ Stevens was likely aware of this, considering his knowledge of Pater and his affection for du Bellay. Given Pater's importance for Aestheticism, Stevens is further playing on a nineties literary sensibility via this once-removed allusion.

²⁷ In 1798 Jane Austen writes in her Letters that "coquelicot is to be all the fashion this winter" and in the most recent usage Cassell's Family Magazine describes "the fashionable Coquelicot or poppy shade" in 1884 (OED).
²⁸ This point about Pater's judgment of the poem also originally comes from Cook (102).
²⁹ The Renaissance 182.
"Cy Est Pourtraicte," which was read to a mostly-enthusiastic audience at the Arensbergs' apartment, also shows Stevens making fun of fin-de-siècle poetic associations, and much more skilfully than his earlier lampooning in "Ballade of the Pink Parasol." Ursula's pious affection, which might have been presented seriously in The Little June Book, for example, becomes a source of ribald humour when the "good Lord" feels "a subtle quiver, / That was not heavenly love, / Or pity." The unexpectedly humorous ending reflects back on the rest of the poem, deflating in retrospect the elaborate title and the ostensibly solemn account of Ursula's floral and vegetal offerings. The 'footnote' which ends the poem, "This is not writ / In any book," becomes in this context a waggish mock-pedantic wink from the narrator.

The speaker of "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock" experiences the characteristic disappointment of the dandy and of Jarrell's aesthete-tourist while observing the lack of imagination and colour in the lives of people around him:

The houses are haunted
By white night-gowns.
None are green,
Or purple with green rings,
Or green with yellow rings,
Or yellow with blue rings.
None of them are strange,
With socks of lace
And beaded ceintures.
People are not going

30 Carl Van Vechten reports that the only displeased member of the audience was Stevens' wife, who felt, on the whole justifiably, that the poem was written in a "mocking spirit" (A Mythology of Self 73).
To dream of baboons and periwinkles.
Only, here and there, an old sailor,
Drunk and asleep in his boots,
Catches tigers
In red weather.

The mundane white night gowns are metaphorically associated
with the subsequent tedium of common dreams that do not
involve such things as African monkeys or interesting
shellfish. Jarrell comments:

They have all gone to bed early, like good sensible
machines; and the houses' ghosts, now, are only
nightgowns, the plain white nightgowns of the Common
Man, Economic Man, Rational Man - pure commonplace, no
longer either individual or strange or traditional; and
the dreams are as ordinary as the nightgowns. (138)

The delicate old-world preciosity of the decorative
"socks of lace" and the French-originated "beaded
ceintures"\(^{31}\) summons up a familiar antique sensibility. The
preoccupation with attire, as well as the detailed listing
of the desired colours, suggest a fastidious aesthetic
sensitivity.

This attention given to dress and decoration surfaces
again and again in *Harmonium*, and is characteristic of a
number of poems which also have related French associations.
One of these is theatrical costume, "the white wig, full of
powder," and "the old costume of Pierrot." The focus on
dress and decoration serves to link Pierrot figures with
their hybridized descendants because the garb and decorative
accessories of fop figures can identify inner

\(^{31}\) "Ceinture" is the French word for belt, girdle, or
cincture. Its use in English is rare, with the only example
of usage from 1852, by Thackeray: "'A simple white muslin
dress and blue ceinture'" (OED).
characteristics in much the same way as generic costumes identify stock theatrical characters. As an example, the "fans" and "coiffures" of "Carlos Among the Candles" (1917) and "The Ordinary Women" serve to represent and emphasize the affectation of the characters, just as the desire for coloured nightgowns in "Disillusionment" and for women "in fine clothes, / With parasols" in "Peter Parasol" (1919) represent the speakers' aesthetic dissatisfaction. The use of "ceintures" can also be seen as part of the speaker's desire for aesthetic gratification in the form of exotic language; in this it recalls Geoffrey and the Nymph. Morse comments that the poem satirizes "the pursuit of esoteric sensations by the self-styled avant-garde who were the first to praise it and at whose expense, in part, it was written" (108).

The poem takes a turn as the boring nightclothes and dreams are held up against the vibrant and imaginatively colourful dream of the old sailor. The vivid exoticism and danger of the tiger contrasts with the communal blandness of the usual dreams, as does the red weather with the ghostly white nightgowns. The old sailor is more a descendant of sea yarns and Melville than of fin-de-siècle Europe, and in this Stevens is infusing a distinctively American touch.

It is interesting to note the Harmonium placement of "Disillusionment" right before Sunday Morning (1915), which was published in Poetry in November of 1915, \(^{32}\)

\(^{32}\) Poetry published an abbreviated version of "Sunday
chronologically interspersed between the three Rogue poems. The arrangement in Harmonium suggests that "Sunday Morning" is the aesthetic morning after the aesthetic night before, as it were. The woman enjoying coffee and oranges might well have blue rings or a beaded ceinture on her peignoir, or have dreamed of monkeys. And the white-garbed citizens of "Disillusionment" would certainly be in church on a Sunday morning.

A peignoir, which comes from the French peigner, to comb, is "a loose dressing-gown worn by women while their hair is being combed; a kind of linen or flannel gown put on on coming out of a bath; misapplied to a woman's morning-gown" (OED). "Complacencies of the peignoir" combines self-satisfaction, "true pagan pleasure" as Cook puts it (104), with a hint of French-tinged sartorial extravagance. The effect of the phrase is to suggest very skilfully the self-indulgence and the languid, slightly decadent, state of mind of the woman musing about Paradise while avoiding church.

"Tea," while not directly French-connected, shows how Stevens has progressed from his unpublished poetry towards a more modern tone and focus. A Pierrot from The Little June Book uses romanticized natural elements equated with his emotions, "All things are old. The new-born swallows fare / Through the Spring twilight on dead September's wing," whereas the detached speaker in "Tea" observes an urban morning" (sections I, VIII, IV, V and VII). It was not published in its entirety until the first edition of Harmonium.
scene of natural decay without any overt emotional involvement: "When the elephant's-ear in the park / Shrivelled in frost, / And the leaves on the paths / Ran like rats." The distant quality of the observation softens the effect of the leaves image, which, if isolated, summons up a Baudelairean vision of the decaying modern city with all its vermin and spleen.

The leaf and rat image is contrasted with an indoor scene ("Your lamp-light fell / On shining pillows"), which creates a mood of urbane sophistication, involving as it presumably does the taking of tea and perhaps some discussion of oriental art or, as Cook notes, botany (112-3). Litz notes that "afternoon tea becomes an escape from the death of nature's colors" (39). The taking of tea also implicitly brings up images of ritualized social activity of the kind which so depressed J. Alfred Prufrock, Eliot's failed dandy, if not this speaker.

One of the earliest post-manuscript personae who is implicitly a Pierrot figure more than an eccentric fop or aesthete-tourist is the titular speaker of "Peter Quince at the Clavier."33 His connection in name is furthered by his Shakespearean origin, a theatrical link with the Commedia dell'arte ancestry of Pierrot. He is initially a source of irony and humour because his farcical Midsummer's Night Dream role ostensibly runs counter to the poem's serious motifs of love and death. As a Pierrot figure, however, the

33 Others I,2 (August 1915).
elegiac melancholy as well as the desire for the woman in the opening stanza are not out of place.34

Hybridized Pierrot relatives are also present in two of Stevens' Harmonium-era experiments with drama, "Carlos among the Candles" and "Bowl, Cat and Broomstick" (1917), as well as "The Weeping Burgher" (1919), the uncollected "Peter Parasol," and "Last Looks at the Lilacs" (1923). The avuncular narrator of "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" (1918), and Crispin, the protagonist of "The Comedian as The Letter C" (1923), are related figures in longer poems.

"Carlos among the Candles" is a one-act monologue featuring Carlos, described in the stage directions as "an eccentric pedant of about forty" who "is over-nice in sounding his words." Carlos, whom Morse sees as "self-caricature" on Stevens' part (82), is dressed in black "close-fitting breeches and a close-fitting, tightly-buttoned, short coat and long tails," a dandy's garb. Baudelaire was known for his tendency to wear black.

Carlos is clearly a figure of some ridicule as he prances about the stage lighting candles and indulging in metaphysical speculations about the nature of perception: "The light of two candles has a meaning different from the light of one...and an effect different from the effect of

34 "Peter Quince at the Clavier" also has a further French connection in that it is widely considered to demonstrate Stevens' use of Symboliste technique. Taupin notes: "on sent là le style cher à l'école symboliste: le déchiffrement des prolongements et des échos d'une émotion dans une forme extrêmement délicate" (276).
one...And the proof that that is so, is that I feel the difference...."

His announcement "truly, I am a modern," associates him with the affected refinement that stems from Geoffrey in "Part of His Education." This continues as Carlos says "Here there will be silks and fans...the movement of arms...rumors of Renoir...coiffures...hands...scorn of Debussy...." The "scorn" of the popular Debussy links Carlos with the Decadently fatigued poses of those who in Stevens' Harvard days said "that all the poetry had been written and all the paintings painted," furthering his image of affected intellectuality. The "silks and fans" and "coiffures" are similar to the kind of synecdochal decorative flourishes wistfully desired by the speaker of "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock," and later vapidly present in "The Ordinary Women." "Coiffure" and other terms derived from the French "coiffer" in fact become indicators of this kind of aesthetic desire, re-appearing later in "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" and "The Comedian as The Letter C."

Stevens also mocks foppish French-associated pedantry in Bowl, Cat and Broomstick, where the three characters bear some resemblance to Commedia dell'arte figures. Bowl, a patronizing intellectual similar to Carlos, is clothed in a

35 Coiffure in French indicates a head cover or a manner of arranging hair (Larousse 1,2). In English, "coiffure," a substantive of the French verb coiffer, is "a style or fashion of attiring the head and dressing the hair" or "headdress, usually of women." The most recent example comes from 1866 (OED).
patterned black gown and wears a hat with a jewel. Maureen T. Kravec notes "a striking resemblance" between Bowl's costume and that of "the sententious Doctor Gracian Baloardo ('Dullard')," a Commedia character discussed in Duchartre's Comédie italienne, who "entertains the audience by reciting all manner of garbled misinformation until one of the other characters thrashes him." There is also a certain resemblance in sound between Bowl and Baloardo.

Cat and Broomstick, the other two characters, respectively play the roles of neophyte intellectual and cynical rationalist. Cat is dressed in green, fitting his youthful credulousness, and the older Broomstick is dressed in blue, white, and red, "like a French peasant." Kravec notes that this costume "corresponds to the wise peasant of the commedia."

It is set in 1667 and the characters spend the play discussing the work of a fictional seventeenth-century French poet named Claire Dupray. Interestingly, the late seventeenth century is the period of decline of the Commedia dell'arte-based Comédie italienne, a decline completed by a 1680 royal decree establishing a French monopoly in Parisian

36 "Bowl, Cat and Broomstick: Sweeping the Stage of Souvenirs" 314.

37 Morse notes that Bowl, Cat, and Broomstick are clearly intended to represent three aspects of a single self. Bowl assumes the appearance and 'finical importance' of a self-styled scholar; Cat is the devoted and rather literal-minded 'appreciator' of the arts, in love with the idea of being artistic; and Broomstick is the skeptic, the man of good sense. (Poetry as Life 113)
theater; Stevens may be alluding to this with his intellectual defeat of Bowl and Cat by the French flag-colour-clad Broomstick.

Bowl is first seen reading "a book which is bound in yellow paper, like a French book," Dupray’s poetry. The binding also brings to mind The Yellow Book, the English Decadent periodical, suggesting that the mockery of Bowl and Cat is also a general mockery of fin-de-siècle intellectual affectation.

The play revolves around the interpretation of poetry: the main issue, and source of Bowl’s eventual downfall, is the age of the poet according to the poetry that she writes and her portrait in the frontispiece. Bowl neglects to read the preface to the book and assumes that Dupray "cannot be more than twenty-two" based on his interpretation of the poems. Broomstick eventually finds out her actual age (fifty-three), proving that Bowl’s elaborate assumptions about Dupray are narrow and sentimental: "One should always read a preface first."

Bowl’s misleading translations from French to English are also evidence of his wrong-minded pedantry, at one point becoming so elaborate that they ironically cause him to exclaim: "These things are atrociously difficult in English. In French, they seem almost pellucid." Early in the play Bowl, sententiously translating for Cat, freely interprets

---

38 Hollier, Dennis et al., eds., A New History of French Literature 354. All further references will be abbreviated to NHFL.
"fleurs rouges" as "tawny flowers," "because it is obvious that Claire Dupray means tawny." To Cat's protest that "rouges means red," Broomstick however replies, "A man with so firm a faith in the meaning of language should not listen to poetry."

Along with the mockery of Bowl's and Cat's intellectual attitudes, there is also a degree of self-mockery involved on Stevens' part. One of Dupray's poems consists of "nothing more than the names of colors," which resembles one of Stevens' early poetic experiments,39 and another of Dupray's poems, "Banal Sojourn," ends up as the title of a later Harmonium poem (1919). Du Bellay becomes part of an inside joke as well, mentioned in a list of Dupray's early readings "selected by her mother." Morse notes that "the parodies of his own poems and those of his contemporaries, disguised as the poems of Claire Dupray, reduce the play almost to the level of aesthetic slapstick" (82).

In the end, Broomstick wins out as Bowl leaves the stage in dismay and Cat, struck with the realization that Bowl's aesthetic rationalizations were based on false assumptions, has to be helped off stage by the older Broomstick: "Damn all portraits of poets and poetesses."

Kravec writes that Stevens "sets up his two kitchen macaronis to be swept off the stage of history by the

39 "Colors" (1909). Dupray's poem is titled "The Bouquet," a title Stevens will use for one of his own poems in The Auroras of Autumn more than thirty years later, although with no relation between the two beyond the title.
sensible Broomstick, the herald of a new poetry cleansed of the sentiments and expressions of the twilit eighteen-nineties" (319).

"Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" is the first long poem in Harmonium, and one of the major poems of the period. The early placement gives it a striking presence in the volume and makes the narrator a significant figure. He is related to other Harmonium personae, but complexity of thought and language as well as range of reference distinguish him from all others with the possible exception of Crispin.

Mon Oncle's personality starts with the poem's title, which suggests a punning, avuncular, continental figure.40 Litz notes that the title, "a copybook phrase from the French schoolroom, sets the witty and slightly pedantic tone of the poem" (83). Being an avuncular figure allows him to speak from the point-of-view of age and authority, as Cook points out: "mon oncle is a persona of Stevens himself, and thus, of course, a Dutch uncle as well as a French uncle" (54).

The monocle itself intimates an emphasis on looking and examining, which goes along with the concerned, interested, avuncular aspect of the speaker. It also hints at the sartorial old-fashionedness characteristic of Harmonium personae.

The original title given to two unpublished stanzas was

40 Stevens commented on the title in a 1918 letter: "That means of course My Uncle's Monocle, or merely a certain point of view" (L 250).
"The Naked Eye of the Aunt" (1918), which sheds a somewhat different light on the narrative by de-emphasizing the French and the male perspective. The theme is similar, "twiddling mon idée, as old men will, / And knowing the monotony of thought, / I said, ‘She thumbs the memories of dress,’" but the tone is cruder and harsher, more "grotesque," as Litz notes (83), especially when directed towards the lover: "I grieve the pinch of her long-stiffening bones. / ‘Oh, lissomeness turned lagging ligaments!’"

The French title of the published version links the narrator linguistically with other French-associated Harmonium personae, and he might well be described, like Carlos, as "an eccentric pedant of about forty." Litz sees him as "a middle-aged conflation of Pierrot and the poetic dandy" and compares him with Prufrock, seeing Mon Oncle as a "mock-hero who accepts the ironies of his position" (83-4).

Mon Oncle's focus on love relates him to Pierrot up to a point, but he is a unique figure who cannot be easily categorized. He is first and foremost an aging poet, one concerned with love in a formerly-youthful state: "When amorists grow bald, then amours shrink / Into the compass and curriculum / Of introspective exiles lecturing." The slightly antique and precious French resonance of "amours"41

41 "Amour" in English is adopted from the Old French amour, and can mean general love and affection (an archaic usage) and a love affair (OED 1,3). When used in the plural "amours" indicates, in an obsolete usage, "the tender affections, love towards one of the opposite sex" (OED 2).
contributes subtly to Mon Oncle's tone of refined pedantry.

An interesting aspect of Mon Oncle's French connection is the use and italicization of "connaissance" in section II. One of the subjects of attention in "the one great love poem that Stevens wrote"42 is the myth of unchanging love, and as Mon Oncle faces the realities of sex and love at forty he criticizes his female partner for her unwillingness or inability to also do so:

I am a man of fortune greeting heirs;  
For it has come that thus I greet the spring.  
These choirs of welcome choir for me farewell.  
No spring can follow past meridian.  
Yet you persist with anecdotal bliss  
To make believe a starry connaissance.

The flat finality of the strongly end-stopped lines leading up to the closing couplet emphasize the foreign sibilance of connaissance and give it a strong presence at the end of the stanza. The italics stress the linguistic difference and also serve to make the word stand out physically on the page, hence furthering the fiction of the woman's "anecdotal bliss" and its distance from reality. This deliberate use of French contributes to Mon Oncle's pedantic manner; the prominent foreign effect of connaissance suits the grandiloquent narrative tone.

The italicization is interesting because it was of course not uncommon for Stevens to use French or French-derived words in his poetry; however he rarely chose to give even completely French words like connaissance this added

42 Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War 52.
foreign emphasis. He wanted to make it clear to the reader that it was a French word and should be pronounced as such. He would also italicize French phrases in "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" (1924) and occasionally in other later poems as well.

The use of connaissance is part of Stevens' ongoing treatment of French-related eroticism, associated, as it often is in his poetry, with an attractive but finally unhealthy escapism. In this poem French is specifically tied in with the woman's avoidance of the realities of age and mortality. Her connaissance is "starry," related to the "furious star" Venus of stanza V, which no longer burns for Mon Oncle and his partner. Mon Oncle is able to accept, however unhappily, that he and his lover no longer feel the passion of "fiery boys" and "sweet-smelling virgins," and he eventually finds a certain degree of solace in the mature reason and love of age. By implication, as long as his lover chooses to maintain the "starry connaissance," she will not be able to reach acceptance and thus not be able to experience even Mon Oncle's limited contentment. This links her with frustrated and ultimately pathetic figures like "The Ordinary Women."

In stanza III, Mon Oncle's admiration for the "mountainous coiffures of Bath" and the "all-speaking braids" of "Utamaro's beauties" in comparison with the plain "dripping" hair of his lover, "a woman whose hair was still down" (L 251), associates him suggestively with the
Harmonium-era desire for French-related sartorial decorativeness, such as in "Carlos Among the Candles" where Carlos speaks of "silks and fans" and "coiffures," and "The Ordinary Women" with their "explicit" "coiffures." He however distinguishes himself from foppish and affected desires, at least in context of the writing of poetry, in section X:

The fops of fancy in their poems leave
Memorabilia of mystic spouts,
Spontaneously watering their gritty soils.
I am a yeoman, as such fellows go.
I know no magic trees, no balmy boughs,
No silver-ruddy, gold-vermilion fruits.

These lines are ironic and not entirely persuasive given the conscious luxuriance of some of the poem's language. Litz states that "the most 'precious' lines belong to the characterization of love's illusions, and are constantly controlled by the ironic self-awareness of the persona" (90). I would argue that the ironic self-awareness of Mon Oncle also includes the realization that he too is susceptible to anecdotal bliss, as well as to the rhetoric of the fops of fancy, and these are both things he has to fight against.

Mon Oncle's persona is given a turn at the poem's end as he identifies himself with rabbi figures: "Like a rose rabbi, later, I pursued, / And still pursue, the origin and course / Of love." This is, as Bloom puts it, "a kind of gain amidst the erotic loss" (44). Stevens commented in a 1953 letter about another rabbi in "The Sun This March"
The figure of the rabbi has always been an exceedingly attractive one to me because it is the figure of a man devoted in the extreme to scholarship and at the same time making use of it for human purposes. (L 786)

In this way the rabbi is a meeting of sorts between the "dull scholar" aspect of Mon Oncle and his more emotional tendencies, ending with an elegiac "human" acceptance.

The rabbi represents a move away from the French-associated, pedantic poet portrayed in earlier stanzas toward a more spiritual and implicitly mature figure who rises above love's quarrels and rhetoric. This movement bears some resemblance, while not as explicit or comic and likely more fulfilling, to Crispin's later movement from a 'greenhorn' in Bordeaux to a full-grown family man in Carolina. It also fits in with the general Harmonium-era poetic movement from youth to mature experience, exemplified in one way by the move away from the fin-de-siècle French associations of the Little June Book and Carnet de Voyage.

"Homunculus et La Belle Étoile" (1919) is a related poem, as Cook notes:

The homunculus is yet another of those c-sound male figures who are personae for Stevens (Peter Quince, Pecksniff, Crispin) and he is closest to mon oncule. The word 'uncle' is etymologically related to the diminutive -unculus, so that we might punningly say that the homunculus is a little uncle of a man; his poem is a postscript to the great 1918 poem. The homunculus sets about rehabilitating the star Venus that mon oncule has undone. (67)

The naming of Venus as the "Belle Étoile" is a link with French-related female eroticism as philosophers are seduced
by the star "Until they become thoughtlessly willing / To
bathe their hearts in later moonlight." Here, in comparison
with other poems, the escapist eroticism is not necessarily
a bad thing: "It is a good light, then, for those / That
know the ultimate Plato, / Tranquilizing with this jewel / The torments of confusion."

"Peter Parasol" is a nominal relative of Pierrot who
has a fop's aesthetic concerns. The title recalls
"Ballade of the Pink Parasol" in what Storey calls "a
regression" to earlier Pierrots (174). The French epigraph
"Aux taureaux Dieu cornes donne / Et sabots durs aux
chevaux..." sets up a contrast between the natural beauty
of animals and the lack of it that the speaker sees in women
around him:

    I wish they were all fair,
    And walked in fine clothes,
    With parasols, in the afternoon air.

Bates notes that Peter "is conscious of a lapse in
decorum...if elephants have tusks and tigers a ferocious
beauty, why should not women be fair?" (101). Stevens tried

43 Peter Parasol is also one of the Peter names Stevens
played with over the years, using it as a pseudonym for
Phases, Poetry V (November 1914).
44 It is not entirely clear whether Stevens took these lines
from a French source or made them up himself. Bates notes:
    Stevens inscribed the French lines which serve as the
poem's epigraph above "Women's Gift" in his copy of
Richard Aldington's Greek songs in the Manner of
    Beneath them he wrote the single word "Pléiade,"
    referring possibly to a Pléiade edition or to the
school of sixteenth-century poets." (101-2n)
Lensing observes "the horns of the bull and the hooves of
horses come directly from Anacreon through Aldington to what
is apparently Stevens' own French translation" (214).
to have this poem withdrawn from the "Pecksniffiana" collection because "the element of pastiche...will not be apparent and the poem will go off on its substance and not on its style" and did not allow it to be re-published in his lifetime, even in 1953 commenting "there was something about it that I did not like" (L 214, 794).

The speaker of "The Weeping Burgher" is another French-associated persona, one who is a figure of pathos:

It is with strange malice
That I distort the world.

Ah! that ill humors
Should mask as white girls.
And ah! that Scaramouche
Should have a black barouche.

The mention of Scaramouche links the burgher with the Commedia dell'arte context of Pierrot. His desire for the past, expressed in part by the use of antiquated French-sounding words such as "barouche," identifies him with the affected fin-de-siècle fop and Jarrell's backwards-looking tourist figure. Morse notes:

The burgher has no name; he is identified only as a city dweller by a term both surprising and faintly ironic in the context of twentieth century usage. His words reveal him as a displaced figure of classic comedy, a précieux ridicule isolated from the ordinary

---

45 Poetry XV, October 1919.
46 While "barouche" has a French spelling and pronunciation it is not actually a French word and does not appear in French dictionaries. It originally comes from the Latin birotus, 'two-wheeled,' via adaptations from German, Spanish, and Italian. The most recent example of usage comes from 1854 in Thackeray's The Newcomes: "Great dowager barouches roll along emblazoned with coronets" (OED). Moers quotes the Duchess of Malborough's description of sophisticated Londoners in the 1880's driving "slowly back and forth in stately barouches" (290).
world by his longing for past elegance.\textsuperscript{47}
The Burgher knows that the world of "white girls," and archaic theatrical characters is distorted, but indulges in it anyway, implicitly to move away from his burgherly status. His need amounts to more than a mere desire for the past as solace, he is "tortured for old speech."

There is a tension in tone between the exclamatory quality and amusing rhymes of lines like "And ah! that Scaramouche / Should have a black barouche"\textsuperscript{48} and the use of words like "malice," "tortured," and "calcined." The tension contributes to the pathos surrounding the burgher because he is trying to be nostalgic, mannered, and amusing while at heart knowing that he is dealing with "imagined things," and suffering badly. This makes him a much more complex figure than, for example, the stereotypical and self-satisfied Carlos.

"Last Looks at the Lilacs" involves another pedantic, clownish figure, one more crudely and comically drawn, and closer to Carlos and Bowl than to the rather more self-aware Burgher. The aptly named "caliper" is derided for being oblivious to the beauty of the flowers that he is observing with his female companion and analyzing for her: "this bloom is the bloom of soap / And this fragrance the fragrance of vegetal." Caliper is derived from the French calibre (OED)

\textsuperscript{47} "Wallace Stevens, Bergson, Pater" 5.
\textsuperscript{48} Marianne Moore notes: "The playfulness, that is to say humor, of such rhymings as...Scaramouche and barouche, is just right, and by no means a joke; one’s sense of humor being a clue to the most serious part of one’s nature" ("Unanimity and Fortitude" 268-9).
and denotes a mechanical measuring device, fitting for a figure who sees "nothing but trash" while looking at flowers and is unaware of the eroticism of his partner. The French-associated theatrical and chronological connotations of "Ingénue" and "Floréal" complement Caliper's link with French "buffo" figures.

Crispin, the "nincompated pedagogue" protagonist of "The Comedian as The Letter C," is chronologically the last major Harmonium persona. He is related to Pierrot, at least partly because of his French comic genealogy, and also has characteristics of the affected French-using fop. He, however, moves geographically, and by implication poetically and imaginatively, away from France: "Bordeaux to Yucatan, Havana next. / And then to Carolina. Simple jaunt." Storey sees Crispin as "fin-de-siècle Pierrot on the threshold of a

49 "Floréal" is the 8th month of the French Republican calendar begun in 1793, ranging approximately from April 20/21 to May 19/20 (Larousse). It is thus associated with springtime and hence romance, both things to which Caliper is oblivious.

50 Lensing notes "The models for Crispin...derive from the commedia dell'arte, beginning with the Crispin of Paul Scarron's L'Ecolier de Salamanque and including the Crispin of Ben Jonson's Poetaster" (224). Riddel states that Crispin is not related intimately to Pierrot, any more than he is a modern Candide. He owes the name of Crispin and perhaps little else to the French comic valet [in Le Sage's Crispin rival de son maitre], and similarly to Saint Crispin. He has many qualities, but no distinctive ones, of the many-masked harlequins of Commedia dell'Arte. The point is, however, that Stevens deliberately refrained from specific allusions, making his figure a composite which borrows from a heterogeneous tradition. (95)

Cook notes Crispin's link with "earlier, self-mocking, comic personae who come with comic c-sounds: Peter Parasol, Peter Quince, and Pecksniff" (84).
palingenesis" (180).

Crispin leaves behind the world of "gelatines and jupes" where the sun shines "with bland complaisance on pale parasols." Again, as in earlier poems discussed, the use of French-associated words is allied with a general French fin-de-siècle aesthetic sensibility. The use of parasol in particular may be an inside joke referring to "Ballade of the Pink Parasol."51 "Jupes" is somewhat antiquated in English usage,52 and thus creates an effect similar to that of the "beaded ceintures" in an English context in "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock," which is of summoning up superannuated French-flavoured sartorial practices associated with past elegance. In Crispin's case this is part of what is left behind. The young, pre-Yucatan Crispin is also described as having a "barber's eye," something that links him with the characteristic Harmonium-era interest in hairstyle.53

Vendler notes that Crispin shares with Mon Oncle "a

51 Morse notes that Stevens "played with the parasol as a symbol of the imagination for a long time" and that it "crops up...at the moment when Crispin is about to renounce the imagination for his peculiar kind of realism" ("Wallace Stevens, Bergson, Pater" 2).
52 Jupe has the obsolete English usage of a man's tunic or loose jacket, and the Scotch usage of a woman's jacket, kirtle, or bodice. The modern meaning, borrowed from French, is that of a woman's skirt, for example from Harper's Magazine, 1852 - "The Morning Costume is a jupe of blue silk." The most recent example of usage comes from 1885 (OED 1,2,3). Stevens likely had the last of the three meanings in mind given Crispin's "Bordeaux" provenance.
53 Cook notes Stevens' use of "tropes of the body, notably of hair and clothing...with emphasis on barbers, tailors, and shoemakers" (77-8).
dismissal of rhapsodies in favor of yeoman plainness" (61). This is also part of the move from "Bordeaux" for he that once wrote "poems of plums" and "his couplet yearly to the spring, / As dissertation of profound delight" and eventually becomes "the stiffest realist."

   Near the end, in part IV, "The Idea of a Colony," Crispin is compared to Voltaire's Candide: "Like Candide, / Yeoman and grub, but with a fig in sight, / And cream for the fig and silver for the cream, / A blonde to tip the silver and taste / The rapey gouts." The sensuality of this passage as well as the allusion to Candide and the use of the French-adopted "gouts" suggests that Crispin still retains a taste for French-related sensory indulgences even if he has left "Bordeaux" behind and established himself on American poetic ground.

   One of the ways of looking at "The Comedian as the Letter C" is as an allegory of Stevens' movement away from the French-associated fin-de-siècle consciousness and personae which do not really re-appear after Harmonium. By moving away from Bordeaux Crispin is metaphorically leaving behind the finicky aestheticism and desire for bygone elegance that are part of Harmonium-era poetry. Bates notes that "'Bordeaux' was, by synecdoche, the France of

54 Gout, adopted from the Old French goute or goutte, used "in the original etymological sense of 'drop'" signifies a drop (esp. of blood in early usage) or a large splash or clot of liquid (OED I,5). The association with disease (the primary meaning in English) and with blood gives this passage a somewhat grotesque undertone.
Steven's imagination and the country whence he had imported the dandyism of Barbey d'Aurevilly, Baudelaire and Laforgue" (119). "The Comedian" is one of the latest poems to appear in Harmonium, and thus fittingly illustrative of Stevens' move away from his early French associations. It is, however, placed relatively early on in the collection and this emphasizes, in the context of the whole volume, the metaphoric move away from "Bordeaux," and makes this movement one of the main story-lines of Harmonium.

Perkins notes that Stevens' reading of Symboliste poets accentuated tendencies of his literary personality that we have already remarked in his youthful letters and journalizings - his sudden transitions and ironic reversals, his oblique modes of statement, and his foppish pose. (538)

I would argue that this statement applies to Stevens' French literary tastes in general leading up to and including the Harmonium era. He began with a natural love of the French language and came in his Harvard years to associate France both with the popular fin-de-siècle aestheticism that appealed to him and with what Jarrell calls "the needs of his spirit," his natural desire for "the Earth-minus-America" and the past. The theatricality and romantic sensitivity of the Commedia dell'arte Pierrot figures he read about in Duchartre and Verlaine attracted him in the context of his early relationship with Elsie and he transformed them into personae in his letters and poems for her. Pierrot and elements of the French-associated fin-de-siècle then went into Carnet de Voyage. As Stevens advanced
his poetic techniques, developing more idiosyncratic speakers, the sometimes poignant clownishness of Pierrot was then incorporated along with the diverse affectations of the fin-de-siècle fop into figures like Carlos, Bowl, and the Weeping Burgher. Stevens also developed more complex figures like Mon Oncle, who has some of the characteristics of the finicky French-using aesthete but whose self-analytical focus is ultimately on being a poet, and Crispin, closer to Pierrot because of his theatrical genealogy but a vaguer figure than Mon Oncle because he tends to lose definition in the convoluted linguistic abstractions of Stevens' third-person narrative.55

In this way the French-associated, clownish, would-be sophisticate figure, with some variations, is one of the basic Harmonium personae. The character is finally not quite the wistful Pierrot of the manuscript poems, or the refined Aesthete poet of "Cy Est Pourtraicte," or a roundly ridiculous clown like Carlos or Caliper, but rather a hybrid who veers towards melancholy or smug affectation or

55 Vendler notes that "although the Comedian is written in the third person, there is no consistent speaking voice" (41). Michael Hamburger writes that the language itself in "The Comedian" serves a quasi-dramatic purpose, becoming a "mask of style":

The conflict between empirical and poetic identity was enacted by his vocabulary and diction, extreme artifice and preciosity on the one hand, the bare blunt vernacular on the other. This is especially true of his early poems, such as The Comedian, with its many erudite, archaic or exotic words whose function is like that of a clown's costume and make-up. (The Truth of Poetry: Tensions in Modern Poetry from Baudelaire to the 1960s 110)
aesthetic longing depending on the individual work. The enduring link between these figures is the French connection, as Stevens repeatedly uses French diction, titles, echoes, and allusions in varying manifestations in all of these poems. France and French would always retain a certain association with aesthetic affectation for Stevens; as he said "a fellow must pooh-pooh something, even if it happens to be something he rather fancies," but from this period on Stevens' poetry is less populated by figures like Pierrot and his hybridized relatives. Exceptions to this in later poetry are the "old fantoche" from The Man with The Blue Guitar and the tramp from Notes toward a Supreme Fiction (1942), both of whom are clearly related to Pierrot.

Not all of Stevens' French-connected Harmonium-era personae are male, however. We have already seen the early innocent-temptress Nymph, the French siren-like girls plotting against the Giant, and Ste Ursule, "threatened-virgin." Other figures are the speaker of "Explanation" (1917), the titular aunt of "Colloquy with a Polish Aunt," and "The Ordinary Women."

In "The Ordinary Women," placed early in the volume, Cook observes that the subjects "oscillate between an ordinary or tedious everyday life and a fantastic night-time moonlit-palace life" (54). The women's implicitly fruitless search for sexual and cultural fantasy is emphasized by the

---

56 A Mythology of Self 87.
57 Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War 102.
use of French, itself to an extent associated with the escapist night-time existence. A good example of this is the phrase "The moonlight / Fubbed the girandoles." Cook notes that "there is much glitter in this escapist fantasy but no fire. 'Wickless halls' tells us that the girandoles have dead candles; the moonlight 'fubs' them by making them look fiery." The natural light of the moon becomes something artificial, vapid, and cold like the women themselves as it imitates candle flame. The French-adopted "girandoles," used for candlestick instead of the more common English equivalent,\(^58\) accentuates the sense of artifice because of its somewhat precious effect and sound, particularly in contrast with the flat Teutonic bluntness of "fubbed."

The falseness of the girandole light emphasizes that there is no real originality or genuineness in these women. Their jewels and coiffures, however "explicit," are really only like sequins, with glitter and no real value. Their speech, while "puissant,"\(^59\) is "alike in each."

\(^58\) "Girandole" is adopted from the word of the same spelling in French (in turn adopted from the Italian girandola), and can indicate a species of firework, a revolving fountain-jet, or a branched support for candles, Stevens' use of the term. Although it is not marked as archaic, the most recent example of the third usage comes from 1880 (OED 1,2,3). "Girandole" is current in U.S. usage, and can also indicate an ornamental mirror with attached candle holders or a pendant earring (Webster's Third New International Dictionary, 1993 ed. [2b&c,3]). All further references will be abbreviated to Webster).

\(^59\) "Puissant" in English is adopted from the French word of the same spelling. There are a number of examples of usage from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and although it is not marked as archaic or obsolete, the most recent
"coiffures" and "The sequins / Of the civil fans" stand against ordinary garb, and by extension, mundane experience, but they are still only decorative flourishes; these women remain "ordinary" even when in the fantastic night-time world.

The negative portrayal of the moonlit world as something escapist and artificial is interesting given Stevens' earlier uses of the traditionally 'moon-struck' Pierrot. In 1922 Stevens is moving against older romantic moon tropes by making the world of moonlight fantastic and yet unfulfilling.

In a similar vein, the ordinary women's star-watching is a link with the lover's self-deceptive "starry connaissance" in "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle." The unfortunate women in the later poem however do not even have the ability to see the star Venus and to fantasize about it. They are limited to "beta b and gamma g," seeing, as Cook points out, "no stars of alpha or first magnitude; their stars, like their abortive erotic fantasies, are of the second or third order" (54).

In "Explanation," the speaker also practices French-connected imaginative aggrandizement, using a clothing trope in what might be seen as a metaphor for Stevens' use of French in his poetry: "Ach, Mutter, / This old, black dress,

example is from Arnold's Bacchanalia in 1867 (OED); it thus has a somewhat antique effect. It also conveys a French-tinged impression of linguistic preciosity similar to "girandoles" and "coiffures."
/ I have been embroidering / French flowers on it."60 The implicitly Teutonic plain black dress stands against the decorative French embroidered flowers and imagined orange gown in much the same way as the plain white nightgowns are contrasted with desired colours and ornamental flourishes in "Disillusionment of Ten O’Clock."

"Colloquy with a Polish Aunt" is another Harmonium erotica poem as well as an interesting example of Stevens’ use of his French reading. Cook notes the poem suggests that men are also subject to erotic fantasies like those that "The Ordinary Women" experience (54). The male speaker in "Colloquy" reads about the "burning secrecies" of saints (like Ste Ursule) from Voragine, and they "touch [his] spleen." This brings to mind the "subtle quiver" that the Lord in "Cy Est Pourtraicte" feels upon receiving Ursule’s offering.

Lensing notes that the epigraph, "Elle savait toutes les légendes du Paradis et tous les contes de Pologne," is taken from a 1917 essay on Teodor de Wyzewa, a nineteenth-century journalist and music critic (211).61 Doumic’s essay mentions Wyzewa’s aunt Vincentine, she of the poem’s title, and discusses her storytelling abilities, hence the epigraph. Lensing also notes that Wyzewa translated

60 Stevens wrote in a 1935 letter: "Just how it comes about that my vocabulary is more Latin than Teutonic, I don’t know. Perhaps there may be something in the idea that the language of poetry is never Teutonic" (L 302).
61 The epigraph is taken from René Doumic’s "Teodor de Wyzewa." See Appendix.
Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* into French, and sees the aunt's tales as inspiration for his translation (213). The use of Voragine in this poem and earlier in "Cy Est Pourtraicte" suggests that Stevens regarded the translated *Legenda Aurea* as a personal French-associated textual realm, one filled with distinctly unsaintly eroticism.

Stevens' French-connected *Harmonium* females, especially the temptresses, are clearly related to his Floridian Venus figures like the dark "donna" of "O Florida, Venereal Soil" (1922), of whom the poet asks "Conceal yourself or disclose / Fewest things to the lover" or the astral Venus of "Homunculus et La Belle Étoile" who "might, after all, be a wanton." They provide similar attractions and dangers. French females will re-appear later in the form of the "smoky demoiselles" of "Montrachet-le-Jardin." The late "Madame La Fleurie" (1951) is also a related figure.

Two poems that were printed in the second edition of *Harmonium* in 1931, "New England Verses" (1923) and "Sea Surface Full of Clouds," contain uses of French that look forward to some of Stevens' varied uses of French in later poetry. "New England Verses," which is in some ways a structural precursor to "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery" (1935), is divided into short aphoristic segments, four of which are given paired French titles. The first pair is stanzas III and IV:

III
Soupe Aux Perles
Health-o, when ginger and fromage bewitch,
The vile antithesis of poor and rich.

IV
Soupe Sans Perles

I crossed in '38 in the "Western Head,"
It depends which way you crossed, the tea-belle said.

Stanza III, the title of which is taken from Stevens’ "Schemata" notebook,62 explores "the idea that one is categorized as poor or rich on the basis of the quality of one’s daily life."63 The categorization is based on the food one eats and depends on whether one can afford, like the rich, to eat pearls in soup. The basis of categorization breaks down, however, with the fact, as Coyle points out, "that we are all sustained by the same simple pleasures and staples of life (ginger and cheese)" (57). "Soupe Sans Perles," the point-of-view of the less rich, categorizes one, depending on how one crosses the Atlantic, whether "as immigrant or gentleman" (58). These two stanzas foreshadow the concerns of the later aphoristic pair "Nudity at the Capital" (1934) and "Nudity in the Colonies" (1934) in Ideas of Order.

Coyle notes the "mock-pedantic mode" of "New England Verses" and, as often in Harmonium, the use of French goes along with this general tone. The language of a country so traditionally sensitive towards both class consciousness and food is also particularly fitting for these two stanzas.

The final stanzas of the poem address artistic

62 A Poet’s Growth 159.
63 Beverly Coyle, A Thought to be Rehearsed: Aphorism in Wallace Stevens’ Poetry 55.
concerns, looking forward to future French associations in following volumes:

XV
Scène Flétrie

The purple dress in Autumn and the belfry breath
Hints farewells of academic death.

XVI
Scène Fleurie

A perfect fruit in perfect atmosphere.
Nature as Pinakothek. Whist! Chanticleer....

Both stanzas focus on the artistic portrayal of nature and ostensibly present painted scenes. One is faded ("Flétrie") and "academic" in its elegiac association of autumn and death. The other, flowering ("Fleurie"), scene is "perfect," and thus artificial, reducing nature to an art gallery or "Pinakothek." Both scenes are imperfect reproductions of nature, anthropomorphically linking seasonal change with human emotion in the same way that Chanticleer is a humanized rooster. Litz states that "the withered autumn landscape is an academic subject, but 'the perfect fruit in perfect atmosphere' of flowered spring is a theme for Chanticleer alone" (112). The question of natural portrayal is not solved, as Coyle notes "the series does not end in a decided resolution" (62).

Coyle observes that the speaker of "New England Verses" resembles "a myriad of pedantic characters who provide Stevens with a means of making aphoristic assertions about experience in an ultimately nondidactic way" (62-3). The speaker in this poem is less defined than many Harmonium-era
speakers and is thus indicative of the general move on Stevens' part away from the quasi-dramatic personae and characters who people *Harmonium* and who will appear much less frequently in future poetry.

"Sea Surface Full of Clouds," one of the latest poems to be included in the second edition of *Harmonium*, consists of a sequence of variant visual impressions of a sea scene "off Tehuantepec." Blackmur comments that Stevens wanted to present the tone, in his mind, of five different aspects of the sea. The strictly visual form is in the background, merely indicated by the words; it is what the visual form gave off after it had been felt in the mind that concerned him. (62)

The poet uses repetitive variations on italicized French phrases as a refrain or choral commentary on the sections of the poem, for instance in I:

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

In this stanza the imagination is presented with terms of affection, even love, with "âme" providing a cross-linguistic near-rhyme with the pleasing "balm and "calm."

Litz states that the key to each scene...is the answer given in French.... By their very preciosity these lines declare that the balance of the poem is on the side of language and the imagination, not the 'text' of the actual seascape. (149)

Bates notes that "the perceiving consciousness identifies itself in French" (139), and that "just as one is ready to seize the key to a given section, a foreign language baffles and redirects the quest for meaning" (141). I would argue
that Stevens uses the French lines not so much to confuse and redirect as to distinguish and distance them from the "text" of the visual impressions, expressions that are distinguished and enhanced by the italics. Anthony Hecht observes that "the French line in every stanza changes because the viewer, too, changes - changes because time changes everything and because the imagination is a fertile activity."64

In this way, the French phrases express the mutable point of view of the speaker, and they amount to a summary of the imaginative stance inherent in the interpretation of the seascape in each stanza. This somewhat diffuse and abstracted French voice in some ways anticipates the French-associated voices in Stevens' late long poems like Notes toward a Supreme Fiction and An Ordinary Evening in New Haven.

There is a movement throughout the poem from relatively benign to less comfortable imagery as the poet's impressions of the "sea-blooms" develop. This is reflected in the French lines, which progress from "C'était mon enfant, mon bijou, mon âme" to the final "C'était mon esprit bâtard, l'ignominie." Litz notes that "the poem has progressed from a transforming imagination...to a fancy which indulges in idle or comic transformations. The final promise of 'fresh transfigurings of freshest blue' is never fulfilled" (150). The figure of "esprit bâtard, l'ignominie" is interesting.

64 On the Laws of the Poetic Art 34.
because it casts the imagination in a negative light, suggesting that the progeny of the poet's mind, equated with precious substances and ecstasy earlier in the poem, is now seen as illegitimate and shameful. This bastardization of the imagination, as it were, is a powerful statement of poetic self-doubt, and foreshadows the later "Bastard chateaux" in "Montrachet-le-Jardin," which the poet rejects in favor of purer products of the imagination.

In this last section the imagery is also comedic, with the "bowing" light of day addressed "Good clown" and the description of the presiding imaginative presence: "What pistache one, ingenious and droll, / Beheld the sovereign clouds as jugglery?" Northrop Frye comments:

> In Harmonium the various elaborations of vision are seen as projected from a residual ego, a comedian...or clown (Peter Quince is the leader of a group of clowns), who by himself has only the vision of the 'esprit bâtard'..., the juggler in motley who is also a magician and whose efforts are 'conjurations.'

The final manifestation of the imaginative voice in "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" is thus a late look at Harmonium-era theatricality and Commedia associations, a last Pierrot as it were, one who also looks forward to future French voices and roles.

One of Stevens' late Harmonium-era collections, Sur Ma Guzzla Gracile (Poetry XIX, October 1921), has a witty French-derived title, showing an interest in French and

---

65 Hecht notes that the "imagery is drawn from the circus [and] the motley of Shakespeare's clowns" (37-8).
66 *Fables of Identity* 244.
French linguistic play that goes beyond the distinctive
*Harmonium* personae. *Sur Ma Guzzla Gracile* is an important
publication, containing "The Snow Man" and "Tea at the Palaz
of Hoon," among other poems, and the title is characteristic
of *Harmonium*'s Franco-American synthesis.

"Guzzla" is a Stevensian coinage that contains
etymological connotations of a stringed instrument and of
throat. In one path of linguistic descent "Guzzla" can be
seen as derived from "guzzle," which comes from the Old
French *gosillier*, meaning to pass through the throat, and is
also related to the French *gosier*, throat. As a noun,
guzzle can mean a gutter or drain as well as a drink of
liquor, a bout of excessive drinking, and in dialect, the
throat (the meaning most closely associated with the French)
(*OED, Larousse*).

"Gracile," the English and French uses of which have
the same Latin cognate, can mean slender or lean (*OED,
Larousse*).67 In ‘translation’ the title could then mean "On
My Slender Throat," with poetic implications of song or
outpourings from the throat, perhaps, but also containing
the cruder connotations of "guzzle" such as to swill or
drink, adding a certain robustness to the effect of the
title.

67 The Latin cognate is *gracilis*, slender. *Gracile* in
French has the literary connotation of "une grâce fragile et
délicate" (*Larousse*). The *OED* notes that "gracile" is
occasionally misused in English (through association with
grace) as "gracefully slender." Stevens is playing on both
French and English meanings in his use.
Anne Luyat notes that a guzla is a monochord guitar used for folk music, and that

When the Dalmatian guzla acquires a second 'z' [it]
takes on the full throaty sounds associated with a
noisy word peculiar to the American idiom,
'guzzling.'

As a rustic stringed instrument a guzla is Stevens' version
of the poetic lyre, a folksy American Aeolian harp, as it
were. There is a slyness and humour contained in the
blending of a prosaic guitar (and its accompanying poetic
connotations) with the Franco-English sophistication of
"gracile" and the lively vulgarity of 'guzzle' that nicely
encompasses the overall mood of Harmonium, and also looks
forward to Stevens' taking up of the Blue Guitar in the
following decade. First of all, however, his poetry will
pause for a few years.

68 Gusla, also spelled gusle, gustlé, guszla, and guzla, is
the Serbian word for the instrument Luyat describes, "used
chiefly to accompany and support the chanting of the epic
poems of the southern Slavs" (OED).
69 "Aix-en-Provence or Wounded Knee: Wallace Stevens and The
American idiom" 49.
70 Stevens also used a French-derived title for his 1922
"Revue" collection (Dial LXXIII, July 1922). Litz notes
that the title is "a finicky use of the French word which
had lately been imported to describe an episodic musical
review of current fashions" (106).
CHAPTER 3

THE NINETEEN-THIRTIES

Only last year he said that the naked moon
Was not the moon he used to see, to feel

(In the pale coherences of moon and mood
When he was young), naked and alien,
More leanly shining from a lankier sky.
"Anglais Mort à Florence" (1936)

Commenting on the break in Stevens' poetic career
between the publishing of "Red Loves Kit" (1924) and "The
Sun This March" (1930), the first poem that would eventually
be collected in Ideas of Order (1935), Holly Stevens writes
that her father "seem[ed] to have discontinued writing
for...five or six years; at least he did not submit anything
for publication" (L 242). Stevens cast some light in
retrospect on this hiatus in a 1937 letter:¹

I deliberately gave up poetry because, much as I loved it, there were too many other things I wanted not to
make an effort to have them. I wanted to do everything
that one wants to do at that age: live in a village in
France, in a hut in Morocco, or in a piano box at Key
West. But I didn't like the idea of being bedeviled
all the time about money and I didn't for a minute like
the idea of poverty, so I went to work like everybody
else and kept at it for a good many years. (L 320)

¹ Richardson notes that Stevens' period of poetic non-
productivity also corresponded chronologically with the
beginning of the Depression: "with the crisis there were
failures; failures meant claims. Accordingly Stevens became
busier and busier through the early thirties, again
traveling often and being overwhelmed with work at the
office" (The Later Years 71).
It is interesting to note that the idealized escapist locales are France, Morocco, and Florida, places of sensory satisfaction, mystery, warmth, and erotic appeal for Stevens. France and Florida\(^2\) were, of course, well-travelled imaginative realms by this point, and Morocco fits in well with his fondness for the Eastern and the tropical.

Stevens' life and poetry in the nineteen-thirties were unavoidably tied in with contemporary politics and economics. The Depression and the worsening political situation in Europe both had their effect on him. He did not suffer financially,\(^3\) but the problems around him encouraged him to work harder and to save money for his family. He was sensitive towards the international political scene,\(^4\) and was concerned about the political environment in Europe, particularly that in France, his land of literary and sensory pleasure.

One of the broad literary tendencies of the nineteen-thirties was the treatment of politically aware and relevant material. Samuel Hynes notes a contemporary focus upon "the

\(^2\) Stevens first travelled to Florida in 1916, calling it "one of the most delightful places I have ever seen" (L 191), but wrote of its appeal as early as 1900: "My desire to be off somewhere still exists, though no longer so exactlying.... Still I could enjoy mornings in Florida and afternoons and long nights in California - breathing fresh air and living at leisure" (L 48).

\(^3\) Stevens bought his first house in 1932, and in 1934 was promoted to vice-president of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company, where he had been employed since 1916 (L 255-6 and Parts 4-6).

\(^4\) He wrote in 1935, "A man would have to be very thick-skinned not to be conscious of the pathos of Ethiopia or China" (L 295).
idea that in a time of public chaos art becomes a mode of action."5 That Stevens was sensitive to this is evident upon a reading of his poetry of the period.6 His efforts to make his work more contemporary and political were, however, ambivalent and not entirely successful; this is reflected in a 1936 letter describing his composition of "The Greenest Continent" section of Owl's Clover (1936):7

The specific subject is, I suppose, the white man in Africa. But it may be that no one will ever realize that. What I have been trying to do in the thing is to apply my own sort of poetry to the subject. Is poetry that is to have a contemporary significance merely to be a collection of contemporary images, or is it actually to deal with the commonplace of the day? I think the latter, but the result seems rather boring.

+To what one reads in the papers. (L 307-8)

Stevens' deliberate addressing of "what one reads in the papers" receded after the nineteen-thirties, becoming more subtle as he moved into his great poetic phase of the following decades.

Stevens' well-documented period of concentration on his family and career corresponded with a general scarcity of literary discussion in his letters.8 He affectionately described life with his six-month-old daughter in a 1925

5 The Auden Generation: Literature and Politics in England in the 1930's 33.
6 Cook notes that Ideas of Order "includes a troubled impulse to speak to and for a society" (119).
7 "What I tried to do in OWL'S CLOVER was to dip aspects of the contemporaneous into the poetic" (L 314). Owl's Clover was not included in Collected Poems.
8 Holly Stevens notes that "although his correspondence with Miss Monroe and others continued, its volume and interest drop off sharply. He began to travel less and spend more time in the Hartford office; there are no letters to his wife between 1923 and 1931" (L 242).
letter to Harriet Monroe, and admitted "such experiences are a terrible blow to poor literature" (L 244). He also jokingly noted a lack of his usual interests in a 1925 letter to William Carlos Williams, mentioning a "poet from Paris visiting in Hartford at the moment"9 and adding "but oh la-la: my job is not now with poets from Paris. It is to keep the fire-place burning and the music-box churning and the wheels of the baby’s chariot turning and that sort of thing" (L 246).

By the middle of the decade, however, Stevens was again writing poetry regularly and was also meeting new correspondents and discussing literature in his letters. In November of 1934 he established a correspondence with Ronald Lane Latimer, editor of the Alcestis Press. He began to communicate routinely with Latimer, often explicating his own poetry at length,10 and the following year published Ideas of Order with Alcestis.11

---

9 According to James Longenbach, the "poet from Paris" was Robert McAlmon (Wallace Stevens: The Plain Sense of Things 125).
10 Lensing notes that Latimer "was the first of several people to whom Stevens wrote many letters offering explanations of his work" (123). They continued to exchange letters until Latimer went to the Orient in 1938 (L 256).
11 Stevens published most of his major work with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., but he also initially published, with Knopf’s agreement, some individual poems and volumes of poetry with smaller presses such as Alcestis (Ideas of Order and Owl’s Clover) and Cummington (Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, Esthétique du Mal, Three Academic Pieces). Knopf published a second edition of Ideas of Order in 1936 with three additional poems ("Farewell to Florida," "Ghosts as Cocoons," and "A Postcard from the Volcano") and a revised Owl’s Clover in The Man with the Blue Guitar volume (1937) (L 257, 289, 310, and 397).
had produced three volumes of poetry, *Ideas of Order*, *Owl’s Clover*, and *The Man with the Blue Guitar* (1937), and given his first public lecture, "The Irrational Element in Poetry" (1936).

Stevens’ renewed interest in writing and publishing poetry coincided with the beginning of a commonplace book entitled *Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects*. It eventually became two volumes, with "Cahier I" ranging from 1932-1939, and "Cahier II" from 1940-1953. *Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects* differs from his earlier journals in that it does not include records of his daily activities, and consists primarily of quotations taken from his reading. Stevens enjoyed commonplace books, and it was natural that he should in due time have his own, as Coyle comments: "Stevens came eventually to own many volumes of collected aphorisms and some of his later journals consist almost exclusively of his own aphorisms and of aphoristic passages copied from books and reviews" (17).

In translation, the title suggests a collection of appealing pieces of information or comments on a variety of pleasing subjects. The spelling of "sujects" makes the foreign title even more distinctive. "Sujects" is a variant, up to the sixteenth century, of the modern French *sujet*; Renaissance French writers often included the ‘c’ in words whose Latin roots originally contained it.12 The

12 *Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects* 16. All further references will be abbreviated to *SPBS*. 
phrase is likely taken from the title of a sixteenth-century French anthology of Greek epigrams,\textsuperscript{13} which reflects both the structure and content of Stevens' commonplace book. Stevens enjoyed French Renaissance poetry,\textsuperscript{14} and used this archaic spelling in "Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges" and "Bouquet of Belle Scavoir" (1939). The old spelling gives a sense of antiquity to the whole book, suggesting that it somehow belongs to a bygone era. This adds to the sophisticated yet lighthearted effect of the title and recalls some of Stevens' Harmonium-era uses of French, where the antique was also sometimes precious. *Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects* retains a hint of that characteristic self-deprecatory mockery in its archaic title.

Bates places the title along with "mock-pedantic lecture or treatise" poem titles like "Academic Discourse at Havana" (1929) and "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas" (1940) (SPBS 16). *Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects*, however, is lighter in spirit and does not suggest to me the heavy-handed intellectual satire of the two poem titles.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} Bates notes: Guillaume Legangneur's *Epigrammes anciens sur plusiers beaux sujects: Extraicts de l'anthologie des epigrammes grecs par Henry Estienne*, a late-sixteenth-century manuscript, is discussed in the August 1933 issue of the *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* (Boston), from which Entry 11 [of SPBS] is also taken. (SPBS 18)
\end{flushleft}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{14} Stevens was notably fond of du Bellay, one of the important Pléiade poets, and he was also familiar with Ronsard, among others, discussing him in a 1949 letter (L 661).
\end{flushleft}
The entries in the commonplace book show the breadth of Stevens' French reading in this period, ranging from Racine to Pascal, to journals such as Le Figaro and Je Suis Partout (SPBS 21, 49, 55, 93). They also give a good indication of the quantity of French material he read, compared to both English and other languages. Out of 104 entries in both volumes, forty-six are in French or are French-related, and four are in or from languages other than English or French. Thus almost half of the entries in Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects are French-connected, persuasive evidence of Stevens' interest.

Along with the quoted entries in Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects, Stevens would occasionally add marginal commentary. In entry 52 (1938), for example, he quotes from an unidentified article in Marianne: "Mais le vrai prodige ne se fabrique pas" and adds in a kind of translated reversal, "this is the same thing as that there is no such thing as an artificial marvel" (SPBS 63). He would also intermittently write down aphorisms of his own, such as "success as the result of industry is a peasant ideal."  

Material from Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects is sometimes

15 I have included entries such as 11, where Jacques du Fouilloux's La Venerie is quoted in English translation, and 32 where Confucius is quoted in French translation (SPBS 29, 45).
16 Entry 5 is a quotation in Latin from Sir Christopher Wren, 21 is partially in Latin, 63 is a quotation in Latin from the Pervigilium Veneris, and 81 is a quotation in Spanish from Ortega y Gasset's La rebelión de las masas (SPBS 21, 37, 75, 87).
17 This was included as one of the Adagia in the first edition of Opus Posthumous (179).
also reflected in Stevens’ contemporaneous poems. In 1937 he copied down two phrases from Jules Renard’s Correspondance; one of them, "‘Je tâche, en restant exact, d’être po[è]te’n is used as the epigraph for "United Dames of America" (1937), which was written in this period but published in Parts of a World. In an earlier example, Stevens copied down a passage in 1935 quoting Paul-Jean Toulet about his desire for postcards from the Louvre.19 In February of 1935 Stevens published "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery," which contained a reference to Toulet in stanza xv ("Serve the rouged fruits in early snow. / They resemble a page of Toulet").

The Toulet passage indicates the way in which Stevens’ choice of entries illustrates his personal interests. Carco writes that Toulet "souhaitait...vivre avec le souvenir de certaines collections du Louvre, qu’il avait tant de fois visitées" (SPBS 49). Carco notes that Toulet did not want "splendeur surhumaine" in the postcards but a simpler beauty. He wanted to recall some of the relatively plain,

18 The quotation is taken from a 1900 letter to Louis Paillard. The other phrase "Quoi de plus moral qu’un grand poète?" is taken from a 1903 letter to Isidore Gaujour (SPBS 55). Stevens owned a specially bound 4 volume set of Le journal de Jules Renard, commenting in a 1945 letter that "Renard constantly says things that interest me immensely" (L 510).

19 "Celles que je désire sont [...]. Statues antiques sans trop chercher les plus belles." Taken from Francis Carco’s 1934 Amitié avec Toulet (SPBS 49). Although Carco’s book predates the publication of "Like Decorations" (Poetry XLV, February 1935), the quotation in SPBS may actually come chronologically later than Stevens’ poem as it is placed after a passage taken from a November 1935 issue of Le Figaro.
commonplace statues in order to re-create the feeling of his trips to the Louvre. This relates, although necessarily indirectly, to Stevens’ frequently expressed desire for the more mundane aspects of foreign experience, as he says in a 1913 letter: "I’d like to be in Paris, sipping a bock under a plane-tree" (L 181). Toulet’s desire also relates to Stevens’ own great affection for postcards. He frequently requested them from correspondents and friends who were travelling, and through them sought to experience the foreign vicariously: "Your postcard from Varadero Beach is on my dresser at home, where the surf of it rolls day and night making mild Cuban sounds." Later in life, when he knew that he was unlikely to ever actually see France and other exotic foreign locales, he solaced himself with postcards and other mail: "I survive on postcards from Europe" (L 797).

Interestingly, one of the central poems in Ideas of Order is "A Postcard from the Volcano" (1936), placed late in the collection. In it Stevens treats some of the elegiac themes of the volume, which ends, as Bloom puts it, "majestically but despairingly, with the poet’s confession of his temporal defeat" (114): "Children picking up our bones / Will never know that these were once / As quick as foxes on the hill." Cook notes that the postcard of the title is "not the tourist’s postcard from the safe slopes but a voice from within the volcano addressed to future

---

20 Letter to José Rodriguez Feo, July 29 1949 (L 643).
generations" (194). In this way the postcard is a message to the children to express what the dead speakers can no longer directly communicate, "that with our bones / We left much more."

Postcards appealed to Stevens because of their casual, fragmentary, and aphoristic nature. They present a visual and written message in a way that can be quite poetic, especially to one who so valued aphorisms and well-turned phrases that he wrote and copied out notebooks full of them. The reasons for both writing postcards and keeping commonplace books are reflected in Stevens’ quotation of Ernest Renan near the beginning of Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects: "On écrit de telles choses pour transmettre aux autres la théorie de l’univers qu’on porte en soi" (67).

Ideas of Order differs from Harmonium in a number of respects, beginning with the length of the volume. It is a self-evaluatory, elegiac, and restrained collection where Harmonium was exuberant, stylistically diverse, and mostly celebratory. French has less of an overall presence in Ideas of Order; Stevens’ uses, which include varied French diction as well as reference and allusion to French authors, and artists, reflect some of the general differences from his first volume.

21 Harmonium occupies 113 pages of Collected Poems, Ideas of Order 45 pages. The difference in length is not surprising given the difference in composition and collection time of the two volumes.
The diminished presence of French itself reflects a general reduction in linguistic ornateness. Cook notes that "Stevens appears to be deliberately roughening his earlier subtlety and self-consciousness. The elegant diction, the shaded ironies, the implicit plays with language: much of this is gone" (118).

Ideas of Order is generally less comic than Harmonium, although Stevens is quite satirical in a number of poems. It is also notably less theatrical. As a result strong poetic personae are fewer and less clearly-drawn. The speakers in Ideas of Order tend to be unspecified poet figures, as opposed to Harmonium's comic French-speaking fops, Nineties pedants, and boisterous American iconoclasts. Stevens now has different concerns; he is more interested in social and political roles than with fin-de-siècle aesthetics and Commedia dell'arte personae.

In the Harmonium era French diction often carried refined and foppish connotations that came from Stevens' early writing. French-connected words were used to summon up an often ironic sense of "Frenchy" aesthetic affectation that was itself associated with decoration, comic theatre, and the archaic. These specific associations recede and become sporadic after Harmonium along with that volume's characteristic personae; in Ideas of Order and

22 This is in regard to Stevens' 1911 letter to Elsie where he jokingly comments on his use of ellipses: "notice my Frenchy way of punctuating? Très chic, n'est-ce pas?" (The Early Years 382).
afterwards, French diction is used in more varied and extensive word-play. The early French associations become part of Stevens' broader linguistic explorations; he will sometimes play on them in much the same way that he occasionally summons up *Harmonium*-era personae and aesthetic sensibilities.

"Sailing after Lunch" (1935) has a faint echo of *Harmonium*-era "Frenchy" resonance when the poet writes "Mon Dieu, hear the poet's prayer. / The romantic should be here. / The romantic should be there. / It ought to be everywhere." The slightly arch "Mon Dieu" in this mock-invocation, along with the here/there/everywhere lines, makes for a tone of mild self-ridicule that recalls Mon Oncle's more elaborately self-depreciatory pronouncements. In 1935, however, this tone, as well as the clumsy movement of the "dirty sail," is replaced in the final stanzas by "sharp white" and swift sailing in the boat and poet's "slight transcendence." The poet is able to leave behind the "heavy historical sail" of earlier poetic and linguistic associations and to receive a fresh inspirational wind.24 "Sailing after Lunch" is placed early on in *Ideas of Order* (it is the third poem in the volume), and this emphasizes it as a declaration of poetic change.

23 There is an echo in these lines, perhaps a joke on Stevens' part, of the Scarlet Pimpernel's song: "We seek him here / We seek him there / Those Frenchies seek him everywhere." (*The Scarlet Pimpernel* 130).
24 Cook notes that the poet is "luffing in a romantic bateau ivre, which suddenly finds new wind (Stevens is combating some views of the Romantic)" (117).
In "Waving Adieu, Adieu, Adieu" (1935), chronologically close to "Sailing After Lunch," Stevens uses another common, and related, French-associated term, but in this case one that has been fully assimilated into English. "Adieu" in English is adopted from the French adieu, which is formed from à (to) + [D]ieu (God). Stevens is employing it as an interjection, "an expression of kind wishes at the departure of friends" or a general expression of regret at "departure or loss" (OED A1,2). The use of "Adieu" is part of the exploration of leave-taking throughout the poem: "That would be waving and that would be crying, / Crying and shouting and meaning farewell."

The valedictory formality of "adieu" contrasts with the poet's plain "One likes to practice the thing," and also implicitly with the English version, which would be waving "goodbye" or "farewell." Adieu in French is distinguished from au revoir, which is non-permanent and less formal; there is no such distinction in English, unless that between "goodbye" and a colloquial "see you later" or the like. By using the French-adopted "adieu," Stevens is making the leave-taking in the title of his poem a lasting one, and playing on the differences between French and English usage to explore formal and informal valediction.

There may be an echo of Tennyson from In Memoriam LVII in Stevens' title: "I hear it now and o'er and o'er, / Eternal greetings to the dead; / And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said,
"Adieu, adieu," forevermore."²⁵ Stevens' repetitions and "waving" echo Tennyson's "Adieu" and "Ave," recalling his predecessor's distinction between salutary greeting and an "adieu" that lasts forever.

The etymology of "adieu" also provides subtle irony in a poem about "a world without heaven to follow." This is part of Stevens' elegiac theme, that as in "Sunday Morning," the pleasures of earth must suffice: "What is there here but weather, what spirit / Have I except it comes from the sun?"

French diction adds to the sardonic tone in "Evening without Angels" (1934), an anti-Christianity poem:

Why seraphim like lutanists arranged Above the trees? And why the poet as Eternal chef d'orchestre?

John Hollander comments that "the familiar Christianized version of the heavenly choir of harmonia mundi is queried as to its right to represent the eloquent significance of our surrounding element."²⁶ The use of "chef d'orchestre" is distinctly critical as the poem is against the idea of arranging nature into supernatural fictions beyond human activity or imagination. The poet may have replaced God as conductor of the eternal orchestra²⁷ but he cannot seemingly rid himself of the angel musicians, the title notwithstanding, until the end of the poem when such fictions are removed: "Bare night is best. Bare earth is

²⁵ This echo was suggested to me by one of the OED examples of "adieu" usage, which quoted Tennyson's poem.
²⁶ "The Sound of the Music of Music and Sound" 246.
²⁷ Chef d'orchestre is a French term used in English for the leader or conductor of an orchestra (OED).
best. Bare, bare."

The italicization of "chef d'orchestre" works in a way similar to the italicized "connaissance" earlier in "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle," accentuating it textually as a foreign phrase and emphasizing its effect. In this case the French phrase increases the sharpness of the poet's criticism by adding a certain archness in tone, almost to the point of sneering. If the idea of poet as conductor of angels is already overly lofty and misguided, calling him an "eternal chef d'orchestre" increases the implicit derision.

A tone of French-associated irony also comes out in the idea of light as "coiffeur of haloes, fecund jeweller" for the angels, in that divine light becomes a kind of decoration or cosmetic created by "sad men." Unable to accept the natural beauty of the sun, they must justify it in extra-human terms and thus make it artificial, like a hairstyle or costume jewelry for the angels, which are themselves innately artificial.

It is interesting to compare this disparaging treatment of coiffures with Harmonium, where their associated decorativeness held a somewhat ambivalent attraction. In Harmonium coiffures were desired and valued, if by figures of foppish ridicule like Carlos and the Ordinary Women; even Mon Oncle's admiration for the "mountainous coiffures of Bath" can be seen as a sign of his tendency towards

28 There is a difference between the two in that, unlike connaissance, chef d'orchestre is sometimes used in English contexts (OED).
dandyesque affectation, which again is not overtly criticized or derided by the poet of Harmonium. In the starker and barer world of "Evening without Angels" they are explicitly rejected.

In "Nudity in the Colonies," (1934) published along with "Evening without Angels," when the speaker says "Black man, bright nouveautés leave one, at best, pseudonymous," the use of the French "nouveautés" is part of his sophisticated colonialist nature. He is answering the "savage" speaker of "Nudity at the Capital" (1934) who claimed that even when naked, people retain an undisclosed inner being: "But nakedness, woolen massa, concerns an innermost atom. / If that remains concealed, what does the bottom matter?" The "civilized" speaker states that clothing conceals us and that this act of concealment itself is in fact the essence of our inner selves: "Thus one is most disclosed when one is most anonymous." Stevens comments "obviously, the savage and the civilized man agree that nakedness concerns the self, but disagree as to the mode of concealment" (L 347).

The difference in treatment of garb and costume from Harmonium is again notable. The focus is on psychological

---

29 Alcestis (October 1934). This group also included, among other poems, "Nudity at the Capital," "The Idea of Order at Key West," and "Lions in Sweden" (L 256).
30 The speaker may well be a French colonialist in Africa. There is some suggestion by the poet in "The Greenest Continent" section of Owl’s Clover that it takes place in a French African colony: "The diplomats of the cafés expound: / Fromage and coffee and cognac and no gods" (VII).
and social identity rather than theatrical role and
decoration; the poet compares colonialists and savages
rather than fin-de-siècle fops and American bumpkins.

French-associated diction is also used in "Dance of the
Macabre Mice" (1935), another socio-politically satirical
poem. The title plays on the French-adopted Danse Macabre
or Dance of Death. In this case, the mice are dancing
rather than Death, mocking the statue and reminding the
"Founder of the State" represented there of its relative
insignificance in the face of animal life and seasonal
change: "Whoever founded / A state that was free, in the
death of winter, from mice?" Longenbach notes:

Stevens satirizes both the turgid order of the statue
and the ineffectual disorder of the mice that dance
over its surface; yet again, the mice finally enlist
Stevens' sympathy if only because they are capable of
change. (166)

"Macabre" is well assimilated into English and
Stevens is playing more on the humour of transferring Danse
Macabre to the dancing mice than he is playing on the French
resonance of the title in itself. "Macabre" is also punned
on in "the dead of winter."

31 The Danse Macabre is a traditional literary or pictorial
representation of a Death figure dancing around people and
hence reminding them of their incipient mortality (OED,
Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable. All further
references will be abbreviated to Brewer's). Stevens owned
a collector's copy of E. H. Langlois' Essai historique,
philosophique et pittoresque sur les Danses des Morts.
Edelstein notes that this book has a "lavish binding...with
five extra 'Dance of Death' engravings tipped in at front
and back of the two volumes bound in one" (67).

32 There are a number of examples of the use of Danse
Macabre and the substantive form "macabre" ranging from
Lydgate to Longfellow to F. R.. Leavis (OED A[1,2] B[1,2]).
The statue is referred to as "Monsieur" ("Monsieur is on horseback") and this adds to the irreverence of the mice with a tone of sarcasm stemming from the ostensibly polite formality of the French address. A mocking tone is also present in the closing of the poem: "What a beautiful tableau tinted and towering, / The arm of bronze outstretched against all evil!" "Tableau," although French in sound is well-assimilated into English as an artistic and theatrical term and does not have much foreign resonance.\(^{33}\) It does, however, add to the overall tone of mockery because its quasi-sophisticated pictorial and dramatic connotations undercut the stolid heroism of the bronze figure. The supposedly impressive "Founder of the State" becomes just another entertaining artwork or scene in this context. Stevens is playing with political and artistic conventions, and this is tied in with the title of the poem as the dancing mice themselves are a re-interpreted pictorial and literary tradition.

Stevens again uses French-connected diction for ironic effect in "Snow and Stars" (1933), which also mocks conventions, in this case seasonal and bird song tropes:

The grackles sing avant the spring
Most spiss-oh! Yes, most spissantly,
They sing right puissantly.

The French-adopted "avant" and "puissantly" create a mock-pompous tone, adding to the "ill-tempered" quality of the

\(^{33}\) "Tableau" in English is same in pronunciation and origin as the French tableau, a diminutive of table; both stem from the Latin tabula (OED).
Bloom also observes that the poem is "in rather ill humor, excusably so, since crow blackbirds are hardly a provocation to joy" (91).

Puissant is adopted from the French puissant, with a long history of English usage although it has become archaic (OED). It retains little French resonance but still stands out strongly, conveying an effect of literary anachronism, as does "avant." Cook notes of Stevens' use of "spissantly" that "we might hear a long 'i' in 'issant,' and hence a family of French words in this Ur-paronomasia." This would have the effect of strengthening the French resonance of "puissant."

"Puissantly" is ironic because of its historical usage; it generally describes heroic or martial acts, as in this example from Wyrley's Armorie, 1592: "Puissantly the Frenchmen doth he daunt" (OED). By using "puissantly" to describe the unappealing and distinctly ordinary sound of the grackles, Stevens is ascribing an mock-epic valour to their song, sarcastically associating them with minstrelsy and noble adventure in the way Keats did, non-ironically, with his nightingale who "charmed magic casements, opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn."

34 "From Etymology to Paronomasia: Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, and Others" 45.
35 "Avant" is adopted from the French avant, before, and used in combination words such as "avant-alour." It is archaic in this form, with the last example from 1719 (OED). Stevens is using it in an uncombined adjectival form that replicates the French meaning and also retains the archaic association of the combined forms.
"Puissant" is earlier given an uncomplimentary association in "The Ordinary Women": "Insinuations of desire, / Puissant speech, alike in each, / Cried quittance / To the wickless halls." Here "puissant" is ironic because while it indicates power and majesty, it is used to describe imaginative vacuity and impotence. Its dated quality is part of the women's overall linguistic and aesthetic affectation and thus also a link with its degree of French resonance. These associations carry over into "Snow and Stars" and contribute to the arch tone of the later poem.

Stevens uses "puissant" as well in "The Greenest Continent," to describe onomatopoeically "glittering serpents.../ Hissing, across the silence, puissant sounds." In this case the word carries little of the derision implicit in the other uses and is used for its sound, which complements the line's internal 's' rhymes and snake sounds. The use of "puissant" for sound also applies to "Snow and Stars," given the spissantly/puissantly rhyme and the profusion of 's' sounds in the stanza. There is however a certain irony on Stevens' part in describing the grackles with sibilants that so contrast with the harshness of their actual song.

There is also a good example of Stevens' use of onomatopoeic French sounds in "Mozart, 1935":

Poet, be seated at the piano
Play the present, its hoo-hoo-hoo,
Its shoo-shoo-shoo, its ric-a-nic,
Its envious cachinnation.
Thanks to an interview with Judge Arthur Powell, Stevens' longtime friend and business associate, there exists an explanation of the way that Stevens used adaptations of French word sounds to add hidden meaning to ostensibly meaningless sounds written out in English.

Powell states:

As you know, sound effects are part of his artistry; especially sound effects produced by making slight changes in a word.... I now have in my possession a scrap of brown paper, a piece of heavy envelope, with this written on it in his handwriting: ‘ses hurlements
ses chuchotements, ses ricaments
its hoo-hoo-hoo
its shoo-shoo-shoo, its ric-a-nic.’ (Parts 104)

"Hurlements" in French means 'howlings' and "chuchotements" and "ricaments" are presumably meant to be chuchotements and ricanements, which mean respectively 'whisperings' and 'cacklings' or derisive laughter (Larousse). All three words are onomatopoeic in French, and Stevens transfers those effects to the sounds "hoo-hoo-hoo," "shoo-shoo-shoo," and "ric-a-nic." Ricanement also relates to "cachinnation," which means loud or immoderate laughter and which is itself onomatopoeic (OED). With an understanding of the French words behind the sound effects, it becomes clear that the sounds represent the howling, whispering and snickering of the hostile audience who "throw stones upon the roof" while the poet plays.

A "hoo" sound is also used with hostile intent in Part X of The Man with The Blue Guitar, where a public figure ("him whom none believes") is confronted by the poet "hoo-
ing the slick trombones." Stevens explains in a late letter:

I address him but with hostility, hoo-ing the slick trombones. I deride & challenge him and the words...express the derision & challenge. The pejorative sense of slick is obvious. I imagine that when I used the word hoo-ing I intended some similar pejorative connotation. The word back of it in my mind may have been hooting. (L 789)

He adds that he may also have had "booing or hooting" in mind. There is a similar effect in "Bantams in Pine Woods" (1922), where the bristling "inchling" poet "fears not portly Azcan nor his hoos." He also uses "hoo" sounds to describe oceanic howlings in section II of "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" and section III of "It Must be Abstract" in Notes toward a Supreme Fiction. In An Ordinary Evening in New Haven XXI the poet describes the "boo-ha of the wind," a version of the French brouhaha.

In this way, Stevens is using French nuances to add meaning to sounds in English, and taking advantage of cross-linguistic onomatopoeic effects. Litz notes a similar use of French sounds in the earlier "Frogs Eat Butterflies, Snakes Eat Frogs, Hogs Eat Snakes, Men Eat Hogs" (1922). Stevens uses the descriptive phrase "thunder's rattapallax" and Litz notes "rattapallax" as an "onomatopoeic coinage from the French rataplan, the rat-a-tat of a drum" (115).

36 "The gongs rang loudly as the windy booms / Hoo-hooed it in the darkened ocean-blooms."
37 "And still the grossest iridescence of ocean / Howls hoo and rises and howls hoo and falls." Cook notes that this "hoo" is an "implicit French-English pun on houle (seaswell)" ("Riddles, Charms and Fictions in Wallace Stevens" 236).
Another, slightly different, *Harmonium* example of Stevens' use of onomatopoeic French sounds comes in "Depression before Spring" (1918), where writing about a spring where "no queen rises," the poet says "But ki-ki-ri-ki / Brings no rou-cou, / No rou-cou-cou." "Ki-ki-ri-ki" imitates the sound of a Germanic cock crowing, but "rou-cou-cou" is the onomatopoeic French version of the sound of a dove cooing, or roucoulement, which is itself occasionally used in English.38 *Cocorico* is the sound of a French cock cry, falling somewhere in sound between the two cries in this poem. Stevens will also play on English and French sounds in later bird song poems such as "The Beginning" (1947) and "Song of Fixed Accord" (1952), where as Cook notes Stevens "evokes the maddeningly insistent cooing of mourning doves on spring mornings" (309) in a late readdressing of bird song tropes.

Use of French in *Ideas of Order* does not always connote irony or humour. "Anglais Mort à Florence" (1936), for example, is a moving elegiac poem where the French title reflects the subject's continental urbaneness but does not suggest the affectation that it might have earlier. The Englishman is cultured; he listens to Brahms and travels to Florence. He is also aesthetically sensitive, keenly sensing the loss of his youth in sensory terms: "Only last year he said that the naked moon / Was not the moon he used to see, to feel." He is not, however, portrayed as a fop or

38 *Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War* 18.
would-be Aesthete, and is not mocked. Rather, he is sympathized with in his state of helplessness and rapidly approaching mortality, also depicted via the senses: "the colors deepened and grew small."

There are various uses of French-connected diction in "Like Decorations from a Nigger Cemetery," a long elegiac poem placed late in the volume, which also contains notable references to a French author and an artist. In these diverse uses it looks forward to the great long poems of the next two decades. "Like Decorations" is made up of fifty short aphoristic segments that address aesthetic and sensory concerns, often with a focus on the apprehension of art and nature.

The first use of French occurs in stanza XXVI:

This fat pistache of Belgian grapes exceeds
The total gala of auburn aureoles.
*Cochon!* Master, the grapes are here and now.

The physically immediate and appealing grapes are preferred over a less definable pleasure, the "auburn aureoles," perhaps those of painted saints.

"Pistache" is a Stevensian usage of the French word for pistachio nut or the associated pale green colour *(Larousse).* The French phrase *prendre/ramasser une pistache* means to get drunk *(Larousse)* and this subtly

---

39 Vendler comments: "Stevens' true subject in Decorations becomes the complexity of mental response as he gives intimations...of almost all possible reactions to the decay that is the topic of the poem" (71).
40 "Pistache" is also used earlier in "Sea Surface Full of Clouds": "What pistache one, ingenious and droll, / Beheld the sovereign clouds as jugglery."
reinforces the images of excess in the stanza. Holly Stevens points out that, both in manuscript and in its first published form in *Poetry*, "pistache" was actually printed "pastiche." This has a different effect, and suggests a comparison between two paintings, one a "pastiche" of grapes, a still-life perhaps, and the other involving "auburn aureoles." By using "pistache" Stevens makes the meaning quite a bit more ambiguous.

The italicization of *Cochon* emphasizes its exclamatory quality and makes the rebuke more forceful. The scorning of the grape enjoyer takes some of the pomposity out of the previous two lines, as if the speaker was saying that yes, the grapes are more immediate than the "auburn aureoles," but too much appreciation of them is still pig-like, even if they are imported and pleasantly coloured.

In stanza XLV Stevens uses an italicized French phrase in a somewhat mean-spirited context:

> Encore un instant de bonheur. The words Are a woman's words, unlikely to satisfy The taste of even a country connoisseur.

The misogynistic dismissal of what the speaker sees as an unfounded optimism, as well as the use of italics, recalls "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" where that poem's speaker criticizes the "anecdotal bliss" with which his female companion makes believe "a starry connaissance." In these two examples a French phrase has a negative feminine

---

41 *The Palm At The End Of The Mind* 402. All further references will be abbreviated to *Palm*. 
connotation, an association with unrealistic romantic fantasy that is the converse of a more positive, while still seductive and risky, French-associated female eroticism in poems like "The Plot Against the Giant." In this it anticipates the "smoky demoiselles" of "Montrachet-le-Jardin."

Stanza XXXVIII contains a reference to Corot in an argument about actual experience and the artistic representation of nature:

The album of Corot is premature.
A little later when the sky is black.
Mist that is golden is not wholly mist.

Stevens later explicated these lines to Hi Simons: "Do not show me Corot while it is still summer; do not show me pictures of summer while it is still summer...wait until a little later" (L 349). The speaker is comparing the direct experience of summer with a pictorial depiction in what Vendler calls a "truncated dismissal of art" (71).

Stevens had an enduring affection for Corot. He is mentioned in a 1906 journal entry describing a visit to an art gallery where he saw a "gray-green Corot" depicting a pair of lovers: "Fortunate creatures to be wandering so sweetly in Corot!" (L 89). Forty years later, Corot is still of interest, as he writes to Barbara Church: "It was

42 Jean-Baptiste Corot (1796-1875). Stevens owned a 1932 edition of Corot etching and lithograph facsimiles, including an essay by Paul Valéry, and this may well be the "album of Corot" mentioned in "Like Decorations". The album was auctioned off as part of Stevens' library by Parke-Bernet Galleries in 1959. See Appendix.
pleasant to have you say that Ville d’Avray was never lovelier than now. For me, it is wholly a fiction but, because of Corot (of course), a very special fiction" (L 562-3).43 He also mentions the "limpid vistas of Corot" in "The Relations between Poetry and Painting" (1951).

The somewhat enigmatic observation about Corot fits in with the general abstruseness of the poems in "Like Decorations."44 A similar effect is achieved in stanza XV with a reference to Toulet:

Serve the rouged fruits in early snow. 
They resemble a page of Toulet
Read in the ruins of a new society, 
Furtively, by candle and out of need.

Baird suggests that Stevens, writing in the Depression, may have had in mind Toulet’s poetry written in the midst of World War I, and that, rather than a comment on Toulet’s poetic technique, the allusion signifies "the artist’s will to endure: the persistence of an American poet in a time of despair."45 The cosmetic connotation of "rouged" suggests cosmetically-enhanced, or "rouged," fruit served out of season. The lines may indicate that Toulet is in fact inappropriate or out of place in such times, but that one takes what one can "out of need" for solace, whether it be unripe fruit or poetry. "Rouged" may also simply be a description of the fruit’s colour.

43 Corot painted in Ville d’Avray in the eighteen-thirties and painted the transept of the Église de Ville d’Avray in 1855 (OCA). 
44 Litz comments that readers "supply the missing connections and gloss the cryptic allusions" (185). 
45 The Dome and the Rock 54.
Other French references in *Ideas of Order* include "Botanist on Alp (No. 1)" (1934), and "Lions in Sweden" (1934), which has a combined literary and artistic reference as Stevens refers to Guillaume Apollinaire via his mention of "Monsieur Dufy's Hamburg." Raoul Dufy's woodcut illustrating Apollinaire's *Le Bestiaire ou le Cortège d'Orphée* depicted a once majestic lion "maintenant qu'en cage;" the reference thus reflects on the less than impressive status of the "sovereign" financial images represented by Stevens' lions.47

In "Botanist on Alp (No. 1)" Stevens mentions Claude48 in the context of a comparison between a natural and an artistically represented natural scene: "Panoramas are not what they used to be. / Claude has been dead a long time / And apostrophes are forbidden on the funicular." The botanist speaker, one of Stevens' rational scientist figures like the addressee in "Delightful Evening" (1934), lives "by leaves" and while not much tempted by "corridors of cloudy thoughts," is still attracted to Claude's "central composition," before deciding it is a "panorama of despair" that is negative in comparison to the quality of nature.

46 Dufy (1877-1953) was a Fauvist painter and decorator (*The Oxford Companion to 20th Century Art*; all further references will be abbreviated to OCTA).
47 *Introspective Voyager* 188.
48 Claude Gellée, Le Lorrain (1600-82). Stevens wrote in a 1935 letter "the Claude of THE BOTANIST is, of course, the painter and not the musician" (*L* 293). Claude is considered, along with Poussin, to be the among the greatest painters of the French Classical tradition (*The Oxford Companion to Art*; all further references will be abbreviated to OCA).
Claude, known for his paintings of natural vistas, is also mentioned in *Phases* (1914): "Peace means long, delicious valleys, / In the mode of Claude Lorraine."

Stevens' uses of Dufy, Apollinaire, and Claude, as well as of Corot and Toulet in "Like Decorations," are typical of the reference and allusion to French artists and authors that becomes a characteristic of French presence in Stevens' poetry after *Harmonium*. While there is French allusion and reference in *Harmonium* and earlier, it is notably increased in *Ideas of Order*, and continues in *Parts of a World* and afterwards.

Stevens' references are also not confined to French figures alone; he mentions Constable in stanza XXVII of "Like Decorations," Picasso in section XV of *The Man With the Blue Guitar*, and Franz Hals in *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction I VI*: "Weather by Franz Hals, / Brushed up by brushy winds in brushy clouds." There are, however, proportionately more French figures mentioned throughout his poetry, showing, like the entries in *Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects*, Stevens' cultural preferences.

Reference to authors and artists is given a twist with the mention of Ramon Fernandez in "The Idea of Order at Key West," who is addressed as the auditor of the poem: "Ramon Fernandez, tell me, if you know." Ramon Fernandez was a

49 A good *Harmonium* example is "The Doctor of Geneva" with its topical references to Racine and Bossuet.
50 "John Constable they could never quite transplant / And our streams rejected the dim Academy."
well-known French critic, Stevens claimed, however, that
the person in the poem had no relation to Fernandez the
writer:

Ramon Fernandez was not intended to be anyone at all.
I chose two everyday Spanish names. I knew of Ramon
Fernandez, the critic, and had read some of his
criticisms but I did not have him in mind. (L 798)

There is no particular reason to doubt this claim, but the
use of Fernandez is interesting given Stevens' current
critical interests. To have the poet questioning Ramon
Fernandez about perception and arrangement of thought while
discussing the "rage for order" in a poem is a subtle
critical commentary in itself.

The presence of Fernandez is also finally nicely
illustrative of Stevens' blending of poetry with
contemporary reality in the Ideas of Order era. Even though
Stevens claimed to "not have him in mind," the suggested
reference to a current French critic who published in the
Nouvelle Revue Française, a journal Stevens was fond of, can be seen as a distinct nod towards external social and
political reality. This poetic tendency is continued in The
Man With the Blue Guitar (1937).

51 Litz observes that Fernandez's participation in poésie
pure debates "may help to explain the 'accidental' appearance" ("Wallace Stevens' Defense of Poetry" 115).
52 In his 1936 lecture "The Irrational Element in Poetry" Stevens discusses, among other writers, Abbé Brémond and
Charles Mauron, and considers interconnected ideas about
psychological interpretations of the artistic process, poésie pure, and the social role of the poet.
53 Stevens wrote of the NRF in a late letter "it is the best
magazine in the world today." (L 817).
The Man With the Blue Guitar contains little French
diction, contrasting with Harmonium and even Ideas of Order.
This lack is part of the prosodic simplicity that Stevens
aims for with the distinctive short sections, two-line
stanzas, and repetitive rhymes that characterize this
sequence. Cook notes the "austerity" (135) of the poems and
Bates, contrasting it in particular with Owl's Clover, notes
how "terse, sometimes fragmentary sentences replace the more
grandiloquent periods of the earlier poem."54 There are
however some interesting uses of French throughout the poem,
which become all the more significant because their relative
rarity.

In section XII the poet states "Tom-tom, c'est moi.
The blue guitar / And I are one." "Tom-tom" is the
onomatopoeic, percussive sound of the guitarist striking the
strings (or the body of the guitar) and it announces the
presence of the poet, as in "Here I am." In another sense,
the poet is associated with the sound, is the sound,
literally, as he is "one" with the guitar. "C'est moi" fits
in rhythmically with the spondaic "tom-tom" and the 'm'
sounds. Luyat sees this particular use as an example of
Stevens' general adoption of French words and sounds in his
poetry:

By the time that the blue guitar of Stevens was
strumming the syncopated 'Tom-tom, c'est moi' in 1937,
thereby claiming the right for the American poet to
speak the foreign language and the American idiom
simultaneously, Stevens had had long practice in

54 A Mythology of Self 189.
creating bilingual instruments. (24)

The "c'est moi" has the effect of a polylingual wink at the reader that stands with a certain bravado against the self-doubt and questioning in the rest of the section: "Where / Do I begin and end?

In section XXX, the poet introduces a new French-connected persona:

From this I shall evolve a man.
This is his essence: the old fantoche

Hanging his shawl upon the wind,
Like something on the stage, puffed out,
His strutting studied through centuries.

"Fantoche" in English is adopted from the French fantoche, a derivation of the Italian fantoccio, puppet or marionette (OED). Fantoche in French can also mean an easily malleable person or someone who does not deserve to be taken seriously (Larousse).

Stevens notes that "fantoche is used rather arbitrarily for a fantastic actor, poet" (L 361). The etymology and theatrical context of this new persona recall Stevens' Harmonium-era Commedia dell'arte-descended personae.55 The fantoche is implicitly a comic personage who is "puffed out," and "strutting" upon the stage. The comedic afflatus and posing recall earlier French-connected figures like Carlos and Bowl, as well as Crispin with his theatrical genealogy and his role as Comedian-poet. Litz notes:

55 There is a further link with the Harmonium era in that a Fêtes galantes poems is entitled "Fantoches." Storey comments on Verlaine's poem: "They are characters...defined by their gestures, as if few others were possible for them" (Pierrots on the Stage of Desire 235).
The "old fantoche," man as puppet or stage comedian is the "comic sum" of our accumulated ideas about man: he is an adaptable figure like Crispin, who has strutted through the centuries playing different roles, and as we think of his past performances he becomes a mere abstraction.  

The fantoche is placed in the industrialized "banal suburb" of Oxidia. This distinctively contemporary setting recalls, in its juxtaposition of romance and grimy urban realism, Stevens' vision of William Carlos Williams as a "romantic" poet, itself looking forward to the later vision of the poet as man on the dump:

He happens to be one who still dwells in an ivory tower, but who insists that life there would be intolerable except for the fact that one has, from the top, such an exceptional view of the public dump and the advertising signs of Snider's catsup, Ivory Soap and Chevrolet Cars; he is the hermit who dwells alone with the sun and moon, but insists on taking a rotten newspaper. (OP 214)

The fantoche is thus put in a current and realistic setting, not Pierrot's rarefied Fêtes galantes world, and this represents a progression from Harmonium.

The old fantoche and his setting can be seen as epitomizing the broad and often ambivalent movement in Stevens' poetry of this period towards contemporary social awareness; they are an illustration of "the incessant conjunctions between things as they are and things imagined" (OP 233). Stevens refuses to bend completely towards public expectations of political content by stating somewhat provocatively that Ideas of Order "is essentially a book of pure poetry," however the lyricism and colour there and in

56 Introspective Voyager 255
The Man With The Blue Guitar exist side by side with concerns about the social role of the poet. Similarly, the old fantoche and Oxidia encompass both the world of poésie pure and rarefied aesthetic concerns as well as the contemporary depressed urban world. As he says in "The Irrational Element in Poetry," "I wanted to apply my own sensibility to something perfectly matter-of-fact." Oxidia as a modern Olympia is a figure for the fusion of myth-making and public awareness. As a combination of the old and the new, the fantoche and his setting are an example of the "process of cross-fertilization" and "hybridization," Stevens' organic metaphors for the "new romantic" that he explored in his poetry of the nineteen-thirties (OP 221). That the fantoche is a French-related figure is fitting; it demonstrates again how Stevens' French connections progress along with the diffuse movements of his poetry.

At one point in "The Irrational Element in Poetry," while discussing "the pressures of the contemporaneous," Stevens writes: "The painter may establish himself on a guitar, a copy of Figaro and a dish of melons. These are fortifyings, although irrational ones" (OP 230). This applies well to Stevens in the nineteen-thirties as he reads French and records it in Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects, and enjoys sensory pleasures, all the while making do in turbulent political and economic times and continuing the "serenade / Of a man that plays a blue guitar."
The ordinary, everyday search of the romantic mind is rewarded perhaps rather too lightly by the satisfaction that it finds in what it calls reality. But if one happened to be playing checkers somewhere under the Maginot Line, subject to a call at any moment to do some job that might be one's last job, one would spend a great deal of time thinking in order to make the situation seem reasonable, inevitable and free from question. (December 29 1939 to Hi Simons, L 346)

Parts of a World, published in 1942, is one of Stevens' most French-oriented volumes. In this it resembles Harmonium more than Ideas of Order or The Man with The Blue Guitar. It is also closer to Harmonium in structure, with a variety of forms and styles as well as a mixture of long and short poems. French and France open and close the collection, which is rich with allusion and reference to French texts, artists, acquaintances, and locations.

The volume was written during the period of approaching and then actual war in Europe; the poems range in date from 1937 to 1942. Stevens commented on the effect of "this unbelievable catastrophe" (L 343) in a 1940 letter to Henry Church:

I am afraid that what is going on now may be nothing to what will be going on three or four months from now, and that the situation that will then exist may even involve us all, at least in the sense of occupying our thoughts and feelings to the exclusion of anything else
except the actual and the necessary. (L 365)

While the war does not dominate *Parts of a World*, there is violence of various kinds throughout, from the two opening poems, "Parochial Theme" (1938) and "Poetry Is a Destructive Force" (1938), to the closing "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War" (1942).¹ Litz notes that "Stevens absorbed the experience of war into his poetic" (265).

Stevens was sensitive in general towards the war; his concern for French-residing acquaintances like Henry and Barbara Church² and Anatole Vidal³ made him even more aware of war on French ground. This is emphasized with the French references in "Parochial Theme" and "Examination," as well as elsewhere.

*Parts of a World* is also notable for a focus on art, especially painting. Riddel sees *Parts of a World* as

---

¹ These two poems also cover the chronological range of *Parts*, an arrangement suggesting that one of the story-lines of the volume is a sequential progression from pre-war to mid-war.
² Henry Church was a wealthy American who co-founded *Mesures* magazine with Jean Paulhan (L 338n). In 1939 he contacted Stevens with a request to publish French translations of *Harmonium* poems in *Mesures*; this led to a lasting friendship with Church and his wife. The Churches, who normally lived in Ville d’Avray, France, for most of the year, spent the war in New Jersey (L 357).
³ Anatole Vidal was the owner of the Librairie Coloniale in Paris, with whom Stevens had a regular correspondence and through whom he purchased many books and paintings. Stevens lost touch with Anatole Vidal until after the war, writing in a 1941 letter

I have heard nothing at all from Vidal. Recently, there has been a certain amount of communication between France, even between occupied France, and this country, or so I hear in New York. But Vidal has not come through and I don’t expect him to, because he has too much at stake to attempt to do anything irregular. (L 393)
reflecting "the world of the art gallery" (150). Cook notes that it is a painterly volume (153), and Macleod likens it to an art exhibition. Art is tied in with French and France throughout the volume, with a broad sensibility expressed through references to French artists and museums, and through the use of French artistic terminology.

In this way, the strong French presence in Parts of a World is related to the importance of France in two of the thematic axes of the volume. However, one of the characteristics of this volume is a movement against unifying themes and approaches, as Cook notes: "This is a volume of 'parts' in numerous senses, but all senses agree on this: that they should question the relation of parts to the whole" (153-4). This must be taken into account in any analysis of the volume, and fits well with Stevens' varied uses of French.

The volume starts out on a somewhat cryptic note in "Parochial Theme": "Long-tailed ponies go nosing the pine-lands, / Ponies of Parisians shooting on the hill." "Parisians" is Stevens' pun on the parishioners of the poem's title. Parish and parochial are both descended from the Old French paroche, a linguistic connection beyond the similarity in sound.

Stevens noted that the poem was "an experiment at

4 Wallace Stevens and Modern Art 81.
5 While looking up "Parisian" in the OED I noticed that it comes directly after "parish priest." Stevens may well have had the same experience.
stylizing life" and that it "may be summed up by saying that there is no such thing as life; what there is is a style of life from time to time" (L 434-5). In an abstract way the idea of the hunters as Parisians may be part of Stevens' notion of stylization. In that context the implicit urbanity and sophistication of a citizen of Paris plays against the poem's titular parochialism and hence rusticity.

I also hear a veiled pun about the contemporary French intellectual milieu in the last lines of the poem: "It is more than any scene: / Of the guillotine or of any glamorous hanging. / Piece the world together, boys, but not with your hands." The use of Parisians in a 1938 poem brings to mind the current political turmoil and violence in France. Paris was rocked with anti-Front populaire demonstrations and clashes between left-wing and right-wing forces from 1936 until 1938. France also faced international problems, which peaked with the lack of opposition to Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland in late 1938 (HFXX 275-87). In 1937 Georges Bataille, Roger Caillois, and Michel Leiris formed the Collège de Sociologie, an avant-garde group that lasted until the outbreak of World War II in 1939. Stevens presumably knew of the group from his reading of French

6 Histoire de la France au XXe siècle II 169-73. All further references will be abbreviated to HFXX.
7 Allan Stoekl notes that the group "attempted to rewrite not only the avant-garde, and especially surrealism, but also French academic sociology and anthropology" and that they were interested in "the sociological importance of the sacred," particularly relating to shamanistic "intervention in society" ("The Avant-Garde Embraces Science" NHFL 929-35).
journals and general interest in the Parisian literary scene. The Collège was one of many contemporary attempts to "piece the world together," but interestingly in context of the "guillotine," Bataille also founded a group named Acéphale, which means headless (931). The implicit response to the poet's closing command is to work with one's mind instead of hands; this is difficult to do if one does not have a head.

Cook points out that the hunting metaphors in "Parochial Theme" go beyond the actual pursuit of animals: "The thirties had hunters and hunted too, some desperate, and the thirties also hunted after various 'salvations,' both civil and religious" (160). From this point of view the "Parisians shooting on the hill" might be French activists, including intellectuals such as the Collège members, engaging in hunting in all its connotations. Political 'hunting' can be brutal, and this is shown by the contemporary violence in Paris, as well as by past violence like the public executions of the French Revolution, and

8 Stevens never directly mentioned the Collège, but he was certainly familiar with its members. He read Caillois, if later, but did not especially admire him, writing in a 1945 letter: "Caillois is provocative, but he is also provoking; he is not a man with a first-class mind, nor even with a good mind" (L 495). In a more personal connection, Leiris was part of the Church circle at Ville d'Avray (Parts photograph 174-5). Jean Wahl and Jean Paulhan, both of whom Stevens knew personally and admired, were also involved peripherally with the Collège (NHFL 930).  
9 The term can apply to an animal such as a gastropod, or to a statue (Larousse).  
10 The Collège de Sociologie held the view that "the evolution of society...was a function of a purely destructive force" (933).
other kinds of "glamorous hanging."11

Not all Parts of a World poems are necessarily violent, however. "Anything is Beautiful If You Say It Is" (1938) is thematically and linguistically in the vein of Harmonium poems like "The Ordinary Women;" Vendler observes a relation to the earlier poem in the "feverish and surreal elegance cum vulgarity" and "the vocabulary of grotesque fancy" (147). Macleod notes the depiction of "an overly refined atmosphere...inhabited chiefly by women of disreputable or frivolous character" whose "finicky tastes reflect their vapidity" (50):

Under the eglantine
The fretful concubine
Said, "Phooey! Phoo!"
She whispered, "Pfui!"

The demi-monde
On the mezzanine
Said, "Phooey!" too.

The near-rhyming of "phooey," "phoo," and "pfui," a French expression of exasperation (Larousse), opens the poem with cross-linguistic onomatopoeic dissatisfaction. These sounds also recall in tone and effect the "Pftt" from "Add This to Rhetoric" (1938), about which Cook comments "We can hear [Stevens] indulging his old sense of fun" (152).

There are several other French-related words in the first four stanzas. "Concubine" in English is adopted from

11 Cook points out the "outrageous" "picture-hanging or...execution" pun in "glamorous hanging" (170). This public violence and art gallery image memorably encompasses two significant aspects of Parts of a World; its placement at the opening of the collection is apt.
the French concubin/e; it has a long history of English usage ranging from Chaucer to the early 19th century (OED). Its dubious moral associations\(^{12}\) go along with those of the echoing "demi-monde," a French word, sometimes used "improperly" for courtesan, describing "the class of women of doubtful reputation and social standing, upon the edge of 'society'" (OED).

Both of these terms are familiar in English usage but retain a French resonance that Stevens accentuates via their poetic context. "Concubine" in particular is well assimilated into English; however its foreign origins are emphasized by its association with the fully French "demi-monde."\(^{13}\)

The shared sexual connotations of the two terms bring to mind Harmonium-era French temptresses like the girls plotting against the Giant rather than the more effete and unappealing "Ordinary Women." The "concubine" and her entourage share features of both, as they are tempting as well as pretentious.

"Eglantine," or sweet briar, is adopted from the French églantine (OED). It is a plant associated with finicky sophistication for Stevens, as for example in "Floral

\(^{12}\) Concubine is not, however, pejorative in French, where it indicates a woman living out of wedlock (Larousse). The disparaging associations come from English, where a concubine can indicate "a kept mistress" (OED 1).

\(^{13}\) "Demi-monde" is also part of a cross-linguistic pun with "mezzanine," which is adopted from the French mezzanine and indicates a low story between two higher ones, literally a half-story (OED).
Decorations for Bananas" (1923), a poem in a similar vein to "Anything is Beautiful If You Say It Is," where bananas are disdained because their "insolent, linear peels / And sullen, hurricane shapes / Won't do with your eglantine."

In this way it fits in with the concubine’s aesthetic displeasure, which is continued in the complaints of the parrots:¹⁴ "And the chandeliers are neat... / But their mignon marblish glare! / We are cold, the parrots cried, / In a place so debonair."

"Chandeliers," "mignon," and "debonair," are all also derived from French but have differences in their degree of familiarity in English. Chandelier is a modern adoption of the French chandelier and is commonly used in English (OED). The "chandeliers" recall the "girandoles" of "The Ordinary Women" and are used to similar effect. While the earlier "girandoles" were "fubbed" by the moonlight, the "chandeliers" of the later poem are replaced by the "lemon light" coming through a window; both are decorative French-associated lighting accessories that do not stand up to more natural light, whether of sun or moon.

"Mignon" is adopted from the French mignon/ne and is used as an adjective in English to describe something small or delicately formed (OED 1). The term often applies to attractive females or other prettily appealing beings, such as this example from Pater’s Renaissance: "Bright small

¹⁴ Macleod notes that perruche, or parrot in French, is "slang for a chatty, forward young woman" (50).
creatures of the woodlands with arch baby faces and mignon forms" (OED). "Debonair" is adopted from the Old French debonaire, and was common in Middle English. As an adjective, it describes a person who is pleasant and affable in outward manner (OED, A[b]). Both these words are extended by the "parrots" to apply to physical surroundings, and they indicate linguistic pretension more than they help to describe the environment. A mild sense of preciosity comes from the use of "mignon" and "debonair" and their foreign, and in the case of "debonair," slightly antique quality, which recalls at a distance Harmonium-era use of mannered French-connected language.

The tone changes in the still-life images of the two final stanzas: "The Johannisberger, Hans. / I love the metal grapes, / The rusty battered shapes / Of the pears and cheese." There is a sense of physical acceptance and enjoyment in these lines, albeit accompanied by a certain harshness in the metallic imagery and an awareness of "The crack across the pane, / The dirt along the sill" that play against the pleasures of the food and wine.

Marie Borroff notes a "contrast with the conspicuously French diction of the first section" and sees the last two stanzas as spoken by a Teutonic male whose "relationship to his world contrasts in every way with that of the concubines, the demi-monde, and the parrots."15 Vendler argues persuasively that the whole poem is spoken by the

15 "Wallace Stevens: The World and the Poet" 20.
concubine, and sees the last stanza as acknowledging her failure to accept the "dogma" of the title (148). In any case, the treatment of the "concubine" is distinctly scornful, if not entirely coherent. A look back at Harmonium-era images and aesthetics occurs in other Parts of a World poems as well.

"The Man on the Dump" (1938) has an implicit reconsideration of earlier French-associated images as part of a larger poetic process. The poet writes "The sun is a corbeil of flowers the moon Blanche / Places there, a bouquet..." and follows this with "Ho-ho...The dump is full / Of images" as a commentary. By referring to the moon as "Blanche," Stevens is playing on the commonplace of the white moon and summoning up French moon-images.16 The French tone of "Blanche" is emphasized by "corbeil" and "bouquet," both French-adopted words (OED).17 "Corbeil" comes from corbeille and, in its French form, indicates an elegant basket of flowers or fruit, the meaning that Stevens uses (OED 3).18 "Bouquet" is well-assimilated into English,

16 Pierrot and the world of Verlaine's "Clair de Lune" come to mind:

Votre âme est un paysage choisi
Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques
Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi
Tristes sous leurs déguisement fantasques.

A. E. Carter points out that "in several of the most successful [Fêtes galantes] poems...moonlight is the main theme" (Verlaine: A Study in Parallels 43-4).

17 "Blanche" also recalls the early "Blanche McCarthy" (1915/6), where the mundane English name is played against the existential French whiteness of the moon: "Look in the terrible mirror of the sky. / See how the absent moon waits in a glade / Of your dark self."

18 "Corbeil" can also indicate an architectural construction
much more so than "corbeil," for example, but still has a degree of French resonance that is increased when it is placed in conjunction with "corbeil" and "Blanche."¹⁹ This is an effect that Stevens often uses.

There is a discarding of poetic images in this poem, a process of purification that concludes starkly with "The the." It leaves the poet sitting atop, among other poetic debris, what Bates calls "the accumulated trash of moon-metaphors" (216). Once the poet has rejected the "trash" he is capable of seeing the moon stripped of its associations, unencumbered by dissimulating images: "You see the moon rise in the empty sky." One of these discarded associations is the figure of the moon as French lover presenting the sun as a bouquet. I would argue that another discarded moon-image is that of Pierrot as moonstruck lover in the Fêtes galantes world of Stevens' early poetry. Romantic moonlight tropes were discredited in "The Ordinary Women," and there is the implication in this later poem that they are as trite as the murmuring of "aptest eve" while one is sitting on the dump. Some French associations are part of what is abandoned in the poet’s search for "what one wants to get near."

A similar movement also occurs in the later "Montrachet-le-Jardin" (1942), which contains a moment of self-revelation that revolves around the rejection of French resembling a fruit- or flower-basket or, in an obsolete usage, a basket of earth placed on a parapet to protect and conceal soldiers inside fortifications (OED 1,2). ¹⁹ "Bouquet" has been in use in English since 1716 for a bunch of flowers or nosegay (OED 1a).
images, the title notwithstanding. Baird notes that the
title contains "the name of a rare French wine" (23).

*Montrachet* is both the name of a well-known white wine and
the area of Bourgogne where it is produced.20  "Montrachet-
le-Jardin" is not an actual place-name; it is one of
Stevens' imaginary French locales.21  The combined effect
suggests a garden in Bourgogne, or perhaps the drinking of
*Montrachet* in a garden. Stevens wrote in a 1945 letter:

> We had a long weekend last week and I spent three
> afternoons sitting in the garden at home. Everyone
> seemed to be away. I had lunch there three times in
> succession, mostly white Burgundy....  Sitting there,
> with a little of Kraft's Limburger Spread and a glass
> or two of really decent wine, with not a voice in the
> universe and with those big, fat pigeons moving round,
> keeping an eye on me and doing queer things to keep me
> awake, all of these things make The New Republic and
> its contents (most of the time) of no account. (L 512)

Thus "Montrachet-le-Jardin," which is one of the long
meditative poems of the volume, can be seen to express the
thoughts of a wine-drinking poet dozing off in the garden.
This idea is supported to an extent by the process of
speculative musing interrupted periodically by sober
realization, of dreaming interrupted by waking, that recurs
throughout the poem.

The poet's initial musing arising from the opening of
the poem ("What more is there to love than I have loved?"

---

20 *The Oxford Companion to Wine.* All further references
will be abbreviated to *OCW.*

21 *Montrachet* wines from specific vintners are listed in
hyphenated form, for example *Puligny-Montrachet* (*OCW).* The
poet might be referring to an imaginary wine itself rather
than a locale.
nothing more." Stevens uses "Chome" as the onomatopoeic sound of a clock, with the suggestion that it is a French clock. The exclamatory noise emphasizes the finality implicit in a negative answer to the opening question.

Musing interrupted by an awakening realization occurs again later during the poet's Paradisal dream:

A little while of Terra Paradise  
I dreamed, of autumn rivers, silvas green,  
Of sanctimonious mountains high in snow,  

But in that dream a heavy difference  
Kept waking and a mournful sense sought out,  
In vain, life's season or death's element.  

Bastard chateaux and smoky demoiselles,  
No more. I can build towers of my own,  
There to behold, there to proclaim, the grace  

And free requiting of responsive fact,  
To project the naked man in a state of fact,  
As acutest virtue and ascetic trove.  

Riddel sees the poet "looking back nostalgically...to the fading 'Terra Paradise,' possibly the world of Harmonium," while also proclaiming his search for purity (162). I agree that the poet is indeed looking back to Harmonium, but in this context as a fantastic delusion or "dream" that he must wake from, rather than something he is nostalgic about.

Bates notes the movement away from "wishful thinking

22 Chôme, used as a verb and spelled with a circonflex accent in French, describes cessation of work or unemployment, as well as other kinds of inactivity, as, for example, of fallow land (Larousse I [1,2,3]). There is no listed use of "Chome" as a sound-effect in French, and the word may simply be one of Stevens' personal poetic sounds, "a senseless syllable." The poem's movement from musing and dreaming to realization and determination, however, fits with the French meaning of chôme; in that sense the poet moves from chômage to activity and back throughout the poem.
and grandiose descriptions" in these lines (243). In particular the movement is against certain French-associated imaginative constructs, "Bastard chateaux and smoky demoiselles." The language is strong as the purity and cleanliness implicit in "grace," "naked," "virtue," and "ascetic" are placed against the adjectival illegitimacy of the "Bastard chateaux" and dinginess of the "smoky demoiselles."

I take a bastard château to be a metaphor for an inauthentic poetic structure, one that should be replaced by something more original: "I can build towers of my own."

"Chateaux" is a French word (OED); its foreign nature may be part of this sense of illegitimacy, although French-connected words are an accepted part of Stevens' poetic language.23 I would argue, however, that Stevens is using "bastard chateaux" more as an abstract example of imaginative constructs that he wishes to purge from his poetry, than as a blanket statement against French.

In another context Vendler observes the "recurrant châteaux" in Stevens' work,24 noting their early appearance in "Architecture" (1918):25 "What manner of building shall

23 "Château" retains the circonflex accent in English usage (OED). Stevens does not use the accent in "Bastard chateaux" although he did in the earlier "Gallant Château" (1934). If intentional, this effect might contribute to the sense of illegitimacy of the "Bastard chateaux," but given Stevens' somewhat erratic use of French accents, the omission may not have been intended.
24 Vendler's comments are part of her analysis of "The Auroras of Autumn" (332n).
25 "Architecture" was included in the first edition of Harmonium but removed for the second (L 259).
we build? / Let us design a chaste de chasteté." This early château is associated with purity of body and of thought in figure of the "chastel de chasteté. / De pensée." In "Gallant Château" (1934) the earlier "chastel de chasteté" is no longer viable, replaced by a vision of cooled love. The commonplace of a man's home as castle becomes something ironic and slightly melancholy while the poet muses "Is it bad to have come here / And to have found the bed empty? / One might have found tragic hair, / Bitter eyes, hands hostile and cold." In "Montrachet-le-Jardin" the "chastel de chasteté" trope is no longer viable or appealing either, and is replaced by the undesirable "Bastard chateaux."

There is also a submerged pun about bad wine in "Bastard chateaux." One of the uses of château in English is to indicate a French vineyard, i.e., "château-bottled" (OED, A[a]); the bibulous poet might simply be railing against inauthentic or falsely-labelled wine and declaring

26 "Chastel" is the 10th century French spelling of château, both descended from the Latin castellum, fortress (Larousse). Stevens is playing on the similarity in sound and appearance of the two words in the "chastel de chasteté" phrase, although "chasteté" comes from the Latin castus, pure (Larousse).
27 Cook observes that this is "a quest-poem ending without fulfillment, but also unexpectedly without grief" (118).
his intention to consume it no more. Interestingly, one of the Montrachet regional variants is called Bâtard-Montrachet (OCW).

The "smoky demoiselles" are versions of Stevens’ French seductress figures, "tormenting" and "insatiable"28 like his Floridian Aphrodites, and still distracting poets and yokels. These demoiselles are "smoky," which brings to mind mysterious cigarette-smoking figures, perhaps lurking in dark smoke-filled bars or private-eye offices. "Smoky" also connotes dissimulation and insubstantiality, suggesting that the appeal of "smoky demoiselles" may not be as concrete or intense for the poet of 1942 as it was for the easily-abashed poet of Harmonium.

The abjuration of the "smoky demoiselles" in "Montrachet-le-Jardin" can be seen to reflect progressive changes in Stevens’ poetic treatment of French-associated female sexuality and romantic relationships. There is an increasingly negative movement from Stevens’ Pierrot and Columbine sketches and his early enraptured vision of his future wife as "une vraie princesse lointaine," to "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle" with its sometimes uncomfortable realism about love and its condemnation of the lover’s "starry connaissance," to the pensive apathy of "Gallant Château." Seen as a narrative, there is a somewhat unhappy progression from idealistic love towards realistic love, and finally, to indifference and hostility. The rejection of

28 "O Florida, Venereal Soil."
the "smoky demoiselles" is one of the possible culminations of this narrative, although Stevens will later look at related figures in Notes toward a Supreme Fiction and Esthétique du Mal (1944), as well as in "A Golden Woman in a Silver Mirror" (1949) and "Madame La Fleurie" (1951).

Finally, given the contemplative quality of "Montrachet-le-Jardin," it may not bear to over-emphasize the poet's movement against the "Bastard Chateaux" and "smoky demoiselles." It may simply be a sober moment of poetic self-deprecation that rises out of reverie and then fades away again. This is supported to an extent by the last lines of the poem, which meditatively downplay the earlier moments of resolution and suggest the arrival of night-time and a return to dreaming: "And yet what good were yesterday's devotions? / I affirm and then at midnight the great cat / Leaps quickly from the fireside and is gone."

The implicit rejection of French-associated metaphors as part of poems like "The Man on the Dump" and "Montrachet-le-Jardin" shows an interesting internal poetic debate on Stevens' part, one that is crystallized in "Montrachet-le-Jardin" with the apparent repudiation of certain French poetic constructs in a French-titled poem from a pervasively French volume. However, given Stevens' suspicion of unity and thematic cohesiveness in Parts of a World, an expressed negative opinion towards early French associations should not necessarily to be taken as an all-encompassing statement of poetic policy, as it were. It should be taken as a part
rather than a whole. Although he periodically re-evaluates them and changes his treatments of them, Stevens' early French associations always remain with him at some level.

"Of Hartford in a Purple Light" (1939) is another *Parts of a World* poem where the poet summons up *Harmonium*-era French associations; it also has an interesting geographical reference. The poet writes "A long time you have been making the trip / From Havre to Hartford, Master Soleil / Bringing the lights of Norway and all that," seeing the movement of the sun as an intercontinental sea-voyage.29 The sun is given the combined English and French address "Master Soleil"30 and questioned by the poet about the evening light that follows him: "But, Master, there are / Lights masculine and lights feminine. / What is this purple, this parasol,31 / This stage-light of the Opera?"

29 "Havre," or Le Havre, the northern French port town, is a major point of sea-travel between France and North America, making it a fitting departure place for the sun as well as a nice alliteration with "Hartford" (*Grand dictionnaire encyclopédique Larousse*, 1982 ed. All further references will be abbreviated to *GDEL*). Hartford is located on the Connecticut River, which runs to the Atlantic, making possible an actual voyage from Havre to Hartford by water.

30 Lensing notes a similarity between "Master Soleil" and "Le Poète Soleil," one of the entries in *From Pieces of Paper*, Stevens' notebook of poem and title ideas: "'Le Poète Soleil' plays upon the designation of Louis XIV as the Sun King; it also recalls Baudelaire's 'Le Soleil,' in which the sun 'ainsi qu'un poète,' descends upon the city and 's'introduit en roi'" (198). The figure of "Master Soleil" bears resemblance to the power and majesty of these royal sun images that it echoes, and also has an element of pedagogical authority like that of a schoolmaster or of a French *maître*, lawyer. There is also a certain offhand humour in the phrase if it is looked at simply as a somewhat archaic form of address. The combined bilingual effect is one of authority and whimsicality.

31 Stevens uses "parasol" in a play on the literal sense of
The comparison between daylight and evening light is rendered in a metaphor of cultural and gender difference. Evening light and daylight are respectively equated with French and American light. Daylight is strong, hard-working, male, and implicitly American: "A moment ago, light masculine, / Working, with big hands, on the town, / Arranged its heroic attitudes." In contrast evening light is theatrical ("stage-light of the Opera"), emotional, colourful, female, and French: "But now as in an amour of women / Purple sets purple round." The description of the evening light recalls Stevens' Harmonium-era association of French with femininity and theatricality. In this poem the association is not negative, as it can be in post-Harmonium poetry, because of the knowledge that the sun will return and there will always be balance between the two kinds of light.

In "Variations on a Summer Day" (1940), when the poet writes "The moon follows the sun like a French / Translation of a Russian poet," the comparison is similar. Both tropes treat differences in the perception of sunlight and moonlight in terms of cultural and linguistic aesthetics. In both cases France is linked with moonlight, not surprisingly considering earlier associations.32 This is counter to the sun. Evening light is thus something against the sun, that blocks it. There may also be an echo of "Ballade of the Pink Parasol:" the femininity and decorative colour of the evening light certainly fit in the context of that early parody.

32 These associations include Pierrot as moonstruck lover, the dark moon of "Blanche McCarthy," the fantastic and yet
given a twist in "Variations on a Summer Day" with the idea that the moon’s movement is "like a French / Translation of a Russian poet." The simile has the effect of distancing moonlight from sunlight; a French translation of a Russian poet is a reproduction of a text, one that is at a cognitive remove from the original. In this way sun and moon both express a poetry of light, but they come from different origins, whether those be astronomical or cultural.

Cultural aesthetics are also of interest in Stevens’ *Parts of a World* art poems. Macleod observes that during the 1930’s "Paris was the center of Western art" (91); Stevens reflects this throughout the collection with a strong French-connected artistic sensibility, which is expressed in one way with references to French artists. These occur in "Connoisseur of Chaos" (1938), and "Poem Written at Morning" (1942). In "Connoisseur of Chaos," the poet describes "a law of inherent opposites, / Of essential unity" as being "As pleasant as the brush-strokes of a bough, / An upper, particular bough, in, say, Marchand,","33 and in "Poem Written at Morning" the poet refers to "A sunny day’s complete Poussiniana."34 These references, like those to Claude in "Botanist on Alp (No. 1)," and to Corot in "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery," create combined vacant moonlit world of "The Ordinary Women," and "the moon Blanche" in "The Man on the Dump."

33 Jean-Hyppolyte Marchand (1883-1941). Marchand was a contemporary of Stevens whose style possessed a "vigorous naturalism" *(OCTA).*
34 Nicholas Poussin (1593/4-1665).
poetic and pictorial moods that revolve around various painterly associations and frames of reference.

In "Poem Written at Morning," the poet is summoning up Poussin's strict classical design and form. 35 "A sunny day's complete Poussiniana" suggests a skilfully arranged pictorial scene. That the day's "Poussiniana / Divide it from itself" suggests that human treatments of nature, rendered synecdochally in the figure of "Poussiniana" standing for art and artistic representation, somehow distance us from the actual unmediated experience of nature: "By metaphor you paint / A thing." This is not a criticism of renderings of nature as much as an observation about the gap between visual representation and full sensory experience:

The truth must be
That you do not see, you experience, you feel,
That the buxom eye brings merely its element
To the total thing, a shapeless giant forced Upward.

35 Poussin, considered the founder of French Classical painting, formulated the doctrine that painting must deal with noble and serious human situations presented in an orderly and rational fashion; he is known for his strict use of form and design while eschewing sensual appeal for its own sake (OCA). Stevens had long been fond of Poussin, in 1922 writing about receiving "a batch of large photographs after the Poussins in the Louvre" (L 229). Poussin is also mentioned in "Recitation after Dinner" (1945), "Imagination as Value" (1948), and "The Relations between Poetry and Painting" (1951). In "Recitation" "Æneas seen, perhaps, / By Nicolas Poussin" is used as an example of "the form / Tradition wears." He is used in a similar context in "The Relation between Poetry and Painting": "Pretty much all of the seventeenth century, in France, at least, can be summed up in that one word: classicism. The paintings of Poussin...are the inevitable paintings of the generation of Racine" (172).
The poet acknowledges the complexity of this gap by recognizing that a poetic treatment of the question is also necessarily distanced from nature, as are even our sensory impressions up to a point: "The senses paint / By metaphor." The poem closes with an organic, vegetative, metaphor for the "shapeless" "total thing" that we perceive, which brings us back to the beginning of the poem and figuratively combines nature with its artistic and poetic renderings: "Green were the curls upon that head."

In "Connoisseur of Chaos," the nonchalant phrasing of "An upper, particular bough, in, say, Marchand," suggests that it is an example tossed out by the "Connoisseur" of the title. Riddel observes that a "mood of casual observation predominates" in the poem (156). Macleod notes that Stevens "liked to imagine the life of a connoisseur - particularly that of a wealthy art collector" (30). The use of a contemporary painter can also be part of the "chaos" of the title in artistic terms. Macleod observes, however, that Marchand was not particularly radical or innovative.

A different French-connected artistic sensibility is also shown later in the poem: "Now A / And B are not like statuary, posed / For a vista in the Louvre. They are things chalked / On the sidewalk so that the pensive man may

36 "Connoisseur" in English uses an older spelling of the modern French connaisseur (OED).
37 Stevens owned Marchand's Les Oliviers; this likely influenced him to use Marchand as an example.
38 Macleod describes Les Oliviers as "a landscape painted in a fairly impressionistic style...neither abstract nor surrealist" (219).
see." The description of A and B as "chalked / On the sidewalk" makes them transitory; they may be for the "pensive man" to see, but they can be easily erased, unlike the unchanging statues in the Louvre.

A somewhat similar effect is created in "Prelude to Objects" (1938), where the subject of the poem "has not / To go to the Louvre to behold himself." Both of these poems place themselves against art, or at least the art of museums, represented by the figurative Louvre. What is significant in terms of Stevens' French connections is that he chooses the Louvre, rather than, for example, the British Museum or the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as an archetypal museum in his arguments about art and perception. As a negative statement it is not necessarily critical of the Louvre itself as much as it is of museums in general. It does not diminish the quality of Stevens' admiration for French-associated art, but rather emphasizes its importance as he uses French connections in abstract theoretical discussions.

Stevens also sometimes uses French painting terminology, for example in "Add this to Rhetoric": "The buildings pose in the sky / And, as you paint, the clouds, / Grisaille, impearled, profound, / Pftt...." "Grisaille," adopted from the French grisaille, is an artistic term used to describe a method of grey monochrome relief painting (OED a). It can also refer figuratively to a writing style, as in this quotation about Schopenhauer from 1965: "the
grisaille of his prose is relieved...by quotations" (OED). "Grisaille" is an example of the "rhetoric" that is being mocked with the "Pftt:" it is part of the pictorial description of the clouds, which we are told is "posed" and evasive. The poet is using "grisaille" as a painting term and also figuratively to describe the style of the description itself, which has substance only in appearance, like a painting done in grisaille.

"The Latest Freed Man" (1938) has an interesting and different art-associated French reference, one that is somewhat of an inside joke for Stevens. It comes in the last lines of the poem, which are a still-life description: "The blue of the rug, the portrait of Vidal / Qui fait fi des joliesses banales, the chairs."

The reference is to Anatole Vidal; it is assumed that this quotation came from him although it has not survived from any of his letters to Stevens. Stevens owned a portrait of Vidal painted by Jean Labasque, which is the one in the poem. It no doubt amused Stevens to include a quotation from his Paris art dealer and a reference to his

39 The mention of Vidal places this poem alongside the few others that make direct reference to Stevens' acquaintances. Other examples include "A Fish-Scale Sunrise" (1934), "Certain Phenomena of Sound" (1942), "A Word with José Rodriguez-Feo" (1945), "The Novel" (1948), and "Our Stars Come from Ireland" (1948).
40 Stevens commissioned the portrait, noting in a 1942 interview, "'I always wanted to know what he looked like, so finally I had a fellow go 'round and paint his portrait'" (Parts 131). Stevens admired Labasque, purchasing two other of his paintings, and wrote a short commentary on him, "Notes on Jean Labasque," in this period (OP 240, 329). See Appendix.
portrait in a volume so full of artists and painting. There is also an interesting poetic effect created, in that by mentioning his actual belongings and domestic surroundings ("the blue of the rug" and "the chairs"), Stevens is playing between subjectivity and objectivity. He is making the poem more intimate and also separating those belongings and surroundings from the private by their very inclusion. The effect is one of simultaneous accord with and distance from the personal.

The play between the private and the external implicit in the reference to Vidal is sharpened given both Stevens' general attachment to France and the historical context of the poem and volume.41 Stevens' use of his Parisian art and book dealer in Parts of a World is much more moving than it would have been in Harmonium, for example; it adds a subtle poignancy to the poem and links it with the underlying war-themes that run through the collection.

Vidal's scorn of "joliesses banales" fits with the titular man who is "Tired of the old descriptions of the world." "Joliesses banales" are part of the descriptive "doctrine of this landscape" that he escapes from: "It was the importance of the trees outdoors, / The freshness of the oak-leaves, not so much / That they were oak-leaves, as the

41 Although "The Latest Freed Man" was published in 1938, Stevens was already undoubtedly very concerned about the impending conflict and its effect on his French friends; Vidal wrote Stevens two moving handwritten letters in late 1939 discussing "les temps si dangereusement mouvementés que nous vivons." (November 18, 1939, WAS 2669. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library).
way they looked."

"A Dish of Peaches in Russia" (1939) also has a strong French-related personal association for Stevens, one that comes from literary allusion rather than direct reference. Cook notes that it is a "moving poem of exile" where the speaker, a Russian emigré, expresses his feelings of separation through the words of Joachim du Bellay (156). The smell, touch and taste of the titular peaches is related to the strength of feeling that an exile experiences for the homeland: "I absorb them as the Angevine / Absorbs Anjou." The allusion is to du Bellay's "Ulysse" sonnet, one of Stevens' favorite poems. In du Bellay's poem the speaker longs for "la doulceur Angevine" of his native province, and here that longing is transferred to another foreigner who senses in peaches "the colors of my village." Du Bellay's nostalgic yearning was evocative for Stevens, and an awareness of the allusion strengthens the emotional impact of the poem.

Stevens ends the volume with a series of long meditative poems, one of which, "Montrachet-le-Jardin," has already been discussed. Two of the others, "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas" (1941) and "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War" (1942), also have noteworthy French associations.

"Extracts" opens with a French narrative voice: "Messieurs / It is an artificial world." This address, as well as the mock-scholarly title of the poem, suggest that
it is meant to be spoken by a pedagogue or academician. Harold Bloom observes that this prophesies the opening of "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" where a rather rococo scholar-poet addresses the reader-as-ephebe" (148). The "Messieurs" suggests that the Academy of Fine Ideas is in France, perhaps at the Sorbonne from which the poet and companion will later return at the end of Notes. As a French scholar figure, the speaker is a descendant of earlier French-using pedant personae like Carlos, Bowl, and Mon Oncle, and also looks forward to later professorial French voices in "The Auroras of Autumn" and An Ordinary Evening in New Haven.

In the second section of "Extracts" Stevens uses French sounds, recalling his technique in the earlier "Mozart 1935": "My beards, attend / To the laughter of evil: the fierce ricanery / With the ferocious chu-chot-chu between."

"Ricanery" is a Stevensian bilingual coinage derived from the French ricanement, meaning derisive laughter, and "chu-chot-chu" is an onomatopoeic derivation of the French chuchoter, to whisper (Larousse). Stevens is referring to uncomplimentary laughter and whisperings that are part of the "laughter of evil." As with "Mozart 1935," where "shoo-shoo-shoo," and "ric-a-nic" describe the whispering and snickering reactions of an audience, an understanding of the French roots behind Stevens' sound effects clarifies their meaning.

Later in the poem Stevens uses two italicized French
phrases, which has the general effect of emphasizing the
French presence in "Extracts," especially since they are
among the relatively few French words or phrases Stevens
chose to print in italics. In section III, in the context
of criticizing the "lean cats of the arches of the
churches," he refers to their unsuccessful quest for a
divine figure who might take the form of "a dark-blue king,
un roi tonnerre." The idea of a thunder-king is a version
of Zeus or Jupiter as an option for one's supreme being.42

In section VII the poet refers to the sea as "la belle
/Aux crinolines" in a trope that recalls some of the sea-
personification metaphors from "Sea Surface Full of Clouds."
Crinolines in French can indicate both crinoline material
itself and hooped petticoats made out of the material, the
latter particularly in nineteenth-century usage (Larousse).
In this way, the sea is portrayed fancifully as a hoop-
skirted lady, an image that is opposed by "one's belief,"
which "Resists each past apocalypse, rejects / Ceylon, wants
nothing from the sea, la belle / Aux crinolines." This kind
of rejection of extravagant imagery is a familiar movement
in Parts of a World, similar to the rejection of "Bastard
chateaux and smoky demoiselles" in "Montrachet-le-Jardin."
Both are movements against imaginative frivolity, which in

42 The French phrase du tonnerre is a slang expression
describing something impressive or pleasing (Larousse).
By extension "un roi tonnerre" could be a kingly leader
addressed with familiarity rather than a thunder-deity; if
so, this somewhat undercuts the impressiveness of the
figure.
some poetic moods must be forsaken in order to reach a state of purity and self-knowledge.

Longenbach observes about the "Secretary of Porcelain" in section II that Stevens "wanted to avoid...the easy aestheticization or internalization of experience" (59). This observation also applies to the poet who "wants nothing from the sea," who rejects the facile use of frivolous imagery with the same toughness that he shuns the aestheticization of violence and death.

In "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War" Stevens intermittently summons up French references and incorporates them into the 1942 wartime mood of the last poem in the volume. There is often a French focus in Stevens' war poems. This is something seen previously in the World War I sequences Phases and Lettres d'un Soldat, and that will also occur in later World War II poems like "Martial Cadenza" (1940), "Dutch Graves in Bucks County" (1943), Esthétique du Mal (1944), and "Imago" (1950).

The first example of this war-time geographical association in "Examination" occurs in part I where the poet writes "Force is my lot and not pink-clustered / Roma ni Avignon ni Leyden, / And cold my element." In this case, the mention of Avignon along with Italian and German locales as wartime focal points and the use of the French negative

---

43 "Let the Secretary of Porcelain observe
That evil made magic, as in catastrophe,
If neatly glazed, becomes the same as the fruit
Of an emperor, the egg-plant of a prince."
form "ni" give a French colouring to the beginning of the poem.

France surfaces again in part VII as the poet contrasts types of heroes in terms of French newspapers, likely also reflecting Stevens' war-time reading habits:

Gazette Guerrière. A man might happen
To prefer L'Observateur de la Paix, since
The hero of the Gazette and the hero
Of L'Observateur, the classic hero
And the bourgeois, are different, much.

Vendler notes that this passage is a series of speculations on cultural fashions, on the classic hero of war versus the bourgeois hero of peace...in which Stevens tries the offhand and casual tone of an experienced journalist. (158)

In the nineteen-thirties the artist fortified himself on "a copy of Figaro and a dish of melons;" in a time of war the reading materials have changed. In this, as with part XXX of The Man with the Blue Guitar with its use of the old fantoche and Oxidia, Stevens brings a volume of poetry to a close with contemporary French-associated observations, something he will do again later in Transport to Summer with the ending of Notes toward a Supreme Fiction.

In the end, the diversity of French uses is the key to the French presence in Parts of a World where, as Cook observes, "Stevens is wary of themes that commonly give a sense of unity or wholeness" (153). The ambivalent treatment of residual early French images, the use of them in some poems and explicit rejection in others, shows Stevens experimenting with these associations, sometimes
finding a place for them and sometimes sloughing them off. Even ostensibly negative treatments indicate the prominent position of French in his poetic universe.

It is worth noting again that the French presence in *Parts of a World* comes about at least in part because World War II and art have such strong French associations for Stevens. The dark political scene in particular sheds some light on the deeply personal tone of the references and allusions in this volume, which are densely layered with meanings that resonate off the themes of the collection. Good examples of this are the use of Vidal in "The Latest Freed Man" with its meaningful personal reference tied into a theoretical discussion of art, and the allusion to du Bellay in "A Dish of Peaches in Russia," which summons up Stevens' feelings about the Ulyssian sonnet and combines those with the contemporary plight of a political refugee. Both these poems show well the emotional immediacy that lies close beneath the surface of any French reference or allusion in this period. This emotion will carry over into *Transport to Summer*, Stevens' other war-time volume.
CHAPTER 5

TRANSPORT TO SUMMER

They will get it straight one day at the Sorbonne.  
(Notes toward a Supreme Fiction)

Transport to Summer (1947), which Bloom calls "Stevens’ strongest single volume" (219), is the longest collection since Harmonium. It has less of an overall French presence than Parts of a World, although French and France play significant roles in major poems of the volume, and there are uses of French in a variety of the shorter poems as well.

Published two years after the end of World War II, it is both a war and a post-war volume. A number of the poems, including "Dutch Graves in Bucks County" (1943), Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, and Esthétique du Mal (1944), were written at the peak of the war and have martial elements to varying degrees. These poems and others contribute to a war-oriented reading of the volume,1 and as in Parts of a World, continue to connect the war with France.

Transport is, however, a diverse and often quite comic collection where treatment of war is one aspect among many.

---

1 Litz writes that these and other "apparently diverse works...form a chorus on the war which is unsentimental and immensely powerful" (265).
Fusion of war themes with comedy and theatricality, which can be seen in "Repetitions of a Young Captain" (1944) and sections of Notes toward a Supreme Fiction among other poems, is one of the characteristics of the volume.

There are also a variety of distinctive poetic personae in Transport, making it stand out among Stevens' later volumes and inviting comparisons with Harmonium, which it resembles in this aspect more than any other collection. Some of the Transport personae are in fact descendants of Harmonium-era characters with whom they share French origins.

Cook observes that Stevens arranged the poems of the volume in roughly chronological order with the exception of Notes, which although published before the other poems in the volume were written, is placed at the end. This gives Notes a climactic importance, and emphasizes the significance and emotional impact of its French elements, which include a defining "major man" figure (the old man in the "sagging pantaloons") and an accepted "terrestrial" French muse.

Transport opens with "God Is Good. It is a Beautiful

2 Both volumes have dramatic themes and a sense of theatricality; Stevens memorably captures this in the final section of "Credences of Summer" (1947):

The personae of summer play the characters
Of an inhuman author, who meditates
With the gold bugs, in blue meadows, late at night.

3 Notes toward a Supreme Fiction and Esthétique du Mal were initially published, with Knopf's agreement, by the Cummington Press in 1942 and 1944 respectively, before being reprinted in Transport to Summer.
Night" (1942), which Cook notes is an invocation as well as a summer poem (172): "Look round, brown moon, brown bird, as you rise to fly, / Look round at the head and zither / On the ground." The disembodied head is a synecdochic figure for the poet, who is described as "seeking celestial / Rendezvous."

"Rendezvous" is a French word that has been used in English since 1591; the oldest use as a noun is in military and naval contexts, for a place of troop or vessel assembly (OED 1a,b,c).4 The most common use of "rendezvous" in English is as "an appointed place of meeting or gathering" (OED 2a);5 this is the context in which Stevens uses it.6 "Rendezvous" is well assimilated into English but still retains a French resonance, which Stevens uses as part of an ongoing treatment of moon images.

The poet is looking at the moon rising in the sky:
"This was the place to which you came last night." The "celestial rendezvous" is that of poet and moon. Cook observes that "it is [Stevens’] old moon watcher who speaks this poem":

This moon of 1942 is not white, not the 1915 Blanche of an early version of this poem.... It is brown: descriptively a rising moon, and by association something other than the unearthly white or immaculate or unspotted round moon that so haunted Stevens' imagination. (173)

4 It is used in the twentieth century for the meeting of spacecraft in space (OED 5c).
5 It is also used as a term for the meeting itself (OED 5a).
6 I also hear an oblique reference to the war in the early military connotation of "rendezvous," although this is not reflected in the rest of the poem.
It is interesting to compare "God is Good" with "The Man on the Dump," where moon-images were problematic. The later "brown" moon, which rises instead of "creeping up" as it did in 1938, does not summon up the "trash" of white moon-images. The white moon of "Blanche McCarthy" and "The Man on the Dump" was a French moon, and there is the suggestion that the moon of "God is Good" is also one, as it carries the French resonance of "rendezvous." Having earlier rejected ethereal French white moon tropes, the poet happily welcomes a more realistic, "fresh" moon, and takes poetic inspiration from it: "The venerable song falls from your fiery wings."

There is also the sense that the "celestial rendezvous" sought by the poet's head, which "reads the book" and "becomes the scholar again," is an intellectual one, as the poet looks for understanding of "celestial" matters. Both senses of "celestial rendezvous" involve the poet searching the heavens, as it were.

"Gigantomachia" begins an intermittent series of French-connected war-poems that runs through Esthétique du Mal. In this 1943 poem Stevens continues his exploration of the role of the war-time hero from Parts of a World and earlier, here looking at how soldiers adopt heroic attitudes, which result in quasi-fantastic "inhuman elevation." Bates notes that the soldiers in the poem are relatively unimpressive and weak until they admire an abstract "braver being...that could never be wounded" and
make themselves into heroes (245): "Each man himself became a giant, / Tipped out with largeness." The poet refers to the soldier's new status as an "A mask, a spirit, an accoutrement." "Accoutrement," used in English since 1549, is adopted from the Middle French accoustrement, and refers to general apparel and trappings (OED). It also has a specifically military connotation, referring to the equipment of a soldier aside from uniform and weapons (OED 1). Stevens develops this, making the soldier's state of mind and self-esteem part of the gear they carry around with them. A different kind of baggage, as it were.

While "accoutrement" has a long history of English usage, it is somewhat dated in a modern context.\(^7\) It is much less common than, for example, "rendezvous," and sounds foreign and unfamiliar. The archaic French quality of "accoutrement" as well as its military association creates an effect that is almost chivalric or heraldic, adding a sense of history and romance to the self-mythologization of the soldiers.

In "Repetitions of a Young Captain" Stevens uses "accoutred" in a similar context, as soldier figures who "make / The giants that each one of them becomes" are described as "Accoutred in a little of the strength / That sweats the sun up on its morning way." "Accoutred" as a participle indicates dress or array "generally with the idea

---

\(^7\) While the OED does not mark it as obsolete, the last example of the use of "accoutrement" is in 1858. The same is true with "accoutred."
of being specially attired for some purpose" (OED). It does not have the military connotation of "accoutrement," with which it shares etymological origins; however the poet makes that association because of the martial setting. Again, the wearing of certain garb or uniform is equivalent to adoption of a certain persona, that of a soldier-hero. In "Repetitions" this becomes more theatrical, as the titular Captain is portrayed as an actor on a broken stage: "The people sat in the theatre, in the ruin, / As if nothing had happened."

"Accoutred" has an archaic foreign feel similar to "accoutrement," and in both cases the association of French and theatrical costume recalls Stevens' Harmonium-era use of Commedia dell'arte and Fêtes galantes personae. The difference is that Stevens is now writing about soldiers in war-time rather than fin-de-siècle fops and clowns, again adapting his earlier associations and personae to more contemporary settings.

"Dutch Graves in Bucks County," another of the volume's French-associated war-pieces, has a somewhat different focus. The poem, which Harold Bloom calls "one of Stevens' rare overtly personal statements" (219), summons up Stevens' ancestral background, both geographical and literary, as a speaker addresses dead Pennsylvania Dutchmen and considers

---

8 The poet suggests that these are ancient soldiers, as they "Tap skeleton drums" and are dressed "in gaffer-green." This fits in context of the comparison with a contemporary war-time setting.
questions of history and continuity. 9

"Dutch Graves" is one of two poems in Transport that allude to Charles Baudelaire.10 It opens with a description of modern soldiers at war, "Angry men and furious machines," and these are contrasted, in what becomes a refrain, with the ancestral Pennsylvania Dutchmen: "And you, my semblables, in sooty residence / Tap skeleton drums inaudibly." "Semblables" is an allusion to Baudelaire's "Au Lecteur," the famous opening poem of Les Fleurs du mal. In Baudelaire's poem, after listing a series of human sins and evils, the speaker ends with the dramatic address to the reader: "- Hypocrite lecteur, - mon semblable, - mon frère!" By calling the reader a brother and a similar, the poet is involving him or her in the acceptance of sin portrayed in the poem.

"Semblable" in English is adopted from the French semblable, and when used with a possessive pronoun, indicates "(One's) like, (one's) fellow" (OED B2).11 This is the meaning that Stevens uses, although he also plays on

9 Holly Stevens notes that her father developed an "interest in genealogy" during this period which became intense in 1942 [and] continued for the next ten years. Over four hundred of the letters extant from this period are of a genealogical nature and are largely to various professionals whom he employed to trace his family on both the paternal and maternal sides.... [T]his interest is reflected in many of the poems Stevens wrote at the time, such as "The Bed of Old John Zeller" and "Dutch Graves in Bucks County." (L 397-8)

10 The other is the later Esthétique du Mal.

11 This use was current from the 14th-16th centuries and revived in 20th-century usage (OED B2).
another meaning, which is a "semblable" as something apparent, seeming, or not real (OED 3). This connotation becomes part of the language of deception and falsehood in the poem.

Stevens' allusion to Baudelaire's "semblables" brings to mind T. S. Eliot's famous use of the same line to conclude "The Burial of the Dead," the first section of The Waste Land: "You! hypocrite lecteur! - mon semblable - mon frère!" Eliot uses the line in much the same way Baudelaire did, to shock readers into involvement, to accuse them of complicity in creating the hellish "Unreal city," the mental Waste Land. Stevens' use of the word has a different effect in that his poet is not implicating the reader as much as he is comparing himself with his ancestors; the ancestral Dutchmen are the poet's "semblables" in a basic sense because he is their relative.

In "Dutch Graves" the weight of the alluded Baudelairean accusation falls upon the futile desire for "placid end" and the need to pass along "our stale perfections" to future generations, as well as the notion that one can easily commune with one's ancestors. Baudelaire's devastating indictment of his readers makes Stevens' implied accusation very forceful as well, although this is downplayed in his eventual conclusion that some kinds of continuity between past and present are possible. To my mind the Baudelaire allusion is not entirely successful for this reason, because its incriminatory
strength makes for a certain unevenness in tone.

_The Waste Land_ is also a war poem (or a post-war poem) and both Eliot and Stevens use the socially and historically chaotic wartime context to address issues of continuity and identity. They do so by comparing the historical and literary past and present. The comparison is manifested somewhat differently, however. Eliot juxtaposes present and past, combining the two by having figures from the historical and literary past appear in a figurative contemporary London: "A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many" ("The Burial of the Dead").

Stevens' version is more of a side-by-side comparison than Eliot's synthesis.12 His poet textually distinguishes present and past throughout the poem by separating them into stanza and refrain, where the stanza addresses the present and the refrain the ancient "semblables":

Men are moving and marching
And shuffling lightly, with the heavy lightness
Of those that are marching, many together.

And you, my semblables - the old flag of Holland
Flutters in tiny darkness.

Even so, Stevens' poet addressing "my semblables, in sooty residence" beyond the grave is in some ways a similar figure to Eliot's speaker who cries out "'Stetson! / You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!'" to a recognized shade.

12 Stevens notes in "A Poet That Matters" (1935) that Eliot "incessantly revives the past and creates the future" in "a process of cross-fertilization" (OP 221).
Stevens was, of course, familiar with *The Waste Land* and Eliot is being called up as well as Baudelaire. 13

There may also be an echo of the title of Walt Whitman’s "Drum Taps" collection in the first "semblables" refrain where the Dutchmen "Tap skeleton drums inaudibly."

The Whitman echo, like the Baudelaire allusion, summons up Stevens’ poetic ancestry. It also further brings in his American background because Whitman was writing about the Civil War, in which Pennsylvania Dutchmen of Stevens’ father’s generation certainly participated. 14 The Whitman echo thus makes for a rich literary and historical image.

Eliot states in *Ulysses, Order and Myth* that James Joyce’s use of Homeric elements in *Ulysses*, his establishment of literary parallels between contemporaneity and antiquity, is "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." 15 This statement applies well to Eliot’s use of the literary past as "fragments I have shored against my ruins" in *The Waste Land*. Stevens’ poet is also facing the mayhem of

13 Stevens was conversant with Eliot’s poetry at least as early as 1920, writing to Harriet Monroe of receiving a copy of *Ara Vus Prec* (1919) and commenting "It contains nothing, I think, that I had not seen before" (L 217).
14 Bates observes that the "Dutch Graves in Bucks County" are likely in "the Dutch cemetery at Feasterville," Stevens’ father’s hometown (282). Thomas Francis Lombardi notes that Stevens’ paternal great-grandparents are buried in the "Old Dutch Cemetery in Feasterville, Bucks County" (*Wallace Stevens and the Pennsylvania Keystone* 128).
15 Selected Prose 177.
order and meaning in the past, initially seeing no continuity between past and present. The ancient Pennsylvania Dutchmen are described as "crusts that lie / In the shrivellings of your time and place," who in their diminished state "share nothing of ourselves." This is emphasized in the division between the present poet and the past: "And you, my semblables, in gaffer-green, / Know that the past is not part of the present."

Stevens' diction suggests that attempting to find significance for the present in the past can be deceptive. Early in the poem Stevens refers to the modern war, represented synecdochally, as an "on-dit":

There are circles of weapons in the sun.  
The air attends the brightened guns,  
As if sounds were forming  
Out of themselves, a saying,  
An expressive on-dit, a profession.

"On-dit" is a French phrase that signifies a spoken rumor or even a falsehood, although it mostly has the meaning of gossip or hearsay (Larousse, OED). The "on-dit" can apply to the popular or aestheticized view of war, suggesting that the "brightened guns" and the "lustiest" armies with their flash and "hullabaloo" are implicitly specious.

Furthering the theme of questionable truth and possible deception, Stevens later uses the term "chimeres" in the last regular refrain of the poem: "the stars, my semblables, chimeres, / Shine on the very living of those alive."

Ridle observes that "the thunder of modern chaos batters against the lyrical refrain, the orderly world of the old Pennsylvania Dutch" (201).
"Chimere" is the Middle English spelling of the Modern English "chimera," originally descended from ancient Greek through the Latin chimaera and the French chimère (OED). The standard modern usage of "chimera" is as an unfounded conception or imaginary fancy (OED 2b), and this is the meaning that Stevens uses. By using the Middle English spelling Stevens is emphasizing the French background of "chimeres" and making it appear more French than "chimera." This furthers its association with "semblables" and "on-dit," the other French words of deception and dissimulation in the poem.

"Chimeres" seems to modify "the stars" grammatically, and that suggests that the stars themselves are a fancy, or at least the idea that they "Shine on the very living of those alive." The meaning is ambiguous, however, since syntactically "chimeres" is also a parallel to the "semblables," implying in turn that they, the ancient Dutchmen, are illusory and deceptive. This goes along with one of the meanings of "semblables" and suggests that both the Dutchmen themselves and the idea of being able to somehow commune with them, are, if not actually deceptive, potentially so. The Dutchmen are "chimeres" on various levels; they are phantom-like and thus fantastic and quasi-monstrous, and they are also representative of something illusory, the idea of easy communion with the past.

The use of "chimeres" also recalls the phrase the "old chimera of the grave" from Sunday Morning, in which the poet
is rejecting theological and classical views of death and the afterlife. In that context, the association of modern soldiers and modern war with the warriors and battles of the past is sentimentalized and false, akin to the idea of heavenly redemption and eternal life.

Continuity between present and past eventually comes about as the ancient soldiers are able to "behold in blindness / That a new glory of new men assembles" and the poet concludes enigmatically that "Time was not wasted in your subtle temples." Longenbach notes that the poet’s realization that the modern soldiers "March towards a generation’s center" enables him to accept a certain continuity: "Once Stevens is able to see a generation’s plight in the soldier’s plight, including even himself in the struggle, then the gap between the past and the present is narrowed" (214).

In the end, the use of French in "Dutch Graves" remains rather striking. It is a consciously American, or German-American, poem and Stevens does not use the French geographical references that he does in other war poems. There are also no foreign languages used besides French in "Dutch Graves," not even the expected Pennsylvania Dutch of the ancestral "semblables." The French presence in the

17 Bates notes that Pennsylvania Dutch soldiers were buried in the Feasterville cemetery (3, 282). The American geographical references in "Dutch Graves" make it unique among Stevens’ war-poems.
18 Bates notes the use of a "Pennsylvania Dutch polyglot" (282) in the lines "The Got whome we serve is able to deliver / Us" from section II of "Examination of the Hero in
poem centers on the repeated allusion to "Au Lecteur," with its implications of hypocrisy and lying, and the accompanying deceit-associated French shadings in "chimeres" and "on-dit." In this poem, French is the language of falsehood, or at least of self-deception; the implied Baudelairean self-delusion and the use of "chimeres" and "on-dit" all emphasize how easy it is for one to be deceived about history and war.

*Esthétique du Mal* also alludes to Baudelaire and other literary predecessors. The title summons up Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal*, as Riddel notes:

Stevens chose his French title carefully, implying by *mal* something more than an abstract or theological evil and an academic response to it. If he were calling attention to Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*, as the title may suggest, he chose the French not to imitate his predecessor but to distinguish ‘esthétique’ from the traditional forms of belief against which his poem set itself. (202)

Riddel also observes that the title "is a possible combination of *Les Fleurs du mal* and *Curiosité esthétique*. But if so, the debt to Baudelaire is by no means the key to the poem" (296). I agree with Riddel that Stevens was not attempting to imitate Baudelaire and that the allusion is not the key to the poem, but I would argue that the openness of the allusion serves to deliberately place Stevens’ poem in the literary context of other writings on "mal," whatever the extent of Stevens’ particular debt to a Time of War." There is nothing such in "Dutch Graves." 19 Riddel observes that "Dutch Graves" "with its honorific yet ironic bow to 'my semblables,' is a kind of prelude to 'Esthétique du Mal'" (201).
Baudelaire. Baudelaire's *Fleurs* stands as a monument of pre-Modernist poetry that is also one of the more recent and canonical explorations of "mal" among those that Stevens addresses and alludes to in his own treatment of the subject. *Les Fleurs du mal* is an aesthetics of "mal" itself, and while Stevens specifically distances his own theories and approach from literary predecessors and contemporaries like Longinus, Dante and Eliot, among others, he has to summon them up and allude to them before he dismisses them. ²⁰

Aside from the actual allusion to Baudelaire, the use of French in the title allows Stevens a range of meaning associated with "mal" that does not exist in English. In French, "mal" can mean abstract evil, general suffering, and actual physical pain; the term is also associated with a variety of diseases and medical conditions (*Larousse*). As a result, the use of the French title gives Stevens the opportunity to meditate on various kinds of "mal" within the parameters of his poem, adding meaning and suggestiveness.

Cook notes that the use of "mal" "gives [Stevens] one term for both necessary (or natural), and unnecessary evils, that is, for evils apparently unavoidable, and those deliberately done and suffered" (190). In this way, the use of the French title gives Stevens room for linguistic and semantic exploration. In a letter written shortly after the composition of *Esthétique* Stevens notes: "I am thinking of

²⁰ See *Poetry, Word-Play, and Word-War* 189-213.
aesthetics as the equivalent of apérçus, which seems to have been the original meaning. I don’t know what would happen if anybody tried to systematize the subject, but I haven’t tried" (L 469).21 The aphoristic approach implicit in this interpretation allows him to explore and meditate without systematization, as does the use of "mal" with its range of bilingual associations.

Baudelaire also comes to mind at the beginning of section IV:

Livres de Toutes Sortes de Fleurs d’après Nature.
All sorts of flowers. That’s the sentimentalist.
When B sat down at the piano and made
A transparence in which we heard music, made music,
In which we heard transparent sounds, did he play
All sorts of notes? Or did he play only one
In an ecstasy of its associates,
Variations in the tones of a single sound,
The last, or sounds so single they seemed one?

One of the suggestions about the identity of "B" is that it is Baudelaire.22 The temptation to make this association comes initially via the strong allusion in the title of Stevens’ poem and more specifically from the French opening line of the stanza. One is also tempted to associate Baudelaire with the Symboliste evanescence of the piano playing "in an ecstasy of its associates, / Variations in the tones of a single sound," which brings to mind Baudelaire’s "Correspondances" where "les parfums, les

21 An adjectival meaning of "aesthetic," now obsolete, is "of or pertaining to sensuous perception, received by the senses" (OED A1).
22 Bloom suggests that it may be Brahms, and notes that "B" and the "Spaniard" represent "true precursors of Stevens" (230).
Raymond Poggenburg writes regarding section IV:

Assuming, as I do, that 'B' is surely Baudelaire I make the following interpretation: Stevens is asking the question of whether in Fleurs du Mal Baudelaire achieved a kind of absolute poetry in which are to be found every kind of flower, the ultimate expression of beauty, the many-sided correspondence that adequately translates our view of and feeling for life in sounds so musical they are transparent.23

"B" as Baudelaire is clearly one of the possible interpretations, but I think that Poggenburg overlooks the idea that Baudelaire would then be "the sentimentalist." This would seem a distinctly negative connotation for Les Fleurs du mal given Stevens’ treatment of sentiment and nostalgia throughout the poem. Baudelaire’s blighted flowers may be "d’après Nature," but they are certainly not "all sorts," being flowers of "mal" only; they are much closer to "Variations in the tones of a single sound" than they are to "All sorts of flowers." If Stevens meant "B" to be Baudelaire, the line of argument would be that Baudelaire’s flowers are generalized and sentimental, and it is not at all apparent that he is building that kind of polemic against Baudelaire. In fact, Stevens may well be setting a kind of trap, one where the reader would automatically assume that "B" was Baudelaire and thus get caught up in an interpretive answer, one of "the false engagements of the mind," that is similar to fixed emotional and intellectual responses to "mal."

"B" can also simply be seen as the sentimentalist himself, the owner of the flower book. As the sentimentalist, "B" would be one of the figures who is later described as having "studied the nostalgias," who falls prey to "well-made" scenes and easy emotional responses.

Stevens later makes remarks about Baudelaire's poetry in a 1949 letter to Thomas McGreevy discussing "La Vie Antérieure":

Your quotation from Baudelaire made me run through the poems again. I am afraid that B. is beginning to date. Would anyone read him quite naturally today? The poems seem unrelated to anything actual or perhaps it is only that they are so unlike the actuality of this earliest spring weather in Hartford. Thus your line ["J’ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques"] which is at first so evocative soon becomes

I lived a long time in a porchéed vastness

or something equally rhetorical.

The demand for reality in poetry brings one sooner or later to a point where it becomes almost impossible since a real poetry, that is to say, a poetry that is not poetical or that is not merely the notation of objects in themselves poetic is a poetry divested of poetry.... The bare idea makes everything else seem false and verbose and even ugly. It is from this point of view that

J’ai habité longtemps, etc. becomes repulsive. Alas that such lovely things can become repulsive from any point of view. (L 631)

He expands on these comments in his 1951 lecture, "Two or Three Ideas," using his discussion with McGreevy to illustrate his proposition that "the style of a poem and the poem itself are one" (OP 257). His concern that Baudelaire is outdated aside, Stevens' use of the French poet as a poetic axis for examinations of historical and aesthetic falsehood and mal in this poem and "Dutch Graves" suggests
that he still has a high opinion of Baudelaire and the lasting resonance of his poetry.

Some less apparent French sources are also associated with Stevens' ideas in *Esthétique*. Cook notes two quotations from *Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects* which are roughly contemporary with the composition of the poem (190, 206). The first is a 1943 paraphrase from Gustave Flaubert's *Letters*: "L'esthétique est une justice supérieure" (*SPBS 77*). This quotation reflects Stevens' choice of concentrating on an aesthetics of mal in a time of war, rather than choosing to address political issues or abandoning art altogether. The second quotation from *Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects* is by André Rousseaux: "La nostalgie de l'éternel est au fond de toutes les oeuvres des philosophes, des romanciers et des poètes" (*SPBS 89*). This reflects Stevens' meditation on the subject of nostalgia and more specifically, his awareness of its attraction for writers, particularly on the subject of "mal." As Cook notes in reference to this quotation and section X, "We know that Stevens studied the nostalgias" (206).

The nostalgia sought by the poet in section X is that of a mother: "the softest / Woman with a vague moustache, and not the mauve / Maman." "Mauve" is adopted from the French *mauve* (*OED*); this links "mauve" and "Maman" linguistically as well as alliteratively.24 I take a "mauve

24 There is also a link with the purple "feminine" light in "Of Hartford in a Purple Light," as mauve is a light shade of purple.
to be an idealized French mother figure, distinctive because Stevens' mother figures are not usually French. She is not "fecund," does not have the physical immediacy, bordering on the grotesque, of the desired "softest" mother, and is thus of little use in assuaging the poet's nostalgic needs. Her only function is as a sentimental and attractive archetype who is rejected in the search for a more fulfilling figure, however futile or deceptive that may be. A later dangerous witch-like French mother will appear in "Madame La Fleurie."

Stevens also discusses emotional reactions to "mal" in section XI, this time more trenchantly, presenting three "confected" scenes associated with the war (falling paratroopers, a sinking ship, and violets springing from graves) and then reacting against them. There are three French words in this section, first of all in the couplet that divides it, "Natives of poverty, children of malheur, / The gaiety of language is our seigneur," and then in the beginning of the third stanza: "A man of bitter appetite despises / A well-made scene in which paratroopers / Select adieux."

"Malheur" is a French word used in English since 1471,

25 Cook suggests that one of the possible sources is Proust's Mme Swann (206): "Mme Swann apparaissait, épanouissant autour d'elle une toilette toujours différente, mais que je me rappelle surtout mauve" (A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs I 625).
26 Longenbach notes that "Stevens emphasized that the fiction of the mother...was one of the many 'nostalgias'" (246).
meaning misfortune (OED). It is somewhat archaic, and not familiar in current usage. "Seigneur" is also a French word used in English, since 1592, referring to a feudal lord in French history, and in Canada, to a member of the landed gentry (OED a,b). In French it has the general meaning of a ruler or proprietor, and can also refer historically to a feudal lord, and when capitalized, to God (Larousse). "Seigneur" is more current and familiar than "malheur," but its long history and feudal connotations give it a sense of age and history that complements the antique tone of "malheur."

The "Natives of poverty" couplet seems a reflection upon the "well-made" scenes, but is in fact one of them. Longenbach notes about the first stanza:

This is the work of what Stevens called in "Extracts" the Secretary for Porcelain and it is dismissed accordingly.... The famous couplet that follows the scene...turns sour in this context. (241)

I agree with Longenbach that the couplet tends to ring false. The physical separation of the stanza gives it a particular emphasis that, taken with the bygone foreign resonance of "malheur" and "seigneur," makes for an almost hierophantic effect that is clearly meant to be ironic in

---

27 Literary examples include Chaucer in Chaucer's Dream, "I woffull wight full of malure," and Dryden in Marriage à la Mode: "Ay, 'tis long of you that this Malheur is fall'n upon me."
28 While "malheur" is not marked as archaic or obsolete, the most recent example comes from 1792 (OED).
29 Stevens plays on the French connotations with an implicit pun on Seigneur, fitting in a poem that deals with "an over-human god" and "the death of Satan."
30 The most recent example of "seigneur" is from 1978 (OED).
the eyes of a "man of bitter appetite." In this context the "children of malheur" are maudlin, and the redemptive power of "the gaiety of language" is one of the "exacerbations," a tempting but ultimately empty sentimental view that the poet "despises."

The use of "adieux" is also meant to be ironic, and is part of the "well-made scene" as the paratroopers are linked with what is in this context a mannered valediction. Although "adieux" is well-assimilated into English, lingering associations of French-tinged preciosity add to the critical tone of the phrase. There is also, however, a serious undertone as the formal, permanent, connotation of "adieux" points to the fact that these soldiers are going to their deaths. The poet summons up the "mal" that underlies the "well-made" scenes while still condemning the easy aestheticization of violence and pain.

All in all, Esthétique du Mal seems Stevens' most pervasively French major long poem. Other languages besides English are important to the poem but French dominates because of the title and the accompanying force of the Baudelaire allusion. But, as Riddel observes about Baudelaire, the French content is not necessarily the key to the poem. World War II was inextricably linked with France

31 As the paratroopers fall they "mow the lawn;" Cook notes a "pun on coup de grâce and 'couper le gras': To give or receive a coup de grâce certainly means coming to a final adieu" (207).
32 Cook notes Stevens' detailed Greek and Latin etymological word-play, for example.
in Stevens' mind, both geographically and personally, and that is reflected here and elsewhere. The title of Stevens' poem necessarily links it with Baudelaire, and literary predecessors are central to this poem, but it is probably a mistake to associate the poem too directly with either Baudelaire or a French tradition in general. The key to the poem would seem to be a thorough knowledge of all the canonical treatments of "mal" that Stevens alludes to throughout. As mentioned previously, assuming too much of a French connection in Esthétique could well be, in another context, like the facile categorization of experience and adoption of nostalgia that Stevens so criticizes.

There are a variety of uses of French diction in the shorter poems of Transport to Summer. The title of "Poesie Abrutie" (1943) is an interesting example.33 Abrutie is a French word meaning stupid or ignorant (Larousse); it is one of the relatively rare examples in Stevens' poetry of a French word that is not used in English.34 Stevens chose the "Poesie Abrutie" title to fit the poem, and it can be seen as a somewhat facetious reflection of the repetitive syntax and simple rhymes in the body of the poem: "The water puddles puddles are / And ice is still in Februar. / It

33 "Poesie Abrutie" was originally titled "Return." The later title, taken out of From Pieces of Paper, was added when the poem was republished in Transport to Summer. Lensing notes that "Poesie Abrutie" "is the only French entry in the notebook that actually became a title" (191, 199).

34 The very rare term "abrutalize," an intensified form of "brutalize," is the closest word to abrutie in English (OED).
still is ice in Februar." The idea of a "Poesie Abrutie" recalls the emotion in poems of failed inspiration like "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad" (1921): "Mildew of summer and the deepening snow / Are both alike in the routine I know."

"Abrutie" is, however, a powerfully negative word, and it has a forceful effect that seems almost too strong in the context of rest of the poem.

It is interesting to compare "Poesie Abrutie" with a title like "Crude Foyer" (1947), which uses a French word that is well assimilated into English and retains little or no French resonance even though it has kept its French spelling. "Poesie Abrutie" has a much more French feel coming from its title than "Crude Foyer" although neither poem is particularly French per se; this comes entirely from the difference in level of familiarity between "Abrutie," which is completely French, and "Foyer," which, while of French origin, is widely used in English.

Stevens varies his play on the foreign resonance of French-adopted words in "The Lack of Repose" (1943), where a "young man" reads from a book that becomes his grandfather's voice speaking to him from a cloud: "It is the grandfather he liked." The ghostly grandfather expresses "the intense

35 "Abrutie" comes from the Latin brutus, heavy, dull, or irrational, from which also come the English "brute" and "brutal" (OED), giving it an additional proximate sense of ignorance and violence.
36 "Foyer" in English is adopted, via the French foyer, from the Latin focus, and as such is marked as a French word. It has been in use in English since 1799 (OED).
37 Lensing notes that the source of this line (and by extension the poem) is in Stevens' Schemata notebook, and
disclosures / Of a parent in the French sense." "Parent" in English is adopted from the Old French parent, and one of the meanings, current in the sixteenth century but now obsolete, is a relative, a kinsman or kinswoman (OED 2). This meaning is used in French and other Romanic languages, and it is likely the one Stevens had in mind. In this way the "parent in the French sense" is Andrew's phantom grandfather, with whom he communes "with an understanding compounded by death."

By writing "a parent in the French sense," Stevens is playing on a word that has been completely assimilated into English and retains no French resonance or pronunciation. He is pointedly, although in a humorous manner, calling attention to etymological origins in a kind of reversal of his more common French-connected word-play, which works back and forth between the English and French meanings of more obviously French-adopted words.

This is something he does in "Man Carrying Thing" (1946), with the phrase "A brune figure in winter evening resists / Identity," where he uses both English and French connotations of "brune" in a bilingual word-play. Cook comments:

"Brune" is an obsolete English adjective for "brown," so this is an obsolete or dead metaphor, to read symbolically. But perhaps "brune" is French, and the figure is alive, to read bilingually. (Figure in French is feminine and so would take the form brune.) But "brune" is also a noun in French, and it means that it originally involved a grandmother figure: "A young man fond of his grandmother" (160, 162-3).
"dusk" or "twilight" - say, a "winter evening," as the poem says. In that case, a "brune figure" is a twilight figure or metaphor. (185)

In "Credences of Summer" (1947) IX the poet uses italicized French words in the description of the "cock bright" watching the dying garden: "Soft, civil bird, / The decay you regard: of the arranged / And of the spirit of the arranged, douceurs, / Tristesses, the fund of life and death." Bloom translates "douceurs, / Tristesses" as "the sweets and tribulations...of summer," noting that "the whole sequence's complex of emotions falls apart, in anticipation of the fall of the season" (251).

Douceur in French means something sweet or gentle, and tristesse is a state of sadness or melancholy (Larousse). Doux, the root of douceur, also connotes softness in French, a link with the "soft" bird. Both "douceur" and "tristesse" have been adopted into English, and their meanings are quite similar to the French.38 Stevens is using both "douceurs" and "Tristesses" unambiguously in their French contexts, and this is emphasized by the italicization.39

38 "Douceur," adopted from the French douceur, was "apparently" naturalized in Middle English, but is marked as being a French loan-word since the seventeenth century. It formerly meant amiability and sweetness of manner and was revived in the general sense of something pleasant or agreeable (OED 1). This last is closest to its French meaning. It can also mean pleasant speech or a complimentary phrase (an obsolete use), as well as a conciliatory note or bribe (OED 2,3). "Tristesse" was adopted in Middle English from the Old French tristesce, and is not marked as foreign. It means sadness, grief, or melancholy (OED).

39 Interestingly, the earlier completely French "Abrutie" is not italicized whereas these two terms are, something that emphasizes their meditative and ceremonial quality as well as their French origins.
sense of "Frenchy" irony or affectation here, and no cross-linguistic word-play. Instead, the French adds a melancholy emphasis to the poet's expression of the emotions involved in the passage from summer to autumn. The phrase has a formal, almost hierophantic, effect that reflects "the spirit of the arranged," and contrasts with the bare decay of the surrounding garden.

These poems illustrate well the range and diversity of effects that Stevens achieves through French-connected diction, from the strikingly pejorative and overstated French of "Abrutie," to the varied play along the scale of English familiarity in the French-adopted "foyer," "parent," and "brune." The quietly monumental italicized "douceurs" and "Tristesses" carry no bilingual word-play, but have a deep French resonance that adds to their lyric effect and to the meditative and ceremonial tone of "Credences of Summer." By this point in his poetry Stevens' French lexis has its own distinctive tropes and degrees of word-play that work in both united and separate ways; his French connections have become an integral part of his poetic language.

There are also a number of French-connected art references in Transport, although they are less frequent

40 Cook notes that "Credences of Summer" "seems uninterested in obvious puns, riddles [and] paradoxes" (103).
41 On the scale of familiarity in English, "parent" is the most familiar as it is barely recognizable as a French-adopted word (unless of course it is pointed out by the poet), "foyer" is somewhat more foreign because of its spelling but still well-assimilated and very familiar to English speakers, and "brune" is the least familiar and most foreign in effect.
than in *Parts of a World*. They continue to explore some of the same ground in comparing the relations between artistic representation of nature and the direct experience of reality, and they further consider how cultural attitudes and assumptions colour and shape perception.

In "From the Packet of Anacharsis" (1946)\(^{42}\) the poet describes an Athenian farm: "The farm was white. / The buildings were of marble and stood in marble light," and then mentions Puvis de Chavannes: \(^{43}\) "A subject for Puvis. He would compose / The scene in his gray-rose with violet rocks." The poet is referring to Puvis' use of pale colour in his mural paintings, comparing it with the description of the farm. This use of Puvis follows the pattern of earlier references to painters, such as that to Corot in "Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery," where the style of a particular artist is incorporated into poetically described visual detail.

In this case, Puvis is criticized, ultimately ineffectually, by "Bloom," who by his name and his mention of "the floridest reality," represents bright colours and, implicitly, the wild floral growth of Stevens' once-beloved Florida. "Bloom" does not understand the subtleties of white and pale shades, how "a tone defines itself and

---

42 This title is in *From Pieces of Paper (A Poet's Growth 183).*
43 Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824-98). He was considered to be the foremost French mural painter of the second half of the nineteenth century, widely respected for his "style of monumental decorative painting" with "flat fresco colours" and "simplified forms" (*OCA*).
separates," and is ultimately overwhelmed by colour: "And the circles quicken and crystal colors come / And flare and Bloom with his vast accumulation / Stands and regards and repeats the primitive lines."

In "Holiday in Reality" (1944) the poet also makes a painterly comparison of individual colour perceptions, this time using a geographical metaphor:

It was something to see that their white was different, Sharp as white paint in the January sun;

Something to feel they needed another yellow, Less Aix than Stockholm, hardly a yellow at all.

The vibrant colours and warm weather of the French south stand against the climatic coolness and relative chromatic calmness of a northern landscape. The geographical contrast metaphorically expands the comparison of the colours into one of states of perception associated with locale and climate. This recalls the night and day light comparison in "Of Hartford in a Purple Light," where France and French geography were also characteristically associated with strong and pleasurable sensory experiences, in that case the quasi-erotic "amour" of evening light.

Individual colour perception is then expanded into general cognition of nature, which is contrasted with the ostensibly restrictive experience of observing paintings in

44 This title is in From Pieces of Paper (A Poet's Growth 181).
45 I take "Aix" to be a reference to Aix-en-Provence, the southern French city. Stevens wrote in a 1950 letter: "On my death there will be found carved on my heart, along with the initials of lots of attractive girls, that I have known, the name of Aix-en-Provence" (L 671).
an art gallery:

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 that they
possessed.
It was impossible to breathe at Durand-Ruel's.

Personal apprehension and naming of nature ("These are real
only if I make them so") are placed against external
depiction and presentation. Two different aspects of the
poem's titular "reality" are being compared, one of which
involves aesthetic and poetic freedom, the other a
repression so strong that it amounts to a physical stifling.
Bodily metaphors for the inner understanding of nature
continue in the second half of the poem: "And I taste at the
root of the tongue the unreal of what is real."

"Analysis of a Theme" (1945) has a French geographical
reference with a twist. A speaker who is watching clouds in
the sky describes "immaterial monsters" of time as

Pure coruscations, that lie beyond
The imagination, intact
And unattained,

Even in Paris, in the Gardens
Of Acclimatization,
On a holiday.

The reference to "the Gardens / Of Acclimatization"
ostensibly has the effect of bringing the high-flown
"ANALYSIS" down to earth, as it were, situating the poet who

46 "Durand-Ruel's" was a French-owned art gallery in New
York City with which Stevens was familiar, and this adds a
personal emphasis to the lines. He commented upon its
closing in 1950 "one never felt that place was vital," and
added that "the galleries were becoming a little faded and
the windows seemed almost a bit grimy" (L 668).
is observing cloud-shapes firmly on the ground in a park in Paris. The *Jardin D'Acclimatation* is, however, an amusement park that includes a zoo among other attractions.\(^47\) The reference becomes a joke of sorts because the intellectual rhetoric of the "ANALYSIS" is deflated by the fact that the poet is sitting in an amusement park on a holiday, just as it is by the hilarious punning in the final stanza. That the park includes a zoo also goes some way toward explaining the "three-legged giraffes" in the "THEME" that so please the poet and his young companion. In this way, Stevens subtly uses his geographical knowledge of Paris for a joke apparent to readers with similar knowledge. This is somewhat similar to the reference to the Durand-Ruel gallery in "Holiday in Reality" in that an awareness of Stevens' low opinion of the New York gallery sheds some light on its negative connotations in the poem. Both references are excellent examples of how Stevens incorporates his personal Francophilic experiences into his poetry.

*Notes toward a Supreme Fiction* was published early in the chronological range of *Transport to Summer* poems but is placed at the end of the volume as a climactic piece. It has a series of pivotal passages that are significantly linked with France, as well as a number of scenes where Stevens uses French and France to create diverse Gallic effects. *Notes* in fact contains examples of most of Stevens' poetic uses of French, including varied French

\(^{47}\) *Paris: Guide de Tourisme* 176.
diction, allusion and reference (both to people and to French locales), and French-related personae. In this way it makes for a kind of summary of Stevens' poetic French connections and a fitting conclusion for this varied volume. Fitting also is the dedication to Henry Church, a man with strong French connections himself. 48

Notes opens dramatically with a narrative voice, which Cook observes "speaks with slightly exaggerated authority" (216), and which returns periodically throughout the poem. This voice, like the speaker in "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas," is French-associated. I distinguish this presence from more externally defined and theatrical personae such as the tramp in the "slouching pantaloons" and Canon Aspirin, and hear the voice as a kind of diffuse professorial French-infused alter-ego for Stevens, who descends from Mon Oncle and other Harmonium-era pedants. 49 In this there is the sense that Stevens is looking back at some of his past poetic and narrative selves. A version of this persona will also appear later in An Ordinary Evening in New Haven.

The narrator's French connections are particularly evident in the climax of "It Must Give Pleasure" X and the

48 Stevens wrote to Church in 1942: "I should like very much to dedicate [Notes] to you, if I may, by way of showing appreciation of your kindness to me last spring, and, generally, just because I should like to, if it is all right with you" (L 409).
49 Cook comments that "one of Stevens' selves, as he very well knows, is an all-too-willing pedagogue, that self he calls 'the Devil of sermons, within me' [and] smiles at in the opening canto of Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" (54).
epilogue, but he can also be seen behind some of the French diction and references that appear throughout the poem. In "It Must Be Abstract" II, the poet writes: "It is the celestial ennui of apartments / That sends us back to the first idea." "Ennui" in English is adopted from the French ennui, and used as a noun, indicates a feeling of "mental weariness or dissatisfaction" (OED). The "ennui" echoes Baudelaire's "monstre délicat," but, as Cook observes, in this case it is not so much horrifying as expected (220): "What else, prodigious scholar, should there be?"

The phrase "the celestial ennui of apartments" foreshadows the suffering ephebe looking across the city roofs in I V, and also recalls the bleak modern cityscapes of Baudelaire's "Tableaux Parisiens" in Les Fleurs du mal:

Il est doux, à travers les brumes, de voir naitre
L'étoile dans l'azur, la lampe à la fenêtre,
Les fleuves de charbon monter au firmament
Et la lune verser son pâle enchantement. ("Paysage")

Examples of French references include that to Descartes in I IV, "The first idea was not our own. Adam / In Eden was the father of Descartes," and to the French architect Viollet-le-Duc in I VIII: "Can we compose a castle-fortress-home, / Even with the help of Viollet-le-Duc." The Descartes reference is, as Riddel points out, part of "Stevens' secularization of the Fall" (171). Cook notes

50 "Ennui" is marked as a non-naturalized word because "so far as frequency of use is concerned, the word might be regarded as fully naturalized; but the pronunciation has not been anglicized" (OED).
51 "C'est l'Ennui! - l'œil chargé d'un pleur involontaire
Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka" ("Au Lecteur").
"Adam is the father of mankind, and so perforce of Descartes, but Adam himself as a Cartesian in Eden is another matter" (223). The mention of Viollet-le-Duc is also topical; Cook observes that "castle-fortress-home" is "a precise description...of some of the buildings Viollet-le-Duc did restore" and that it recalls "Stevens' longtime desire for a poetic home" (228).

These references to Descartes and Viollet-le-Duc, while serving distinct discursive purposes, also demonstrate the slightly self-mocking erudition that is sometimes evident in the "Frenchy" pedagogical voice of the narrator. This is particularly the case in the arch tone of the Viollet-le-Duc reference, and looks back to the use of du Bellay and Pater in "Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges," as well as the elaborate allusiveness of "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle."

A French-associated narrative voice is also evident in passages like the description of the "blue island in a sky-wide water" in "It Must Change" V: "And là-bas, là-bas, the cool bananas grew." "Là-bas," a French expression not used in English, is used to indicate something situated at a distance (Larousse). It is a very common phrase and has a somewhat offhand effect, as if the narrator were casually pointing something out to a companion on a walk.  

52 Stevens wrote in a 1947 letter: "Last evening, after dinner...I walked round, là-bas, without politics and without philosophy - even the superficial politics and philosophy that represent my maximum" (L 558-9).
an effect that Stevens will use later in *An Ordinary Evening in New Haven*.

There is also an interesting bilingual coinage in III V with the description of the Canon Aspirin's sister:

She lived in her house. She had two daughters, one of four, and one of seven, whom she dressed
The way a painter of pauvred color paints.

"Pauvred" combines the French pauvre, which can mean poverty, insufficiency, or something that attracts sympathy (*Larousse*), and which has no English usage, with an English adjectival ending to create an evocative effect of weak colour and of destitution.

The first major French-connected persona aside from the recurring narrative presence appears at the end of IX:

Cloudless the morning. It is he. The man
In that old coat, those sagging pantaloons,

It is of him, ephebe, to make, to confect
The final elegance, not to console
Nor sanctify, but plainly to propound.

The man in the old coat and pantaloons is a hybridized descendant of some of Stevens' *Harmonium*-era French personae. Bates notes that "this Chaplinesque figure stands for the mass of humanity; as such, he balks the dreams of those, who, like the rabbi and chieftain, long to surpass the human condition" (218). Stevens' tramp comes down from his early Pierrot figures just as Chaplin's character was in some ways a descendant of miming figures like Deburau's Pierrot. The figure in *Notes*, however, has come a long way from the effete Pierrots of Stevens' early poetry. He is
now a slightly ironic, slightly rumpled, but steadfastly normal figure who represents humanity while still being in many ways a figment of the general imagination. Longenbach notes that he is far more likable than any of Stevens' more bombastic wartime heroes, and while not everyone may see him - or herself in this figure (no single representation could be truly universal) it is designed to evoke our common sympathies. (262)

Benamou sees the figure as "a twist on the Pierrot theme" in which "Stevens has reconciled...the ironic and the serious" (33). It is as if the figure had first to develop from the Pierrot of the Little June Book through Crispin and his stages of poetic maturation, then through the "old fantoche" from The Man With The Blue Guitar, who represented the link between rarefied poetic concerns and an awareness of the outside world, before he could grow into the Chaplin-inspired tramp. These figures all stem originally from the romantic theatrical persona that Stevens envisioned when he referred to himself and Elsie as Pierrot and Columbine in an early idyllic fantasy (L 106).

Stevens brings in an indirect French touch by dressing the tramp in "sagging pantaloons." "Pantaloon" is adopted from the French pantalon, and can refer to various kinds of leg-wear. "Pantaloon" is also the}_{

---

53 Vendler notes that the tramp is Stevens' "'new' version of the hero" who represents a return "to the 'old fantoche' of The Man With The Blue Guitar" (328).
54 Stevens wrote in Adagia "The poet is a god or The young poet is a god. The old poet is a tramp" (OP 198).
55 "Pantaloon" is used at different periods for different styles of leg garments, usually in a plural form. In the
English version of Pantalone, or Pantalon, a foolish old man figure originally from the Commedia dell'arte (OED 1a). Through these connotations Stevens subtly emphasizes the tramp's somewhat ridiculous aspect while also alluding to his theatrical genealogy.

"Paisant Chronicle" (1945) suggests in a similar vein that "major men" need not necessarily be elite figures.56 Riddel states that Stevens is "proclaiming in effect that man in his need to apotheosize something comes at last to create the 'fictive man'...out of the demonstrably common" (217). The peasant association emphasizes this: "the chronicle of humanity is the sum / Of paisant chronicles."57 Stevens wrote in a 1944 letter "Il faut être paysan d'être poète" (L 461).

The poet compares "major men" with invented literary figures and their creators:

They are

eighteenth century it could refer to stage or theatrical garb (an obsolete usage), and afterwards referred to a buttoned trouser style that replaced knee-breeches. This was eventually extended to trousers in general, although this later meaning may have come directly from the French pantalon at the beginning of the nineteenth century (OED 3 b,c,d).

56 Stevens wrote about "Paisant Chronicle" in a 1945 letter to José Rodriguez Feo: "I have defined major men for you. I realize that the definition is evasive, but in dealing with fictive figures evasiveness at least supports the fiction" (L 489).

57 "Paisant" is an obsolete spelling of the modern English "peasant," and also the Old French root of the modern French paysan (OED). "Chronicle" is adopted from the Old French cronique and indicates a factual historical record (OED). In this way it stands against embellished or fictional accounts and histories, and a "paisant chronicle" thus suggests unadorned rusticity and authenticity.
Nothing in which it is not possible
To believe, more than the casual hero, more
Than Tartuffe as myth, the most Molière,
The easy projection long prohibited.

The baroque poet may see him as still a man
As Virgil, abstract.

The desired "major men" are "beyond reality" yet "composed
thereof," like the tramp of Notes who is "In being more than
an exception, part / Though an heroic part, of the
commonal." 58

The "megalfreere" of "Chocorua to Its Neighbor" (1947)
xxi is also a related figure:

Not father, but bare brother, megalfreere,
Or by whatever boorish name a man
Might call the common self, interior fons.
And fond, the total man of glubbal glub,
Political tramp with an heraldic air.

"Megalfreere" is one of Stevens' French-derived coinages,
formed from the Greek prefix mega-, great, and the French
frère, brother (OED, Larousse). 59 The combined linguistic
effect suggests a kind of super-brother, as it were, and
unites the larger-than-life and yet ordinary aspects of
"major man" in one term. 60

58 In a 1943 Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects entry Stevens quotes
Molière: "Je vis de bonne soupe et [non] de beau [langage]
(77), and this seems very much in the spirit of a "paisant
chronicle." The passage is also used in "The Relations
between Poetry and Painting" while discussing bad
contemporary poets and "the exploitation of form": "They are
neither 'bonne soupe' nor 'beau langage'" (NA 168). The
quotation is Chrysale speaking to Philaminte and Bélise in
Les femmes savantes II.vii.531; Stevens has it wrongly
marked as Paul Bonifas speaking to Philaminte.
59 Stevens' insertion of 'l' in between "Mega" and "frere"
is curious as there is usually nothing placed between
"mega-" and words starting with consonants (OED).
60 The "blank frere of the fields, their matin laborer"
from "Things of August" (1949) is also a French-connected
figure related to both "Chocorua" and "Paisant Chronicle."
In English "frere" is an obsolete spelling of "friar," itself an adoption of the Old French frere (OED). This adds a sense of age to the "Megalfrere" that goes along with the figure’s "heraldic air," which also brings in the antique military and chivalric associations of "Gigantomachia" and "Repetitions of a Young Captain." One of the principal meanings of "friar" is a member of one of the Roman Catholic mendicant orders (OED 2a); this encompasses both the role of the tramp and the spiritual aspects of "major man."62

The second significant French-related persona in Notes is the poet’s metaphorical "fat girl," invoked in the final section of "It Must Give Pleasure": "Fat girl, terrestrial, my summer, my night." This passage is, as Cook points out, Stevens’ rhetorical ending for his supreme narrative. It is also a completion of the lecture structure of the sequence, as the professorial narrator heads home after the talk is over, addressing his companion:

They will get it straight one day at the Sorbonne. We shall return at twilight from the lecture Pleased that the irrational is rational.

Bloom sees a return to "the mock-academic world of the opening of Notes" (218), and it is significant that it is a French world. Cook writes

We end with the poet and his beloved 'fat girl,' walking down a street in Paris after a lecture at the

61 "Friar" can have a slight martial connotation as it is "sometimes loosely applied to members of the monastic or of the military orders" (OED 2b).
62 Stevens makes it clear, however, that "major man" is not a religious figure in any orthodox sense: "But apotheosis is not / The origin of the major man" (I IX).
Sorbonne (a mark of Stevens' Francophilia and a tribute to the dedicatee, his friend Henry Church). (215)

The "fat girl" is important, particularly as a French female, because she is a positive figure. Vendler notes the "touching" quality of the passage (204), and Cook observes that the girl is an "auspicious muse" for the speaker who physically holds her (179). The poet does not attempt to escape like the Giant of 1917 or to turn away as in "Montrachet-le-Jardin;" he accepts this French-connected female muse where he could not earlier. This is emphasized by the fact that he names her and touches her: "this unprovoked sensation requires / That I should name you flatly, waste no words, / Check your evasions, hold you to yourself." This positive and affectionate treatment represents a metaphoric acceptance of French-connected females and, in a sense, the attainment of a poetry of earth, as Stevens wrote in a 1942 letter: "the fat girl is the earth" (L 426). Stevens has grounded his French connections, as it were, fixed them in an earthy and physical female who differs dramatically from earlier threatening and flitting figures, and whose terrestrial nature stands against the romantic and ethereal French lunar tropes that once tormented him.

It is revealing that the climax of "It Must Give Pleasure,"63 one of Stevens' greatest moments of poetic contentment complete with a fecund and satisfying

---

63 Stevens wrote in a 1953 letter: "one uses French for the pleasure that it gives" (L 792).
terrestrial female figure, is set in Paris. The passage is a culminating point of Stevens' poetic interest in France as well as a formal ending to the sequence.

The lecture structure of Notes, with its French-connected narrator, suggests in fact that the entire poem, not just the conclusion, is set in Paris. Paris fell to the Germans in June of 1940, making it a captive city well before Stevens composed and published Notes.64 This adds a certain sombre tone to Stevens' use of Paris in 1942, and makes for an underlying poignancy, which is carried over from some of the French- and war-connected poems of Parts of a World.

In a Biblical reading of Notes, where there is an implicit movement from Genesis to Revelation,65 Paris is also a version of the Heavenly City; it becomes a modern New Jerusalem as part of Stevens' earthbound vision. There is an emphasis on the civic throughout Notes, beginning with the "ephebe"66 and continuing through urban architecture to the narrator's "civil" address to the fat girl, and it is fitting that Paris, that most civilized and sophisticated of cities, should be used by Stevens as a climactic earthly

64 Stevens first mentions what will become Notes in December of 1941, and in January of 1942 writes to Henry Church: "I am going to write a very small book for a private press, which will certainly not be published until late in the summer or early autumn" (L 397, 401).
65 Cook comments that Notes "has its own kind of Genesis at the beginning, and its own kind of Revelation at the end" (215).
66 Cook points out that an "ephebe" in ancient Athens was "a beginning citizen and beginning soldier" (215).
metropolis.

Stevens wrote in a late letter that his notion of Paris "communicates an interest in life that may be wholly fiction, but, if so, it is precious fiction" (L 773). The use of Paris in Notes may be Stevens' ultimate poetic tribute to his notion of Paris as a "precious fiction." It is entirely appropriate that in one of his important poems at the end of one of his major volumes, Stevens' final satisfaction and contentment should be placed in Paris.

In the epilogue to Notes the narrator addresses a soldier in a final French-connected passage: "Soldier there is a war between the mind / And sky." The soldier is addressed as "Monsieur and comrade," implying that he is a Frenchman. Macleod suggests that he is related to Eugene Lemercier, whose writings were the basis for Stevens' 1917 Lettres d'un Soldat sequence.67 This continues the link between France and war that Stevens established in the early Phases and Lettres and then took up later in his World War II-era poetry.

The epilogue re-emphasizes the relation of soldiers and poets as representatives of "major man" in one of the repeated themes of Transport and Notes,68 and concludes the French-associated war-poetry of Transport with an elegiac

67 Stevens' Lettres d'un Soldat consists of translated poetic paraphrases and adaptations of sections of Lemercier's letters. See Wallace Stevens and Company 62-4.
68 Daniel Schwartz points out that "at the very crux of Notes [Stevens] is reaching out for kinship with the simple folk" (Narrative and Representation in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens 186).
link between the poet and soldier as envoi at the end of poem and volume. The common soldier is ordinary and plain, like a tramp, but is also, paradoxically, invested with heroism. In this figure France remains tied in with the quasi-theatrical assumption of heroic military role, as well as with the general theatrical associations of "major man," which are emphasized by the genealogy of the tramp in the "slouching pantaloons." This again shows how Stevens' residual Harmonium-era relation of France and Commedia dell'arte theatricality has moved into the contemporary context of World War II and its all-too-direct French associations for Stevens.

It is worth noting again, that like Parts of a World, Stevens chooses to end Transport to Summer with France. This positional emphasis casts a French light on the entire volume, and makes it seem more French as a whole. As in Parts of a World it is also a French ending with strong emotional associations; Stevens' unspoken concern about occupied France and French acquaintances is a powerful undertone throughout the volume. By ending with a poet conversing with a girl in Paris, and a French-connected

69 Some of Stevens' readers have been critical of this soldier figure. Vendler sees the epilogue as "something of an anticlimax," which "perhaps would not have been appended to Notes if the war had not made some external justification of poetry seem necessary" (205), and Bloom calls it "overtly personal" (216). Longenbach notes that the epilogue "has seemed uncharacteristically explicit following the ambiguous undulations of the sequence at large" (249), and that Stevens is "making a desperate attempt to normalize the violence without," which "reminds us that there is a war that never ends" (270-3).
soldier, Stevens also however makes the transport to summer a metaphoric voyage to the "precious fiction" of a poetic France, a voyage he will continue to make in his poetry and imagination in his last two books of poetry and the final years of his life.
CHAPTER 6

THE NINETEEN-FIFTIES

I have never been able to see why what is called Anglo-Saxon should have the right to higgle and haggle all over the page, contesting the rights of other words. ("Two or Three Ideas" 1951)

There seems to be only one place left in the world, and that of course, is Paris, in which, notwithstanding all the talk of war and all the difficulties of politics, something fundamentally gay and beautiful still survives. (June 18 1952, L 755)

Stevens' last two volumes, The Auroras of Autumn (1950) and The Rock (1954), have a relative scarcity of French, especially in comparison with Transport to Summer and Parts of a World. This is associated with a general sense of linguistic and poetic austerity in both collections. Frank Doggett observes of the late poetry: "the imagery is more spare, the mere assertions more frequent, the flamboyant lyricism is subdued."¹

Both collections are elegiac, which is natural for a poet in his seventies. Cook notes that both "The Auroras of Autumn" (1948) and An Ordinary Evening in New Haven (1949) "explore ways of saying farewell" (295). Both volumes also contain elegiac poems written about friends: "The Owl in the

¹ "Wallace Stevens' Later Poetry" 138.
Sarcophagus" (1947), which "was written in the frame of mind that followed [Henry] Church's death" (L 566), and "To an Old Philosopher In Rome" (1952), which refers to George Santayana, and was published just before his death in 1952 (L 761).

Some of the repeated themes in both volumes include seasonal change (particularly from summer to autumn), old age, childhood, and parentage. The Auroras of Autumn is a somewhat darker volume where large issues such as apocalyptic change are explored, whereas The Rock is a lighter, more personal and introspective volume.

In both collections French is connected with main issues and themes, some of which are carried over from other volumes. The poems in both Auroras and The Rock are in fact remarkable for the way Stevens looks back at earlier poetic uses of French, recalling and acknowledging them in subtle ways. As Cook notes, "many of Stevens' late poems...play back over his own work, echoing it, reshaping it, enlightening it" (307).

The Auroras opens with "The Auroras of Autumn," which Vendler calls "the most economical" of Stevens' long poems (268), and whose somber tone establishes the mood of the volume. While "Auroras" has less overall French content than major long poems like Notes and Esthétique du Mal, it does contain a notable French reference as well as uses of

---

2 Bates observes that "Stevens' late mythology has...a pervasively 'parental' character" (277).
French-connected diction, some of which hint at earlier associations while contributing to the poem's themes of sublimity, theatricality, and parentage.

Section III is an evening poem about a protective, comforting mother figure: "She makes that gentler that can gentle be." At the end of the section, the peace surrounding the house, the "ease in a shelter of the mind," is disturbed by the sound of the wind: "A wind will spread its windy grandeurs round / And knock like a rifle-butt against the door." The "windy" 'w' and 's' sounds are contrasted with the short sharp monosyllabic sounds of "knock," "like," and "butt" in the next line. The divergence in sounds strengthens the effect of the clash in imagery between peaceful maternal domesticity and the forceful rifle-butt simile. This opposition is also reflected in the linguistic contrast between the French-adopted "grandeurs" and the abrupt sound and effect of the wind at the door.

"Grandeurs" is well assimilated into English but to my ear retains a French quality that comes at least partially from its spelling. I would also argue that it has a faintly ornate "Frenchy" resonance stemming from its French tone and from its connotation of material splendour. This sense of physical luxury suggests a certain civilized sophistication,

3 "Grandeur" is adopted from the French grandeur and has been used in English since 1500 (OED).
4 This connotation of magnificent "style of living" is associated with the plural "grandeurs" in particular (OED 6), which suggests a further subtle link with Stevens' use.
which emphasizes through comparison the bare natural
violence of the "invincible" wind. "Grandeur" can also
indicate, in an obsolete usage, a "bad sense" of haughtiness
and arrogance (OED 5). This can be linked, although
somewhat tenuously, with a recurring French-associated sense
of self-important intellectuality, and as such would
contribute to the ironic undertone that I hear. "Grandeur"
also connotes a sense of imposing majesty (OED 4), and this
imparts an additional power and magnificence to the wind,
which as Vendler notes carries a sense of "peremptory doom"
(257). 5

There is a somewhat similar use of French-connected
diction in canto VI, where the poet writes of "a theatre
floating through the clouds," using a dramatic metaphor to
describe cloud formations and the play of the Aurora
Borealis in the sky. 6 The description is developed into an
architectural metaphor before being cut short: "A capitol, /
It may be, is emerging or has just / Collapsed. The
denouement has to be postponed...." This passage serves as
a bridge between the lyrical description of the Auroras and
a moment of sublime terror in the reaction of a scholar

5 "Grandeur" can also connote, in an obsolete form, a sense
of lofty height (OED 1a). This usage contributes an image
of physical size to the wind, further emphasizing its
forceful power.
6 John Unsworth hears Baudelaire's "vastes portiques" and
other lines from "La Vie Antérieure" in section vi: "The
theatre is filled with flying birds, / Wild wedges, as of a
volcano's smoke, palm-eyed / And vanishing, a web in a
corridor / Or massive portico" ("An Echo of Baudelaire in
'The Auroras of Autumn'" 106).
figure to the sight and experience: "The scholar of one candle sees / An Arctic effulgence flaring on the frame / Of everything he is. And he feels afraid." Coming after a rhapsodic description, and prefacing a passage of negation and fear, the "denouement" phrase has the effect of drawing the reader up short. The French-associated dramatic connotations of "denouement" also reflect the grandiose theatrical troping of the section's first five stanzas.

Both "grandeurs" and "denouement" fit in with Stevens' theme of sublimity in "Auroras" and emphasize intellectual responses to the force of nature. They both also have a faintly ironic tone, "denouement" more so because of lingering Harmonium-era comedic connotations. The terms

7 Bates sees the scholar in this section as a poetic alter-ego for Stevens, who becomes a "fully enlightened" rabbi at the end of the poem (274-6). This is a similar movement to that in "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle," where the avuncular narrator evolves into a "rose rabbit," and it intimates the relation of the "scholar of one candle" to past pedant personae.
8 "Dénouement" is a French word that signifies the resolution of a dramatic plot or sequence of events. It is marked as a partly-naturalized word because it retains French spelling, including the accent aigu (OED). Some usages omit the accent, as does Stevens.
9 Bloom notes that "watching the auroras, Stevens re-enacts the central Romantic confrontations between the power of a poet's mind and the object-world or universe of death" (254).
10 In the closing section of the poem Stevens derides a description of "happy people in a happy world" as "Buffo! A ball, an opera, a bar." "Buffo" in English is an adaptation of the Italian buffo, meaning a comic actor or singer, and as an adjective, belonging to or characteristic of comedy or burlesque (OED). In this Stevens can be seen as summoning up his erstwhile use of the Commedia dell'arte, and may be suggesting that that earlier comic universe is no longer sufficient for his current elegiac vision of an "unhappy people in a happy world."
are well assimilated into English and quite familiar, but Stevens subtly emphasizes their French resonance by suggestively calling up earlier French-connected tropes and associations.

A French figure of personal note surfaces in section V as part of a parental theme. In the midst of a description of a family celebration where "The mother invites humanity to her house / And table," the poet suggests that the scene is empty, false somehow:

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

The scene is commented on almost offhandedly by the poet: "This then is Chatillon or as you please."

"Chatillon" can refer to a number of people and locales. The "This" in the "Chatillon" phrase is ambiguous enough that "Chatillon" can also be a slightly obscure geographical reference to a number of French locations. The most likely, based on Stevens’ comments below, is Châtillon-sur-Loing, birthplace of Gaspard de Coligny. Another might be Châtillon-Sur-Seine, a town near Paris which is renowned for its Medieval churches and known historically for two events, the Congrès de Châtillon in 1814 where Napoleon conferred with his adversaries, and in 1944, the meeting of French forces coming from Normandy under Patton with forces from the South (GDEL). If "Chatillon" functions as a place name then it stands as the location of the theatrical scene. The suggestion would then be that the poet regards
"Chatillon" as an archetypal meeting-place, albeit a French one, and thus a good location for a grouping of humanity, a festival.

Bloom states that "Chatillon" is meant to refer to Sébastien Châtillon, arguing that the father figure in this stanza

is a failed translator, of desire into fiction, which is why the father's poetic failure is compared to the work of Châtillon, who was a sixteenth-century Huguenot humanist, a doctor expelled from Geneva for heresies from Calvinism, heresies exalting the will. (268)

He also notes that Châtillon translated the Bible into French and Latin and that he may be the model for "The Doctor of Geneva."

Vendler notes that the use of "Chatillon" may be a reference to "Stevens' recurrent châteaux, built by his figures resembling, in their desire for a mise-en-scène, the father of Auroras," but that the "passage remains obscure" (332n). Cook argues persuasively that "Chatillon is...a family name, or at least a desired family name," noting that in a 1945 letter to Paule Vidal "Stevens speaks of his ancestor, Gaspard de Châtillon, grandson of Coligny,\textsuperscript{11} 'one of the great Protestant figures of his time'" (302).

\textsuperscript{11} Gaspard II de Coligny (1519-1572), the military leader and close advisor to Charles IX killed in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of Huguenots. He was born in Châtillon-sur-Loing, and as a result was known as \textit{l'amiral de Châtillon}, and also sometimes referred to as Gaspard de Châtillon de Coligny (GDEL). His grandson, Gaspard III de Coligny (1584-1646), known as the \textit{maréchal de Châtillon}, is who Stevens refers to in his letter. Stevens owned Walter Besant's \textit{Gaspard de Coligny, Marquis de Châtillon}, see Appendix.
Given his genealogical interests and the letter to Paule Vidal, I agree that Stevens intended "Chatillon" primarily as a reference to "Gaspard de Châtillon," or even to Coligny himself. As patriarchal ancestors both are appropriate prototypical father figures, even if presiding over a "loud, disordered mooch." The various other possible connotations of "Chatillon," both as person and location, add referential ambiguity in an effect that Stevens was fond of using.

The "Chatillon" allusion is thus an interesting example of Stevens' poetic use of his heredity, and it is his sole reference to his French ancestral background. He occasionally used familial names, such as Blandina in "Analysis of a Theme" and the title of "The Bed of Old John Zeller" (1944), but this is the only example where his

12 Stevens' French roots, his claim of descent from "Gaspard de Châtillon" aside, are somewhat unclear. He was told early on in his genealogical research that he descended, on his mother's side, from "The Lady Clothilde de Valois Zellaire" (L 399). Bates notes:

He succeeded in tracing his mother's family back to the original European emigrant, a Huguenot exile named Clothilde Zeller. Some of Clothilde's descendants claimed she was a Valois, a member of the French royal family; but Stevens, in the spirit of disinterested inquiry that characterized his research, disputed their claim. The evidence suggested that Clothilde was a German of common stock. (279)

Stevens' letter to Paule Vidal likely came before he had thoroughly investigated the background of Clothilde Zeller. In a 1948 letter he wrote "I am happy and satisfied about being a member of an old and rugged Pennsylvania Dutch family without the help of any coat of arms and without any nonsense about royalty or nobility" (Bates, "To Realize the Past" 614).

13 Holly Stevens writes that her father refers specifically to his great-grandfather in the poem "The Bed of Old John Zeller".... The name is also
genealogical interests and his Francophilia are combined. Bates points out that Stevens' poetic personae have turned "from dandified clowns and masterful heroes to figures resembling his own parents" (277).

The historic French atmosphere summoned up by the "Chatillon" reference continues when the poet calls the hosts "hospitaliers," an original spelling of the modern English "hospitalier," which was adapted from Old French in the twelfth to thirteenth century (OED).¹⁴ "Hospitaliers" is also the modern French spelling, and in both languages it indicates people, often members of religious orders or hospices, whose duty it is to care for strangers and visitors (Larousse). In his "hospitaliers" spelling Stevens is emphasizing foreign origins as well as the long history of use in English, both of which add to a sense of age and antiquity. This makes for quite a different French-connected effect than the more familiar "grandeurs" and "denouement," whose etymological origins are not emphasized. "Hospitaliers" is further down a scale of familiarity than "grandeurs" or "denouement," less common than either of them because of its foreign and archaic quality, and as a result mentioned in "Two Versions of the Same Poem." Blandina in "Analysis of a Theme" and Jacomyntje in "Extraordinary References" are also figures from the genealogy. (L 4)

Bates notes that "Blandina" or "Blandenah" "was the name of at least three women in the Stevens line" (A Mythology of Self 285-6n).

¹⁴ The earliest examples of usage are from the fourteenth century, such as Chaucer's Parson's Tale circa 1386: "Folk that been entred in-to ordre as subdeke or preest or hospitaliers" (OED).
makes for a much more striking effect. It is also less familiar within the context of Stevens' poetry, because unlike "grandeurs" and "denouement," it carries no weight of previous French associations.

The meaning of "hospitaliers" is somewhat incongruous given the "unherded herds" of "brute-like guests" and the poet's discontentment. Vendler sees the negativity of this scene as in line with Stevens' argument throughout "Auroras," indicating his "revulsion against that deliberate primitivism of his own which wants summer, not winter" (252). The archaic sound and effect of "hospitaliers" also looks forward to the last stanza of the poem, with its antiquated sound and its rejection of peaceful summer imagery:

In hall harridan, not hushful paradise,
To a haggling of wind and weather, by these lights
Like a blaze of summer straw, in winter's nick.

Vendler notes that

The energy of repudiation directed towards Credences of Summer is nowhere clearer than in this igniting of the Oley hay mows. As they go up in flame, in a blaze of summer straw, they produce the streamers of the auroras, and the hushful paradise of August gives way to the hall harridan. (248)

The spare French presence in "Auroras" is not typical of most of Stevens' recent long poems;\textsuperscript{15} the elaborate allusive play and strong poetic personae of Notes and Esthétique du Mal are notably lacking. It does, however, to

\textsuperscript{15} The exception to this is "Credences of Summer," the seasonal companion-poem to "The Auroras," which has a minimal French presence.
some extent anticipate An Ordinary Evening in New Haven, Stevens' last long poem. Uses of French there, while playing somewhat larger roles, will remain comparatively rare as well as dense and self-referential.

The uses of French in the shorter poems of Auroras follow the patterns of the longer poems in that they are relatively infrequent as well as complex. "The Bouquet" (1950) contains French-connected word-play and references characteristic of the volume. It is a poem of visual perception, of "distinction between the particular of the eye and the abstract of the imagination," as Benamou points out. The nominal subject is a bouquet of flowers, seen and perceived in various ways throughout the stanzas.

"Bouquet" is a French-adopted word, which although familiar in English, sets the stage for the various uses of French diction which begin in the first lines of the poem:

Of medium nature, this farouche extreme
Is a drop of lightning in an inner world,
Suspended in temporary jauntiness.

"Farouche," a French word used as an adjective in English since 1765, indicates something that is shy and repellent in manner (OED). In French, farouche means wildness and ferocity, as of a beast (Larousse).

16 "Wallace Stevens: Some Relations Between Poetry and Painting" 244.
17 "Bouquet" has been used in English since 1716 (OED).
18 Farouche is listed as a partly-naturalized foreign word (OED).
19 The OED notes that "farouche" is of unknown origin and that the "received connexion" with the Latin ferocem, cruel,
combined cross-linguistic effect suggests an object of perception that is hard to fully grasp, or even to approach. This is associated with the "temporary" visual clarity of a jar of flowers seen in a flash of lightning, where lightning and bouquet are both actually and metaphorically "Crowded with apparitions suddenly gone." Doggett notes that "each object is seen as the image of itself" (152).

"Farouche" stands out because of its prominent foreign sound and effect. It is much less common and familiar than "bouquet," for example, which has been thoroughly assimilated into English, and this gives its strong French meaning further emphasis. Its foreign quality increases the sense of wildness; it is a wild French word, as it were, one that has been little tamed or adapted.

The use of "farouche" is also striking because the feral French meaning suggests a savagery that amounts to an almost physical risk, and this implicit wildness and sense of peril contrast with the cerebral and domestic, and hence civilized, setting of the poem: "One enters, entering home, / The place of meta-men and para-things." The poet is exploring a contrast between the sophisticated veneer of ironic or effete "Frenchy" connotations, in this case associated with the quasi-pedantic "meta-men," and the savage or untamed associations of "farouche."

is "untenable." Stevens, however, plays on this false etymology. 20 The phrase "meta-men and para-things" comes from From Pieces of Paper (A Poet's Growth 185).
The poet further comments somewhat ironically on the ways in which the bouquet is perceived and on the figures who perceive it. There is a sense in which the bouquet of flowers is over-perceived by the "meta-men:" it is "quirked / And queered by lavishings of their will to see" and as a result becomes "part of a dithering." From this point of view the bouquet is "farced, finikin."

"Farce" in English is adopted the French farcir, to stuff, and as a noun indicates a comic dramatic work (OED). As a mostly obsolete verb, it also means to stuff (in cookery and taxidermy) (OED). Stevens is using it as a verb and playing on both meanings, suggesting that "the rudiments in the jar" are both comic, and stuffed, as it were, like a stuffed animal or flowers "growing in glue." In this there is the suggestion that the bouquet, once alive and "farouche," is now somehow static because of the kind of examination directed towards it. It has become "transfixed, transpierced," like a wild animal now dead and preserved as a trophy, or a Prufrockian insect pinned and wriggling on the wall.

The titular bouquet is also described as one of the "things of medium nature," which are distinguished from "choses of Provence, growing / In glue." The "choses of Provence" represent objects of perception that are somehow distanced from reality or in stasis, like dried flowers as

21 Both sense of "farce" originally come to English via French from the Latin farcire, to stuff (OED).
compared to a bouquet of live flowers. That they are from Provence furthers the sense of aesthetic and physical distance because they are imported and somewhat exotic, like the dried lavender and herbes de Provence from that Southern region.

The kind of exaggerated perception practiced by the "meta-men," is associated here, as it is in poems such as "The Doctor of Geneva" and "Homunculus et la Belle Étoile," with the Harmonium-era sense of fastidious French-associated aestheticism and pedantic intellectuality. Again, this sense contrasts with the savage French implications of "farouche." There is also a submerged argument about kinds of thought and perception in this contrast and in the "received" etymology of "farouche." Stevens has on occasion used terms of ferocity and violence to describe intense and desirable mental activity, such as the "rage for order" at the heart of "The Idea of Order at Key West," or the "savage scrutiny" of "Credences of Summer" VII, and here this kind of ferocious or "farouche" thought can be set against the "dithering" intelligence of the "meta-men."

In the last section of the poem the analysis of the "meta-men" is brought down to earth, literally, as a soldier, perhaps one of Stevens' French soldiers, enters the house and knocks over the flowers:

He bumps the table. The bouquet falls on its side. He walks through the house, looks around him and then leaves. The bouquet has slopped over the edge and lies on the floor.
The house is empty ("No one is there"), and the examining "meta-men" have apparently departed. The bouquet is no longer "farced" or metaphoric; its palpable reality is asserted and emphasized by the physical interaction with the soldier. This is emphasized by the straightforward syntax of the short unadorned sentences in this stanza, which contrast the sound and effect of words like "bumps" and "slopped" with earlier lavish descriptive phrases like "splashings in a penumbra." This also accentuates the break from the "finikin" perceptions of the "meta-men."

Joseph Carroll notes that "The Bouquet" concerns itself "with the opposition between 'reality' (unadorned sensory perception) and an imaginative transformation of reality through metaphor." By the end of the poem, the bouquet is in a sense "farouche" again. It has been stripped of metaphor and of the pedantic associations of the "meta-men" in a movement that recalls the rejection of fanciful imagery in poems like "The Man on the Dump," "Montrachet-le-Jardin," and "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas."

An evocative use of French diction comes in "The Beginning" (1947), an elegiac poem about a dead or departed female figure who figuratively represents summer: "The house is empty. But here is where she sat / To comb her dewy hair." The poem ends with a bird song chorus: "Now, the first tutoyers of tragedy / Speak softly, to begin with, in the eaves."

22 Wallace Stevens' Supreme Fiction: A New Romanticism 278.
Tutoyer is the French verb indicating use of the "tu" form of address, the French second-person singular pronoun. Tutoyeur is the French noun form of the verb, spelled "tutoyer[s]" by Stevens in this poem.23 "Tutoyer" is not used as a noun form in English; Stevens' nominal use of "tutoyers" is a bilingual play between English and French.

The tu form is used for informal address, mostly communication with persons familiar or inferior enough not to require the polite vous form, and, as Cook points out, with God (239). In this way "tutoyers" connotes familiarity and casualness. The phrase "tutoyers of tragedy" suggests speakers (or singers) who address tragedy informally. As birds, the "tutoyers" can be read as having an informal, familiar relation with nature and thus with the "tragedy" of cyclical seasonal change, in this case the passage from summer to fall, and the accompanying inevitability of decay and death: "the rust and rot of the door through which she went."

Stevens plays on both senses of "of," and "tutoyers of tragedy" also suggests speakers who represent or speak for tragedy. In this sense a tutoyer of tragedy might be an elegist, if an informal or intimate one. The song of the birds would then be one of mourning for the passage of summer.

23 "Tutoyer" has been used as a verb in English since 1697 in the same sense as the French, but is marked as partly-naturalized because it has retained French spelling and pronunciation (OED).
The "tu" form and birdsong association, however, recalls Notes toward a Supreme Fiction II VI where the poet writes of "the jug-throated robin pouring out, / Bethou, bethou, bethou me in my glade." Stevens writes in a 1943 letter that "bethou me" is equivalent to "Tutoyez-moi" (L 438n). Cook observes of the Notes passage that "Stevens' word-play captures something of his mixed feelings about birdsong and bethouing - the sense of intimacy, with all the poetic and spiritual implications" (239). The use of "tutoyers" in "The Beginning" carries the weight of his earlier "attack," which itself brings to bear the long history of birdsong tropes and Stevens' antipathy towards "poets...who locate birdsong in a paradise" (240).

Given Stevens' ongoing arguments about traditional birdsong tropes, the "tutoyers of tragedy" cannot be assumed to be natural elegists, or even to be expressing mourning, as this succumbs to the pathetic fallacy. Like the later "gold-feathered bird" in "Of Mere Being" (1954), they sing "without human meaning, / Without human feeling, a foreign song." Their song is not an anthropomorphized reaction to death; the passage of summer and the inevitability of change are only a "tragedy" to humans.

"Tutoyers" also has an onomatopoeic effect, with the 'tut' sound recalling the tooting or tootling of birds. That they are the "first tutoyers" intimates the early-morning sounds of birds, which accompany sunrise as they "Speak softly, to begin with, in the eaves." This morning
image suggests that "The Beginning" is that of a new day as well as of the autumn of the volume's title.

Stevens liked "The Beginning" enough to include it as one of only eight poems chosen from Auroras for a projected Knopf publication of selected poems. The bilingual play, evocative birdsong imagery, and subtle elegiac feel of the poem make it clear why it was one of his favorites.

"Questions Are Remarks" (1949) also uses cross-linguistic word-play. The poem is about the contrast between an adult's and a child's impressions of the sun, the adult who sees it "with so much rhetoric," and "the grandson" who "sees it as it is." Throughout the poem the poet compares young and old interpretations of the sight of the sun, beginning with what is implicitly the older view: "The sun aches and ails and returns halloo / Upon the horizon amid adult enfantillages."

"Enfantillages," a French word with no English usage, indicates words or actions more appropriate to a child than an adult (Larousse). This childishness paradoxically refers to the accepted adult "vision" of the sun "that rises with so much rhetoric." "Adult enfantillages" is implicitly critical of the adult view, as "enfantillages" is not complimentary. One usually associates childishness with intellectual immaturity and frivolity, but in this case Stevens has reversed the usual associations and made the adult point of view inconsequential while the child's

impressions are seen as discerning and wise. The oxymoronic figure expresses the irony of a return to a child-like state in old age, which is not accompanied by the perceptual purity of a child.

The "adult enfantillages" are linked linguistically and thematically with the "drowsy, infant, old men" in the final line. Cook notes Stevens' play on the Latin *infans*, unable to speak, in her discussion of "Infanta Marina" (1921) (40-41), and this also relates to "Questions Are Remarks" where the "infant" old men are unable to speak like children as it were, unable to express themselves fully like the grandson whose "question is complete because it contains / His utmost statement." Vendler writes that the old man's questions are "improper anthropomorphic harassments of nature. The sun rises anew, but the old man still vests it in antique appearances, in the old rhetoric, and in the pathetic fallacy" (334n).

The child is referred to as "Peter the voyant." "Voyant" is a French word, one of the meanings of which is a person who is gifted with or makes a career of extra-sensory perception (Larousse). It is used in English to indicate someone with a strong degree of mental perception, a visionary (OED). The English meaning does not include the

25 "Infant" and the French *enfant*, the root of "enfantillages," both come from the same Latin origin (OED).
26 Stevens spoke of his grandson Peter as "the voyant" (A Poet's Growth 156).
27 "Voyant" is marked as a non- or partially-naturalized French word (OED).
extra-sensory connotations of the French.

"Voyant" is a present participle as well as a noun form of the verb voir, to see; Stevens plays on all of these meanings. Peter is a "voyant" in a direct sense of voir because he looks or sees. He is also a "voyant" following the English meaning because of his clear conception of the sun, which is unfettered with the "antique acceptances" that adults place upon it. Finally he is a voyant in the French, extra-sensory use of the word because his vision metaphorically extends beyond that of adults as he is able to perceive things that the "old men" cannot. In this sense he has access to things beyond normal perception, which is to say adult perception.

Interestingly, "clairvoyant" in English carries the same extra-sensory meaning as voyant in French (OED A2), while clairvoyant in French is similar in meaning to the English "voyant." In this way, Peter is both a clairvoyant and a "clairvoyant" as well as a "voyant" and a voyant.

Stevens' bilingual word-play in "Questions are Remarks" thus operates in two different ways. The "enfantillages" play creates a cross-linguistic effect extending the infant/infans pun and using different English and French words in a similar sense that reflects on shared Latin origins. "Enfantillages," although a foreign word, is used less for its French resonance than it is for the etymological play with "infant." Its foreign quality does, however, give it a certain ornateness that makes it stand
out strongly and accentuates Stevens' implicit criticism of
the rigid adult view. On the other hand, "voyant" is not
used ironically at all, and is part of a characteristic
word-play that uses different English and French meanings of
the same word and moves back and forth between the
languages, exploiting the differences in application between
the two.

Stevens' uses of French reference and allusion in
Auroras are also relatively scarce. "In the Element of
Antagonisms" (1947) and "Celle Qui Fût Héaulmiette" (1950)
contain French references that operate slightly differently
from those previously discussed. This is because, as Bates
notes, the references have already been previously
"textualized" (SPBS 7); their French-associated meaning and
resonance are significantly related to their original
sources.

In "In the Element of Antagonisms" Stevens writes:
"Birds twitter pandemoniums around / the idea of the
chevalier of chevaliers." Cook notes:

Keats and Milton and Hopkins are...recalled, though not
as in the quiet closing of Sunday Morning but "in the
element of antagonisms." Stevens uses a different verb
from To Autumn...and a discordant noise from Paradise
Lost...in order to attack a "chevalier of chevaliers"
("O my chevalier," said Hopkins of a bird). Or rather,
to attack such an "idea." (300)

In this way, Stevens' use of the French-adopted
"chevalier"28 echoes Hopkins' "The Windhover":

28 "Chevalier" in English is a Middle English adoption from
the Anglo-French chevaler and the Old and Modern French
chevalier. It is used as early as 1292 to indicate a
Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

Hopkins' ecstatic reaction is rendered in images of power and beauty that peak in the invocation, as the kestrel becomes something valiant and magnificent, like a knight in shining armour. Stevens echoes Hopkins' use of "chevalier" and gives it a negative shading in his own poem, ironically increasing its effect by making it a "chevalier of chevaliers." In the context of Stevens' ongoing arguments against bird tropes, the heroic associations placed upon Hopkins' bird become sentimental and anthropomorphized, and are scorned by both poet and other birds. The "one man" is already treated ironically, "On his gold horse striding, like a conjured beast, / Miraculous in its panache and swish," and the image is made richer with the implicit negative treatment of Hopkins' trope. Stevens' criticism of the "chevalier of chevaliers" depends to some extent on Hopkins' earlier use for the full unfolding of his "attack."

Slightly different is Stevens' use of an already "textualized" phrase for the title of "Celle Qui Fût Héaulmiette." Bates notes a 1953 letter where Stevens

---

horseman, especially a mounted soldier or a knight, although this usage is now archaic (OED la). More modern usages include indication of membership in honorific orders of knighthood, and a general appellation of honour for a courteous or chivalrous person (OED 1b, 2).

29 Earlier examples of already "textualized" titles include "Cy Est Pourtraict, Madame Ste Ursule, et les Unze Milles Vierges," taken from a fifteenth-century French translation of Voragine's Legenda Aurea, and Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects,
writes that the title was suggested by Rodin's sculpture *Celle qui fut la belle heaulmière*; Rodin, in turn, named his sculpture after the old courtesan in Villon's poem *Regrets de La belle heaulmière*, part of Le Grand Testament, one line of which reads, 'La belle qui fut heaulmière.' *(SPBS 7)*

Stevens' title alludes to both Rodin and Villon, making for two levels of associative meaning. One of these levels is the fifteenth-century context and language of Villon's poem, which Stevens earlier summoned up in "Ballade of the Pink Parasol" and "Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et les Unze Milles Vierges." The other is the modern context of Rodin's sculpture. 30 Stevens also brings in an American geographical setting with his use of the North American hemlocks: 31 "out of the shine of the hemlocks, / Among the bare and crooked trees, / She found a helping from the cold." "Celle Qui Fût Héaulmiette" thus contains a fusion of medieval and modern as well as of French and American, a synthesis that recalls some of the settings and cultural colourings characteristic of *Harmonium*. Fisher observes that Stevens "creates a liaison between past and present art, Old and New Worlds" (146).

Stevens' adaptation of Rodin's and Villon's titles combines the two and also changes heaulmière to taken from a late-sixteenth-century manuscript *(SPBS 18).*

30 Rodin's sculpture was made between 1880 and 1883 *(The Sculpture of Auguste Rodin, 141).* Barbara Fisher notes that Stevens "saw the cast of the figure that was given in 1910 to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York" *(Wallace Stevens: The Intensest Rendezvous 144).*

31 Fisher points out that "Stevens is writing strongly in an American grain, in sharp contrast with the French of the title" (146).
"Héaulmiette," a proper name. The diminutive name distances his poem somewhat from its sources and also suggests a change from the old heaulmière lamenting her lost youth towards a younger figure.32 This fits with the poem's movement from winter to "the first warmth of spring," and the ending description of a "child / Of a mother with vague severed arms / And of a father bearded in his fire."

The French resonance in "Celle Qui Fût Héaulmiette" comes largely from Stevens' titular reworking of Villon and Rodin, and to a lesser extent from the body of the poem, for example the allusion to Villon's armoress in "that native shield." Even so, the title and poem continue to link French with the themes of parentage, old age, and childhood that run through the Auroras volume, as well as illustrating Stevens' layered use of French sources.

Another interesting French reference comes in "The Novel" (1948), where Stevens quotes a letter from his acquaintance José Rodriguez Feo.33 The letter discusses Feo's mother's fears about his health and welfare while he visited Paris:

Mother was afraid I should freeze in the Parisian hotels.

32 Fisher writes that "Villon's ironic line, 'the beauty who was the helmet-maker's wife' becomes, virtually, 'that one who could be the little (child of the) Héaumière'" (145). Given Stevens' somewhat erratic use of French accents, I am not entirely persuaded that he intended there to be a clear change in meaning from the third-person passé simple fut (was) to the subjunctive imperfect fut (could be).

33 Stevens wrote of "The Novel" in a 1948 letter that "José is José Rodriguez Feo of Havana and the language quoted is taken from his letter" (L 617n).
She had heard of the fate of an Argentine writer. At night, he would go to bed, cover himself with blankets —

Protruding from the pile of wool, a hand,
In a black glove, holds a novel by Camus. She begged That I stay away. These are the words of José...

In a sense this reference to Paris and to Camus has already been "textualized," if only in a private letter, making it a French reference once (or twice) removed.34 The reference is extended as the poet compares himself with the writer in the novel: "It is odd, too, how that Argentine is oneself, / Feeling the fear that creeps beneath the wool." The emotion of the Argentine, part of which is implicit existential fear engendered by the Camus novel of the title,35 has become something larger and more universal: "And one trembles to be so understood and, at last, / To understand, as if to know became / The fatality of seeing things too well."

Stevens' reference to Feo's letter in "The Novel" recalls his earlier use of Anatole Vidal's quotation and portrait in "The Latest Freed Man." In both cases he takes the name and words of a friend and incorporates them along with French literary, geographical, and artistic references into poetic discussions that give them significance beyond their original meanings and sources.

"Angel Surrounded by Paysans" (1950), the last poem in

34 Stevens also uses Spanish and Cuban ("vividest Varadero") references in the poem, at one point quoting Garcia Lorca: "Ollala blanca en el blanco." This quotation was taken from a letter by his acquaintance Thomas McGreevy, making this too a once-removed reference (L 687).
35 Baird notes that the book in the poem "speaks of a final nothingness" (215).
the Auroras volume, has an interesting history, which like Stevens' uses of Vidal and Feo, exemplifies the French connection between his day-to-day life and his poetry. The title is personally meaningful, and also in a sense previously "textualized," in this case by Stevens himself. In October of 1949 Stevens received a Tal Coat painting entitled Still Life, and renamed it Angel Surrounded By Peasants, using a title he had previously recorded in From Pieces of Paper. 36 In describing the painting Stevens noted:

The angel is the Venetian glass bowl on the left with the little spray of leaves in it. The peasants are the terrines, bottles and the glasses that surround it. This title alone tames it as a lump of sugar might tame a lion. (L 650)

Shortly after receiving the Tal Coat Stevens published a poem called "Angel Surrounded by Paysans." 37 He explained the poem as a treatment of the imaginative creation of divinity in human minds, noting that "the point of the poem is that there must be in the world about us things that solace us quite as fully as any heavenly visitation" (L 661). The poem itself bears little direct connection with

36 Stevens also later renamed Cavaillès' Port of Cannes as Sea Surface Full of Clouds (L 814). These are the only two cases where Stevens (re)named paintings after poem titles (or perhaps vice-versa in the case of "Angel Surrounded by Paysans"). Along with the reference to Labasque's portrait of Vidal in "The Latest Freed Man" and to Marchand in "Connoisseur of Chaos," these are the only direct links between Stevens' uses of French art in his poems and his private collection. See A Poet's Growth 189-90 and L 649-50.
the Tal Coat painting but the development of its title is worth contrasting with Stevens' other uses of already "textualized" French references in his titles. 38

It is interesting to note that Stevens used "peasants" for the Tal Coat title but used the French-descended "paysan" instead for the poem in an indirect reference to its French source. "Paysan" in English is an obscure form, 39 actually the French word from which "peasant" descended, adding a sense of archaism to the rusticity of the peasant figures and also subtly emphasizing the ancient quality of the angel and the ideas associated with it. Bates observes that "the angel tells the countrymen that he is one of them, a paysan" (287).

Stevens' famous lyric is not an ecphrastic poem, even given the highly personal and subjective association between the Tal Coat painting and the body of the poem. It is not, however, far-fetched to suggest that the imaginative impulse to give form and name to the painting and the objects in it is similar in Stevens' mind to the impulse to create imaginative objects like angels, and more generally, to create poetry. In the case of "Angel Surrounded by Paysans," it is an imaginative impulse that is closely

---

38 Paul Dow recalls seeing the painting at Stevens' house: "There was a table there, and on that was a picture of a bowl of flowers [by Pierre Tal Coat]. He had quite a bit to say about it. He thought it was a beautiful thing, quite stimulating, and it had great value. 'By the way, I've written a poem ['Angel Surrounded by Paysans'] about that picture'" (Parts 52).
39 The last recorded use of this spelling in English occurs in 1523 (OED).
linked with his interest in the relationship between writing and painting, as well as to his love of France and French.

*An Ordinary Evening in New Haven* (1949) is Stevens' last major long poem. As with *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction*, it contains a representative variety of his uses of French, including assorted French-connected diction and word-play, French literary allusion, geographical references, and a French narrative voice. It is a lengthy poem, second only to *Notes* in length, and proportionately, French does not play an overly large role; it does not have the prominent presence that it did in *Notes* and *Esthétique du Mal*, for example. French is one note among many in *An Ordinary Evening*, if one that runs throughout and is important in some of the main scenarios and themes.

*An Ordinary Evening* is a strongly American poem, and this comes at least in part from the title and Stevens' related considerations about sense of place. Cook argues that "the poem is centered on New Haven and nowhere else," and that it can be read "as meditation on an actual city" (267-8). American geography is emphasized throughout the poem through such things as elms, squirrels, mockingbirds,  

40 "There seems to exist a corpus of remarks in respect to painting, most often the remarks of painters themselves, which are as significant to poets as to painters" (NA 160).  
41 The only French element significantly absent in *An Ordinary Evening* in comparison with *Notes* is the presence of prominent French-related personae like the tramp in the "slouching pantaloons" or the "Fat girl, terrestrial."  
42 Bloom notes that New Haven is "traditionally the land of the elm trees" (333) and Cook adds that "New Haven is known as Elm-Tree City" (268).
and a mythologized quasi-Floridian "land of the lemon trees." There is, in fact, more American geographical contextualization in An Ordinary Evening than in any other late long poem, with the possible exception of "Credences of Summer." This is related to the French presence in An Ordinary Evening when near the end Stevens compares New Haven and Paris in a consideration of places "real and unreal," creating a late Franco-American geographical fusion.

Occasionally in An Ordinary Evening there is the impression that one is listening to a French voice, with the suggestion, as in "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas" and Notes, that it is the voice of a lecturer or professor figure. As in Notes, the voice is diffuse and intermittent, and serves as a kind of pedagogical alter-ego for Stevens. In some ways this voice is an echo of Stevens' earlier French-connected narrative selves, and a subtle acknowledgment of their presence in previous long poems.

Cook notes the academic setting, and one of the suggestions is that it is the voice of a Yale scholar, perhaps Professor Eucalyptus. The voice is, however, more casual and less explicitly didactic than it is in "Extracts" and Notes; it evokes more the feeling of walking around New Haven listening to a speculative discussion than of

43 "Yale University is situated in New Haven: its faculty (Professor Eucalyptus, xiv, xxii), its 'chapels and ...schools' (vii)" (268).
44 Cook points out that "the movements of the meditator can be mapped. Most of the poem is in daylight, with the last
attending a lecture.

Presence of the French voice is sometimes suggested by the seemingly offhand insertion of French figures of speech. A good example of this comes in section X: "It is fatal in the moon and empty there. But here, allons." "Allons" is the first-person plural imperative of aller, to go, and is used in English to mean 'let us go,' and also as an interjection meaning 'well!' (OED). Stevens uses it as an interjection and here it has the effect of a verbal shrug, dismissing and deflating the ostensible heaviness of the moon line and moving the auditor on to the next point.

Another common figure of speech is used near the end of the poem in section XXX: "The last leaf that is going to fall has fallen. / The robins are là-bas, the squirrels, in tree-caves, / Huddle together in the knowledge of squirrels." The "là-bas," used in a casual conversational manner, indicates something situated at a distance (Larousse), and recalls Notes II V: "là-bas, là-bas, the cool bananas grew." In both cases it suggests an informal French voice in much the same way as the "allons" in section X.

few cantos taking place in the evening as night falls. The title suggests that the whole series is under the aegis of such an evening meditation" (268). 45 "Allons" is marked as non-naturalized French word (OED). 46 The most recent example of usage is actually taken from a 1954 letter by Stevens, where he uses it in a similar fashion to An Ordinary Evening: "So that if in ten years I seem to be fifty, allons!" (OED, L 825). 47 "Là-bas" is a common French expression not used in English.
The French voice is also hinted at in canto XI as the narrator comments on the others in the street with him who are

Free from their majesty and yet in need
Of majesty, of an invincible clou,
A minimum of making in the mind.

"Clou" in French means nail, and is used in English, in a meaning taken from French, to indicate "the point of greatest interest, or central idea" (OED). The short definite French sound makes the word stand out in the stanza, and sharply closes the multi-syllabic line. In the context of this section, "clou" means an answer, a "verity," that is unavailable to the men walking "the metaphysical streets." Richardson hears a "'clou'-clue" pun, which adds a certain bilingual ambiguity and ironically plays down the significance of the "invincible clou," making it a hint instead of a central truth (The Later Years 353).

A French voice again surfaces in section XXV, as part of a description of a poet figure who, seated beside a guitar, thinks "C'est toujours la vie qui me regarde." This translates as 'life is always looking at me' or 'life always concerns me.' Charles Berger comments that "the hidden self [is] brought to the surface with the aid of French" and equates this with the italicized French phrases that serve

48 "Clou" is marked as non-naturalized French word (OED).
49 Baird sees the "clou" as "the nail of the joiner, recalling 'Peter Quince at the Clavier' from the earliest display of Stevens' technique" (44).
50 It is not clear whether the phrase is an actual quotation; I have been unable to find a source for it and Stevens does not identify it.
the same purpose in "Sea Surface Full of Clouds." I would argue that this late phrase is meant to be spoken by the French-associated narrative voice present in sections X, XI, XII and XXX, who is observing the "hidalgo," and who is more one of Stevens' externalized poetic speakers than an indicator of hidden inner self.

There are other uses of French-connected diction in An Ordinary Evening lacking the casual conversational quality that I take as a sign of the diffuse narrative voice, although they may still be indicators of that presence. In section III French-connected diction is used to emphasize imagination and fantasy: "It is to the hero of midnight that we pray / On a hill of stones to make beau mont thereof."

"Beau," adopted from the late Old French beau, can be used as an adjective or a noun in English. One of the adjectival uses of "beau," now obsolete, indicates something or someone fair or beautiful (OED A1). The other adjectival use, also somewhat antiquated, is as a term of affection, friendship, or politeness, which is often used to address relations or friends (A2). "Beau mont" thus implies a fair or beautiful mount addressed in a polite and friendly way. "Beau" has a somewhat antique effect, especially in combination with the equally archaic French-tinged "mont."  

51 Forms of Farewell 101.  
52 While this use is not marked as obsolete, the most recent example is from 1513.  
53 "Mont" is an obsolete form of "mount," originally adapted from the Latin mons but also "taken up afresh" from the
In Notes toward a Supreme Fiction I VIII "the MacCullough," or "major man" is referred to as "Beau linguist." "Beau" used as a noun carries the connotation of a suitor, as well as that of a dandy or a fop (OED B1,2). "Beau linguist" suggests a poet who is a lover of words, perhaps one who uses language in a foppish fashion. In this way, a "Beau linguist" is a noble poet figure, a lover of beautiful language who is addressed in an affectionate and respectful, if somewhat dated, manner. The foppish associations of "beau," although not overly emphasized in this use, can create a mildly ironic effect suggesting that a "Beau linguist" is somehow frivolous. A derisive weight is certainly later placed upon "beau" in "Repetitions of a Young Captain" where a poet is requested to write about war in "beau language without a drop of blood," recalling the Secretary of Porcelain in "Extracts" who wanted evil "neatly glazed."

By referring to the hill as "beau mont" in An Ordinary Evening, the poet changes it and elevates it linguistically in much the same way that the "hill of stones" is changed and elevated symbolically by prayer. There is a mild French-based irony in "beau mont" carried over to some extent from the "beau language" of "Repetitions," which suggests that the prayer on the "hill of stones," and its subsequent linguistic elevation, add up to mere embellishment and not genuine apotheosis of the "hero of French mont in the twelfth century (OED).
midnight." This is linked with Stevens' theme of poetic and imaginative purification, as he wrote in a 1949 letter:

My interest is to try to get as close as possible to the ordinary, the commonplace and the ugly as it is possible for a poet to get. It is not a question of grim reality but of plain reality. The object is of course to purge oneself of anything false. (L 636-7)

In this sense, fancy French-connected language and imagery are not part of "the ordinary:" in fact in its long Stevensian association with decorativeness, theatricality, and fantasy, French has often stood for much the opposite. This movement of purgation by which poets abolish "'That which is not ourselves: the regalia, / The attributions, the plume and helmet-ho,'" is a familiar one, and in its implied rejection of fanciful French associations (linguistic and otherwise) recalls similar movements in "The Man on the Dump," "Montrachet-le-Jardin," and "Extracts."

Stevens shows an interesting adaptation of French diction in his coining of "tournamonde" in section xv. In the midst of a series of cantos about Professor Eucalyptus, the poet describes the Professor's "instinct for earth, for New Haven, for his room / The gay tournamonde as of a single world / In which he is and as and is are one." This is contrasted with the "instinct for heaven" as he "sits in his room" and "seeks god in the rainy cloud." Stevens explains the use of "tournamonde":

Tournamonde is a neologism. For me, it creates the image of a world in which things revolve and the word is therefore appropriate in the colloquation of is and as. Curiously, this word, to which I paid considerable attention when I used it, originated, in my mind, in
the word mappemonde. I then got around to tournemonde, which would be a French neologism and then I changed it arbitrarily to tournamonde. I think that the word justifies itself in the sense of conveying an immediate, even though rather vague, meaning. (L 699)

Stevens thus uses French to create a compound word that is not available in English, and "tournamonde" connotes the sense of a perceived, mapped-out, and revolving world.

"Tournamonde" becomes a figure for one's sense of place, as the progressively smaller scope of the Professor's "instinct for earth, for New Haven, for his room" is encompassed in the "gay tournamonde as of a single world." In this sense the Professor is at the centre of his world, which revolves around him. The verb and preposition play, "as of a single world / In which he is and as and is are one," suggests that his sense of the "tournamonde" goes beyond his physical and geographical awareness (his location on the planet, in the city and room) to involve his self-awareness and his perceived relations to others; his sense of existence and of reality itself are tied in with his sense of place.

Sense of geographical location as part of one's sense of reality is also explored in section XXVIII, where Stevens uses Paris, as he has done in the past, as an archetypal urban scene. After considering "If it should be true that reality exists / In the mind," the poet states

> it follows that
> Real and unreal are two in one: New Haven
> Before or after one arrives or, say,

> Bergamo on a postcard, Rome after dark,
> Sweden described, Salzburg with shaded eyes
Or Paris in conversation at a café.

This passage is a consideration of how foreign places, particularly well-known ones, can be physically real because they are actual places with real people and buildings, but are also in a sense unreal once they are viewed as foreign, "on a postcard" or "with shaded eyes," since they are then distanced from the familiar.\(^5^4\) The locational associations and tropes appended to foreign locales distinguish them from the normal. The poet is also pointing out, though, that a sense of the foreign is a matter of perspective. Paris is not after all exotic to a Parisian, who might however experience or imagine New Haven (or Hartford or Reading) as a wondrous alien landscape. What is "real" in terms of location to an American may be "unreal" to a Frenchman (or Italian or Swede), and vice-versa. The poet is implying that "If it should be true that reality exists / In the mind," then sense of place does as well, and that one's sense of place is interconnected with one's sense of reality.

Stevens was intimately familiar with the ways in which foreign places are transformed by imaginative associations. He was fully aware of how his fascination with France affected his perception, that the country he so admired was in a sense "unreal," a complex and pleasurable illusion.

\(^5^4\) Lensing sees this passage as based on the postcards Stevens received from Barbara Church during a European tour in 1949, noting that she visited and sent postcards from the locales mentioned in the passage, which "were unreal to [Stevens'] own immediate experience, but vividly real through the agency of his friend's correspondence" (236).
cultivated in his mind: "I suppose that if I ever go to Paris the first person I meet will be myself since I have been there in one way or another for so long" (L 665).

In this way, it is entirely fitting that Paris should be included in Stevens' catalogue of foreign locales. Of all the other cities, Paris, particularly the Paris of cafés, bookshops, and museums, has the strongest hold on Stevens' imagination and rightfully holds its position at the end of the list of places that are both real and unreal.

It is interesting to compare this Paris passage with the Parisian setting of Notes, which, in a Biblical reading, becomes a kind of revisionist New Jerusalem. In An Ordinary Evening, Paris is also "precious fiction," but within an analytical consideration of how differences in perception make places seem real or unreal. In the later poem New Haven is also "new heaven," as Cook points out, but here the poet is moving not towards a supreme fiction but towards an expression of "plain reality": "If the Apocalypse is an extraordinary dawning in a new heaven, where else could an ordinary evening be for Stevens but in New Haven?" (270).

There are also two other "unreal" French-connected scenarios late in the poem, both of them with fanciful literary landscapes. In section XXI Stevens alludes to Baudelaire and Verlaine, and also indirectly to his own work of thirty-five years earlier in Carnet de Voyage. The section is about a fictive "black shepherd's isle," which
the poet also calls "Cythère." The "black shepherd's isle" recalls Baudelaire's "Un voyage à Cythère," with its "île triste et noire" that a voyager finds instead of the expected place of mythical beauty. Stevens does not, however, refer directly to the horror and disillusionment of Baudelaire's poem but rather uses "Cythère" abstractly as a symbol of "Romanza," fanciful romantic imagination. In Stevens' own early "Cytherean glade," the youthful poet celebrates Cythera as a fantasy land: "It was a place to sing in / And honor noble Life / For white doves to wing in, / And roses to spring in." Although he echoes Baudelaire in both, Stevens' early and late versions of Cythère seem closer to Verlaine's Fêtes galantes "Cythère," where sensory pleasures and immortal love dominate: "Un pavillion à claires-voies / Abrite doucement nos joies."

Stevens' late Cythère is, however, compared with "another isle" where "the senses give and nothing take," which Bloom sees as "an island of a more sympathetic imagination" (327). This other island, "the alternate romanza," is associated with the commonplace, "The bricks grown brittle in time's poverty / The clear," and as such

55 Baird comments on Stevens' use of the "Arcadian pastorals in the commedia" and of the "'lost [enchanted] island'" theme in this section (215n). Kathleen M. Lea notes the Commedia dell'arte pastoral setting of "a lost island inhabited by nymphs and shepherds" (Italian Popular Comedy 201), a setting that is echoed by both the "black shepherd's isle" and the "land of the lemon trees" in a subtle look back at Harmonium-era French associations. 56 "Romanza," an obsolete term adapted from the Italian romanzo, indicates a romance or romantic fancy (OED 1).
stands against Cythère, whether Baudelaire's dark post-romantic version or Verlaine's and Stevens' idyllic locales. The implication is that all versions of Cythère need to be surpassed, or opposed, to reach the desired "isolation / at the centre, the object of the will." This rejection of "romanza" in favor of an ostensible plainness of image and poetic purity is a familiar one in An Ordinary Evening and elsewhere.

In the last lines of the section both the "black shepherd's isle" and the "alternate romanza" are blended and swept away in a kind of naturalistic envoi as they become "a single voice in the boo-ha of the wind." The nonsense-sound of the wind, a quasi-translation of the onomatopoeic French brouhaha, makes for a humorous and dismissive commentary on imaginative escapism and the poet's attempts to "evade / The will of necessity, the will of wills" through whatever "romanza" he chooses.

Another literary locale is visited in section XXIX, where there is a French, or at least Mediterranean, geographical consciousness implicit as part the paradisal "land of the lemon trees": "They rolled their r's, there, in the land of citrons." The full sensory array of colour, scent, and sound in the southern land contrasts with the

57 The idea of "Cythère" reflecting an imaginative locale or state of mind that is to be surpassed or rejected looks back to From the Journal of Crispin, where Crispin is described as "an artful, most affectionate emigrant / From Cytherea" as part of his movement from an immature poetic state to a mature poetic existence.
autumnal "land of the elm trees." "Citron" is the French word for lemon, its original meaning in English as well, and is now associated with the citron fruit, a relative of the lemon and the lime. Both come originally from the Latin citrus (OED). Citrus fruits of all kinds are associated with the Southern hemisphere, notably Florida. Berger notes that "this lemony land conforms to the mythological locus Stevens called the visionary south" (104). The French-tinted "citrons" and the rolling Mediterranean "r's" combine with the Floridian citrus trees to produce a Franco-American locus amoenus.58

In the short, eleven-section version of the poem,59 this canto ends the sequence. This leaves the reader with the mariners on the paradisal isle, but armed with the knowledge that the land is "redescribed," a metaphor: "At last, in that blond atmosphere, bronzed hard, / They said, 'We are back in the land of the elm trees, / But folded over, turned round.'" In this sense the "land of citrons" is part of the "gay tournamonde." Longenbach comments that this section "offer[s] a parable of Stevens' quest for the

58 Cook observes that the lemon trees point "in part to Goethe's paradisal Italy and Stevens' once-loved American South, home of the New World mockingbird," also noting the poem's "allusive echoing of Whitman, and its fainter echoing of Milton - a compound farewell tribute to Stevens' masters, appropriately offered at the threshold of the earthly paradise" (290-2).
59 Stevens wrote An Ordinary Evening for the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences and read a shortened version at an Academy meeting in 1949. The order of verses in the shortened version is I, VI, IX, XII, XVI, XXII, XXVIII, XXX, XXXI, XXIX (L 636n, 662n).
ordinary; only by voyaging to an extraordinary world does he come to appreciate the commonplace world around him, recognizing that he never really left it" (290).

In the end, the uses of French in An Ordinary Evening, while not pervasive, are revealing and significant; the same is true of the Auroras volume itself. French-connected diction is used in the exploration of poetic and linguistic plainness, and Paris as a "real and unreal" city is used as a pivotal example of perceived sense of place along with the allusively-loaded "Cythère" and "land of citrons."

Throughout it all the faint voice of a French-associated narrator provides sporadic meditative commentary. This French-tinged narrative voice is in some ways exemplary of the French presence in Stevens' two final volumes; it is subtle, varied, and diffuse, and yet involved in central poetic issues and themes.

The poems in The Rock tend to be gentle and meditative,60 as well as deliberately concise; Stevens' uses of French throughout the book reflect that. French-connected diction is relatively infrequent, as are French allusions and references; as a result French has concentrated meaning and effect in this collection, much as

60 Stevens uses a Georges Enesco quotation as the epigraph for "The World as Meditation" (1952), part of which reads "Je vis un rêve permanent, qui ne s'arrête ni nuit ni jour." The epigraph gives the poem its title and also matches the overall mood of the volume; it is thus all the more fitting as the only quoted French passage in the volume.
it did in *Auroras*. French is personal and meaningful in *The Rock*, as it is in other volumes, but it has an additional conscious elegiac poignancy in these late poems as Stevens looks back at earlier uses, sometimes critically, sometimes fondly, and places them in the service of his final lyrical meditations.61

A fine example of Stevens' compact and powerful French-connected diction in *The Rock* occurs in "The Plain Sense of Things" (1950), an introspective poem about an ostensible failure of the imagination:

> After the leaves have fallen, we return
> To a plain sense of things. It is as if
> We had come to an end of the imagination,
> Inanimate in an inert savoir.

In this elegiac post-autumnal scenario the poet is considering the familiar theme of imaginative simplicity and ordinariness, this time recalling poems of failed inspiration like "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad." The weight of "the absence of the imagination" is placed on the oxymoronic figure of the "inert savoir."

"Savoir" is a French word used in English, meaning knowledge *(OED)*.62 In French it can be a verb indicating knowledge or ability, or a noun indicating knowledge itself *(Larousse)*. Both these definitions connote awareness, or at least mental activity, something opposed by "inert."

61 Cook notes that the late poems "are poems of last things, of memories, of repetitions, of attenuations, yet also of a fierce will to live and a love of this earth" (296).
62 "Savoir" is marked as non-naturalized word. The most recent usage is this example from "The Plain Sense of Things" *(OED).*
"Inert" is originally adapted from the Latin inert-em, meaning unskilled or sluggish. This meaning carries over into English where "inert" is used to describe a person or thing that is "not inclined for or capable of action," and can be applied to mental activity (OED 2). "Inert" is also used as a scientific term indicating something inanimate or without active properties (OED la,b). Stevens is playing on both meanings of "inert," those of physical slowness and actual inanimacy. The failure, or "absence," of imagination is made concrete in the "inert savoir," which emphasizes the poet's lack of inspiration to the point where it goes well beyond a matter of mental fatigue or inactivity and becomes something on a material and scientific level.

"Savoir" is syntactically and phonetically situated for maximum effect, bringing the line to a smooth close after the short, choppy syllables of lines 2, 3, and 4.63 "Inanimate in an inert savoir" has a strong static effect as the profusion of 'n' consonants in the repeated 'in an' sounds ("an end of the imagination, / Inanimate in an inert savoir") leading up to "savoir" creates an effect of multiple negativity, emphasizing inaction within inaction.

"Savoir," while used in English, is not very familiar and has a strong foreign effect that adds additional

63 Fisher notes that "the verses are cast as short, flat statements of fact, and endstopped with unusual frequency" (51).
64 Compound phrases such as "savoir-faire" are somewhat familiar in English, but "savoir" used alone is more unusual; there are only three examples of "savoir" usage and one of them is Stevens' own (OED).
emphasis and makes it stand out even more at the end of the
stanza. The "inert savoir" is equated with "an end of the
imagination" and "savoir" thus comes to stand, in a sense,
for the "fantastic effort" that has failed. This, as well
as its French sound and effect, summons up familiar French-
connected poetic associations of decoration and fancy,
which, like the exotic "turban," are no longer viable.
Linked with this is the decaying architecture trope, "The
greenhouse never so badly needed paint. / The chimney is
fifty years old and slants to one side," which contrasts
with the early structural metaphor for a fanciful French
imagination in "Architecture" (1918), "Our chiefest dome a
demoiselle of gold," and recalls the rejection of "Bastard
chateaux" in "Montrachet-le-Jardin."

The conditional phrasing of "It is as if / We had come
to an end of the imagination," is important, however, as it
suggests that it only seems as if there is a true failure of
inspiration, and allows for the recognition of a different
kind of imagination in the last two stanzas of the poem:
"Yet the absence of the imagination had / Itself to be
imagined." Longenbach notes that "Stevens tries to place
the power of poetry not in opposition to ordinary experience
but in the service of its recovery" (303).

In this way, the poet is acknowledging imaginative
associations while recognizing that they are currently of
little use in achieving "a plain sense of things." He
summons up a poetic imagination and simultaneously denies
its power because it is "inert" and is part of what must be rejected in order to get at "The great pond, / The plain sense of it, without reflections."

The use of "savoir" can also be seen as part of a poetic looking-back at French associations, even if in this case it includes the realization that the "essential gaudiness" of French has to be set aside "as a necessity requires." This kind of look back at French poetic associations happens in subtle ways throughout The Rock volume.

"Madame La Fleurie" (1951) is a French female who is waiting to "feed" on us, whom Cook calls "a wicked fairy-tale earth mother whose reality awaits us all," (301) noting that she is a "late form of Florida," the geographically personified seductress in Harmonium poems like "O Florida, Venereal Soil." Florida personified is related to French seductress figures, for example the girls in "The Plot against the Giant" and the "smoky demoiselles" in "Montrachet-le-Jardin," both because of their shared linguistic associations and their roles as destroyers of stoic male intellectuality and physical self-sufficiency. "Madame La Fleurie" is a more menacing seductress, a figure of death and organic decay, as man is literally "devoured by her," but she still bears a relation to the earlier figures. In fact one might argue that she is much more immediate and threatening to a poet in his seventies than the earlier potential usurpers of his youthful energies. Ellmann writes
that "'Madame La Fleurie' is a poem about a man who read[s] horror into nature, and instead of seeing her as a lady with flowers conceive[s] of her as a bearded queen, wicked in her dead light."65

"St Armorer’s Church from the Outside" (1952) has a notable French artistic reference, the only one in The Rock. The poem considers, somewhat ironically, the dilapidation of St Armorer’s church and uses it in a meditation on senses of old and new: "St Armorer’s was once an immense success. / It rose loftily and stood massively." Riddel comments that "St Armorer’s decay repudiates once more the nostalgias, and all forms which disallow ‘beginning, over and over’" (246).

In contrast with the crumbling titular church, the poet describes "His own" chapel: "No radiance of dead blaze, but something seen / In a mystic eye, no sign of life but life, / Itself." Of this "chapel of breath" the poet writes "It is like a new account of everything old, / Matisse at Vence and a great deal more than that."

"Matisse at Vence" refers to one of the French artist’s last major works. As part of his late work Matisse was commissioned to design and decorate the Chapelle du Rosaire des dominicaines in Vence, the southern French town where he lived for several years late in life.66 Finishing in 1951, he described the Chapel as "'the culmination of a life of

65 "Wallace Stevens’s Ice-Cream" 101.
66 Baird notes that Matisse "designed the Chapel...in its entirety: in its exterior and interior architecture, its vitraux, its frescoes, and its vestments" (311).
work and the coming into flower of an enormous and sincere effort'" (OCTA). Stevens, who was Matisse's contemporary,\(^6^7\) admired him\(^6^8\) and obviously considered his work at the Chapelle praiseworthy.

By working on frescoes and stained-glass at the Chapelle, Matisse was, in a sense, doing something "old," looking back to past traditions of decorative religious art. However, because it was done in Matisse's modern style, it becomes "a new account" of bygone artistic practices, an expression of "the need for each generation to be itself" and thus "part / Of that which is always beginning, over and over."

In this way, Stevens' reference to Matisse's Chapel as part of "This vif, this dizzle-dazzle of being new" is a tribute to the French artist's late work, a poetic recognition of an aging fellow spirit who was still producing fresh and innovative art.\(^6^9\) As a final French artistic reference it is entirely fitting for this volume and stage of Stevens' career.

In what can be seen as quiet closing nods at the role

---

\(^6^7\) Matisse lived from 1869-1954.
\(^6^8\) In a 1948 letter Stevens distinguished Matisse, Klee and Braque from art "without distinction" that "enjoys the completest possible prestige merely because it is modern" (L 574\(^\text{a}\)). Later the same year he complained that in the modern world "there is no painting because the only painting permitted is painting derived from Picasso or Matisse" (L 622). In a 1953 letter he noted "I detest orientalism," adding "although I like it well enough the way Matisse does it" (L 797).
\(^6^9\) Baird comments: "One concludes that Matisse and Stevens were fellows in the rarest of satisfactions known to man: the sense of the ultimate, the design realized" (311).
of French in his poetry, Stevens uses French-connected
diction with decorative and theatrical connotations for
subtle touches in three of his most personal late lyrics,
"Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour" (1951), "Not
Ideas About the Thing but the Thing Itself" (1954), and "Of
Mere Being."

"Final Soliloquy" is a self-examining poem in a similar
vein to "The Plain Sense of Things," where the poet looks
back, and in this case finds contentment. Bloom notes that
in this poem "the poet and the muse are about to be so
joined that every remaining poem will be a dialogue of one"
(359) and that this union is represented in the figure of
"the intensest rendezvous." In "Final Soliloquy" Stevens
takes the social connotation of "rendezvous" and expands
it to represent a mental communion:

Here, now, we forget each other and ourselves.
We feel the obscurity of an order, a whole,
A knowledge, that which arranged the rendezvous.

Stevens has used "rendezvous" before to symbolize
intellectual and poetic union, notably in "God is Good. It
is a Beautiful Night," where a poet figure seeks "celestial
rendezvous." In 1951 "rendezvous" also retains its social
connotation because the metaphoric assignation is between
the poet and his "interior paramour," or lover, a union

70 The most common use of "rendezvous" in English is as "an
appointed place of meeting or gathering" (OED 2a).
71 "Paramour," a Middle English adoption of the Old French
adverbial phrase par amour, used as a noun can indicate a
lover or sweetheart (OED 2a). This is the sense in which
Stevens uses it.
that leaves the poet in a state of satisfaction: "We make a
dwelling in the evening air / In which being there together
is enough."

There is also the sense in which this late use of
"rendezvous" represents a union or reunion with French-
connected diction. "Rendezvous," because of its meaning,
reflects as much on itself and its use as it does on the
metaphoric union with the inner lover. Cook notes of the
late poetry that Stevens sometimes looks "through and at
language at the same time" (297).

The idea of the poem as soliloquy brings in theatrical
associations that are also present in "The Planet on the
Table" (1953), where the poet writes of himself "Ariel was
glad he had written his poems." Both these poems are in
this way dramatic utterances of a sort, and "Ariel" is a
final theatrical persona, who, although of Shakespearean
origin, recalls the early roles of Pierrot and his
descendants. Both Ariel and Pierrot are versions of the
"interior paramour," the mutable persona who is a dramatized
and figurative extension of the poet. As Stevens wrote in
1906: "There is a perfect rout of characters in every man -
and every man is like an actor’s trunk, full of strange
creatures, new & old" (S&P 166).

Pierrot and Ariel are in this way both allusive
dramatic masks for Stevens, and there is the happy sense of
a full poetic circle between his early and late poetry in
the use of these personae. This is another level on which
the "intensest rendezvous" functions, as Stevens quietly reunites with his earlier theatrical masks as well as with his love of French in its varied manifestations.

In "Not Ideas about the Thing" there is also a sense of satisfaction, in this poem coming from a moment of awareness and perception. The poet hears an early-morning bird cry and distinguishes it from his internal experience of waking:

The sun was rising at six,
No longer a battered panache above snow...  
It would have been outside.

It was not from the vast ventriloquism
Of sleep's faded papier-maché...
The sun was coming from outside.

"Panache" and "papier-maché" are both French words that have been adopted into English.72 "Panache" in English and French means a decorative tassel of feathers, commonly used to adorn military headgear (OED, Larousse). In French it also has the related meaning of a sense of display or verve, a meaning adopted into English since the late nineteenth century (OED 2). Stevens' use of "battered panache" is somewhat cryptic, suggesting a visual impression of the weak early-morning winter light of the sun. The sun is reduced to something decorative, its colour and implied verve lessened by being worn-out and "battered."

"Papier-mâché," usually spelled with a circonflex accent, is a substance made out of pulped paper, used for

72 "Papier-mâché," while composed of French words and having developed into a common French and English term, is probably not originally a French term (OED). It is usually written with a circonflex accent over the second 'a,' which Stevens omits.
decoration and art. It can also refer to the objects themselves made out of that material (OED). The poet’s impressions are distanced from reality because of his dormant state of mind and this is furthered by the idea of "sleep’s faded papier-maché." This distancing from reality is also expressed in "the vast ventriloquism," as if sleep were an external physical force controlling the poet’s thoughts like a magician controlling a dummy. As a raw material "papier-maché" is associated with the poet’s drowsy half-formed impressions, which are themselves the material which will be moulded into thought and poetry, just as papier-mâché can be made into art. As decoration papier-mâché has a sense of artifice and this too is associated with the poet’s sleepy thoughts as if they themselves were something artificial or created externally. It is also an impermanent, somewhat frail material, and this reflects on the sleepy impressions as well, implying that they too are somehow insubstantial.

The poet thus relates "panache" and "papier-maché" to the diminished, "battered" and "faded," quality of his initial sleep-infused sensations and they are eventually replaced with perception of "the colossal sun," which comes from "outside," and not from the poet’s waking impressions. As he wakes, the "battered panache" of the sun is distinguished as an idea about the sun that comes out of "sleep’s faded papier-maché," and not the sun itself, which is "from outside" that awareness, and which becomes
"colossal" when separated from it. The bird's cry, which "seemed like a sound in his mind" is in fact "from outside" and "far away." Once he has cast off sleep, with its figurative and linguistic impediments, he can clearly experience "A new knowledge of reality." Cook notes that the soft "sh" sounds of "panache" and "papier-maché" are replaced with hard "c" sounds as the poem progresses from the poet's initial impressions to his bird-accompanied realization: "The bird-cry lines are full of c-sounds; the old wintry and sleepy worlds sound out 'sh'" (311).

"Panache" and "papier-maché" are both familiar in English but still retain a certain French resonance in their sound and spelling. They do not have an overly foreign effect by themselves, but Stevens emphasizes their "Frenchy" quality by accentuating their decorative associations, which have a touch of irony given the respective implications of gestural insubstantiality in "panache" and material flimsiness in "papier-maché."

There is a final use of a French-connected sense of artifice and imagination in "Of Mere Being" where the poet envisions a "gold-feathered bird" of the imagination and places it in a palm tree, itself situated "In the bronze decor."

73 Stevens writes in a 1955 letter that "robins and doves are both early risers and are connoisseurs of daylight before the actual presence of the sun coarsens it" (L 879).
74 The first edition of Opus Posthumous used "distance" instead of "decor," although "decor" was in the original typescript (OP 325n). That version removes the subtle French aesthetic associations from the poem.
"Decor" in English is adopted from the Latin decor and has, in an obsolete usage, the meaning of comeliness, beauty, and ornament (OED). "Décor" spelled with the accent is a French word adapted from the Latin decor, meaning the scenery and furnishings of a theatre stage, and can be transferred figuratively to mean general setting and surroundings (OED). Stevens spells it without an accent but his meaning is closest to the figurative application of "décor" as he characteristically plays back and forth between English and French meanings. "The bronze decor" thus describes the setting, the state of artifice as it were, in which the bird is located, and the obsolete English meaning also suggests indirectly that the bird itself is beautiful and ornamental.

In this poem, as opposed to "Not Ideas" where the poet moves away from French-connected imaginative trappings towards a "new knowledge of reality," the pleasing artifice is calmly embraced and accepted, even if it is alien, a non-human "foreign song." Another kind of "foreign song" might be French, which had long been accepted by Stevens; his acknowledgment of it in one of his last poems confirms that yet again.

Stevens' poetic uses of French in Auroras and The Rock are not extensive; neither do they differ significantly from the patterns that he established and maintained after

75 Both "decor" and "décor" are marked as non-naturalized words.
Harmonium's varied stylistic and linguistic extravagances. They do, however, show again and again his confident and impressive mastery in their smooth integration into his poetic themes and processes and their layered complexities of suggestive meaning.

As with Parts of a World and Transport to Summer, the French connections in Stevens' last two volumes are notable for their depth of personal and emotional significance. In these late volumes the emotion does not come from war, but rather from the elegiac awareness of an aging poet. This awareness is never self-pitying, and is evident in his tempered reacknowledgments of old tropes and word-play, which become like old friends being fondly remembered and then given a warm farewell. The re-examinations of French-connected language, the subtle and dense French literary, artistic, and geographic references, and the final uses of French voices and personae are all part of this valedictory process and they provide a gratifying sense of aesthetic closure to Stevens and his readers.
CHAPTER 7

FRANCOPHILIA

After all, I like Rhine wine, blue grapes, good cheese, endive and lots of books, etc., etc., etc., as much as I like supreme fiction.
(December 8 1942, L 431)

There are always things in Paris that I want.
(July 25 1951, L 723)

Stevens' Francophilia entered into many areas of his life besides his poetry. It provided him with a full spectrum of sensory and cerebral pleasures, from his reading habits to his enjoyment of art, food, and wine. It remained a constant through the various stages of his poetic and professional career, providing him throughout with an important sense of intellectual and aesthetic recreation.

He read widely in French from his Harvard days onwards, and his tastes, determined from his surviving books and letters, ran more to literary and art criticism, history, and philosophy, than to poetry and fiction, although there are many major French poets\textsuperscript{1} and a number of contemporaries\textsuperscript{2} in his remaining collection. There are relatively few

\textsuperscript{1} Stevens' surviving library includes volumes of Villon, Chénier, Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Nerval, Valéry and Verlaine, among others.

\textsuperscript{2} Some of these include Léon-Paul Fargue, of whose poetry Stevens wrote three translated "paraphrases" in 1951 (\textit{OP} 144-6), Francis Ponge, and René Char.
French novels in his remaining library, even given his reply when asked by a co-worker whether he read current (American) bestsellers: "'No, Charlie, all I do is read French novels'" (Parts 43).

Stevens also voraciously read art catalogues, and had an insatiable appetite for French journals throughout his life. He loved journals in particular because they gave him a sense of contact with what was current in France, as he wrote to his fiancée in 1908: "I've a notion to run over to the library some night and take a look at the Journal des Débats. One must keep in touch with Paris, if one is to have anything at all to think about" (S&P 199). This sense stayed with him, as he writes in a 1946 letter to Henry Church:

I bought a copy of Graphis, Quadrique and one or two [other journals] and was quite staggered that they cost $14.50. However, they were worth it because one never realizes how completely we seem to belong to Europe until we attempt to get along without it. (L 531)

Financial comfort eventually gave him the ability to regularly purchase the journals, books, and paintings that he desired, and to amass a modest library. Edelstein notes:

In his middle and late years he bought, never lavishly, but constantly, fine books, particularly French books, good examples of printing, the best editions of authors in whom he was interested, the best art books and works on the history of art which he could get, philosophical works and bindings. (55)

3 Coming full circle Stevens eventually accepted offers to write explanatory catalogue notes for French painters Jean Labasque (from whom he commissioned the portrait of Anatole Vidal), Marcel Gromaire (one of whose paintings he owned), and Raoul Dufy (OP 240-1, 250-2, 281-3). See Appendix.
He sometimes collected particular authors, for example his specially-bound set of Alain, and also had a number of his own books decoratively bound in France. And he had all of these shipped to him, mostly to his office: "I never really lived until I had a home, and my own room, say, with a package of books from Paris or London" (L 301).

In this way, a great deal of France came and went through Stevens' mail one way or another; there are over fifty references to Paris alone in his published letters. As a lover of exotica from early on, Stevens had cultivated acquaintances in Japan, Ceylon and China who could send him teas and foreign trinkets. He was later able to establish

---

4 Morse reports from a visit to Stevens' house that the poet had a "big collection of the writings of Alain" prominently displayed in his library, noting that "he collected Alain because Alain was an aphorist" (Parts 156). See Appendix.

5 In a 1942 interview Stevens notes that "'Whenever I publish a collection, [Anatole Vidal] has it specially bound. A sort of automatic arrangement; nothing in writing'" (Parts 131). He also had some of his books bound in the U.S. by Gerhard Gerlach, including Parts of a World, Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, and Transport to Summer (L 408n, 417-8, 547).

6 Hale Anderson Jr, one of Stevens' colleagues describes Stevens' office in an interview:

As you came through the door on the left...there was a large, very expensive mahogany table on which he might have a shipping package of some kind. Never a file. There might be, to his great glee, a carton in stitched-up canvas, an order of tea that had finally gotten through from Ceylon. Or propped up against the wall, resting on the table, there might be a print. This was the repository on which he would place things that he had ordered, and they would stay there until he was ready to take them home. (Parts 23)

7 Stevens received tea, foodstuffs and small pieces of art from various acquaintances who were visiting or lived in Japan and China. In a 1935 letter he wrote of Benjamin Kwok, a Chinese student in Macao, "gathering pickled apricots, candied gold fish and sugared canaries' knees for me" (L 303). He was also acquainted with Leonard C. van
contacts in France, and his main connection(s) became Anatole and Paule Vidal, with whom he did business and communicated extensively over the years.

Stevens' first mention of Anatole Vidal comes in a 1935 letter where he discusses purchasing Valéry's "ETAT DE LA VERTU" (L 290), and in a 1939 letter he mentions that he has "been buying a picture or two once a year or thereabouts through Mr. Vidal" (L 343). Vidal died during World War II and in 1945 Stevens began communication with his daughter Paule, who took over the Librairie Coloniale. Stevens lost touch with Anatole during the War and likely established contact with Paule via Henri Amiot, a Frenchman who had worked at the Hartford during the late twenties (L 480). In his first letter to Paule Vidal in March of 1945, presumably after receiving correspondence from her, Stevens wrote:

The news of your father's death saddens me. I had hoped that, when the war was over, we could go on as before. My contact with him was one of the pleasantest things in my experience. His great interest in the things that I wanted him to do, and his willingness to take pains were most ingratiating. Besides that, he was a man of remarkable intelligence and taste. I shall miss him very greatly and think of him often. (L 491-2)

After this it was business as usual,8 with the poet Geyzel, a poet living in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and had him send tea regularly to support his tea-drinking habit, as one of co-workers notes in an interview:

Now at three o'clock every afternoon he would do this: He'd buy imported tea; he'd invariably have this in the afternoon with some little tea wafers.... This was one of his daily habits." (Parts 20)

8 Stevens mentions "a small balance to [his] credit": "This you are to write off, so that when the time comes for us to start once again, we shall start afresh, without reference to that."
mentioning a volume of Alain that had been sent to be bound before the War, and discussing a Brianchon painting he was thinking of purchasing.

Stevens had a unique relationship with the Vidals in that they often purchased fairly expensive paintings for him that he had never previously seen. They would discuss an artist in whom Stevens was currently interested, having read about them in one of the many art journals and catalogues that he perused, and he would then forward money so that the painting could be purchased and shipped.

A good example of this kind of exchange comes in 1946 when Stevens inquires about purchasing some work by Camille Bombois, whom he had recently admired in a New York gallery: "If you could buy a good drawing or water color from him, for say 5,000 or 7500 francs, I should be very much interested to have you do so" (L 530). A month later he approves the purchase of one of two Bombois paintings and suggests that the artist have it framed "as he thought suitable" (L 532-3). Stevens ended up spending 50,000 francs, more than he had planned: "This involves some sacrifice on my part, but a new picture and a few books now

9 It should be noted that there was a very favourable exchange rate between the U.S. and France, favourable for Americans anyway, particularly after World War II. Stevens was getting a good deal, even on his more expensive purchases.
10 Charles Cunningham, director of Hartford’s Wadsworth Atheneum, recalls in an interview: "What he did was to send what he could afford and told him to buy what he thought was good and send it to him. He said he’d never been disappointed" (Parts 121).
and then seem to be things that I cannot go without (L 545). He finally receives the Bombois in early 1947 and pronounces it to be "fresh, pleasant and without sophistication." He also says revealingly:

more important than my ultimate feeling about this picture, whatever it may be, is the fact that it shows with how much care it has been chosen (and how well the frame has been adapted to it) by you. (L 545)

Stevens' proxy purchasing method gave him little actual control over what he was spending considerable amounts of money on. However, I think that purchasing French art via a relatively sophisticated and yet average French native whose taste he agreed with pleased him.

Stevens' taste in art, as much as is reflected in his surviving collection, was apparently less than radical.

James Johnson Sweeney\textsuperscript{11} comments in an interview:

These are people who are playing it safe, on the inside: Brianchon, Labasque, Marchand.... Maybe he had a certain fondness for the bourgeois comforts. The people in Paris who would have their apartment filled with them would be comfortable, and they would have good dinners, and they'd have interesting conversation - but never to frighten the horses. (Parts 227-8)

It is important to point out that Stevens was certainly interested in and knowledgeable about avant-garde art even if he did not actually buy or own much of it. Macleod writes that "Stevens' engagement with advanced art theory did not affect his taste for conventional painting," emphasizing that he had an appreciation of avant-garde contemporary art but that he did not necessarily want to

\textsuperscript{11} Sweeney, an acquaintance of Stevens' via the Church circle, was director of the Guggenheim Museum (Parts 217).
live with it. The reasons were also at least partly financial, as he wrote to Paule Vidal, "the truth is I have a taste for Braque but a purse for Bombois" (L 545).

As well as books, journals, and paintings, Stevens also occasionally had the Vidals send him French food, which, like French literature and art, occasionally played a role in his poetry. Stevens enjoyed eating and drinking heartily, and he was also a connoisseur of fine food and wine. He would often discuss food in his letters and stories about food, whether they involve shopping trips to bakeries and fruit stores or meals in homes and restaurants, come up again and again in recollections about him. He is

12 Wallace Stevens and Modern Art xix, 219.
13 Stevens wrote in a 1948 letter:
   I practically lived in France when old Mr Vidal was alive because if I had asked him to procure from an obscure fromagerie in the country some of the cheese with raisins in it that I read of one time, he would have done it and that is almost what living in France or anywhere else amounts to. (L 610)
14 He comments in a 1947 letter:
   There are many things that I should like to be able to do and usually summer is a good time to do them, but this summer has been anything but. Not long ago a French baker opened a shop in West Hartford and this has set me back terribly. His brioches are as good as any. His croissants are not quite so good because he doesn’t use butter, but some queer substitute. Nevertheless, to start the day so full of these things that every time one breathes one whistles does not help to get things done. (L 561).
15 There are in particular a number of amusing stories about Stevens indulging in gastronomic pleasures while on business trips, such as this one recalled in an interview by Robert Devore, who picked up Stevens at the train station in Philadelphia:
   Then he said, ‘The attorney’s office is down on Chestnut Street, so on the way down what do you say we get some cinnamon buns.’ I said, ‘Cinnamon buns?’ ‘Yes,’ he said, ‘I always, whenever I come to Philadelphia, buy these cinnamon buns at Lahr’s.’ I
remembered as an educated and sensual eater by José Rodriguez Feo, recounting a dinner with Stevens at the Chambord in New York City ("a very good restaurant"), which included a special avocado dish: "To him that was a beautiful thing; it became almost a poetic object, to be eaten, but to be enjoyed, to be looked at. Then the wine. He gave me the impression of being a Frenchman or an Italian, not an American" (Parts 140-1).

Stevens' interest in food and wine was naturally tied in with his devotion to France, that most food-loving of countries. He not only appreciated French food itself, but the appreciative and serious attitude towards it, the French gastronomic state of mind, which so differed from the American. Stevens reflected on this while musing on his thought, This is strange to do before we're going to an attorney's office. He ordered a dozen to send to Hartford. I thought Oh, that is that. Then he wanted a dozen more; they put them in a bag, and we started off. And I thought, My gosh, I wonder where he's going to eat these things. Well, we got to the attorney's office, and we went through the introductions and into the conference room. There were about seven of us. He opened up his bag, put it in the middle of the table, and said, 'Let's have a cinnamon bun.' Everyone, trying to be polite, agreed with him, and we all reached in and got a handful of goo. And we started our conference. (Parts 13)

16 Stevens appreciated fine, high-quality food, which did not necessarily have to be French, at one level for its sense of distance from the commonplace ordinary world that surrounded him. Monroe Wheeler recalls lunch with Stevens at a French restaurant in New York:

He was a great gourmet, and he talked about his favorite foods and how hard it was to live in Hartford because there were no really great restaurants there. Neither were there any great grocers where he could buy the really fine fruit. That's why he loved to come to New York to buy wonderful fruit to take back with him to Hartford. (Parts 193)
desire for a more fitting gastronomic setting at the 1943
Les Entretiens de Pontigny conference in Mount Holyoke:

Professor Cohen is naturally interested in trying to establish his Entretiens. It seems to me to be a very simple affair; he cannot do it on lettuce and rye bread, but he could do it very well, I imagine, on the right sort of soup jellies, artichokes, soufflés, etc. People over here expect French things to be French. There is nothing French about lettuce and rye bread. The mere language is not enough; obviously, people look to Paris for more than clothes. (L 453)

In his writing, Stevens ties in the use of French with the sensory pleasures of eating and drinking as early as "The Nymph." In that 1899 story an association is established between affected French-connected aesthetics and fancy or pretentious food, as the Nymph offers the narrator wild French-named fruits like "mûres de ronce" (blackberries). These contrast both with the narrator’s ordinary provisions and the Nymph’s hidden American origins, and serve as a symbol of exotic sensory and imaginative yearnings.

In the 1909 Little June Book poems a disenchanted speaker expresses his aesthetic fatigue with "I am weary of the plum and of the cherry." Plums were often a fructive symbol of elegance and affectation for Stevens, as in the contrast with the "insolent" crude bananas in "Floral Decorations for Bananas":

You should have had plums tonight,
In an eighteenth-century dish,
And pettifogging buds,
For the women of primrose and purl,
Each one in her decent curl.

Fanciful fruit is also linked with foppish pretension in
"Carlos among the Candles," where the affected Carlos describes "servants as fat as plums, bearing pineapples from the Azores." In "The Comedian as the Letter C," Crispin has to abandon "poems of plums" as part of his maturation process and accompanying movement from Bordeaux to North America. The plums thus have a certain French association as part of what Crispin must geographically and poetically forsake, and as such they also contrast with the "crude" New World bananas of "Floral Decorations."

French food later comes to be less directly associated with pretension, although Stevens continues to explore poetic links between food and state of mind. In "Forces, the Will & the Weather" (1942), for example, the poet uses French gastronomic associations to describe mood and sensation brought about by the time of day and the weather: "It was at the time, the place, of nougats." Later in the poem he uses a similar trope: "The weather was like a waiter with a tray. / One had come early to a crisp café." Here the outside world is again described in terms of a French-connected state of mind; the sensation of sitting in a café and having a drink becomes one's perception of the weather. State of mind affects the external world, rather than vice-versa.

17 Stevens wrote during a hot August in 1950, "weather or no weather, people still lunch on the terraces of Paris and drink Chablis" (L 687).
18 Stevens wrote in a 1940 letter: "We are physical beings in a physical world; the weather is one of the things that we enjoy, one of the unphilosophical realities. The state of the weather soon becomes a state of mind" (L 348-9).
French wine and fine food are associated with luxury in *Notes III v* where the poet describes a lavish meal eaten with the Canon Aspirin: "We drank Meursault, ate lobster Bombay with mango / Chutney." The oenophile in Stevens took particular pleasure in this kind of reference; Meursault is a white Burgundy [OCW], a variety of wine for which Stevens had already shown his fondness in "Montrachet-le-Jardin."

The luxuriousness of the food and wine is part of the poet's somewhat mocking treatment of the Canon, who as Stevens notes, "has explored all the projections of the mind, his own particularly" and who has "a sense of nothingness, of nakedness, of the finality and limitation of fact" (L 445). In this the Canon resembles other pedantic figures like the Doctor of Geneva or the "scholar of one candle" in "Auroras of Autumn," who are overwhelmed when faced with sublimity. In the case of the Canon, his gastronomic indulgence weakens him in a sense, and makes him vulnerable:

In short, a man with a taste for Meursault, and lobster Bombay...who, for himself, thinks to the very material of his mind, doesn't have much choice about yielding to 'the complicate, the amassing harmony.' (L 445)

The Canon's "taste for Meursault, and lobster Bombay" also links him with the affectation earlier associated with self-conscious indulgence in fancy and exotic food and drink. This goes all the way back to the Nymph, and to "Geoffrey" in "Part of His Education" with his Crème de Menthe. Taste in food, like garb or costume, is an indicator of character.
It should be pointed out that in Notes and elsewhere French food and wine are not always associated with luxury. Stevens himself enjoyed plainer gastronomic pleasures, and poetically they are a indication of rusticity and simplicity. "Paisant Chronicle" ends with a vision of Stevens' hero "seated in / A café. There may be a dish of country cheese / And a pineapple on the table." The commonplace quality of the setting and the food emphasize the sense of ordinariness in the title and poem, although the pineapple adds an admittedly exotic Stevensian touch. A taste for plain food is thus as much a sign of character as a taste for luxurious and exotic food.

Stevens also troped on food in other ways, as in "Examination of the Hero in a Time of War" where the poet plays on poetry as food, asking "Can we live on dry descriptions, / Feed everything starving except the belly / And nourish ourselves on crumbs of whimsy?" This question is answered in a sense in the epilogue to Notes: "How gladly, with proper words the soldier dies, / If he must, or lives on the bread of faithful speech." The poet had written earlier that the soldier might return from the war to "six meats and twelve wines," but given the alternative, the "dry" bread of faithful speech will suffice.

Later in "Examination" food imagery is given a macabre turn in a vision of soldiers on parade, on their way to be

19 Longenbach notes that by "It Must Give Pleasure" IX "the menu is not Meursault and lobster Bombay but wine at a simple table in the wood" (269).
devoured by war and violence: "Young boys resembling pastry, hip-hip / Young men as vegetables, hip-hip." The men become both a sacrificial offering and a sacrament to be consumed.

In this way, food tropes, with or without their frequent French associations, could be highly serious for Stevens as well as illustrating various kinds of aesthetic and sensory indulgence. The polarity between seriousness and frivolity in Stevens' uses of and attitudes towards food is characteristic of his Francophilia in general, as it was more than just recreational.

Beyond his enjoyment of the books, paintings, wine, and food he purchased, the idea of having access to France and its products, of being connected, was important to Stevens throughout his life. As he wrote to Elsie in 1908, "One must keep in touch with Paris, if one is to have anything at all to think about" (S&P 199). Forty-two years later he wrote to Paule Vidal "to have no contact in Paris is like having no contact anywhere" (L 722).

Stevens treasured his connection in Paris and resulting friendship with the Vidals for more than the opportunity to purchase books and paintings. For him the personal contact with the Vidals was a way to experience a sense of France, as he writes to Paule Vidal: "my letters from you are an occasional glimpse of France. You have no idea how much I appreciate them" (L 523). This sense of contact with

20 Stevens' desire for postcards was not limited to France; he frequently requested them from other locations as well for similar reasons, as in 1949 from José Rodriguez Feo: "I
France was also part of why Stevens so enjoyed his friendship with Henry and Barbara Church, as he wrote to Barbara in 1953: "The postcards from Ville d'Avray came the other day. They did me a lot of good. In fact, I survive on postcards from Europe" (L 797).

The contact with the Vidals thus provided an aesthetically and emotionally satisfying friendship for Stevens as well as a way of surrounding himself with French things and generally of fulfilling his desire for maintaining a French-informed state of mind. The idea of creating a diffuse French sensory mood was something that appealed to him, whether that involved imaginary walks in the streets of Paris, or reading French journals at home in Hartford while surrounded by pleasant French paintings:

After waiting for FIGARO a long time, several numbers came at the same time. This has brought Paris close to me. When I go home at night, after the office, I spend a long time dawdling over the fascinating phrases which refresh me as nothing else could. (L 773)

Stevens' recreational use of France for mental travel increased with his age and the growing certainty that he would never go there in person. As he wrote in a 1949 shall be immensely interested in arranging for a series of postcards, etc. from Madrid. Seriously, I cannot imagine anything more interesting than to know someone there and through that person to acquire some sense of the place" (L 630). Earlier in the same year he wrote to Thomas McGreevy: "Your postcard from Rome set me up. Rome is not ordinarily on the itinerary of my imagination. It is a little out of the way, covered by cypresses. It is not a place that one visits frequently like Paris or Dublin" (L 629).

21 In an earlier letter thanking her for putting him in touch with Jean Wahl he wrote both in jest and appreciation, "You are a kind of magic wand by the aid of which I elicit things that I want from Europe" (L 725).
letter, "I shall never be able to make the trip for a variety of reasons" (L 638). The answer to why he never actually traveled to France seems finally to be that professional and financial obligations made it difficult to go earlier when it would have been practical, and that he was prevented later by historical circumstances, age, and temperament. Holly Stevens comments in an interview:

As a young man he couldn't afford it, and later he was married to someone who was a terrible traveler and constantly carsick or seasick whenever she went anywhere. After the war I think he was afraid of finding things too much changed. By that point, of course, he had constructed his own Europe. (A Poet's Growth 241)

In this way, Stevens was content with his created sense of France, and in some ways did not want to destroy it with the likely disappointing experience of actually traveling there.22 He expressed this in a 1950 letter upon receiving some French journals: "Merely to read the names of bookbinders, the names of publishers and book shops excited me. But I think that perhaps the excitement is more real at this distance than it might actually be" (L 698). In any case, his Paris would always be a fictive one, as he wrote in a 1952 letter: "I rode in town to my office this morning with a man who has just returned from Paris. When he had finished telling me about it, I sighed to think that it must forever remain terra incognita for me" (L 755).

22 He wrote in a 1954 letter, "I wanted all my life to go to Paris but what would have been important when I got there was the ability to leave the hotel in the morning and wander around all over the place all day long before returning to the hotel in the evening" (L 845).
Stevens used his Francophilia to satisfy his deep desire for, as Jarrell puts it, "Culture, the exotic, the past, the Earth-minus-America" and his need for a sense of recreative escape from his daily life in Hartford:

I am one of the many people around the world who live from time to time in a Paris that has never existed and that is composed of the things that other people, primarily Parisians themselves, have said about Paris. That particular Paris communicates an interest in life that may be wholly fiction, but, if so, it is precious fiction." (L 773)

Stevens did not take "fiction" lightly in either his poetry or his life; in some ways his Francophilia was as much of a "sanction" for him as his writing of poetry, and along with poetry it helped bring pleasure and meaning to his existence.

23 "Reflections on Wallace Stevens" 133.
24 "I think that the real trouble with poetry is that poets have no conception of the importance of the thing. Life without poetry is, in effect, life without a sanction" (L 299).
CONCLUSION

We remain quietly at home, engaged in meditation and prayer and thoughts of Paris. (July 23 1954 to Barbara Church, L 841)

Wallace Stevens’ interest in and involvement with French began early and remained until the end, both changing progressively and staying fundamentally the same in many ways. He never grew tired of French literature, art, food, and wine, and never stopped using French diction, references, and allusions in his public and private writing. From the pervasive fin-de-siècle popularity of French while he attended Harvard, to his gallery-going New York bachelor days, to his mature collecting of paintings and finely-bound books, France and French were always part of his sense of aesthetic and personal identity.

The French connections in Stevens’ poetry progress from the manuscript poems and the Harmonium era where he uses French-connected personae, diction, and references to create elegant and decorative poetic effects, to the somewhat starker socio-politically aware movements in Ideas of Order, The Man with the Blue Guitar, and, to a lesser extent, Parts of a World, where he also incorporates moving personal elements. His French connections in Transport to Summer are still war-torn, but at the end of that volume he brings

280
in moving and redemptive lyricism in the Parisian climax of Notes toward a Supreme Fiction, which sets the stage for the meditative and elegiac retrospection of his final two collections. In this way, Stevens' uses of French change along with the diffuse movements of his poetry; the survey of their development and progress provides a revealing and significant map of his poetic oeuvre.

Stevens' uses of French in his poetry are all ultimately based upon his Francophilia, and they lead back to it as well. His experimentation with French diction comes out of his love of the language and its "influence indéniable" upon him, his references and allusions to French writers and artists come from his substantial French reading habits and his love (and collection) of French art, and his locational references and tropes from the alternately wistful and fantastic geographical musings that he expressed throughout his life.

As he aged Stevens developed his French connections into the sense of an imaginary refuge, a kind of fictive aesthetic and intellectual haven for his senses and mind where they could be bathed in literature, painting, postcard images, and with any luck, perhaps a good Meursault. He was happy with this created sense of France, even if Paris would always remain fictive for him, and derived a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction from it, as he had always done.

In the end, the study of Stevens and French is meaningful and enlightening for both his life and his
poetry. His fascination with France was both a pastime that reveals much about his recreational tastes and preferences, and also a deep intellectual manifestation of complex theories about sense of place and imaginative treatment of reality. Pleasure was aesthetically, spiritually, and poetically important for Stevens, and one of the most consistent and powerful sources of pleasure in his life and work was his French connection.
Wallace Stevens was a great reader and collector of French books as part of his abiding interest in France. The purpose of this appendix is to make a comprehensive list of all the French authors and artists whom Stevens mentioned in print, as well as a list of all the French and French-related books that remain from his personal collection. I have also included French journals mentioned and owned as well as a list of French paintings owned.

I have noted only direct citations and quotations by or attributed to Stevens himself, and not, for example, citations by people speaking about Stevens. I have also indicated where an author or artist is actually quoted rather than being merely mentioned. Also included are references to people indirectly but importantly associated with Stevens’ French interests, such as Anatole and Paule Vidal.

I have used Brazeau’s Parts of a World, Richardson’s Wallace Stevens: A Biography, and Secretaries of the Moon (see below) as sources for previously unpublished letters, as well as for previously unpublished excerpts from conversations with Stevens. Material that appears in both Souvenirs and Prophecies and Letters of Wallace Stevens is not mentioned twice.

Sources for the lists of French books owned by Stevens
are as follows. Most of his remaining collection resides at the Huntington Library and this material was examined in detail and written up by Milton Bates for the Wallace Stevens Journal in 1978. Because of Bates’ work I am able to give details about bindings and markings concerning these books. There is also a smaller collection of books from Stevens’ library residing at the University of Massachusetts which was examined in similar detail by Peter Brazeau, also for the Wallace Stevens Journal.

In 1990 the Huntington purchased 531 additional printed items from Holly Stevens. None of these have yet been annotated or catalogued in the Stevens collection but it is believed that most of them originally belonged to Stevens. I received a list of these unexamined items photocopied directly from the catalogue cards and as a result some of the information is incomplete, and there are no details provided about whether Stevens signed or marked them up, etc. I have distinguished these new catalogue entries from the Huntington items on Bates’ Checklist.

Most of the remaining books listed are taken from auction catalogues for March 10, and April 7 & 8, 1959 at the Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York City, where books from Stevens’ library were auctioned off after being sold to the galleries by Elsie Stevens following her husband’s death. Some of his paintings were sold on March 13.

A comparatively high percentage of the Parke-Bernet books had special and valuable bindings, often commissioned
by Stevens himself; they were likely chosen for sale for that reason. The auction also included many of Stevens’ illustrated art books and portfolios. Misspelled Parke-Bernet entries have been silently corrected and some missing publication details have been filled in with complete information from other sources.

Unpublished letters to and from Stevens, beyond those taken from secondary sources, remain largely unexamined in this appendix; this includes the full Anatole and Paule Vidal correspondence. Otherwise, the evidence of Stevens’ French reading comes mostly from his surviving books and his correspondence. There are obviously a good deal of missing books that he read, and in some cases cited or alluded to, that are not listed either because he never owned them or because they were sold or lost at some point. Because of this there are a number of possible pitfalls in making assumptions about his reading habits based on this list. As a general indicator, however, it shows quite strikingly his taste for prose, for literary and art criticism, and for philosophical and historical works.

I list authors and artists, and books by and about them, under the same headings for purposes of comparison because it is often useful to note that Stevens owned (and perhaps marked up or had specially bound) copies of books that he quoted or referred to in print. I also arrange books chronologically by publication date under the author headings.
Abbreviations:

CP - Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens.

EY and LY - Richardson, Wallace Stevens, A Biography: The Early Years [EY] & The Later Years [LY].

H - Huntington Library, Stevens Collection.

HBC - Huntington items listed in Bates' "Stevens' Books at the Huntington: An Annotated Checklist."

L - Letters of Wallace Stevens.


NA - The Necessary Angel.

OP - Opus Posthumous. All page references are to the 1989 Revised Edition.

Parts - Brazeau, Parts of a World: Wallace Stevens Remembered.

PB - Parke-Bernet Galleries - sales catalogues for March 10, 1959 and April 7&8, 1959.

SEC - Secretaries of the Moon: The Letters of Wallace Stevens and José Rodriguez Feo.

SPBS - Sur Plusiers Beaux Sujects.

SB - special binding.

S&P - Souvenirs and Prophecies.

UM - Items listed in Brazeau's "Wallace Stevens at the University of Massachusetts: Check List of an Archive."
Alain (Émile-Auguste Chartier). Stevens admired Alain and put some effort into collecting his works. Samuel French Morse notes from a visit to Stevens' house that the poet had a "big collection of the writings of Alain," which was prominently displayed in his library as a showpiece along with other books (Parts 156). Barbara Farris Graves writes of Holly Stevens showing her father's Alain collection in the nineteen-seventies and remarking "that Alain was the only writer [her father] collected systematically" ("Stevens' Reading in Contemporary French Aesthetics," 159). One can speculate from the above remarks and the book list below that substantial portions of the Alain collection were sold en masse to Parke-Bernet in 1959, and that the remainder is held by the Stevens estate, as there are no Alain books at the Huntington.

L 492, 740, 868, OP 275 [quoted in translation in "A Collect of Philosophy" 1951], 297-8 [quoted in "Two Prefaces" to Valéry's Eupalinos and L'ame et la danse, 1956], LY 400.

Les cent un propos d'Alain. 4 vols. Paris, 1908. SB, PB.

Quatre-vingt-un chapitres sur l'esprit et les passions. Paris, 1917. SB, PB.


Mars ou la Guerre jugée. Paris, 1921. SB, PB.
Propos sur le christianisme. Paris, 1924. SB, PB.
Elements d’une doctrine radicale. Paris, 1925. SB, PB.
Propos sur le bonheur. Paris, 1925. SB, PB.
Le citoyen contre les pouvoirs. Paris, 1926. SB, PB
Sentiments passions et signes. Paris, [1926]. SB, PB.
La visite au musicien. Paris, 1927. SB, PB.
Onze chapitres sur Platon. Paris, 1928. SB, PB.
Entretiens au bord de la mer. Paris, [1931]. SB, PB.
Vingt leçons sur les beaux-arts. Paris, [1931]. SB, PB.
Alain professeur par X.X. Paris, 1932. SB, PB.
Propos sur l’éducation. Paris, 1932. SB, PB.
Elements d’une doctrine radicale. Paris, 1933. SB, PB.
Propos d'économique. Paris, 1934. SB, PB.

Propos de la littérature. Paris, 1934. SB, PB.

Propos de politique. Paris, 1934. SB, PB.


Histoire de mes pensées. Paris, [1936]. SB, PB.

Avec Balzac. Paris, 1937. SB, PB.

Entretiens chez le sculpteur. Paris, 1937. SB, PB.


Souvenirs de guerre. Paris, 1937. SB, PB.

Minerve ou de la sagesse. Paris, 1939. SB, PB.

Preliminaires a l'esthetique. Paris [1939]. SB, PB.


Ingres. [Paris, 1949]. SB, PB.

Les dieux. Paris. SB, PB.

[Three unidentified Alain books. PB.]

[Seven unidentified "books by and about Alain" PB.]

Almanach de Paris An 2000. Stevens wrote in a 1950 letter "The book may be described as a permanent good."

L 663.

Amiot, Henri. Amiot was a Frenchman who briefly worked at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Co. in the late twenties before returning to Paris; after WWII he helped Stevens establish contact with Paule Vidal (L 480n).

L 480-1, Parts 88-9, 91.

Apollinaire, Guillaume. NA 169 ["The Relations between Poetry and Painting" 1951].
Arp, Jean. L 627-8, 629, 799.


Asailly, Giselle d’. L 841.

Aubert. Les maitres de l’estampe japonaise. 1914. SB, PB.

Auberjonois, Fernand. L 582, 607, 704.

Auberjonois, René. L 607.

Aurelius. Pensées de Marc Aurèle. Paris, 1924. SB, PB.

Aussourd, René. Aussourd was a Parisian binder and engraver to whom Stevens periodically sent, via Anatole and later Paule Vidal (see below), copies of his own and other works to be specially bound, often elaborately and expensively. In a 1942 interview Stevens notes that "'whenever I publish a collection, [Anatole Vidal] has it specially bound. A sort of automatic arrangement; nothing in writing’" (Parts 131).

L 492, 510, 698, 702, 713-4 [the last three re: Aussourd’s binding of The Auroras of Autumn (1950)].


Inscribed to Victor Hugo. SB, PB.

Bachelard, Gaston. L 740.


Balzac, Honoré de. NA 55 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet" (1944)], S&P 164 [quoted from Peau de
chagrin], 181 [quoted from a letter to Honoré Daumier], SPBS 73.

Barzun, Jacques. L 772.

Baudelaire, Charles.

L 391, 631 [quotes and discusses "La Vie Antérieure"], NA 160, 173 [both in "The Relations between Poetry and Painting"], OP 257-8, 265 [both quote and discuss "La Vie Antérieure" in "Two or Three Ideas" (1951)], SPBS 103-5 [quoted in French Studies, 1950].


The Letters of Charles Baudelaire to his Mother, 1833-1866. [Suffolk]: J Rodker, [1928]. H.

The mirror of Baudelaire. Norfolk: New Directions, [1942]. H.

Beauvoir, Simone de. SPBS 89 [see Rousseaux, below].

Beigbeder, Marc. L 714.


Bergson, Henri. L 476, NA 24-5 ["The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words" (1942)], 39-40, 41, 49-50 [all in "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet," 49-50 quoted from The Two Sources of Morality and Religion], OP 227 ["The Irrational Element of Poetry" (1936)], 268, 270 ["A Collect of Philosophy"].
L'intuition philosophique. Paris: E. Pelletan, 1927. HBC.

Berlioz, Louis-Hector. L 505.

Bernard, Émile. NA 47 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"].

Beucler, André. L 663, 769, 781.

Bezombes, Roger. L 777, 795-6, 797.

Blanchot, Maurice. L 879.

Bloy, Léon. SEC 66.

Boccardi, Renzo. Le lac Majeur et les isles Borromées.

Water color illustration by F Vellan. Paris. SB, PB.

Bofa, Gus. Illustrations. Pierre Mac Orland. PB.

Malaises. Paris, 1930. PB.

Boileau-Despreaux, Nicolas. L 377, NA 14 ["The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words"].

Oeuvres diverses...avec le traité du sublime, etc.

Paris, 1701. Bound by Pouillet. SB, PB.

Boissier, Gaston. S&P 183 [quoted from Tacite].

Bombois, Camille. In 1946 Stevens purchased Bombois' Le Loiret à Olivet (see list of paintings, below) and commented that it was "fresh, pleasant, and without sophistication" (L 545).

L 530, 531, 532-3, 535, 545, 546, 560, 569.

Bonnard, Abel. SPBS 55 [quoted from Le Monde des poissons].

Bonnard, Pierre. L 601.

Bores, Francisco. L 548, 549, 560.


Bossuet, Jacques-Bénigne. *CP 24* ["The Doctor of Geneva" (1921)], *L 66*, 754, *NA 55* ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"], 169 ["The Relations Between Poetry and Painting"], *OP 27* ["Meditation" (1917)].

*Sermon sur la mort.* Paris: E. Pelletan, 1921. SB, HBC.


Boucher, François. *OP 84* ["The Greenest Continent" (1936)].

*Portfolio of 10 drawings.* Paris, [1925]. PB.

Bourget, Paul. *S&P 145*, 178 [quoted from *Une Idylle Tragique*].

Bourdeille, Pierre de, seigneur de Brantôme. *L 229-230* [mentions acquiring *Vies des dames galantes*].


Braque, Georges. (see list of paintings, below) *L 545*, 548, 552, 574, *NA 15-6* ["The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words"], 161 [quoted in "The Relations Between Poetry and Painting"], *OP 186* [quoted in *Adagia*].

Brayer, Yves. (see list of paintings, below) *L 548-9.*

conception of poésie pure: "M. Brémond elucidated a mystical motive and made it clear that, in his opinion, one writes poetry to find God." Stevens notes, however, that "Because most of us are incapable of sharing the experiences of M. Brémond, we have to be content with less" (OP 228).

OP 227-8 ["The Irrational Element in Poetry"].

Brianchon, Maurice. (see list of paintings, below)

L 492, Parts 233.

Briand, Aristide. SPBS 21 [quoted from "Autour Aristide Briand," Je Suis Partout, March 1932].

Brillat-Savarin, Jean A. The Physiology of Taste. London: P. Davies, 1925. HBC.


Les silences de la mer. New York: Pantheon, 1943. HBC.


Buffon, George Louis. NA 55 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"].

Bussy, Simon. L 522.

Caillard, Christian. L 841.


Camus, Albert. CP 457 ["The Novel" 1948], L 617, 624.

L'homme révolté. Paris: Gallimard, 1951. HBC.

Caran d'Ache, Emmanuel. Caran d'Ache the Supreme. London: Methuen, [1933]. HBC.
Cézanne, Paul. Stevens commented in a 1943 letter "last evening, in the course of two or three hours, I read Cezanne’s letters, in which there is quite nothing at all except his sharp definitions, and the stubborness of his will" (L 451).

L 451, 672, 828, NA 46-7 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"], 167, 174 [both in "The Relations between Poetry and Painting"], OP 240 ["Notes on Jean Labasque," 1938-41], 244 ["A Note on Samuel French Morse" 1944], SPBS 53-5.

Correspondance. Paris [1937]. SB, PB.
Cézanne, a Study of His Development. Roger Fry.
London: Hogarth Press, 1927. PB.
Cézanne, son art - son oeuvre. Lionello Venturi.
Paris, 1936. PB.

Chabaud, Jean. L 548.
Chaminade, Cécile. L 525.
Champfleury, Jules Husson. Histoire de l’imagerie
Char, René. Peter Lee, a Korean poet and correspondent of Stevens' notes in an interview: "When I asked him whom I should read he recommended Randall Jarrell and two French poets, Francis Ponge and René Char" (Parts 137).

Parts 137.


Chardin, Jean-Baptiste. NA 175 ["The Relations between Poetry and Painting"].

Charpentier, Gustave. L 393, SPBS 65 [both quoting Gounod (see below) from Musical Quarterly, 1939: "He composes in C-natural and no one else but the Almighty could do that"].

Charron, Pierre. De la sagesse. Amsterdam, 1662. SB, PB.

Chastel, Roger. L 548.

Chastellux, François-Jean. L 568


Voyages...dans l'Amerique septentrionale dans les années 1780, 1781 & 1782. 2 vols - bound in at end is Examen critique des voyages...de M. le Marquis de Chastellux, by J. P. Brissot de Warville. Paris, 1786. PB.

Chateaubriand, François-René, vicomte de. NA 55 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"].

Châtillon, Gaspard de. Châtillon, a possible ancestor of
Stevens' is referred to in section v of "The Auroras of Autumn." See discussion in Chapter 6. See also Gaspard de Coligny, below.

CP 415 ["The Auroras of Autumn" 1950].

Chénier, André-Marie de. L 151, 156 [prose translation of "La Flute" for Elsie Moll], NA 159 ["The Relations between Poetry and Painting"].

Oeuvres poétiques. Paris, 1874. 3 vols. SB, PB.

Chevreau, Urbain. Chevraena. Paris, 1697. SB, PB.

Chonez, Claudine. L 696-7, OP 144 ["Three Paraphrases from Léon-Paul Fargue" 1951].

Church, Barbara. Barbara Church and her husband Henry (see below), were close friends and regular correspondents of Stevens' for many years. In the interests of space I have not included the extensive list of page references from Stevens' Letters for either of the Churches.

L'ombrageuse. Mesures, 1936. H.

Church, Henry. Church, an American, was editor and co-founder of Mesures magazine with Jean Paulhan (see below). In 1939 he requested permission from Stevens to have translated Harmonium poems published in Mesures; this contact led to a lasting friendship with Church and his wife Barbara, above.


Bacillus subtilis artis. Mesures, 1936. H.

Le savant. [Mesures, 1937]. H.

Claretie, Jules. L 634.

Claude (Claude Gellée, Le Lorrain). CP 134 ["Botanist on Alp (No.1)" (1934)], L 293, NA 159, 164, 172 [all from "The Relations Between Poetry and Painting"], OP 12 [Phases (1914)].

Cinquante-deux reproductions...Claude Gellée dit Claude Lorrain. Portfolio. Paris, 1922. PB.

Claudel, Paul-Louis. L 670, NA 55 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"].


Colette (Sidonie, Gabrielle). L 663, LY 135.

Coligny, Gaspard de. Coligny's grandson, Gaspard de Châtillon (see above), is referred to in "The Auroras of Autumn."


Corot, Jean-Baptiste. CP 156 ["Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery" (1935)], L 89, 349, 562, NA 159, 164 [both in
"The Relations between Poetry and Painting".


Coulanges, Philippe Emmanuel, Marquis de. La cité antique. Paris, 1864. SB, PB.

Courbet, Gustave. L 626, 632, 691.


Croisset, Francis de. L 327 [mentions buying a copy of La féeerie Cinghalaise, 1926].

Crotti, Jean. L 821.

Daumier, Honoré. L 471.

Portfolio of 50 colored lithographs. Paris, 1924. PB.

Debussy, Claude. L 525, NA 122 ["Effects of Analogy" (1948)], OP 166 ["Carlos among the Candles" 1917].


Degrandpre, L. Voyage dans l'Inde et au Bengale, fait dans les années 1789 et 1790. Paris, 1801. PB.

Delacroix, Ferdinand-Eugène. L 175, 478.


Soixante-dix aquarelles, dessins, croquis.

Paris, 1928. Portfolio. PB.

Denis. Sur la tombe d'Antoine Bourdelle. Paris, 1933. PB.

De Rochas. L 504 (mentions Le livre de demain).

Signed and dated 4/1903 in New York, marked. Seven laid-in photographs, one with notes dated 1926 in Miami. HBC.


*Traité des passions*. Paris, 1928. SB, PB.

Descoulins, Camille. *S&P 162.*


Doudan, Xavier. *NA 53 [quoted in "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"].*

Doumic, René. Doumic's article "Teodor de Wyzewa" [*Revue des Deux Mondes* (Sept 15, 1917) 211-13] is quoted as the epigraph of "Colloquy with a Polish Aunt" (1919).

*CP 84 ["Colloquy with a Polish Aunt"][."

Du Bellay, Joachim. Stevens had an enduring fondness for du Bellay, shown in his 1909 translation for Elsie and in references and allusions to that sonnet in private and public writing throughout his life, for example in *Phases, "Bowl, Cat and Broomstick"* (1917), *"A Dish of Peaches in Russia"* (1939) and *"A Collect of Philosophy."*

*L 151 [Stevens' translation of "Heureux qui comme Ulysse" sonnet from *Les regrets*. Included in the letter was Austin Dobson's translation of the same*
sonnet, taken from Waddington's The Sonnets of Europe (see below)], 181, OP 176 ["Bowl, Cat and Broomstick"], 277 ["A Collect of Philosophy"].

Dubuffet, Jean. Stevens wrote in a 1948 letter "these are the most potent things I have seen for a long time: horrible but at the same time potent with the effort of an extraordinarily intelligent man to arrive at the source of art in the mind" (SEC 148).

L 618, 626, SEC 148.

Duchamp, Marcel. L 185, 228, 797, 821-2, 823, 825, 836, 851.


Dufy, Raoul. Stevens wrote a pamphlet on Dufy's La Fée Electricité in 1953, commenting "It is an exploitation of fact by a man of elevation. It is a surface of prose changeable with the luster of poetry and thought" (OP 282).

CP 125 ["Lions in Sweden" (1934)], L 659, OP 281-4 ["Raoul Dufy" 1953].


Dumas, Alexandre. L 198.


Du Pont, Pierre. L 461.

Duthuit, Georges. L 478.

Enesco, Georges. CP 520 [quoted as the epigraph to "The World as Meditation" (1952)].


Fargue, Léon-Paul. Stevens presented three English "paraphrases" of Fargue prose poems at a 1951 reading, commenting in a letter that his research on Fargue "has been far more exciting than I could have foreseen" (L 697).

L 682, 696-8, 769, 781, OP 144-6, ["Three Paraphrases from Léon-Paul Fargue" (1951)], 325.


Fauré, Gabriel. SPBS 59.

Fénélon, François. L 105, NA 55 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"].

Les aventures de Téléméaque, fils d'Ulysse.

Paris: Didot l'Aîné, 1784. SB, PB.

Fernandat, René. NA 55 [quoted in "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"].

Fernandez, Ramon. In "The Idea of Order at Key West" (1934) the poet's companion and auditor is named Ramon Fernandez. Stevens claimed that the person in the poem had no relation to Fernandez the well-known French critic: "I knew of Ramon Fernandez, the critic, and had read some of his criticisms but I did not have him in mind" (L 798).

L 798, 823.

Feuillet de Conches, Félix Sébastien. Les apocryphes de la peinture de portrait. Paris: Imprimerie de
Gerdes: 1849. H.

Flaubert, Gustave. *L 461, 505.*


*Bouvard et Pecuchet.* Paris, 1928. SB, PB.


Focillon, Henri. Stevens’ copy of *The Life of Forms in Art* is extensively marked and annotated; this was likely done as he prepared "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet," where he quoted and drew upon Focillon’s book. The only other book remaining in his collection that is as thoroughly marked and annotated is Mauron’s *Aesthetics and Psychology* (see below).

*NA 46, 48-9, 66 [*The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet.*] All 3 quoting from *The Life of Forms in Art*.]


*Giovanni-Battista Piranesi. 1720-1778.* Paris: 1918. PB.

*Le mont dans la ville.* Paris, 1928. Inscr. by Focillon. PB.


*A plurality of worlds (Entretiens sur la pluralité

Fougeron, André. L 584.

Fouilloux, Jacques du. SPBS 29 [quoted from Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, 1933].

Fragonard, Jean Honoré. NA 175 ["The Relations between Poetry and Painting"], S&P 172.


Fromentin, Eugène. L 797.


Gadoffre, Gilbert. SPBS 103 [quoted on Descartes from "Le discours de la méthode et l'histoire littéraire," French Studies, 1948].


Gaschon, Jean-François. L 832n.


Gautier, Léon. Le chanson de Roland. Texte critique by L. G. SB, PB.


Genévrier, Pierre. SPBS 91 [quoted on Scott in French
Studies, 1947].

Gericault, Théodore. Dessins de Théodore Gericault.
Paris, 1928. Portfolio. PB.


Gide, André. L 445, 461, 602, 670, 741, NA 64 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"], 152, 169 [quoted on Poussin and Bossuet respectively in "The Relations between Poetry and Painting"].


Robert. Paris: Gallimard, 1930. HBC.


Recollections of André Gide. R. Martin du Gard.


Gillet, Louis. L 666.

Girardoux, Jean. SPBS 49.


Gounod, Charles-François. L 393, SPBS 65 (see Charpentier, above).

Groethuysen, Bernard. L 578, 580, 596, LY 135.
Gromaire, Marcel. Stevens wrote a catalogue note on Gromaire for a 1949 exhibit at the Louis Carré Gallery in New York City, noting that Gromaire's paintings were "full of the mesmeric presence of meanings below the surface, things not in the school of Paris, but of some harsher, more fundamental zone" (OP 251). He also owned a Gromaire painting entitled Plaine hollandaise, see list of paintings below.

OP 250-1 ["Marcel Gromaire" (1949)], 330.

Guérin, Eugénie de. S&P 20 [quoted from Journal].

Guy, Georges. Entretien de Hugo van der Goes avec Piero Della Francesca au Chateau d'Urbin. 1955. Typescript poem ded. to WS. HBC.

Guyau, Jean Marie. S&P 184.


2 vols. SB, HBC.

Henriot, Émile. SPBS 107.

Histoire des ordres militaires ou des chevaliers, des milices seculieres & régulieres, etc. Paris, 1721.

PB.

Houdon, Jean-Antoine. La vie et l'oeuvre de Houdon.


Hugo, Victor. L 9, OP 268, 275 ["A Collect of Philosophy"].

Huyghe, René. La peinture française; les contemporains.

1939. PB.

Ivliani. See Papini, below.
Les proverbes divertissans. Paris: E. Loyson, 1668. HBC.


Jeanne d'Arc. OP 256 [quoted in address to Bard College, 1951].


Labasque, Jean. Stevens wrote "Notes on Jean Labasque" in the period from 1938-41; Bates notes that no manuscript or printed source has been located (OP 329). In it Stevens discussed Labasque's interest in "'civic' art" as well as his "passionate admiration for the work of Rousseau and, by inference, for the work of any primitive deriving from popular art" (OP 241).

CP 205 [reference to Labasque's portrait of Anatole Vidal in "The Latest Freed Man" (1938)], OP 240 ["Notes on Jean Labasque"], 329.

La Bruyère, Jean de. Les caractères. 1922. SB, PB.


La Fontaine, Jean de. L 780-1, NA 108-10, 127 [all from "Effects of Analogy," Fables quoted in translation 108-10].
Fables choisies. Amsterdam: P. Mortier, 1731. HBC.
The fables of La Fontaine London: W Heine Mann, 1933. H.

Laforgue, Jules. L 391.

Langlois, E. H. Essai historique, philosophique et pittoresque sur les Danses des Morts. Rouen, 1852. 2 vols. SB, PB. J. M. Edelstein notes that this book has a "lavish binding...with five extra 'Dance of Death' engravings tipped in at front and back of the two volumes bound in one" ("The Poet as Reader: Wallace Stevens and his Books" 67).


La Patellière, Amédée Dubois de. (see list of paintings, below) L 522.

Laprade, Pierre. FPP 167.

Larquier. *Les dimanches de la rue Jacob.*

Paris [1938]. SB, PB.

La Rochefoucauld, François, duc de. *S&P 160* [mentions *Maximes*].


La Rochelle, Drieu. L 799.


Lavignac, Albert. *SPBS 43* [quoted in Marianne, 1935].

Lebasque, Henri. (see list of paintings, below) L 548, 577-8, 584, 606.

Lebourg, Albert. L 577.

Lecuire, Pierre. L 800.

*Voir Nicolas de Staël.* Paris, Fequet et Baudier, 1953. H.

Leger, Fernand. L 568, 713.

Legueult, Raymond Jean. L 841.


Lemaitre, Jules. L 653 [mention of *Au marge des vieux livres*].
Lemercier, Eugène Emmanuel. Lemercier's Lettres d'un soldat (août 1914-avril 1915) (Paris: Chapelot, 1916), a posthumously published collection of letters to his mother from the front was the basis for Stevens' 1918 war-poem Lettres d'un Soldat in which he wrote poetic paraphrases and adaptations of sections of Lemercier's letters. Stevens' copy of Lemercier's book is not to be found in what remains of his library but it can be assumed that he owned a copy and in a 1917 letter to Harriet Monroe he writes that he is sending her a copy, indicating that it was readily available in print (L 202).

L 202, OP 29-36 [Lettres d'un Soldat].

Lenclos, Anne de (Ninon). S&P 220.
Lequier, Jules. OP 275 ["A Collect of Philosophy"].
Le Roux de Lincy. L 673.
Le Roy, Jean. L 204, 209-10, OP 142-4 [translation of "Instant de clarté"].
Le Sage, Alain René. L 9.

Théâtre: Turcaret, Crispin rival de son maître.
Paris: Garnier frères, 1911. PB.

Lespinasse, Julie, Mlle de. OP 71 ["Lytton Strachey Also Enters Into Heaven" (1935)].

Lettres de Mademoiselle De Lespinasse. Gustave
Isambert, ed. Paris: 1876. SB, PB.


Limouse, Roger Marcel. *L* 841.


Malebranche, Nicolas. *OP* 275 [quoted in "A Collect of Philosophy"].


Mallarmé, Stéphane. *L* 391, 635, 699, 872, *NA* 57 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"], 122 ["Effects of Analogy"], 168, 173 ["The Relations between Poetry and Painting"], *OP* 144 ["Three Paraphrases from Léon-Paul Fargue"], 225, 227 ["The Irrational Element in Poetry"], 275 ["A Collect of Philosophy"], 294, 297, 299 ["Two Prefaces"], *SPBS* 89 [quoted from letter to Verlaine and from *Divagations*].


*Divagations*. Editions. d’Art A. Skira, [1896]. H.


*Psychologie d’art*. PB. Published in the late forties
according to Richardson (LY 308).

Marchand, Jean-Hypolyte. (See list of paintings, below)

CP 215 ["Connoisseur of Chaos" (1938)].

Maritain, Jacques. NA 59 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"], SPBS 57-9 [quoted from The Degrees of Knowledge].

Marquet, Albert. L 535, 545-6, 560, 572.

Dix estampes originales, présentées par George Besson.


Mathieu de Noailles, Anne-Elisabeth, Comtesse. L 174.

Matisse, Henri. CP 529 ["St. Armorer’s Church from the Outside" (1952)], L 574, 622, 797.

Matisse, Pierre. L 530, 626.

Maucroix, François. Maucroix oeuvres diverses.

Paris, 1854. 2 vols. SB, PB.

Maulnier, Thierry. L 490.


Mauriac, François. SPBS 61 [quoted, see Gay-Lussac, above].

Maurois, André. L 411.

Mauron, Charles. Stevens’ copy of Aesthetics and Psychology is heavily marked and annotated, with paraphrased passages and chapter summaries written in the end-pages.¹ He drew on

¹ RB 440369: Reproduced by permission of the Huntington
this material for "The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words," his second public lecture, given in May of 1941 (L 392). Of particular interest are his endnotes, where there is extensive copying and paraphrasing of Mauron's arguments. The first use of Mauron, or at least of something suggested by Mauron, comes in the discussion of the series of literary and artistic representations of horsemen that Stevens uses to illustrate the "history of [humanity's] progressive mental states" (NA 8). One of Stevens' examples is Verrochio's statue of "Bartolommeo Colleoni in Venice." He notes that contemporary observers cannot relate imaginatively to the statue because it "seems, nowadays...a little overpowering, a little magnificent." Mauron writes about Verrochio's statue in his "Expressive Art" chapter, noting that "the cruel face of Bartolomeo Colleone" is "strongly suggestive of a brutal domination" (68). Stevens copied "the cruel face of Bartolomeo Colleone" into his endnotes; Mauron's use of the well-known Verrochio statue may well have inspired him to include it as part of his argument.

Later in the lecture Stevens uses paraphrases of Mauron in more detail as part of a general summary of Mauron's aesthetics:

I want to repeat for two reasons a number of observations made by Charles Mauron. The first reason is that these observations tell us what it is that a poet does to help people to live their lives and the second is that they prepare the way for a word
concerning escapism. They are: that the artist transforms us into epicures; that he has to discover the possible work of art in the real world, then to extract it, when he does not himself compose it entirely; that he is un amoureux perpétuel of the world that he contemplates and thereby enriches; that art sets out to express the human soul; and finally that everything like a firm grasp of reality is eliminated from the aesthetic field. (NA 30)

In this passage there are five paraphrases or quotations taken from different places in Aesthetics and Psychology, all included in Stevens' endnotes. For example, the line "the artist transforms us into epicures," is paraphrased from "The Aesthetic Attitude" chapter (38), while the phrase "un amoureux perpétuel" is actually a quotation of Auguste Bréal by Mauron from "The Pleasures of Sensibility" chapter, which Mauron uses to demonstrate that great artists "never tired of contemplating those details which give the world a bold relief and a rich flavour" (51 - in his endnotes Stevens mistakenly cites the Bréal quotation as coming from page 45). The other paraphrases or quotations of Mauron in this passage are the phrase "that he has to discover the possible work of art in the real world and then to extract it," which Stevens writes in his endnotes as coming from page 59 of Mauron's "Expressive Art" chapter but that it is unclear where it is actually taken from, the phrase "that art sets out to express the human soul," quoted from the "Expressive Art" chapter (69), and the phrase "everything like a firm grasp of reality is eliminated from the aesthetic field" which is a direct quote from Mauron's "Conclusion" (106).
NA 30 [paraphrased in "The Noble Rider and The Sound of Words"], OP 230 [paraphrased in "The Irrational Element in Poetry"].


Extensively marked and annotated. HBC.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. LY 406.


Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin). CP 335 ["Paisant Chronicle" (1945)], SPBS 77 [quote by Chrysale misascribed to Paul Bonifas from Les femmes savantes], 103.


Monet, Claude. L 841.

Montaigne, Michel Eyquem de. L 578.


Montmorot, Jules de. Sonnets d'Italie. Trans. 1923. SB, PB.


Morisot, Berthe. Correspondance de Berthe Morisot, avec sa

Mounier, Emmanuel. L 714.

Mouravit, Gustave. L 518, 567, 673.


Musaeus, Jean-Auguste. Contes de Musaeus, precedes d'un notice par Paul de Kock. Paris, 1826. 5 vols. SB, PB.


Orléans, Charles d’. L 156.

Oudot, Roland. (see list of paintings, below) L 548, 549, 559-60, 561-2, 569, 841.

Pankoucke. Dictionnaire des proverbes François, etc. Paris, 1758. SB, PB.

Papini, P. C. C. Giovanni. An uncredited French translation of Papini’s "LETTER OF CELESTIN VI, POPE, TO THE POETS P. C. C. PAPINI" is laid-in to Stevens’ copy of Ivliani’s Les proverbes divertissans (see above), likely Juliette
Bertrand's 1948 translation (A Poet's Growth 219). Stevens used an English translation of Papini's LETTER as the epigraph for "Reply to Papini" (1950).

Pascal, Blaise. NA 133-6, 141-2 ["Imagination as Value" 1949], OP 9 [quoted as epigraph for Phases (1914)], 275, 279, 280 ["A Collect of Philosophy"], S&P 160, SPBS 93-9 [quoted from Pensées], 103 [discussion of Descartes (see Gadoffre, above) mistakenly ascribed by Stevens as about Pascal].

Trois discours sur la condition des grands.

Paris: Editions d'art E. Pelletan, 1932. H. Paulhan, Jean. Paulhan was a French writer and critic who was involved with the Nouvelle Revue Française and Mesures, which he founded with Henry Church. Stevens knew him from his writing and from his acquaintance with Church.


Perruchot, Henri. SPBS 107 [quoted on Henriot in Revue de la pensée Française, 1953].

Pignon, Edouard. L 583-4.

Pissarro, Camille. (see list of paintings, below) L 601, 841.


Vol. 1 signed as bought in Albany 7/31/02, vols 1 and 2 marked and annotated. Vol. 1 includes du Bellay, Ronsard, Marot and Malherbe, vol. 2 includes Froissart, Scudéry, and Charles d'Orleans. HBC.

Poncelet, Jean. L 548.

Ponge, Francis. Stevens recommended Ponge, along with Randall Jarrell and René Char, when asked for poetry suggestions by his friend Peter Lee (Parts 137).

Parts 137.

Poulenc, François. L 303, 411.


Poussin, Nicolas. CP 219 ["Poem Written at Morning" (1942)], L 229, NA 152 ["Imagination as Value"], 172 ["The Relations between poetry and Painting"], OP 115 ["Recitation after Dinner" (1945)].

Lettres de Poussin. Paris, 1929. SB, PB.
Cinquante réproductions. Paris, 1921. Portfolio. PB.


Poussin. André Gide. 1945. PB.

Proust, Marcel. L 575, FPP 176, NA 165 ["The Relations between Poetry and Painting"], OP 227 ["The Irrational Element in Poetry"], SPBS 85.


Within a Budding Grove. London: Chatto & Windus, 1924. H.

The Guermantes Way. London: Chatto & Windus, 1925. H.


Time Regained. London: Chatto & Windus, 1931. H.


Puvis de Chavannes, Pierre. CP 366 ["From the Packet of Anacharsis" (1946)].

Rabelais, François. NA 55 ["The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"], S&P 181 [quoted].

Racine, Jean. CP 24 ["The Doctor of Geneva" (1921)], L 305, 493, FPP 179, NA 172 ["The Relations between
Poetry and Painting], SPBS 55-7 [quoted from Bérénice].

Raymond, Marcel. From Baudelaire to Surrealism.

Renan, Ernest. SPBS 67 [quoted from Souvenirs].

Renard, Jules. Stevens had a particular liking for Renard, quoting him in his commonplace book and using one of those quotes as the epigraph for "United Dames of America" (1937). In a 1945 letter Stevens writes that "Renard constantly says things that interest me immensely" and mentions ordering Renard's Journal from Anatole Vidal; he eventually had it specially bound by René Aussourd (L 510n).

CP 206 [quoted from letter to Louis Paillard as epigraph for "United Dames of America"], L 510, SPBS 51 [quoted in excerpt from G. W. Stonier, "The Young Hopkins," New Statesman and Nation, 23 Jan 1937], 55 [quoted from letters to Louis Paillard (see above) and Isidore Gaujour from Correspondance de Jules Renard].


Renard, René. L 545, 547.

Renoir, Pierre-Auguste. OP 166 ["Carlos Among the Candles"].


Richter, Johann Paul Friedrich (Jean-Paul). *Titan*. Paris, 1878. SB, PB.

*Choix de rêves*. Paris, [1931]. SB, PB.

*Voyage du proviseur Falbel*. Paris, 1930. SB, PB.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Poèmes français*. 1935. SB, PB.

Riquier, Giraud. *SPBS 79* [quoted].


*Oeuvres complètes*. Paris, 1932. SB, PB.

*Prose Poems from LES ILLUMINATIONS of Arthur Rimbaud*, 1932. UM.

*Ébauches*. Paris, 1937. SB, PB.


*Prose poems from the Illuminations*. Norfolk: New Directions, 1943. H.

Rodin, Auguste. (see list of paintings, below). Stevens wrote in an unpublished 1953 letter that title of his poem "Celle Qui Fût Héaulmiette" (1950) was suggested by Rodin’s sculpture *Celle qui fut la belle heaulmière*, in turn named after François Villon’s poem in *Le Grand Testament*, see below (*SPBS 7*).
S&P 179, SPBS 7.

Rolland, Romain. L 186 [comments that "'Unbroken Chain' seemed uncommonly well written"], 657, 659, 666, 669, 671, 758.

Ronsard, Pierre de. L 661.

Rostand, Edmond. S&P 89, 92 [discusses seeing Maude Adams and Sarah Bernhardt in L'Aiglon].

Rouault, Georges. Georges Rouault: Paintings and Prints. 
James Thrall Soby. New York: MOMA, [1945]. HBC.

Le misérere. Paris: Carré, 1952. HBC.


PB.

Rougemont, Denis de. L 589, OP 313 [quoted in response to Partisan Review questionnaire, 1948].

Rousseau, Henri. L 545, OP 241 ["Notes on Jean Labasque"].

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. NA 55 ["The Figure of Youth as Virile Poet"].

Rousseau, Théodore. L 71.

Rousseaux, André. SPBS 89 [quoted from review of de Beauvoir's Tous les hommes sont mortels. Le Littéraire Dec. 1946].

Sainte-Beuve, Charles A. L 457.


Saint-Saëns, Camille. L 94.


Sand, Maurice. Masques et buffons (Comédie Italienne).
Paris, 1860. PB.
Sartre, Jean-Paul. L 624.
Schlumberger, Jean. SPBS 39 [quoted from Nouvelle Revue Française, July 1919].
Schwob, Marcel. L 736, 740.
Séchan, Louis. OP 298-9 [re: a letter from Valéry, "Two Prefaces"], 302 ["Two Prefaces"].
Sénancour, E. Pivert de. L 87 [quoted from Obermann in The Note-Books of Matthew Arnold].
Seurat, Georges. L 368-9.
Siegfried, André. LY 379.
Soulary, Josephin. Les figulines suivies du rêve de l’escarpolette, etc. Lyon, 1862. SB, PB.
Staël, Germaine Necker, Baronne de. NA 55 ["The Figure of Youth as Virile Poet"].
Staël, Nicolas de. L 797, 800-1.
Stendhal (Henri Beyle). L 505, OP 219 [quoted from Pensées, "A Poet that Matters"], S&P 200 [mentions reading La Chartreuse de Parme].
Anecdotes Italiennes & Francaises. [Maestricht, 1932]. SB, PB.


Sully-Prudhomme, René-François-Armand. S&P 185 [quoted from Journal des savants (see below)].

Supervielle, Jules. L 418, 563, 665.

Tal Coat, Pierre. In 1949 Stevens bought (via Paule Vidal) a Tal Coat painting entitled Still Life (see list of paintings below) and eventually renamed it Angel Surrounded by Peasants, which in turn became the nominal basis for Stevens' poem entitled "Angel Surrounded by Paysans." See my discussion of that poem.


Tallemant des Réaux, Gédéon. Miniature portraits.

Guy Chapman, 1925. H.


Térechkovitch, Constantin. L 841.

Tharaud, Jean & Jérome. La tragédie de Ravaillac. Paris: 1913. SB, PB.
Tonnelle, Alfred. *Fragments sur l'art et la philosophie.*

Tours, 1959. SB, PB.


Toulet, Paul-Jean. *CP* 153 ["Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery"], *SPBS* 49 [quoted from Carco’s *Amitié avec Toulet*, see above].

*Le mariage de Don Quichotte.* Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1922. PB.

*Journal et voyages.* Paris: Le Divan, 1934. SB, PB.


Toussaint. *Le jardin des sagesses.* [1921]. SB, PB.


Valéry, Paul. Stevens admired Valéry, even though in 1935 admitting "I have read very little of...Valéry, although I have a number of his books and, for that matter, several books about him" (L 290). In 1954 he took the opportunity "to know Valéry better" and accepted the task of writing prefaces for Valéry’s dialogues *Eupalinos* and *L’âme et la danse* for a collected edition of Valéry being issued by the Bollingen Foundation (L 855). These prefaces were eventually reprinted in *Opus Posthumous*. Stevens mentions owning copies of *Etat de la vertu* (L 290) and *Lettres à*
quelques-uns (L 761) although neither has survived from his library.

L 290, 510-1, 618, 624, 737, 757, 761, 795 [quoted], 854, 855, 856, 866-7, 868, 874, 877-8, NA 39 [quoted on Bergson in "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet"], 115 ["Effects of Analogy"], 169, 173 ["The Relations between Poetry and Painting"], OP 290-302 ["Two Prefaces"].


Eupalinos. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1927. H.


SB, PB.


Venturi, Lionello. "At the moment, Venturi is to me what a very smelly fox is to a young dog: I don't need any horn to find him" (L 432).

L 432, OP 244 [quoted on Cézanne in "A Note on Samuel French Morse"].
Verhaeren, Émile. *S&P 171* [quoted from *Les forces tumultueuses*].

Verlaine, Paul. Stevens admired Verlaine, writing in a 1908 letter "I like Verlaine - water-colors, little statues, small thoughts." He later stated that in his youth Verlaine "meant a good deal more to him" than other French poets and that there "were many of his lines that I delighted to repeat."

*L 110, 636.*

*Poésies complètes.* Paris: Editions de la Banderole, 1923. SB, HBC.

*Sagesse.* Paris: Editions d’art E. Pelletan, 1925. SB. HBC.


*Parallèlement.* Paris: Editions d’art E. Pelletan, 1932. SB. HBC.

Vidal, Anatole. Anatole Vidal was the owner of Librairie Coloniale, a Paris bookshop with which Stevens did business over many years, ordering books and paintings. Stevens commissioned a portrait of Vidal from Jean Labasque (*Parts 131*) and refers to the portrait in his poem "The Latest Freed Man." Vidal died in late 1944 and his daughter Paule (see below) took over the store and had an extensive
correspondence with Stevens while continuing to procure books and paintings for him. In the interests of space I have not included the extensive list of page references from Stevens' Letters for either of the Vidos.

*CP 205 (see above), Parts 131.*

Vidal, Paule. A good deal of the plentiful correspondence between Stevens and Paule Vidal has survived, including over fifty examples in the collected Letters. Stevens first wrote to her in 1945, and continued purchasing through her and corresponding with her until very late in life (L 480, 840-1).

Villiers, Pierre de. *De l’amitié.* Cologne: Chez Pierre Marteau, 1692. H.


*L 582.*

*Poésies de Villon.* [1925]. SB, PB.

Villon, Jacques. L 777, 795, 836, NA 165-6, 168 ["The Relations between Poetry and Painting"].

*Jacques Villon ou l'art glorieux.* Eluard and Jean, eds. [1948]. PB.

*Vingt gravures choisies.* Paris [1928]. Portfolio of reproductions of Canaletto, Goya, Fragonard, Van Ostade, Lucas de Leyde, Mantegna, Rembrandt, Watteau and others. PB.
Viollet-le-Duc, Eugène Emmanuel. CP 386 [Notes toward a Supreme Fiction].


Vogué, Countess Nelly de. L 741, 743.

Vollard, Ambroise. L 530.

Souvenirs d’un marchand de tableaux. [1937]. SB, PB.

Voltaire, Jean F. M. Arouet de. CP 42 ["The Comedian as the Letter C" (1923): "Like Candide, / Yeoman and grub"], L 620.

Romans de Voltaire. 3 vols. Paris: Didot l’Ainé, 1821. SB, PB.


Voragine, Jacques de. Voragine was not a French writer originally but Stevens used a French translation of Legenda Aurea as a source for the title of "Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges" (1915), and also refers to him in "Colloquy with a Polish Aunt" (1919), commenting in a letter to Harriet Monroe:

Voragine may warrant a charge of obscurantism on my part or of stupidity on the other fellow’s part, as the wind blows. Jacques de Voragine or Jacopo da Voragino is the immortal begetter of the Legenda Aurea, which, as the best known book of the Middle Ages, the subject of Caxton’s w-k work and W. Morris’ chef d-o., not to speak of the fact that it is obtainable in any bookstore and is constantly in catalogues, ought to be fairly well-known even to book-reviewers.... (L 216)
CP 21 ["Cy Est Pourtraicte, Madame Ste Ursule, et Les Unze Mille Vierges"], 84 ["Colloquy with a Polish Aunt"], L 216.

Voyenne, Bernard. L 669.

Vuillard, Jean, E. L 781, 836.


Portfolio. HBC.

Wahl, Jean. Wahl, a French philosopher, was a friend of Henry Church and an acquaintance of Stevens'. Upon reading Wahl's comments about Notes toward a Supreme Fiction Stevens wrote: "I am most content, in the French sense of that word, to have pleased Jean Wahl" (L 430). Wahl later invited Stevens to give "The Figure of the Youth as Virile Poet" at the 1943 Les Entretiens de Pontigny conference in Mount Holyoke, MA.


Watteau, Antoine. NA 175 ["The Relations between Poetry and Painting"].


Portfolio with catalogue raisonné. PB.

Weidlé, Wladimir. L 879.

Weil, Simone. NA 174 [discusses La Pesanteur et La Grâce in "The Relations between Poetry and Painting"].
Journals:

*Bibliophile, Le.* vols 1-3 (5 issues each) 1931-33. SB.


*Collonade.* L 741 ["Colonnade is to be revived in London. Marianne Moore is going to spend the summer in France, and so on. Pfui! C’est là, la litterature moderne, n’est-ce pas?" (Letter to José Rodriguez Feo, 2/19/52)].

*Eventail.* L 481.

*Fontaine.* L 531.

*France Illustration.* #88 (6/7/47). HBC.

*French Studies.* L 624, SPBS 91, 103, 105.

*Gazette des Beaux Arts.* L 432 ["I picked up several copies of the GAZETTE des BEAUX ARTS, which they are publishing now-a-days in English. Probably you wouldn’t like it, but, after all, it is pretty much like Nietzsche’s mind. If you don’t like it, what is there to take its place?" (Letter to Henry Church, 12/8/42). In this letter Stevens also discusses Lionello Venturi’s "IDEA OF THE RENAISSANCE," an article from the November 1942 issue. See Venturi, above.], SPBS 77.

*Gazette Guerrière.* CP 276 ["Examination of the Hero In a Time of War" (1942)].
"I bought a copy of Graphis, Quadrique and one or two others and was quite staggered that they cost $14.50. However, they were worth it because one never realizes how completely we seem to belong to Europe until we attempt to get along without it" (Letter to Henry Church, 8/5/46).

Je Suis Partout. SPBS 21.

Journal des Débats. S&P 199 "I’ve a notion to run over to the library some night and take a look at the Journal des Débats. One must keep in touch with Paris, if one is to have anything at all to think about" (1908)].

Journal des Savants. S&P 185 [Sully-Prudhomme quoted].

L’Arche. L 531.

La Licorne. 3 vols: (Spring 1947, Winter 1948, Fall 1948).

PB.

L 578, 580 [Both letters refer to Jean Paulhan’s "extraordinarily touching souvenir" of Bernard Groethuysen in the Winter 1947 issue].

La Table Ronde. SPBS 105.

Labyrinthe. L 527 "Of all the hebdos that you have sent me, the only one that I really like is Labyrinthe.... [I]t is very well done" (To Paule Vidal, 1946)], SPBS 87.

Le Figaro. L 773 "After waiting for FIGARO a long time, several numbers came at the same time. This has brought Paris close to me. When I go home at night, after the office, I spend a long time dawdling over the
fascinating phrases which refresh me as nothing else could."], SPBS 49.

Le Littéraire [Figaro supplement]. SPBS 89.

L'Observateur de la Paix. CP 276 ["Examination of the Hero In a Time of War"].


#21, July 1939, [Matisse issue]. HBC.

Le Portique. L 698 ["The other day I received from Europe a copy of No. 7 of Le Portique. Merely to read the names of book-binders, the names of publishers and book shops excited me"].

#8, 1951. H.

Le Soleil Noir. L 799.

Le Temps. SPBS 33.

Les Lettres Parisiennes. 1-9 (June 1918-April 1920). UM.

Lettres Françaises. L 418.

Marianne. L 523, SPBS 43, 63.

Mesures. Mesures was founded in 1934 by Henry Church and Jean Paulhan, see above. Stevens subscribed to Mesures from its inception and became acquainted with Church after the latter requested permission to publish translated Harmonium poems (L 338).


Minerve. L 528.

Nouvelles Litteraires. L 732, OP 280 ["A Collect of Philosophy"].

Nouvelle Revue Française and NNRF. L 781, 797, 799, 817
["It is the best magazine in the world today"], 877, 879, 890, SPBS 39.

May 1953, Feb 1955, H.

Quadrigue. L 531.
Revue de la Pensée Française. SPBS 107.
Revue Des Deux Mondes. CP 84 ["Teodor de Wyzewa" Sept 15, 1917 (René Doumic), quoted as epigraph for "Colloquy with a Polish Aunt"], L 741.
Samedi-Soir. L 528.
Sur. L 418.
Verve. OP 186 [Braque quotation from Verve No. 2 in Adagia].

Paintings:

This list is taken from Glen Macleod’s Wallace Stevens and Modern Art, "based on the list of thirty-six paintings included in the exhibition ‘Wallace Stevens’ Collection of Paintings and Prints’ at Trinity College, Hartford, Conn. (May–June 1963)" (199-200):

Bombois, Camille: Le Loiret à Olivet (oil).
Bouda, Cyril: Strawberry Torte (etching) and Village Street (b&w print).
Brayer, Yves: Venice – Grand Canal (oil) [owned by the Stevens Estate (L 548)].
Brianchon, Maurice: Still Life (oil) [according to Holly Stevens this painting was sold for her mother at Parke-Bernet, March 13, 1959 (L 492)].

Cavailles, Jean Jules: Interior with Still Life (oil) [sold at Parke-Bernet March 13, 1959 (L 548)] and Port of Cannes (oil) [renamed Sea Surface Full of Clouds by Stevens].

Céria, Edmond: Harbor Scene (oil) [sold at Parke-Bernet March 13, 1959 (L 548)] and La Trinité des Monts (oil).

Detthow, Eric: Blue Bowl of Red Flowers (oil) and Paysage du Midi (oil).

Gromaire, Marcel: Plaine hollandaise (ink and watercolor).

Labasque, Jean: La Démolition (oil), Tableau, and Portrait of Vidal (oil) [this last is referred to in "The Latest Freed Man"].

La Patellière, Amédée Dubois de: Mexican Scene (oil) [sold at Parke-Bernet March 13, 1959 (L 522)].

Lebasque, Henri. Bathing (oil) and Landscape with Woman in Foreground (oil) [both of these are owned by the Stevens Estate (L 548n)].

Lebasque, Marthe: Bridge with Angels (pastel).

Marchand, Jean-Hyppolyte: Les Oliviers (oil).

Oudot, Roland: Paysage (oil) The Bathers (oil).

Pissarro, Camille: Untitled charcoal drawing.

Rodin, Auguste: Nude (lithograph).

Tal Coat, Pierre: Still Life (oil) (renamed Angel Surrounded by Peasants by Stevens).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


---. "Wallace Stevens at the University of Massachusetts:


Cohen, J. M. *Poetry of This Age 1908-1958.* London:


---. "From Poe to Valéry." 1948. To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings. London: Faber & Faber, 1965. 27-
42.


---. *Modernism from Right to Left: Wallace Stevens, the Thirties, & Literary Radicalism.* New York: Cambridge


Graves, Barbara Farris. "Stevens' Reading in Contemporary French Aesthetics: Charles Mauron, Thierry Maulnier,


Kenner, Hugh. The Pound Era. Berkeley: University of
---. "Wallace Stevens’s Defense of Poetry: La poésie pure, the New Romantic and the Pressure of Reality." Bornstein 111-32.
MacCaffrey, Isabel G. "The Ways of Truth in 'Le Monocle de Mon Oncle.'" Doggett and Buttel 196-218.
Mallarmé, Stéphane. *Oeuvres complètes.* Paris: Librairie
Gallimard, 1951.


Munson, Gorham, B. "The Dandyism of Wallace Stevens" The


Picoche, Jacqueline. Dictionnaire étymologique du français.


Riddel, Joseph N. The Clairvoyant Eye. Baton Rouge:


Serio, John N. and Leggett, B. J., eds. *Teaching Wallace


---. Pierrots on the Stage of Desire. Princeton: Princeton


Walsh, Thomas. Concordance to the Poetry of Wallace


