

# On Wallace Stevens's "Asides on the Oboe": The Crisis of Faith and Poetic Redemption

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In the poem "Asides on the Oboe," Wallace Stevens depicts a world rife with war, chaos, and a lack of faith, where old fictions no longer hold credibility, and it is time to create a new one. By crafting "the central man" as an embodiment of poetic fiction, Stevens argues for the possibility that poetry can bring poetic redemption to people in this era of war and crisis of faith. The frequent use of imagery, allusion, and other techniques in the poem together constitute the deep connotations of the text, reflecting Stevens's equal attention to the aesthetics of poetry and humanism.

*Keywords:* Wallace Stevens, "Asides on the Oboe", crisis of faith, poetic redemption

As one of America's most respected 20th century poets, Wallace Stevens is both a master stylist and a philosopher of aesthetics. He is a late-blooming poet who published his first collection of poems after the age of forty<sup>1</sup>, yet his fame has continued to grow to this day. His poems are characterized by a blend of abstraction, philosophical reflection, and a deep engagement with the nature of reality and the imagination. Due to the intellectual density and technical refinement of his poetry, Stevens is sometimes considered an elusive poet, which has also led to some controversy in the evaluation of his work. "Criticism on Stevens's work has evolved and developed in tandem with American modern literary criticism since the early last century, going through stages of New Criticism, deconstruction, and postmodern criticism" (Cheng, 2012, p. 2), with critics' evaluations of his poetry becoming more diverse. The New Critics' focus on the text itself to some extent led to a subsequent general anti-historical tendency in the study of Stevens<sup>2</sup>. Critics mostly analyzed Stevens's poetry from a linguistic perspective, and paid more attention to the poetic theories reflected in Stevens's work, as J. Hillis Miller pointed out that "his poems are poems about poetry. They contain within themselves discussions of what they are and of what they mean" (Miller, 1985, p. 4). This anti-historical tendency regarded Stevens's works as a pure practice of poetic theory, neglecting the implicit interaction between Stevens and his times and reality. F. O. Matthiessen pointed out Stevens "mature apprehension of actual society" (Matthiessen, 1936, p. 605) in 1936,

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<sup>1</sup> Stevens published his first collection of poems, "Harmonium," in 1923, followed by five more collections: "Ideas of Order" (1936), "The Man with the Blue Guitar and Other Poems" (1937), "Parts of a World" (1942), "Transport to Summer" (1947), and "The Auroras of Autumn" (1950). Additionally, he published separate editions of three long poems: "Owl's Clover" (1936), "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" (1942), and "Esth étique du Mal" (1945).

<sup>2</sup> New Critics such as R.P. Blackmur, Yvor Winters, and John Crowe Ransom were all dedicated to the study of Stevens' poetic concepts, with varying degrees of praise and criticism.

But it failed to gain traction with other critics. As late as 1982, Marjorie Perloff incorrectly identified Stevens and his critics for political irresponsibility in her essay "Pound/Stevens: Whose Era?" Despite the fact that the article itself sparked considerable controversy<sup>3</sup>, nearly half a century later, there are still prominent scholars who ignore the relationship between Stevens's poetry and social reality. Stevens critics have played no small part in perpetuating the apolitical, vacuum-like, and socially disconnected judgments of Stevens's poetry.

Stevens once said, "The pressure of reality is, I think, the determining factor in the artistic character of an era and, as well, the determining factor in the artistic character of an individual" (Stevens, 1997, p. 656). This sufficiently reflects his concern for reality. In fact, he not only integrated his poetic thoughts into poetry but reflected and contemplated the chaotic social realities of the early 20th century. These two aspects are not in a zero-sum game, where one overshadows the other. More accurately, Stevens's poetic thoughts also have social utility; they are a remedy he prescribed for the society of his time. He regarded poetry as a metaphysical belief, believing that poetry, as the supreme fusion of creative imagination and objective reality, can bring poetic redemption to people in this era of war and crisis of faith. "Asides on the Oboe," a wartime poem written in the summer of 1940, during the second year of World War II<sup>4</sup> in Europe, is an expression of this idea. This paper will explore how "Asides on the Oboe" reflects the bloody wars and lack of faith in the early 20th century by combining Stevens's discussion of war and faith in his poems and letters, arguing that Stevens is not satisfied with reflecting the social reality in this poem, but at the same time proposes metaphysical solutions to the problem, namely "final belief must be in a fiction." (Stevens, 1971, p. 250)

### **"Martyrdoms on the Jasmine Islands": War and the Loss of Faith**

"Asides on the Oboe" possesses a very unique worldview; it depicts not the world in our eyes but a world that has been processed by the poet. The depiction of war and death is direct: "One year, death and war prevented the jasmine scent / And the jasmine islands were bloody martyrdoms," yet it is also rich in meaning. These lines offer no specific war context, and even though the poem was written in the second year of World War II in Europe, this cannot be taken as sufficient evidence to infer that the "war" here refers to World War II. Stevens intentionally stripped war of its historical context, hence the use of "one year," not "that year" or a specific time. He also employed an obsolete meaning of "prevented," which is "act in advance"<sup>5</sup> in addition to the usual meaning of "keep something from happening." "Act in advance" introduces a sense of temporal recurrence, which Merle Brown calls "super-temporal fiction" (Brown, 1970, p. 126). The jasmine islands always exist, only to be repeatedly covered by war and death; Stevens successfully endowed "death and war" with a universal temporal significance. Jasmine is not a common image in Stevens's poetry, appearing only twice in his collection. In this poem, the pure white color of jasmine contrasts with the red of blood, and the sweet scent of jasmine contrasts with the bloody stench of war and death, highlighting the indelible harm war inflicts on the senses. As a tropical flower, the exotic aura of jasmine relative to Western civilization gives "death and war" a universal

<sup>3</sup> A number of critics have argued that Perloff's assessment of Pound's view of social and history is not justified

<sup>4</sup> The September 18th Incident in Japan in 1931 opened the prelude to World War II. The July 7th Incident in 1937 marked the outbreak of World War II in Asia, and Germany's blitzkrieg attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, followed by the declaration of war by Britain and France, led to the full-scale outbreak of the Great War. So, it is reasonable to consider the year 1940 as the second year of World War II in Europe.

<sup>5</sup> All meanings of words in this paper refer to Oxford English Dictionary.

spatial significance. War, as a phenomenon universalized through historicity and spatiality, embodies a series of internal human disharmonies such as strife and antagonism.

Not content with merely depicting war, Stevens goes further and points to the loss of faith: "And the jasmine islands were bloody martyrdoms." "Martyrdom" means "the killing or sacrifice of a person in defense of a belief". Its plural form corresponds to the counterpart of war mentioned above; not only is war repetitive, but so are the sacrifices that heroic figures make for their faith. When the heroes people believe in go to their deaths, where should they put their faith? Stevens' emphasis on "martyrdom" seems to imply that he understands the loss of faith as being no longer sheltered by God. He has expressed his contemplation on this topic more than once. In "Sunday Morning," the bourgeois woman chooses not to go to church to pray on a Sunday morning but instead enjoys the warm and cheerful life at home. This choice signifies a shift from traditional religious divinity to humanity. Similarly, in "Asides on the Oboe," Stevens depicts war and martyrdom not as a call to return to traditional religious beliefs. Although he uses the term "martyrdom," which carries significant religious connotations, he does not arrange for Jesus's resurrection. For him, death is a rebellion against traditional Christian thought, showing his rejection of traditional religious fiction. Christianity advocates the immortality of the spirit, while Stevens emphasizes the finiteness of heroic figures in whom human believe. Wars and disasters are eternal, but people cannot always rely on the martyrdom of heroic figures; people need a "final belief." As the poem begins in an affirmative tone: "The prologues are over. It is a question, now, / Of final belief." John Newcomb, from a New Historicist perspective, regards this serious judgment as Stevens's response to "political escapism and cynical despair" (Newcomb, 1990, p. 108) after witnessing the fall of Europe to Blitzkrieg<sup>6</sup>, and also sees Stevens's rejection of other fictions as a rejection of two political ideologies. This argument emphasizes Stevens's political thinking, but it contradicts Stevens's deliberate emphasis on transcending the specific historical context of war and crisis of faith. Furthermore, Stevens has clearly stated that "poetry is not personal" (Stevens, 1997, p. 902), indicating that he does not express personal emotions in his poetry; instead, he prefers to explore issues of universal significance. Therefore, "final belief" here discusses how to reconstruct social faith in an era of continuous warfare and when humanity has lost the protection of God.

### **The "Obsolete Fiction": Beliefs No Longer Credible**

The structure of this poem is very clear and can be seen as a process of posing a question—what kind of fiction the final belief should exist in, eliminating wrong answers—what fictions are no longer credible, and arguing for the correct answer—why the poetic fiction can bring about redemption of faith. The opening word "prologue" instantly places the reader on a theatrical stage, and the mention of instruments like "oboe" and "hautboy," common in dramatic performances, reinforces this feeling. Thus, the "asides" in the title more likely refers to words spoken by an actor, which the other performers on stage are supposed not to hear. The entire poem can be seen as a monologue by an actor who laments the loss of faith, the ongoing war, and the martyrdom of the hero, yet goes unheard.

The poem starts with a short prologue in an affirmative tone, stating that "So, say that final belief / Must be in a fiction." The accent ending the former line forces a pause and heavy accent on the first word of the next line,

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<sup>6</sup> Beginning with the outbreak of the campaign on May 10, 1940, the Germans conquered France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands by defeating Allied forces through maneuver in a six-week period.

"Must", and then the heaviness comes to the fifth word "fiction." The affirmer has a heavy and stubborn tone, rejecting any skeptic's evasion. As Stevens points out in many places, ultimacy can only be conceived of in fictional or metaphorical terms. Fiction or metaphor becomes more trustworthy than representational language because it reveals the truth of Being and uncovers the Being of truth as revelation. "It is time to choose." The question is, which fiction should people choose? If men's ultimate beliefs have always been in some fiction or another, the crisis of faith today may be due to the fact that our traditional myths have ceased to be credible, as Stevens calls them "obsolete fiction". "That obsolete fiction of the wide river in / An empty land; the gods that Boucher killed; / And the metal heroes that time granulates-" (Stevens, 1971, p. 250). Stevens summarizes the past or contemporary fictions in these three lines, contrasting them with the fiction he advocates.

Hi Simons interprets the first clause as "vague religious associations" (Simons, 1945, p. 570), considering it as another instance of Stevens' opposition to traditional religious fictions, suggesting that he wants to "substitute the idea of man for the idea of God" (Simons, 1945, p. 570). However, the rich connotations of this line of poetry extend beyond this, "wide river" and "empty land" evoke the impression of T. S. Eliot's post-World War I masterpiece, *The Waste Land*. In Section III, the Fire Sermon on England's River Thames runs through a now empty land: "The nymphs are departed. / Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song. [...] The nymphs are departed. / And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors; / Departed, have left no addresses. / By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept..." (Eliot, 1971, p. 42). In this section, Eliot depicts the litter on the Thames, including empty bottles, cigarette butts, and even contraceptives, which, as symbols of modern life, reveal the destruction of the natural environment and the desolation of people's spirits. "The nymphs are departed." This sentence is repeated twice; the first time, it laments that the ancient rivers filled with mysterious and spiritual water nymphs no longer exist, and the modern Thames is left with only garbage. This contrast emphasizes the loss and decay of modern civilization. The second time, "nymphs" depart along with "heirs of city directors," where "nymphs" can be read as a euphemism for prostitutes, revealing the commercialization of modern sexual relations and the moral decay.

Stevens was well-acquainted with his contemporary Eliot, and in his December 1938 publication "Homage to T. S. Eliot," he unabashedly pointed out their significant differences in poetic views: "more or less complete acceptance of (Eliot's poetics) helps to create the poetry of any poet, it also helps to destroy it." (Stevens, 1997, p. 801) Some critics have recognized "the influence of French Symbolist poet Jules Laforgue on both Stevens and Eliot" (Benamou, 1972, p. xix). While they two indeed have similarities, their differences are quite apparent: Stevens emphasizes abstraction and universality, while Eliot focuses on concrete facts and particularity, as seen in the inclusion of bottles, cigarette butts, and heirs of city owners in his poetry, which Stevens rarely uses as significant imagery in his own poems. Stevens's rejection of Eliot's fiction is, in fact, a rejection of the fiction holding that the object (as opposed empirical observation) reflects truth.

It is hard to confirm who Boucher is in "the gods that Boucher killed"; there is no definitive evidence found in Stevens's letters and articles. The most likely reference is to the archaeologist Boucher de Perthes (1788-1868), who in 1838 excavated ancient stone axes that proved the existence of prehistoric humans, thereby laying the foundation for the theory of evolution in the field of human kinship. Since then, humans are no longer considered descendants of gods. This discovery not only stripped humans of their sublimity but also severed the connection between humans and gods, deconstructing the mystery of anthropomorphic mythology and causing the gods to

lose their power as objects of worship. On one hand, Stevens recognizes the development of natural science at the time, saying, the modern poet "lives in the world of Darwin" (Stevens, 1997, p. 878). On the other hand, he was concerned that the rationalism brought about by the scientific age would lead to the exhaustion of imagination, a point he believed had already been proven in Europe, as he wrote in a letter: "The exhaustion of Europe is a great menace both to Europe and ourselves. It looks to us and also to you" (Stevens, 1966, p. 838). Thus, the second line of poetry is actually an opposition to two kinds of fictions, one being anthropomorphic mythology and the other being rational scientific narratives. Interestingly, Chen Dongbiao, an important translator of Stevens's poetry, believes that Boucher refers to Francois Boucher (1703-1770), a painter in the Rococo style. This judgment that is also reasonable. Francois Boucher looked down upon the achievements of the masters of Renaissance painting, and instead, his depictions of Greek gods were indulgent in love affairs. He tirelessly painted scenes of Mars and Venus flirting, Hercules embracing Omphale, and goddesses bathing and beauties applying makeup. His works were sharply criticized by his contemporary art critic Denis Diderot, who called them decadent and corrupt art that had a negative impact on society. This lack of seriousness in fiction is likewise disapproved of by Stevens.

"And the metal heroes that time granulates-" "Metal heroes" can be regarded as a metaphor for military heroes. Stevens disagrees with the war hero fiction because war heroes cannot escape the bonds of time and will eventually fade away, just as "metal" corrodes over time. In just three lines of poetry, Stevens rejects multiple fictions, including religious fiction, fiction that reflects truth through objective things, anthropomorphic mythology, fiction without sublimity and seriousness, and fiction of the material world.

### **"Philosopher's Man," "Man of Glass," "The Central Man": Metaphysical Belief**

By rejecting all the obsolete fictions, Stevens is making things as difficult as possible since he asks so much of his poetic fiction. Even so, he makes these hard assertions. As opposed to all the obsolete fictions, the poetic fiction should at least be sublime and transcendental. In an era of faithlessness, Stevens has always "spared no effort in seeking an ultimate order for people" (Huang, 2007, p. 215). His attitude towards religion is not a rigid rejection; instead, he hopes to reconstruct the collapsed belief system with something "approximating God," as he wrote in "Sunday Morning," "Not as God, but as a god might be." Erik Tønning also believes that Stevens "still wrestles with a voluntarist God of absolute and arbitrary power" (Tønning, 2023, p. 2). Stevens "believed that language is the only possible means to reach the truth" (Richardson, 1986, p. 63). Under the influence of this belief, he hoped to imbue his poetic fiction with both religious and philosophical significance, becoming a metaphysical belief. Therefore, he created an image with three different names, "philosopher's man," "man of glass," "the central man," representing three layers of meaning, together constituting the prototype for the metaphysical belief. This image both generates poetic fiction and is part of it.

The first is the "philosopher's man" who recites poetry by the sea, with "dew" and "sea-side" as natural images suggesting an intimate connection between him and nature. His ability to recite poetry is nature preauthorized, and it is under the influence of nature that he creates "an immaculate image." The action of reciting poetry by the sea easily evokes the impression of the poetess in "The Idea of Order at Key West," where the poet's song is not merely an imitation of nature but a transformation and transcendence of it. Through her artistic creation, she bestows order and beauty upon the chaotic real world. By appropriating the

image of the poetess, Stevens also endows the "philosopher's man" with the same capability, which bears a distinct flavor of the romantic assertion that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world"<sup>7</sup>. Stevens's insistence on using the term "philosopher's man" is not because he was influenced by Plato's belief that philosophers are closer to the truth than poets, nor is it because Stevens was determined to form his own philosophical system in poetry. He once stated, "I was not interested in the philosophy of poets [...] I am not a philosopher" (Stevens, 1997, p. 860). The most likely origin of this naming is his desire to bridge "the fissure between the paradigms of nature and language" (Ackerman, 1983, p. 401). The paradigm of nature is connected to the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, while the paradigm of language is related to human creativity and fiction. In his early creations, Stevens was willing to shape the image of a poetess and nature goddess in his poetry, who serves as an example of the eternity of nature, in line with the Romantic tradition of natural supernaturalism. Despite "philosopher's man" apparent identity as a philosopher with the belated distance of fiction, like former nature goddess, his authority is preauthorized by nature. Compared with poet, "philosopher's man" can bridge the rift between the encompassing paradigms of nature and language. Poetry pursues fiction, and fiction itself stems from the distance between the poet and nature, so a poet cannot exist entirely within the nature paradigm without being influenced by the language one. However, the "philosopher's man" can exist within the two paradigms, because he is also the "man of glass", he is transparent. The phenomenological transparency enables the language of the poetic fiction symbolized by the "philosopher's man" to offer no obstruction to the natural world, so it continues to serve the nature paradigm.

Stevens then begin to portray the image of the "man of glass" through comparing him with "man on the hautboy." Hautboy refers to "a wooden double-reed wind instrument of high pitch", and its meaning is similar to that of the oboe in the title. The hautboy man can never "stand as God" because he is "ever wrong." In terms of religious significance, "ever wrong" may be related to the concept of original sin. Stevens uses several conceits to depict the image of the central man, including "globe," "mirror," "glass," and "diamond." Based on the possible similarities of these four images, it can be inferred that "globe" refers to a light globe (a rounded glass container). All four items are transparent and responsive, as is the "man of glass". He is first and foremost transparent. By contrasting him with the "ever wrong" hautboy man, it is not difficult to realize that "transparence" here has taken on the connotation of innocence firstly. Since he has no original sin, he can break free from religious constraints and obtain a kind of eternity, which is why he "has had the time to think enough." The second connotation of "transparence" is the state of "uncoveredness" in the phenomenological sense, which refers to the ideal state of complete revelation of phenomena. This state can be achieved by employing epoché to bracket the preconceptions and presuppositions about the world, and by returning to the immediacy of direct experience itself. This question of transparence or innocence is the rock of Stevens's phenomenological faith. The "transparence" of "man of glass" allows people to reduce complex reality to an original intuition of the thing itself, and then eliminates all preconceptions in order to evoke a conceptual essence. At the same time, it is precisely because the "man of glass" projects everyone that gives us the possibility of unification with him. Stevens places his flexible, self-conscious belief in the non-ontological fiction of the

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<sup>7</sup> This line is from Percy Shelly's *In Defense of Poetry*.

"man of glass", and thus he says, "He is the transparency of the place in which He is, and in his poems we find peace."

The third image is "the central man," and this image first vaguely appears in "Life on a Battleship," a poem written in 1938. In this poem, "the central man" is "merely the center of a circle, spread/ To the final full". As a contrasting character to Captain, an anti-hero who symbolizes ideological absolutism in the poem, "the central man" is the "collective embodiment" (Newcomb, 1990, p. 108) of a belief, the center of an encompassing circle surrounded by people who share the same belief, with the center of the circle and its circumference being interdependent. Two years later, Stevens used this image again in "Asides on the Oboe" to convey a similar idea. The "central man" in this poem also serves as the center of the sphere, being able to unite all people to form a complete and unified collective, so we find in him "the sum of man." We know him "without external reference." Our understanding of him requires no external information or bias. He is all-encompassing, and centrality is his greatest quality. Stevens creates such a meaningful concept as "the central good", which is very different from any concept of "absolute good" in terms of its relationship to the things around it, just as "the central man" depends on the people who believe in him. Only by integrating with the people around it, "the central good" can gather the goodness of everyone and become a complete good. "The central man" as the core has to dedicate himself to mankind. More importantly, as a fictional non-ontological belief, he does not cover individuals with the collective, and its "man of glass" quality can present and preserve the characteristics of each individual in the collective.

In conclusion, "philosopher's man," "man of glass," "the central man" is the embodiment of the metaphysical belief conceived by Stevens as well as a prototype of his poetic fiction. Stevens demands a great deal from his poetic fiction: it is closely connected to nature; it is a transcendental belief that is transparent in the phenomenological meaning; it is a belief that unites people without obliterating individuality.

### **The "Wholeness" of Imagination and Reality: Achieving Poetic Redemption**

Stevens did not content himself with defining the qualities of poetic fiction; he also sought to explain how it could bring redemption and spiritual peace to people. As a "poem of ideas," "Asides on the Oboe" expresses the poetic views that Stevens consistently advocated, namely, that poetry can achieve the fusion of imagination and reality, thereby replacing religion and providing people with spiritual satisfaction and order. Scholars have long been captivated by the concepts of imagination and reality in Wallace Stevens's poetry. However, the majority have reduced this pair of concepts to a binary opposition, thereby examining the waxing and waning of these two opposing concepts throughout Stevens's poetic development. Helen Vendler has taken note of this pervasive "binary distinction" (Vendler, 1984, p. 61) in Stevens criticism, and she attempts to replace the binary distinction with the term "magnitude," also derived from Stevens, but it has not been fully embraced. The attitude towards imagination and reality remains a dividing line among many critics. Indeed, Stevens's views on imagination and reality have undergone a lengthy developmental process, culminating in a systematic perspective in "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" written in 1942: the fusion of reality and imagination, that is, "the First Idea" and symbol's alignment, achieving poetic ideals in a moment of transparency, providing ultimate satisfaction and pleasure, which is the "Supreme Fiction." Although the "Supreme Fiction" emerged as a core concept in Stevens's later poetics, its embryonic form was already present in "Asides on the Oboe."

Stevens placed great emphasis on the role of poetic imagination, regarding it as an antidote against disenchantment, capable of endowing poetry with a power equivalent to the idea of God. The ability to enable the unimaginable to be imagined is the standard by which the quality of poetry is judged. In a 1940 letter to Hi Simons, Stevens explicitly states: "The idea of God is a thing of the imagination. We no longer think that God was, but imagined. The idea of pure poetry, essential imagination, as the highest objective of the poet, appears to be, at least potentially, as great as the idea of God" (Stevens, 1966, p. 369). In the poem "Gubbinal," Stevens depicts the consequences of a lack of imagination as "The world is ugly, / and the people are sad" (Stevens, 1971, p. 85). Every piece of evidence attests to Stevens's emphasis on poetic imagination, and "Asides on the Oboe" is no exception. Whether it is "an immaculate image" or the "peace" we find in poetry, both are brought about by imagination. Imagination endows fiction with the ability to create a second world in which people can find peace, albeit an illusory one. This fictive ability is, in fact, a sign-making capability. When "the central man" naively and arrogantly says, "Thou art not August unless I make thee so," he has already acquired the power to endow symbols with meaning. This ability stands the test of time, and the archaisms of language and syntax are indicative of that. It is a source of illumination for the rest of us. "The central man" would be "responsive / As a mirror with a voice" (Stevens, 1971, p. 250). He would be responsive to people's common aspirations.

However, this poetic imagination is completely separate from reality and brings a fake peace, so we have to go through wars and martyrdoms. "Clandestine steps upon imagined stairs Climb through the night, because his cuckoo call" (Stevens, 1971, p. 251). Stevens not only presents the scene in which imagination constructing a false material world but also implies the consequences of the misuse of imagination: there are only images in this line of poetry, but thoughts are absent. The empty picture loses its meaning, leaving only the mournful cries of the cuckoo. Thoughts come from reality, which is a reflection and contemplation of reality. Relying solely on imagination to add to the fictional world still cannot change the current state of the material world.

According to Stevens, "the relation between the imagination and reality is a question, more or less, of precise equilibrium" (Stevens, 1997, p. 647). "It is not only that imagination adheres to reality, but, also, that reality adheres to the imagination and that the interdependence is essential" (Stevens, 1997, p. 663). In "Asides on the Oboe," the fusion of imagination and reality in poetic fiction is achieved through the martyrdom of "the central man." The act of martyrdom itself signifies that he has taken notice of the external world and is no longer intoxicated with the creation of pure imagination. This was not without warning; in his final days, he had also "set this peddler's pie," showing curiosity and affection for concrete people and things. Jesus demonstrated the power of the almighty God through resurrection, while "the central man" achieved the fusion of imagination and reality through his resurrection. His "chanting for those buried in their blood" is a concentrated expression of his compassion and a response to the people's eager and bitter question, "Did we find peace?" Only the fusion of imagination and reality can bring true peace, realize the wholeness of "the central man" and us, and bring about poetic redemption for humanity.

### **Conclusion**

In a word, "Asides on the Oboe" is not a mere accumulation of abstract religious imagery, but a vivid embodiment of Wallace Stevens' poetic views: he creates an image of "approximating God," an image that both generates poetic fiction and is part of it. Stevens elucidates the triple significance of this metaphysical belief's



incarnation, ultimately pointing out that poetic fiction must achieve the wholeness of creative imagination and objective reality. Through this poem, Stevens proposes what he believes to be a method for redeeming those lacking faith, that is, using poetry (poetic fiction) to bring ultimate order and satisfaction to people. This poem is not only a reflection of Stevens's poetic concepts but also an embodiment of his humanitarian ideas as a poet, "a man who was the axis of his time."

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