

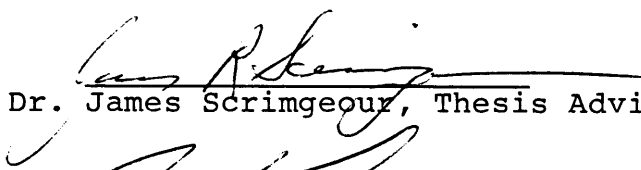
DEC 07 1995

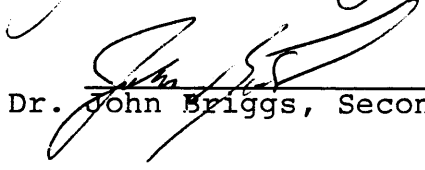
AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS  
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
OF WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

by

Stephen Dann Truran

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF ARTS

  
Dr. James Scrimgeour, Thesis Advisor

  
Dr. John Briggs, Second Reader

  
For the Graduate Division

  
Date

Stephen D. Truran

Dr. Scrimgeour

English 592 Independent Study Project

8 February 1995

### Abstract

#### Wallace Stevens and the Politics of Living

The politics of Wallace Stevens has become a popular topic for critics of the poet's works. Stevens was a product of his background. The combination of Germanic Protestant heritage and largely rural upbringing he had in Pennsylvania left an indelible mark on his character and colored his reaction to the world. Politically, this happened to align him with the mostly Mid-Western Agrarian Movement of the turn of the century, which was embodied in the Populist Party of that time as well and the larger-than-life political figure of William Jennings Bryan.

Stevens populist-like attitude has been misinterpreted by critics as everything from Romantic/Pastoral Idealism to Arch-Conservatism and even fascism. Instead, as we can see from Stevens' poems, letters and other writings, the poet maintained, from at least 1900 on throughout his life, a typical middle American perspective. This perspective is generally liberal on social issues and is coupled with a belief in self-reliance emphasizing a stiff dose of personal responsibility. For this reason, Stevens could consider himself "left" leaning while being completely without sympathy for socialist or communist policies, which de-emphasize individual initiative and accountability.