

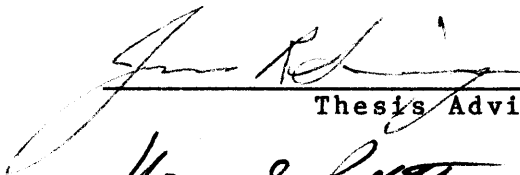
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DIALOGUES WITHIN A THRESHOLD
WALLACE STEVENS'S POETICS OF INTERACTION

AN ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS
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by
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Abstract

In response to the post-Enlightenment view of the natural world, Stevens creates his supreme fiction as a source of illusory yet essential presence. This supreme fiction arises through the dialogic interplay of the objective world and the poet's subjective imagination as these two forces interact within a threshold region formed at their interface. Using the words of his poems to give momentary voice to his supreme fiction, Stevens, as poet-creator, transforms his experience of life from an objectified emptiness into a fictive yet vital presence of spirit both within nature and within himself.

The first part of this thesis approaches the paradoxical nature of Stevens's supreme fiction through three related interpretive paradigms: Angus Fletcher's studies of thresholds in literature, Mikhail Bakhtin's analysis of the dialogic utterance, and Donald Woods Winnicott's psychoanalytic theories of the "holding" environment as the setting for creative playing. Using these paradigms as a foundation, the second part analyzes the play of Stevens's language in his diction, syntax, and prosody in order to examine the ways Stevens loosens the binds of verbal constancy to charge words with hints and glimmers of his supreme fiction as it comes into being within the individual poem.