

Research Article

# Wallace Stevens, Communism, and the Artistic Imagination

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## Abstract

In his lectures and poetry across pre- and postwar America, Wallace Stevens evinced an increasingly fervent anti-communist stance. In several seminal poems, including “A Duck for Dinner,” “A Dish of Peaches in Russia,” “Description without Place,” and “Mountains Covered with Cats,” Stevens addressed aspects of life in the Soviet Union, as well as what he perceived to be communism’s assault upon the creative imagination. For Stevens, this strident political position was in keeping with North American sentiments at the time. As Samuel French Morse remembers, Stevens “was very conservative, essentially. Eisenhower was his man, not Stevenson.” In fact, unlike many other Americans, Stevens had simply remained conservative all along—throughout the Depression, the second World War, and their respective aftermaths. By the 1950s, America’s imagination—and its anti-communist sentiments—had merely caught up with Stevens’s. Indeed, as the 1950s progressed, America’s hysteria began to manifest itself in “the red scare” and the witch hunts of blacklisting and McCarthyism. As his poetry during this era demonstrates, Stevens remained deeply concerned about communism’s potential for infiltrating American life and shifting the course of postwar society.

## Keywords

Communism, Dmitri Shostakovich, Imagination, Poetry, Soviet Union, Wallace Stevens

## 1. Introduction

“[T]he whole left now-a-days,” Wallace Stevens wrote to Ronald Lane Latimer in October 1935, “is a mob of wailers. These people go about it in such a way that nobody listens to them except themselves; and that is at least one reason why they get nowhere.” [1]. Their cause, communism—that penultimate utopian dream, or “imagination on its most momentous scale,” according to Stevens—was sweeping the United States in 1935 (NA 143). Responding to the economic and social failures of the Depression era, the American Communist Party grew both in number and influence in the 1930s. A few months before Stevens’s letter, the Party began marshaling its energies to keep America out of World War II. “Communism,” their banners reported, “is twentieth-century

Americanism.” [2] Likewise, a large contingent of communists protesting the war had marched the previous April in Manhattan, picketing the German consulate and the Hearst newspaper offices. [3] Further, *The New York Times* reported in June that American communist activity was likely inspired by Soviet propaganda. [4]

For Stevens, such Soviet infiltration was a grave concern. Moreover, the socialistic fervor of the lower classes was a serious issue with Stevens as well. Donald Stanford remembers meeting with him in 1937:

We started talking a bit about politics. This was the depths of the Depression. I was one of the angry young men, more or less inclined to Marxism, although I never became a Marxist.

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And I expressed the notion that capitalism was in a bad way and that the lower classes were being exploited. He wasn't having any of that. He just said "exploitation" was the wrong way of saying it; that was unfair. I don't remember the conversation in detail, but he certainly opposed my political views, no doubt about that. [5]

In fact, Stevens's clash with communism became a significant issue in his poetry as well. In his 1935 poem, "Lytton Strachey, Also, Enters into Heaven," Stevens fears the "passions" of "men of memories" who hope to alter society:

Perhaps, without their passions, they will be  
Men of memories explaining what they meant.  
One man opposing society  
If properly misunderstood becomes a myth.  
I fear the understanding. (OP 38)

Indeed, demythologizing communists, to Stevens, would be fatal. As myths, they remain harmless, but upon becoming realities, their "understanding may be troublesome" (OP 39). Moreover, Stevens was often concerned with the Soviet leaders—Lenin and Stalin—and the power of their political influence, which he frequently likened to that of misguided spiritual prophets: "[O]ne well/ might muff the mighty spirit of Lenin./ That sort of thing was always rather stiff" (OP 39). At the end of "Lytton Strachey," though, the communist remains misunderstood—"Georgian and serene"—and temporarily safe within the bounds of imagination.

## 2. Art versus Communism

In 1936, art fell victim to communism as well. In New York City, the Bolshoi Theatre's production of Dmitri Shostakovich's ballet, *Limpid Stream*, was cancelled after the Soviet press branded him a "Leftist"—a purveyor of "tricks and distortions" which "have no relation to communism." [6] Shostakovich's ordeal had begun two years before in Lenin-grad upon the debut performance of his experimental opera, *Lady Macbeth of Mzensk District*. In the next day's reviews the political and artistic reputation of Shostakovich, previously Russia's premier composer, was publicly destroyed in *Pravda*:

From the first moment, the listener is shocked by a deliberately dissonant, confused stream of sound. Fragments of melody, embryonic phrases appear—only to disappear again in the din, the grinding, and the screaming. Here we have "leftist" confusion instead of natural, human music. [7]

In that year, 1934, Soviets were afraid for more than reputation, however; it was the age of the purges, the Gulag, and Stalin. Shostakovich, relenting to Stalinism and its penalties, consented to compose soundtracks for state-produced films, thus allowing him to continue with his private composition. [8] However, he first had to admit his transgressions before a Soviet tribunal. Afterwards he recalled, "I was completely destroyed. It was a blow that wiped out my past. And my future." [9]

Publicly, though, the Party was always careful to demon-

strate the benefits of modern life in the Soviet Union. Europe was first introduced to such propaganda in the Soviet Union's self-promoting artistic and architectural conference, the "Third International," held in 1920. There, a variety of significant early Soviet exhibits were featured, most notably Vladimir Tatlin's ambitious design for a "Monument to the 'Third International.'" This spiral structure, which Tatlin planned to build in Moscow out of iron and glass, was never constructed because it was virtually infeasible. Ironically, it grew to symbolize the future of Russian revolutionary art. [10] Such displays were not unusual in the 1930s, as the Soviets hoped to garner global attention for their new way of life. Remarkably, conferences like the "Third International" seemed to clarify the uncertainties between public and private Soviet culture, rather than define their contribution to the world's artistic heritage.

### 2.1. "A Duck for Dinner"

Stevens considers the ambiguities of pre-World War II Russia in his 1937 poetic ideological debate, "A Duck for Dinner." Proudly proclaiming Soviet Russia's crowning achievement—that "triumph of the arcs of heaven's blue," the elevator—Stevens's imaginary Soviet propagandist persona, "the Bulgar," is always on the ready with Party rhetoric (OP 60). The poem opens with the Bulgar, a worker himself, expounding on the glories of modern Soviet life like a miniature "Third International":

The Bulgar said, "After pineapple with fresh mint  
We went to walk in the park; for, after all,  
The workers do not rise, as Venus rose,  
Out of violet sea. They rise a bit  
On summer Sundays in the park, a duck  
To a million, a duck with apples and without wine."  
(OP 60)

Although they have only one duck for dinner, the Bulgar exclaims, the Soviets shall rise up with their collective "grizzled voice and be heard"—a shining example of the Party at work. In stanza II, however, Stevens's narrative persona reminds the Bulgar that Soviet workers have paid a dear price for communism in their present reality: "[I]n your cadaverous Eden, they desire/ The same down dropping fruit in yellow leaves,/ The same return at heavy evening, love/ Without any horror of the helpless loss" (OP 61).

Likewise, the Bulgar replies with mock sarcasm, "There are more things/ Than poodles in Pomerania." Soviets, he notes, have no need for material goods and security—they have an unparalleled unity: "Is each man thinking his separate thoughts or, for once,/ Are all men thinking together as one, thinking/ Each other's thoughts, thinking a single thought,/ Disclosed in everything, transcended, poised/ For the syllable, poised for the touch?" (OP 62). Indeed, this singular unity was precisely Stevens's fear—the culmination of imagination at its most extreme; so much so, that the intelligentsia no longer imagined individually, but instead, as one.

In late 1939, while war raged through Europe, socialism continued to spread throughout America as labor unions began waging war with the establishment. In 1937, the United Auto Workers engaged in their first sit-down strike at the General Motors plant in Flint, Michigan. The union itself had been organized by two American socialists, Wyndham Mortimer and Bob Travis. As Mortimer later noted, “[T]he main strategy of the sit-down strike itself was conducted by communists.” In fact, during the next few years, communists were the principal organizers of nearly a dozen new labor unions. [11] Finally, in December 1939, as a decade of economic depression and labor strife was mercifully drawing to a close, New York City’s Transport Workers Union threatened to strike daily unless new wage negotiations continued. [12]

For Stevens, such demonstrations were incomprehensible. As he wrote to Hi Simons in January 1940,

There are a lot of things that the workers are doing that I do not believe in, even though, at the same time, I want certainly as ardently as they do to see them able to live decently and in security and to educate their children and to have pleasant homes, etc. I believe that they could procure these things within the present frame-work. (L 351)

Stevens genuinely believed in the plight of the worker, although he feared, like many, that the angst of the masses would lead to communism: “A few months ago,” he remarked to Simons, “the universal fear (I use the word fear, because I have no sympathy with communism, instead of expectation) was that the world would go communistic, if in fact it had not already done so without realizing it, except in the matter of putting it into effect. Communism,” he concluded, “is just a new romanticism” (L 350-351). Indeed, to Stevens, communism was merely a temporary, yet potent, global infatuation with imagination.

In fact, Soviet communism was thriving in the late 1930s, depicting itself as the picture of global success. Stalin himself, however, was already the subject of several conflicting public accounts. In the 1930s, a Polish minister lauded Stalin’s “great courage” and “astuteness,” while British reporters later revealed a more elusive leader:

Stalin deliberately makes himself a figure of mystery, rarely issuing from the Kremlin. (It is generally believed that he is suffering from persecution mania and fears of assassination.) His public utterances are very few. By surrounding himself with mediocrities and by the employment of an iron discipline, aided partly by luck and the natural apathy of the Russian people, he has reached a position of absolute despotism, such as no Mussolini ever attained. [13]

It was the enigmatic Stalin that Stevens feared. While Lenin symbolized the Marxist past, Stalin remained a metaphor for the future of communism, an ideology whose scope and duration were a veritable unknown. For this reason, Stalin was a far more dangerous icon to Stevens.

In May 1941, Stevens delivered his lecture, “The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words,” at Princeton. During his address, he advanced the notion that communism is the apex

of imagination, juxtaposed with the reality of the Western world. This reality, which we take for granted, Stevens explains, “is the comfortable American state of life of the eighties, the nineties and the first ten years of the present century.” Yet, he continues, this reality was adulterated after the passing of the Victorians, leaving the “intellectual minorities and social minorities to take their place and to convert our state of life to something that might not be final.” This “something,” this product of the imagination, is communism. Thus, he concludes, “[r]eality then became violent and so remains” (NA 26). For Stevens, this violent reality manifested itself in the second World War and the union struggle—the ultimate products of a global imagination gone awry.

Having accounted for the current state of near-global warfare, Stevens turns to the role of the poet in a “deadly” time. The poet, he adds, “must be a poet capable of resisting or evading the pressure of the reality of this last degree, with the knowledge that the degree of today may become a deadlier degree tomorrow.” Indeed, Stevens concedes that imagination, or communism rather, has yet to run its course. As he later notes, the poet’s function is not to “lead people out of the confusion in which they find themselves,” but rather, to help them live their lives. Stevens explains, however, that in Soviet Russia the poet cannot fulfill this charge. Typically, he adds, a powerful social movement is followed by “moving poems.” This is not so in a nation where “Stalin might grind his teeth the whole of a Russian winter and yet all the poets in the Soviets might remain silent the following spring.” In the Soviet Union, with the threat of “imprisonment or exile,” artists will no longer express their imaginations, or they may, Stevens adds, “like Shostakovich,” content themselves with “pretence” (NA 28-29).

In 1941, “pretence” for Shostakovich was a violent reality in itself. He had been appointed professor at the Leningrad Conservatoire, composing communist dirges for the state, and still smarting from the events of the previous five years:

I was completely in the thrall of fear. I was no longer the master of my life, my past was crossed out, my work, my abilities, turned out to be worthless to everyone. The future didn’t look any less bleak. I desperately wanted to disappear, it was the only possible way out. I thought of the possibility [of suicide] with relish. [14]

Nevertheless he continued, composing now for the war effort and less for his imagination. Stalin was now his employer, and “tyrants” like Stalin, Shostakovich notes, “like to present themselves as patrons of the arts. That’s a well-known fact. But tyrants understand nothing about art. Why? Because tyranny is perversion, and a tyrant is a pervert. The tyrant sought power, stepping over corpses.” [15] Indeed, there were many corpses of artists in Stalin’s wake, notably Anna Akhmatova, Marina Tsvetayeva, and Osip Mandelstam. Throughout Stalin’s reign, the artists of the Soviet Union remained ominously silent. In fact, as literary historian Max Hayward notes, they chose this silence: “The sacrifice of one’s intellectual and moral independence did not seem too

high a price to pay” for a Russian intelligentsia that was already “severed from the people.” After all, Russian artists had been denied their artistic freedom since the late 1920s; in 1941, a poet who made his “own moral or intellectual judgements was virtually equated with treason to the higher cause of humanity.” [16]

## 2.2. “A Dish of Peaches in Russia”

Likewise, in his 1942 poem, “A Dish of Peaches in Russia,” Stevens addresses the issue of intellectual freedom in the Soviet Union, and its inaccessible fruits. The narrator—“that I, that animal, that Russian, that exile”—sits in his village, disturbed. Alone in exile, he is taunted by the peaches—his metaphorical art:

With my whole body I taste these peaches,  
I touch them and smell them. Who speaks?  
I absorb them as the Angevine  
Absorbs Anjou. I see them as a lover sees,  
As a young lover sees the first buds of spring  
And as the black Spaniard plays his guitar. (CP 224)

On the table they sit—red, large, round, and untouchable. Like Russian art, the peaches are static and inaccessible; and the narrator, like the true Soviet exile, cannot disturb them, while they, in turn, disturb him: “I did not know/ That such ferocities could tear/ One self from another, as these peaches do” (CP 224). Like Shostakovich, Stevens’s exiled artist is taunted by his art—a victim of communism—and moreover, he is torn, not only from his craft, but from his audience.

In 1943, Stalin was unusually visible; the siege in Leningrad had recently broken and the Red Army was once again on the offensive, about to enjoy one of its greatest victories at the Battle of Kursk. [17] As Stevens wrote to Henry Church in May 1943:

If God made a progress through the streets of Moscow in a carriage drawn by twelve horses, ornamented with red pom-poms, and preceded by the massed bands of the Red Army, I don’t believe that he would cut any more ice than Stalin would, even if Stalin followed Him barefoot: in fact, sensation for sensation, Stalin would probably be the more thrilling one. (L 449)

Two weeks before, in fact, Stalin greeted his nation during Russia’s traditional May Day festivities: “Comrades, Red Army and Red Navy men, political workers, men and women guerrillas, I greet you and congratulate you on the occasion of May 1!” [18] Only in recent months had Soviet and Allied troops managed to attack German forces on two collective fronts. With such a political victory in hand, Stalin wasted little time in attempting to strengthen Soviet ties with his Western allies. This latest attempt at “military solidarity,” according to *New York Times* reporter Harold Callender, may have merely been a diplomatic ploy, as Stalin was alarmed over recent developments in Poland, which might have precluded that nation falling into communist hands. [19] A few days later, the fervor over Stalin’s May Day address may have

been further spoiled, as a *New York Times* article linked Stalin to communist activities in America. Stalin, asked about the possibility of financially aiding American socialists, said that he “would not hesitate to do so if we thought it might accomplish something of value.” [20] The popular American response in 1943, unlike the socialist-receptive United States of the 1930s, was somewhat less divided. As the chairman of the American Communist Party conceded in January 1944, the United States was no longer “ripe for a new political party line-up,” as it had been only a few years before. [21]

In late 1945, Stalin disappeared from the public eye for several months, inciting a variety of press reports hypothesizing his whereabouts. In October, *The New York Times* reported that Stalin, exhausted from the war, would shed some of his more “onerous” duties. On that same day, October 23rd, the London press reported that Stalin was more than exhausted, characterizing him instead as “gravely ill” despite protests from the Soviet embassy. [22] The next day, new reports circulated proclaiming that Stalin had died the previous weekend. Further, Stalin’s successor was rumored to be Soviet Marshall Zhukov. [23] Three weeks later, however, photographs of Stalin surfaced during Soviet Artillery Day festivities, showing the premier “robust” and refreshed after visiting the Black Sea. Stalin, *The New York Times* added, had simply been on vacation. [24]

To Stevens, though, Stalin’s reasons for hiding were far less mysterious: “Very likely the only reason Stalin has been out of sight recently,” he confided to Henry Church, “is that he is laughing his head off at the thought of the soft people who are trying to oppose him: to hold him back” (L 518). In fact, Stevens was not far from the truth. As World War II drew to a close, the nation, particularly the Ukraine, was swept with a post-war famine. Additionally, while Stalin was busy gobbling up future Soviet bloc nations, rumors circulated in the Soviet Union that Zhukov would indeed become the new premier through treason, rather than succession. Zhukov’s duties as a Soviet Marshall, however, were later reduced by Stalin, leaving rumors of the premier’s unexpected political demise to fester for the moment. [25]

## 2.3. “Description Without Place”

Likewise, in “Description without Place,” written in 1945, Stevens explores the imaginative process, as well as an early vision of communism’s influence on post-war Russia. In the first stanza, Stevens examines the notion of a “sun.” Seemingly real, the sun, like communism or any other named ideology or place, is merely a signifier. For Stevens, the process of naming an object creates reality out of its imagination. Thus, Lenin appears in the sixth stanza, sitting on a park bench beside a lake. Like the sun, Lenin is a signifier himself—an exemplar of Soviet Russia, and moreover, Communism, in the twentieth-century. Lenin, Stevens reports, has “disturbed the swans.” The “swans,” the last bastions of tradition in Soviet Russia, are indeed repulsed by Lenin’s pres-



ence near the lake, as they avoid the bread he has scattered for them. In Stevens's description, Lenin seems more the vagrant than the architect of communism, although in Stevens's reality, they are really one in the same:

The slouch of his body and his look were not  
In suavest keeping. The shoes, the clothes, the hat  
Suited the decadence of those silences,  
In which he sat. (CP 343)

Further, as Lenin scatters the bread, the swans flee "outward to remoter reaches,/ As if they knew of distant beaches." Indeed, the swans can fathom a moment, moreover, a distant one, when Lenin's influence might wane. Yet for now, Stevens concludes, "the distances of space and time" are one, and the "swans far off" are still "swans to come" (CP 343).

Remarkably, in 1954 Stevens would posit a similar theory about communism's possibilities for the future. In a letter to Leonard van Geyzel, he wrote, "President Eisenhower is probably right in saying that the general state of affairs [Western fears of communism, or "the red scare"] may continue for another forty years. The truth is, however, that I find such a period of time incomprehensible. It is easy to imagine a difference in things a year or two from now. But it is not easy to imagine such a thing forty years from now" (L 839). Like the swans in "Description without Place," for Stevens, the possibility of communism flourishing for years to come was unimaginable.

In 1946, though, the post-war realities of food and medicine shortages were very real in Europe and the Soviet Union. Americans, responding to the pleas of President Truman in August 1945, were busy organizing foreign loan programs to combat the shortages. The following May, *The New York Times* reported that I. B. Catz, president of Catz-American, an import company, was urging his stockholders to consider such a venture for humanitarian reasons, as well as its inherent political possibilities: "If we put France and other countries on their feet," he declared, "we are not only creating customers but also helping to restore the capitalistic system in those countries and combatting communism." [26] Similarly, Clare Booth Luce, a Republican Representative from Connecticut, proposed a similar program in June 1946, hoping to garner U.S. support for famine relief in Europe and Asia. Without such programs, she argued, the suffering will undoubtedly seek shelter in communism: "Some 30,000,000 people are doomed to die of hunger in the next six months unless they get bread. And if they don't get bread in sufficient quantities, millions—perhaps hundreds of millions more—will seek to fight their way out of the intolerable trap of slow starvation in terms of bloody revolution, and, eventually, of communism." [27]

Predictably, Stevens's response to the crisis in Europe was somewhat similar. As he wrote to Henry Church, who was touring Europe in August 1946.

The world is full of poverty and misfortune, and it seems to take little or no effort to convince people that communism means an escape from poverty and a refuge from misfortune.

Maybe it does. It is true there are great masses of poverty and misfortune in the United States itself, but there are great masses of the opposite: there are great masses of happy, hopeful and ambitious people who expect to make something of themselves and of the world in which they live. Why Russia should be so aggressive unless she feels that she cannot maintain herself in competition with our system is more than I can imagine. (L 532)

Fearing communism's imaginative possibilities for the war refugee, Stevens questioned the real expectations of post-war peace and the political aggression of Soviet Russia.

## 2.4. "Mountains Covered with Cats"

Likewise, in his 1946 poem, "Mountains Covered with Cats," Stevens explores the Soviet Union in the wake of World War II, renewed with peace:

The sea full of fishes in shoals, the woods that let  
One seed alone grow wild, the railway-stops  
In Russia at which the same statue of Stalin greets  
The same railway passenger, the ancient tree  
In the centre of its cones, the resplendent flights  
Of red facsimiles through related trees,  
White houses in villages, black communicants—  
The catalogue is too commodious. (CP 367)

Yet somehow it remains unchanged. The woods of Russia are still infected with "red facsimiles," and Stalin still greets a singular "railway passenger," the singular Soviet unaffected by peace. Further, communism's grip on Asia has not lessened, and "the imagination," Stevens continues, is still "seeking/ To propagate the imagination." Peace in the Eastern world, he reveals, is fleeting, as "[w]ar's miracle" begets "that of peace." Despite the struggle of World War II, of which the Russians waged the greatest toil, communism continues to flourish. Finally, Stevens adds, the lives of dead soldiers must surely have been wasted if the post-war lessons of communism—imagination begetting violence—have not been learned: "The spirits of all the impotent dead, seen clear,/ And quickly understand, without their flesh,/ How truly they had not been what they were" (CP 368).

Similarly, the United States in the late 1940s was decidedly anti-communist. The Depression, following the struggle of World War II, had faded quietly into history, as had the memory of late 1930s union battles. America was now driven by peace, and an even more resilient desire to keep it. Anti-communist feelings, however, were not a post-war phenomenon. America's new angst for communism, according to historian George Sirgiovanni, had actually been fostered during the war. In fact, despite their roles as allies on the battlefield, the new relationship between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was simply a friendship of convenience, according to many anti-Soviet Americans. [28] To combat these feelings, the American Communist Party launched an ambitious new campaign in 1946 designed to reignite their pre-war fervor and rebuild public goodwill. Party chairman William

Foster, in a July 1946 article in *Political Affairs*, warned of faulty U.S. economic policies, which would “produce an economic breakdown that would arrive more quickly and have far more disastrous consequences than the one which followed the first World War.” [29] Nevertheless, despite such attempts, the Party’s resilience was in serious question as early as 1953, when several of its key leaders were jailed under the Smith Act for conspiring to overthrow the government. [30]

### 3. Result

Likewise, in his July 1948 lecture at Columbia, “Imagination as Value,” Stevens posits the relationship between imagination and communism. “One wants to consider the imagination on its most momentous scale,” he begins. “Today this scale is not the scale of poetry, nor of any form of literature or art,” but rather, he concludes, “of communism.” Further, communism—“not the measure of humanity,” he is quick to add—is the product of the collapse of other belief systems. Indeed, when these systems collapse, “this grubby faith [communism] promises a practicable earthly paradise” (NA 142-143). Moreover, it is precisely this fear—that the populace will be inspired to communism through an eclipse of the imagination—that drives Stevens’s own communist paranoia. As he wrote to Barbara Church in June 1948, “[V]ery likely that society of which Martin Luther was once the chief pillar is now sustained by Stalin. How in the world the full moon of these nights can go on looking as if nothing had happened gets me” (L 602); and in October, “We might need a police state before long to protect ourselves against Communism” (L 620). Indeed, as the 1940s were coming to a close, it was *Stevens’s* imagination that was altering his reality.

### 4. Discussion

In fact, before long the mere existence of communism, to Stevens, was also altering the quality of life, as he wrote to Paule Vidal in November 1948, “[O]ne could not enjoy books and pictures in a world menaced by poverty and enemies. By enemies I mean the Russians, assuming that they are enemies. One never knows. Perhaps they are merely undertakers” (L 623). Further, by the early 1950s, Stevens’s fears grew to include communist infiltration as well. As he wrote to Barbara Church in April 1951, on the occasion of going outdoors to clean up his garden: “[T]here is a Russian behind every tree and door or so it seems” (L 713); and later to Leonard van Geyzel, “Today, however, the Communists are growling not only at your back door but all around the house” (L 838). Though partly written in jest, Stevens’s new concerns were indeed significant. Like the degree of imagination necessary to produce communism, Stevens’s own imagination, having reached its own “momentous scale” by the 1950s, had produced an equally stirring anti-communism.

### 5. Conclusion

However, as Samuel French Morse remembers, Stevens’s conservative political values were not anathema in 1950s America, and moreover, certainly not for a person of his social stratum: “He was very conservative, essentially. Eisenhower was his man, not Stevenson.” [31] In fact, unlike many other Americans, Stevens had simply remained conservative all along—throughout the Depression, the second World War, and their respective aftermaths. By the 1950s, America’s imagination—and its anti-communist sentiments—had merely caught up with Stevens’s. Indeed, as the 1950s progressed, America’s hysteria began to manifest itself in “the red scare” and the witch hunts of blacklisting and McCarthyism, all sad realities of a societal imagination having reached its loftiest degree.

### Abbreviations

CP	The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens
L	Letters of Wallace Stevens
NA	The Necessary Angel
OP	Opus Posthumous

### Author Contributions

Kenneth Womack is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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