ET IN ARCADIA EGO:

NATURE, DEATH, AND DISSOLUTION IN AMERICAN ROMANTICISM

Andrew Hurley

DR. ANDREW HURLEY. Norteamericano nacido en Texas, recibió toda su preparación académica en su estado natal y en la Universidad de California, en Berkeley. Comenzó su carrera universitaria en Rice University en Houston, Texas, y desde el año de 1973 se desempeña en el Departamento de Inglés de la Facultad de Humanidades de la Universidad de Puerto Rico como catedrático auxiliar. Este joven profesor, que ha recibido varias distinciones académicas, ha participado en comités del Recinto de Río Piedras, ha ofrecido conferencias sobre su especialización y actualmente trabaja en algunos proyectos de investigación.

I

America has always been much more than a place. Since its discovery, and probably even before, when it was nothing more than a wished-for state of existence, America has been in large part the seeming answer to a longing for *reverdie*, as M. H. Abrams[1] designates the greening of the earth in springtime; America has seemed to offer a satisfaction to the common longing for renewal. This longing was, and still is, a state of mind or imagination which has sought, whether in the return to a better, but lost, past or in the infinitely possible future, an oasis almost Eden-like, certainly at least Arcadian and even more certainly taking the power of its allure from the beauty, abundance, and perhaps the simple existence of a nature fruitful, redemptive, and ready to hand, so remote from the "culture" and cultivations, the "civilization" and its discontents in Europe. It is a longing that was so sure of finding its fulfillment that it sought after, somehow found, and immediately claimed as its own this apparently park-like refuge from corruption, decay, death, and sometimes from the taxes due Caesar.

As the great historian of religion Mircea Eliade makes clear in an essay titled "Paradise and Utopia: Mythological Geography and Eschatology," this longing is a constant of the human spirit, not necessarily connected with our Judeo-Christian myths of Eden and Arcadia, but rather shared by all men in much the same form. But Eliade makes equally clear, as if the abundance of extant contemporary writings were not itself sufficient, that not since the mythologizing of Arcadia itself in Virgil had any *place* had such force to awake the imagination and move the spirit as America

[1] M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p.437.

had. The words that Eliade uses are that Europe was "shaken" and "transformed"[2] by the new geography, the mythical or symbolic and yet very real geography, that suddenly gave Europe a wholly new map for their imaginations to explore. The Reformation had had its millenarian causes and effects, but with the discovery and exploration of American, and with its settlement, such theretofore impossible possibilities opened that even the word "fervor" may not be strong enough to describe the exictement that suddenly, as it were, possessed all of Europe.

It was a New World. It is difficult today to imagine the significance of those words as they were felt in the sixteenth and later centuries: a New World, or, perhaps, *the* New World. And it was not a desert, not the uninhabitable seas. It was green, unbelievably green as all the documents assert, and rich, even if it were only imagination that lent it some of its particular El Dorado richness. Someone even noticed that Palestine and Georgia were on the same latitude: Not only, that is, were fruits and game and wood and heaven only knew how much fertile and fertilizing land ready to hand, there simply for the reaching-out, but so was a myth. It was one of the most instant and has been one of the most powerful myths in the history of the world, in a way, and not only in the more or less luxurious areas of religion, art, and literature, but also in those bread-and-butter areas of economics and politics, since, by its power, in a mere three hundred years or so, by, let us say, 1792, when the American Revolution has lighted the way for the beginnings of democracy, when Crêvecoeur had settled in and written about the new land, and most importantly when Thomas Jefferson was in the midst of formulating his very complex system of thought about the relation between man and nature that he thought would produce the best culture and politics —a system of thought which seems so peculiar to him and to America that it can only be called Jeffersonianism—, by, as I say, 1792, the world, or at least the whole Western world, had so "bought" the myth that it was not the same world anymore.

Not only had a great population begun quite consciously moving, but the center of hope had also shifted. One hardly needed heaven anymore, since a new "Kindgdom of Man" was being made; Jerusalem and Rome had lost their centrality, for now

[2] Mircea Eliade, "Paradise and Utopia: Mythical Geography and Eschatology," in Frank E. Manuel (ed.), *Utopias and Utopian Thought* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1966), pp.260-280. For much of my argument about the pervasiveness of the myth on this and the following pages, I am greatly indebted to M. Eliade.

America, early conceptualized as a City on a Hill, the New Jerusalem, commanded an eminence that it seemed that all the world was looking to. On another level, political repair-jobs to the old order could virtually be abandoned, since now a politics of hopefulness and grand experiment, a new order, and an economics of essentially infinite abundance could be undertaken. America, since 1492 and for every one of those succeeding three hundred years, through changes of emphasis unchanged in essence, for Columbus and the Spanish, for the Dutch, the English, for all the dispossessed and disillusioned, and also for all those men with dreams of a better world, was the *locus* of hope, where tranquility and harmony and abundance were at last *really* to be found. It was a land certainly of economic opportunity, for the early traders as for the wave on wave of later immigrants, if that was what mattered, but more, and especially at the beginning, a land of spiritual possibility, and, what cannot possibly be overemphasized, it was the land that made it so, that now gave to the airy nothingness of wishes a locale and name —America, the New World.

II

But this is not a Fourth of July speech, though it begins to seem like one. If I have ignored certain harsher realities, such as Indians and hard winters and a series of ravaging diseases it is not out of simple jingoism, but rather in an attempt to portray from a palette of rosier colors the new land *as seen*, for it was a land, surely, and at the same time a vision of a land, almost a dream come true, and when dreams seem to begin to come true, often more eggs are counted than ever hatch.

For that reason I will not talk about America as the new Eden or as Arcadia, but about another and more complex America, symbolized by the motto I have chosen as the title of this essay: *"Et in Arcadia Ego."* What I have given is the background of hope and desire that allows any sort of analogy between America and Arcadia or Eden. What I will now present are the complicating factors that produced the peculiarly double, sometimes unconsciously ironic literature of the nineteenth-century American Romantics.

Before I continue, though, and because there are several strands to my argument, let me summarize that argument in advance and define its limits. In speaking of American Romanticism, I have both acknowledged a continuity of the Romantic

With the third picture in the series, also done by Poussin, a third element seems to be stressed, and the ambiguity of Latin grammar plays a part in the change. "*Et in Arcadia ego*" should, technically, be translated, "Even in the garden am I," since the *et* ordinarily is associated with the nearest noun in a case like this, and "*et*" can be used as an intensifier. Also, the verb, which may be omitted in Latin, must be obvious, and that implies that it be present tense unless a context makes clear another tense. So —"*Even* in the garden *am* I." But with Poussin's second picture —the third in the series— the grammar seems to shift, and the translation becomes "Even I lived, or was, in the garden, just as you are now." The interpretation comes from certain details in the picture: it is rendered with a more symmetrical and formal, less coincidental arrangement of the figures; they are no longer shocked but now seem contemplative and melancholic, as though mourning a dead friend or acquaintance whose sarcophagus they are visiting; and there is no death's-head, but only an inscription on the tomb. Now the relevance of this to our concern with garden imagery in American Romanticism is that both interpretations of the message have come down to us, and influenced the notions of Arcadia that we have. From the second interpretation of the motto, "I, too, was in Arcadia," come those "sweet, sad memories" that Panofsky attributes to the original Arcadian poetry, the sense of lost time, lost place, perhaps lost hopes, a sense of the transitoriness of the tranquil and beautiful. With the first interpretation comes the standard *memento mori* so common in nature writings of any sophistication, the sense that life, though lived in a garden, ends in death. This gives us much of the fallen Eden imagery that comes by way of the Middle Ages and Renaissance right up to today, as for example in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, so full of gardens, and wastelands. Together, these interpretations produce a curious and complex set of emotions —of being locked out of the garden by death while perhaps even in the garden. To live in nature, especially if you are a naturalist like leaning and loafing and observing a spear of summer grass, is to be constantly reminded of the cycles of living and dying that nature must go through if it is to be nature. We cannot get back to the garden. In fact, one of the most freezing and disheartening moments in all of literature is perhaps that moment in Milton's *Paradise Lost* when, after Adam and Even have eaten of the fruit forbade and felt shame and hidden from God, the rose that Eve is holding drops a petal. Ever after, as Robert Frost says, though Nature's first green is gold, it is her hardest hue to hold:

Her early leaf's a flower,
But only so an hour,
Then leaf subsides to leaf;
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day,
Nothing gold can stay.

In the Romantic literature of the American nineteenth century, postlapsarian gardens abound. The catalog runs through Hawthorne's very specific garden in *The House of the Seven Gables*, with its scrawny chickens, flowerbeds choked with undergrowth, a witchily muttering dark pool throwing up pictures of decay adding their ironies to the story's sense of lost gold. In Herman Melville's early South Seas novels the supposed primal innocence of the Happy Valleys of the beautiful islands he visits is in reality an innocence that conceals cannibalism and sensual decadence. In fact, the sexual falling-away is so great that in *Typee* Melville suffers constantly from a mysterious disease in his leg that is cured as soon as he leaves the island. Far from being curative nature, the gardens presented in such tales —and there are many more, two of the major ones of which I will speak about in just a moment— are decayed and perhaps actually enervating or poisonous, in keeping with, especially, Hawthorne's and Melville's knowledge of our modern, that is, post-Edenic, state of existence.

In *Moby-Dick*, among a surprising number of gardens, Arcadian references, and pastoral interludes such as the "Main-- Mast" chapter or "The Symphony," there is one specific bower, in the chapter called "In a Bower of the Arsacides," which offers an eminently quotable summary of this motif. Ishmael has gone to an island in the Arsacides, perhaps intending the anagram with Arcadia, where there is a whale skeleton he can measure. This done, Ishmael observes that

> It was a wondrous sight. The wood was green as mosses of the Icy Glen; the trees stood high and haughty, feeling their living sap; the industrious earth beneath was as a weaver's loom with a gorgeous carpet on it, whereof the ground-vine tendrils formed the warp and woof, and the living flowers the figures .... Through the lacings of the leaves, the great sun seemed a flying shuttle weaving the unwearied verdure .... Now, amid the green, life-restless loom of the Arsacidean wood, the great, white, worshipped skeleton lay lounging —a

gigantic idler! Himself all woven over with the vines; every month assuming greener, fresher verdure; but himself a skeleton! Life folded Death; Death trellised life; the green god wived with youthful life, and begat him curly-headed glories.[8]

The two major, and most interesting examples of the specifically garden, as opposed to generally Arcadian, imagery are in Melville's group of tales called *The Encantadas* and in a very much misunderstood story by Hawthorne called "Rappacini's Daughter."

The Encantadas are what are now known as the Galapagos Islands. They are similar to the wandering rocks in the *Odyssey* in that the currents in the area for a long time made mapping them impossible, so that they seemed to float from one place to another —hence their somewhat ironic name, for the enchantment is not exactly of the white-magic variety. Melville makes them very specifically the *in malo* garden, such as is the Bower of Bliss in Spenser or Circe's garden in the *Odyssey*. This medieval device of giving a figure two aspects—the so-called *in bono* aspect and its inverse, the *in malo* aspect, was a staple in allegorical writings for hundreds of years, and we are alerted to its use here by the head-poems to each of the ten "sketches,"[9] each a snatch of poetry from Spenser's *The Faery Queene* wherein Spenser is continually manipulating what look to be the same images to convey perfectly opposite moral or ethical positions. This Eden, says Melville, is almost completely without vegetation, rocky and "clinkered." Its inhabitants include, according to a whimsical census-study taken by Melville,

men	none
ant-eaters	unknown
man-eaters	unknown
lizards	500,000
snakes	500,000
spiders	10,000,000
salamanders	unknown
devils	d[itt]o.[,]

making a clean total of 11,000,000, not counting the unknowns.

[8] H. Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: Hendricks House, 1962), pp.446-7.
[9] H. Melville, *The Encantadas, Four Short Novels* (New York: Bantam, 1959), pp.43-104.

The sound of the islands is not rippling waters and whispering leaves, but a hiss, to be heard everywhere, and the roar of the ravening sea. The island's aspect is much "as the world might look after a penal conflagration." [45] Moreover, the special curse, or enchantment, of the Encantadas is that they lie almost exactly at the Equator, and therefore "to them change never comes; neither the change of seasons nor of sorrows." [46] This garden is a hell, like the "burned apples of Sodom." "In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist." [47]

The kings or gods of these islands are Circe-like men with dogs and chickens and wild goats for subjects, or the tricky hermit ironically named Oberlus who says at one point, "This island's mine by Sycorax my mother" [92], and who kidnaps and enslaves sailors who come to the island for water and such scanty provisions as there are. Even the apples of Sodom are not freely given here. Buccaneers have visited the islands and made them home, finding there an ironic tranquility which they have denied others. There is even a rocky bench, overgrown with moss, a "green sofa," on Barrington Isle where Melville says he sat one day with a rusty dagger-fragment in one hand and a bit of a wine jug in the other, and where he contemplated the ironies of this "bower of peace" which the buccaneers, blood- and gold-thirsty, made in this Eden-hell.

In *The Encantadas* there is even an idyllic love-story, bucolic and almost Arcadian, about a young couple just married who are going to take some of the abundance of this to-them garden, namely the abundance of tortoises, and make the fortune needed to start their lives together. But almost at once, the husband is killed when the sea, toying almost wantonly, cat-like with his frail boat, capsizes and drowns him in full view of his young and very innocent wife. She is horror-stricken, and even more so when, after months, thinking that the boat she sees is coming to her rescue, she is used, sexually abused, or so we are led by Melville to assume,[10] and left stranded still in the Bower of Eden now become for her a waking hell.

Because of all these postlapsarian horrors, Melville's imagination seems permanently affected:

[10] Yvor Winters in his *Maule's Curse*, collected in *In Defense of Reason* (New York: Swallow Press, 1947), *says*, as though it were obvious, on page 223, that the Chola widow was "ravished by two boat crews." I do not consider it so obvious as Winters did, but I do think that this is a possible assumption.

I can hardly resist the feeling that I have slept upon evilly enchanted ground. For, often, in scenes of merriment, and especially at revels held by candlelight in oldfashioned mansions, so that shadows are thrown into the further recesses of an angular and spacious room, making them put on a look of haunted undergrowth of lonely wood, I have seemed to see, slowly emerging from those imagined solitudes, and heavily crawling along the floor, the ghost of a giant tortoise, with "Memento . . . ." burning in live letters upon his back. [49-50]

To have used our expectations of "nature writing" and the travelogue so against us was an act of some daring, but Melville could not have made his message any clearer. Hawthorne, however, in using a similar *in malo* inversion in "Rappacini's Daughter" seems to have been less successful in making his vision understood.

"Rappacini's Daughter" is set in Renaissance Padua, and the story is a kind of retelling of that other tragic Paduan love-story, *Romeo and Juliet*. There is a garden of monstrous flowers, the creations of an early geneticist, Dr. Rappacini, whose skills as a doctor are considerably resented and envied by a rival, Dr. Baglioni. Rappacini himself is an older man who entrusts much of the care of his garden to his daughter Beatrice. One day a young student, Giovanni, sees Beatrice from a window overlooking the garden and falls in love. They meet, and the love seems reciprocated. He enters the garden, but after awhile is appalled to find that all the flowers, and especially the gorgeous one at the center of the garden, exude a poisonous odor that Beatrice seems immune to, and that she herself has been so affected by breathing the vapors that she, too, exudes a poison. He himself seems to be becoming Mithridated, as Leo Marx calls it.[11] This discovery distresses Giovanni so that he desires to take Beatrice from the garden, and so takes from the supposedly white-magic Dr. Baglioni an antidote. He gives it to Beatrice, and although she doesn't want to take it, she does, and dies.

Now there are several interpretations of this story, but all of

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[11] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.276. I have used Marx's arguments about the nature of the American vision of nature, and nature fallen, throughout. Marx, too, has much reference to Virgil, but his emphasis is not so much on the "Et in Arcadia Ego" motif as either Panofsky's or mine.

them seem to me to miss the main imagistic argument of the story. Beatrice, like Mithridates, has been slowly poisoned by her father so that she will be able to live in the garden. This *is* Renaissance Italy, too, full of the possibility of poisoning, and Rappacini may have been acting as a good father; certainly he is willing for his otherwise well-protected daughter, once she falls in love, to admit her lover to the garden to live with her; Rappacini throws up no barriers to the love of the two young people. The garden is a negative Eden, whose topography is very like Eden's, but whose central and dominant plant is poisonous rather than the Tree of Life or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is a negative Eden, therefore the real, postlapsarian world. But the story acts itself out as though it were prelapsarian Eden, except by virtue of a series of *in malo*, inversions; Baglioni's jealousy is as Satan's for God [Rappacini, the creator of this garden] except that Baglioni is a man, like Hawthorne's other creations Young Goodman Brown and the doctor in the story called "The Birthmark" who when perfecting his wife's beauty kills her, for it is not in man's nature to be perfect—Baglioni is, like these, a man who cannot accept the fallen, and therefore mixed, nature of the world. It is not perfection he envies, nor ambition that betrays him, but rather imperfection that he resents and would root out. He is an idealist turned bitter. The antidote to poison is poison to a postlapsarian body, for in *this* world, the very breath of life is death, and to counteract that breath, to purify beyond humanity, is to kill. Giovanni, then, is Eve to Beatrice's Adam, and the plans of the God of this garden, creating in a fallen world a place of beauty which yet does not deny the nature of fallen nature, are spoiled by the invidious devil of a perfectibilitarian working through a gullible agent.

This was always Hawthorne's, and Melville's, theme—that we do live in a fallen world, and that all of nature reflects this. Hawthorne had learned by living at Brook Farm that the hopes for our redemption by nature garnered by the Utopians simply didn't take into account man's peculiar fallen, and therefore always *radically* imperfect, state. Pearl, the bastard chid of Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*, is *not* a symbol of purity, but a symbol that out of dirt can come beauty, out of sin life, for Pearl is a symbol of Hester's sin, and her humanity. But pearls *are* symbols of redemption, and Hawthorne used her to symbolize not heavenly but human, earthly redemption, the limited redemption that love, the truth to the human heart, may effect even in this world. Giovanni betrayed his, and Beatrice's, heart, and killed her. He

but it may be nature which has other roles than that of mother, at least in the real world. Thoreau was tough-minded, in Williams James's phrase, and he shows us this everywhere. He knows that Arcadia can not last, and knows that his experiment was only that, and not a final answer to our desires. He knows that nature can be brutal and that at any turn in the path through the Arcadian woods around Walden he may find a pitched battle, or a skull.

There are many other such places as Walden Pond in the Romantic literature, and I will just give some *loci* without going into any details. There is Templeton, the almost-Arcadian city built by Judge Temple in Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking novel *The Pioneers.* Templeton is an attempt to build an American city not quite like a city of Europe, in the midst of nature, striking a balance between real hard civilization and hard nature. But the city is not quite acceptable to the rough Arcadian hero, Natty Bumppo. so Natty quite toughmindedly moves on. There is Hester Prynne's house, in a kind of magic space between the forest and the town. There is redemption for Hester in that space, we feel, and yet it is a lonely redemption, involving much struggle and loss. There is the Utopian-Arcadian setting of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, a satire of sorts on the famous Brook Farm experiment, and not successful either in life or in the book. And there are of course many more such Arcadian landscapes or topographical spaces. Each author seems to have taken this Arcadian space, with a certain attitude toward the possible balance of man and nature, as a desired and even possibly possible state. But in each work, the hope is tempered by knowledge, and the ideal by the depressingly real, so that what results, in every case, is a recognition, even if the recognition is almost suppressed and must make its way in almost accidental or even apologetic ways, a recognition that *Et in Arcadia ego.* But the hope was strong, as we have seen and felt in Thoreau. And nowhere was the hope for the redemptive qualities of nature stronger than in Emerson and Whitman. In fact the hopefulness of those two wonderfully kind-spirited and genial men is so strong that one must almost deal in modern psychological theory to see the chinks in their façades through which the chilling undesired and suppressed knowledge penetrates, and besides the question of time here for such examination, that is matter rather for close textual study than this type of broad overview, so let me quickly just suggest two places in Emerson and one in Whitman where it seems to me that the sad recognition is most obviously to be seen darkening an otherwise bright landscape.

Both Emerson and Whitman are centrally concerned with reaching a Unity with the All, if I may be pardoned a redundancy for the sake of making a point about their truly and correctly called mysticism. For them, the perfection and completeness, the wholeness of nature, for which Emerson constantly uses Pythagorean and Platonic analogies as well as various kinds of symbolic arguments, is an article of faith, and both men wish to reproduce this perfection, from which we have fallen, in each man and in society. (One must remember that Whitman is the great poet of the perfected Democracy as well as one of the great mystical poets of universal Nature.) But the moments at which the unity occurs are, in a way, troubling moments. The most famous is the "transparent eyeball" epiphany in Emerson's *Nature.*

> Crossing a bare common [and this is probably an Arcadian space, or attempt at it, as anyone familiar with the commons in Boston, Cambridge, and Concord will recognize], in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good-fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. In the woods, too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough. In the woods is perpetual youth. Standing on the bare ground —my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space— all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing. I see all. The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God . . . In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.[14]

This is a moving statement of man in a state of nature, no doubt. And yet to lose mean egotism, to become that transparent eyeball is to dissolve. This dissolution is perhaps —and it is for me rather a weak perhaps— not in itself reason for discomfort in the reader, but let us examine a poem by Emerson called "Bacchus." In this poem, Emerson once again seems to break loose from time and place and to float, intoxicated by what he calls, neoplatonically, the wine of wine, much, one supposes, like what Emily Dickinson was talking about when she called herself "inebriate of air" and "imbiber of the dew". But the lines "And I intoxicated/ And by the draught assimilated/ May float at pleasure through all

[14] R. W. Emerson, "Nature," Chap. I, "Nature."

natures," make the trouble more definable. Emerson says that he is assimilated by the draught of wine he drinks. This interimmersion allows Emerson, later in the poem, even to hear "far Chaos" talk with him. The loss of self is a modern malady, perhaps, and so Emerson's desired loss of self may not be so fell as it would seem to us. And yet this loss of self is a kind of death, a dissolution, which troubled Melville so greatly that he wrote very forcefully against it in *Moby-Dick* in "The Mast-Head" chapter, saying that though such moments of mystic union were pleasant, and even seductive, that in yielding to them one "hovered over vortices."

The strangely uncomfortable feeling that I am trying to pin down can be more easily defined by looking for a moment at Whitman. At the end of *Song of Myself*, Whitman, now an old man apparently, seems to be dying.

> I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
> I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

Whitman has been "coaxed to the vapor and the dusk." More troubling still, in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," is the whispering seductiveness of the sea, which

> Whispered me through the night,
> and very plainly before daylight
> lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
> And again death, death, death, death,
> Hissing melodious, neither like the bird
> nor like my arous'd child's heart,
> Creeping thence steadily up to my ears
> and laving me softly all over,
> Death, death, death, death, death.

Now I hesitate to use such a word as "pathological," and especially since there have been more than one poet "half in love with easeful death," and especially too since I am suspicious of psychoanalysis of dead subjects, moreso when they are dead poets. And yet even if a desire for the redemption or cure by nature can only be conveyed in a mystical language comprised of such artists realize that the perfection they seek is not to be found in life, quite, but in another place which may not tolerate the individual human self with its postlapsarian limitations of self and fallibility. To expand so is to attenuate into nothing. *Here* is not the Arcadia of our wishes, for it can only exist out of space and time, or in a time before Adam and Eve were what we would now call human.

There is, then, in Emerson and Whitman a tension, calling them to full humanity, a divine humanity, and that is, as I think they "knew better than they knew," impossible in *this* world. Emily Dickinson recognizes this more bravely or honestly, I think. She writes lovely, almost deliriously frothy poems celebrating nature, and yet knows that time and the world cannot finally satisfy, and so writes also poems chiding God for our unfulfillment, and poems in which, in the grave, or out of world, will come the fulfillment of our dreams and our desires, of what Wallace Stevens has somewhat condescendingly called our "need for some imperishable bliss." The new Jerusalem, the Kingdom of Man, the perfected democracy did not pan out in this New World, not for the Puritans or Quakers or Mormons or the Fourierite socialists or the Brook Farmers or the men who, in order to make a more perfect union, envisioned the land vitalizing the spirit, nor for Emerson and Whitman. Melville and Hawthorne and Thoreau understood, and said, over and over again, that without hope there was no life, but that one must also live in the world of custom houses and tax collectors and real, flesh-and-blood whales, perhaps of inscrutable purpose.

Wallace Stevens, not a nineteenth-century Romantic, but a man nonetheless who understood the dilemma of hope and having, offers probably the unsurpassable statement of the doubleness that I have tried to show at work. In "Sunday Morning"[15] Stevens shows that if we look not to nature as the *locus* of tranquility and eternal spring but rather as that "the earth seem all of Paradise that we know./ A part of labor and a part of pain,/ And next in glory to enduring love," we are more likely to find our satisfaction. Stevens counsels his dissatisfied woman in the poem that *things* are to be cherished like the thought of heaven, that

> There is not any haunt of prophecy,
> Nor any old chimera of the grave,
> Neither the golden underground, nor isle
> Melodious, where spirits gat them home,
> Nor visionary south, nor cloudy palm
> Remote on heaven's hill, that has endured
> As April's green endures.

Rather than a wish for heaven, for some imperishable bliss, for an inhuman perfection which neither nature nor vision can ever deliver, Stevens offers his magnificent synthesis of the hard facts

[15] Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poems*, pp.66-70.

and glories of human life, made of hopes and happiness and perishing and death and darkness. In the heavenly fellowship of men that perish and of summer morn, in the haunting and poignant evocation of a nature going, like the pigeons, down to darkness, yet we feel, always on extended wings, and always sweet, Stevens shows better that I could hope to do all the balances and tensions, the doubleness of *Et in Arcadia ego*, now, in Stevens, made a principle of Beauty as of Life itself, that the Romantics had seen and tried to communicate, and that often they had a succeeded in.

> Supple and turbulent, a ring of men
> Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn
> Their boisteous devotion to the sun,
> Not as a god, but as a god might be,
> Naked among them, like a savage source.
> Their chant shall be a chant of paradise,
> Out of their blood, returning to the sky;
> And in their chant shall enter, voice by voice,
> The windy lake wherein their lord delights,
> The trees, like serafin, and echoing hills
> That choir among themselves long afterward.
> They shall know well the heavenly fellowship
> Of men that perish and of summer morn,
> And whence they came and whither they shall go
> The dew upon their feet shall manifest.
>
> We live in an old chaos of the sun,
> Or old dependency of day and night,
> Or island solitude, unsponsored, free
> Of that wide water, inescapable.
> Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail
> Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;
> Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
> And, in the isolation of the sky,
> At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
> Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
> Downward to darkness, on extended wings.