

makes possible the apotheosis of which poetry is the idiom (IX). Major man articulates the idea of man, which is a representative abstraction of common man, in such a way as to relate the common man to the reality of his particular environment (X).

It Must Change. Reality is in a state of change beyond any decorum the mind would impose on it, and the feelings require this change (I). Life in change provides good sufficient to render the repetitions of memory and of immortality superfluous (II). An ideal must change with the change of reality, or it becomes obsolete (III). The origin of change is in a passionate union of opposites that produces a third thing (IV). A man is changed by the life he leads, if he embraces it with strong feeling (V). No single expression of reality remains adequate, so that the singer of reality must use his imagination to change his song (VI). The particulars of reality are adequate to satisfy desire; there is no absolute truth to satisfy desire, but only changing degrees of certainty with regard to our relation to the particulars of reality (VII). Reality is always seen through some idea of it which is final for a time, but which changes (VIII). The poem is an articulation of the common speech produced by a combination of the language of the imagination with that of the vulgate (IX). Change in our conceptions of things is a necessity that freshens the world and we who conceive it (X).

It Must Give Pleasure. The pleasure that is referred to is not conventionalized spiritual joy, but that of perceiving the good of reality in its irrational substance, the first idea (I). We must take pleasure in reality as it is, not as we might wish it to be (II). Through the imagination we see reality not in one, unchanging, monotonous image, but in pleasure and variety (III). Our relation to reality is determined through love of it, and is not fixed as if by contract (IV). Our love for reality should operate through the imagination only within the limits of reality (V). Reality and the imagination are mutually inclusive, and the latter goes beyond fact to express our feelings about reality (VI). The order of reality must be found in reality itself, and must not be im-

posed on it (VII). Satisfaction may be found in the process of life without final ends of supernatural belief, which latter comprise wishes impossible to fulfill (VIII). Enjoyment can be found in the ends in themselves of earthly activities, and fulfillment may best be found in such discrete, final goods (IX). The fiction of reality which describes it is dictated by one's feelings about reality (X). Epilogue: The poet through his fictions provides the faith by which the soldier lives and dies.

A fiction, in this poem, is an idea of reality, a version of the first idea (compare "It Must Give Pleasure," VII and X). It has the function of disclosing the substance of reality in such a way that the feelings of the ego are brought into accord with it. It is neither wholly reality itself, nor merely a projection of the ego, but an abstract construction of the relation between the two, in which the feelings of the ego are adjusted to the fact of reality, in a state like that of the "incalculable balances" of "It Must Be Abstract," VII. Since both terms of the relation change, the fiction must also change; since the relation is one in which the feelings of the ego are to be satisfied, the fiction must give pleasure. The poem does not give a particular fiction but the specifications of a "supreme fiction" which a final idea of reality would have to include.

"Large Red Man Reading" (CP, p. 423)

The personage of the title is "large" in that he is a mythic figure, "red" because he is vividly alive compared to the pale ghosts who listen to him. The ghosts, disappointed in a heaven that has turned out to be merely a "wilderness of stars" (compare "Of Heaven Considered as a Tomb," CP, p. 56), have returned to earth to hear the red man, the mythic figure of the poet, read from "the great blue tabulae," blue as the color of the imagination in Stevens, which contain "the poem of life." The poem of life is of the most commonplace things, and the ghosts, correspondingly,

would have been overwhelmed by the simplest sensory contact with reality, would have taken intense pleasure in the most rudimentary sensation of it, as if this sensuous contact were the essence of life. The poet reads from his "purple" books ("purple": a deep blue, therefore deeply imaginative, also, perhaps, a blend of the reader's vivid life with his imagination) a description of existence and its articulations in poetry ("The outlines of being and its expressings"), whose syllables are its "law," in that by giving us the literal content of reality in its inspired ("vatic") lines, poetry enables us to realize reality in terms of feeling, brings us to reality through its feeling for it, as it brings the ghosts to life.

"This Solitude of Cataracts" (*CP*, p. 424)

His feelings about existence, the "flecked river" (flecked with the details of reality), existed in a continuum of change, as existence itself was a continuum of change (flowing "never the same way twice"). The river, since it is that of existence itself, flows everywhere at once, and therefore seems to stand still (compare "The River of Rivers in Connecticut," *CP*, p. 533: "The river that flows nowhere, like a sea"; also, "Metaphor as Degeneration," *CP*, p. 444.) Its surface manifests the details of reality which appear in it randomly, without order or set purpose, like wild ducks "Ruffling" the surface of a lake. These random details of reality disturb our projections of existence which are mirrored in it, our imaginings, our thoughts, and which, therefore, are "its common reflections" (the mirrorings of the New Hampshire mountain, Monadnock, in the lake, are like thoughts, "reflections"—see *LWS*, p. 823). There seems to be an unspoken apostrophe inherent in the concept of reality represented by this lacustrine scene, and which is articulated by what follows. So much of this already fluid existence consists of our "reflections" on it, so much is imaginary ("not real at all"),

that it seems doubly insubstantial. This provokes a desire for the opposite. He wanted the river to flow not in a continuum of change ("never the same way twice," l. 2), but in "the same way," and to keep on flowing in that one way. He wanted the scene to be static, the moon, unchanging, nailed in one place, as he walked under the buttonwoods (one imagines them, in this context, buttoned in place). He wanted to become static himself "In a permanent realization" of himself and of a reality in which there would not be any random detail like that of the wild ducks, in which there would not be any imaginary projections that, though unreal, are part of reality. He wanted to get the sense of a permanent reality, in which one would be released from the continual destruction of impermanence and, by implication, released from death as well. He would then be like a monument, indestructible, in an ambiance of unchanging stone ("lapis"), "archaic" because it has never changed, beyond the fluctuations of the planetary cycles ("pass-pass," also with the implication that such phenomena are illusory, unreal, from the French "passe-passe," prestidigitation—compare *LWS*, p. 823). He would then be non-human, breathing a "bronzon breath" at the "azury"—both heavenly and, by association with Stevens' use of blue as the color of the imagination, imagined—"centre of time," the hub of the wheel, the still point of time where time does not pass.

"Saint John and the Back-Ache" (*CP*, p. 436)

The poem is cast in the form of a dialogue which represents Saint John's reaction to the presence of a pain in his back. The mind is the most potent force in the world, because it alone can defend us against the difficulties of consciousness which it contains. This is suggested to Saint John by the Back-Ache because, in his consciousness of it, his first thought is that its pain is something that can be resolved in