

tion, like objects in a museum. They are meant for the thoughtful man in his everyday life ("chalked/ On the sidewalk") to help him resolve the problems of that life, such as the opposites, life and death, considered in nonreligious terms. The man who takes thought (section V) can see unity in the complexities of reality.

"The Sense of the Sleight-of-hand Man" (*CP*, p. 222)

The felicitous spiritual events in one's life occur fortuitously ("Occur as they occur"). Felicitous events also occur fortuitously in nature, such as the chance composition of clouds, houses, and rhododendrons, or as the way the clouds change, shape and color as the wind contorts them in the sky. Nature is in this sense a sleight-of-hand man, bringing things about that one least expects. Who could have predicted the movement of the bluejay? In a parallel manner, the poet here improvises metaphors to describe nature: sun rays become spokes of a wheel. The reality of the sun, here captured in the improvised metaphor of the wheel, outlives man's myths about it—the myths die, but the sun keeps rolling around again; and, in another improvised metaphor for the sun, the "fire eye" outlives the gods men derive from it. The poet shifts by association with the word "eye" to another improvised metaphor. As with nature, so with the mind; the operation of the imagination is fortuitous and unpredictable—its metaphors, for the pink-eyed dove and pines that make wind sounds like cornets, the imaginary island, occur as they occur. It may be, therefore, that only "the ignorant man," whose mind works without preconception and without premeditation, thus in a way parallel to nature's operation, in a natural way—it may be that only a man with such a mind can apprehend nature in such a way as to become one with it, "to mate his life with life," that life of nature which is "sensual" and beyond the mind, therefore unavailable to systematic thought or intellectual preconception. (The realm

of nature is to be joined as a "pearly spouse," in a sensual marriage, not in theory.) The "life" of nature is, even in winter when most barren and static, "fluent" like the mind of the poet in this poem which flows from one improvised and unexpected image to another in order to capture it.

"Of Modern Poetry" (*CP*, p. 239)

Modern poetry concerns itself with the mind as the mind tries to discover belief that will enable it to confront the contemporary world.³⁴ Playing on the word "act" in the first line, the poem goes on to develop the metaphor of a play. When the world we know was based on stable tradition, the mind did not have to search for belief: since the culture was stable, one merely had to repeat what was known. But then the whole situation changed and the traditional past became nothing more than a memory, a memento of a time gone by ("souvenir"). Modern poetry cannot be of that dead past, but rather must be of the present, "living." It has to speak to the people of the present in their own language; it has to meet their needs; it has to consider such things as war, and discover how the mind can confront them. Since the historical environment, the "theatre," has changed, the imagination must find a new artistic vehicle to contain our modern experience, poetry must "construct a new stage" within the "theatre" of our environment. On that stage, in that art, poetry must be like an actor whose impulse to act can never be satisfied; here, however, the act is that of the mind as it continually meditates the words which are an exact expression of the mind, words which have the right sound to the "ear of the mind," and which compose, therefore, apt modern poetry. The "invisible audience" of contemporaries should, in fact, find such poetry so apt that it will seem, in listening to it, that it is listening to itself. In creating through his expression the perfect expression of his audience, the poet unites their feeling with his and the feelings of both become identical. The "actor" is the imagination, thinking