

beneath the foliage as a metaphor for reality is common in Stevens; see, for example, "The Rock" *CP*, p. 525.) This is reality seen without the imagination, or, rather, reality known so plainly that the knowledge seems absolute and the imagination cannot act upon it, an "inert savoir." In this state of mind the vital connection between the ego and reality has been lost. The imagination, which makes that connection, cannot vitalize or give value to reality; it cannot, in other words, incorporate it into the ego. Reality therefore seems empty, lifeless, a "blank cold." This experience has not been brought about merely by a change in reality, since, if it had been, the cause of its accompanying "sadness" would be clear. The seasonal change has stimulated, but has not determined, this state of mind which primarily concerns not the sadness of autumn, but the psychological fact of depression, which autumn has provoked. The sense of reality in this state of mind is described in images of fallen splendor, dilapidation, and futility. In them the "adjective" (l. 5) so difficult to choose has been found. The "absence of the imagination" has literally been imagined in the poem, and, captured in the poem, the "plain sense" of reality is no longer alienated from and inert to the ego. Again, nothing in reality has changed, but the state of mind has changed in describing reality in a certain way. The case is now put that it was necessary to grasp the plain sense of reality, which, though it is still described as a wasted scene, is now called "The great pond." This is reality "without reflections" of the ego, desolate, existing beyond the imagination, but which is the base to which the imagination must return, and which it must incorporate. It is the gap between the ego and this alien reality, which, driven by the anguish described in the first three stanzas, the imagination must span.

"Looking across the Fields and Watching the Birds Fly" (*CP*, p. 517)

The body of this poem is discounted as one of "the more irritating minor ideas/ Of Mr. Homburg" because it is put forth as a fantastic (see stanza 13) though interesting speculation, and not as a final formulation. (Mr. Homburg's speculation has been related to Emerson and the Transcendentalists by way of Concord, and his name, suggesting such puns as Hamburg-humbug, to that movement's German background.) The thought, developed through an analogy between the mind and nature, is that the world is itself "A pensive nature" (stanza 3), a meditation of which the mind is part, and that, conversely, the mind partakes of the "mechanical" (stanza 3) quality of nature, behaving like a natural process rather than an entity with volition (stanza 11). Variations of the same idea are developed elsewhere in the late poems in connection with Ulysses (see "The World as Meditation," *CP*, p. 520, ll. 10-11, "The Sail of Ulysses," *VI, OP*, p. 102, and the two poems which derive from the latter, "Presence of an External Master of Knowledge," *OP*, p. 105, and "A Child Asleep in its Own Life," *OP*, p. 106). In this poem the idea is developed from the observation that as the mind excludes objects from its consciousness, so does the sun alter the natural world through its daily changes of light or, possibly, through gradual seasonal change (stanza 2). Therefore, the operation of nature may be like the process of thought, the world may be of "A pensive nature," except that this process of thought would be independent of man's "ghost," or spirit, would not be the product of man's aspirations like his literature and his gods, would be "mechanical" and so without reference to aspiration or choice, and thus, indifferent to man, it would be "slightly detestable" (stanzas 3 and 4). It is in any case true that we live in a somewhat alien element beyond our formulations about it, in which we are not so much at home as we are in our formulations ("that which we do for ourselves"). Reality is no longer determined for us by our assertion of a human version of it ("one of