

1975

# Wor(L)ds 23

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CROSS\*SECTION OF THE KANSAS LILAC I SAT IN AT  
SEVEN

—The Secret Garden—

⊙

transfigured night:

nodal strand of light out of pebble:

The Pleiades off snail's back:

moon behind cloud behind bloom beyond eye, within juxtaposed  
black  
afterimage:

zig-zag twig, live silver:

a tranquility of minute balances:

“melodies of five octaves apart,” as the wind lifts  
leaf:

*wrung from the heart*

Wor(1)ds 23

& THE RAINBOW COME FULL CIRCLE  
IN THE COCK &  
BALLS

*Henceforth: everything to be real.*

From the flow-er comes the wor(1)d, its globe-like flower  
sprout out your eyes.  
The head is meadow to The Mover  
and from its multiseeded soil  
we copulate the void.

:madness compassed to what we call a rose

:love, at interplanetary center, rhymes 'yellow' with 'pollen'

:thorn from greenstem equals what the mind climbed

:blue balances it in boundless pendulum of air

:inviolate Night its source, course.

"Now in the play that woman, led before the mystic crib, began to sing in her quavering voice, and then the voice changed, changed from the voice of a witch to that of an angel, and from an angel's voice to a child's, and then the answer came . . ."

"great planes that intermingle"

". . . *the absolute north, the absolute south . . .*"

(Van Gogh)

"I am going to put the *black* and the *white*  
in a green park with

pink paths."

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CRITICISM / CHARLES ALTIERI

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### The Poem as Act: A Way to Reconcile Presentational and Mimetic Theories

In pre-Romantic poetry the poet's or speaker's acts of mind serve to supplement the context or the argument; in poetry since Romanticism the act of mind tends to become the content of the poem. This oversimplified but useful generalization should help us understand why the theory of the poem as act of mind strikes us as an important subject and should make clear the stakes involved in our attempts to construct a theory that will at once suffice for poetry in the Romantic tradition and afford a new perspective on more traditional poetry.

We need terms for discussing the act of mind in poetry in large part because we have come to trust so little in older views which subordinate the qualities exhibited by the mind in action to the generalizations the mind achieves. Since Romanticism, however, our poets have come to share, even to precipitate, our culture's increasing scepticism with respect to abstract