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The Poetics of Plenitude and Self-Creation in the Poem

The "poetics of plenitude" is a poetic formula, derived from a larger group of notions related to pragmatist aesthetics, in which the poem arrives at, notes, registers or signals, in any given way, the awareness of its own participation in the meaning making processes. The poem is treated as an aesthetic inquiry in which the inquirer's subjectivity evolves toward various shapes as it confronts various types of externality – linguistic, textual, material, cognitive. What gets "self-created" in such poetics is an artificial subjectivity, co-extensive with the poem as a formal environment designed in order to filter the plethora of external stimuli. Although such artificial selves emerge within the poem, in series of interpretive responses the poem takes toward its environment, they are not wholly "textual" – the pragmatist poetics of plenitude shows how such "selves" breach the life/text divide. They do so by remaining in various kinds of vital relations to the life of the empirical poet. I am going to examine three types of such relations as found in the life-text constellations offered by three American poets: Wallace Stevens, John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara.